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DECOLONISING THE CURRICULUM

TEACHING AND LEARNING ABOUT RACE EQUALITY ISSUE 4 - MAY 2021

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University of Brighton
University of Sussex
University of East London
Nottingham Trent University
University of Salford

EDITORIAL

Welcome to *Issue 4 of Decolonising the Curriculum – Teaching and Learning about Race Equality*. High interest in our previous issues have called for the opportunity to share wider views, interpretations and experiences of the concept. This interest demonstrates the broad impact of our work in research and knowledge exchange. *Issue 4* offers a multidisciplinary voice for decolonising the curriculum given by academics and students from across five UK Higher Education institutions.

Lambros Fatsis (*School of Applied Social Sciences, University of Brighton*) raises concerns with the implementation of black scholarship into the curriculum without black people included in the power structure of universities taking a lead on this intellectually, culturally and materially. **Olga Lidia Saavedra Montes de Oca** (*School of Media, Arts and Humanities, University of Sussex*) voices her scepticism with the decolonisation process taking place within UK institutions, due its disconnection from people's real struggles. This is a tension against what she sees as the need to maintain ownership of this academic platform for strengthening and broadening networks between scholars, activists and artists all committed to dismantling structural racism in academia and society. Next, **Shreya Savadia, Chelsea Priscila Gomes Da Costa** and **Holly Jackson** (*Nottingham Trent University BA Hons. Education students*) reflect on their experiences of teaching and learning through the school national curriculum. They call for action and commitment with decolonising the curriculum by improving design and delivery of course and module content to make this more ethnically and culturally representative of all pupils in the classroom. In her article, **Lisa Opoku** (*Masters of Education student, University of East London and primary school teacher*) argues that change and positive action with decolonising the curriculum can only be effective when school leaders face up to the negative existence of racism. **Melanie Norman** (*formerly a Geography tutor, School of Education, University of Brighton*) offers an overview of how she sees geography teachers are working towards eliminating the dominance of whiteness in teaching and learning, allowing for more broader and inclusive educational opportunities. Finally, **Katherine Rostron** (*Salford Business School, University of Salford*) shares her account of decolonising the curriculum through course review and changes implemented to a level five cross cultural communication module of teaching and learning. All in all, another fabulous collection of unique responses to the concept which can support with advancing thinking and action for transforming policy and practice.

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Black Tools for White Schools?

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In the aftermath of the 2020 wave of Black Lives Matter protests, renewed calls to decolonise university and school curricula became mainstream. UK universities quickly responded with fresh declarations of their commitment to the cause, giving new impetus to such debates. My provocation enters the fray by arguing that decolonisation must move beyond the curriculum to achieve racial and social justice. Drawing on my own discipline—Criminology—I open my thoughts up as an invitation to decolonise what and how we know and think, what and how we teach, as well as where we work, who we work with and what we work towards.

In the summer of 2020—as temperatures soared and the Covid-19 pandemic brought the national death toll to a Grenfell a day—a rebellion over the value of black lives forced many to confront what makes black and minority ethnic groups disproportionately vulnerable to the virus as well as to the policing against it. 'Race' was discovered as a social factor rather than a biological or cultural attribute, and 'racism' was identified as the cause (see Croxford, 2020; Downey, 2020; Godin, 2020 and Liverpool, 2020 in Moncrieffe (2020)). Racism-deniers aside, this (belated) realisation came after the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests educated the mainstream about defunding the police and decolonising our relationship to Britain's national—that is to say, imperial-colonial—history through the institutions that educate us into it.

UK universities - or rather, a fifth of them (Batty, 2020) - pledged to 'decolonise', urging us to rethink whether we can decolonise without undoing institutional barriers and power relationships that stand in the way. Decolonisation is overdue, but limiting our discussion to the curriculum risks addressing what racism produces without shortening its institutional shelf-life. What follows, therefore, is an invitation to restore epistemic justice without divorcing racism from its power source. Using the metaphor of 'black tools' for 'white schools', I voice some concerns about bringing black* scholarship into the curriculum without ensuring that black people are included in the power structure of universities to 'un-whiten' them intellectually, culturally and materially. In doing so, I draw on my own discipline—Criminology—to reflect on decolonising what and how we know and think, what we teach— as well as where we work, who we work with and what we work towards.

