Creating inclusive curricula

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What we’ll cover today

1. **Wider context for tackling racial inequality**
   What are the current racial inequalities in higher education?

2. **Anti-racist agendas**
   What strategies, policies and initiatives are underway to tackle racial inequality in higher education?

3. **Decolonising the curriculum**
   What is decolonising the curriculum and how do you do it effectively?
Wider context
Different times, same ecosystem
Racial inequalities persist in HE today

- **26% attainment gap**
- **Inadequate racial harassment reporting structures**
- **Eurocentric curriculum**
- **Few black senior leaders in the sector**
- **Microaggressions and overt racism**
- **Lower continuation rates for BAME students**
- **Few black professors (even fewer women)**
- **Progression pipeline into PGR poor for black students**
Impact on students

- Attainment
- Sense of belonging
- Mental Wellbeing
- Progression

“When I arrived at university it didn’t seem like diversity was being celebrated and utilised in the way I was used to.”

Joel, University of the Arts, London

Source: #ClosingTheGap report, NUS-UUK
Impact on students

- Attainment
- Sense of belonging
- Mental Wellbeing
- Progression

"It’s understandable that staff might not know what BAME students go through and the issues they face; but it’s about being open to understanding and learning about these."

Salma, Aston University

Source: #ClosingTheGap report, NUS-UUK
Anti-racist agendas
Where are we now?

- Debates about racism and colonialism are alive and well
- Sector wide regulation and initiatives are in place
- Sector leaders are taking the issues more seriously with numerous recent reports (e.g. EHRC, UUK, Glasgow)
- Lack of comprehensive, institution wide approaches to tackling racial inequalities
Actions and initiatives

- BAME counsellors
- Report + Support
- Decolonising the curriculum
- Anti-racism strategy
- New senior appointments
- Mentoring opportunities
- Anti-racism/cultural awareness training
- Safe spaces
Key principles when tackling racial inequalities

- Take a strategic institution-wide approach
- Centre BAME students’ and staff experiences when implementing solutions
- Source appropriate expertise
- Resource effectively
Decolonising the curriculum
Existing curricula can be alienating

- BAME students don’t see themselves represented in the canon

- BAME students’ work that draws on their own heritage or background is valued less

- Delivery of education is not sensitive to issues of race and racism
3 quotes to unpack decolonisation

“It is a way of thinking about the world which takes, empire and racism as its empirical and discursive objectives of study and resituates these phenomena as key shaping forces of the contemporary world, in a context where their role has been systematically effaced from view.”
Bhamra et al, 2018

“If new facts are not connected to the learner’s existing knowledge, the result is likely to be boredom, alienation and poor motivation.”
Ramogale 2019

“To truly ‘decolonise’ our curriculum, requires a radical overhaul of what we even consider knowledge and how it is produced.”
Kwakye and Ogunbiyi 2019
Levels of decolonisation

1. Identifying continual influence of colonialism
2. Dismantling colonial structures
3. Re-imagining and building new futures
Key steps to decolonise the curriculum*

1. Critically contextualise current curriculum
2. Challenge “core texts” and existing canon
3. Challenge and reform pedagogical frameworks
4. Co-create curriculum with students
5. Create parity with marginalised voices in the academy
6. Work with external partners to build capabilities

*not exhaustive!
Benefits of a decolonised curriculum

- Increases BAME students’ sense of belonging in their course and university
- Empowers BAME students to take an active role in the production of knowledge
- Provides academics with development opportunities
- Benefits all students by giving them a more well rounded education
Thank you
Nous Group is an international management consultancy operating in 10 locations across the UK, Australia and Canada.

For over 20 years we have been partnering with leaders to shape world-class businesses, effective governments and empowered communities.
QAAS Webinar

LGBTQ+ students, Higher Education, Curricula, Inclusion and Mental health

Dom Smithies,
Session Outline

● What are the key issues are coming up for the LGBTQ+ community?

● What are the issues facing LGBTQ+ students? How do LGBTQ+ students experience Higher Education? And how have they found the HE this past year?

