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1 Chapter 15 - One size does Not fit all

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3

4 Introduction

5 This book originated from a UK higher education project on decolonising the curriculum,
6 Learning Innovation for Tomorrow (LIFT). This chapter details the decolonisation principles
7 that guided the project and includes reflections from the project team.

8 **A Three-Pronged Framework for Decolonising the Curriculum**

9 The team has designed a consolidated framework of three interconnected actions, summarising
10 their practical insights into curriculum decolonisation. These actions represent the typical range
11 of activities individuals, groups, and institutions encounter during decolonisation. Although
12 distinct in description, these elements are holistically experienced as interwoven cognitive and
13 behavioural actions.

14

15 **1. Developing a Shared Understanding of a Decolonised Curriculum**

16 Decolonisation is a troublesome concept with complex meanings leading to transformative and
17 irreversible consequences. In institutions, each stakeholder's understanding of decolonisation
18 matters and will likely diverge from the interpretation of others (Two Convivial Thinkers,
19 2024). These differences stem from unique demographics, histories, interests, and disciplinary
20 focuses.

21

22 LIFT did not aim to homogenise understanding. Instead, we facilitated individual and
23 collective engagements with decolonisation literature and practices, alongside respectful
24 sharing of diverse perspectives. These interactions illuminated shared beliefs and points of
25 departure. Even with similar foundational understandings, the practical implications for

26 decolonising the curriculum often varied (Le Grange, 2020). Where different beliefs exist,
27 achieving a shared understanding necessitates open, honest dialogue where all stakeholders
28 feel comfortable expressing their views. It demands a willingness to learn, unlearn, challenge
29 assumptions, and embrace new thinking (Kluttz, Walker & Walter, 2019). As cultural practices
30 and institutions evolve in response to societal shifts, decolonisation strategies must also adjust
31 (Gopal, 2021) to keep the curriculum relevant, inclusive, and adaptable to diverse student and
32 societal needs.

33

34 **2. Create a Supportive Institutional Culture**

35 Visible and genuine leadership commitment significantly bolsters decolonisation efforts
36 (Briscoe & McIntosh, 2022). For successful curriculum decolonisation, staff agency is crucial
37 for this complex cultural shift. Leaders with organisational power must establish
38 accountability, recognise and reward excellence. These have resource implications, and policy
39 initiatives such as targeted research funding and professional development make a difference
40 (See Chapter 2).

41 The LIFT projects highlighted the vital role of bottom-up initiatives (Middelveld et al., 2021).
42 Within schools and course groups, trailblazers embraced decolonisation, applying it within
43 their spheres of influence and valuing networking opportunities. As change-makers, they often
44 sought institutional shifts, which often caused conflict. These situations saw decolonising
45 scholars' networks provide paths for "decolonising affect" (Hutchison et al., 2024), tackling
46 emotional strain and inspiring sustained delivery.

47

48 **3. Design and Implement Decolonised Learning Outcomes, Activities, and** 49 **Assessments**

50 Decolonising the curriculum profoundly transforms learning for students and staff (Ndlovu-
51 Gatsheni, 2020), foregrounding both content and pedagogy. The LIFT project emphasised
52 these key principles for module design: critical engagement with diverse worldviews (Mignolo,
53 2007), authentic assessments (Lambert et al., 2022), identifying forms of coloniality within
54 disciplines (Quijano, 2000), and fostering interdisciplinary connections (Keet, 2014).

55 While learning outcomes are essential for constructive alignment (Jackson, 2002), these
56 frameworks may not inherently support decolonisation (Newby & Cornelissen, 2025).
57 Regardless of the specific domain, a critical engagement with diverse perspectives is
58 paramount, as challenging dominant voices directly counteracts the monoculturalism that
59 silences minoritised perspectives (Gill, 2024; Scheiner et al., 2024). Coloniality is perpetuated
60 when educators predominantly feature knowledge from the Global North and specific
61 demographic groups. Conversely, the curriculum is enriched when both lecturers and students
62 cultivate an open-minded approach, actively embracing and critically evaluating varied
63 viewpoints. This shared disposition and the right to a broad understanding are foundational to
64 a decolonised learning environment.

65 So, among other things, a decolonised learning environment requires racial harmony, gender
66 equality, and minoritised group empowerment, avoiding a sole Western view. This principle
67 deeply resonates with the wisdom of historical educators, such as Dr. James Aggrey (1875 -
68 1927), a Ghanaian American philosopher who powerfully articulated the need for inclusive
69 education (Jacobs, 1996):

70 "Too often the African was taught that everything African was heathen, wrong,
71 ungodly. Our very names were designated as pagan and we were given European or
72 American names" (p. 59).