This inevitably involves rethinking the object of decolonisation (=curriculum) in terms of the institution where it lives (=university) and the people who shape how life is lived within it (=academic staff and university management). Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan (2019, pp 81-82) reminds us

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*'Black' is used here in the coalitional sense of 'political Blackness' to include all visible minority ethnic communities who are oppressed by racism. But it also refers to 'thinking Black' (Fryer, 1984: xiii) in opposition to 'whiteness'— not as skin colour, but as a (racist) worldview.

that decolonisation cannot be limited to what is on the menu. It involves considerations of who is invited to the table, to do what? as what? for whom? and for what? Is the banquet of decolonisation organised just to 'unwhiten' syllabi, or is it aimed at encouraging anti-racist teaching, developing Black or Critical Race studies programmes, funding anti-racist and black led research, hiring, retaining and promoting non white candidates, supporting non white employees with a living wage and environmentally safe working conditions, and evaluating investment portfolios to ensure that we are not funding systemic racism through partnerships with organisations or companies that profit from racial inequalities? When the ethnicity pay gap or the BAME attainment gap are discussed, is this to meet numerical diversity quotas or to genuinely ensure the welfare of non-white colleagues and students?

Thinking about such questions in relation to Criminology involves rethinking not just what we teach, but where we stand in relation to the intellectual history, professional identity and ideological agenda of the discipline itself. This requires a head-on confrontation with the racism of/in our discipline, having learned to see and think our subject matter through the whiteness of its eyes.

An indicative roll call of pressing concerns is therefore offered here as a guide to some of our discipline's sullen silences on its racism. Starting with the absent presence of Black scholars in the teaching of criminological "classics", we might need to pause and think why the ethnography of the Chicago School is prioritised over W.E.B. Du Bois' (1973) pioneering criminological writings in *The Philadelphia Negro*. Or, wonder why Robert Park's heinous racist remarks in the School's foundational text; *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, are rarely mentioned – to say nothing about the volume's paeans to eugenics. This is not simply a case of replacing one set of texts with another, but to reflect on why certain texts are canonised and their prejudices internalised.

Teaching about racism in Criminology, makes little sense unless we also teach about racism within Criminology. This is best illustrated in the way that racism in the criminal legal system is often taught as a system error, rather than a default setting – thereby ignoring the colonial roots of policing and erasing the legacy and afterlives of colonial slavery; as an ideology and practice of racial discrimination which is alive and well in all aspects of the criminal legal system. Similar attention ought to be placed on whether 'race', racialisation and racism are afforded the same weight as class, gender and sexuality in what we teach, or whether an intersectional perspective is adopted – to discuss how forms of oppression cross-hatch to disempower those who are disproportionately affected by them. A few lectures on 'race', racialisation and crime or institutional racism here and there cannot do justice to the issue, especially when stand-alone modules on such issues are rare.

Equally, a commitment to decolonisation means little if we encourage – instead of reassessing – partnerships and placements with criminal legal institutions. The same goes for research, prompting

us to rethink where we stand when we conduct research with or for the criminal legal system – or when we participate in conferences (e.g. European Society of Criminology Annual Conference) that are funded by companies (e.g. G4S, Securitas and Seris Security) that profit from mass incarceration and immigration detention centres, where violence, abuse and misconduct are rife. While this is only a perfunctory nod to blind spots within Criminology, there is no reason why it could not kick-start a pledge to eradicating racism from our institutions. Decolonising Criminology, therefore, involves decolonising the whiteness of our minds and our school walls. Will we tear them apart, or simply give them a splash of colour?

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A Black scholar emerging from the closet of otherness

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Introduction

I will start this article by acknowledging my scepticism about the decolonisation process taking place within UK institutions, because of what I identify as their disconnection from black people's real struggles in these spaces. Yet I recognise that we need to use any academic platform, given, reclaimed or created to strengthen and broaden networks between scholars, activists and artists that: interrogates the legacy of colonialism in higher education; fights structural racism in academia and society; and is critically engaged with the production of postcolonial knowledge on race, and in relation to class, the non-gender binary, and to sexuality.

