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Exposing Colonial and Imperial Roots in Neoliberal Globalization of BC K–12 International Education System

Mise au jour des antécédents coloniaux et impériaux de la mondialisation néolibérale du système éducatif international de la maternelle à la 12e année en Colombie-Britannique

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Abstract

With the rise of British Columbia (BC) kindergarten to Grade 12 (K–12) international education (formerly known as onshore schools) and the BC Offshore School Program, the business of international students is no longer limited to higher education. Working from a decolonizing framework, this study argues that the ever-changing, complex global system of international education in the context of BC's public education system is a continuing form of imperialism and colonialism working under the guise of neoliberal globalization and the knowledge-based economy. Through a critical review of the current development of BC public schools' K–12 international education, this study investigates how the shift from public schools dependent on shrinking government expenditure to relying on market-driven funding mechanisms has enormous implications on the way we think about education and the values that underpin educational endeavours.

Résumé

Suite à l'essor de l'enseignement international de la maternelle à la douzième année (K-12 en anglais) en Colombie-Britannique (C-B) (anciennement connue sous le nom d'Onshore schools) et du programme d'éducation délocalisée de la C-B (BC Offshore School Program), l'industrie des étudiants internationaux ne se limite plus à l'enseignement supérieur. S'appuyant sur un cadre décolonisateur, cette étude soutient que le système mondial de l'éducation internationale – un phénomène complexe et en constante évolution – dans le contexte du système d'éducation publique de la C-B est une forme continue d'impérialisme et de colonialisme fonctionnant sous le couvert de la mondialisation néolibérale et de l'économie basée sur la connaissance. Par le biais d'un examen critique du développement actuel de l'éducation internationale des écoles publiques de la C-B, de la maternelle à la 12e année, cette étude examine comment le passage d'écoles publiques qui dépendent de la réduction des dépenses gouvernementales à des mécanismes de financement axés sur le marché a d'énormes implications sur la façon dont nous pensons l'éducation et les valeurs qui sous-tendent les efforts éducatifs.

Keywords: decolonizing, neoliberal globalization, international education, education as an industry, onshore schools, offshore schools

Mots-clés : décolonisation, mondialisation néolibérale, éducation internationale, l'éducation en tant qu'industrie, écoles onshore, écoles délocalisées

Introduction

With the rise of British Columbia (BC) kindergarten to Grade 12 (K–12) International Education (formerly known as onshore schools) and the BC Offshore School Program, the business of international students is no longer limited to higher education. Over two decades ago BC school districts were granted permission to establish arm's-length for-profit school district business companies (SDBCs) to exercise entrepreneurial powers that would otherwise not be possible for them as public institutions through the enactment of *School Amendment Act of 2002 (Bill 34)* (Fallon & Paquette, 2009). Fallon and Poole (2014) explicate, *Bill 34* is the first policy "in the history of school finance in BC or in Canada … enabling school districts to behave like incorporated business entities" (p. 303). They call this funding mechanism "a quantum jump from a fully publicly funded school system to a finance model that enables alternative (private source) entrepreneurially based financing" (Fallon & Poole, 2014, p. 303). Since then, K–12 international education programs in the BC public school system have evolved and become a major source of revenue for school districts and an important sector in the BC economy. Education that was once regarded as a public good has become a commodity sold by suppliers (schools and others) to customers (students and parents) (Poole, 2007).

This paper will map out the development of the K–12 international education system in BC (hereafter is referred to as BCK–12IE), which includes the expansion of for-profit K–12 international education programs offering BC certified curriculum in BC public schools, BC offshore schools operating in foreign countries, and most recent development—BC offshore schools opening up "branch schools" (categorized under Group 4 Independent Schools) in BC. The mapping will also critically examine the initiation and amendment of policies that grant the structural changes in BC's public education system to allow the selling of BC curriculum, products, and services locally and internationally.

Most importantly this paper seeks to address the lack of analysis on the development of BCK–12IE from a decolonizing framework informed by Māori Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), Black/African Canadian George J. Sefa Dei (2006), and first-generation settler Canadian Arlo Kempf (2009). Recognizing the privilege and responsibility of living and working on the unceded territories of xʷməθkwəy̓əm, Sḵwx̱wú7mesh, and sə̓lilwətaʔɬ təməxʷ[1] Peoples as a first-generation Taiwanese racialized settler, I intend to identify contemporary colonial dynamics and challenge the dominant narratives of Western superiority in order to disrupt various forms of colonial domination and imposition in BCK–12IE. This paper argues that the development of BCK–12IE is a continuing form of imperialism and colonialism working under the guise of neoliberal globalization and the knowledge-based economy. It seeks to identify the historical patterns of colonialism and imperialism in the development of BCK–12IE.

Background: Global Forces and Their Impacts on British Columbia

Under neoliberal globalization, privatization and decentralization of public education are perhaps the most dominant reform efforts endorsed by many governments around the world (Torres, 2013). When discussing the concept of neoliberalism, Scholte (2000) elucidates that neoliberalism not only enjoys very powerful backing from big financial institutions, economic, and financial policymakers and academics, particularly mainstream social scientists, but also prevails as the

[1] Writing out the exact Indigenous names of the Nations without the anglicized version of their names is a small but important way of challenging settler colonialism.

"reigning policy framework in contemporary globalization" (p. 35). In this paper, neoliberal globalization in the context of education takes on Schuetze et al.'s (2011) definition, which refers to "a hegemonic policy discourse" that encourages "trans-national homogeneity or uniformity" as seen in international standardized assessments of educational attainment and privatization of education that is founded on "market-inspired forms of competition, commodification and efficiency" (p. 63).

