Commentary

# Decolonising curriculum in education: continuing proclamations and provocations

Richard Race,[1,*] Pere Ayling,[2] Dorrie Chetty,[3] Nasima Hassan,[4] Stephen J. McKinney,[5] Lauren Boath,[5] Nighet Riaz,[6] Saima Salehjee[7]

[1] School of Education, University of Roehampton, London, UK
[2] School of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Suffolk, Ipswich, UK
[3] Department of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Westminster, London, UK
[4] Star Academies Shadsworth Road, Blackburn, UK
[5] School of Education, University of Glasgow, UK
[6] Equality and Diversity Unit, University of Glasgow, UK
[7] School of Education, Strathclyde University, Glasgow, UK
* Correspondence: r.race@roehampton.ac.uk

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## Abstract
A prominent feature of the Black Lives Matter protests following the murder of George Floyd has been the renewed call for schools to become antiracist. What can be learnt from past unsuccessful attempts to implement antiracist education? Specific critiques of the antiracist movement made by prominent academics such as Paul Gilroy are

worth revisiting.  Research also suggests that sections of White working-class students were alienated by antiracist strategies that were often clumsy and exclusive in their implementation.  In relation to state initiatives, there has been a shift from antiracist or multicultural agendas to the forefronting of the teaching of British values in schools.  It is within this context, with the catalyst of popular outrage at racial injustice, that calls for antiracist education are again being vocalised. This article suggests that a renewed form of antiracism might focus on integrating a pedagogy of educating for social justice, setting out to avoid the polarisation of racialised categories.  Rather than espousing a limited and essentialising discourse of race, a reexamination of class relations could usefully be positioned within a reformulated and reimagined antiracism that offers a critique of systemic injustice to include a wider constituency than race alone.

## Introductory background

The idea for this article came about with the increased focus in education on decolonising the curriculum (Moncrieffe, 2020; Moncrieffe et al., 2020). The aim here is to allow different voices in higher education to express their ideas and advocacy for decolonising not only the school curriculum but also curricula everywhere.  We acknowledge that decolonising can involve more than one interpretation, aims and initiatives.  We underline that a taught notion of decolonising must involve transformation rather than change (Banks and Banks, 2020). The methodology we suggest and encourage readers to use is critical race theory (CRT). It is used directly in one proclamation, but it can be applied within others, and we return to this theoretical application in the provocation.  By highlighting this method, we allow all readers to share and reflect on their own experiences of decolonising the curriculum, which is a central tenet of this article (Parker and Gillborn, 2020).  The theoretical and practical applications of the voices below are as important as each other, but the applied and analytical stances in relation to the proclamations below justify the focuses of this article and its implications for children, students, parents and all other actors in education. All arguments here are more than simple expressions of agency. The objective of this article is to proclaim our advocacy of the need to decolonise and to provoke the reader into reflecting and thinking about their feelings, views and experiences on decolonising curricula (plural) in education.

## British is best: how British private schools in Nigeria construct and maintain White supremacy

Despite calls to decolonise the curriculum – both in the UK (Arday et al., 2021) and elsewhere (Seehawer, 2018; Gukurume and Maringira, 2020) – research shows an increase in the demand for Anglo-Western private schools (Tarc et al., 2019). These institutions, based in non-Western countries, offer a British style of schooling where the socialisation of English*ness* is paramount (Bunnell et al., 2020). While efforts to decolonise are to be applauded, we must also critically examine how the notion of White supremacy is constructed and maintained through the international education marketplace. This proclamation, by Pere Ayling, discusses the 'White rota' scheme, which fosters White supremacy and is used by schools to maintain their global brand image as 'world-class' education institutions.

   As explained in previous scholarship (Ayling, 2015, 2016, 2019), there is a strong preference for British private schools among affluent Nigerian parents.  These parents not only see White British teachers as experts in education, capable of teaching the British curriculum, but British private schools are also conceived as *moral enclaves* where virtues such as honesty and integrity are acquired (Ayling, 2019). The author's data shows that head teachers of British private schools are aware of the valorisation of Britishness and crucially capitalise on it through the utilisation of marketing strategies that appeal to their wealthy clientele.

