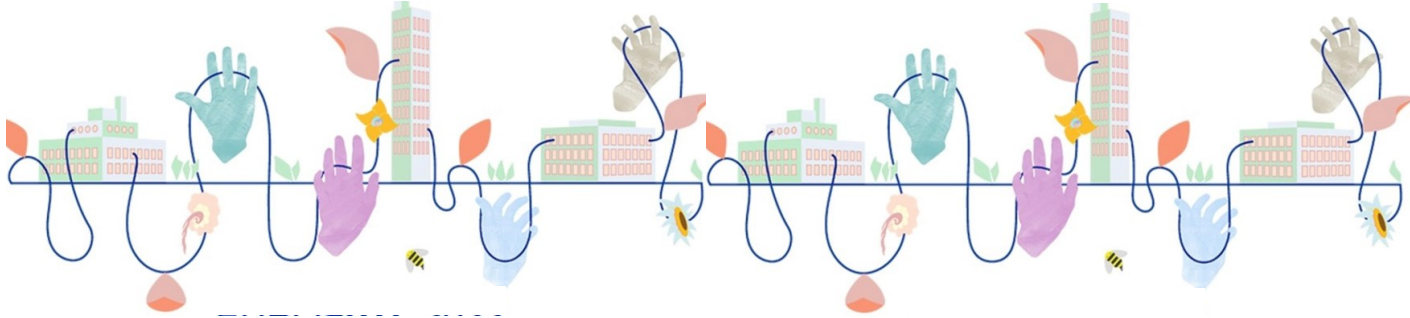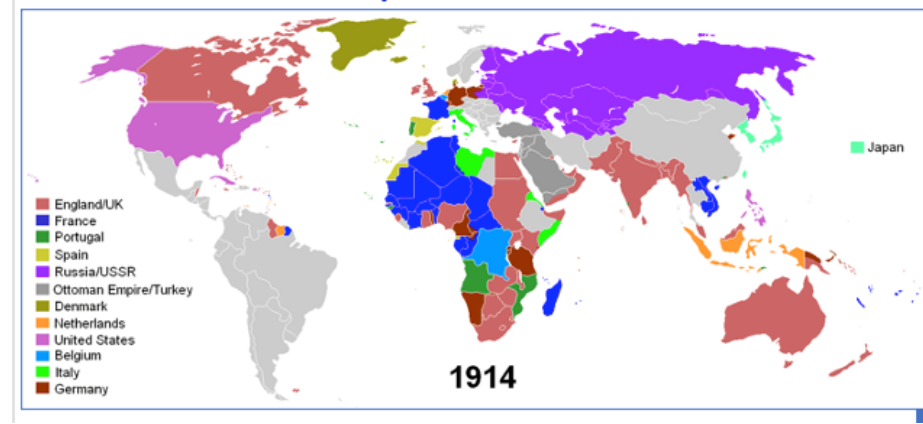# EUROSoTL 2022

Decolonising HE Curricula: Authentic Narratives from Academic and Learner Communities

Theresa Nicholson and Fiona Saunders

With support from Donna Jones (2nd Year Student) and Ashton Greenwood (Graduate Intern)

Manchester Metropolitan University

What is Decolonising the Curriculum?

Colonised areas of world in 1914, mainly by European countries (*Beauchamp, 2015*)

Decolonising = acknowledge and identify impact of colonialism

⬇

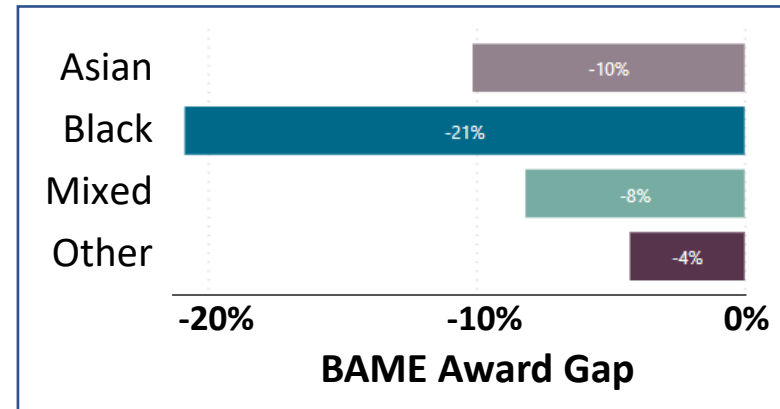Colonialism and Imperialism (Sharp 2009, Clayton 2009)

⬇

Decolonise curricula = re-balance, integrate wider perspectives

Inclusive curriculum ➤ Anti-racist ➤ Decolonised

Benefits of Decolonising

- Reflect learners in curricula

- Put right inequality

- Challenge perspectives

- Optimise knowledge production

- Provide empowering context

Rationale

Decolonising is a significant undertaking

- BUT it needs buy-in from **academics**

- AND it needs to make a difference to **students**

Aim: To inform and support the decolonising process

Obj1: Gain insights into lived experiences of BAME students

Obj2: Find out what academics already know....

