



# LEARNING WEEK 2021



## Transcript for 'Embedding Diversity in the Curriculum'

**Nuzhat Uthmani**

**Slide 1:** Hello. Thank you for joining me on this session focusing on embedding the values of global citizenship and diversity into our daily curriculum. The main focus for the session is based around the primary context, however the concepts can be and should be equally applied to an early years or secondary context.

**Slide 2:** My name is Nuzhat Uthmani and I am a primary teacher in Glasgow and am the founder of a blog called Global Citizenship Education Scotland.

My family is from South Asia, so I was blessed with richness of language, culture and history. I don't remember experiencing discrimination in Liverpool where I was born, but faced racism in Glasgow in my teens – but at that age, you often put it to the back of your mind and learn to accept it, you normalise it. Society has set up the norm to ignore racist behaviour and as a child you begin to feel that your race and cultural heritage is second class. Of course – it isn't. As teachers we should be very aware of the extra burden borne children are often carrying, and will continue to carry until there is more fairness in society.

Because of my own background, I've always had an interest in promoting acceptance of cultural diversity and celebrating multiculturalism. But teacher training did not touch on anti-racist education or promote diversity in the curriculum, indeed there were very few staff of ethnic minorities. So after qualifying, I found myself working within the same confines of teaching our traditional topics in the traditional way.

**Slide 3:** I wanted to learn more about how to address this lack of addressing race equality not just for my own culture but for others too. So I signed up for a certification on Global citizenship with WOSDEC; West of Scotland Development Education Centre.

This really opened my eyes to the importance of the SDG's in developing a fairer world through a more equitable education, promoting the values of Global Citizenship in our everyday teaching. It gave me a platform, a foundation to build my next steps as a teacher.

Lockdown has been a blessing for my professional development: I've grown my network to include people I can learn more from developed my website to help others learn from me....and so here I am.

Slide 4: So what do we mean by decolonising? First let's establish exactly what we mean by the concept of colonising.

The definitions by Warwick University are helpful here:

Decolonising is the undoing of colonial rule/freeing of minds from colonial ideology – the ingrained idea that to be colonised was to be inferior.

A Coloniser is described as a country that sends settlers to a place and establishes political control over it.

For example when America was discovered or when India was taken over, as well as other countries such as Australia, Canada, and parts of Africa, who all had existing communities.

Slide 5: So what does it mean to decolonise the curriculum? Our curriculum is based on the successes of the British Empire and has traditionally only promoted a very Euro centric view of the world. A view of the colonisers, not the colonised. The curriculum has never acknowledged the impact on the communities that the British left behind.

So as an example, when we learn about early years education and development, we learn all about the value of the work of Bowlby and Vygotsky but not that of Rabindranath Tagore who lived at the same time as Vygotsky and held opinions that chime well with today's push on play pedagogy. He was a pioneer of outdoor learning, which we only credit the Scandinavians for – I recommend you look him up.

When we teach about Fibonacci and his number system, we don't mention where he got his numbers from. Al-Khwarizmi was a scholar of the Islamic Golden Age, who gave us our number system, quadratic equations, algebra and is the father of computing science.

Indeed, the word algorithm is a latinised version of his name.

Slide 6: Decolonising is not just about incorporating Black history for example. It also about representation across the whole curriculum.

Please take a look at the areas listed here and have a think about what content is usually used to teach it, who are the faces we associate within these areas, where do the stories come from traditionally?

Slide 7: Here are the some examples that I am trying to use when teaching these areas. You will notice that incorporating diverse stories or examples from further afield do not dilute what we have to teach in any way, instead they deepen and widen understanding and perspective among our learners.

For World War 1 or 2 I look to incorporate the stories and contributions of allies around the world, that we have traditionally heard less about. Eg. The British Indian Army or the Gurkhas.

Moving away from our traditional authors to use books written by writers from diverse backgrounds in which central characters are also diverse, bringing a rich perspective of lived experiences to the story, but also to encourage normalising the diversity that exists within our society and global communities.

When teaching enterprise, I use the examples of successful small or large businesses from around the world. This increases learner knowledge and understanding of the global economy and how we are inter-linked, by still learning the basics of running a business.

Slide 8: It doesn't have to be a specific topic designed around another culture to include diversity, we need to use examples in everyday conversations. For example, learning about bonfire night and the gunpowder plot – mentioning that gun powder is a Chinese invention.