A key strategy that enables British private schools in Nigeria to maintain the idea of 'White British is best' is using the 'White rota' system. This is a rotational system whereby White British teachers are strategically spread out across the year group, thus ensuring that each student will be taught by a White British teacher 'every other year' (British head teacher 2 – Nigeria). As one head teacher explained, ensuring that their children are taught by a White British teacher is what 'the parents expect and demand' (British head teacher 3 – Nigeria). Although some of the head teachers in the research project are aware of the racial implication of such a system, with one describing it as 'racist' (White British head teacher 3 – Nigeria), there was an understanding among the head teachers that using the 'White rota' simultaneously allows them to 'protect the integrity of the British brand' (British head teacher 2 – Nigeria) and avoid situations where 'parents don't feel they are getting what they pay for' (British head teacher 3 – Nigeria). Furthermore, to ensure that 'Britishness [is] sort of sprinkled in the school' (British head teacher 1 – Nigeria), the schools tended to have White British people as head teachers and heads of departments.

These school cultures and practices, which are a type of soft-sales technique used for selling global brands, have serious implications, not least because they help to reinforce notions of White supremacy. In my case study, using the 'White rota', along with the strategic positioning of White British teachers both as head teachers and heads of departments, simultaneously devalues Nigerian teachers (and their knowledges) while positioning White British teachers as the gatekeepers of knowledge. The implication here is that decades after the end of British colonisation, White British teachers continue to be the ones with the authority to determine what constitutes valuable, appropriate and authentic knowledge in Nigeria (Onwuzuruigbo, 2018; Ndille, 2020).

Findings from my research have indicated the need to broaden the decolonisation debate to include the international education sector for us to gain meaningful and lasting outcomes for the decolonisation movement. By critically examining the marketing and marketisation strategies used by British private schools to project their world-classness, while ensuring their students are sufficiently imbued with Britishness, private schools have survived for hundreds of years because wealthy people have both social class and the capital to pay for this commodity. I have been able to highlight the ongoing nature of colonisation, and how colonial powers continue to actively participate in the production and maintenance of coloniality. Coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of people, in aspirations of self, and in so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects, we breathe coloniality all the time and everyday (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Crucially, my findings have revealed how Anglo-Western private schools operating in non-Western countries such as Nigeria are heavily invested in a racially influenced market. The racial market can simultaneously marginalise the scholarship of Africans and Indigenous forms of knowledge, while constructing Western epistemologies as universal and the only truthful knowledge.

## Unmasking and dismantling White power structures in education

This proclamation, by Dorrie Chetty, highlights some avenues taken on the journey to decolonising the academy. The preparation for the journey starts with self-reflexivity and acknowledgement of positionality within White power structures. As a migrant woman of colour from a formerly British colonised island, I have not always recognised these structures for what they are, and, crucially, how I may have been complicit in maintaining the status quo. Reflecting on my own colonised education and learning and teaching practices, I began to recognise how we are all implicated in maintaining power structures, albeit from different positions within it. Understanding the ways in which I had internalised coloniality unmasked how its impact and the barriers that I faced were shared by other colleagues. Bell (2018) argues that social change projects that ignore the effects of unconscious dynamics of oppression sustain coloniality. We are talking here of structural and institutional racism, but we need to apply these and other 'dynamics of oppression' to our own professional practice. Thus, acknowledging our positionality, and self-reflecting on our privileges – as well as our barriers – is a first step to revealing the pervasive, yet invisible power of White privilege – which refers to White people and the benefits they receive in societies where they top a racial hierarchy.

Finding others committed to justice and change is an important step in shifting personal indignation to building allyship and solidarity for a common political movement, so a group of us founded a Black

Minority Ethnic (BME) network at the university (UOWBME, 2020). Despite its early struggles in gaining recognition, relying entirely on the emotional labour and goodwill of its members, the network's official launch took place in 2016. The event was attended by a diverse audience from various universities, and it was judged to be a great success. It nevertheless took the reignition of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests in 2020 for the network to be recognised as an important vehicle for justice and change. Informed by the BME staff network's collective statement of demands (UOWBME, 2020), the university published a Black Lives Matter Commitment Plan, with a joint statement between the Students' Union, the trade unions UCU and Unison, other colleague networks and the university. People may be committed through complex and sometimes contradictory histories (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2012), but clearly allyship and solidarity are foundational steps in the decolonising of the academy.