Obj3: Develop online Toolkit to support process

Authentic Narratives
Student Diary Project

Manchester Metropolitan University

- 14x self-identified B.A.M.E. first year students (3 departments)
- Majority = female, 18-20 years of age, Home students
- Weekly online diary (MS Forms) for six weeks Oct-Dec 2022

Forms

Authentic Narratives
Student Diary Project

Where Am I?	**Identity Safety**	**Don't They Know It's _NOT_ Christmas?!**
Building Confidence and Community	**Safety In Numbers**	**That's Life!**
Being 'Other'	**Decolonising: Why and What?**	Dear diary

Student Diary Project

What I really like about my course is the diversity. I'm different from a lot of people, but as it's a really diverse place, it's a difference that's embraced.

Identity Safety

Don't They Know It's *NOT* Christmas?!

Times I felt I was being discriminated against. This wasn't something I was expecting because back at home I didn't experience anything like this - being marginalised or feeling left out.

Being 'Other'

Student Diary Project

Where Am I?

I want to hear about a Bengali scientific researcher making some cool science discovery

y Know OT Christmas?!

Building Confidence and Community

Safety In Numbers

That's Life!

I'm very grateful to have friends - who are also people of colour - who are struggling with the same things as me.

Dear diary

Student Diary Project

Last year on Eid I had an exam instead of spending the day with my family - if it was Christmas, there's no way that would happen

Don't They Know It's NOT Christmas?!

Building Confidence and Community

Safety In Numbers

That's Life!

In BAME cultures, the topic of mental health isn't something talked about at home

Being 'Other'

Student Diary Project

Where Am I?

Identity Safety

Don't They Know It's *NOT* Christmas?!

Building Confidence and Community

Safety In Numbers

That's Life!

Being 'Other'

Decolonising: Why and What?

