Closing Report for PSA Research & Innovation Fund

Confronting Eurocentrism for Equality and Diversity: Decolonising Pedagogical Strategies and Voices of International Students in Global Development Politics

What was set out to do?

Teaching and learning have become increasingly challenging in the contested fields of broadly conceived global development politics. However, the coloniality of knowledge has frustrated learners (teachers and students), a structural constraint that prevents us from thinking and acting outside echo chambers to sustain diversity and plurality. Adding to this are the vicissitudes of politics that compel us to ask and answer difficult questions in global development politics.

Against the above backdrop, this year-long research project set out to explore innovative pedagogies and empower the voices of the international student cohort in UK universities to counter Eurocentrism in ever-internationalising and highly multicultural settings. The project drew upon theories that broadly relate to diversifying and decolonising pedagogies, taking an informed but critical view of existing equality and inclusion plans and decolonisation schemes across universities in the UK. The project had three main aims:

(1) Ascertain the Eurocentric tendency perpetuating in lectures, seminars, and tutorials encountered by international students at the undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) levels.
(2) Evaluate the effectiveness of existing pedagogies to diversify and decolonise
curricula and learning;
(3) Propose new pedagogical strategies, with particular attention to teacher-student collaboration and the role of international students.

Achieving these aims involved problematising two intellectual orientations – methodological individualism and methodological nationalism – as sources of Eurocentrism embedded in the long tradition of the (inter)disciplines mentioned above. The project addressed four research questions:

1. What Eurocentric elements do teachers ascertain in the curriculum? How are these elements related to methodological individualism and methodological nationalism?
2. What Eurocentric narratives do international students encounter in their learning? To what extent do their perspectives differ from those of teachers?
3. To what extent are existing pedagogical strategies effective in countering Eurocentrism?
4. What counts as pedagogical strategies that might work better and bring students and teachers together?

To this end, 34 semi-structured interviews were conducted across UK universities. Interviewees include international students and teachers at various stages of their

careers. All interviews were one-to-one, with the longest lasting 5 five hours and the shortest lasting 50 minutes. In addition, findings were drawn from observations of 12 lecture and seminar sessions and various decolonisation work meetings, as well as equality and diversity plans (EDPs) and decolonisation proposals.

The research project identifies limitations in two strands of literature.

The first strand focuses on international students' vulnerabilities, (self-) struggle to overcome difficulties, clustering, and employability (Lee, 2022; Zhao and Cox, 2022; Yu and Moskal, 2019; Gu and Schwersfurth, 2015; Wu, 2015; Gu, 2009). However, some of these studies end up cementing stereotypes of international students, homogenising their experiences and depoliticising their challenges. International students are reduced to simply cultural shock, language, and learning difficulties. Comparatively, much fewer studies directly address international students' concerns about Eurocentrism within the learning of global development politics and beyond.

The second strand assesses ethnic inequality in admissions to elite UK universities, the widening attainment gap between students, racial privilege, processes of racialisation (e.g., Sian, 2019; Alexander and Arday, 2015), and decolonisation (e.g., Bhambra *et al.*, 2018; Sousa Santos, 2017; Freire, 2013). Some adapt critical race theory to critique the system of racial capitalism or racial neoliberalism (Bhagat, 2019; Goldberg, 2009). However, these studies often focus exclusively on the experiences of BAME students with permanent residency or citizenship status in the UK, overlooking international students, including those from postcolonial countries and the South. Moreover, some studies take a macro view without delving sufficiently into the everyday classroom experiences of students, let alone their international peers.

The project connects the above strands of literature and makes three contributions.

First, the project presented the everyday practices and reflections of teachers and international students in countering the coloniality of knowledge, promoting equality, and maintaining diversity. The highly diverse background of international students provided the testing ground for whether pedagogical strategies and institutional efforts to diversify and decolonise were effective. The investigation was designed to report on the following:

1. Teachers' understanding of diversifying and decolonising curriculum as part of the pedagogical strategies, of Eurocentrism (arguably methodological nationalism and methodological individualism), and of their engagement with students, especially the international cohort.
2. Teachers' justifications and responses to doubts about their approaches to pre-seminar/pre-lecture work (e.g., course outlines and additional learning materials) and the organisation and delivery of lectures and seminars (e.g., micro-presentations, classroom group and collegial discussions, etc.).
3. International students' overarching concerns and various understanding of existing equality and inclusion plans and the burgeoning demand and practices to decolonise the curriculum, pedagogy, and university.

