

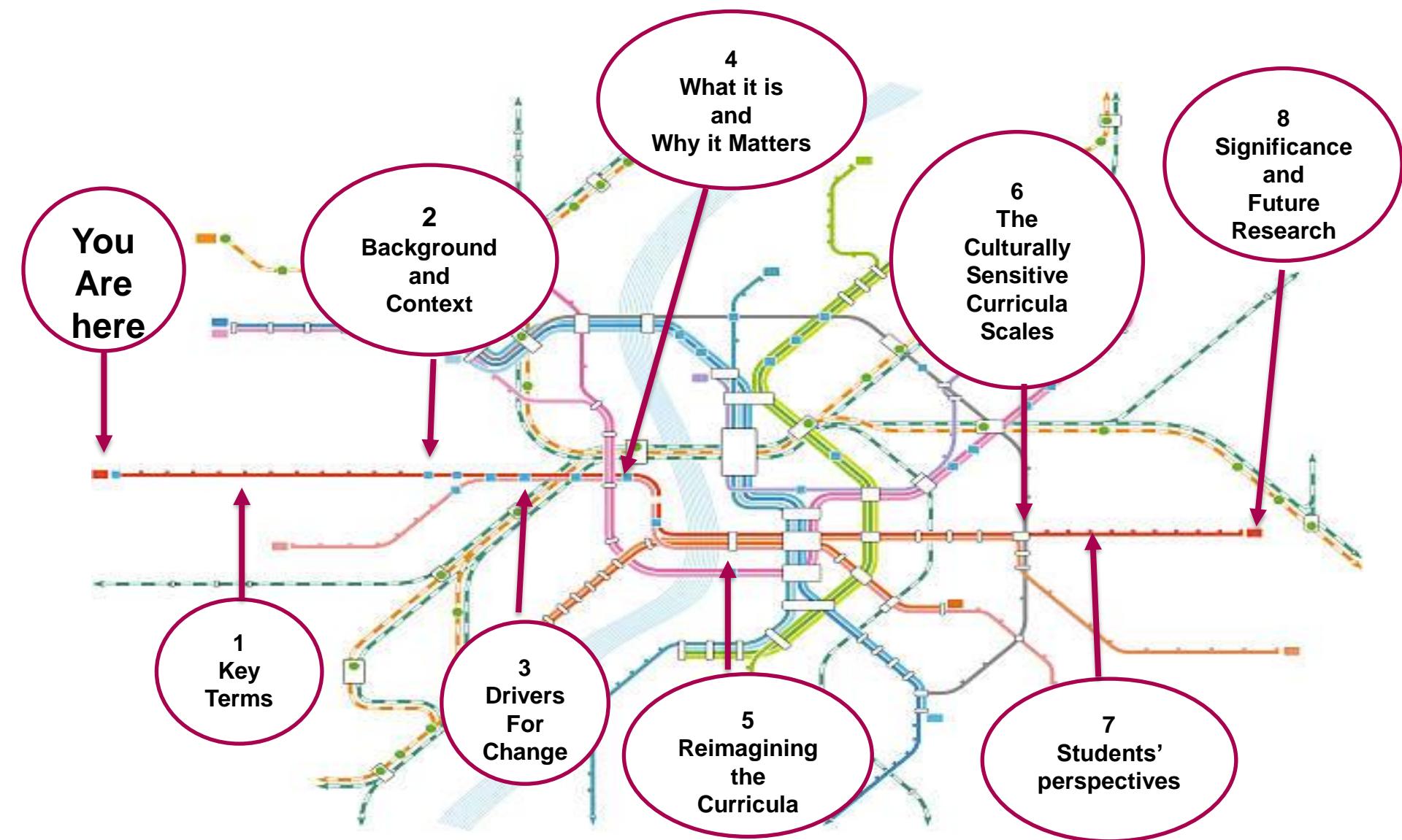
The need for research and evaluation in student success / Culturally Sensitive Curricula Scales as new tools for evaluating students' perceptions of the cultural sensitivity of the curriculum

Wednesday 11th November 2020

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Direction of Travel



“The only time we look at non-White material is in relation to colonialism (slavery/anti-slavery) or extremism, and the material tends to be negative as opposed to positive”

“It was literally White male theorists all the time and it was just boring because you cannot relate to it... it was just not relatable”

(Focus Group participants – Decolonise the University of Kent Manifesto)

Question?