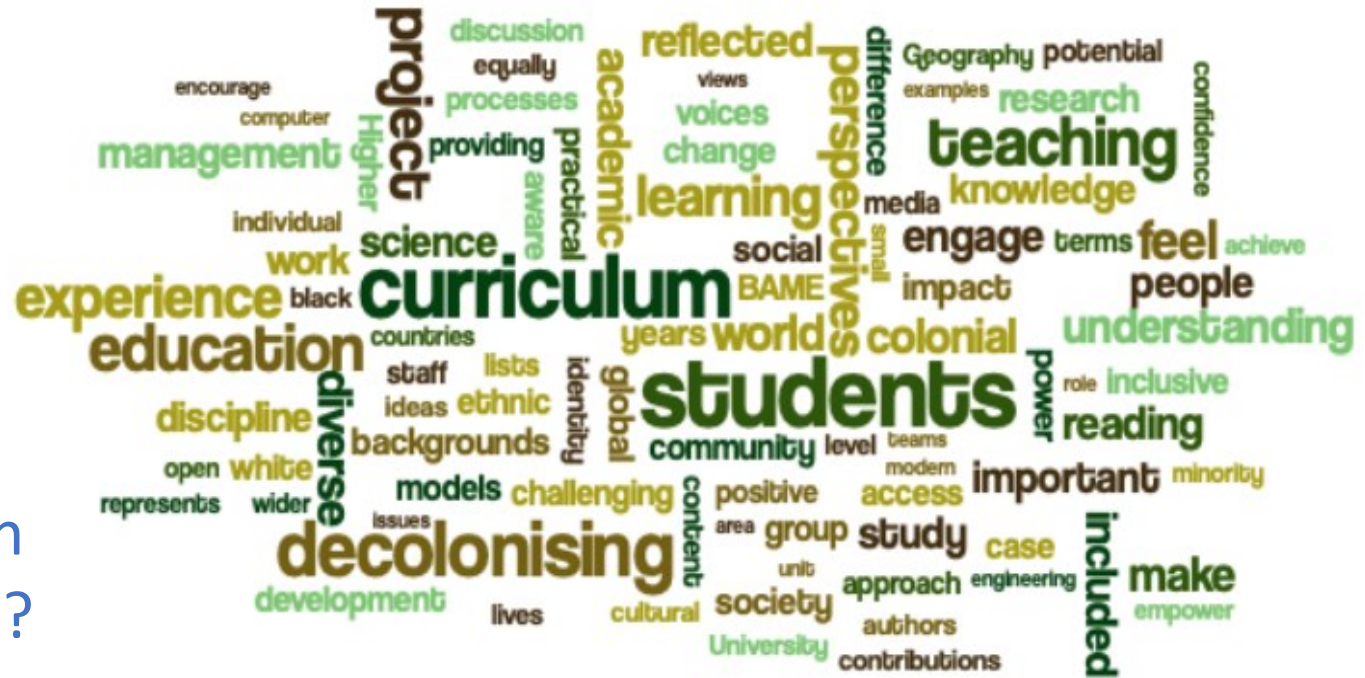Dear diary

Authentic Narratives
Stories from Scholars

What is decolonising?

Why is it important?

How to implement it in your discipline?

Stories from Scholars: **What?**

Means reviewing content, and equity in learning activities

....introducing previously ignored voices, images, authors, topics, theories and arguments.... creating a classroom and environment in which everybody feels safe, valued, respected... able to learn effectively.

Needs transformational approach to pedagogical basis

....it requires internal changes - reflection on our identity, agency and individuality. This is hard, especially when you are in a position of power or privilege.

Stories from Scholars: **Why?**

Practical benefits for <u>HE</u> (e.g. award gaps)

> It's important.... to signal a clean break between the dark deeds of our colonialist past.... otherwise we merely reproduce and reinforce the inequalities that exist.

Empower <u>students</u> to fulfil potential

> ...increase [students'] critical understanding of inter-connected human-natural-economic systems.... and better equip them as responsible global citizens and agents of the future.

Stories from Scholars: **How?**

Challenges of the process

My thinking is still developing and I don't have all the answers

This is a complex, difficult task

It may be feel uncomfortable for some, refreshing for others

....not only a challenging task but a profound one

Commonality and Difference
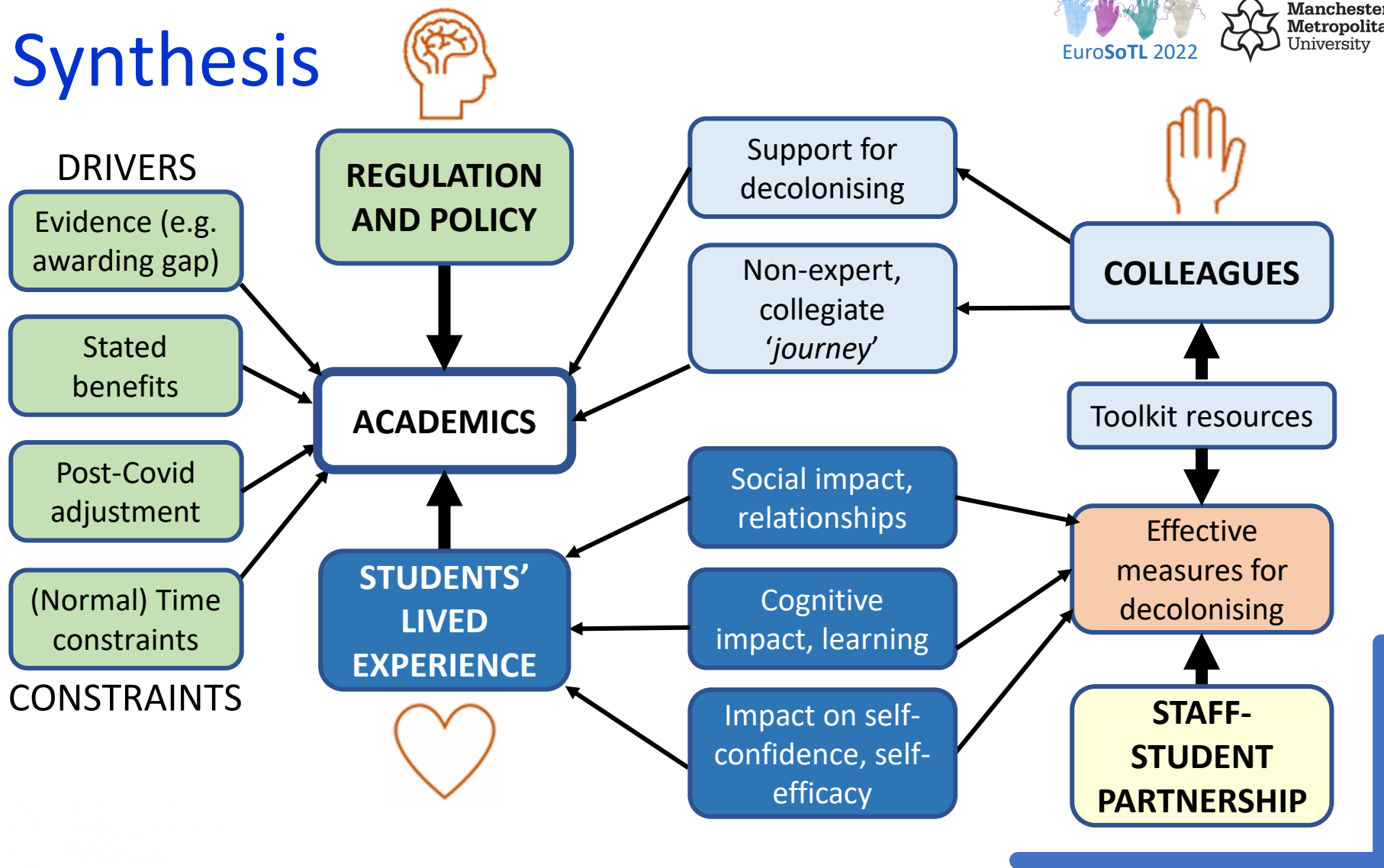
Some areas of commonality