The movement for decolonising the academy started with demands from students worldwide (Bhambra et al., 2018) and the 'Why is my curriculum White?' campaign (Charles, 2019); we therefore have a responsibility as educators to address these demands. The response cannot be superficial – the inclusion of readings and lectures from decolonised perspectives is merely a start. What is required is a complete paradigm shift from the Eurocentric epistemology that underpins pedagogic practices (Chetty, 2018; Moncrieffe et al., 2020). As bell hooks (1994: 148) points out 'different more radical subject matter does not create a liberatory pedagogy, [and] ... a simple practice like including personal experience may be more constructively challenging than simply changing the curriculum'. Referring to Maldonado-Torres (2016), hooks (in Bell, 2018: 250) sees decoloniality as 'efforts at rehumanizing the world', and mindful of the trauma of imperialism and colonialism, she creates a 'decolonial atmosphere' whereby students are empowered to explore their subjectivities. Further, several writers look beyond the academy for potential 'coalition and collusion', as they see it as an apparatus through which coloniality sustains itself (hooks in Bell, 2018; Grande, 2018; Russo, 2018).

Dismantling White power structures in nursery/kindergarten, schools, colleges and universities generates resistance, defensiveness and 'White discomfort and guilt' (DiAngelo, 2018). We cannot retreat when faced with White fragility; instead, we must stay with the awkwardness and discomfort. The challenge is to explore and address how White discomfort is entangled with race, racism and Whiteness, so that we can produce more robust theory and pedagogical practices to confront White discomfort (Zembylas, 2018). It is argued here that several phenomena – the killing of young Black men during police arrests, the reignition of Black Lives Matter or the COVID-19 pandemic with its exigencies of lockdown – all converged to give momentum to decolonising education. A surge of suppressed emotions among BME communities, combined with guilt felt among wider communities, prompted several universities to develop toolkits for decolonising the curriculum (CTI, 2020). However, decolonising the curriculum is only part of the process of decoloniality, which involves continuous self-reflexivity and learning. It is a journey which needs advancing. My proclamation therefore advocates:

- ongoing critical and dialogical engagement with students' diverse histories, and with those of educators and wider global communities
- drawing on the work of Indigenous and Global South writers for inspiration and guidance
- addressing White fragility and discomfort through pedagogical practices.

## Decolonising the school curriculum: some reflections on the role of initial teacher education

This proclamation, by Nasima Hassan, focuses on the role of initial teacher education in the wider context of decolonising the school curriculum. Decolonising the curriculum presents a challenging task for all stakeholders involved in education policy and practice, in that there is a demand to interrogate and reflect on exactly what is taught, the sequence of learning and when it is taught. Initial teacher education is a keystone player in moving beyond representing diversity and moving towards addressing power and placing voices from Southern theory to the centre. This important work has the aim of nurturing critical engagement by early career teachers which de-centres the colonial other to inform their practice and progression.

When exploring the role of teacher education, the importance of theory is a fitting starting point. Unpacking the dominance of the Global North (Hall, 1992) and the notion that knowledge production is a particular Western social phenomenon disconnected to a universal scholarship (Rizvi, 2008) speaks to the foundational issues explored in the work of Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell (2007: 44), who offers a

sharp critique of some of the noted social theorists from the Global North, including Coleman, Bourdieu, Giddens and Beck.  The Global North, with its First World–Third World binary 'presents knowledge about a colonised society as acquired by an author from the metropole and deployed in a metropolitan debate. Discourse and debate among the colonised are ignored'. From a sociological and a historical perspective, it is important to understand that Northern theory, arising out of the colonial metropole, is provincial in nature and consequently paints an incomplete picture. The colonised world is understood as the 'other', and Western sociology is framed and formed within the culture of imperialism which articulates an intellectual response to the colonised world.  This is how we have come to learn about 'primitive' cultures and forms of knowledge.  Connell (2013) argues that Southern theory offers insight often missing from social theory, and that by studying the work of intellectuals (Mignolo, 2011) and social theorists from the Global South (Singh, 2015), we can reframe how we analyse educational practice to locate a deeper, more inclusive understanding of social processes, such as teacher education in the context of this section.

How can Southern theory support the contemporary trainee teacher in gaining a fuller understanding of educational theory and practice? The work of education reformers, such as Tagore's Southern theory of inclusive education (Mukherjee, 2018), which is born of his own schooling experiences in India, is one exemplar of pedagogy that requires further contemplation.  Tagore's (1892) writing on education ranges from the reflective analysis of his factory-style schooling, which replicated the colonial model of schooling during the Victorian era, to critical essays that challenge the language and content of the curriculum in India.