What are the components of a Culturally Sensitive Curriculum and why does it matter in terms of student outcomes in higher education?



Key Terms

- **Curriculum** = that which is taught and how it is taught
- **Black** = African heritage (including Caribbean heritage)
- **BAME** – people who identify as belonging to a Black, Asian or minority ethnic background. **Not a homogenous group**
- **Whiteness** =an ideology that empowers people racialized as White (New Urban Collective 2015)

Background and Context

In the **2018/19 academic year**

- **98%** of UK domiciled students disclosed their ethnicity
- **24%** identified as belonging to a BAME background (a **73%** increase from 2003/04 numbers)
- **43%** of BAME students were **Asian**
- **30%** of BAME students identified as **Black** (23% Black African)
- The problem of non-continuation was most severe for **Bangladeshi** and **Black** students who have the lowest rate of non-continuation at about **82%** each, compared with **90%** of White students who continued or qualified

Background and Context cont'd

In the academic year 2018/19

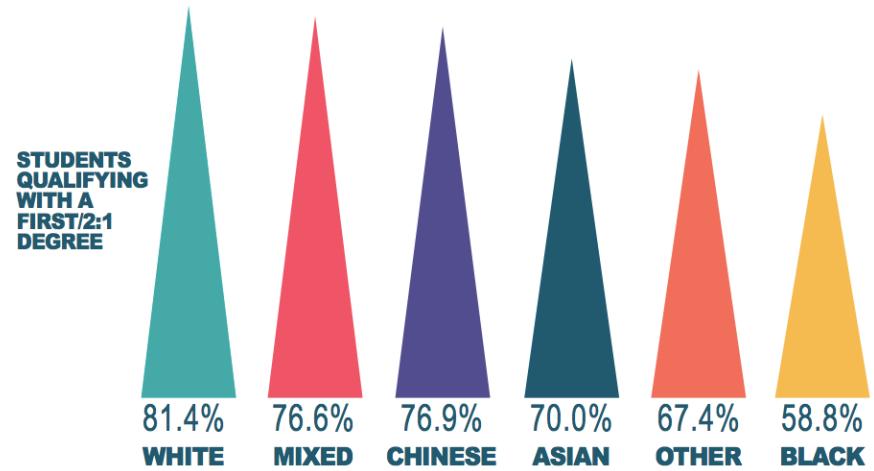
81% of **White** students earned a 'good degree' vs. 68% of **BAME** students

BAME 13% gap

Black Caribbean 19% gap

Black African 25% gap

STUDENT ATTAINMENT ACROSS ETHNIC GROUPS



5: UK domiciled first degree undergraduate qualifiers with a First/2:1 degree by ethnic group, 2018-19

• AdvanceHE

Advance HE (2020) Equality in higher education statistical reports - weighted by full person equivalent

#AdvanceHEstats

Background and Context cont'd

“**...controlling for other factors** which impact on attainment...**ethnicity is still statistically significant** in explaining attainment in HE (higher education)...” (Broecke and Nicholls 2007, pp. 16:19)

Drivers for Change

- Legal
- Moral
- Sectoral
- Institutional



What is Cultural Sensitivity and why does it matter in terms of student achievement?

- **Culture**
 - Shared understandings, characteristics, practices or customs of a group of people
- **Cultural Sensitivity**
 - Awareness of and understanding that cultural differences exist between people without assigning them a value (negative or positive, better or worse)
 - Respect
 - Value

What is a culturally sensitive curricula? How does it differ from other related concepts?

A curricula in which the **attitudes, teaching methods and practice, teaching materials and theories** relate to students' cultural characteristics, experiences and context.

(Bryan-Gooden, Hester and Peoples 2019; Ladson-Billings 1995a; Holgate 2016; Ladson-Billings 1995b; Gay 2000; USC Race Equity Centre n.d.)

