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<b>Title</b>	Decolonising the curriculum. Contemplating academic culture(s), practice and strategies for change
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In 2015, students at the University of Cape Town called for the statue of Cecil Rhodes, the 19<sup>th</sup> century British coloniser, to be removed from their campus. Their clarion call, in this increasingly widespread #RhodesMustFall movement, was that for diversity, inclusion and social justice to become a lived reality in higher education (HE), the curriculum has to be ‘decolonised’. (Chantiluke, et al, 2018) This was to be done by challenging the longstanding, hegemonic Eurocentric production of knowledge and dominant values by accommodating alternative perspectives, epistemologies and content. Moreover, they also called for broader institutional changes: fees must fall, and the recruitment and retention of both students and staff should take better account of cultural diversity rather than working to socially reproduce ‘white privilege’ (Bhambra, et al, 2015) Concerns had long been voiced by both academics and students about curricula dominated by white, capitalist, heterosexual, western worldviews at the expense of the experiences and discourses of those not perceiving themselves as fitting into those mainstream categories (for an Afrocentric perspective, see *inter alia*, Asante, 1995.) The massification of HE across race and class lines in the past four decades has fuelled these debates; consequentially, the ‘fitness’ of curricula across disciplines, are increasingly being questioned. Student representative bodies have also voiced the deeper concern that many pedagogic practices and assessment techniques in university systems serve to reproduce society’s broader inequalities. Certainly, in the UK, recent in-depth research has indicated that the outcomes of inequity are both multifaceted and tangible, with, for example, graduating students from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds only receiving half as many ‘good’ (first class and upper second) degree classifications as their white counterparts (RHS, 2018).

As a consequence of such findings and reports, the momentum for discussing the issues around diversifying and decolonising the university has gathered pace. Importantly, however, as the case and arguments have been expressed not only through peer reviewed articles and reports published by learned societies, but also in the popular press, the core issues have become more accessible than most academic debates and more readily discussed by both teachers and learners (Arday and Mirza, 2018; RHS, 2018). Hence, more recently, findings about the attainment/awarding gap have been taken seriously and given prominence by both Universities UK and the National Union of Students, though their shared conclusion is that radical (though yet to be determined) steps are needed if any movements or campaigns, such as #closingthegap are to find any success. (Universities UK, 2019; NUS, 2016)

However, the weight and welter of publications and polemic presented, at least for us, a number of conundrums. First of all, there is no absolute agreement about definitions. The conceptual hybridity of ‘decolonising the curriculum’ - the melange of two dominant conversations; curriculum (how taught, examined); and discrimination (how ‘race’, gender, class and sexuality can affect learning experiences), seemed to carry different emphases to different people. While these conversations have long been acknowledged as related (Freire, 2000), they might, in educational practice, be dealt with separately. As a consequence, interpretations about how theory might manifest itself in practice seem to be based on an array of principles, for example some practitioners are concerned less about seeking ‘authentic’ culture, but more about opening up of spaces to facilitate knowledge informed by indigenous thoughts and actions. At the other end of the spectrum, the challenge of decolonising the *content* of the curriculum has created a siege mentality for some academics whose epistemologies (and maybe livelihood) is nurtured by the rigid, rather than malleable and permeable disciplinary boundaries (Bender, 2005). Interestingly, this argument has also been evident in its reception by some scholars in the humanities. One position against ubiquitous change marshals the view that local, regional,

national histories and literatures should be a research and teaching strength of UK universities. *Ipsa facto*, the appointment of staff and significantly the staff demographic in those areas should not fall on the sword of the decolonisation movement. One certainty emerging from the literature was that curriculum and structural developments, to carry decolonisation into practice, are highly dependent on doing ‘difficult’ things: having uncomfortable conversations; and developing institutional spaces, opportunities, strategies and effective policies for promoting cultural change. That is not to say that a need for cultural change has gone unacknowledged - it is now *de rigueur* in many UK universities for staff to undertake unconscious bias training and the like. However, the matter of changing mindsets is, as Devine’s recent analysis suggests, is complex (Devine, 2012). Recognising and countering stereotypes is not, in itself, sufficient; individuation, rather than generalisations, should, she says, be accompanied by perspective-taking/empathy and increased opportunities for engaging with marginalised groups in a positive manner. However, to take the example of the teaching in one discipline which has been put under the microscope because of its curricular introspection, the content and perspectives of undergraduate history degrees in the UK and north America are dominated by Eurocentrism (Clossey and Guyatt, 2013), and militate against inclusivity in terms of both the student and staff body (RHS, 2018).

To research these issues, a project, based in one of the UK’s most culturally diverse universities, has examined the perceptions, concerns and aspirations of twenty students, and the knowledge, practice and strategic engagement of over twenty academic staff, ranging from experienced educators to those new to teaching. What does decolonising the curriculum mean for them; what is its relevance for equity and social justice in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)? What are the barriers to progress; and what might a strategy for change look like? We are utilising the data, derived from and triangulated between surveys and interviews, to explore this conference’s theme of inclusive and accessible learning and teaching by contemplating (a) how marginalised perspectives can be brought to the centre; (b) how can partnership and interaction between students and staff effect change; and (c) considering what strategic processes lend themselves to the actual expansion of disciplinary borders. At three points in the presentation delegates will actively interrogate the following challenges: how can the SoTL decolonise the curriculum taking it ‘from academic knowledge to democratic knowledge’ (Robinson and Katalushi, 2005, 51); what do we, as practitioners need to do ‘to re-examine disciplines and their epistemological structure’ and ‘ways of thinking and practice’ (Kreber, 2010, pp. 33-104, *passim*; wa Thiong'o, 1986); and how can systemic change happen, to make teaching and learning more meaningful for both staff and students?

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