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34 BCF Event: A Research Approach to Curriculum Development
When I drafted this piece, six days before the general election, the BERA Blog had just posted my article that analysed the three main parties’ education promises. One commitment that I highlighted was the Liberal Democrats’ idea of ‘an independent body of education experts who [would] use the most up-to-date educational evidence to oversee any future curriculum changes’.

The national curriculum in England has suffered more than those of other UK nations from the lack of influence that balanced research evidence can have on policy. Past BERA president Mary James has given very clear accounts of how unbalanced policymaking can happen – indeed, the very fact that Mary, Andrew Pollard and Dylan Wiliam had to disown the government’s actions on the national curriculum as they were contrary to the research position remains a very worrying outcome. And it is not just curriculum: many areas of education would benefit from a closer alignment between research evidence and policy.

An independent body that weighs up research evidence to inform policy was also one of the main recommendations of the recent Royal Society (RS) and British Academy (BA) initiative to assess the state of education research. I and a number of BERA colleagues recently attended a one-day conference at the Royal Society to discuss some of those recommendations. Many questions were raised – not least about where the power might lie in a newly created Office for Education Research. In a two-minute ‘soapbox’ speech I made a series of points about BERA’s long track record.

• Given BERA’s near 50-year history of supporting and developing education research, should it not have a leading role in any move to establish a body to oversee education research?

• Engagement with the research–practice interface is central to BERA’s work and mission, so is it not ideally placed to provide guidance on ways to ensure better alignment between research, policy and practice?

• BERA’s key strategic aims on promoting quality in education research and supporting the capacity of education researchers also align very clearly with some of the drivers of the RS–BA work – yet another reason for BERA’s involvement with any new structure.

I’m pleased to report that a meeting has been arranged to clarify BERA’s role in future developments. One issue for consideration at this meeting might be the extent to which popular social media commentators and organisations should be curating education research for teachers. Social media is inevitably playing a growing part in education debates – for example, I was recently invited to share my research expertise on literacy teaching for a live Twitter event. In my view we should continue to engage with new media to assess its strengths and weaknesses – indeed, the BERA office team, supported by academic colleagues, continues to break new ground for BERA’s digital presence.

What BERA offers is unique – nearly five decades of scholarly engagement with close-to-practice research, consistently providing robust and rigorous underpinnings of its views. New social media outlets cannot bring that history of knowledge. BERA is also focussing on links between research, policy and practice through its presidential roundtable series. The next three roundtables will address, respectively, pupil grouping and equity, teacher education, and children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing. These will be led by leading researchers in the field who will engage directly with colleagues in practice, policy and academia to produce state-of-the-art accounts in areas of pressing concern, including short summaries on ‘what works’ in practice. No matter what colour of government is in power, in the nations of the UK and further afield, the outcomes of the roundtables will offer evidence-based guidance on problems that we all care deeply about.

Professor Dominic Wyse
UCL Institute of Education
How can independent researchers better access ethical approval procedures?

In late October 2019, BERA’s Independent Researchers’ Forum (IRF) brought together a diverse group of participants to discuss ethical approval and ethical dilemmas. Attended by schools, self-employed researchers, educational technology platforms, publishers, experts on the legalities of data and consent, a charity and other independent researchers, the event debated means of addressing the challenges that many independent researchers encounter with seeking ethical approval outside of higher education institutions, including but not only in schools.

The event ended with the IRF committing to the goal of establishing access to a panel for ethical approval for its members, and the submission of a report to BERA about this and other ways in which the Association can assist independent researchers in their work.

OUT NOW: BCF CURRICULUM INVESTIGATION GRANT REPORTS

The final reports of the three winners of the 2018–2019 British Curriculum Forum Curriculum Investigation Grant – which supports research led by schools and colleges with a focus on curriculum inquiry and investigation – have now been published.

- Summarised in this issue (see page 8), Lorna Shires and Matt Hunter’s research explores task design as a lens through which teachers can examine and enact the curriculum, in the context of renewed interest in curriculum and schools’ relationships with it.

- As featured in the previous issue of RI (#141), Ruth Trundley and Helen J. Williams investigate how variation theory can be applied to the use of manipulatives to support understanding of early number.

- Claire Needler and Jamie Fairbairn sought to discover whether teaching the new Scots Language Award qualification to Scots-speaking pupils would boost their self-esteem and academic achievement, as covered in RI issue #140.

The grants for the academic year 2020/21 will shortly be launched, with each grant worth between £3,000 and £5,000. We would expect the grant work to be carried out in the 2020/21 academic year, with the final reports submitted by September 2021.

Curriculum Journal update

The Curriculum Journal has completed a successful round of recruitment to its editorial board, which now includes 12 UK-based members and 15 international members, in which each continent (other than Antarctica) has multiple representation. A full list of board members can be found on the journal’s homepage at bera.ac.uk/cj.

The journal has now successfully transferred to new publisher Wiley from Routledge, so please update your bookmarks to Wiley Online. To mark the occasion the Curriculum Journal’s cover has been redesigned, from the first issue of the new volume (31), to match those of the other BERA journals.


On 4 May 2020 the Curriculum Journal will join forces with BERA, the British Curriculum Forum and the Stirling Network for Curriculum Studies to hold a major event on curriculum-making at the University of Stirling. It aims to bring together teachers, policymakers, local authority and national agency staff from across the UK and Ireland to discuss new research and insights in curriculum development from different countries and to develop more nuanced conversations with education professionals about curriculum. For more details and to book see bera.ac.uk/event/curriculum-making.
Announcing the winners of BERA’s Public Engagement and Impact award

This annual award celebrates significant educational research and activities around it that have demonstrably engaged the public and achieved impact within the education community.

We have awarded two prizes this year. The individual prize went to George Leckie of the University of Bristol for his work on ‘The importance of adjusting for pupil background in school value-added models: A study of Progress 8 and school accountability in England’.

The team prize went to Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants, an organisation based at the Centre for Inclusive Education at the UCL Institute of Education that consults, trains, offers guidance and conducts research with the objective of ensuring that teaching assistants ‘thrive in their role and contribute to improved outcomes for pupils’. The team comprises Rob Webster, Paula Bosanquet, Sally Franklin, Matthew Parker, Jonathan Sharples, Marina Kipfer, Kelly Golding and Aimee Shaw.

Both projects will feature in a forthcoming issue of RI.

Dior Webb joins BERA as new Events Officer

Dior first worked with BERA in 2016 as part of her industrial placement while studying event management at Leeds Beckett University; she also provided invaluable help at the 2017 and 2019 BERA Conferences. Now that she has graduated we are glad to have, as of November 2019, secured her as a full-time BERA member of staff.

Her main duties as Events Officer include organising and assisting special interest groups with their events, and working alongside Marie, BERA’s Events Manager.

Having lived in Spain for over 10 years, Dior is fluent in Spanish and enjoys occasional visits back to the place she calls home, as well as learning new languages.
Exploring Task Design as an Enabler of Leading Teaching in Secondary Schools

By Lorna Shires & Mat Hunter, Oxford Brookes University & Icknield Community College, Watlington, Oxfordshire

The introduction of a new education inspection framework in 2019 (Ofsted, 2019a) – and the curriculum workshop (Ofsted, 2018a), consultation (Muijs, 2018) and research processes (Ofsted, 2018b, 2018c, 2019b) that preceded its introduction – have led to a renewed focus on each school’s position in relation to their curriculum. This shift in emphasis comes in the wake of the recent changes to the GCSE syllabi specifications, which resulted in a great deal more content needing to be covered in years 10 and 11 of the secondary school curriculum.

Curriculum now stands centre stage in the accountability culture of the system. What’s wrong with that? As Connelly argues in his consideration of that great curriculum thinker, Joseph Schwab, and his work on curriculum and education reform:

‘Curriculum is nexus, central to educational enterprise. Educational thought ultimately comes down to curriculum thought and I believe that revivifying curriculum in everyday educational discourse would be beneficial.’ (Connelly, 2013, p. 632).
Perhaps there are two issues with the nature of the current focus on the curriculum. First is that the curriculum in schools is being represented by the ‘three Is’ as introduced by Ofsted: intent, implementation and impact. In practice, it appears that these terms actually signify ‘teach, plan and assess’. Why is it, then, that schools appear to feel they need to adopt the three Is? To tick a box to show that they are ‘in tune’ with the new framework?

The second issue is that the role of teacher knowledge, and ideas about the configuration of the curriculum through a focus on the agency of teachers, appears to be being sidelined. If this iteration of education inspection framework heralds a resurgence of studies focussing on the curriculum and curriculum theory, then teacher agency (Priestley, 2015; Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2015; Biesta, 2015) should have a part to play in making the most of this opportunity.

Task design is a great lens through which teachers can examine the curriculum.