Coming out from the closet of otherness

How can I relate my personal experience to decolonising teaching and learning on race? To start this conversation, I need to come out from the closet of otherness. This means putting my knowledge, my education, my family and my humanity first, before I think of my racialised body, of my blackness. It's also stating that, having been a scholar from a non-western background and having had a precarious employment history in the UK academy is also connected with knowledge production. This paper intertwines my experiences as a student and academic staff, within UK universities. It also entangles earlier memories of Cuba a socialist state, once a colonised country and of the UK as a capitalist and former colonising country. In both contexts the knowledge contribution in the academy is associated with whiteness.

Black and white scholars' relationships to knowledge

The killing of the black man George Floyd by a white policeman in Minneapolis, USA sparked worldwide protests in May 2020 against police brutality, racism, colonial histories and current injustices. Here in the UK, demonstrations against racism swept the country. As a result the privilege of whiteness has been re-located within the discussion of race. However, the narrative that equates whiteness with privilege is conveniently fragmented and separated from its origins. Hence decolonising in education requires an un-earthing of white privileges to see their roots i.e. the practices of colonialism, imperialism, racism, enslavement, displacement, genocide, apartheid, global poverty ... (Mantz, 2019)

Black people in academia are subject to systematic racism (Arday and Mirza, 2018). So it is clear that a socio-political analysis needs to be brought into discussions of race and decolonisation but without putting aside the real intellectual contributions of black and minority-ethnic scholars to the

creation of knowledge. I see that by portraying them only as 'disadvantaged' victims of racial discrimination reinforces colonial narratives about blackness.

Therefore we need to critique the deficit model (Harry and Klingner, 2007). In this black scholars and students are still perceived as lacking the cultural capital for academic success while white scholars are seen as having 'cultural capacity' (Bourdieu, 1986). Here race remains uncontested and unproblematised, leaving us with no means to confront the racialised atmosphere of the university (Gilyard, 1996). We need to dismantle the master tool that keeps blackness and knowledge separated. The percentage of black academics is a minority in relation to the white scholars (Adams, 2020) and fewer than 1% of UK university professors are black. But a greater awareness of that small percentage needs to be shared, and their contributions to knowledge cited. More names need to be added to the list of Stuart Hall, Sonia Boyce, Steve McQueen, Lubaina Himid, Nelarine Cornelius, Harry Goulbourne and Avtar Brah...

Conclusion

It is not enough to make black academic contributions to knowledge visible. We also need to change the academic and social structure, and to reflect on the ways in which our own individual behaviour reinforces colonial mentalities in academia and in the world today. There is still a long way to go - as Stuart Hall says, this is an 'unfinished conversation'. And is it as part of this ongoing conversation towards decolonisation that I place my question? Are we black scholars a powerless workforce, or are we critical holders of knowledge in the classroom and in academia?

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Is the National Curriculum inclusive? The perspectives of three undergraduate students regarding the current UK education system.

SHREYA SAVADIA, CHELSEA PRISCILA GOMES DA COSTA, HOLLY JACKSON

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During our undergraduate Education degree, we, Shreya (British Asian), Chelsea (Black African immigrant) and Holly (White British), reflected on our contrasting personal experiences of schooling. This short paper intends to express our shared viewpoint of the lack of ethnically diverse representation in the current national curriculum which has continued to prevail in education (Joseph-Salisbury, 2020; McCarthy, 1990) and particularly, within History and Religious Education (RE) whereby areas in which research highlights the marginalisation of minority groups in education (Alexander and Weekes-Bernard, 2017; Gearon, 2001; Hannam and Biesta, 2019; Moncrieffe, 2020). As a result, this article argues that the current national curriculum aims and contents (DfE, 2013) can marginalise people. We give suggestions of how the national curriculum can be decolonised by creating a more inclusive approach to aims and contents which gives narrative acknowledgement through a broader range of ethnicities and cultures in Britain (Charles, 2019; Moncrieffe, 2020).