A Culturally Sensitive Curricula: Why it matters

A Culturally Sensitive Curricula:

- contains **positive references** (see Wei 2007)
- reinforce feelings of **self-efficacy and interest**” and **sense of agency** (Lent, Brown and Hackett 1994)
- **respects all people**
- legitimises knowledge **from all communities and cultures**
- may reduce attainment disparities

(Gabriel 2017; Mountford-Zimdars *et al.* 2017; Mountford-Zimdars *et al.* 2015; Hockings 2010; Dandridge *et al.* 2008)

Reimagining the curricula: A set of Culturally Sensitive Curricula Scales

Validated a set of Scales Comprised of 19 items on 4 dimensions (n=262)

- **Diversity is present** (8 items, $\alpha=.87$)
- **Positive portrayals** (3 items, $\alpha=.81$)
- **Challenge power** (5 items, $\alpha=.88$)
- **Inclusive classroom interactions** (3 items, $\alpha=.83$)

(Thomas and Quinlan 2020)

The Culturally Sensitive Curricula Scale

Dimension 1 – Diversity is present

focuses on how people from diverse backgrounds are referenced within the curriculum.

See yourself on the shelf: The role library collections can play towards decolonising curricula

An initiative at the University of Kent, led by the Student Success Network and Library Services with students as active participants, looked at how to diversify reading lists as a key step in bringing about curriculum change. The Diversity Mark project is based on a belief that reading lists are an important representation of the legitimised ideas, theories and perspectives that dominate within a discipline and subject area.



Diversity Mark Award

- Summarises diversity activities
- Displayed in student VLE
- Dated and recorded for future monitoring
- Demonstrates institutional wide progress in diversifying library collections and curriculum

Diversity Mark Framework

Module convenors: Module evaluation; module audit; action plan of action; timeframe for implementation

Students: focus groups to discuss reading list audit; source, research and recommend inclusion of more diverse materials

Schools: Commit to diversifying the curriculum; Diversity Mark incorporated in core module evaluations; Equality Impact Assessment of all modules



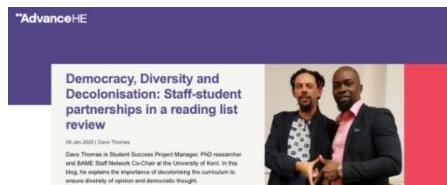
Library support to help academics diversify their reading lists:

- Alternative suppliers of content
- Finding diverse authors and perspectives in our collections
- Identifying best practice
- Reading list retreats

“We need a diversity of perspectives, particularly from members of colour and from the global south, including access to reading lists from around the world.**”**

“It would be great to have better representation to encourage more people to get into different fields.**”**

“We need a curriculum that reflects and addresses a range of experiences and promotes cultural democracy, as well as developing students.**”**



“What is generally understood as knowledge in the peripheries of our world represents a very small proportion of the global treasury of knowledge... Higher education institutions today continue many of the diverse knowledge systems in the world, including those of Indigenous peoples and excluded racial groups, and those excluded on the basis of gender, class, or sexuality.**”**

Hall and Tandon 2017

Surprisingly, there is a paucity of research illuminating the unchallenged epistemological and ontological underpinnings of the reading lists of higher education (HE) study programs from a cultural, sociological or political perspective. This provided impetus for my conception and creation of what I call a 'reading list review' at the University of Kent.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) consist of high-diversity student cohorts, who are not properly represented in current reading lists. Western perspectives, actions and that students are learning in traditional HEIs, where reading lists are mostly static, normative, linear, passive and often resources. Arguably, these students have little appreciation for approaches to knowing and knowledge production from the global South. Such misconceptions are problematic. Professor Hall Tandon challenges these perceptions in reading, "by adopting 'culture-blind' and 'compromised' transnational approaches, universities can claim to be doing something, while really doing nothing at all to change the status quo" (Mitra 2016: 7). The reading list review is one of many strategies one can use to address this.

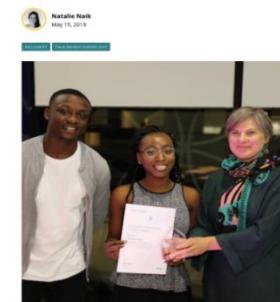
A reading list review is a process whereby staff and students engage in a collaborative, power-sharing relationship to explore the extent to which the contents, concepts and context of a program's reading lists are representative of diverse knowledge systems, then actively make recommendations to address. This process includes a desk-based review of the reading lists, as well as focus groups with staff and students, in order to gain nuanced understandings of their perceptions.

