Decolonising Case Study: Research and Scholarship

Introduction

Decolonising research seeks to challenge and change the dominant Eurocentric paradigms that have historically shaped scientific enquiry. Using a lens of decolonising to critique and reimagine the curriculum is not without difficulty as the privileging of Western scientific methods as universally superior is so steadfast. Hence examples tend to be either theoretical such as 'Towards a Decolonial computing' by Syed (n.d) drawing on the digital divide (Compaine, 2001) and critical race theory (Mills, 2003), or outside of computing and within the wider STEM field.

Illustrative Example

One example of a study investigating biochemistry modules for diversity variety is at Nottingham Trent University (Stavrou et al, 2023). The study explores what decolonising the curriculum means with an aim to change the curricula away from a Eurocentric base to be more inclusive and incorporate previously heard voices and in doing so attract a more diverse cohort of students.

A second example at Bristol University also draws on the perceived superiority, but in this case, the discipline of engineering and the failure to recognise that this standpoint requires change. Eichorn's (2019) recommendations are admiral as he calls for 'respositioning of western engineering of their dominance on the world stage'. The acknowledgement of poor progression rates of women and Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority students into professional engineering roles following graduation, raises critical wider questions.

A third example at Queen Mary, London is perhaps the most practical as this provides a framework for decolonising within the medical curriculum. Through a set of guided questions students and staff are encouraged to reflect and examples assist curriculum transformation and help develop skills and behaviours for future health care professionals when treating patients from diverse backgrounds (Mbaki, 2021).

Conclusion

Decolonising computing research is vital and ongoing but remains an emerging and underrepresented area. Wider efforts across STEM do challenge entrenched power dynamics and the historical exclusion of non-Western knowledge systems and there are helpful frameworks which offer insights for those who wish to start their own decolonising transformation. There is a growing need to interrogate power structures and reframe computing and STEM so a more inclusive curriculum and narrative is developed.

References

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