Shreya: As a Jain, I felt that there was a lack of representation in my secondary school within RE, as the curriculum focused only on the core religions to teach pupils; these included Islam, Christianity and Hinduism (DCSF, 2010). This meant that teaching about Jainism was absent. Every time I spoke or wrote about my views as a Jain, my RE teacher would always listen. However, I was never awarded any marks in assessments for writing about my own religion, even though I wanted people to be educated about my beliefs. This impacted me negatively as I felt that my religion was unappreciated and devalued; I felt invisible. Consequently, this affected my sense of belonging within education. Research has indicated that religion plays a role in forming cultural identity, which can positively impact psychological wellbeing and development (St-Amand, Girard and Smith, 2017; Ysseldyk, Matheson, and Anisman, 2010). In my secondary school, Jainism was also perceived to be a part of Hinduism by my peers, despite our spiritual practices differing. For this reason, I would have liked people to be educated about my culture and religion to avoid misconceptions such as these. Specifically education could have been given about our key Jain Festival, Paryushan. This is a time where we purify our thoughts and soul thus, we practice asceticism (Babb, 2015). As a result, I believe that the RE curriculum must become more inclusive and diverse to reflect the demographic of the local community, so that all pupils' religions are equally valued and respected, to support Britain's claim of being diverse (Arday, Belluigi and Thomas, 2020).

Chelsea: Aligning with Shreya's views, I also believe that minority-ethnic people are under-represented within the national curriculum. This is particularly evident within the subject of history (see Moncrieffe, 2020), in which many Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) perspectives and connections to Britain appear to be filtered out (Bush, Glover and Sood, 2006). This is shown through the great absence of non-western European heritage in the Key Stage 3 and 4 non-statutory curricula, evidenced by a limited selection of only three diverse studies (including Britain's transatlantic slave trade), compared to the extensive list of white British studies (DfE, 2014). Thus, the history curriculum taught at my secondary school was very Eurocentric, nullifying the fundamental purpose of the subject, which intends for individuals to gain an understanding of Britain's past relationship with and the wider world (DfE, 2013). Though at the time I was not as consciously aware of the impact of not learning about colonialism, the absence of content and conversations regarding British colonies was still strange to me. It created a sense of 'when are we going to address the elephant in the room?' considering it was one of most significant occurrences and catalysts in modern day history (AHRC, 2018; Walters, 2012). As an immigrant, it felt intrusive to even question why colonialism in Africa was not incorporated into my school's curriculum, so I passively ignored it. In retrospect, I consider the absence of content and educative acknowledgement towards British colonies a contributing factor towards microaggressions and racism that I have experienced, due to the lack of cultural knowledge and deficit beliefs regarding people of African heritage (Nelson and Guerra, 2014).

Holly: Upon reflection and through meeting other people, the difference gap between my educational experiences and those of my peers is noticeable. In contrast to Shreya's experience, contrastingly, I felt a sense of belonging in education as my religion (Christianity) was embedded into the curriculum (DCFS, 2010). Although this may be because 59% of England's population identifies as Christian (ONS, 2020), education placing primary importance on Christianity is nothing new, as it has always been a significant part of the RE curriculum (Fancourt, 2016). Evident by my time at secondary school, Reverends from local churches were invited to host assemblies to highlight Christianity's beliefs and, despite the diverse community within the school, this invitation was not extended to a more broader range of leaders from different religious faiths. My experience of monoculturalism in RE extends to teaching and learning history where the national curriculum content focuses totally on the white British experience (Mansfield, 2018; Moncrieffe, 2020). Although this continued emphasis appears to give greater value to my white British identity by predominantly learning teaching about the history of my ancestors, this also appears to conflict with the purpose of the subject, which intends for students to learn about 'the diversity of societies and relationships between different groups, as well as their own identity' (DfE, 2014, p. 245). I would like educational policymakers to make statutory the teaching and learning of Britain's ethnically diverse histories in the national curriculum. Particularly, by incorporating and placing an equal focus on teaching about wider scope of religions, as well as including more world history case studies, ensuring that the curriculum content is broad and inclusive for all who engage with this.