I use the term 'review' in a similar manner to Budd Hall and Halloran (2017) to represent an examination and equality representation of reading lists. This process is not limited to Black and/or BAME groups, Indigenous peoples, those generally excluded on the basis of gender, class or sexuality, as well as their White counterparts.

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Talis Insight Europe 2019: The University of Kent's project to improve diversity in the curricula



Ensuring better diversity in resources provided to students is a goal that many universities have been working towards. This year, the University of Kent and the University of Kent Talis team were invited to present at Talis Insight Europe 2019 to share their collaborative project.

This session was presented by Emma Mire-Richards and Sarah Field, Library Librarians, and Caroline Agnew and Cobie Konana-Mensah, Student Diversity Mark Officers at the University of Kent.

Caroline shared the following with us:

"My role was a Diversity Mark Project Officer for the University of Kent, upon taking on this role, the first thing I did was to review our reading lists by looking at the nationalities and addresses of authors within reading lists.

Diversity is Present

Sample items:

- People of diverse ethnicities are represented as researchers or professionals, not just as participants in research, clients, consumers, customers, etc.
- The curriculum references different ethnic and cultural traditions, languages, religions and/or clothing.
- The curriculum respects that different cultures may have different understandings, skills and/or philosophies.

The Culturally Sensitive Curricula Scale

Dimension 2 – Positive Portrayals

focuses on redressing the assumptions, perceptions and considerations of people from diverse backgrounds that may distort how they are considered by society



Dr Karen Hylton speaking to the Driveline UK Audience 2019 that saw the launch of the student research and the development of the BAME/Black History Month exhibition and Black Intellectual Capital report.

One of the essential and often overlooked aspects of promoting race equality and addressing structural inequalities in contemporary higher education institutions (HEIs) is the appreciation of what it is that black students capitalise as a pedagogy of hope, which can be promoted through an inspirational Speaker Programme. This is a practical strategy that departs from the individualistic conception of knowledge proposed by Discourses and enhances a collaborative approach to the development of a more inclusive and representative educational and knowledge system.

Black intellectual capital refers to the acquired social and human capital, as well as tacit and explicit knowledge of structural capital possessed by black people.

I use the term 'black' in a similar way to Nkrumah (1964), with reference to those people who are associated with the African and South Asian diaspora.



NOV 02
University of Kent Annual Race Equality Lecture
by University of Kent BAME Staff Network
[View](#)

Free [Register](#)

Date And Time
Mon, 2 November 2020
17:30 - 18:00 GMT
[Add to Calendar](#)

About this Event
The University of Kent's BAME Staff Network are honoured to welcome Professor Sir Hilary Beckles to deliver this year's Race Equality Lecture 2020. In this exclusive thought-provoking lecture, Professor Sir Hilary Beckles, will excavate the genealogy of systemic racism and the role of universities as critical partners in promoting and sustaining these heinous inequalities. The annual Race Equality Lecture is one of the University's most challenging and insightful lectures surrounding issues of racism and social justice.

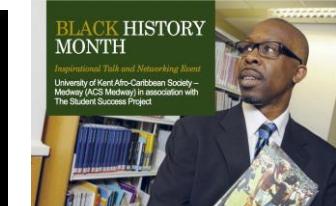
Come and hear Professor Sir Hilary Beckles discuss what Universities can do to help clear up the 'colonial mess'.



About Professor Sir Hilary Beckles
Sir Hilary Beckles is Vice-Chancellor of The University of the West Indies. Before assuming this office on May 1, 2015, he served the University as Professor of Economic History, Vice-Chancellor for



9TH OCTOBER 2017
DOORS OPEN AT 6:30PM
WOLF LECTURE THEATRE, WOOLF COLLEGE,
GILES LANE, CANTERBURY, KENT, CT2 7BQ
WITH LIVE SPoken WORD AND MUSICAL PERFORMANCES FROM:
KELVIN + CARIS
ESENRE KJ
Tickets: Free
Available from uni-of-kent-akala-2017.eventbrite.co.uk



Exploring The Student Experience and Belonging in Higher Education
Professor Kevin Hylton
(First Black Professor in Sport and Leisure Sciences)

Wednesday, October 24, 2018
The Deep End Student Hub (Medway campus)
Doors open at 17:00, talk at 17:30
Followed by Networking and free finger buffet
With a special Word Performance by Kwame Chet Daves (ACS Medway President) and Eunes KJ