Significantly, Tagore (1906) draws attention to the disconnect in epistemology whereby an education provision which reflected English life and society was completely disconnected from the life of Indian children in colonial India. Teaching strategies such as rote memorisation involving the rules of grammar and number patterns did not involve critical thinking and discussion. Tagore (1906) argued that learning should be connected to the child's social and cultural environment, and that teacher training should include approaches to stimulating critical thinking and the creative imagination in children.  Tagore's (1917) writings also called for decolonising the schooling system in India and its imposed pedagogy by drawing on teaching and learning from the ancient Indian *gurukul* model and adapting it to the contemporary era.  Dating back to around 5000 bc, the gurukul was more prevalent during the Vedic age, when students were taught how to live a cultured and disciplined life. It was a system embedded in the pedagogy of experiential learning in subjects such as astronomy, medicine, philosophy, religion, physical education and yoga.  Self-learning is also a feature of this community-based model, which offered an enhanced creative curriculum including sports, crafts and singing.  Activities such as yoga, meditation and mantra chanting supported positive mental health.  However, it has to be noted that class-based hierarchies were maintained in this system of education. Professional practitioners have to be careful when highlighting important Indigenous knowledge within the remit of decolonising efforts, either in school or in higher education.

The impact of the global pandemic on children makes critical demands in terms of prioritising their positive mental health and delivering inclusive practice that supports long-term progression. This proclamation argues that teacher training must learn from voices in the Global South, or, as Mukherjee (2018) states, think in an 'other' tongue to deliver a socially inclusive provision in a rapidly changing world where the child's social and cultural context must be reflected in their schooling.

## Decolonising the curriculum in Scotland

The Black Lives Matter movement has resonated throughout the world and is coherent with international calls to challenge White privilege and decolonise the curriculum.  There are serious implications for Scotland, highlighted by Stephen J. McKinney and Lauren Booth in this section, particularly the city of Glasgow (the second city of the Empire), and the historical manifestations of wealth accumulated from the tobacco and sugar trades, ultimately supplied by the work of slaves in the plantations (Devine and Rossner, 2012). A number of debates have opened up. Many of the streets in Glasgow city centre are a public reminder of the sources of this wealth, for example, Jamaica Street and Virginia Street (Lamont, 2021).  Scholarly activity has revealed the extent of the direct and indirect involvement in slavery (Devine, 2003, 2015).  There is a major debate about renaming the streets or retaining the names as reminders of a shameful history.  While this is exercising the academic and public imagination, the University of

Glasgow is the first university in the UK to recognise that it profited from donations and bequests from wealth connected to slavery from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, and it has constructed a reparation package (University of Glasgow, 2020).

Nevertheless, deep and probing questions emerge.  Can twenty-first-century Scottish society recognise historical and contemporary cultural, ethnic and religious diversity as enriching rather than divisive, and begin to probe and challenge the deep-rooted and damaging mythologies of eugenics and 'White' superiority that have been used for exploitative purposes (Charles, 2019)? The challenge is for Scotland to recognise the intersectionality of race, culture, gender and class, and to use conceptual tools such as racial literacy in reconfiguring itself and striving to be authentically inclusive (Brown et al., 2021).  This will prompt contemporary Scotland to move beyond the initial challenges to the status quo, such as Black History Month. Formal education can lead, support and advance this aspiration.

There are important developments in the research that informed the University of Glasgow initiative, and one of the leading researchers argues that Scotland's involvement in slavery should be highlighted in a compulsory, systematic way in history lessons in Scottish secondary schools (Mullen, 2020a, 2020b). This is well observed, yet the need to explore 'balanced' narratives in Scotland's schools is an exercise that moves beyond the teaching and content of history and the associated subject of modern studies. Opportunities exist throughout the curriculum to open up the question of the extent to which historical and contemporary systemic inequalities continue to pervade our education systems and wider society.

It is instructive to examine science as an example, and the extent to which we go beyond a one-dimensional presentation of historical figures.  It is not uncommon for young people to explore 'famous scientists', presenting or creating posters on predominantly (albeit not exclusively) White men whose discoveries and understandings have contributed to the world we know and experience.  To what extent do we explore the less palatable and conflicting aspects of the people involved?  One notable example is James Watt, the celebrated Scottish inventor and mechanical engineer. We explore his improvements to the steam engine which made such a significant contribution to the Industrial Revolution.  It is questionable if schools also explore his role in colonial commerce during the same period of time (Mullen, 2020a, 2020b; Mullen and Newman, 2018).  Similarly, we seldom explore the sources of the funding through which the scientific 'greats' were able to carry out their work.  When introducing the work of James Watson, do we acknowledge and discuss the problematic views he holds and expresses on race and genetics (The Economist, 2019)?