Education has traditionally been recognized as a public good in Canada, with the rise of neoliberal globalization, the influence of neoliberal ideology in schools has made education a more tradable commodity than ever before. When the World Trade Organization (WTO) enforced the General Agreement on Trade in Services in January 1995, the WTO was able to remove tariff barriers and restrictions in trade and services. By defining education as a service, the WTO succeeded in creating a free global market in education (Moutsios, 2009). Torres (2013) explains that from a neoliberal perspective, the marketplace is seen as the ideal regulator of products and services; thus, if education is regarded as a product or service, nation-states no longer need to fund education because the education marketplace will regulate itself. With the rise of supranational organizations, such as the WTO, Olssen et al. (2004) argue that globalization does not shape education policy, but rather it is the neoliberal policies adopted by governments to protect their economic power in the global economy that shape education policy.

This paper also draws from literature contesting the inevitability and neutrality of globalization and linking globalization to colonialism (Rizvi 2007; Stein & de Andreotti, 2016). Rizvi (2007) raises a critical cautionary point that globalization is overdetermined by global capitalism and is often regarded as "historically inevitable" (p. 262). In a similar vein, referring to the work of Biccum (2010), Stein and de Andreotti (2016) point out that the linkage between globalization and colonialism is rooted in capitalism, which has been the driving force behind imperialist global expansion. For example, another major player in reframing policies on education is Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). OECD has been a leading force in the organization of new forms of governance in education at the global level. It plays a major role in setting frameworks, standards, and benchmarks for education based on human capital economics (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), OECD's most widely known instrument for measuring academic achievement of 15-year-old students in mathematics, science, and reading, has successfully become a tool used for comparing or ranking over 80 countries' national or provincial education systems (OECD, 2021). PISA rankings are often being utilized for promoting Canadian education system in the global international education market (BCCIS East, 2022; Doherty, 2023; The Canadian School, n.d.) since it has gained the reputation for being "the most accurate and legitimate measure of comparative international educational performance" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 133). Based on the 2018 results (OECD, 2019), Canada ranked well among its international education competitors. Canada ranked sixth in reading, above the United States (13th), the United Kingdom (14th) and Australia (16th). Canada ranked 12th in mathematics, above the United States (37th), the United Kingdom (17th), and Australia (29th). Finally, Canada ranked eighth in science, above the United States (18th), the United Kingdom (14th), and Australia (15th). By scoring well ahead of its competitors in the international education market, Canada's PISA ranking is often utilized to promote the Canadian education brand (Canadian Association of Public Schools—International, 2022; Maple Leaf International School, n.d.). However, what is ironic and inherently colonial about using PISA ranking to market Canadian education as world-class education is that China, being one of Canada's largest international education markets,

actually scored first place in reading, math, and science. Specifically, China is the only country that scored high enough to reach level four in both reading and science in PISA (OECD, 2019). Scoring high on PISA does not necessarily grant China the status of being the superior education system in the world. As illustrated in Stein and de Andreotti's (2016) paper on international students and the global imaginary, "the dominant global imaginary presumes the superiority and universality of Western knowledge and therefore, Western education," and international students seek out ways to purchase Western education to access superior work and migration opportunities (Stein & de Andreotti, 2016, p. 231).

In Canada, education is the responsibility of the provincial and territorial governments with the exception of on-reserve First Nations[2] and modern treaty First Nations[3] who have negotiated educational jurisdiction and redefined their relationship with the federal government. In each province K–12 education is governed by a school act and additional regulations are established by a department or the ministry of education representing the provincial government (Council of Ministers of Education Canada, n.d.). At the local level, school boards or school districts are bound by a provincial school act and the ministry of education to administer, operate and maintain schools, hire staff and admit students (Council of Ministers of Education Canada, n.d.; Fallon & Poole, 2014). The K–12 system is funded by grants from the provincial government and local taxes collected by the local government (Council of Ministers of Education Canada, n.d.).

In order for K–12 public schools to pursue for-profit entrepreneurial activities, a series of changes in policy and legislation had to take place first. On May 30, 2002, *Bill 34* of the *School Amendment Act* was passed and came into full effect. *Bill 34* placed new demands on school districts to finance part of their operations and growth, which allowed the government to step away from providing full public financing (Fallon & Paquette, 2009). By setting up separate business companies, section 6.1 of *Bill 34* enabled school districts to make risk-based decisions on both onshore and offshore commercial activities while limiting their liability. The BC's former Premier (then Education Minister) Christy Clark gave the following rationale:

> We want to give school boards more freedom and flexibility. They've told us they need it to bring about improvements in their districts, and we're delivering. Board powers will be increased by this legislation. … It will allow them to create separate entities through which they can engage in a variety of entrepreneurial activities—something school boards have been asking for, for many, many years. … One for-profit school is already operating in China, and the money we are making there we are bringing back to British Columbia to support students here. (Clark, 2002, p. 3005)

Reflected in this paradigm shift is a policy goal to move public education "away from full public financing and towards greater market responsiveness" (Fallon & Paquette, 2009, p. 146) to further distant the BC government's role in providing funding to schools under the pretense of giving school districts more freedom, flexibility, and control in their own finances and operations. Clark's neoliberal move positioned her party as a saviour by "delivering" a solution to a problem: passing legislation to give school boards more autonomy in their own finances and operations, and enabling school boards to pursue profit-making business ventures. Following this neoliberal logic, school districts brand and market their intellectual capital as a commodity for sale and compete

[2] In 2006 the BC government passed a legislation which recognized First Nations' inherent rights to make laws related to the education of their children (https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/F-11.75/page-1.html).