73 "No race or people can rise half-slave, half-free. The surest way to keep a people
74 down is to educate the men and neglect the women. If you educate a man you simply
75 educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a family" (p. 47).

76 "You can play a tune of sorts on the white keys, and you can play a tune of sorts on
77 the black keys, but for real harmony you must use both the black and the white" (p.
78 47).

79

80 **Reflections on decolonised modules**

81

82

83 A significant element of the LIFT project involved decolonising select modules. Applying the
84 three-pronged framework above, each of us reflects on a module that we decolonised from
85 three different disciplines: marketing, accounting, or education.

86 **Copland: Global Communication - Cultural Nuances and Decolonising Perspectives**

87

88 The increasing interconnectedness of the global marketplace presents a complex challenge for
89 marketing communication as companies expand into diverse territories, echoing historical
90 colonisation. Navigating this requires understanding varied cultural values and power
91 dynamics. The adapted Marketing module (Social Media Channels) within the LIFT project
92 aims to equip students to appreciate these complexities and, importantly, move beyond the
93 technical aspects of these platforms to consider their historical and cultural contexts,
94 emphasising that social media is not a culturally neutral entity.

95

96 This module revision addresses two key goals. First, it actively challenges the prevalent views
97 in global marketing. It emphasises that marketing and communication strategies may not be
98 universally appropriate, even be harmful in different cultural contexts. Students are urged to
99 question the dominance of these perspectives. Second, the module significantly broadens its
100 learning materials to include diverse voices, case studies, and theories from various cultures.
101 Additionally, it promotes a critical analysis of social media literature, acknowledging its biases
102 and limitations in capturing the complexities of global online communication. Students are
103 tasked to investigate the diverse cultural perspectives on consumerism and consumer behaviour
104 in different regions and critically assess the factors influencing these perspectives.

105 Implementing these changes presented several challenges. A significant hurdle was the need to
106 adapt the module content and assessment structure without undergoing a formal validation or
107 approval process. This required a careful and strategic approach to integrate new perspectives
108 and materials while still meeting the core learning objectives of the program. We also asked
109 students to actively question and move beyond their often UK and US-centric understanding
110 of audiences and marketing practices. This requires fostering a mindset of intellectual curiosity
111 and cultural humility, prompting students to research, analyse, and empathise with the values,
112 beliefs, and communication styles of diverse global populations. It involves moving beyond
113 superficial understandings of cultural differences and delving into the deeper socio-political
114 and historical contexts that shape consumer behaviour and attitudes.

115

116 Perhaps the most profound challenge lay in cultivating a broader understanding among both
117 staff and students regarding the pervasive and often unconscious influence of colonial attitudes
118 within academia itself. To gain a comprehensive understanding of global marketing
119 communication, it is essential to acknowledge and actively question deeply rooted biases. This
120 demands continuous critical self-examination and a dedication to actively seeking and
121 appreciating varied viewpoints in teaching and learning.

122

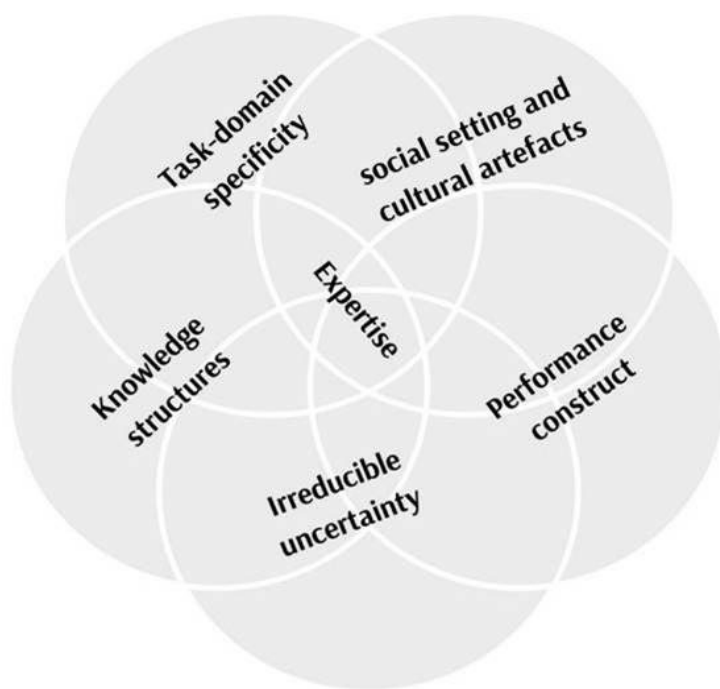
123 In this specific application, students are tasked with a complex, real-world scenario: to develop
124 a strategy for expanding a brand into three distinct global territories. This seemingly practical
125 exercise serves as a powerful vehicle for prompting students to move beyond their familiar
126 cultural contexts and to critically examine the assumptions that often underpin marketing and
127 business practices. The learning activities employed within this module are carefully curated
128 to facilitate this critical engagement. The curriculum incorporates a blend of pedagogical
129 approaches, including traditional lectures that provide foundational knowledge, interactive
130 seminars that encourage in-depth discussion and the sharing of diverse perspectives, and
131 immersive simulations that allow students to apply their understanding in realistic scenarios.
132 This multi-faceted approach caters to different learning styles and provides multiple
133 opportunities for students to grapple with the complexities of operating in diverse cultural
134 landscapes.