“The task a teacher defines for a lesson or unit shape how pupils engage intellectually with the content of the curriculum, what tools and strategies they learn to use with this content, and what learning capacities they take away from these curriculum encounters. Teacher actions, regardless of their inherent ‘quality’, that do not have an instrumental connection to the task students are working on are unlikely to have much effect on learning and development. Tasks, in other words, instantiate the curriculum in a classroom. They are the curriculum in motion – the actual curriculum that is taught – and they embody a teacher’s understanding of the content as educative experience. Task design and enactment, then, are at the core of the work of teaching.’

(Doyle, 2015)

Getting educational research about the design of tasks (see for example Thompson, 2015; Edwards, 2015; Todd, 2015) into the curriculum debates happening now in schools and classrooms might shift thinking around the theory-practice gap. As Oancea (2019) has argued, theory and practice have much in common: inquisitiveness, tools and virtues. The instrumental benefits of task design theory shaping curriculum development in schools will support teachers to think critically about and use the curriculum they teach day by day: the idea of task as a concept is of practical use when enacting the curriculum; schools can debate what a good task looks like; and teachers of subjects can plan together to consider questions such as, What does a history or science or art task look like for me as a school teacher of that subject? (Doyle, 2013).

Ofsted, in its research into the current state of the curriculum (Ofsted, 2018b), argued that many teachers were unable to reflect upon and debate the curriculum they taught. The tasks teachers design create the environment that shapes the kind of learners and the kind of society we have (Edwards, 2015). So let’s use the current curriculum development focus in schools to create that space for teachers to reflect and debate: teachers need to talk about the values that motivate them and shape their teaching.

References
+ Ofsted (2018b). An Investigation into How to Assess the Quality of Education Through Curriculum Intent, Implementation and Impact: Phase 3 findings of curriculum research.
In advancing opportunities to expand upon discussions of the research work found in BERA Research Intelligence Issue 142 on Decolonising the Curriculum, this special event led by convenors of the BERA Race Ethnicity and Education Special Interest Group will be held at the University of West of Scotland, Paisley campus. We will bring together academic scholars, primary and secondary schoolteachers, college lecturers, higher education academics, PhD students and researchers involved with education from across Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland to share on the pedagogic challenges and opportunities with decolonising the curriculum. At the core is considering the importance of challenging the generally Eurocentric epistemological default positioning of school, college and university curricula. A raised awareness of this will be modelled at the event through workshops offering findings from national and international evidence-based research, and critical theoretical perspectives used to assist with advancing approaches to practice in schools, colleges and universities.

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Bursary Information
BERA are offering a limited amount of bursaries to the value of £75 towards travel for BERA Student Members and BERA Teacher Members only. To apply for one of these bursaries, please complete the form online with a statement on why you want to attend this event and why you need the financial assistance.

To apply for a bursary, please check the event page at www.bera.ac.uk/events

For more information and to register visit www.bera.ac.uk/events
DECOLONISING THE CURRICULUM

By Marlon Moncrieffe, with Richard Race & Rebecca Harris

From the Rhodes Must Fall campaign at the University of Cape Town (and, subsequently, the University of Oxford) to the Why is My Curriculum White? debate at University College London, decolonising the curriculum is a hot topic in education. The decolonising the curriculum movement is engaged in an epistemological struggle: it has fostered support and action for change in schools, colleges and universities, but has also met with resistance to the challenges it poses.

As Dorie Chetty discusses, the demand for the decolonisation of the curriculum is not new, but today it has greater momentum thanks to a greater sense of awareness among students from minority-ethnic groups who want to see their experiences reflected in the curriculum. This view is reinforced by Nighet Riaz, who explains why a decolonised curriculum can support opportunities for black and minority-ethnic educators and students to understand who they are. Pere Ayling, in her article, writes about how this can be achieved by adopting and utilising the colonial habitus to explore how dominant discourses, operating at the subconscious level, shape and influence our thoughts, actions and perceptions.

Decolonising the curriculum takes deliberate effort. Educators need to recognise that the curriculum largely reflects the dominate social group, and therefore can establish a narrow, monocultural view of the world in which ‘others’ exist only on the margins. Decolonising the curriculum is therefore about seeing and appreciating the world – past, present and future – by ensuring that the views and voices of marginalised groups are heard, acknowledged and appreciated. Such an approach benefits all members of society.

Today’s educators and academics are detecting and exposing the competing ideological and political motives behind national history curriculum design. Rebecca Harris’s article is an example of this work: in it, Anglocentrism, ‘whiteness’ and ‘white privilege’ are challenged by a call for the diversity of human experience to be at the forefront of history curricula, and for teachers to be trained as ‘critical curriculum thinkers’. These ideas are picked up by Marlon Moncrieffe in his article, which provides an example of decolonising the narrative of mass-migration in the key stage 2 history curriculum.

The piece by Richard Race also exposes and reflects upon the integrationist and monocultural design of the national curriculum over the years, arguing that the original national curriculum in England, introduced in 1988, ‘was a Brexit policy 30 years before Brexit’.

An exposure of inequitable forms of monocultural nationalism and national identity in Thailand is articulated by Thithimadee Arphattananon. She shares a picture of curriculum inertia and an unchallenged agenda of cultural assimilation in education, fuelled by a teaching of ‘Thai-ness’ that imposes and reproduces a national identity. This type of monocultural dominance of curriculum content and supporting textbooks is also a concern for Kamil Nasibullov and Natalia Kopylova, who use examples from their research on school music textbooks in Russia to discuss how cultural representations of ethnic Russians have become increasingly dominant, at the expense of minority-ethnic groups. The final article in this collection, by Shirley Steinberg from Canada, champions the notion of decolonising the curriculum while posing a multitude of critical and challenging questions about precisely where and how this process should begin.
The demand for the decolonisation of the curriculum is not a new one. It is important to acknowledge the decolonising work that black parents in the UK have been doing since the 1960s and 1970s. In setting up supplementary schools which ran on Saturdays, black parents worked towards countering the racial biases that were intrinsic to the British education system, teaching young children from African-Caribbean communities about their histories, cultures and identities (Gerrard, 2013).

In the 21st century, the need to see themselves reflected in the curriculum – beyond Black History Month – has led black university students to question what is considered as canonical text, calling for decolonisation of their curriculum. Such movements have gained momentum globally. The Rhodes Must Fall campaign at Oxford University and the Why is My Curriculum White? campaign at University College London are student responses to the lack of diversity and the Eurocentricity of their curriculum (Gebriel, 2018; Peters, 2018).

Here I argue that it makes pedagogic sense that students see their experiences reflected in the curriculum, enabling them to maximise their potentialities. Using the example of one module in higher education in which small steps to ‘decolonise the curriculum’ have been taken, this article hopes to highlight the importance of an inclusive curriculum that enables learners to feel part of the learning community.

One of the most challenging aspects of the decolonising project is exposing the invisibility of white power and privilege, and dealing with the potential consequence of ‘white fragility’. 

A Personal Journey into Decolonising the Curriculum and Addressing ‘White Fragility’

By Dorrie Chetty, University of Westminster
The module in question relates to migration, and is taught at level 6 as part of an undergraduate programme in social sciences. The first and perhaps easiest task in the process of decolonising is to de- and re-construct the book lists. Without neglecting writers considered ‘experts’ in the field of migration, academics beyond the Eurocentric canon – particularly those writing from indigenous populations of the developing world – are also included. It therefore becomes evident to students that BAME and indigenous academics from outside Europe are well placed to challenge dominant discourses. Through their readings (Ashu, 2012; Palat, 2015; Seed, 2018), students gain perspectives from outside the dominant frameworks of understanding and learning, linking European colonisation to migration. They are thus better able to situate their parents’ and their own experiences within a wider context of power relations.

However, the decolonising project goes beyond booklists. The ways in which knowledge is imparted, the modes of delivery and assessment, are equally important loci where the struggles for decolonisation can take place. Given the abundance of dominant representations of migrants and migration in the mass media, printed and visual material on the most topical issues are selected for seminar discussions. Such material enables students to explore the debates and theories learned in lectures and from their readings, equipping them to critique dominant discourses. Scaffolding readings with questions may be time-consuming, but it helps diverse students develop their critical thinking and maximises engagement and participation. Here, the traditional top-down method of teaching, with its dichotomy of experts/learners, is replaced by a collaborative environment in which students work collectively and apply examples from their everyday lives and histories.

We often neglect students’ cultural and social capital as valuable learning and teaching material which can be integrated into the design of assessments. For seminars, students are set to work in small groups of four or five, enabling timid and hesitant students to take part in discussions. This learning style and environment encourages co-operation between students and validates their experiences as relevant to their learning process. It also creates a space in which to develop their ‘sense of belonging’ to a learning community, which promotes self-esteem in students from diverse backgrounds and builds their confidence in their potential to pursue postgraduate study and/or an academic career – which could be considered a long-term strategy for decolonising the curriculum.