[3] For example, see the Nisga'a Final Agreement (2000) which is the first modern treaty Nation in BC to assume educational jurisdiction in their governance structure (http://www.nnkn.ca/files/u28/nis-eng.pdf).

against one another like private enterprises in an open market (in this case for international students who now become objects to be possessed for capital gains).

In 2011, when Christy Clark became the premier of BC, she carried on with the former BC premier Gordon Campbell's neoliberal marketization of education in her *BC Jobs Plan.* Clark announced an increase in BC's intake of international students to 50% by 2016. Clark claimed that every 10% increase in the number of international students would create approximately 1,800 new jobs and would bring in an additional $100 million to the provincial gross domestic product (GDP) (Bailey, 2011). The following year, as a part of the *BC Jobs Plan*, the BC government put forth the *International Education Strategy (IES)* of 2012 reinforcing its commitment to expanding BC's dominance in the "business" of international students globally.

Prior to the initiation of the *BC Job Plans* in 2011, the annual growth rate of international students was around 5–6% between 2007 to 2010 and increased to 8–9% between 2011 and 2014 as shown in Table 1. Even though the rate of increase dropped to 2.33% between 2014 and 2015, it rebounded to over 3% the next year and surpassed a double-digit percentage increase to 12.09% in 2017. Although BC did not quite meet the *BC Jobs Plan* target of the 50% increase in the number of international students[4] by 2016, it reached over 55% the year after.

Table 1

International Students With a Study Permit at All Levels of Study in BC, 2007 to 2017[5]

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
No. of int. students[6]	76.4	80.5	84.6	90.0	97.8	106.6	116.0	125.9	128.8	135.9	152.4
% change	5.59	5.32	5.04	6.48	8.62	9.02	8.84	8.51	2.33	5.52	12.09
Sources: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2016 and 2019											

This surge of international student population translated into a $3.3 billion contribution to BC's GDP, 43,400 jobs supported and $622 million in government tax revenue raised in 2017 (Roslyn Kunin & Associates, 2019). At the K–12 level, the combined direct and indirect GDP impact of international student spending was $386.4 million (Roslyn Kunin & Associates, 2019). However, what is so striking about BCK–12IE is not the significant economic gains generated from international students nor the rapidly growing population of international students, but the colonial expansion of cultural and economic imperialism and school district inequities created in relation to geographical location, race/ethnicity, and social class (Fallon & Poole, 2014).

Towards a Decolonizing Framework

This study draws from Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) foundational work on decolonizing methodologies and Dei and Kempf (2006) and Kemp's (2009) theorization on anticolonialism. Smith's (1999) concept of decolonization, which is to have a critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations, and values of settler societies and developing a critical

[4] International students are temporary residents who are in Canada on a study permit in the observed calendar year. Under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, a study permit is not needed for any program of study that is 6 months or less.

[5] The numbers presented are summarized to the thousands.

[6] It is important to note that the number of international students might be slightly higher, because the data presented here is based on the total count of study permit holders collected by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and does not include short-term international students who do not need a study permit.

response to the discourses of imperialism and colonialism. A decolonizing framework requires a long-term commitment, as the process needs to evolve in order to counter the ever-evolving colonial paradigms that continue to marginalize Indigenous and racialized peoples. Smith (1999) explains that the power and persistence of colonialism continues to thrive under the expansion of knowledge, economic opportunities and "the market." She further explicates, "the globalization of knowledge and Western culture constantly reaffirms the West's view of itself as the centre of legitimate knowledge, the arbiter of what counts as knowledge and the source of 'civilized' knowledge" (p. 63). Even though Smith's work focuses on the colonial domination and oppression of Indigenous communities from the West, her analysis between colonialism and imperialism is helpful in exposing the colonialism and imperialism working under the guise of neoliberal globalization and the knowledge-based economy. She reveals a crucial point about the works of imperialism and colonialism stating that not only were the Indigenous populations subjugated, but the Europeans were also subjugated in order to serve the greater imperial enterprise. This imperial enterprise thrived on an image of what the West or "civilized" represented, and this image had to be created and maintained. She states, "Colonialism was, in part, an image of imperialism, a particular realization of the imperial imagination. It was also, in part, an image of the future nation it would become" (Smith, 1999, p. 64). This particular realization of the imperial imagination exploits "images of the Other" to legitimize the stories of colonization. In the case of international education, the imperial imagination is rooted in Western supremacy and this imperial imagination makes Western education valuable and desirable.