135 Students often mistakenly believe their personal social media experiences are universal,
136 overlooking the diversity of platforms, user behaviours, and existing cultural norms. Despite
137 initial misunderstandings, the module's design facilitates rapid development of a more
138 comprehensive and nuanced perspective. Through the exploration of diverse case studies,
139 scholarly materials, and peer interaction, students typically achieve a broader understanding.
140 This expanded perspective allows for deeper exploration of the topic, resulting in higher-
141 quality work that reflects a significantly broadened grasp of the international social media
142 environment.

143

144 **Afriyie: Decolonising a First-Year Accounting and Finance Module**

145 Decolonising a core first-year undergraduate accounting and finance module was guided by
146 Afriyie's emergent expertise framework (Figure 15.1). This framework informed the teaching
147 team (three academics) and students in developing decolonial competencies. The team
148 engaged deeply with decolonising literature and collaborated to develop the relevant
149 knowledge structures. The team agreed on core principles for module content and pedagogy,
150 affirming an emergent worldview where parts behave distinctly within wholes (Humphreys,
151 1996; Ellis, 2008). A module guide, outlining the decolonised teaching, learning, and
152 assessment strategy, was disseminated to all stakeholders: tutors, external examiners, and
153 students.



154

155 **Figure 15.1: Emergent Expertise Framework**

156

157 The teaching team proactively managed expectations and empowered students, recognising
158 the module's unique learning experience. Students engaged with decolonial practices by
159 valuing diverse perspectives, recognising coloniality's effects, experiencing assessment as
160 learning, and challenging dogma. The first session introduced and embedded these practices,
161 crucial for students to navigate expectations within this module and other less visibly
162 decolonised learning environments.

163

164 Students formed action learning sets, self-organising into groups of up to six, encouraged to
165 reflect cohort demographics (gender, sexuality, religion, race, age, etc.). The resulting visibly
166 heterogeneous groups eliminated the need for tutor intervention. Each group named itself and
167 shared responsibility for key learning and assessment tasks, fostering a collaborative space
168 where individual contributions defined group efficacy. To further cultivate this environment,
169 "Challenge your tutor Tuesdays" was introduced. This extra-curricular activity shifted
170 traditional hierarchical dynamics. Action learning sets organised weekly 30-minute
171 interactive sessions, challenging the teaching team with activities like quizzes, karaoke,
172 debates, or sports. These mutually rewarding activities built rapport and trust through
173 informal interactions.

174

175 Though existing module learning outcomes didn't explicitly mandate decolonisation, nor
176 were they amended, the module introduced learners to crucial threshold knowledge and skills.
177 To subvert the monocultural and Western-centric nature of these outcomes, assessment-as-
178 learning principles were used, with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) serving as
179 the central reference. Students co-created their assessment. Action learning sets selected an
180 SDG and, in consultation with the teaching team, designed their research question. They then
181 conducted critical literature reviews and empirical data analysis to develop evidence-based
182 arguments. Work was presented to the class, receiving tutor and peer feedback. Module
183 sessions were highly interactive, utilising blended and flipped classroom approaches,
184 allowing learners to confirm, critique, and contribute to designing grade descriptors. Guest
185 speakers (from diverse backgrounds) discussed the role of businesses and accounting/finance
186 professionals in addressing specific SDGs.