When learning about the great historical empires, why only learn about the Romans in isolation, when the Persian empire also existed at the time and also contributed so much to our society that we still use today. We can use this as a comparative study comparing both empires and their significance.

Slide 9: So we've looked briefly at what it means to decolonise but why now? There are many views out there some of them include thoughts like this – We are British, we should only teach about British history. Or that we should focus on British culture.

But what is British history? What is British culture? Have they both not been influenced by the global history that we all share? I would argue that of course they have.

Slide 10: Recent events have made me think, why are we still having conversations about racism and equality?

The Civil rights movement was 60 years ago. We teach about Civil Rights in the Modern Studies curriculum, like this happened way over there in the US, nothing to do with us.

However, the Race Relations Act was introduced in the UK in 1976 to legislate against discrimination based on race.

So why in 2021 are we still having these conversations? How many times do BAME people need to tell their stories of discrimination, alienation and isolation?

I invite you to think.....have YOU changed? Have you taken these stories into account as a teacher? Have you thought about what impact these issues have had on the lives of your pupils?

Slide 11: So why now? Because Representation Matters – not through stand-alone events – but throughout the curriculum, in lessons, in stories, in resources and examples.

Representation is about valuing the heritage of every pupil and also members of our society.

Think back to that child who suffers hidden and blatant racism every where in their society, the child who witnesses their parents being abused, think about how carrying that burden is chipping away at their self-esteem.

Now consider when how it feels when they come to school 5 days a week and never see people who look like them being used as positive role models or in stories – that keeps embedding the sense of not being good enough, being a second class citizen or worse.

Another statement you may have heard recently is “You can't be what you can't see” – research shows that lots of children from BAME backgrounds do not consider education as a career because of poor experiences they had in school and the fact that they never came across anyone who looked like them.

Slide 12: In a recent webinar on antiracism, held by the EIS described racism occurring due to these 4 factors. Skin colour, nationality, religion and culture.

I'd like to then think about what these factors look like within your classroom.

Instead of looking at these factors, as negatives or barriers, we should be thinking about them as positives, as assets, as opportunities for us as teachers, for our pupils as learners and our same communities as equal members.

Slide 13: First let's focus on skin colour – some people say, "I don't see colour".

Well of course you do, we all do because it is not a negative thing to hide or avoid talking about. There are a variety of ways we can value our differences in skin colour; by representing it in our resources, images and people whose lives we use as role models and inspiration.

Slide 14: Secondly, let's look at the variety of religious beliefs, including those of no faith.

Why do we only use artefacts or images of religious objects in RME? Let's diversify and use them for example in art or maths to teach about shape, in technologies for studying structure. And again we should include role models from around the world to teach the message of positivity and solidarity.

Slide 15: Thirdly, how do we value culture but in a wider sense, rather than in the narrow focus of cultural celebrations or RME? Think about normalising the use of images from around the world, play music in your classroom listening to different instruments, in different languages. Study the variety of scripts that exist around the world, use traditional dress and patterns in our understanding of patterns and textiles. An example I often give is in HWB when studying the food plate. When I was at school the plate looked nothing like what I ate at home – let's avoid imposing the dominant narrative and be more inclusive and reflective of society's experiences.

Slide 16: Finally, focusing on nationality. We must ensure that we encourage an understanding of how we are all linked, the fact that migration around the world is not a new phenomenon, it has been practiced by humans for thousands of years. Look for opportunities to bust the myths around stereotyping of certain nationalities and teach our learners to challenge bias in the media, wider society and among our own opinions.

Slide 17: I hope you have found this thinking useful and feel there are changes you can put into practice with ease, as you continue

your journey on understanding global citizenship and antiracist education.

Before I finish, I want to introduce you to my website. I spent a long time early last year thinking about how I could best embed these strategies throughout the curriculum. I began to develop interdisciplinary lessons that not only helped me progress through the curriculum in a more fun and engaging manner but also ensured that I could include diversity and a sense of social justice through the inclusion of the sustainable development goals.

My website now acts as a one stop shop for global citizenship education with a variety of resources to help you learn and also lesson exemplars you can use or adapt for your own setting.

Slide 18: You can also find a variety of links to check out for professional development and resources from organisations who are doing amazing work in this area.

Slide 19: Thank you once again for joining me on this session today. Please check out the website and follow the twitter handles shown for further updates.

I hope you enjoy the rest of the Children in Scotland Learning Week.

Thank you, bye.

End of presentation