



Ensuring equality, diversity, and inclusion in teaching: A case study of the application of whose W.O.R.D.D. counts? A tool to critically assess the diversity of curricula

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ABSTRACT

This case study explores the application of the *Whose W.O.R.D.D. Counts?* tool to promote Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) within the Global Mental Health (GMH) MSc Programme in the School of Health and Wellbeing (SHW) at the University of Glasgow. It underscores the importance of diversifying curricula to challenge systemic biases, promote inclusivity, and address pervasive attainment gaps in higher education linked to gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Developed by the Open University, the tool guided a comprehensive review of the GMH online learning materials under the following topic headings: *writing with the audience in mind, opportunity for exchange of experience, representation through different lenses, drawing on different student experiences, and diversity as the subject matter (W.O.R.D.D.)*. The review identified good practices and areas needing improvement, leading to significant content expansions and new reflective tasks. Larger developments fell into three broader themes: diversifying case studies from low-, middle-, and high-income countries; increasing discussion of gender and sexuality; and framing Western culture. Despite the time and energy-intensive process of reviewing 60 weeks' worth of content, the effort has beneficially impacted teaching practices and received positive student feedback. The findings, disseminated through various academic platforms, have inspired the teaching team to initiate the process of decolonising the curriculum. Decolonisation goes beyond EDI by critically examining and uprooting colonial systems, practices, and power structures, rather than merely integrating non-White perspectives or making space for marginalised groups within existing frameworks. The study advocates for continuous improvement and active student involvement to foster a genuinely inclusive educational environment.

Keywords: equality, diversity, inclusion, critical pedagogy, flipped classroom

Introduction

When you make a mark on a piece of paper to represent the world, you choose what you represent and omit what is not important in that particular vision. And so it is with curriculum. We are in a very powerful position when we create curriculum...we define whose knowledge is important, whose experience is relevant and privileged and a failure to engage with the diversity of our population is a failure to include...and we will not in that way attract, engage or sustain our students...this is simply bad teaching. (Tait, 2008, as cited in Open University, n.d. p. 1).

A pervasive attainment gap exists within higher education institutions (HEI) across genders, social class, ethnicity (Frings et al., 2019; Richardson et al., 2020), and disabilities (Carroll et al., 2020). Protected characteristics such as gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status decrease a person's likelihood of admission to a HEI, lowers average grades, and increases the likelihood of periods of absence and dropout

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rates (Rana et al., 2022). This relationship is compounded through intersectionality (Richardson et al., 2020) whereby having multiple protected characteristics increases the barrier against higher attainment.

The attainment gap is contextualised within complex socio-historic factors which together can result in systemic, institutional, and interpersonal biases (Campbell, 2021), stigma and discrimination on campus, and a sense of not belonging (Frings et al., 2019). Frings and colleagues (2019) argue that the attainment gap can be partly explained through identity theory. Pervasive attitudes and poor representation can cause a student's identity as a minority group member to be incompatible with their identity as a student. This dissonance negatively impacts wellbeing, leading to lower attainment.

The ignition of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, a wave of anti-racist protests spurred by the murder of Black people by authorities in both the United Kingdom (UK; Akhtar, 2022) and the United States of America (USA; Mohdin et al., 2020), has resulted in Western universities and public bodies being viewed through a critical anti-racist lens. Across the UK, many HEI have been found to be institutionally racist where practices within HEI systemically disadvantage Black and minority ethnic (BAME) students and staff (Universities UK, 2020). Experiences of racial harassment and discrimination are reported as commonplace on campus and in the workplace with almost a quarter (24%) of surveyed BAME students reporting they had experienced racial harassment (Britain & Equality and Human Rights Commission [EHRC], 2019; Universities UK, 2020).