Arguably, we cannot avoid exploration of some of this human complexity. We can no longer remain silent on the question of why we do not discuss enough of the scientific greats who are not White. We need to explore and celebrate the role of people of colour.  Otherwise, we remain silent on the reality that structural and systematic inequality aided the work of some at the expense of others.  Perhaps the greatest danger with these gaps in knowledge is that it leaves learners with the idea that somehow White people are inherently better at science, more inventive and greater thinkers (Bain, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic presents a real and relevant opportunity.  Young people in secondary schools will perhaps explore the science of the virus, and the development and uptake of vaccines.  They can also explore the inequalities which lead to a greater risk of death from COVID-19 among Black, Asian and mixed-race communities in the UK.

## Teaching and researching Black history and Black Lives Matter

This proclamation, by Richard Race, first calls not only for the teaching of Black Lives Matter, as well as Black history that goes beyond February in the USA and October in the UK, but a wider, global curriculum which focuses on more topical and contemporary readings of all subjects taught in education.  It is to be noted that the UK consists of four countries, each with very distinct education systems, which would be an interesting international comparison in itself.  What remains true for all four nations is that most classrooms and staffrooms have a majority of White students and teachers. This makes teaching racism theoretically more difficult.  The content of this proclamation focuses on England and the USA, but it has global application, as we are talking about culturally diverse curricula in all countries. Multicultural education, antiracism and antidiscrimination are subjects which must be taught and developed through awareness and diversity training through continuing professional development (Race, 2015).

Developing curriculum and knowing what to teach beyond core and foundation subjects in the national curriculum in England is a key issue.  It is important to note that programmes of study in England

have always offered opportunities and possibilities for teachers to deliver material on culturally diverse issues. However, the issue here is complex. To deliver – that is, to teach – you need to have been taught what is available. It seems that during teacher education, there are not many opportunities to develop knowledge, let alone increased understandings, on a subject such as Black history (Moncrieffe, 2018). In my own institution, two hours are dedicated to race and education during a one-year Postgraduate Certificate in Teacher Education. There needs to be more – much more. The issue then reverts to continuing professional development and the policy of schools giving professional practitioners the opportunities to develop Black history within core and foundation subjects. Local authorities in London, through initiatives and research publications, provide the opportunity to learn more about African and Caribbean histories (Hackney Services for Schools, 2021), as well as looking at other histories which are very relevant to English and American schools.

The murder of George Floyd in the USA, and the increased visibility of the Black Lives Matter movement, poses many issues for practitioners. Teachers need to be trained in how to contextualise events and movements, and then present factual information through a number of edited sources to let students increase understandings of many complex and relevant issues. To that degree, The Black Curriculum (2021) website offers a teacher resource that is both contemporary and helpful to professional practitioners in England, the UK and globally. The provided content aims to: 'equip young people with a sense of identity, and the tools for a diverse landscape. We are working towards changing the national curriculum and building a sense of identity in every young person in the UK' (The Black Curriculum, 2021: n.p.). The Black Curriculum's aims are threefold, and its desire is to go beyond the single-month focus of Black history to something much bigger and wider. First, as a social enterprise, it aims 'To provide a sense of belonging and identity to young people across the UK'; second, 'To teach an accessible educational Black history curriculum that raises attainment for young people'; and third, 'To improve social cohesion between young people in the UK' (The Black Curriculum, 2021: n.p.). These intentions show how Black history and Black Lives Matter can be taught beyond a single month and, as significantly, *what* can be taught within a social enterprise and cohesion framework (Pierre, 2022; Stephen Lawrence Day Foundation, 2020). Black history contextualises lived experiences, and it can be part of a much wider culturally diverse impetus, not only in history, but also in other taught subjects, including literature and citizenship, as well as modern foreign languages – plural, not singular. It is part of a process of moving from a national towards a more international curriculum.