One of the most challenging aspects of the decolonising project is exposing the invisibility of white power and privilege, and dealing with the potential consequences of ‘white fragility’. The continued operations of white privilege and power, and how these impact on migration policies and media representations of migrants and refugees, are not necessarily visible. Decolonising the curriculum means making these operations visible not simply to highlight the historical and inherent ‘racism’ embedded in migration policies but, crucially, for students to understand how we are all implicated in maintaining the status quo in power relations.

This can lead to awkwardness and discomfort. When students and staff realise how their whiteness can operate as privilege they can become defensive and angry – because they don’t see themselves as racist, or because they feel guilty and helpless. As educationalists we don’t like discomfort among our students, so we may experience a strong urge to move to a more comfortable topic or dismiss the debate for a future time. It takes considerable effort to stay with such discomfort (Zembylas, 2015), but the impulse to shut down difficult conversations and avoid dealing with ‘white fragility’ needs to be resisted (Di Angelo, 2018). Responsibility for confronting racism and white privilege does not lie solely with minority students and lecturers. By avoiding the topic, we are effectively maintaining the invisibility of white power and privilege, thereby upholding power structures of racism (Eddo-Lodge, 2018).

References
Imposter syndrome
Part ‘self’, part ‘other’

By Nighet Riaz,
University of West of Scotland

This short article will discuss how imposter syndrome can affect a person’s sense of identity and belonging. I will briefly share some of my experiences before discussing why a decolonised curriculum can, by examining our histories and their intersections with Europe and the UK, support opportunities for black and minority ethnic (BME) educators and students in teaching and learning, and help them to understand who they are.

Firstly, as a mature student and, now, an older British Pakistani Muslim female early-career researcher and associate lecturer, I questioned my identity, the relevance and impact of my research, my place in academia and the worth of my academic qualifications and achievements. This level of self-reflexivity threw into sharp focus the fact that there was something missing that was making me feel inadequate. Clance and Imes (1978, p. 241) have noted that those suffering from imposter syndrome do not experience an internal sense of success despite their many achievements and professional standing in the academy and society.

MISSING PIECES OF HISTORY

As I was growing up, the lack of culture and history shared with us by my parents in our home led me to believe the narrative fed to me in our schools in the 1970s: of being uncivilised, and requiring assimilation into the mainstream culture. This narrative continued through compulsory education – where the munificence of the British Empire, for example, was taught – and into higher education, which seeps students in dead white European men’s perspectives on science and sociology while omitting other world-views perceived as substandard and detrimental to knowledge-seekers.

Reading Priyamvada Gopal’s Insurgent Empire (2019) and Satnam Virdee’s Race, Class and the Racialised Outsider (2014) informed me of a different version of European and British 18th-, 19th- and 20th-century history – one of colonies, resilience and resistance by the colonised, one that is not taught in schools. It also illustrated how attitudes towards colonised citizens continue to be held in relation to minority communities now residing in Europe and Britain.

A growing literature documents the fact that the inequality and racism faced by minority ethnic educators in the spaces in which they teach is often played out through a series of micro-aggressions and passive-aggressive behaviours. In some cases the literature shows us how to navigate those spaces, and even what strategies to utilise in order to avoid encounters with instances of internalised racism or ‘unconscious bias’ – a set of behaviours and attitudes which are racist, but which the owner refuses to take responsibility for. The entitlement of the dominant group to, within the social structures of class, gender and race, behave and participate in group and individual behaviour that underpins their superiority to minority ethnic academics (Bivens, 1995; Andersen & Hill-Collins, 2010) impacted on how I interpreted these interactions within the structure: I internalised them as ‘not being good enough’ and ‘not belonging’.

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OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

Knowing my history has given me sense of identity and of self-worth which was previously missing. This
showed me how important it is to know our place in history, where we come from and why we are here. It empowered me to work alongside allies in academic and political circles to be vocal, and on occasion to ‘disrupt the narrative’, through critical workshops that encourage us to speak ‘our truth’.

BME academic research groups such as the Centre for Education for Race Equality in Scotland, and BME educator groups such as the Scottish Association of Minority Ethnic Educators, are invaluable as they share their research, their experiences and their bespoke coaching and mentoring programmes, creating safe spaces in which to voice concerns in the workplace in order to inform policy and practice. They develop not only resilience but resistance and criticality of racism and ‘white privilege’. They are also vehicles for a movement for changing the policy and practice of education and, more importantly, creating a decolonised curriculum as a prerequisite for a socially just nation.

References
White people and whiteness in general have, historically, been constructed more favourably than black people and blackness (Fanon, 1963). Several postcolonial writers, most notably Franz Fanon, have explained how the colour white (both as a skin colour and as an actual colour) is often used to symbolise goodness, purity and beauty. The colour black, on the other hand, has historically been used to stand for ‘evil, sin, wretchedness, death’ (Fanon, 1967/2008, p. 147). Such dichotomous characterisations of the colours black and white have also, according to Fanon, come to shape how white people and black people are perceived, with white people being seen as having more value and worth than blacks. This short article discusses findings from my own research, which shows that Nigerian elite parents hold white British teachers in high regard, before going on to explain the reason behind such a fatalistic acceptance of what is in essence a racial myth.

WHITE SCHOOL AS ‘TOP QUALITY’ SCHOOL

My research, which explored the reasons why Nigerian elite parents consume international schooling (and some aspects of which I drew upon in the previous issue of Research Intelligence), found that a higher sense of worth and reverence is attached to those with white skin in contemporary Nigeria (Ayling, 2019). Specifically, my study found that Nigerian elite parents often characterised private schools in Nigeria with white British teachers on
their staff as top-quality schools, while schools with mostly Nigerian or Indian teachers were perceived as ‘second rate’ schools. My findings indicated that parental school-choice decisions in Nigeria were based on the extent to which the school is ‘white’ – that is, the school:

- has a white headteacher and a good number of white teachers
- adopts and uses the ‘Oyinbo’ or colonist pedagogical approach
- adopts the ‘white rota’ system.

As well as acquiring the status of top-quality, world-class education institutions, having these key features also enabled these ‘white schools’ to charge what even elite parents described as ‘exorbitant’ prices. However, despite these parents maintaining that the supposed superiority of the white British teachers over Nigerian teachers was indeed a ‘fact’, they often couldn’t give any concrete example to support their reasoning. Rather, when asked to explain their reasons for thinking that a teacher is ‘excellent’ or ‘good’, they often replied that this wasn’t something one could ‘put… in[to] words’ – ‘it’s just something people know’. In other words, the notion that white British people are ‘expert’ in education is based on instinct rather than facts.

THE ‘COLONIAL HABITUS’ AND THE DECOLONISATION OF THE MIND

Fanon (1967/2008) theorises that colonisation has shattered the natural/authentic corporeal schema of blacks, and indigene of postcolonial societies more specifically, replacing it with what Fanon described as ‘racial epidermal schema’ (p. 84). As a result of what is essentially the gentrification of blacks’ minds, Fanon asserts that the colonised can only have ‘a relationship to self… which is scripted by the coloniser’ (1967/2008, p. 84). Crucially, Fanon argues that revealing the supposed superiority of whiteness as a mere myth is central to the decolonisation of both whites’ and blacks’, and indigene of postcolonial societies minds. To gain a nuanced understanding of why the parents participating in my research held white British teachers in such high esteem, I utilised the colonial habitus, which was formulated by coalescing Bourdieu’s (1984) concept of the habitus with Fanon’s (1967/2008) psychoanalytic approach to whiteness.

The colonial habitus has five distinctive characteristics, and can be broadly described as ‘the internalisation of western hegemonic discourses, values and ideologies whereby whites and whiteness are constructed as superior to blacks and blackness’ (Ayling, 2019, p. 39). Specifically, I theorised that the colonial habitus is generated within a colonised field and acquired through the internalisation of the ubiquitous but often invisible western hegemonic discourses ‘which slowly and subtly work their way into one’s mind and shapes one’s view of the world’ (Fanon, 1967/2008, p. xvi). Although colonisation (in its old form) has ended, it now exists in the form of coloniality. According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013, p. 1), the ‘coloniality of power is… one of the main levers of colonial modernity and has continued to sustain the notions of inferior-superior motif in the intersubjective relations of whites and blacks’.

Central to the concept of the colonial habitus is the role of the subconscious (Bourdieu) or, in Fanon’s case, the psychic, in shaping individuals’ worldviews. Consequently, utilising the colonial habitus required me to explore how dominant discourses, operating at the subconscious level, shape and influence our thoughts, actions and perceptions. Specifically, it required that I take into account the fact that we live in a ‘White-world’ (Rollock, Gillborn, Vincent, & Ball, 2011) that not only ‘derives its stability from the perpetuation’ of the supposed inferiority of black people (Fanon, 1967/2008, p. 74), but also ‘produced the categories of thought that [blacks] apply to it’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 128). Consequently, I concluded that Nigerian elite parents’ judgement of white schools as top-quality schools is based not on facts but rather on visceral feelings, which are rooted in, and have emerged from, a colonial habitus.

