DECOLONISING EDUCATION
A Reflective Toolkit

What is this toolkit?

This toolkit offers a **reflective starting point** for decolonising education. It presents three core dimensions to the decolonisation agenda in Higher Education, specifically in relation to teaching and learning. The toolkit has been developed as part of an on-going project at the University of Birmingham in the School of Education led by Dr Jawiria Naseem in collaboration with a student group called Think Diversity

Who is it for?

Anyone interested in decolonising education can use this toolkit. However, it has been particularly designed with teaching and learning staff in mind.

How do I use it?

The toolkit allows you to navigate our dimensions for decolonising education: collaborate, interrogate and represent. Each dimension includes recommended good practice, reflective questions and top tips.

Our website offers a more comprehensive and theoretical guide, including recommended readings and staff case studies.
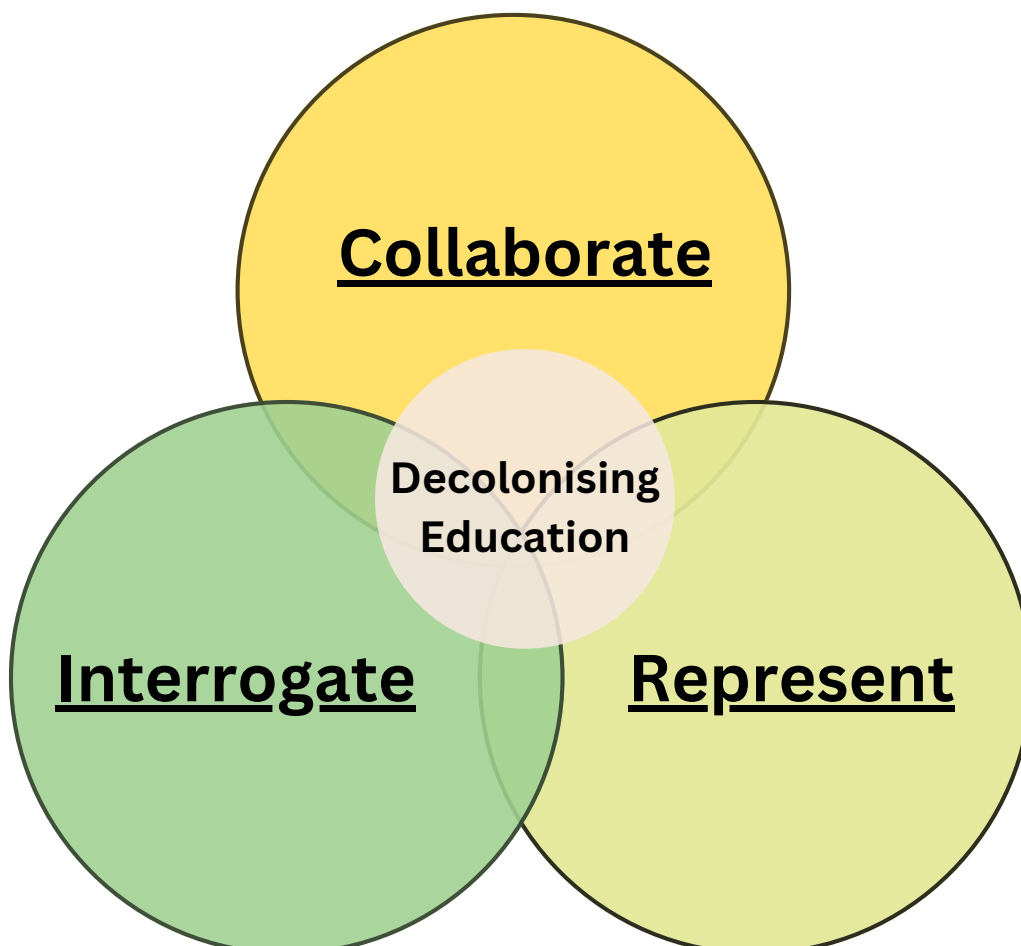
What do we mean by 'decolonising education'?

Decolonising education asks us to critically **interrogate** the formation of knowledge and **take responsibility** for the **colonial legacies** upon which our teaching and learning environments have been built. Decolonising education is a **collaborative process**, relying on a shared commitment to representing diverse perspectives and fostering an **inclusive educational experience** (Think Diversity, 2023).

Diversify vs. Decolonise:

While diversification is a crucial component of decolonising education, it doesn't address the **historical context** in which knowledge is produced. As Blackwood (2020, para. 4) writes, 'Without decolonising work, diversification exists as 'tick-boxing' and tokenism' – performative acts which do not listen to and act upon the experiences of marginalised staff and students.

Based on this understanding, we have developed a model for decolonising education comprised of three dimensions: collaborate, interrogate and represent. Click on each dimension to find out more:

Collaborate

Decolonising Education

Interrogate   **Represent**

Dimensions for Decolonising Education

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Collaborate

What do we mean by 'collaborate'?

Students need to be at the heart of the decolonial agenda. Collaboration, then, refers to both collaborative practice between staff and meaningful student-staff partnerships (Naseem and Hua, 2023).

What questions can I ask myself?
- Can students become co-creators of knowledge?
- How can I involve students in reimagining what my subject / module could look like?

Where can I start?

Start discussions with colleagues and students to establish common understandings and set aims and objectives that would suit your teaching and learning environment.

What could the collaboration dimension look like?

For a case study example at the University of Birmingham, please see the 'collaboration' section of the Think Diversity's website.

Tip: For an example of a collaborative student-staff project, see Naseem and Hua's (2023).

Interrogate   **Represent**

Interrogate

What do we mean by 'interrogate'?

To begin decolonising education, we must first become critically vigilant (Tuitt and Stewart, 2021). This means reflecting on what knowledge we deem worth teaching and on the place of dominant voices in our field of study.

What question can I ask myself?

- Am I critically vigilant of the knowledge I choose to prioritise?

Where can I start?

Begin to ask reflective questions such as:

- What space do I give to voices that are not dominant?
- Do I focus on any particular voice or knowledge base?
- How can I include non-dominant voices?
- How can I open up my knowledge base?

What could the interrogation dimension look like?

For a case study example of this dimension, please follow this link to the Think Diversity website.

Tip: Questioning our own biases is an essential starting point.

Collaborate   **Represent**

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Represent

What do we mean by 'represent'?
The issue of representation can take several forms. From staffing to essential reading lists, ensuring that all students feel represented can contribute to improving academic outcomes, mental wellbeing and a sense of belonging (Taff and Clifton, 2022).

What question can I ask myself?
- How can I make my teaching material and learning enviornment more inclusive of the diversity of my students and the field of study?

Where can I start?
- Take a moment to share key biographical points of the scholars you cite (e.g. their most recent academic position and/or key contributions to the topic under discussion) and show their image.
- Ensure that all students have the opportunity to share their experiences and engage with these by making a comment and/or by asking further questions.
- Include a wide range of authors, case studies and textbooks, from both the Global North and the Global South, to represent a diverse range of perspectives and debates.

What could the representation dimension look like?
You can use the Inclusive Curriculum Framework to start reflecting on your module content and how representative it is of the diversity of your students.

Tip: You can invite both students and staff for an initial conversation about what representation means in your teaching and learning contexts and discuss potential first steps.

Collaborate   Interrogate

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