One theoretical method that can also be used in conjunction with teaching events and issues surrounding Black history and Black Lives Matter is CRT. This is a method that is increasingly being used, which allows not only Black, but all, voices to be heard (NUS, 2021). It allows autobiographical sketches to be created and reflected upon within classrooms and seminar rooms. The results of this method can help increase understandings of contextualised surroundings, and then apply personal experiences to wider issues, such as Black achievement in different education environments (Demie, 2019; https://blackculturalarchives.org/), and stop and search, and knife crime. These issues affect all communities, which corresponds with recent research applications of CRT (Bridges, 2018; CRRE, 2021). CRT is the means to provide more culturally diverse opportunities for students at all levels of education. This proclamation also calls for more use and application of CRT in more classrooms to give the tools to teachers to have more confidence when teaching Black history and Black Lives Matter, within a more international and globally recognised curriculum.

## Decolonising the curriculum through a global citizenship lens

This proclamation, by Nighet Riaz, aims to unpack some of the terminology used in education policy and how it is interpreted in a school setting. The words we use evoke different reactions in different settings and different groups of people. As a Muslim woman of colour (albeit an academic and practitioner), when discussing decolonisation, the initial reaction of my Scottish White peers is very much to see this as an affront and an attack on the patriotism, history and culture of 'the West', fear of the unknown of what is being asked of them, lack of gratitude on my part for not recognising the 'place' I have been 'given', and impudence to question the status quo. When we discuss global citizenship, it is through the lens of the beneficent other (Jefferess, 2008), but when we discuss the racialised groups residing in the UK's four nations, it is through the lens of the deviant other, the undeserving, with the focus being on the racialised to 'prove' that they have the right to belong through assimilation, although even that is not enough, as

the colour of our skin, our religion and our culture put us outside this frame of belonging (Deuchar and Bhopal, 2017; Archer, 2018, as cited in Arday and Mirza, 2018; Riaz, 2020, as cited in Moncrieffe et al., 2020).

Therefore, the questions arise: Who are we and where do we belong? If not here, then where? These questions remain valid where the political, media and some sections of society view us with open hostility. We are fed a narrative by the state to comply with certain standards with the threat of surveillance under the label of safeguarding (HM Government, 2015; Qurashi, 2018), and the insidious removal of citizenship – as seen in the ongoing Windrush affair – if we do not align with 'British values', but also that we are equal and full citizens (Equality Act, 2010). Scotland's curricular intention has been to imbricate global citizenship throughout the curriculum (Biesta, 2008), so that it presents as a cross-curricular and whole-school approach. However, there is debate about whether the Curriculum for Excellence opens critical spaces for 'a complex, ethical understanding and calls to action related to global injustices and political responsibilities' (Swanson and Pashby, 2016: 4), or where the discourse could stand for progressivism yet does not disturb the national narrative, where activism is written out of the story, focusing on 'responsible citizenship'. This focus reinforces 'the ontological and epistemic supremacy and privilege of the West' (Swanson, 2015, as cited in Swanson and Pashby, 2016: 5) through the erasure of global events such as climate change, Black Lives Matter and many other issues with which children and young people can engage.

Decolonising the curriculum is often understood as the process by which we rethink, reframe and reconstruct the curricula and research that preserve the Europe-centred, colonial lens. It should not be mistaken for 'diversification', as diversity can still exist within this Western bias. 'Decolonisation goes further and deeper in challenging the institutional hierarchy and monopoly on knowledge, moving out of a western framework' (Akel, 2020: n.p.). It is about 'an expression of the changing geopolitics of knowledge whereby the modern epistemological framework for knowing and understanding the world is no longer interpreted as universal and unbound by geo-historical and biographical contexts' (Baker, 2012: 2). The Big Lottery-funded project Humari Pehchan (Who am I?) emerged as part of a journey of how I situated myself in the colonial story, where I described my journey from compulsory to higher education (Riaz, 2020, 2021). It was coupled with a previous public call to address the lack of implementation of Urdu as a heritage language in the Languages 1+2 language policy in the school curriculum in Glasgow (Stewart, 2018), as well as climate change.

The project aims to bring families, schools, community organisations and children together (Menheere and Hooge, 2010) to co-create stories (Ladson-Billings, 1998) around:

1.    the impact of social climate change
2.    reflecting on how perceptions of their social environment impact them
3.    how they would or could do things differently
4.    using heritage languages to develop and share stories.

This is a call to action, where storytelling is used to bring communities together to overcome barriers (Lay, 2016) and to make global issues visible, as well as how they can be addressed by the values intertwined in the policy document Curriculum for Excellence – social justice, fairness and equality. It is about bringing heritage languages in through the school door (Cummins, 2000; Scottish Government, 2016; Education Scotland, 2019), decolonising the curriculum through a global citizenship lens, and recognising, valuing and celebrating the ethnic, cultural and multilingual diversity of communities in Scotland.