4. International students' understanding of Eurocentrism (arguably methodological nationalism and methodological individualism) and suggestions on countering it.
5. International students' sense of agency and reception of pedagogical strategies.

Second, the project foregrounds novel thinking about teacher-student relationships in the context of decolonisation. The research findings suggest that pedagogical strategies must push further approaches that restore a healthy teacher-student relationship that has, to some extent, been obscured by marketisation (or even neoliberalisation) processes in higher education witnessed since the early 1980s (Branch & Christiansen, 2021). As often seemed, academics have become service providers, with students being customers (e.g., Myers, 2008; Scott, 2006). International students, typically, are identified as victims and funders of a profit-driven expansion of UK Higher Education (HE) in the logic of the knowledge economy, e.g., they pay an average of £15,500 for an undergraduate degree but as much as £58,000 per year for some programmes (Oliver, 2021). At a deeper level, the coloniality of knowledge has maintained a power imbalance that complicates the teacher-student relationship. The investigation also reports teachers' and international students' understanding of their mutual relationship and the level of support they are given to promote and sustain a healthier relationship that further ensures equality, inclusion, and resistance to the coloniality of knowledge.

Finally, the relationships between teachers and students generate thinking that potentially helps connect processes of decolonisation and internationalisation in higher education within the field of global development politics and beyond.

How it went

The research design changed because flexibility is required to accommodate the regular commitment as a lecturer in Politics.

Ethical consideration

Although the project was submitted for ethical clearance immediately after being accepted for funding, it was not given ethical approval until more than three months later. This led to the initial interview schedule (phase 2) being delayed by one month. However, the pilot study was successful because most teachers and students expressed interest and participated in the project.

Engagements

My project sounds like no surprise to some international students. They already heard about decolonisation at the departmental, school, and university levels. First-year UG students expressed the keenest interest. Teachers were less keen, and at the end of the interview, one of the professors even asked me how well he did and what remarks other colleagues gave. This shows he was slightly concerned about the interview, although he light-heartedly accepted it in the first place. For confidentiality, I did not reveal other colleagues' responses. In my sample, teachers in London universities were more responsive to interview questions and willing to share their experiences.

The information sheet and the consent form were given to all interviewees. All interviewees signed the consent forms.

Interviewees include students from Belarus, China, Ghana, India, Japan, Kenya, Lebanon, Malaysia, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, and Turkey. Chinese and Kenyan students were surprisingly keen and vocal. Interestingly, while they shared highly similar views across various topics and concerns, they also expressed diverse thoughts and opposing views in specific debates. Teachers interviewed also came from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. By nationalities, teachers came from Brazil, China, Greece, India, England, Jamaica, Japan, Lithuania, Portugal, South Korea, Spain, and Uganda.

The interviews successfully identified nuances, especially the distinction between opposing views and various articulations of the same/similar views. Indeed, in other specific conversations, differences in interviewees' remarks simply reflected a "half full or half empty" attitude.

Although interviews were semi-structured with a set of questions to consider, I always left sufficient space for participants to elaborate fully on what they were most concerned with. Thus, some interviews were even unstructured because participants, especially some teachers, were already involved in decolonisation projects in some forms. That said, the set of questions kept the participants and me on track with what was needed to address the questions. From my experience as a reflexive researcher, I was well aware of my role as an interlocutor between insiders and outsiders. Various insider (participants') accounts allowed triangulation, ensuring internal validity. Ultimately, the investigation included sufficiently diverse responses (including grievances).

What were the outcomes?

As with all qualitative research, especially reflexive case studies, findings consist of thick descriptions, observation notes, and rich transcripts of interviewees' remarks. Coding was applied to help identify themes. More specific findings will appear in future publications (see the next section on 'Going forwards').

The sensitivity and image politics of decolonisation

First and foremost, while it is justified that interviewees' names should be anonymised to ensure integrity and confidentiality, the anonymisation of universities, programs, and courses shows that the ethical committee was nervous about the potential implications of the research that might put a school or university in a less positive/negative light. Of course, it can also be justified that mentioning programs and courses would still make the teacher's name visible since it is not hard to search for them online. Yet, anonymising universities, programs, and courses did prevent me from presenting more meaningful data that reflected how pedagogical strategies had been applied to teaching specific courses.