To summarise, the colonial habitus as an analytical tool enabled me to reveal what is meant to be hidden – that is, white supremacy as a racial and racist myth in order to disrupt the dominant notion in Nigeria that ‘white schools’ are top quality schools. The latter point is very important, not least because the disruption and deconstruction of these racial myths is crucial to the decolonisation of both whites’ and black people’s minds.

References

Michael Young (2014) has argued that the curriculum is the pre-eminent issue in education, because at its heart are questions about the purpose of education and what should be learned. Among these debates, history as a school subject has been (and will likely continue to be) the focus of particular attention. There are numerous examples globally of ‘history wars’ (Taylor & Guyver, 2012), as various governments use history teaching as a vehicle for promoting a particular, often celebratory vision of the national past. Others argue that history has more important purposes, such as developing an understanding of how society has come to be, or promoting democratic citizenship. Unsurprisingly, debates around history curricula can easily become highly politicised.

In 1989, John Slater caricatured the history curriculum in England as

‘largely British, or rather Southern English; Celts looked in to starve, emigrate or rebel, the North to invent looms or work in mills; abroad was of interest once it was part of the Empire; foreigners were either, sensibly, allies, or rightly, defeated. Skills – did we even use the word? – were mainly those of recalling accepted facts about famous dead Englishmen.’

(Slater, 1989)

The concern is that, despite various iterations of the national curriculum for history, little has changed. The limited evidence we have indicates that in many schools the history curriculum is still largely white, male, and Anglocentric (see for example Harris & Reynolds, 2018).

This apparent inertia is important for several reasons. At a fundamental level, history is the study of human activity in the past, in all its diversity. It therefore follows that the diversity of human experience should be visible in whatever is studied. For example, Miranda Kaufman’s recent book, Black Tudors (2017), shows that the sight of non-white people, although not typical, was not uncommon in Elizabethan England. Yet the experiences of minority ethnic groups are seldom reflected in the history curriculum. As the American educator Geneva Gay has argued (2004, p. 41), the school curriculum ‘reflects the values, perspectives, and experiences of the dominant ethnic group’. Why should someone be interested in studying history when they don’t see themselves represented?

This curriculum ‘absence’ is reflected in the profile of students who go on to study history when it becomes optional. Students from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds are less likely to study history at GCSE than their majority-ethnic peers, and the proportion who do becomes progressively smaller as students move on to A-level and undergraduate study. One factor behind these figures, according to a recent report by the Royal Historical Society (2018), is the lack of diverse content in the school and university curriculum. This view is supported by a number of small-scale studies that highlight how an overwhelmingly ‘white’ curriculum alienates students from non-white backgrounds. As a 13-year-old student of black Caribbean heritage said to me in an interview,

‘you talk about British history and British history and British history, they don’t talk about like us... it’s like there’s no black people in the history, they’re always talking about... what the white people did in history.’

She did not encounter herself in the past, and therefore felt marginalised and disengaged. There was nothing meaningful for her in the study of history in school; there was no attempt to explore her identity and how this related to the history she was made to study.
Several steps can be taken to address this issue – each of which, as previous studies have shown, presents its own challenges.

- **Teachers need to be ‘critical curriculum thinkers’**. The current discourse frames teachers as ‘curriculum makers’, which implies that teachers simply ‘make’ a curriculum. Curriculum design, however, is a deeply intellectual exercise that requires attention to what should be taught, underpinned by a clear understanding of why and how something should be taught. In my experience teachers have focussed predominantly on the ‘how’, whereas the ‘what’ and ‘why’ (which are inextricably linked) deserve more careful deliberation. Debates here should focus on the educational worth of the curriculum.

- **There should be greater awareness of ‘white privilege’**. Society’s default perspective is that of the dominant ethnic group, and so in England is framed from a ‘white’ perspective (Bhopal, 2018). Stepping outside of this perspective in order to do things differently requires a considerable and conscious effort on the part of white teachers. One way of ‘decolonising’ the history curriculum and addressing ‘white privilege’ is linked to the previous point – history teachers should focus on the nature of history and the question of why it should be studied, and therefore on why particular historical topics are worthy of study. Furthermore, if we accept that the past is inherently diverse then we need to accept that the past we teach should reflect this diversity.

- **We also need to move away from a top-down, events-driven study of the past**. In England the history curriculum is often built around major national political events, which creates an episodic ‘run’ through British history that privileges the roles of those in decision-making positions. If there is going to be a focus on Britain (and there are many reasons for broadening students’ historical horizons beyond Britain), what we need is more on the history of the British people(s) and less on the history of Britain. This would require students to learn about the range of experiences of the people in all their diversity.

A number of small-scale studies highlight how an overwhelmingly ‘white’ curriculum alienates students from non-white backgrounds.

- **References**
n my examination of the national curriculum for key stage 2 history (education for children aged 7-11) (DfE, 2013a) I focus on its aims and contents. I see an ideological motive behind the teaching and learning of the ‘master narrative’ of mass migration and settlement to the British Isles (Moncrieffe, 2014, 2018; Nichol & Harnett, 2011) through an exclusionary Eurocentric narrative of ‘nation building’ and ‘national identity’.

A statutory national policy directive (DfE, 2013a, p. 4) directs teachers to teach children to learn about ‘the 8th century Viking/Anglo-Saxon struggle’ and ‘Viking invasions’, their ‘violent cross-cultural encounters’ and how the nation was formed by these people. The national curriculum for key stage 2 history stops at the year 1066. Does this mean that nation-building also stops at this point as well?
In fact, the national curriculum for key stage 2 history provides no other narratives of mass migration and settlement by people to the British Isles. Its statutory national policy directive ignores the histories and experiences of non-Europeans (people of colour) arriving on the British Isles over the ages, their mass migration and their contributing to ‘nation building’ and ‘national identity’. Instead, ‘epistemic violence’ (Spivak, 1999) is occurring through a ‘whitewashing’ of ‘knowledge’ and ‘experiences’ (Lander, 2016; Moncrieffe, 2018). While teaching about mass migration and settlement to the British Isles can be engaged in during secondary education at key stage 3 (DfE, 2013b), this is a non-statutory requirement: schools and their teachers are under no obligation to do so.

There are of course a multitude of national narrative episodes and accounts that remain unwritten by the national curriculum for key stage 2 history, concerning mass migration and settlement by people in the British Isles over the ages. One example of interest to me stems from the histories of my parents and grandparents and their people: the story of the British citizens of the 20th century African–Caribbean Windrush generation arriving in Britain. These people were invited to Britain by the government to migrate and settle here to help rebuild the nation following the second world war. Their (continuing) mistreatment by the oppressive and racist white-British-led political system, and resistance to this in the form of uprisings across cities in England (particularly during the 1980s) and wider ‘struggles’, is well documented (Gilroy, 1987; Moncrieffe, 2018; Sewell, 1998; Winder, 2013).

As a critical curriculum thinker, I believe that these more recent ‘violent cross-cultural encounters’ and ‘struggles’ should, in order to decolonise the curriculum, be placed in juxtaposition with those from the distant past (Moncrieffe, 2018). As mentioned above, children at key stage 2 are already being taught by their teachers to learn about mass migration and settlement involving ‘violent cross-cultural encounters’ and ‘struggles’ between different ethnic and cultural groups such as the Anglo-Saxons and the Vikings. These were cross-cultural encounters which resulted in treaties to support ‘nation building’, shaping a new sense of shared ‘national identity’. In similar ways, a plethora of race-relations acts have been written into law since the 1960s as a result of ‘cross-cultural’ uprisings across cities in England. These have all spoken to a need for continued ‘nation building’ by the people of the nation, continuously shaping a new sense of ‘national identity’. I also believe that juxtaposing ‘cross-cultural encounters’ from the distant past with those of more recent British history can promote discussion in the key stage 2 classroom on themes such as democracy, tolerance and mutual respect for those of different faiths and beliefs – ‘fundamental British values’ (DFE, 2014). In my view, these are best learned both through the good, bad and ugly histories of people on the British Isles, and by developing a greater sense of multiple perspectives concerning the occurrences of violent ‘cross-cultural encounters’.

Teacher-educators have a duty to foster in their trainee-teachers a deeper sense of criticality towards the current Eurocentric narrative of mass migration and settlement to the British Isles presented by the key stage 2 national curriculum for history (DFE, 2013a).

References
Integration and Decolonising the Curriculum

By Richard Race, University of Roehampton

In October 2019 a teaching resource entitled Decolonising the Curriculum was launched by my colleagues at the University of Roehampton’s Department of Social Studies. The project was student-led, and included a student manifesto explaining why the group was focussing on this issue. The resource consists of a syllabus bank with readings that highlight an intersectional approach. As the resource itself highlights, Roehampton is among a number of universities that are home to teaching resources and support groups that are not only decolonising the curriculum but looking at wider race and ethnicity issues in higher education and the social sciences (Arday & Mirza, 2018).