Collectively, we believe that the culture and lives of minority ethnic people in the UK are under-represented within the national curriculum. We see that this omission could result in a decreased sense of belonging to the macro community of nation through the lack of relevant cultural knowledge being shared and taught (Celeste et al. 2019). Therefore, to decolonise the curriculum and create inclusive environments, it is important to acknowledge the positive contributions of BAME groups within education. We believe that this is achievable if schools commit to transforming their design and delivery of subject content, making it more representative of all pupils and cultures (Charles, 2019; Moody and Thomas, 2020; Moncrieffe, 2020). Educationalists should also aim to include multicultural writers with varying perspectives that challenge current dominant white British narratives (Moncrieffe, 2020; Sabaratnam, 2017) allowing teachers to deliver a more diverse and authentic national curriculum.

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Decolonising Education: A Black Female Teacher's Perspective

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Being a black woman, teaching in inner-city London, in the same area that I grew up in, has led me to view the children that I teach as younger versions of myself. I was born to Ghanaian parents, who moved to England in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

For me, the question, "Where are you from?" has never had a simple answer. "Do they mean where was I born?", "Do they mean the area that I live in?", or "Do they mean where my parents are from?".

The answer is simply not straightforward. This is a small snippet into my multifaceted identity, which many children that I teach share. However, some individuals struggle to be proud of their diverse backgrounds as whiteness and Britishness are made to be synonymous, and are viewed as goodness (Beckles-Raymond, 2020).

My cultural identity led me to be an advocate of multiculturalism as I wanted children to embrace the various aspects of who they were. This drastically changed after the horrific death of George Floyd, which occurred in May 2020 at the height of the Coronavirus pandemic; where many black people died due to the deadly virus (Public Health England, 2020). The depth and issues of racism had been brought to a global forefront as black people seemed to be facing two pandemics – racism and coronavirus (Godlee, 2020; Moncrieffe, 2020a).

As a primary school teacher, I recognised the impact of education in tackling racism; as a final year Masters student I had been immersing myself in research which looked at the impact of colonisation and racism in education. Some argue that primary school children are too young to learn about race or racism (Troyna and Hatcher, 1992). However, it is my belief that the earlier children are introduced and supported in addressing racism, this will enable them to become better members of society in the future. My belief led to a strong conviction in using education to address issues of race and racism.

I see that multiculturalism is an ineffective tool to tackle racism as it often includes stereotypical and superficial activities (Shay, 2018) such as singing songs or cultural or ethnic foods (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 2006). Some educators also believe that racism can be challenged through diversifying the curriculum (Atkinson et al., 2018; Bird and Pitman, 2020). But diversification is not the same as decolonising the curriculum (Moncrieffe, 2020b; Moncrieffe and Harris, 2020), and one must argue that this does not lead to real change. Multiculturalism and diversification fail to challenge the racial status quo. In order to decolonise the curriculum, pedagogy must be

decolonised (Atkinson et al., 2018; Miller et al., 2020). Therefore, the structures of power rooted within the educational institutions must be dismantled and severely engage with the knowledge that is generated (Atkinson et al., 2018). This is because whiteness simultaneously perpetuates a façade of equality, neutrality and compassion, whilst also maintaining and legitimising the status quo (Castagno, 2014). So, a purposeful, conscious and reflective action must be taken by schools, senior leaders and teachers to implement change.

To implement change, schools must recognise there is a problem, and work to solve it (Carter et al., 2016). This can be challenging as senior leaders and teachers may be fearful of the response, reluctant to acknowledge the existence of racism, or lack effective training (Kennedy, 2014; Lander, 2015; Elton-Chalcraft, 2017). The dominance of whiteness in the teacher workforce further exacerbates this as many teachers and senior leaders lack experience and knowledge on such topics (Bain, 2018; Flintoff and Dowling, 2017; Lander, 2015). Furthermore, there is an avoidance in discussing race and whiteness; leading to unaddressed biases, negative stereotypes and the adoption of a colourblind lens (Bain, 2018; Doharty, 2019, Lander, 2015).

Schools must address the beliefs, hearts and minds of their teachers or the issues of racial inequality and racism will continue to be perpetuated through the education system (Miller et al., 2020). Schools must get to the crux of the problem, and leaders must be courageous to dismantle the structures they have put in place. All educators must recognise their pivotal roles and start the necessary steps in dismantling racism and white supremacy.