Indeed, only a few teachers welcomed their engagement with diversifying and decolonising work to be exposed and shared. So, anonymising programs and courses allowed teachers to share their experiences without feeling judged by the public.

Given this, I took the pain of merging courses offered by several universities into categories.

Interestingly, all teachers agreed (with five explicitly mentioning) that diversifying and decolonising work was becoming increasingly popular because it involved a significant degree of image politics. It is not to deny that some individuals, departments, and universities have genuinely taken on decolonisation since the Rhodes Must Fall student movement in 2015 or even before that, but many interviewees (teachers and students) said that instrumental motives and tokenistic tendencies behind decolonisation projects do emerge in their departments and universities. This is not the fault of any individual per se but has to do with the pressure from performance-targeting commitment (e.g., the never-ending pursuit of university ranking) and student recruitment. It may be very attractive to UK-based BAME students if a university presents itself at the forefront of the decolonisation project.

That said, finding evidence to support accusations of “fake/superficial decolonisation" while reflecting those tendencies is extremely difficult because what is genuine and otherwise depends very much on personal experiences and positionalities. Not all teachers and students agreed on the priorities and prescriptiveness of decolonisation strategies.

The ‘international’ among international students

The proposal of this project used the word ‘non-home’ students rather than ‘international’ to identify students without permanent residency in the UK. The reason is that the ‘international’ category does not reflect the diversity among those students (Lomer & Mittelmeier, 2021) but assimilates them unjustly based on stereotypes. Besides, the binary ‘international’ or ‘not international’, which differentiates the international cohort from home students in the UK (Waldron, 2017: 14), is also a form of ‘othering’ (Jones, 2017). Researchers with the rhetorical demands of publications and the best intentions tend to problematise internationalisation or frame pedagogic interventions as responses to various ‘lacks’ among international students (Lomer & Mittelmeier, 2021: 14). These methods end up diagnosing international students as the problem. International students are often seen as having all kinds of issues rather than being ‘capable, able, coping, managing’ (Lomer & Mittelmeier, 2021: 12). This derogatory framing demonises international students as passive ‘subhuman’. However, international students are active partners (Lomer & Mittelmeier, 2021: 13).

However, many students found the term ‘non-home' equally problematic. They did not want to be seen as ‘coming from abroad’, ‘foreign’, or ‘non-home’ either. Some felt comfortable with the term ‘international’. So, the term ‘international’ was finally chosen. All students expressed that instead of nit-picking about which term to use, the focus should be on understanding international students' diverse lived experiences, responding to their genuine demands, acknowledging their agency, and empowering them as contributors to UK higher education. The project argues that such an endeavour is best pursued by including international students in the ongoing debate around decolonising pedagogical strategies and learning.

Decolonising and diversifying strategies

All students and teachers acknowledged the need to continuously diversify the curriculum and promote fairness and justice using the university's equality and inclusion plan for reference or as guiding principles. Most international students acknowledged the university's and teachers' efforts to develop an inclusive and friendly learning environment across classrooms and out-of-classroom settings. Nevertheless, the more specific the context of the discussion was, the more critical international students and teachers became. For example, most international students, irrespective of background, found that compared to teachers in classroom settings, the university's student unions and study support teams (including the counselling services) were considerably better in providing essential facilities and assistance that make them feel included. More than half of the international cohort, however, did acknowledge that academic learning at the university level was challenging, so they did not hold unrealistic expectations of teachers. They thought providing an inclusive, fair, and friendly learning environment would involve collective efforts and must be a two-way street. First, no single party is fully informed about the needs of international students and thus cannot sustain an inclusive and diversified environment. Secondly, assigning unrealistic responsibility to a single party could encourage power-tripping, undermining an inclusive and diversifying environment in practice. All teachers interviewed shared this reasoning.

However, when considering decolonisation, international students' and teachers' views differed drastically. First, about half of the international students struggled to articulate what decolonisation means to them in the university context. They heard about this from their local peers and teachers but understood it vaguely as anti-European and anti-Western. Those who concurred were keen to share their views. But two students even said, 'There is no need to decolonise because most 'developing' states in the Global South are already independent.'