## Decolonising the science curriculum in Britain

This proclamation, by Saima Salehjee, explores why there is a need to expose and critique the colonial forms created and sustained by British and European-based science/scientists in Britain. Lebeloane (2017: 1) argues that even after decades of independence from the British Empire, the school-based South African national curricula 'continue to perpetuate the preparation of learners for leading western lives in a continent that is not western by nature'. Similar to Lebeloane (2017), Sharma and Mir (2019) demand to promote Indian knowledge over the British Empire's colonial-influenced curricular knowledge. The question then raised is: Why is there a need to decolonise the localised (science) curriculum in Britain?

Some literature available in the British and European school science communities emphasises the importance of decolonising the science curriculum and teaching. For example, Gandolfi (2021: 17) uses

the 'history of science' intercultural model to decolonise the national curriculum by using the 'decolonial lens that aimed at reflecting on the links between scientific/technological developments and geopolitical endeavours of expansion/colonisation'. Gandolfi's (2021) attempt to move away from Eurocentrism by incorporating the global view of science in classrooms is powerful. However, in my opinion, this does not capture the wider local and global socio-scientific issues, which need to focus more on equity and social justice agendas. This then allows an inclusion of further intersectional issues of colonisation, such as class, gender, inequality, language and race.

Nevertheless, the immersion of these socio-scientific issues in society are debated by science educators in the Global North, including Britain, as elements that discriminate against people with certain visible characteristics from being/becoming a science person, such as women and racially minoritised women (for example, Avraamidou, 2019), from lower-middle-class families (for example, Zwysen and Longhi, 2018), and intersections of these characteristics (for example, Dawson et al., 2020; Salehjee and Watts, forthcoming) facing discrimination in schools, universities and workplaces compared to White middle-class men (for example, Archer, 2018). Subsequently, the process of colonisation is contributed by a handful of White middle-class male scientists promoting the colonial matrix of power as creators and brokers of gender bias, racial hierarchies and nationalist superiority of Global North over Global South (Andrews, 2021). Therefore, in my view, it is the responsibility of science educators, teachers and curriculum developers to debate about the colonial forms in the education system using an equity and social justice lens.

The existing school science curricula of the four nations of Britain emphasise developing 'scientifically literate citizens', principally directing science teachers to align their teaching to develop citizens who can critically discuss the societal issues and make scientifically informed decisions (Brickhouse, 2007). Moreover, Reich et al. (2010) recommend that discussions on societal issues in science classrooms can support students to acknowledge and critique scientists' studies, which have rooted inequity relating to gender, race, religion and so on in society. The authors here are focusing on a different monocultural approach to professional practice. The socio-scientific issues included in the current science curriculum include the impact of tsunamis and earthquakes on the lives of people, Big Bang and evolution theories, global contribution to the periodic table, the use and abuse of drugs, and the ethics of cloning, in vitro fertilisation (IVF), genetics testing and abortion. All of these are important in promoting equity and social justice mindsets among students, although they miss the issues indicated by Reich et al. (2010), such as the issues surrounding the inclusion/exclusion of people from science because of their visible characteristics of gender, race and religion, which science/scientists have debated (Salehjee, forthcoming; Salehjee and Watts, forthcoming). How, then, can teachers incorporate these societal issues in their teaching practices? For guidance, I have listed four topics and corresponding scientific assertions that science teachers can incorporate – as socio-scientific debates – in their teaching practice. These examples are not absolute; instead, they present some assertions for guidance:

- *Evolution*: The evolutionary makeup of women's brains makes them incapable of working in industries such as engineering and technology (scientist: James Damore).
- *Heredity*: The hierarchal divisions among races; for example, White people are the most civilised and Black people are the least civilised and intellectually able (scientist: Immanuel Kant).
- *The central nervous system*: Male brains facilitate the connectivity of perception and action, whereas female brains enable analytical and intuitive processing (scientist: Madhura Ingalhalikar and colleagues).
- *The solar system/astronomy*: There is a gap in which the existence of a god or gods fits with the scientific laws of the universe (scientist: Brian Cox).