A decolonizing framework also builds on Dei (2006) and Kempf's (2009) anticolonial perspectives, which break away from the previous limited understandings of the term "colonial" as territorial imperialism or indirect and/or direct state or cultural control. This departure exposes the ever-changing colonialism as it morphs into new forms of domination and imposition to accommodate the needs of the colonizer (Dei & Kempf, 2006). It recognizes that all knowledge is situated and informed within particular social contexts, thus subjectivity, positionality, location, and history play a significant role in understanding the epistemologies of and about the colonized subjects (Dei, 2006). It also calls for accountability and responsibility of knowledge production, particularly when oppression is not experienced equally among groups and not all oppressed are affected the same way (Dei, 2006). In the global trade of international education, one might argue that it is a fair trade of money for services or goods where both parties benefit. International students may be perceived as having purchasing power in buying goods and services while the host society may be perceived as providers of these goods and services. This article asserts that BCK–12IE is a continuing form of imperialism and colonialism working under the guise of neoliberal globalization and the knowledge-based economy. In the next section, a decolonizing framework is utilized to map out the patterns of colonialism and imperialism in the development of BCK–12IE to illustrate that BCK–12IE is an example of colonial reproduction of economic imperialism and reinforcement of continuing inequities created among school districts in relation to geographical location as well as race/ethnicity and social class (Fallon & Poole, 2014). BCK–12IE is also an example of propagating Western supremacy through imperial imagination.

BC K–12 International Education System

BC International Education (formerly known as onshore schools) and the BC Offshore School Program offer a BC certified curriculum, hire BC certified teachers and administrators while granting BC Certification of Graduation (referred to as a "Dogwood Diploma") upon graduation (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2020). However, BC onshore schools are public schools

in BC offering regular public education programs to international students, also known as non-resident students in BC, alongside Canadian students; whereas BC offshore schools are set up in foreign countries which educate citizens of those countries with the hope of them enrolling in postsecondary schools in Canada and/or joining the Canadian labour market in the future (Schuetze, 2008). Thus, the business of K–12 international students has great implications for higher education in terms of enhancing sourcing and recruitment efforts, building long-term cooperation relationships, securing the international student market share, and maintaining competitiveness in the global market for international students. BC offshore schools have since evolved into a myriad of unique ways which are explained in the following sections.

BC International Education (Formerly Known as Onshore Schools)

While not all school districts offer international student programs, at least 51 out of 60 school districts have had varied revenue and expenditures from their international and out-of-province students between 2017/2018 and 2022/2023 based on the school district revenue and expenditure data provided on the BC Ministry of Education website. Forty-one[7] out of 60 school districts that offer K–12 international student programs are also members of the International Public School Education Association of BC (IPSEA) (The International Public School Education Association, 2021). The IPSEA of BC is a voluntary member organization comprised of public school districts in BC that host international students. It assists member school districts to collaborate and develop policies and practices relating to admission, recruitment and marketing, homestay compliance and so on to serve the needs of international students.

International education has evolved and grown in BC's public schools and has become an important part of many school districts' funding models in the last three decades. One area that requires more robust discussion is the actual amount that international student fees are used to compensate for public school funding shortfalls, which is a common perception being circulated in the news media and government reports. It is important to point out that enrollment number and revenue gained from international student fees do not distribute evenly but concentrate in just 10 districts in Metro Vancouver and Greater Victoria (Kuehn, 2018; Kuehn & Vaitekonyte, 2019). For example, in 2017/2018, the top six school districts with the highest international student tuition as the percentage of total school district operating revenue are: West Vancouver (13%), Coquitlam (12%), Rocky Mountain (10%), Burnaby (10%), Richmond (9%) and Qualicum (8%) (Kuehn & Vaitekonyte, 2019). Moreover, international student revenue fluctuates depending on factors such as economic downturns and epidemics (Kuehn, 2012).

For example, in the case of West Vancouver school district, its district superintendent Chris Kennedy shared that while the school district has been trying not to make international student revenue part of core funding, it is still an important part of the budget for enhancements and enrichments for all students (Ballard, 2021). However, district superintendent Kennedy continued to explain that sometimes the district has to use international student revenue to make up for gaps in provincial funding covering core programming over time (Ballard, 2021). According to West Vancouver school district's *Financial Statement Discussion and Analysis* for the year ending 2021, due to COVID-19, the district experienced a drop of 218 full-time international student enrollment, which reduced the international student revenue by about 41%, a total loss of $4.1 million. To offset the 41% decline in international student revenues, the report indicated that "all supplies budgets were cut by 25%, staff vacancies remained unfilled where possible, travel and professional

[7] Some school districts offering international student programs are not members of the International Public School Education Association of BC.

development costs were well below normal, and costs for the international program, including agents' fees, homestay and travel, declined in concert with the reduction in enrollment" (West Vancouver Schools, 2021, p. 8). The report also noted that the investment income was reduced due to lower international student fee revenue. Moreover, the report disclosed multiple challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic that affect international student enrollment: issues with the availability and timing of study permits and related border closures, reduced worldwide family income, and reduced homestay availability.

When comparing 2017/2018 data to 2020/2021 data on school district operating revenue, Table 2 shows that international student revenue as a percentage of total operating revenue has dropped significantly (in some cases more than 50%).

Table 2

International and Out-of-Province Student Tuition as Percentage of Total School District Revenue, 2017/18 vs. 2020/21

School District	Tuition as % of operating revenue	
	2017–18	2020–21
45 West Vancouver	13%	8%
43 Coquitlam	12%	6%
6 Rocky Mountain	10%	3%
41 Burnaby	10%	6%
38 Richmond	9%	6%
69 Qualicum	8%	3%
Sources: Data for 2017/2018 is taken from Kuehn & Vaitekonyte (2019). Data for 2020/2021is compiled from selected school districts' audited financial statements.		