When exploring decolonising the curriculum and the wider academy, we have to mention colonisation and the processes that have shaped modern education. Within education, the national curriculum was created in 1988 by the nation state to centralise content and how it was taught in the classroom. Within key stages in English schools, national curricula are monocultural, focussing on a singular history or citizenship rather than taking a wider approach which incorporates and acknowledges cultural diversity (Moncreiffe, 2018).

If we take integration to be a conditional relationship between the nation state, which creates policy, and individuals/communities who accept or resist that policy, then we have a theoretical perspective on policymaking. The national or has always been deliberately singular rather than plural, and it can be argued that the national curriculum in England was a Brexit policy, 30 years before Brexit (Race, 2019). On the other hand, I have also pointed out that the suggested curricula for programmes of study in citizenship and history actually reflect cultural
diversity quite fully, and that the issue lies more with initial teacher training and actual teaching (in all education environments). There is certainly a need to continually develop teacher and lecturer professional practice through diversity courses in order to increase understandings of the multiculturalism within classrooms and lecture theatres (Race, 2015).

In my current research, I’m interested in those people who resist state policy – for example, parents who home educate rather than send their children to school to be taught the national curriculum. They have a variety of reasons for doing so, one of which is a lack of culturally diverse practice. Decolonising the curriculum must involve education change, in terms of both what is taught and how it is taught, as well as all communities within society being involved in the dialogues that lead to this change. It would be simplistic to argue that we need more international, global perspectives on education but not a fuller political understanding of how the nation state preserves its identity, not only through education but also through the work of other departments, specifically through policymaking.

**RACE EQUALITY TEACHING**

Klein, Miles and Richardson (2018) remind us that if we are to attempt to decolonise the curriculum we must recount the multicultural and antiracist education story of Britain over the last four decades. We must remember and pay tribute to those whose activism has promoted race equality and cultural diversity teaching in classrooms, lecture theatres and communities. However, as Callender (2019) argues, we also need to examine the system of teacher training programmes that timetable just one session on issues of race (let alone racism or institutional racism) within a single year. Education practitioners need to be given opportunities to learn about and gain knowledge of the fluidity of demographic and cultural changes. Culturally diverse knowledge of different ethnicities and faiths is essential for any inclusive education practice. But what happens if curricula are, in many contexts, too white or too English?

**CRITICAL MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION PRACTICE**

Some of the best published literature on inequalities and culturally diverse curriculum comes out of the US (see for example Spring, 2016; Manning, Baruth, & Lee, 2017). To put decolonising into context, you have to talk about colonising a curriculum through a national story. Then you have to tackle the problem at its source, which is what is educationally taught – that is, the content that frames the knowledge being shared. This is a systemic issue, so the solution has to be intersectional, and this is what the better publications on multicultural education focus on. Sloan, Joyner, Stakeman and Schmitz’s (2018) call for (critical) personal reflection and knowledge building is an important one. If we are going to decolonise the curriculum then we are going to have to challenge and change the content used in education. How are we going to do this?

**DECOLONISING THE CURRICULUM**

In answer to the two questions above, we need to move beyond simply having a Black History Month to developing programmes of study that incorporate culturally diverse curricula all year round. We can do this by engaging with teaching resources, like the Roehampton resource mentioned earlier, that allow our professional practice to develop and evolve, but also give us a more intersectional lens to bring to bear on our own research.

Let us be in no doubt about the processes of colonisation which, through integrationist policies, uphold an unjust status quo (Tomlinson, 2019). To decolonise in this context we need to change what is taught and how it is taught, but we also need to critically reflect upon how these issues shape our research and consequent publications.

**References**

Decolonisation is the movement, in the formerly colonised territories, to reclaim the rights, justice and dignity of the people from their former colonisers. The process of decolonisation also refers to the questioning and problematising of the Eurocentric set of standards, values and worldviews which has been perpetuated in the formerly colonised nations even after they acquired independence. In education, decolonising the curriculum aims to interrogate and reconstruct Eurocentric school knowledge, and to examine how that knowledge is connected to power. In essence, it requires the shifting of what counts as knowledge away from the dominant groups' vantage point and western epistemological hegemony, in order to embody and reflect the lives and histories of indigenous and marginalised people (Sleeter, 2010).

THE DECOLONISATION OF CURRICULUM IN THAILAND’S CONTEXT

For many Thais the word ‘colonialism’ is irrelevant, as we have been taught in school and repeatedly reminded by the media that Thailand is the only country in south-east Asia that has never been colonised by western countries. However, many historians and postcolonial scholars argue that although Thailand has never officially been colonised, it has been deeply influenced by the west in ways not dissimilar to other colonised countries (Jackson, 2010). Scholars point out that instead of ‘uncolonised’, the terms ‘semi-colonised’ or ‘crypto-colonised’ might more accurately describe the relationship between Thailand and the west. That is, although Thailand (Siam at the time) was not directly ruled by western nations, the encroachment of imperial power from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century put pressure on the ruling elites to reform the country’s administrative, judicial and education systems (Loos, 2010).

Besides its semi-colonised status, scholars and critics also point out that the ruling class in Thailand acted as a local coloniser by imposing the contrived notion of ‘Thai-ness’ on its culturally and ethnically diverse populace. Ethno-nationalist policy was used to assimilate ethnic minorities into the same Thai national identity (Van Roy, 2017): ethnic groups had to shed their cultural identities and adopt linguistic, religious and cultural identities approved by the Thai state. This continues today, and in education the legacy of this contrived Thai-ness and ethno-nationalist policies is still present.

In Thailand, all first graders (aged 6-7) who enroll in government schools have to study a unit called ‘the Symbols of Thailand’ in their social studies class. In the textbooks, the symbols of Thailand consist of the Thai flag, Thai national anthem, Thai food and the Thai language. However, each of these were invented as part of a nationalist project in the early 20th century. The current design of the Thai flag - a horizontal tricolor of red, white and blue - was adopted in 1917 during the first world war, replacing the existing flag which featured a white elephant on a red background, in order to be more in line with the flags of other allied nations. The colours on the current flag symbolise the three overarching national identities: the nation (red), religion (white) and the monarchy (blue).

Another symbol - the national anthem - was first composed in 1852 and revised several times after that. The lyrics of the current version, which were revised in 1939 to reflect the change in the country’s name from Siam to Thailand, arouse a sense of patriotism by glorifying Thailand’s independence and urging all Thais to devote ‘every drop of their blood’ to protect its sovereignty. In fact, 1939 marked the beginning of several nationalist projects led by Prime Minister Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram, including the adoption of the name Thailand to signify the land of exclusively Tai-speaking people: this included the Shan and the Lao, but excluded others such as the Chinese. That same year, Phibunsongkhram decreed that the new version of the anthem be broadcasted twice daily, at 8.00 and 18.00, alongside the hoisting and lowering of the Thai flag in public areas, during which time everyone had to stand still to show their respect - a practice that continues to this day.
During the same period, Phibunsongkhram invented Pad Thai by borrowing the main ingredient - noodles - and the stir-fried cooking style from Chinese cuisine. The dish was invented during a period of rice shortage to protect rice farmers by using rice noodles instead of imported wheaten noodles.

The final symbol - the Thai language - was used as a tool to unify the Thai people. In 1939, the government issued 12 cultural mandates, one of which stipulated the use of Central Thai as the national language. Place-names in other languages were changed to the Thai language, and Chinese migrants with Chinese surnames were made to adopt Thai surnames (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2005).

The symbols of Thailand are the products of a Thai nationalism heavily influenced by fascist Europe. These symbols have been passed on to pupils in order for them to share the same Thai national identity. However, today schools in Thailand enrol not only Thai pupils but also the children of migrants from neighbouring countries. These symbols are therefore used as assimilationist tools for migrants: they must know the symbols on the Thai flag, master the Thai language, and be able to sing the anthem correctly with a Thai accent. One of the most common activities when the ‘Symbols of Thailand’ unit is taught is for pupils to draw and colour the flag, and write the meaning that each colour represents. Pupils also have to recite the lyrics of the national anthem and copy them into their notebooks. Ironically, in order to avoid being singled out as ‘migrants’ or arrested by the authorities, migrant children learn to sing the national anthem in a way that sounds as ‘Thai’ as possible.

For me, decolonising the curriculum in the Thai context means deconstructing school knowledge, including the unit on ‘the Symbols of Thailand’. Instead of having pupils passively learn these symbols, we should teach them to examine their origins, and to critically analyse their functions and the power attached to them in Thai society.