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Steps towards decolonising the school geography curriculum

MELANIE NORMAN

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Geography engages with topics under the umbrella terms of social, cultural, environmental and economic change, it should be at the forefront of tackling its inherent whiteness but has been slow to take action. Pat Noxolo (2017) points out the discipline has a 'well documented, persistent and overwhelming whiteness' and 'displays little practical contemporary openness to difference and diversity in its knowledge production process' (p.317). The whiteness of geography in Higher Education (HE) is the subject of ongoing research by Pat Noxolo and colleagues, many of whom are part of the Royal Geographical Society's (RGS) Race Culture and Equality (RACE) working group. This article focuses on parallel activities in regard to the school geography curriculum and how teachers are working towards change to eliminate the subject's whiteness.

Morgan & Lambert suggested the 'whiteness of geography' is probably 'invisible' and maybe 'unintended' (2003, p.17) given that school geography offered students a view of the world as apparently neutral, which of course it is not. Invisibility and unintended consequences are no excuse for permitting it to remain unaddressed. There has been some progress in school geography to address the issue for example in the last 30 years textbooks that used caricatures and images of people living in mud huts have been abandoned. The dangers of 'the single story' are well documented and the journal I edit, *Teaching Geography*, is conscious to promote equality, diversity and critical thinking in regard to teaching and learning in geography. A recent article in this journal outlined strategies by which secondary school geography teachers could tackle the whiteness of the subject including:

- Case studies involving a critical approach to geographical knowledge e.g. examining the impacts of colonialism and apartheid on contemporary racial inequalities in South Africa.
- At classroom level, drawing on students' own knowledge and experiences to diversify the knowledge production process.
- Adopting an enquiry based approach to enable students to develop critical awareness, necessary for tackling issues of misrepresentation. (Milner, 2020)

Prompted by the killing of George Floyd, the Geographical Association's (GA) International Special Interest Group (ISIG) set up 'The Decolonising of the Geography Curriculum WhatsApp group' in May 2020. Within a couple of weeks the group had attracted 80 educational professionals from the primary and secondary age phases, Initial Teacher Education (ITE) tutors and researchers in HE. They planned to focus on ways that the secondary geography curriculum can be decolonised at Key Stages 3 and 4 for example by contextualizing case studies, looking at the historical context to

position the geographical knowledge. An example suggested in terms of asking students more powerful questions:

Could you link Bangladesh's imperial and colonial history as part of the British Empire, to the present challenges and opportunities of the rapid urban growth of Dhaka as a megacity today in 2020? If so, explain how (Ali, 2020, pp.14).

The group has suggested that decolonising the curriculum also involves decolonising teaching practices across many stakeholders including publishers of textbooks and other resources, ITE providers, exam boards, in other words a massive task. The group has achieved a great deal in a very short space of time including:

- Contacting the exam boards. One has responded and asked the group to help with future planning
- A sub-group is looking at decolonising the curriculum in the early years phase
- Discussion and debate about choice of language and terminology (Black; BAME; Global Majority)
- Google drive established to house academic research articles; resources for primary and secondary teachers.

The geography national curriculum is only a framework, not a prescription of content, geography teachers have autonomy in regard to curriculum making and decisions about what to teach and how to teach it. Exam specifications are more prescriptive but the underpinning Assessment Objectives at both GCSE and A-level are broad. It is the Exam Boards that specify content. If the geography teaching community can work with the Exam Boards, progress towards decolonising the geography curriculum would be effected more rapidly than has been evident in the past 30 years.

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First steps for module leaders: Decolonising a module in Salford Business School

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Situation

Despite a high proportion of Black, Mixed Race and Asian students entering Higher Education (HE) they are less likely to complete and more likely to regret their HE choices. Black students are less likely to graduate with a first or a 2:1 than other groups (Office for Students, 2019a). Increasing awareness of these issues and the HE BAME attainment gap and calls from the BAME community to decolonise curriculums across education (Zephaniah, 2019) coincided with an uneasiness with teaching about the diversity across people's cultures and prompted me to review and make changes to a level five cross cultural communication module in Salford Business School.