More specifically, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the total international student revenue[8] from public schools dropped from $256,038,503 to $151,379,455 (over 40% decrease) between 2017/2018 and 2020/2021 as shown in Table 3. Top five school districts with the most funding from international student tuition include: Coquitlam dropped more than 45% from $36 million to $20 million, Burnaby dropped 40% from $23 million to $14 million; Vancouver dropped about 21% from $26 million to about $20 million; Richmond dropped 34% from $18 million to $11 million; and Greater Victoria dropped 37% from $15 million to just below $9.5 million between 2017/2018 and 2020/2021.

Many smaller and remote school districts faced a much greater drop in international student revenue than school districts in the Metro Vancouver area during the same period. The top five school districts with the most percentage of drop in international student revenue include: Revelstoke school district with just over $133,000 in international student revenue dropped over 91% to $11,000; Cariboo-Chilcotin school district dropped over 80% from $59,976 to $11,950; Fraser-Cascade school district dropped over 77% from $50,048 to $11,503; Sunshine Coast school district dropped over 71% from $118,188 to $33,825; and, Rocky Mountain school district with just over $3.9 million dropped over 70% to about $1.15 million. In the case of Qualicum school district, which dropped from $3.95 million to $1.37 million between 2017/2018 and 2020/2021,

[8] Net international student revenue is calculated based on the difference between total operating expense of international student and out-of-province students and total operating revenue from international and out-of-province students' tuition provided by the school district's financial statement.

incurred a deficit of $336,051[9] in net international revenue for the year ending 2020/2021 (Qualicum School District, 2021). Still, school districts such as Kootenay-Columbia and Boundary, seemed to be showing some growth potential in their international student revenue in previous years, which received zero international student revenue in 2020/2021.

Table 3

International Student Revenue From Selected School Districts, 2017/18–2020/21

School District	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Southeast Kootenay	480,028	-	-	-
Rocky Mountain	3,937,783	3,681,937	2,983,326	1,155,669
Kootenay Lake	1,961,224	2,309,337	1,512,940	638,519
Arrow Lakes	-	-	-	-
Revelstoke	133,139	174,464	173,010	11,000
Kootenay-Columbia	12,000	29,954	14,993	-
Vernon	4,867,254	4,933,289	5,041,265	2,532,963
Central Okanagan	5,886,182	5,423,538	5,895,217	3,726,557
Cariboo-Chilcotin	59,976	57,436	36,050	11,950
Quesnel	7,500	-	-	-
Chilliwack	-	1,430,146	1,635,323	831,627
Abbotsford	5,785,959	6,237,920	6,546,164	2,898,757
Langley	14,833,515	14,407,076	15,037,872	10,713,625
Surrey	14,783,108	14,761,327	15,823,952	11,144,114
Delta	10,851,092	10,938,239	10,926,421	5,176,001
Richmond	18,266,951	18,485,485	18,418,868	11,991,708
Vancouver	26,375,687	27,457,680	27,664,512	20,817,225
New Westminster	4,887,314	4,220,490	3,518,311	1,846,956
Burnaby	23,525,875	24,761,623	25,749,396	14,122,729
Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows	8,367,609	8,840,442	8,215,315	3,858,960
Coquitlam	36,959,535	35,693,129	33,973,625	20,081,360
North Vancouver	10,907,871	10,718,409	10,846,468	5,750,287
West Vancouver	9,931,408	10,108,292	10,033,226	5,915,533
Sunshine Coast	118,188	121,178	81,085	33,825
Powell River	972,675	936,880	1,046,492	516,651
Sea To Sky	2,572,292	2,413,894	2,419,308	835,167
Central Coast	-	-	-	-
Haida Gwaii	-	-	-	-
Boundary	30,300	9,717	8,100	-
Prince Rupert	54,000	81,000	42,500	42,000
Okanagan Similkameen	-	5,000	-	5,000
Bulkley Valley	190	13,344	-	-
Prince George	63,000	104,500	69,000	56,500

[9] Qualicum school district's net international revenue for 2020/2021: $1,370,654 – $1,706,705 = – $336,051.

Nicola-Similkameen	-	-	-	-
Peace River South	37,429	32,673	22,128	34,503
Peace River North	849,643	572,028	603,293	414,210
Greater Victoria	15,024,374	15,976,817	15,373,804	9,473,221
Sooke	6,675,632	6,927,184	6,303,351	3,411,352
Saanich	4,513,142	4,705,976	4,698,186	2,024,160
Gulf Islands	709,860	755,570	811,125	375,090
Okanagan Skaha	1,124,686	973,377	1,542,117	601,166
Nanaimo-Ladysmith	4,229,284	3,762,373	3,353,180	1,842,060
Qualicum	3,952,621	4,005,703	3,829,455	1,370,654
Alberni	3,000	65,700	105,083	91,175
Comox Valley	3,177,311	3,092,617	2,828,612	1,623,154
Campbell River	605,933	582,733	739,071	436,514
Kamloops/Thompson	3,152,489	4,426,697	4,891,438	2,182,567
Gold Trail	-	-	-	-
Mission	2,197,735	2,360,607	2,008,526	1,059,124
Fraser-Cascade	50,048	44,941	55,352	11,503
Cowichan Valley	2,760,857	2,650,653	2,207,697	1,284,335
Fort Nelson	-	-	-	-
Coast Mountains	21,210	13,000	26,000	6,500
N. Okanagan-Shuswap	10,993	30,436	33,490	79,784
Vancouver Island West	192,796	235,470	297,319	118,850
Vancouver Island North	-	11,000	-	11,000
Stikine	-	-	-	-
Nechako Lakes	117,805	198,721	259,550	213,850
Nisga'a	-	-	-	-
Conseil Scolaire Francophone	-	-	-	-
Provincial Summary	**256,038,503**	**259,780,002**	**257,701,516**	**151,379,455**

Source: Data compiled from Table 20. Actual source of tuition revenue by district between 2017/18 and 2020/2021 (British Columbia Ministry of Education, n.d.).