Secondly, while not all students were keen on decolonisation or even diversifying, most students reflected on their thoughts and shared with me how they became conscious of the coloniality of knowledge as they read and learned for courses that can be loosely identified with international political economy (IPE), global politics, and global development politics. However, some were surprised that decolonisation campaigns gained much traction in the North. They were curious about the motivation behind them. One student from China was particularly not convinced at first. He speculated, 'Is the decolonisation campaign genuine? Is it yet another form of hypocrisy or co-optation sugar-coated as ethical politics? Is it a new form of critique that legitimises anti-China bashing?' He contextualised his speculation in the debate of climate change and climate change deniers and found Greta Thunberg a symbol for the kind of hypocrisy he talked about. Surprisingly, his remarks were echoed by some students, even one from Malaysia, though those who articulated similar words held less pessimistic views about diversifying and decolonisation pedagogy.

Thirdly, international students and teachers understood the relationship between diversifying and decolonising differently. I first shared my understanding. Equality and diversity plans (EDPs) aim to recognise diverse voices and create an equal and inclusive learning environment. Decolonisation initiatives (Decols) challenge knowledge production and institutions and aim to give voice to marginalised groups and classes. Practitioners of EDPs may see decolonisers' proposal of wholesale changes as impractical and sometimes even divisive; decolonisers label EDPs as

presentist and ahistorical without considering the coloniality in current structures and their troubling legacy.

However, most interviewees agreed but also thought that, in practice, the distinction may not be as clear as one perceives. Only a few students found the decolonising campaign an alternative that could replace the diversifying campaign. Many saw that decolonising campaigns must be developed from the broad acceptance of equality and diversity goals. That said, some were critical of EDPs because they believed that without identifying and countering the coloniality of knowledge, EDPs would become superficial and pretentious. Many teachers were on the same page. However, one from Lithuania believed that diversifying the curriculum should still be the overall strategy, whereas decolonising the curriculum should only be an approach. She received support from roughly half of the teachers interviewed. Those who disagreed with her considered decolonisation a broader strategy that reflects and dismantles EDPs.

Overall, EDPs and Decols reinforce each other. Decols help EDPs identify voices excluded from the existing framework, so EDPs can strengthen the excluded voices by expanding the inclusivity of the learning environment. EDPs help build solidarity by attracting actors of diverse backgrounds to work together to address coloniality without alienating individuals.

A matter of agency and leadership

When asked about decolonising the curriculum and learning strategies, international students were most interested in who should be at the forefront of the decolonisation movement. All teachers took a less prescriptive view of this. They argue for solidarity between teachers and students and among agents of diverse racial backgrounds, including whites. Students from African countries, however, tend to emphasise that blacks should take the lead. Students from Asian countries did not see a contradiction between ethnic minorities or themselves taking the lead in excluding whites from decolonisation.

Interestingly, students from Asia argued that while everybody should contribute to decolonisation, teachers should be responsible and more proactive. Many found that they enjoyed and engaged more in seminars by teachers from ethnic minority backgrounds. For example, one student from South Korea and another from China said that their teachers from India, Turkey, and Eastern Europe tend to understand their struggles more. That said, few 'alpha white males' were welcomed by students because they were willing to listen.

The student from Kenya said that some professors liked to talk in jargon to show that they were superior, but decolonisation, whether in areas of the curriculum or the provision of a learning environment, must require the teacher to be a 'good listener'. Some students found that teachers tend to sell or advertise to students how they go about 'decolonising' but give little space for students to challenge teachers' unconscious colonial tendencies. This resonates with those who call for the decentralisation or decolonisation of 'decolonisation' or warn about the dangers of 'intellectual decolonisation'. What students meant here is that teachers still tend to rely heavily on academic research they advocate rather than giving enough

opportunity for students to discuss their encounters or understanding. When the opportunity is there, some teachers tend to dismiss students' resources and experiences based on academic merit. Some students were uncomfortable expressing thoughts that did not conform to political correctness based on conventional wisdom or ethics (e.g., liberal democratic values). However, liberal democratic values or liberal governance as a form of democracy were seen by half of the students interviewed as Eurocentric, a key element of the coloniality of knowledge. In other words, students did not think epistemic pluriversity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015a) is possible if basic concepts of freedom and democracy are uncritically taken stock of as universal values without looking into how they have been propagated by (neo)liberal scholars and politicians as first 'historically, economically, culturally, and political distinctive' (Sabaratnam, 2013: 261) from 'the rest' and then as the golden rule for the rest to follow.