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Following the Lessons of Empire
Cultural unification in school music textbooks

By Kamil Nasibullov & Nataliia Kopylova,
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In 2006 the president of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, approached representatives of cultural and educational establishments to help strengthen the Russkiy mir (Russian world). Since then, this idea has become an integral part of Russian political discourse. In Russian, russkiy and rossiyskiy mean different things: the first denotes ethnic identity, while the second pertains to citizenship. This is extremely important, as ethnic Russians comprise only 80 per cent of the population in Russia – a vast, multi-ethnic and multi-religious country comprised of more than 160 nationalities and ethnic groups, including indigenous non-Slavic peoples. Russia is also diverse in terms of religion. Tatars, for instance, who constitute the second largest population of indigenous peoples in Russia, have been practicing Islam for over a thousand years. Representatives of indigenous peoples can be found in every city.

Several educational reforms have been implemented in Russia since 2006. As a result, unified government educational standards have been introduced in schools. This has led to the unification of education, meaning that the regional component – focussed on the detailed study of peculiarities of a specific...
culture – has disappeared from the curriculum. Whereas in the Soviet Union students had the option to take final exams in their native (non-Russian) tongue, nowadays Russian is the only language of instruction in schools.

We analysed school textbooks used in music lessons in Russia in order to better understand the process of cultural unification.

Music lessons are considered important for a child’s development. Russian students aged 7–14 have music class once a week. Only two types of textbooks are approved by the government, so teachers do not have much choice. Unlike STEM subjects, the study of music is intimately linked to understanding cultural and national traditions. We expected that at least one-fifth of the content of music textbooks would be devoted to the study of the musical culture of non-Russian indigenous peoples, proportionate to their representation in the country. However, it turned out that the traditional music of indigenous peoples is not represented in the textbooks at all.

What are these textbooks about? In them we have found beautiful classical music composed by famous Russian composers (Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev and others), and Russian Orthodox music with colorful images of churches, icons, and Christian rituals. It is surprising that students learn sacred songs despite the fact that studying religion in Russian mainstream schools is prohibited by law. However, the content of these textbooks is not limited to Russian music: pupils also study remarkable pieces of western classical music, such as those of Mozart, Bach and Grieg. They also include American jazz, European rock operas and even music from American blockbusters, such as The Lord of the Rings by Howard Shore. However, students will not hear African, Latin American, Arabic or Chinese music, nor indeed any non-western music.

School music textbooks are imbued with time-honored Eurocentrism. Pupils can learn about Eastern culture from Song of Scheherazade by the Russian composer Rimsky-Korsakov. This song, as well as other types of representations of eastern culture in Russian school music textbooks, provide examples of Edward Said’s concept of orientalism.

Representatives of non-Russian indigenous peoples in Russia will not, unfortunately, learn anything about their culture at school. Russian students will not know about the cultural achievements of indigenous peoples who have been living in the territory of the Russian Federation for many years.

Curriculum thus becomes a tool for disengagement and marginalisation. Lack of knowledge about the cultural achievements of indigenous peoples strengthens the perception of their insignificance in the eyes of the government and the ethnic majority. The identity of non-Russian students is therefore at risk. Essentialism that aims at presenting the culture as homogeneous and monolithic leaves no room for students of non-Russian nationalities. Moreover, ethnic Russian students are fully empowered to strengthen their ethnocentrism. Russian mainstream schools build hierarchical relations between students belonging to different religious and ethnic groups, instead of promoting the ideals of equality and justice.

In 2019 the Russian ministry of culture began working on a document titled The Schoolchild’s Cultural Standards, which includes a special list of the works recommended for study at Russian schools. This document defines the requirements for what a student should learn about literature, music, architecture, theatre and cinema, and presents many of the same issues as those we found with school music textbooks.

According to the constitution of the Russian Federation, ‘the bearer of sovereignty and the only source of power in the Russian Federation shall be its multinational people’ (art. III). Unfortunately, modern Russian public schools do not want to hear the voices of non-Russian indigenous peoples, who do not have a right to determine the education policy of the Federation. It seems that the Russian school curriculum, following the lessons of the Russian Empire, is establishing the hegemony of one people, one culture. In this context, the decolonisation of the curriculum remains one of the key challenges for the Russian educational system.

References
+ Russian Federation Const. art. III
Say What, Sisyphus?
Decolonising our attempts at decolonisation

By Shirley R. Steinberg, University of Calgary

How does one decolonise curricula without first decolonising the notions of schooling and education? How do we make meaning of learning when learning means knowing what one is expected to know, not what one wants or seeks to know? How can we decolonise when our structural lives depend on colonisation? Without wishing to sound like an academic with attitude, but rather as one who wants to know exactly how to decolonise, equalitise and diversitise, aren’t we reproducing that which we despise?

My poststructural, post-postmodernised post-truth self declares that we are so post that we are pre. Our pre-status has pushed us into a neoliberal era wherein publishers determine what students are to learn, head-hunter employment agencies select the professoriate and administrative candidates, and testing agencies determine the future of our children. It is an era in which fewer students graduate from high school and, indeed, the only source of power is corporate capital girded by government endorsement.

A few years ago, I co-edited a book – Curriculum: Decolonizing the field (Paraskeva & Steinberg, 2016) – in which we attempted to exorcise the canon and introduce a new way of ‘curriculum being’. As a so-called curriculum theorist, the task we set for the book seemed simple to me. Yet as I began to work on the editing it struck me that the chapters were replications: new words, new gibberish, but the same. In retrospect, I understand that the very notion of de-canonisation becomes yet another canon. This is a constant in the academic left. As educators, we work to reinvent a curriculum, a paradigm, a structure, a framework: we recreate the previous production (equipped with appropriate vernacular, post-post models, re-named theories – what the hell is ‘post-qualitative’ supposed to solve?), and by doing so are philosophically and pedagogically sucked into the next vortex.

We need more than a mandate to decolonise curriculum: the act of acknowledging curriculum is itself colonial. It is an antiquated approach to creating knowledge.

Indigenous ways of being/research work to create an academic speak/research/knowing devoid of so-called western research and curriculum. But again, with all good intent, I believe a retreaded tyre is still made of the same rubber, remains round and continues to roll on the same road. I recall the book From Bricolage to Métissage: Rethinking intercultural approaches to indigenous environmental education and research (Lowan- Trudeau, 2013), which describes an indigenous method of environmental curriculum development and research. While the book and the message are both compelling and solid, my cynicism compels me to note that renaming, re-canonising, re-colonialising through indigeneity creates a ‘non-western’ western research and curriculum, which remains decidedly western. ‘A rose by any other name...’: métissage is precisely bricolage; bricolage is métissage. Do we critique the spin by creating more spin?
So how do we create authentic curriculum, scholarship and research? How do we avoid mucking about in authenticity which then becomes a simulacra-ed second edition? Do we interrogate and destroy the concept of curriculum? Could curriculum itself be the ultimate attempt to reproduce and rebrand that which has never worked? Can the act of learning, the ability to know through pedagogy, exist without curriculum?

When asked to write these articles on decolonising the curriculum, we were invited to ‘be bold’. Naming it, telling it like ‘it’ is, we beg the questions, What was it? What was it like? My goals were clear. However, playing with the words, with the structured non-structure, I yearned for the raw, the organic, the authentic, and revolved through Baudrillard’s Venice, Las Vegas and hyperrealities. Were his own observations of the inauthentic authentic merely reproduction? Kind of like flushing a toilet in the northern hemisphere – say Birmingham (Alabama or the UK), and watching the water go round and round the bowl apparently counter-clockwise... then flushing a toilet in the southern hemisphere, in Melbourne, watching the water go round clockwise? Many argue that, depending on the force of the flush, the tilt of the toilet, the slant of the floor, this could be disputed. Reinventing the notion of toilet-flushing, we still end up with the same result: the water goes down the drain. And we continue to theorise and de-theorise.

We need more than a mandate to decolonise curriculum: the act of acknowledging curriculum is itself colonial. It is an antiquated approach to creating knowledge – categorising, naming, organising, and sorting... I contend that until we reorganise and reconceptualise the tentative acts of pedagogy and research we will continue to push an impossible boulder up a hill that never ends. Camus (1942) gives us Sisyphus, whose entire curriculum is futile because it was unattainable from the beginning. Our premodern, modern and postmodern concept of curriculum is unattainable, because the essence of knowledge cannot be standardised or fixed for a specific population, geographic area or educational content.

We need to know what we don’t need. We need to know what we don’t know. Without divesting ourselves from the cyclical toilet flush of curriculum/colonisation educationese, we have no hope. Being bold may mean embracing the tentative, the pre-post-de-context of changing how we conceptualise and envision knowing.

