Diversifying the Curriculum Blog

Decoloniality and diversification are fundamental themes on the Third Year Sociology module 'Racism and Resistance in Education. There are multiple topics within the module that speak directly to this topic (e.g. Decolonising Higher Education) and there is also an overarching aim to embed anti-racist practice into education throughout.

Decolonising goes beyond only 'diversifying the curriculum'' and requires us to embed a range of strategies to dismantle the Eurocentric, exclusionary knowledge production practice of the 'ivory tower'. One way that we can do this is by connecting with community and drawing from local contexts. Borrowing from Black Studies, where an "activist and community-centred core is vital" (Andrews 2018: 135), teaching and learning should encourage students to create links with the communities they are in. With this in mind, I invited anti-racist social justice group *Maslaha* to the University to deliver a two hour session on the week 'Prevent, Fundamental British Values and Identity'.

Maslaha works across a number of areas including education, gender, criminal justice and health. They have a range of projects that mean they understand the multiple identities communities hold, and the multiple deprivations that can exist. Their work is always rooted in practice and with communities and can range from creating resources, working in the arts, designing new services, campaigns, narrative change, and research. They have a radical approach to safeguarding and expertise on Islamophobia, PREVENT, policy and embedding anti-racism when thinking about these themes. This made them ideal to deliver this session.

Maslaha delivered an interactive session during the usual 2hr lecture slot. The session featured real-life case studies from young people and families they have supported through cases of Islamophobia and racial injustice in education. They engaged directly with students and asked them to draw on their experiences both in school and HE to contribute to discussions. They introduced students to concepts like Islamophobia, safeguarding and the policies around PREVENT and counter-terror strategies in the UK. More broadly, they encouraged students to consider broad concepts and themes like capitalism, neoliberalism and inequalities in education. Maslaha also introduced students to their campaign work, encouraging them to explore their resources and sharing links so students could independently engage with Maslaha beyond the session.

Students were engaged in the session. They contributed to the whole-class discussion and were energetic in small-group chats too. Students were able to relate what they were learning to their own educational experiences and, aside from an agreement that a room with a different layout would have been more suitable for the interactive and

discussion-focussed session, all feedback was positive. Students showed that they were engaged and genuinely excited by the session.

To follow-up, based on what they learnt in the lecture and some in-class research, I asked students to produce a radical safeguarding guide (a document designed for practitioners working with young people, particularly in school contexts, who want to take a radical approach to child safety and safeguarding duties (Johnston & Akay n.d.). Where mainstream safeguarding practices have been shown to criminalise and exclude certain groups – disproportionately racially minoritised young people – a radical approach to safeguarding fosters alternative, resistance safeguarding practices that do not actively cause or reproduce harms (*ibid*). This task required students to actively apply their knowledge and was well-received by students. There were plenty of creative outputs that demonstrated the success of the session and students' ability to produce policy-relevant anti-racist outputs.

This initiative was a success and worked really well on this module. Given this, Maslaha has agreed to partner again for delivery in the next academic year and I hope that this will be a sustained and long-term partnership for the module.