

# Decolonising the Curriculum and Anti-Racist Pedagogy in Sport and Leisure Education

Matthew Green, Dr Spencer Swain, Dr Mark Mierzwinski

## What is Decolonising the Curriculum?

Decolonising the curriculum is an ongoing process that critically reassesses and disrupts the arguments and assumptions of Western and colonial-focused thought across all disciplines. Decolonising education is a complex process which requires reframing traditional Eurocentric and Western-centric curricula and challenging hierarchies of knowledge. Decolonial scholars call for greater awareness and consideration of the historical and cultural context in which the knowledge created through formal education is disseminated.

Central to this work is recognising that knowledge systems are marked by existing power relations rooted within a history of colonialism. European epistemologies present White, global Northern intellectual traditions as universal and superior and position the West as the origin of scientific knowledge. These trends continue to be reinforced by White dominance and privilege and the continued stereotyping and prejudice of non-Western forms of knowledge.

## Further Reading

Arday, J. and Mirza, H. S. (2018) *Dismantling race in higher education: Racism, whiteness and decolonising the academy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Masaka, D. (2019) Attaining epistemic justice through transformation and decolonisation of education in Africa. *African Identities*, 17 (3-4), 298-309. DOI:10.1080/14725843.2019.1681259

Race, R., Ayling, P., Chetty, D., Hassan, N., McKinney, S., Both, L., Riaz, N. and Salehjee, S. (2022) decolonising the curriculum in education: continuing proclamations and provocations. *London Review of Education*, 20 (1), DOI: 10.1177/275264612110688

## What is Anti-Racist Pedagogy?

Anti-racist, or decolonial, pedagogy is teaching that challenges exclusionary practices that promote, reinforce and reproduce dominant forms of knowledge. Decolonial pedagogy should be understood as the process of raising awareness, challenging and unlearning dominant ways of knowing to promote epistemic justice. Anti-racist pedagogy should move beyond identifying racism and begin to actively oppose racism, challenging policies, behaviours and beliefs that perpetuate racist ideas and actions.

Anti-racist and decolonial pedagogy requires careful consideration of what is taught, who we are, and how we teach. Scholars have expressed how anti-racist pedagogy should provoke dialogue in the classroom to create dissonance of the familiar and enhance students' racial awareness. As Paulo Freire (1970) writes, dialogue is central to the project of education. Only through the exchange of ideas and experiences can we hope to work towards transformative change.

## Further Reading

DiAngelo, R. (2018) *White fragility: Why is it so hard for White people to talk about racism*. New York: Penguin.

Ono-George, M. (2019) Beyond diversity: anti-racist pedagogy in British history departments. *Women's History Review*, 28 (3), 500-507. DOI: 10.1080/09612025.2019.1584151

Wagner, A. E. (2005) Unsettling the academy: working through the challenges of anti-racist pedagogy. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 8 (3), 261-275 DOI: 10.1080/13613320500174333

Kishimoto, K. (2018) Anti-racist pedagogy: from faculty's self-reflection to organising within and beyond the classroom. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 21 (4), 540-554.



## Pedagogical Approaches to Decolonial and Anti-Racist Pedagogy in Sport and Leisure

Decolonial and anti-racist pedagogical pedagogy may include the following methods:

- Name and define key concepts to increase students' racial literacy.
- Encouraging dialogue amongst students during taught sessions.
- Provoke reflection on students' own experiences of privilege or discrimination.
- Enable honest and robust conversations to develop within the classroom environment.

### Further Reading

Hylton, K. (2015). Race talk! Tensions and contradictions in sport and PE. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 20 (5), 503-516. DOI: 10.1080/17408989.2015.1043253

Spracklen, K. (2008) The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail: myths of scientific racism and the pursuit of excellence in sport. *Leisure Studies*, 27 (2), 221-222  
DOI:10.1080/02614360801902257

Cleophas, F. J. (2021) Decolonising the South African sport science curriculum. *Sport in Society*, 24 (9), 1539-1553.  
DOI: 10.1080/17430437.2020.1752674

## Recommendations

We encourage educators to acknowledge that students are not a homogenous group and that not all students will arrive at university with the same awareness, exposure and understanding of race, racial inequalities and racism. The results of our case study and conclusions offered by fellow academics lead us to consider the following points in delivering the sport and leisure curriculum through a decolonial and anti-racist lens:

- Students and educators could be encouraged to reflect upon and share their own experiences of privilege and inequality in order to develop a critical consciousness.
- Educators should provide students with definitions and concepts in order to enabling students to use appropriate terminology when discussing sensitive issues.
- We encourage educators to include high-profile case studies within subject resources to enable students to discuss complex and sensitive issues from an objective perspective.
- Time should be dedicated within taught sessions to allow students to explore and discuss issues of racial inequality and racism in a supportive and safe learning environment.
- Students should be encouraged to discuss and challenge oppressive social structures both inside and outside of the classroom environment through continued support from peers and educators.