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One of the most significant developments relating to initial teacher education (ITE) in the Republic of Ireland has been the establishment of the Teaching Council in 2006 as the professional standards body for the teaching profession. Within the last decade, policy documents such as Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and guidelines for programme providers (Teaching Council, 2011, revised 2017) and Guidelines on School Placement (Teaching Council, 2013) have brought wide-ranging change to Irish teacher education programmes. Primary and post-primary ITE programmes in the Republic of Ireland must have professional accreditation from the Teaching Council, with the next round of reaccreditations due soon.

ITE programmes in Ireland continue to follow concurrent (undergraduate teacher education degree) and consecutive (postgraduate) routes to a recognised teaching qualification. Programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels have undergone significant revision in recent times: primary undergraduate programmes were extended in 2012 from three to four years’ duration, and postgraduate options for both primary and post-primary ITE were, in 2014, reconceptualised into two-year professional master of education (PME) degrees. The recent reforms also increased the amount of time that student teachers spend on school placement.

ITE programmes reside predominantly in publicly funded higher education institutions (HEIs) in Ireland, with one private provider offering PME options. Recent years have seen an increased focus on partnership between ITE providers and schools, and while there have been a number of innovative collaborations between HEIs and schools in the area of placement, partnerships between them are still mainly informal (Hall, Murphy, Rutherford, & Ní Áinleáis, 2018). There are no employment-based routes into teaching in the Republic of Ireland.

The Report of the International Review Panel on the Structure of Initial Teacher Education Provision in Ireland (Sahlberg, Munn, & Furlong, 2012) – often referred to as the ‘Sahlberg Report’ or more recently, ‘Sahlberg 1’ – has been another source of changes.
for teacher education. Among its recommendations were that teacher education be facilitated in university settings with links to practice in schools, and that teacher education provision in Ireland be restructured, from 19 institutions in 2012 to six proposed institutes or centres for teacher education. The follow-up ‘Sahlberg 2’ report reviews progress made in this regard and finds that ‘from the restructuring perspective, the recommendations have been fully implemented in the case of three centres’ (Sahlberg, 2019, p. 6), with implementation of the proposals regarding to a fourth centre almost complete. It also recommended that one of the originally proposed configurations be further developed as two separate centres, so that Ireland would have ‘seven centres of excellence in ITE (as opposed to the six centres recommended in 2012)’ (Sahlberg, 2019, p. 7).

Irish primary and post-primary schools are currently experiencing significant challenges in terms of teacher shortages. Teaching has traditionally been seen as a well-respected and valued career in the Republic of Ireland, with high entry criteria and demand for places on ITE programmes (Harford & O’Doherty, 2016). As we begin a new decade in which issues of change, choice and challenge will continue to permeate teaching and teacher education, we must continue to safeguard, incentivise and invest in Irish ITE in order for our teacher education programmes to continue to attract high-quality applicants – the calibre of whom has been, it was noted in Sahlberg 1 (2012), amongst the highest in the world.

A number of studies have highlighted the need for greater diversity in the teaching profession in Ireland in order to better reflect the diversity of Irish society. Recent steps taken towards addressing this include initiatives funded by the Programme for Access to High Education (PATH) scheme in 2017, which were designed to widen access to ITE for students from groups traditionally underrepresented in the teaching population.

Teacher education in the Republic of Ireland continues to face many challenges. Among these are substantial reductions in public funding for higher education over the last decade as a result of austerity measures applied during the well-publicised recession in Ireland. In addition, the recent change to postgraduate ITE programmes, which has increased their duration to two years, means that in some cases it can now take up to six years to qualify as a teacher in Ireland. As well as the significant time commitment required of those following this route, there are substantial financial implications to be considered, as students undertaking a PME are required to pay two years of postgraduate fees. Indeed, following the consecutive route to becoming a teacher in Ireland can now prove more costly in terms of fees than those needed to qualify as a medical doctor (Hyland, 2018). Challenges also exist in terms of sourcing schools for placement, and in some cases this results in student teachers having to travel significant distances to undertake placement, which carries implications for transport costs and accommodation (Hall et. al, 2018). Spiralling rental costs and accommodation shortages bring additional pressures to many students attending HEIs in some locations (most notably Dublin), and have seen increasing numbers of student teachers opting or having no choice but to undertake long daily commutes.

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Exploring Research Methodology and Methods in Education

By Carmel Capewell & Alison Fox, Convenors, BERA Research Methods in Education special interest group

It is only a year since we took on the co-convenor role for this special interest group (SIG). At the 2018 BERA Annual Conference our SIG’s members suggested that we hold events about innovative methods in research. We edited an issue of the BERA Bites series (Fox & Capewell, 2019) which curates a selection of BERA Blog posts around the theme of innovative methods. Simultaneously, we guest-edited a special edition of Research Intelligence (issue #139, May 2019) which marked the 30th anniversary of the passing of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child by showcasing studies that explore the extent to which children are active participants in research.

SIG members also expressed the desire to experience new methods in a workshop context. Just prior to BERAs September 2019 Annual Conference we ran a workshop on using visual methods in educational research. Participants experienced and critically examined the use of wordless picture books; photovoice; alternative methods for network visualisations; and assets mapping within communities. Participants actively engaged in taster sessions for both qualitative and quantitative methods. A panel discussion discussed ideas about how these methods could be applied, and identified issues such as accessing information with rather than about participants.

In October 2019, we piloted a ‘walk and talk’ approach that explored and shared attendees’ research experiences. The methodological rationale was introduced by inputs from Joanne Neary (Neary, Egan, Keenan, Lawson, & Bond, 2013) and Kathryn Spicksley (2018) which drew from their own experiences. Participants then walked from the campus of the Open University in changing pairs, sharing experiences of research and discussing questions about research issues arising during projects. In the final session, attendees reflected on views for the potential and challenges of ‘mobile methods’, creating a collaborative blog post (Lyeight-Jones, Zwierzchowska-Dod, Capewell, & Fox, 2020). There is a proposal is to run another ‘walk and talk’ event at the 2020 BERA Conference.

At the 2019 BERA Conference itself we held, in collaboration with the Early Career Researcher Network and the Inclusive Education and Creative Methods SIGs, a ‘hot topic’ session exploring the issue of ethics from a range of perspectives. A BERA Blog series arising from this session was published in January 2020.

Our focus for 2020 is researcher–practitioner partnerships. We are planning a multi-site event in conjunction with other SIGs in May, and another event that will draw upon international researchers to share good practice and innovation. We are always open to ideas and would welcome your suggestions. BERA members can become a member of more than one SIG, so please feel free to include the Research Methodology in Education SIG as one of your choices.

References
Every year the ECR Network runs a number of events every year, including an annual symposia series across the four nations focusing on a theme. The theme for 2020 is ‘Framing Research: Theories, Concepts and Reflexivity in Educational Research’.

Who is it for?
The ECR Network’s symposia series is targeted at early career researchers (ECRs) – be they current Masters or Doctoral students or those in the early post-doctoral phase. It’s suitable for any ECR seeking to present their research and to network with their peers.

What can you expect?
ECRs attending symposia typically present for 15-20 minutes and subsequently have 10-15 minutes for discussion around their presentations, and their research more broadly. The audience is made up of their ECR peers as well as two experienced academic discussants, typically one from the host institution, and one from a neighbouring institution.

Presenters are encouraged to highlight key points for consideration to guide the discussion and are able to receive constructive feedback around these. ECRs attending and presenting will be tasked with discussing the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that they have drawn on (or will draw upon) as part of their studies and/or considering how they have been (or will be) reflexive within the research process.

Why should you attend?
The ECR Network’s symposia series seeks to provide ECRs with an opportunity to present their research in a supportive environment, gaining valuable experience that will stand them in good stead for attending and presenting at conferences. The symposia enable ECRs to practice their presentation skills, engage in discussion about their research and to receive feedback to help them move forwards with their work, as well as providing the opportunity to network with their peers.

SYMPOSIUM SERIES DATES

Plymouth Marjon University
22nd April 2020

Stranmillis University College
14th May 2020

Keele University
3rd June 2020

More dates to be announced

Bursary Information

The BERA Early Career Researcher Network offers a limited amount of bursaries to the value of £75 towards travel for BERA Student Members only. To apply for one of these bursaries, please complete the form online with a statement on why you want to attend this event and why you need the financial assistance. To apply for a bursary, please check the event page at www.bera.ac.uk/events

@BERA_ECRNetwork #BERAECRSeries20

For more information and to register visit www.bera.ac.uk/events
Looking Backwards, Looking Forwards
Reviewing and previewing the 2019 and 2020 symposia series

By Oliver Hooper & Yuwei Xu, Convenors, BERA Early Career Researcher Network

The BERA Early Career Researcher (ECR) Network organises and facilitates an annual symposia series themed around a particular topic within educational research. These symposia are organised on a regional basis, and involve ECRs attending and presenting on an aspect of their master’s or doctoral work related to the symposia theme. ECRs attending symposia typically present for 15–20 minutes, and subsequently have 10–15 minutes for discussion around their presentations and their research more broadly. The audience is made up of their ECR peers, as well as two experienced academic discussants – typically one from the host institution and one from a neighbouring institution. Presenters are encouraged to highlight key points for consideration to guide the discussion, and are able to receive constructive feedback to support them in moving forwards with their work. The annual symposia series are organised by the ECR Network’s regional reps, with at least one symposium taking place in each of the nations and regions of the UK.