The University of Glasgow (UoG) is committed to providing a learning experience and workplace that is free from discrimination and marginalisation (University of Glasgow, n.d.). In response to the UK-wide findings of systemic racism in HEIs (Britain & EHRC, 2019), the UoG commissioned a report into the experiences of BAME staff and students (Virdee et al., 2019). The report was damning. More than half of the student sample had experienced multiple incidents of racial harassment, a degree awarding gap of more than 10% for BAME students compared to their White peers was reported, there was little to no BAME representation in senior positions, and both staff and students disclosed a reluctance to report racist incidents. The UoG has labelled the report as a catalyst for change and published an accompanying anti-racist action plan to support the progression towards an anti-racist university environment (Virdee et al., 2019).

HEIs have the power, resource, and expertise to offer learning experiences that are engaging, validating, empowering, promote excellence, and support progression into meaningful careers (Karadzhev et al., 2024), regardless of student background (Rana et al., 2022). Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives have been widely adopted across HEIs to improve representation, tackle discrimination, reduce the attainment gap, and improve student experiences and satisfaction (Zhao et al., 2024). Initiatives include providing EDI training to staff, implementing policy change, adopting a zero-tolerance stance to discrimination on campus, increasing the diversity of staff, and diversifying the curriculum (Virdee et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2024).

Engaging EDI within learning materials is recognised as a pedagogically sound teaching practice (Fuentes et al., 2021). Teaching does not occur in a vacuum. Schools, classrooms, and teaching materials mirror wider socio-political narratives that need to be proactively addressed (Doucette et al., 2021; Fuentes et al., 2021). The curriculum can be a force for division and exclusion. The way learning materials are presented is a cultural expression that can marginalise some groups (Paul, 2015), culminating in a visibility gap where marginalised identities, their worldviews, knowledge, and experiences are under-represented or invisible (Kirkland, 2022).

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Diverse learning materials are resources that capture the experiences of a wide range of identity and cultural characteristics (Open University, n.d.) and engage critical pedagogy (Doucette et al., 2021). Academic teams have a responsibility to ensure that the knowledge constructed through the curriculum, and the way information is presented, challenges biases (Fuentes et al., 2021; Paul, 2015). In addition, these teams should encourage collaborative, student-led learning that moves discourses away from homogenous, Eurocentric, and patriarchal paradigms. Doing so facilitates representation. Students with protected characteristics can see themselves reflected in the learning materials, and others are challenged to consider alternative perspectives.

Disciplinary and programmatic context

The Global Mental Health (GMH) MSc Programme at the UoG has been running for almost a decade and has grown annually. The Programme offers two study modes: on-campus (OC) and online distance learning (ODL). The GMH cohort is diverse, attracting learners from around the world. Table 1 details demographic information for the 2023/24 student cohort.

Table 1 GMH student cohort demographics for the 2023/24 academic year.

	OC (No. of Students = 49)	ODL (No. of Students = 50)
International Students	78%	62%
UK/EU-Based Students	22%	38%
Male	18%	12%
Female	78%	88%
Undisclosed Gender	4%	0%

The online learning materials are the cornerstone for both study modes, as the OC Programme adopts a blended learning approach (Sharp et al., 2018) through a flipped classroom. Students are expected to independently progress through the online learning materials, which are supplemented by live sessions that prioritise discussion and collaboration between students, guest presenters, and teaching staff. The online learning materials are delivered on Articulate Rise 360 and accessed via Moodle.

The development and cyclical improvement of the virtual learning environment (VLE)

Since launching the ODL course, the GMH team have dedicated considerable time to developing learning materials that are conducive to a diverse, inclusive, and accessible virtual learning environment (VLE). A cyclical improvement approach that centres students' experiences and feedback has been adopted (Sharp et al., 2022). Programme alumni familiar with the courses have been engaged as teaching assistants, and extensive student feedback has been collated to facilitate the constructive alignment of the curriculum with the intended learning outcomes (ILOs), student practices and outcomes, and assessment structures (Sharp et al., 2018, 2022). This has involved ensuring consistency of language and writing across the curriculum, ensuring content and assessments align with the ILOs, improving the student interface by regularly checking hyperlinks, and providing accurate transcriptions of all audio-visual materials. Other efforts have involved diversifying images to improve representation, providing written descriptors for every image, and ensuring appropriate commons licenses are in place.