Basing public school funding on a market model creates financial instabilities and promotes financial inequalities among school districts (Kuehn & Vaitekonyte, 2019) as well as inequities in relation to geographical location, race/ethnicity, and social class (Fallon & Poole, 2014). Larger school districts that attract more international students would receive more international student revenue and would be able to offer more services and programs to their students which would then attract even more international students. Smaller school districts that are more remote find that they do not compete on a level playing field with larger and more centrally located school districts (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2013). Specifically, school districts in the "northern regions of BC tend to have much higher concentrations of Indigenous peoples, so Indigenous communities may be disadvantaged by a market-driven approach to supplemental funding" (Fallon and Poole, 2014, p. 316). For example, smaller school

districts are often faced with higher recruiting and marketing costs, higher agent fees, higher costs in providing English language learners (ELL) program and/or lower tuition fees when compared to larger urban school districts to compensate for costs associated with their remote locations and lower attraction (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2013). As Table 3 indicates, school districts such as Arrow Lakes, Central Coast, Haida Gwaii, Nicola-Similkameen, Gold Trail, Fort Nelson, Stikine, and Nisga'a, which are in remote areas and with high Indigenous student population, do not have any international student revenue as additional income stream to supplement their school district budgets.

A market-driven funding mechanism is another system reinforcing colonial practices in BC education. On the one hand, the market-driven funding mechanism objectifies international students as a source of revenue and encourages school districts to follow free market capitalism, to compete with each other and seek ways to increase international student revenues. On the other hand, the fierce competition creates winners and losers based on free market capitalism, which reinforces historical patterns of colonial inequities where the less have less and the more have more. Moreover, the inclusion of international student tuition as a source of revenue for school districts obscures the real problem of the government underfunding the public education system. It shifts the discourse away from urging the government to provide school districts with adequate funding towards encouraging school districts to compete for more international students. In a detailed analysis, Hemingway (2016) refutes the claim that education funding is at record levels and shows how provincial funding has actually shrunk to almost $1,000 per student below the Canadian average. While the per-student spending in public schools has increased over the years, BC still had the lowest level at $12,513 among all provinces and territories with the national average at $14,070 in 2018/2019 (MacPherson et al., 2021). Hemingway (2016) explains, the number of dollars going into BC education has risen; however, that figure does not take into account that the costs of delivering the same level of education has also risen. Boasting about the increased dollar amounts of funding, the BC government "obscures the meaning of those numbers" by leaving out "the basic inflation rate and other cost pressures" such as the BC Hydro and Medical Services Plan (Hemingway, 2016, p. 5).

BC Offshore School Program

BC offshore schools are the lesser known of the two international education programs and have grown significantly since the first school established in 1998 in Dalian, China, under the authority of the *School Act* (Office of the Auditor General of BC, 2020). According to the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC, 2023), there are currently 126 Canadian offshore schools in over 20 countries, 67 of the offshore schools are located in China and 34 of the offshore schools are BC certified. There is a lack of research done on BC offshore schools, and only a handful of studies are on BC offshore schools in China (Cosco, 2011; Schuetze, 2008; Wang, 2017). BC offshore schools must be represented by a BC agent, who must be a BC certified teacher. The BC agent is appointed by the BC Ministry of Education to (1) act as a liaison between the ministry and the owner of offshore schools, and (2) ensure offshore schools meet all legal and administrative requirements (Cosco, 2011; Schuetze, 2008). BC offshore schools are not funded by the province, but must meet the same educational program requirements as BC onshore schools, follow the BC curriculum, deliver courses in English, employ teachers and administrators with BC teaching certificates, and have students write the required BC exams (Schuetze, 2008). In the case of BC offshore schools in China, these schools operate as independent divisions of larger Chinese schools and are mostly private educational enterprises (Cosco, 2011; Schuetze, 2008).

All Canadian offshore schools receive accreditation from the education authorities of their home countries and a Canadian provincial ministry of education. As a result, there are variations in offshore school models, school polices and regulations, curriculum delivery, course requirements, school inspection, and jurisdiction and governance from province to province, which may cause confusion among foreign collaborators (Wang, 2017). Many offshore schools, particularly the ones in China, offer dual certification for graduation: graduate certificate from their home country and BC Dogwood Diploma. With the diplomas they receive, offshore students can apply directly to Canadian or other Western universities without taking TOEFL or other tests and are assured that their academic qualifications will be accepted on par with students who attained their high school diplomas in Canada (Schuetze, 2008). In 2013/2014, there were 9,800 students in 42 BC offshore schools, which contributed $4.35 million to the BC Ministry of Education (O'Conner, 2014). These offshore schools ensure a modest revenue on a "cost-recovery basis" to the BC Ministry of Education. They also serve as feeder schools to BC K–12 and postsecondary education systems in Canada (Cosco, 2011). These schools enable K–12 international students, who successfully complete the offshore curriculum, to come to Canada for short-term or long-term studies and apply to universities in Canada upon graduation. According to BC Council for International Education (BCCIE), in 2016/17, there were approximately 12,500 students in BC Offshore School Program located in 8 countries (BCCIE, n.d.). Each year more than 2,000 students graduate from BC offshore schools and about 15–20% of graduates will transfer directly into BC public postsecondary institutions (BCCIE, n.d.).