The Cross Cultural Communication module is part of the International Business programme and explores the topics of culture and communication in the context of international business. Industry scenarios around relationship building, marketing promotions and leadership provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge. Learning takes place in through interactive lectures, group discussion, skills building activities and problem solving and is assessed in a portfolio and a group presentation.

Actions

1. Research

I started by identifying best practice and industry guidance in this area via the Dean (Dr. Janice Allan), the University's Athena Swan lead (Dr. Francine Morris) and the school librarian (Sue Barker-Matthews). This led me to some key documents; Advance HE's Race Equality Charter (REC), a 2019 presentation from The Office for Students' titled 'Strategy to Overcome Barriers to BAME Students' and the Higher Education Policy Institute's 2019 report into reducing racial inequalities in higher education which describes the wider context (Advance HE, 2019, Johnson, 2019, HEPI, 2019). I also found the first issue of Decolonising The Curriculum published by the University of Brighton (Moncrieffe, et.al., 2019), now in its fourth issue, which provided practitioners' experiences and useful contacts.

I based my review on the advice from Section 8 of the Advance HE Race Equality Charter (Advance HE, 2020) and parts of The Office for Students' Strategy to Overcome Barriers to BAME Students (Johnson, 2019). They say that both inclusive curriculum (what is taught and who is referenced) and

inclusive pedagogy (how it is taught and how it is assessed) will help support BAME students. In addition the Office for students recommend deconstructed assessments and providing meaningful interactions and Advance HE recommend empowering students (Johnson, 2019, Advance HE, 2020).

I reviewed the module looking to; 1. include more BAME academics and non-western perspectives in teaching material and reading lists, 2. use a culturally diverse range of case studies and examples in learning materials, 3. provide choice for students where possible (to empower and promote meaningful/inclusive learning for all), 4. encourage students to reflect on their own culture and identity, to engage with literature about it and challenge it where necessary (empowering students, encouraging critical analysis, encouraging meaningful learning and discussion).

2. Curriculum

Change: I had already begun to question the positioning of the module and begun to move from a cross cultural (emphasis on comparing cultures) to an intercultural (emphasis on self-awareness and human communication) approach to studying culture in business. An intercultural approach supports the idea that to become a skilled communicator in international business you need to be highly self-aware above all else as opposed to having a high level of knowledge about a range of cultures. Class discussion included the effects of poor communication and the relationship between generalisations, stereotyping and racism.

Outcomes: Consolidating this change means students focus more on their own cultural identity and identifying their own communication styles. This is more empowering than being taught about culture (sometimes the students' own culture) from the 'outside'. Learners focus on what learning means to them from the outset making it easier for them to reflect on the value that learning may have. The cross cultural approach does demonstrate that cultural differences exist and hence the importance of intercultural communication skills. Alongside this students learn about the pitfalls of making assumptions about an individual's background, communication style and business culture preferences and the importance of developing self-awareness.

This approach 'felt' better. Students made fewer generalisations in their assessments '... the MD will prefer this because he Chinese..' and demonstrated a more sophisticated and self-aware understanding of the modules concepts '... Imran cannot assume that Marie shares the dominant cultural values of France but he may consider known cultural differences in his initial approach to relationship building.' Some students also made connections between the culture of their home country and its international history e.g. the wars in Somalia, or the impact of the Colonial history of their home country. This learning was meaningful to the students and of value to them in the future. Discussion of culture and heritage in class activities led to students challenging theory based on the representation of women, minorities, region and class, helped them understand the complexities of the subject and obtain higher marks.

3. Reading list

Process: The reading list review and referenced academics was undertaken to improve the representation of BAME academics and non-western perspectives. I focused on the central concepts of culture and communication. I found this review time consuming, probably due to continual citing of the same white male academics in these areas for many years.

Change: I wanted to find a non-white cultural theorist, I couldn't find anyone in textbooks. I asked the contact authors at the University of Brighton and they recommended Stuart Hall – acclaimed cultural theorist from University of Birmingham. Even better he wrote about Britishness and how it is not homogenous – leading nicely into discussion of the multiple layers of culture. I now use Stuart Hall as my first reference in my teaching about cultural theory.