● What are LGBTQ+ students’ needs and how can curriculum design help?
A quick point on Intersectionality...

What even is intersectionality?

“the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.”

Does this make sense?

It’s key we don’t homogenize populations
The LGBTQ+ community are at the focal point of many battles in the UK culture wars at the moment...
Self-identification

- GRA Reform Fails
- Trolling
- Healthcare
Free speech

- ‘No-platforming’
- ‘Free Speech Champion’

'Free speech champion' among proposals to fight 'silencing and censoring' in universities

Gavin Williamson is taking aim at silencing and censoring but critics say there are bigger issues he should be concentrating on.
Representation in media (and beyond)

- Cis/straight actors playing trans/gay/queer roles
- (Lack of) quality representation in media? Improving?
- (Lack of) visible role models in HE?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysbX6JULaEc
What are the issues facing LGBTQ+ students?
Challenges to research

- **Research on LGBTQ+ identity and mental health is limited** due to societal attitudes and legislation. Up until this 1973, published research shows evidence of a bias in thinking about the relationship between LGBTQ+ identity and mental health.

- **Engaging individuals identifying as LGBTQ+ is challenging.** With stigma around both LGBTQ+ identity and mental health, biases can arise easily. For instance, those who are open with their LGBTQ+ identity and their mental health may experience fewer mental health difficulties, as a result of being free of concealment related stress.
Key Research and Reports

- Meyer (2003) - Prejudice, Social Stress, and Mental Health in Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Populations - AKA Minority Stress Theory
- Semlyen, et al., (2016) - combined meta-analysis of 12 UK population health surveys
- The National LGB&T Partnership (2017) - The Mental Health of Young LGB&T People
- Queer Futures (2016) - Understanding LGBT Adolescents’ Suicide, Self-harm and Help-seeking Behaviour
- PACE (2015) - LGB&T Mental Health: Risk and Resilience Explored
- NUS (2014) - Education Beyond the Straight and Narrow
- Stonewall & YouGov (2018) - LGBT in Britain - University Report
- Gov (2018) - LGBT in Britain report
What this research told us...

- LGBTQ+ individuals experiences’ differ significantly from their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts.
- Meta-analysis of health surveys that covered 94,818 participants across the UK found that lesbian, gay and bisexual people in the UK - particularly younger and older individuals - have higher prevalence of poor mental health and low wellbeing.
- LGBTQ+ individuals are at higher risk of: developing mental health disorders, having lower self-esteem and body confidence, having suicidal ideation, substance abuse, struggling with loneliness and self-harming than their heterosexual counterparts.
- Increased risk is predicted by a combination of factors: homophobia, biphobia or transphobia; sexual and gender norms; managing sexual orientation and gender identity; being unable to talk; other life crises; bullying; abuse; and shame.
- Average age of coming out: around 18 - overlap with the transition to university.
Risk & Protective Factors

**Protective Factors**
- Appropriate identity management (i.e. selective concealment)
  - Cognitive restructuring interventions
  - Emotional awareness
  - Investment in multiple self-worth domains

- Family acceptance
  - Peer support
  - Romantic partnerships
  - Therapeutic relationships
  - Mentorship from LGB others

- Parental support of romantic relationships and LGB friendships
- Integration of supportive social network

- LGB community based self-enhancement and social support
  - School factors e.g. gay-straight alliances, LGB curricula, teacher training
  - Employment factors e.g. LGB networks
  - Low-risk neighbourhoods

- Legal protections (same-sex marriage, employment protections, anti-bullying policy, hate crime protections)
  - Religious tolerance
  - Positive social attitudes

**Risk Factors**
- Concealment
  - Rejection sensitivity
  - Internalised homophobia
  - Ruminations
  - Negative self-concepts
  - Emotional dysregulation
  - Overinvestment in achievement domains

- Victimization
  - Social isolation
  - Fewer romantic opportunities
  - Impaired relationships
  - Avoidance behaviours