187

188 The graded assessment had two components: an assessed group presentation by the action
189 learning sets (including peer review) and an individual written essay, both based on the
190 chosen SDG. For instance, one set's inquiry into accounting's role in Uganda's drinking water
191 crisis highlighted that accounting and finance concepts are not inherently objective or neutral,
192 and that wealth-maximisation isn't universally fundamental to sustaining life.

193

194 Expertise in decolonising the curriculum, like any skill, develops through deliberate practice.
195 The overarching goal remains to provide students opportunities to embody decolonial
196 practice, remembering Shuell's (1986, p.429) insight:

197 "If students are to learn desired outcomes ... It is helpful to remember that what the student
198 does is actually more important in determining what is learned than what the teacher does."

199

200 **ahmed Shafi: Introducing the idea of decolonising to students**

201

202 The focus was on a module entitled Education in an Ethnically Diverse Society as a Level 5
203 (2nd year) BA Education programme. The aim was to introduce the concept of decolonising to
204 students as a very first step in recognition that not many students would have yet been exposed
205 to the notion of decolonising. The purpose of this aim was to encourage students to challenge
206 themselves to think outside of and beyond that which they know; to challenge the actual
207 materials presented to them and to redesign what learning materials should look like for an
208 ethnically diverse and global world.

209 The ultimate aim was to change the module content and assignment through the course
210 validation process to ensure that the change was embedded and to ensure students were a part
211 of this process. This was part of a critical aim to instill in students to expect and demand more
212 from the learning materials presented to them, i.e., for the learning from this module to extend
213 and broaden their expectations of other modules, leading to a student-led approach to such
214 changes.

215

216 Two new early placed sessions were introduced into the module to include decolonising the
217 curriculum as well as exploring power structures in how and what knowledge is generated. A
218 co-creational approach was adopted over three stages. The first stage was to introduce
219 decolonising the curriculum as an idea and concept, purposely as a formal lecture to give the
220 topic 'gravitas'. The reason for this was that students tend to 'sit up' when classroom contact
221 is presented in a formal lecture format and where there are 'notes to be taken'. The second
222 stage was to get students involved. This was done by tasking them with the job of critiquing

223 the rest of the module as we went through the sessions and content, pausing for where the
224 content could be decolonised and why. In this way, students were taking a lead, encouraged to
225 use their 'decolonised lens' to scrutinise course materials and content from reading lists, to the
226 use of images, to the pedagogical style of me as a lecturer. Just because I am presenting the
227 notion of decolonising, does not mean I was exempt from taking the hegemonic colonial ways
228 in which I was trained or have been practicing, or indeed lived my life. This co-created
229 approach had developmental opportunities for me as a lecturer, as students helped uncover
230 some of my own inherent and unconscious biases, thereby creating a two-way learning
231 environment. The third stage of the approach adopted involved exploring and critiquing the
232 module assessments and learning outcomes so that recommended changes could be embedded
233 into the course, thereby embedding a sustainable approach into the module, irrespective of the
234 lecturer delivering the module. This included decolonisation of curricula and an understanding
235 of power structures in the generation of knowledge to be part of the learning outcomes and
236 thereby integral to the module assignments.

237

238 In enabling collaboration and co-creation, there was an opportunity to create an environment
239 that signalled to the students that the institution is open to their involvement and to be
240 challenged. And that the institution is open to change and to embed that change into its
241 processes and structures. The messaging involved in such an approach is powerful in
242 communicating the appetite for innovation and change and the fostering of autonomy and
243 integrity within students for the broader and better good of the society that they will be a part
244 of.

245

246 **CONCLUSION**

247 **Just do it!**

248

249 A "one size fits all" approach to curriculum decolonisation is ineffective, alienating some and
250 dissatisfying others. A nuanced, multifaceted approach is crucial for creating inclusive,
251 equitable curricula. The LIFT project exemplified how decolonisation can be meaningfully
252 embedded within disciplines, not merely added. This integration, whether through critical

253 reflection in global marketing, collaborative learning in accounting or co-created assessments
254 in education, demanded sustained commitment, openness to challenge, and a willingness to
255 learn and unlearn.

256 Decolonisation is an ongoing process, not a destination. It disrupts taken-for-granted
257 knowledge, acknowledges colonial legacies, and fosters collaborative curriculum
258 decolonisation. It invites us to reimagine education where all learners feel seen, challenge
259 assumptions, and contribute meaningfully.

260

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