

The Education Academy

Decolonising DMU Toolkit

Decolonising the Reading List

Decolonising the reading list

In working to build an anti-racist university where all can achieve Decolonising DMU demands the need for representative, culturally aware, and diverse reading lists. Lists where all students can see themselves reflected as a valued voice within the academy. This enables a sense of belonging helping students to connect with the curriculum and learn (Atkins 2018, Cousin and Cureton, 2012).

Decolonising the reading list workshop offers a bridge between the desire for decolonising reading lists and development of such lists. It offers a variety of tools to explore diversity within disciplines plus tools that can be used co-creatively in the classroom. This helps students explore their discipline and to annotate, suggest and share new sources for reading and research.

The session invites reflection on the role and function of the reading list within student learning; contemplation of reading list hierarchies and the power attributed to the theorists, researchers, ideas and knowledge contained. Consideration of the impact of reading list composition on the diverse student body is invited and the excluding nature of a lack of own identity representation on a reading list noted.

The following process and questions enable a move from review to enhancement:

Action: Reading list review of the composition of the reading list, recruit a colleague as a critical friend, share this activity with students or researchers for discussion, input and co creation.

Questioning stage: Auditing, analysing and acknowledging:

What is the situation? What does the reading list look like? Where is the bias? Why does it look like this? Who are the dominant voices? Why is this so? Legacy, history, commerce, capitalism, patriarchy, colonialism, racism...a combination?

Acknowledging: This is the picture, what can we do to change this? Seek other voices and perspectives, challenge and disrupt but not tear down the canon. Decolonising is enriching, broadening and deepening knowledge.

Seeking: Where do we find hidden or underrepresented voices? In what format? How accessible are these formats? Raise issues of authority and value of contexts, origins and source. But ask why are these voices excluded from the canon and from traditionally authoritative academic sources. Ask what light other voices shine on knowledge, experience and practice of this discipline. What changes to perspective and knowledge base do hidden voices bring?

Welcoming and widening: How do we get "hidden voices" into the academy, the discipline, the academic community? Systemic barriers exist within publishing and knowledge production, researchers talk of the grip of the "big five" publishers, the barriers of bibliometrics and the impact of the tyranny of metrics on more representative knowledge production (Okune 2019, Chan 2018).

Added to these issues are the problems of the talent pipeline where under-represented academics of colour experience barriers to both entry and progression within the academy. A further issue is prevalence of the monoglot, the predominant language of published academia is English.

Decolonising the reading list empowers students to explore different cultural narratives, challenge hierarchies of knowledge facilitating agency and a true sense of belonging.

To learn more a screencast has been created on how to decolonize your reading list, which can be accessed via [decap kt 2 \(panopto.eu\)](https://panopto.eu/decap/decap-kt-2)

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