- Parental rejection of LGB relationships
- Fragmentation of social networks

- LGB community based risks (e.g. bar culture, within-community discrimination, sexual risk behaviours)
- Lack of school and employer engagement with LGB issues
- High-risk neighbourhoods

**Individual:**
- Intrapersonal factors

**Microsystem:**
- Family, peers, partners, teachers, caregivers

**Mesosystem:**
- Interactions between microsystem members

**Exosystem:**
- LGBT community, neighbourhood, school/work environment

**Macrosystem:**
- Laws, policies, societal attitudes and ideologies, religious values

**Chromosystem:**
- Sociohistorical progression and lifecourse
Involvement in the LGBTQ+ Community
- Most students either felt strongly engaged in their LGBTQ+ communities or not at all engaged.

Perspectives on Mental Health and Support
- 79% of respondents agreed there was a need for further support.

Help-seeking behaviours
- Students are most likely to seek support from their friends.
- Friends are most likely to provide positive experiences for help-seekers.
- Students are likely to seek help from their parents, but experiences with parents varies significantly.
- Students’ experiences of receiving support from university counsellors is generally positive, but there is notable variance.
- Biggest predictor of a student accessing & having a positive experience with a support service, is that they’ll believe the support will be helpful.
What we’ve heard in our listening

The negatives...

Hidden Figures: The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on LGBT Communities is a culmination of the findings from our online survey, existing research on LGBT health inequalities, and our own unpublished service user data. Our survey found that of LGBT people who responded:

- 42% would like to access support for their mental health at this time
- 8% do not feel safe where they are currently staying
- 18% are concerned that this situation is going to lead to substance or alcohol misuse or trigger a relapse
- 64% said that they would rather receive support during this time from an LGBT specific organisation
- 16% had been unable to access healthcare for non-Covid related issues
- 34% of people have had a medical appointment cancelled
- 23% were unable to access medication or were worried that they might not be able to access medication

(Read this!)
What we’ve heard in our listening

1. The Impact of the Virus
2. Mental Health
3. Isolation
4. Substance Misuse
5. Eating Disorders
6. Safety
   6.1 LGBTphobic Family or Housemates
   6.2 Domestic Abuse
   6.3 Hate Crime
7. Financial Impact
8. Homelessness
9. Access to Healthcare
   9.1 Trans and Non-Binary Specific Healthcare
   9.2 Sexual Health
10. Accessing Support
    10.1 Need for LGBT Specific Support
    10.2 Concerns about Accessing Community Support
    10.3 Impact on LGBT Sector
    10.4 LGBT Communities and Sector Response

(Read this!)

https://s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/lgbt-website-media/Files/7a01b983-b54b-4e83-84b2-0f2uad%2FHidden%20Figures%20-%20The%20Impact%20of%20the%20Covid-19%20Pandemic%20on%20LGBT%20Communities.pdf
What we’ve heard in our listening

Some positives...

- Use of software like Zoom for lectures and seminars has allowed for people to be much clearer with their pronouns by putting them next to their names.

- We’ve also heard some positive stories about how the digital learning environment has felt more inclusive and accessible.

- There are also reports that the increased provision of digital support has meant that support services are more accessible to a range of minority students and uptake and usage has increased accordingly.
The Role of Inclusive Curricula, Pedagogy and Teaching & Learning Spaces

#StudentMindsSUs
The Role of Inclusive Curricula, Pedagogy and Teaching & Learning Spaces

• ‘Safe spaces’ - learning environments need to be free from discrimination, harassment, abuse, *microaggressions*, etc.

• **Visible role models / staff representation**

• **Visibility in the curriculum** - lack of inclusion in curriculum allows for perpetuation of stereotypes, myths and false information (which could ultimately be harmful, e.g. in courses)

• Lots of research still to be done around how curricula, pedagogy and teaching impacts a range of aspects of student experience. We’ve been working with colleagues at Derby to understand how we can give guidance on how to create curriculums that are supportive and empowering when it comes to mental health.

But so much more to do...
Thank you

Dom Smithies

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