In response, most teachers argue that decolonisation must be an ongoing, self-reflective process rather than some specific outcomes or goals. In general, teachers were nervous about decolonisation approaches being too prescriptive. One teacher said that decolonisation pedagogy must be innovative and informed by students, and there should never be a cookbook or 'decolonisation ABC' mandate. Yet, one student who was involved in a decolonising campaign at the university level said, in her words, 'being less prescriptive can also be a lovely excuse for shirking from responsibility or not doing anything at all!'

In specific terms, one teacher who self-identified as a realist international relations (IR) scholar defended the 'Western' theoretical construction of realism and argued that it also embodied a decolonising element. He argued that by treating all nation-states as realists, we can avoid being culturally deterministic, standing on the moral high ground, and imposing some values and norms onto non-European states. While I acknowledge his position, his understanding of decolonisation remains an outlier among the teachers and students I interviewed.

Intersectionality and conflicting priorities

One crucial observation is that all interviewees acknowledged the complexity involved in practising diversifying and decolonising pedagogical strategies or engaging in the movement. All interviewees realised they did not agree on the approaches to diversifying and decolonising and the priorities. A much higher consensus can be found in the discussion of what needs to be achieved and what the ideal curriculum looks like. The reading list must be as diverse as possible. Academic debates must welcome more scholars of ethnic minorities or from the South; reading lists must include 'non-Western' scholarships. Teachers must give more opportunities for international students to talk about their experiences and politics from their native countries, especially within the discipline of international studies. That said, one student from South Korea said that teachers should also avoid picking on international students to make a point. Not everybody is comfortable with being picked to express views about their native country. So, the art is to be spontaneous and interculturally responsive. The key is to have international students in mind and give them enough space to express themselves when they want to do so.

All interviewees also accentuated intersectionality. Radical ones argued that development politics would remain colonial and not global if we continued to neglect class politics and structural inequalities of global capitalism. Less radical from Asia advocated modernity and modernisation beyond the Western/European constructs. Interviewees have somewhat vacillated between two modes of decolonisation: (1) the reanimation of inherited (colonial) concepts and (2) the innovation of new concepts in parallel with the old (colonial) ones (Getachew & Mantena 2021). Yet, when it comes to global development politics, conceptual innovation and conceptual reanimation are two concurrent processes.

Teachers disagreed greatly about discussing priorities and what pedagogical strategies work best. Radical ones would advocate a more prescriptive approach, arguing that decolonisation, albeit a never-ending process, must not be about 'anything goes'. Otherwise, it would lose momentum and a sense of purpose. Moderate ones saw that having a less prescriptive approach to diversifying and decolonisation allows agents to be more aware of intersectionality and superimposing. Two teachers were particularly negative about decolonisation because they thought it unnecessary to hold such a banner. After all, diversifying the curriculum would facilitate decolonisation. All teachers stressed that decolonisation must be bottom-up and student-centred in principle.

Radical students advocate collective agency, and more attention to the subject (who is in charge) would help balance the principles of being an open encounter and having a sense of direction when diversifying and decolonising pedagogical strategies and learning.

The challenge remains to build solidarity and synchronise various diversifying and decolonising strategies to confront Eurocentrism and other forms of centrism. Conflicting priorities make this extremely difficult.

Discussion

This section brings us back to the research questions. Concerning research question 1, all teachers found Eurocentric elements in their curriculum. The majority acknowledged the dominance of neoliberalism and saw methodological individualism as Eurocentric, although some would argue that it was the consequence of capitalist development, industrialisation, modernity (modernisation), and neoliberalisation. Students and teachers conflate these processes in their remarks, although some made nuanced distinctions when asked to define them.

