

Reimagining the Curriculum: A Call for Decolonial and Values-Driven Education

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Curriculum is often seen as a fixed “course of study”—a neutral list of topics to be taught and assessed. Yet, it is anything but neutral (Apple, 2004). Pinar (2019) argues curriculum is a socio-political construction embedded with assumptions about power, identity, and the future. Every decision on what is included—or excluded—reflects contested values and worldviews (Young, 2007).

The UK is undergoing significant [curriculum reform](#) from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 5. Although education policy is devolved—resulting in different national curricula and reform trajectories in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland - these systems continue to bear the imprint of colonial legacies. For example, in English literature [curriculum](#), Shakespeare continues to dominate reading lists, while literature from the Global South or works by Black and Indigenous authors are often relegated to optional units or absent entirely. Curriculum is also increasingly shaped by market-driven logics that frame education around performance metrics, competition, and the production of economically “useful” learners (Ball, 2003). We should consider reimagining curriculum through a decolonial lens.

Colonial foundations of curriculum

In England, [Key Stage 3 history](#) emphasises topics like the Tudors, World Wars, and the British Empire, centring white British narratives while often overlooking critical views on colonisation and resistance. [Science](#) and [maths](#) are presented as culturally neutral, excluding significant contributions from Islamic, Chinese, and African scholars (Tikly, 2019).

Further and Higher Education prioritises “employability,” reflecting a colonial-capitalist focus on workforce preparation rather than ethical or civic development (Mbembe, 2016; Gopal, 2021). This narrows education’s purpose to economic utility, marginalising humanistic goals such as democratic participation, ethical reflection, and social justice, evident in the decline of critical pedagogy and the arts (Biesta, 2021).

Accountability systems—Ofsted inspections, GCSE exams, and university league tables—reinforce a performance-driven model, reducing learning to measurable outcomes and checklists. Despite reforms in [Wales](#), [Scotland](#), and [Northern Ireland](#), UK educators still face pressure to meet standardised targets, often sacrificing deeper learning and critical engagement (Lingard, 2011).

What is decoloniality?

Decoloniality is not simply about adding diverse content to existing structures. Rooted in Quijano (2000) and expanded by Mignolo and Walsh (2018), it demands epistemic disobedience: questioning dominant knowledge hierarchies, their formation, and whose interests they serve. It challenges Western epistemic dominance and affirms historically marginalised ways of knowing.

In education, decoloniality involves critically examining inherited assumptions and engaging with alternative traditions. Black feminist thought (hooks, 1994) and Indigenous methodologies (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2021) offer more than diverse perspectives—they propose radically different ethical orientations grounded in care, land, and interdependence.

Towards a reimagined curriculum

What if curriculum design began not with rubrics or attainment targets, but with public values—like justice, sustainability, and care? What if we asked:

- What does it mean to live well together?
- How do we learn to respond to injustice?
- What futures are worth imagining and building?
- What is the *true* purpose of education?

A values-led, decolonial curriculum reframes education as an ethical and relational practice prioritising inquiry over instruction and transformation over transmission. Biesta (2021) contrasts “learnification”—education reduced to content delivery—with “subjectification,” which supports learners in becoming thoughtful, responsible agents.

Curriculum, then, is not merely what we teach. It is who we are, what we value, and the futures we seek to co-create. As systems globally grapple with reform, we must not only revise content but reimagine education as a space for justice, plurality, and hope.

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