Black Lives Matter in Education, Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

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The violent killing of the African-American man George Floyd by a White-American policeman has justifiably fuelled the force of the #BlackLivesMatter movement across the world. They have proclaimed: 'Enough is Enough!'.

#BlackLivesMatter defends against the physical, psychological, epistemic and symbolic violence of white supremacism which, as a pandemic, has oppressed Black people for over 400 years.

In the UK, #BlackLivesMatter movement has awoken a plethora of unresolved grievances experienced by Black-British people through their egregious institutional mistreatment in the past and in current times. The recent 'Windrush scandal' provides a clear example of institutional ignorance.

The Covid-19 pandemic has also revealed the true inequality of British society's ethnic multicultural co-existence, specifically where it was reported that African, African-Caribbean and Asian people with symtoms of the virus were being treated less favourably with care than White people, and because of this have been two or three times more likely to die from the virus. The Covid-19 crisis has shown clearly how 'White privilege' (Eddo-Lodge, 2017; Di Angelo, 2011) works in British society.

George Floyd's brutal death by suffocation is analogous to the early strangulation of Black children's life opportunities within the British education system. Black children today remain the highest percentage of

pupils excluded from schools fifty years after Coard (1971) reported on their mistreatment. Black children's school exclusions are caused by many factors including the 'epistemic violence' inflicted upon them by a Eurocentric national curriculum (particularly history) (Moncrieffe, 2020; 2018). There is no presence of Black people in the national narrative (Moncrieffe, 2020) given by the statutory aims and contents the national history curriculum. Where minimal space has been made for Black people through non-statutory teaching and learning, their ethnic origins and lives are generally trivialised through negative one-dimensional Eurocentric accounts of the transatlantic slave trade. It is no wonder that Black children have been resistant to school, especially where such traumatic histories are being taught.

The school teacher workforce census (DfE, 2020) presented 85.9 per cent of all teachers in state-funded schools in England as White-British; 92.9 per cent of headteachers were White-British. Just 2.2 per cent of teachers were Black people. These figures indicate the dominant influence of White-British teachers on teaching and learning in the school population. Could this then mean that they will be more inclined to maintain the cultural reproduction of White-British history in schools and classrooms through their privileged 'white' perspectives? Boronski and Hassan (2015) suggest that where White people mainly interact with only each other, this can result in the sharing of similar cultural and racial experiences. This can influence the formulation of shared attitudes, thereby reinforcing their socialisation and allowing for further White supremacy ideologies to prevail in a setting where shared values and attitudes about non-Whites dominate. As a result, 'white privilege' becomes the invisible unchallenged norm.

Anti-racist teacher education training must occur by decolonising the curriculum. Future advancements for training student-teachers on history education should offer the opportunity to study through various forms of historical consciousness. This discipline is a key skills-set which will allow student-teachers to develop a greater sense of reflexivity for critical curriculum thinking, and advancing their actions in providing social justice through their pedagogical approaches (Moncrieffe, 2020).

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