Although the BC curriculum is the core for all offshore schools, it is structured differently from school to school. For example, a BC offshore school in Al Sherouk City, Egypt, called the British Columbia Canadian International School (BCCIS) implements the BC K–12 curriculum. It has grown from a school of 27 students in September 2005 to a school community of over 800 students and more than 100 staff members by 2019 (BCCIS, n.d.). In September 2021, BCCIS opened another location in 6th of October City, Egypt. Both are accredited solely by the BC Ministry of Education and offer only BC curriculum.

In contrast, the Maple Leaf Education Systems (MLES) is a corporation of international and/or independent schools with 32 preschools, 32 elementary schools, 29 middle schools, three foreign national schools and 18 high schools (English with Chinese) in China, North America, and Asia Pacific (MLES, n.d.). Started off as the first BC certified offshore school with 14 students in 1995, the MLES now enrolls over 46,000 students and employs nearly 400 Western certified teachers, 250 international ESL teachers, over 3,000 Chinese certified teachers and over 7,000 employees (MLES, n.d.). There were over 6,000 students enrolled in MLES's BC programs as of November 2021 (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2021a). In addition to being certified by the BC Ministry of Education, the MLES is also accredited by Cognia, a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization accrediting K–12 education systems around the world (MLES, n.d.-a). The Maple Leaf Educational Systems became a public company on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange on November 28, 2014 (MLES, n.d.-b).

According to its website, the Maple Leaf Schools offer more of a blended curriculum of traditional Chinese culture with Western cultural awareness and language development in their preschool program. Their elementary and middle school programs provide a Chinese compulsory education curriculum supplemented with additional science and English classes taught by Canadian teachers in their Maple Leaf English curriculum. At the high school level, Maple Leaf Schools offer a BC Graduation Program that is fully taught in English. In 2016, the MLES opened up its first independent high school on the campus of Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops

(MLES, n.d.-c). A year later, an independent high school on the campus of Kwantlen Polytechnic University was set up in Richmond in 2017. In 2019, another independent high school opened its door on the campus of Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario (MLES, n.d.-c). In September 2019, MLES bought a 27-acre independent school campus, Augusta Academy, in Brockville, Ontario, to be opened in 2024 (MLES, n.d.-d). Expanding beyond offering BC curriculum, MLES opened its first independent high school on the campus of the University of South Australia in Adelaide in 2019 (MLES, n.d.-e). This Australian Maple Leaf School operates under a new branding, MLS-UniSA, offers South Australian curriculum from Grades 10–12 and grants South Australian Certificate of Education to its graduates (MLES, n.d.-e). What started off as the importation of BC curriculum to China has now become an expert system of propagating BC offshore school model from China to Canada and other Western education models in other countries.

The development of MLES has progressed rapidly over the years and in November 2019, MLES announced that 12 of its BC certified offshore schools would transition out of the BC offshore program over the next three school years, starting in September 2020. These schools are not closing down. They are transitioning to the China Maple Leaf Educational System (CMLES) curriculum certified by the Cognia organization as noted in the Certification Inspection Report for Maple Leaf International School—Shanghai (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2021a). This change means reducing the number of offshore schools by almost a third and student population by about 5,500, or nearly 50%, which equates to an estimated loss of $2.1 million in program recoveries to the BC Ministry of Education (Office of the Auditor General of BC, 2020). This change also highlights the fierce open market competition in global K–12 education accreditation systems, which reinforces the global hierarchies of education accreditation systems and colonial reproduction of Western supremacy. This change indicates the BC Ministry of Education accreditation system as well as the Canadian brand are being replaced by a global accreditation system and brand, Cognia. Switching over to Cognia may be more appealing to current and potential offshore school investors, because choosing a global educational accreditation that is recognized by so many countries would allow these foreign investors to bypass the provincial, regional, and jurisdictional differences presented in Canada's offshore schools as explained previously. Cognia was founded by two of the six regional accreditation bodies in the United States in 1895 and has since merged with other accreditation entities and become a global organization serving 36,000 institutions in over 90 countries (Cognia, n.d.). All these changes make BC's public education vulnerable to the pressures and demands of the global education marketplace as indicated in Fallon and Poole (2014) and Kuehn and Vaitekonyte's (2019) studies.

In addition, while majority of BC offshore schools are located in China, they represent a tiny percentage in China's Chinese-foreign cooperation institutions. In a study on BC offshore schools in China, Schuetze (2008) shows since the mid-1980s when China opened up its education system to nonpublic institutions, more than 800 Chinese-foreign cooperation institutions, of which 80 were Canadian certified, were established as of the spring of 2008. Schuetze (2008) identifies a number of critical issues that might impact the viability of these offshore schools. Some of the problems include high teacher turnover, inadequate teacher supervision and continuing professional education, lack of regular communication between teachers and parents, and in some cases, substandard facilities compared to Canadian public schools. Schuetze (2008) describes a BC certified offshore school in China, S2, established in 2003, as occupying the premises of a former theme park, part of which the owner wanted to develop as a resort and upscale housing.

Schuetze (2008) explains that this "education plus real estate model" is common and commercially successful, because these schools attract affluent families who can afford the school fees and at the same time may want to vacation at the nearby resort or buy property close to their children's school. In her *Vancouver Sun blog,* Steffenhagen (2008, June 27) presented the following promotional ads from the Sino-Canada High School website.