‘A really useful experience providing me with the opportunity to present my research and answer “on the spot” questions.’
SYMPHOSIAS SERIES 2019: ANALYTICAL APPROACHES IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

The theme for the 2019 symposia series was ‘Analytical Approaches in Educational Research’, with those attending and presenting discussing the approaches to data analysis they adopted as part of their research, alongside a host of related topics. Over the course of the year, more than 100 delegates attended one of the nine symposia that took place across the UK.

Host institutions included the University of Derby, the University of Exeter, the University of Sheffield, Edge Hill University, Staffordshire University, Cardiff University, Swansea University, the University of Strathclyde and Queen’s University Belfast – see opposite page for a map of where we’ve been in 2019.

Presentations delivered as part of the symposia series covered a range of topics, from utilising narrative analysis to drawing on secondary data as part of the analytical process to using multi-modal analysis. The 2019 symposia series was a huge success for the ECR Network – feedback on the events from delegates was overwhelmingly positive.

‘The event had a really ‘friendly feel’ to it and I felt very comfortable sharing my research and receiving constructive feedback.’

‘The discussants were very knowledgeable about the PhD process and provided excellent feedback.’

‘It was fascinating to hear about other ECR’s studies and the work that they’re doing as part of their projects.’

‘Such a useful, thought-provoking event. Really interesting to hear about other ECR’s journeys – particularly refreshing to hear honest accounts about some of the struggles encountered along the way, too.’

SYMPOSIAS SERIES 2020: FRAMING RESEARCH: THEORIES, CONCEPTS AND REFLEXIVITY IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

The theme for the 2020 symposia series is ‘Framing Research: Theories, concepts and reflexivity in educational research’. ECRs attending and presenting will be tasked with discussing the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that they have drawn on (or will draw upon) as part of their studies, and with considering how they’ve been reflexive throughout the research process. Symposia are taking place across the UK, with many institutions hosting events for the first time, supported by both new and returning academic discussants (see the advert on page 31 for further details).

The ECR’s Network’s symposia series provides an ideal opportunity for ECRs to present their research in a supportive environment, gaining valuable experience that will stand them in good stead for attending and presenting at conferences. The symposia enable delegates to practice their presentation skills, engage in discussion about their research and receive feedback to help them move forwards with their work.

Whether you’ve attended one of our symposia before or are a ‘first-timer’, we’re confident that you’ll find them engaging, enjoyable and enthusing. So, if reading this feature has piqued your interest and you’d like to attend and present at one of these symposia, please check the events page on the BERA website to find out about forthcoming symposia throughout 2020: bera.ac.uk/events

ECR NETWORK EVENT FUNDING SCHEME

The BERA ECR Network seeks to provide financial support to its members with its event funding scheme, which provides up to four grants of up to £1,000 per annum intended to support early career researchers in the 24 months following completion of their doctorate. Specifically, the scheme supports these members’ attendance of non-BERA events that they believe will contribute to their continued development. The funding can be used for costs associated with conference registration fees, travel and/or accommodation.

Application period four is now open, and the deadline for applications is 31 April 2020. See bera.ac.uk/awards.

EVENT BURSARIES 2020

The ECR Network also offers a limited number of bursaries to the value of £75 towards travel to attend most BERA events. Eligibility for these bursaries has now been extended to teacher members of BERA as well as student members.

Bursaries are offered on a first-come, first-served basis. Travel expenses will be reimbursed after the event in accordance with our travel policies. Please check the details on each individual event’s webpage to apply for one of these bursaries – see bera.ac.uk/events.
ERA's British Curriculum Forum held another successful event in November 2019. ‘A Research Approach to Curriculum Development’ featured a combination of keynote presentations and contributions from a range of schools. With increasing and renewed emphasis on the curriculum across Britain there is a need to ensure that schools and colleges are focussed, supported and equipped to develop their curriculum in a way that is meaningful.

This event was designed to bring together practitioners engaged in curriculum development to look at the value of research-informed approaches. A special series of articles on the BERA Blog will outline some of the day’s presentations and workshops, which sought to answer some vital questions.

- How can ‘academic’ researchers best work with teacher researchers to support curriculum development in schools?
- Does the new Ofsted framework promote or discourage a research approach to curriculum development?
- How can we help subject leaders develop the skills and confidence needed to take a research approach to curriculum development?

UPCOMING EVENT: A CURRICULUM FOR WELLBEING
A BCF event at the Sarah Bonnell School in Stratford, London on Saturday 14 March 2020 will provide an opportunity for education professionals from different systems and sectors to share ideas about curriculum development and wellbeing. For more information and to book see bera.ac.uk/events/a-curriculum-for-well-being.
CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO FUTURE ISSUES OF RESEARCH INTELLIGENCE

We are looking for suggestions for future themes and guest editors for those themes. If you have an idea you would like to discuss with our Publications Committee, please contact publications@bera.ac.uk.

RI (Research Intelligence) is BERA’s primary record of members’ contributions to the field. Each issue is dedicated to a holistic investigation of a topical theme of interest to the field of educational researchers, and those with an interest in the impact of educational research on policy and practice. We regularly invite contributions from researchers at different stages of their career to demonstrate the Association’s commitment to engagement, capacity and dissemination.

OPINION AND GENERAL CONTRIBUTIONS – THE BERA BLOG

The BERA Blog has been established to provide research-informed content on key educational issues. Members wishing to respond to a published RI article should consider the BERA Blog as the best means of doing so.

The Blog editorial team welcome articles of 500-750 words (including any references) that are:
· short reports or summaries of research;
· opinion pieces;
· responses to policies;
· experiences as an educational researcher;
· experiences using research.

Prospective contributors should ensure their contributions:
· are research informed;
· avoid jargon, dense language and excessive references;
· provide links to sources where possible;
· use inclusive and non-derogatory language;
· do not include obscene or rude content, or content that belittles or attacks persons or groups;
· do not link to profane, obscene, rude, or illegal material or to sites that knowingly violate intellectual property rights.

Please see: www.bera.ac.uk/blog for more. All BERA Blog submissions should be sent to: publications@bera.ac.uk.

NOTES FOR RESEARCH INTELLIGENCE CONTRIBUTORS

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**dates for your diary**

- **Bursary application deadline**
  - 26 February 2020

- **Authors notified of outcome of submission**
  - 17 March 2020

- **Early bird deadline for registration**
  - 1 May 2020

- **All presenting authors to be registered**
  - 1 May 2020

- **Authors notified of date and time of presentation**
  - 23 May 2020

- **Deadline for all attending delegates to register online at the standard registration rates**
  - 21 August 2020

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**Keynote Speakers**

**Professor Lani Florian**

University of Edinburgh

Professor Lani Florian is Bell Chair of Education at the University of Edinburgh and Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences (FaCSS). Her influential research in the field of inclusive education supports initiatives in many countries funded by international agencies including the British Council, Open Society Foundations, and the Council of Europe. She is frequently invited to give keynote addresses and lead seminars on inclusive pedagogy and teacher education for inclusive education. She is editor of the Sage Handbook of Special Education, now in its second edition, and co-author of Achievement and Inclusion in Schools, also in its second edition.

**Dr Katy Vigurs**

Birmingham City University

Katy is a Reader in Education in the Centre for the Study of Practice and Culture in Education (CSPACE). She has published on a wide range of educational and methodological issues and has undertaken research across a number of education sectors, including primary and secondary education, community and adult education, and further and higher education. She is a sociologist of education and has a particular interest in researching policy and practice relating to inequalities in higher education, including the related area of student finance reform and its impact on the stratification of higher education. She sits on the editorial board of two international journals and is a peer reviewer for numerous other education and methodological journals. She was previously Associate Professor of Higher Education at the University of Derby and Associate Professor of Higher and Professional Education at Staffordshire University.

**Professor David Olusoga**

Historian and Broadcaster

David Olusoga is a British-Nigerian historian, broadcaster and film-maker. Born in Lagos, Nigeria David studied history and journalism before joining the BBC. He's the maker of award-winning TV and radio documentaries and also a writer, the author of Black and British: A Forgotten History, Civilisations: First Contact; The Cult of Progress, the prize-winning The World's War: Forgotten Soldiers of Empire, and he’s co-author of The Kaiser’s Holocaust: Germany’s Forgotten Genocide. David’s books and television programmes have explored the themes of colonialism, race, slavery, the slave trade and contemporary culture in the UK and USA. He’s currently working on a series about empire. David Olusoga has recently joined The University of Manchester as Professor of Public History.