This is a free event, open to all students.
Book early to avoid disappointment by email: studentsuccess@kent.ac.uk

www.kent.ac.uk/studentsuccess

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Positive Portrayals

Sample items

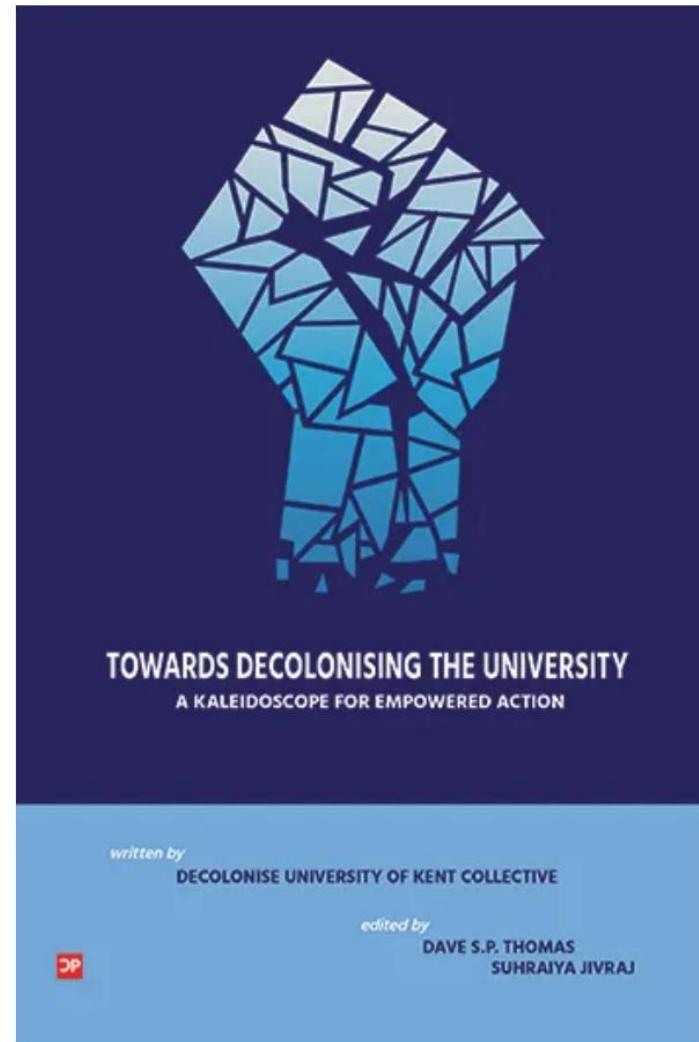
- When social problems (e.g. crime, violence) are presented, people of colour are usually considered the problem (R)
- When people of colour have problems, white people are usually presented as being able to solve those problems (R)

(R) Item reversed

The Culturally Sensitive Curricula Scale

Dimension 3 – Challenging Power

focus on the curriculum's ability to provoke critical thought and challenge dominant ideologies



<https://counterpress.org.uk/publications/towards-decolonising-the-university/>

Challenge Power

Sample items

- The curriculum raises critical questions about power and/or privilege that are usually taken for granted.
- The curriculum encourages students to connect learning to social, political or environmental concerns.
- The curriculum encourages students to take actions that fight inequity or promote equity

The Culturally Sensitive Curricula Scale

Dimension 4 – Inclusive Classroom Interactions

focuses on the development of a learning environment accepting of cultural differences and respectful of different perspectives



Inclusive Classroom Interactions

Sample items

- My instructors make an effort to pronounce everyone's name correctly.
- My instructors encourage students to respect other students' perspectives.

Perceptions of the curricula

BAME students perceived their curriculum as less culturally sensitive on all four dimensions of the Culturally Sensitive Curricula Scales than White students

Why does culturally sensitive curricula matter?

All dimensions of the Culturally Sensitive Curricula Scales were correlated with:

- increased interaction with teaching staff
- higher interest

Significance

- Key research tool for assessing and evaluating students' perceptions of the curricula

Findings led further support for:

- BAME students' qualitative reports of the "Whiteness" of the curriculum
- calls for educators to improve their cultural competence
- calls to decolonise the curriculum

Next Steps

- investigate the relationship between a culturally sensitive curricula and achievement
- Evaluate curricular interventions

Questions



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