Outcome: All students are exposed to a more diverse range of academics and ideas.

4. Pedagogy – inclusive / meaningful / empowered

Process: I attempted to follow advice to provide inclusive learning, providing meaningful interactions and empowering students (Advance HE, 2019, Johnson, 2019). I interpreted this to mean that teaching would be of equal interest and value to all students and that learning activities would encourage interesting interaction through opportunities to discuss, challenge and reflect. The module is built on interaction as students took part in skills based practical activities each week, work in groups in the seminar each week and a group presentation for assessment two. I kept the interaction and reviewed on the basis of inclusivity and opportunities to improve. To provide equal interest to all students and to empower them I took every opportunity to enable students to make choices and personalise their learning and critique what they found. Below are some examples of changes made.

Change: students reflect on what makes up their identity and how it changes over time and context. This activity had been used to explore concept of 'perception'. This semester I extended this activity to discussions about the complex nature of identity, culture and nationality – as it highlights diversity and how we don't fit into boxes – therefore we learn about the importance of not making assumptions about individuals based on their colour, nationality, background and the difficulties in relying on academic theory about culture to make decisions about personal communication in business.

Change: students get more opportunities to challenge what theorists have said about culture and communications in their cultures or cultures they are familiar with e.g. Plotting cultural dimensions before comparing with Hofstede's data. Students are always given the opportunity to challenge what the textbooks say about their culture supported by the concept that no outsider can know a culture better than an insider. The assessment also provides this opportunity, see below:

Change: In week 7 learning focuses on CCC in marketing and one learning point is the concept of transcreation – you can't simply translate language in marketing material you have to translate meaning. I adapted an activity in this week to promote inclusivity and ensure learning was meaningful to each individual student. Students pair up, ensuring one member has a first language other than English. They then are given a range of promotional material and one student provides direct translation – they discuss the result – identify problems – then have a go at transcreation trying to retain the meaning, humour, nuances of the original.

Outcomes: a greater emphasis personalised / meaningful learning seemed to have a positive impact i.e. Better engagement and increased acknowledgement of complexity leading to less oversimplification and higher marks. Emphasises the value of dual heritage, local/cultural knowledge and languages in marketing activities – builds confidence.

5. Assessments

I had already embedded a deconstructed assignment (portfolio) as assessment one in the module so this already fits the advice I was following. What I have not been able to find out is why this method of assessment is recommended. I use it because it enables me to build strong engagement and build assessment skills through the first half of semester. I focused instead on the content and options within the assessment.

I changed one of the portfolio elements from a comparison of two cultures to a review of what is said in the literature about a culture they are familiar with and a critique of how this compares with their own knowledge. This change is important as it; a) emphasises the value of their own cultural heritage (an outsider can never understand a culture as well as an insider), b) empowers students to challenge/reject what others have said about their culture and c) encourages critical analysis.

The second assessment is a group presentation where students work together to offer explanations and solutions to a problem arising in an industry scenario. As well as assessing their knowledge and understanding and ability to problem solve, this assessment requires them to work together in a group, which requires them to use communication skills and be self-aware. There are marks available for teamwork during the group work and on the day of the assessment.

Outcomes: A little bit of knowledge is worse than none? In previous cohorts I had noticed that students receiving lower grades would often oversimplify the role of culture in business making statements that relied on generalisations and assumptions. I was concerned that simply teaching content about different cultures could be counterproductive and could be offensive. With the changes to the curriculum and the pedagogy, and an emphasis on self-awareness this was seen much less. The presentation also provided an opportunity for the panel to ask questions which meant any generalisations / stereotyping could be challenged before the end of the module.

Results

Student engagement and results for this cohort were an all-time high, with zero non submissions and 100% pass rate. It is not possible to simply attribute this to the changes made but high engagement leads to high marks. There was full attendance at assessment surgery the week before the final assessment. The module survey had a high level of student satisfaction and positive comments.

Next Steps

- Continue to make an effort to find, read and use non-white academics
- Consider adding racism in business to the curriculum
- Continue to engage with the academic community and identify best practice

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