In contrast, not all interviewees considered methodological nationalism a Eurocentric intellectual orientation. Some teachers, including the one from Lithuania, argued that methodological nationalism, a modern orientation, was absent in Europe during the pre-modern era. Of course, it depends on how we define this. Some teachers intuitively defined methodological nationalism as thinking in nation-state terms when engaging in the analysis of international relations. Others took it as wanting to establish a unified nation-state and hard territorial borders. Some students acknowledged that colonisers divided and conquered the 'non-European' civilisational states. A doctoral student said that in East Asia, a poly-centric special order has

existed and survived despite the dominance of European modernity. However, other students also acknowledged that European states were once civilisational.

Concerning question 2, international students expressed that Eurocentric narratives existed in reading materials, teachers' presumptions and arguments, and debates. However, their views differed in what counts as the Eurocentric narratives. Interestingly, all students interviewed believed that the colonial expansion was one of the many sources (but a structural source) of global inequalities, economically and socially, although some also argued that the experiences and feelings of the colonised were never homogenous even though the colonised had shared sorrows and struggled interdependently. The student from Kenya emphasised that the economic dependence on the (semi-)peripheries and the domination of Western ideals and the ruling classes in the colonised must be criticised in one conversation rather than separately considered. Most students also understood that while the core-periphery structural inequality persists, the nation-states as actors within the structure have changed over time. The magnitude of oppression, economic dependence, and ideological battles are highly uneven. It shows that the colonising tendency is not merely European or Western but has perpetuated in different contexts, going beyond European borders. However, one student from Belarus and another from China at one of the London universities claimed that the 'white' teachers they have encountered tend to over-emphasise the universality of colonialism, which further whitewash, in their words, 'European colonialism'. Students from Nigeria and Saudi Arabia, though articulated differently from their Belarusian and Chinese peers, claimed that some, albeit not all, 'white' scholars tend to see decolonisation as yet another opportunity to impose their moral compass on newly emerged powerhouses that seem to challenge the still global dominance of the West. Of course, this is controversial because other students, typically from Japan and South Korea, disagreed. Some even claimed that liberal nation-states of the West are the new guardians against the neo-colonisers.

Fundamentally, international students felt teachers gave too much space to local students when the narrative was correct. For example, some students said they were given less space to talk by their teacher, an international security scholar if they dared to criticise liberal democracy or mainstream perspectives in IR from a Marxist perspective or their native perspectives. In their essays, similar arguments were often regarded as 'editorialisation' which 'needed 'references'. But when they expressed arguments that were more aligned with the liberal or mainstream conventions, teachers were less strict about evidence. It is the double standard that some of the students interviewed were particularly frustrated. Additionally, one student from Nigeria said that since academic sources were predominantly written in English and published in mainstream journals, he struggled to find references that supported an argument he held with conviction. He often had to give it up or rephrase it in a way that satisfied the 'academic palate' if he was to achieve a higher score in his essay. A deeper level of concern is what Mantz (2019: 1370) called 'Second-order Eurocentrism' or 'the canonisation of Eurocentric perspectives in non-Western scholarship'. Indeed, even postcolonial critiques 'continue to reproduce their position as master texts rather than decentring them and positioning them as relational to global historical thinking on matters of the economy' (Tilley, 2016: 24). Non-whiteness does not equate to epistemic pluriversality. Teachers were more aware of this but were in a much stronger position to engage with the relevant debate.

Another issue was that some international students found that teachers were not patient enough towards those whose English was not their first language. While all students appreciated academic rigour/integrity and independent learning, some students found these to be excuses for teachers to be less responsible and supportive. In classroom participation, some students felt pressure from peers and teachers to adapt and conform to the 'British seminar' system. While they saw the benefits of doing so, they demanded teachers' patience and support to help them fit in. Some international students valued classroom participation and proactively participated. Others felt they should not be dissuaded from forming 'cultural clusters' that facilitate the transition and reduce cultural and learning shocks, especially when teachers were too busy to care about their difficulties. Teachers' negative attitudes towards international students forming 'clusters' were seen as 'being Eurocentric' in the classroom. That said, most students understood that teachers were constrained by either or all of the following: (1) ignorance and misunderstanding, (2) workload and time, (3) institutional pressure, (4) path dependency, etc.

Concerning questions 3 and 4, most international students and teachers agreed that diversifying and decolonising work was a long and winding road. Only two teachers took a back seat and were generally disengaged from the conversation.