Therefore, I recommend that science curriculum developers, educators and teachers not only include the global view of science, but also decolonise the mindsets of students by using social constructions (including gender, race, religion and class) that have embedded discrimination/privilege among people, and an education gap between science and society.

## Provocations

The seven proclamations above, and the advocacy of decolonising the curriculum, aim not only to stimulate reflection, but also to provoke actual, positive, critical and constructive responses from the

readership of this article.  As noted, the danger for voices of decolonising is that they will not be heard and acted upon.  For decolonising to take place within education, let alone within the curriculum, the first provocation relates to changing what we teach in classrooms and lecture theatres.  White (2019, 2020; see also Sardoc and White, 2018) has consistently called for changes in the national curriculum in England, which has global application.  What is taught in education needs to be challenged and changed. This includes Black history and Black Lives Matter, the social and political movements and the underpinning historical events raised in proclamation by Richard Race, but also a much wider antiracism and antidiscrimination focus on all subjects taught.

The second provocation focuses not only on changing what we teach, but also how we teach it.  In relation to decolonising the curriculum, we need more awareness and diversity training through continuing professional development.  This needs to be within all subjects at all levels.  As the proclamations above show, this is applicable not only in England and Scotland, but also globally.  We need more programmes that include learning, reflection and practical applications to help participants develop new inclusive teaching strategies for the courses they teach (Bhopal, 2018; Hudson, 2020). However, as Smits and Janssenswillen (2020) warn us in their research, practitioner respondents in relation to diversity awareness ranged from deliberate avoidance during lesson planning through to those who breached official policy to address multicultural issues. The authors underline the challenge of applying theory through practical settings into diverse lesson planning. Moreover, this recommendation highlights the need to be able to reflect 'in' and 'on' action within professional practice settings (Schon, 1991; Pollard et al., 2018) that move beyond virtual training sessions, that is, the cheapest options, which do not allow any face-to-face feedback. In the current COVID-19 and 'new normal', post-COVID education environment, this must be remembered and discussed.

The third provocation concerns critical pedagogy and the requirement to be critical within not only teaching and learning generally, but especially within our own professional practice.  We have, in this article, acknowledged CRT, White power structures and White superiority, but we must teach these subjects and issues within a decolonising curriculum, which concerns all subjects being taught. As Steinberg (2018: 28) highlights, 'critical educators must be intellectually equipped to make a convincing case for the need to expose the white power bloc in the academy … a critical pedagogy of whiteness produces a counter-history grounded on the deconstruction of a whitewash of racial history'.  This implies that colonising stories need to be taught, and this does not exclusively relate to England or other European countries such as France and Portugal.  There are global stories to be told and rewritten in relation to colonisation, and that is perhaps the greatest challenge to the White power bloc (Scanlan, 2020; Sanghera, 2021).  Colonisation provides the contexts for decolonising within education. Programmes of study, curricular content and, ultimately, how more inclusive, equitable education is taught in classrooms, colleges and lecture theatres are the major issues.

For more inclusive and equitable curricula, we need a range of resources to be used.  Tomlinson (2019) looks at the British Empire through to Brexit, while Andrews (2021) examines the beginning of European empires, to show how genocide, slavery and colonisation are the key foundation stones upon which the West was built:  a system we still live with today.  We then need to contextualise experiences from Black, Asian and all communities to make curricula more contemporary and relevant for our students. We encourage the readers of this article to look at the reference list, which encompasses a comprehensive range of different issues within the wider frame of decolonising curricula.  We must use, apply and reflect upon a range of resources to put present-day issues into contexts to increase multicultural understandings – raised in most, if not all, of the above proclamations (Olusoga, 2020; Skin and O'Brien, 2020; Wheeler, 2020; Dabiri, 2021). But we need to go further. We also need to challenge ourselves, see the opportunities in education policy and practice, and move beyond an advocacy of decolonising the curriculum to transform, not only change, what we teach and how we teach it. There is a continued need for activists, and therefore activism, at all levels for multiple calls for action, which will lead to transformation of education, rather than simple or relative change (Banks and Banks, 2020). It is this combination of advocacy and action within a wider critical pedagogy that we hope will encourage and challenge the reader to do much more in relation to decolonising the curriculum.

# Declarations and conflicts of interest

## Research ethics statement

Not applicable to this article.

## Consent for publication statement

Not applicable to this article.

## Conflicts of interest statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest with this work. All efforts to sufficiently anonymise the authors during peer review of this article have been made. The authors declare no further conflicts with this article.

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