- Decolonising is more than content

- Identify safety

- Staff-student partnership

- Potential for enlightening and empowering experience

Areas of difference

- Student future potential

- Awareness of complexity

Synthesis

DRIVERS

Evidence (e.g. awarding gap)

Stated benefits

Post-Covid adjustment

(Normal) Time constraints

CONSTRAINTS

REGULATION AND POLICY

ACADEMICS

STUDENTS' LIVED EXPERIENCE

Support for decolonising

Non-expert, collegiate '*journey*'

COLLEAGUES

Toolkit resources

Social impact, relationships

Cognitive impact, learning

Impact on self-confidence, self-efficacy

Effective measures for decolonising

STAFF-STUDENT PARTNERSHIP

Online Decolonising Toolkit

Curriculum design and planning ▶

Teaching methods ▶

Curriculum content ▶

DECOLONISING THE CURRICULUM TOO...
Perspectives on Decolonising

Stories From Scholars — Narratives from SciEng Academics

Voices Of Student Leadership — BAME Ambassadors and MMUnion

Diary Of A BAME Student — Insights into the Lived Experience

DECOLONISING THE CURRICULUM TOO...
Supporting Resources

Discipline-based resources

Guidance, facts, examples, data

Individuals, decarbonising

Frequently Asked Questions

Manchester Metropolitan University — **Faculty of Science and Engineering**

Decolonising the Curriculum Toolkit
GUIDANCE

January 2022

D. Theresa Nicholson
With contributions from Donna Jones, Ashton Greenwood, and members of the Faculty Narrowing the Awarding Gaps Task Group
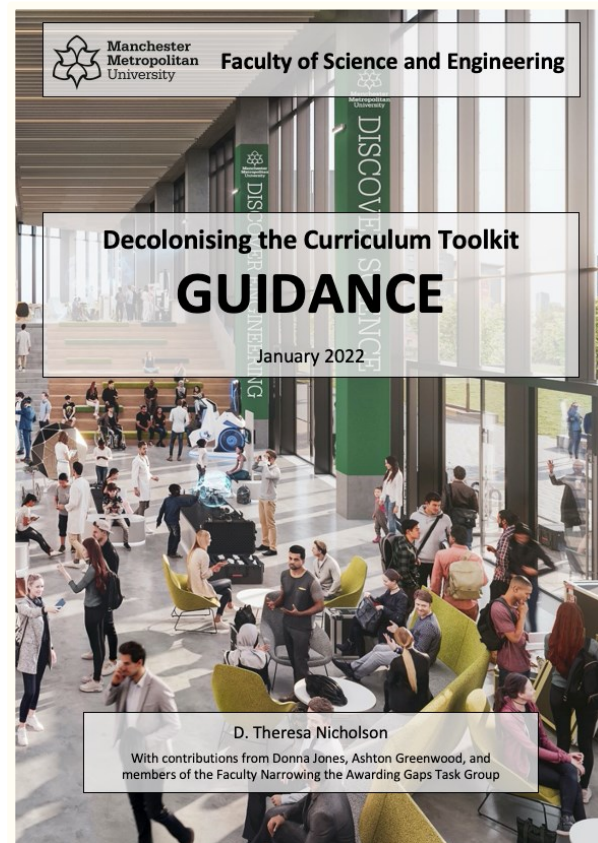
Online Decolonising Toolkit

Man Met University Teaching Academy: External-facing web page

https://www.mmu.ac.uk/about-us/professional-services/uta/reducing-awarding-gaps/decolonising-the-curriculum-toolkit

EURO**SoTL** 2022

Thank you for your attention

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