As interviews deepened, all international students felt teachers could give them more attention and space to experiment with their learning strategies in the classroom. Most teachers welcomed this as long as well-structured teaching plans were in place. Some teachers tended to worry more about how some of those learning strategies, including cultural clusters, may get in the way of being inclusive. This is a legitimate concern. However, as one student from Malaysia argued, the mixing of students should not be imposed by the teacher from above. International students, she argued, should rely on some scaffold (at least in the first term) to give time for them to familiarise a different learning style and environment. Scaffolding or otherwise is wholly voluntary, so it should not be interpreted as a form of discrimination against local students. Teachers must welcome this instead of dismissing it in the first place. All this depends on how mixed a classroom setting can be, as some teachers indicated.

A related point to the above is how teachers encourage international students to speak and participate in classroom discussions. Most teachers told me they were open to all 'silly' remarks and questions so long as they were not racial slurs or deemed offensive. They also claimed that they always refrained from being the 'grammar police' because they understood that international students needed time to articulate fluently in English. I appreciate teachers' intercultural awareness. However, a student from China said that he wanted the teacher to know that he did not mean to appear bleak and offensive, but his spoken English stopped him from making nuanced arguments. He could have done so easily in Chinese but had to lose the debate because he could not articulate as well in English. He found this unfair and unjust. Whose fault was it? After being self-reflective, I realised I held stereotypes about those who refused to make a point in the classroom. While some students were shy and afraid to make mistakes, others were keen to express themselves but feared that their bleakness could easily make them misunderstood. Nobody wanted to appear inferior or expose vulnerability.

Finally, from my own experience, some international students stay behind and ask questions as their way to make up for the lack of engagement in the seminar session. A PGT student from Kenya said that professors at his university would have lunch with students in the canteen when possible. This is also the case with students and teachers from China. A healthier relationship between students and teachers takes time to ripen, so staying behind or going for a coffee should not be seen as unprofessional. Indeed, keeping a professional distance is necessary, but more opportunities given to students outside office hours are ideal. Some teachers agreed with this, though most said that the way British universities had been set up and managed left little room for this. This is a pity. Of course, teachers and students have little power to change this. At the end of a lecture/seminar, I would leave the hall/classroom at a walking pace instead of running off to avoid seeing students. This is the least a teacher can do as one of the diversifying and decolonising pedagogical strategies.

Concluding remarks – Decolonising Global Development Politics

This project has shown how intersectional forms of decolonisation can be quite a struggle in the contested field of global development politics and others. The process of decolonisation needs considerable internal coherence among agency and leadership, strategies and priorities, and goals and visions. The voices and participation of international students would facilitate coalescence without undermining diversity and globalness.

About Author

Dr Yue Zhou (Joe) Lin is a Lecturer in Politics at the School of Sociology, Politics, and International Studies (SPAIS) at the University of Bristol (Bristol). Lin completed his PhD in International Political Economy (IPE) at the Department of European and International Studies (EIS), King's College London (King's). Lin is also a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (FHEA) and the owner of China's Political Economy (BSc unit) and China's International Relations (MSc unit) at SPAIS, Bristol. Before Bristol, Lin lectured EIS and the Department of Political Economy (PE) at King's. During his PhD study, Lin was also an Associate Lecturer in the Department of Educational Studies at Goldsmiths, University of London. Working at the intersection of Marxism, post-Marxism, and Constructivism in international relations (IR), Lin is currently integrating three avenues of research: (1) Political Theory (Gramsci), (2) China and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and (3) Decolonisation. Lin's teaching covers IR, development and politics in the Global South, and qualitative research methods (autoethnography & ethnography, critical discourse analysis, and reflexive case studies). While co-convening PSA's Global Development Politics specialist group, Lin also co-leads the Teaching Development Politics Initiative. Lin is also a member of SPAIS's Decoloniality and Race group. Lin has published in *Critical Sociology*, *Environmental Politics*, and *International Gramsci Journal*. Lin has been a regular peer reviewer for manuscript submissions to *Antipode*, *Brill's Notebooks – The Journal for Studies on Power*, *Educational Review*, *Environmental Politics*, *Globalizations*, and *Oxford University Press (textbooks)*.

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