Figure 1
A BC Certified Offshore School's Very Own "Vancouver Resort" in China

The image above shows a rendering of Vancouver's "Robson Street" with palm trees, creating a "Vancouver" resort on the campus of the Sino-Canada High School. The promotional ads ask, "Who wants his or her children losing at the first place? Every moment is crucial to a student. Choosing Sino-Canada High School is an express way to experience the authentic Canadian education; one step closer to the University of British Columbia." The website describes Vancouver as the "city of heaven" with beaches, lakes, forests, and a mild climate that make it the first choice for holidays and immigration. The Vancouver replica, on the banks of Dingshan Lake, will be the model of "Canadian lifestyle" (Steffenhagen, 2008, June 27). Today, Sino-Canada High School resides over the land and buildings of a previous theme park called Frobel Land by Lake Yuandang in Jiangsu province and has over 2,200 students in its K–12 program, which includes 360 students in its BC program from Grades 10 to 12 (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2021b; Sino-Canada School, n.d.). According to its Certification Inspection Report dated December 2021, the school has also experienced a drop in enrollment in part due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is developing a "recruitment plan that focuses on a niche market for BC program within the competitive market for international schools in the area" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2021b, p. 13).

Conclusion

In Canada, as governments further withdraw their role in providing funding to education, public school districts have little choice but to strengthen the business of recruiting students from overseas and expanding their market share in the global international education market. Popular discourses on globalization are treating neoliberal globalization as a historically inevitable global order to which the world has to simply accept and adapt (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). These dominant

discourses privilege economic profit over social welfare and normalize a "growth-first approach" to policy (Peck & Tickell, 2002, p. 394). These dominant discourses also put pressure on countries to conform to the global education guidelines, practices, and rankings in the business of international students. While neoliberal globalization is the most dominant perspective on the marketizing of the Canadian education system (Schuetze et al., 2011), this paper offers decolonizing perspectives to reexamine these neoliberal policies and practices that seem to be covering up the works of colonialism and imperialism.

Colonialism used to be about occupation of land and exploitation of natural and human relationships[10]. Today, it is refracted through culture, language, lifestyle, nation, race, and class as sites of difference (Dei, 2006). Colonialism is not in the past but is very much alive and continues to be part of the global transformation of political, economic, and cultural life of both colonized and colonizing nations. BCK–12IE is one example of such a colonial expansion.

As discussed previously, while a market-driven funding mechanism appears to enable local autonomy and agency in generating revenue for BC schools (Fallon & Poole, 2014), it actually creates winners and losers in competing for international students among school districts based on free market capitalism. A market-driven funding mechanism puts school districts under tremendous pressure to meet their budgets and reinforce colonial inequities that may further undermine schools in remote areas with higher concentration of Indigenous students from achieving financial stability and further marginalize Indigenous students and communities. School districts that are disadvantaged in their location, size, and resources cannot compete with larger and more centrally located school districts. Particularly when facing global economic crisis and global pandemic, losing international student revenue means cutting staff and programs in some cases or incurring a deficit in net international student revenue in other cases.

Participating in PISA tests is an act to comply with Western hegemonic conception of performance measures and acknowledge their importance and relevance in today's singular global world, a compliance with globalization. PISA, among other international assessment tools, helps to make educational systems ready for the "laws of the market" (Goedl, 2016, p. 163). Scoring higher on the PISA tests does not improve one's status. For instance, if PISA is widely accepted as a credible measure of global academic proficiency, why are students from China still competing to go to Canada, the United States, or the United Kingdom for education when the Chinese students ranked well above the students from G7 countries? This is an example of remnants of colonialism where Western hegemonic conception of performance measures is historically and socially constructed. The BC brand remains a favourite among international students because Canada has maintained its status on the hegemonic hierarchy. However, with the development of global accreditation systems such as Cognia replacing the BC Ministry of Education accreditation and brand, like PISA becoming the global benchmark for educational performance, would Cognia become the new standard for certifying K–12 schools? This development signals the trend of a singular global world dominated by Western hegemonic standards and values. Not only does the colonial encounter continue to persist in colonized and colonizing nations, it continues to uphold an image of what the future nation would become (Smith, 1999). The colonial history between the West and its colonies continues to influence the myriad of ways we are positioned, and position ourselves within the grand narrative of the West.

At the same time, the BC Ministry of Education is losing out to its global competitor, Cognia, in the global marketplace for educational accreditation as shown in the case of MLES. By

[10] "Relationships" is used instead of "resources" to challenge the settler colonial understanding of nature as commodity or human as commodity (Raibmon, 2018).

transitioning out of BC offshore program and using its own Cognia-certified China MLES curriculum, MLES aims to establish its own global school system issuing Maple Leaf High School Graduation Diploma instead of BC Dogwood certificate to its graduates (Bramham, 2021). MLES's goal is to increase its enrollment to over 100,000 students in 10 countries by 2025 (Bramham, 2021). By becoming the leading expert of exporting BC education, MLES has not only expanded across China, but also come to setup shops in Canada selling BC education to international students on Canadian soil. From this experience, MLES is now transforming into a leading global international school system using its own curriculum and granting its own diploma. This is the ultimate success of neoliberal globalization of education and the most peculiar way of a Chinese enterprise becoming an imperial enterprise by becoming the expert in selling Canadian education and reinforcing Western educational excellence based on brand distinction and superiority in the context of global international education.

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