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Several projects have been undertaken to improve student experiences and opportunities. Examples include integrating discipline-specific employability competencies into the online learning materials through the EEVE (Enhancing discipline-specific Employability skills and awareness via the Virtual learning Environment) project (Karadzhov et al., 2024), updating assessed work to authentic assessment formats to improve accessibility (Karadzhov et al., 2021), creating online modules to advise students about the dissertation project and plagiarism, and hosting a workshop for students about the appropriate use of Generative Artificial Intelligence Tools (GAITs). Diverse teaching materials have been created that include case studies from various contexts, incorporate reflective tasks for students to engage in and collaborate on, and neutralising language so that the background of the reader is not assumed.

Diversifying learning materials is transformative (Doucette et al., 2021). VLEs offer unique opportunities to create flexible, personalised, interactive, immersive, and interdisciplinary learning experiences that allow for students to self-pace, engage active learning, and construct their own knowledge (Evans et al., 2019; Adedoyin & Soykan, 2023; Foster & Shah, 2021). Novel teaching methodologies such as gamification are becoming increasingly accessible through technological advances, and preliminary evidence implies their success in creating environments that promote student learning and identity exploration (Foster & Shah, 2021). VLEs and the flipped classroom can represent a move away from didactic, teacher centred pedagogies that encourage a hierarchy between teachers and learners. Didactic methodologies are criticised for being exclusionary and assuming prior knowledge that disadvantages marginalised groups (Fuentes et al., 2021; Paul, 2015).

Whose W.O.R.D.D. counts? A tool to critically assess the extent to which diversity is embedded in the course content

As part of the development and review process, the teaching team engaged the *Whose W.O.R.D.D. counts?* tool developed by the Open University (n.d.) and is displayed in Table 2. This tool encourages users to reflect on the learning materials, posing 15 questions intended to guide thinking about the following topics: *writing with the audience in mind, opportunity for exchange of experiences, representation through different lenses, drawing on different student experiences, and diversity as the subject matter (W.O.R.D.D.)*. The online learning materials for the full GMH curriculum were reviewed and reflected on with these questions and topics in mind. Examples of good practice were identified, alongside issues requiring consideration and development.

Table 2 *Whose W.O.R.D.D. counts?* A tool to critically assess the extent to which diversity is embedded in the course content

Review Topics and Guide Questions	Good Practice Identified in the Text	Issues for Consideration
<p>Writing With the Audience in Mind</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have idioms, colloquialisms and other culturally specific references been avoided? 2. Is the use of English language appropriate to the level of study? 3. Have assumptions about the lived experience of students been avoided? 4. Have a wide range of case studies been used to portray the diversity of the audience? 5. Do case studies avoid limiting assumptions or stereotypes? 		
<p>Opportunity for Exchange of Experiences</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Are there opportunities to bring students together to share ideas and experiences and to enrich the understanding of other students? 7. Are there opportunities to create respect and appreciation of the value of difference? 		
<p>Representation Through Different Lenses</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Are there authors with different viewpoints? 9. Are there experiences from other countries, including outside of Europe? 10. Are there experiences from different UK contexts where appropriate? 11. Do authors acknowledge their standpoint and its limitations? 		
<p>Drawing on Different Student Experiences</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Are there exercises or activities that bring the student experience to the forefront? 13. Are students made aware of how their experience and viewpoints are shaped by their cultural, historical, geographical, economic and other contexts? 		
<p>Diversity as the Subject Matter</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 14. Are there opportunities for direct discussion of age, culture, disability, gender, language, race, religion, sexual orientation or other aspects of identity? 15. Are there opportunities for direct discussion of racism, sexism, ageism, heterosexism, religious intolerance, etc? 		

Phase 1. Familiarising with the tool and conducting the review across the learning materials

The review was formerly carried out over the three core modules consisting of 20 credits, and latterly expanded to include the three optional 20 credit modules in the GMH MSc Programme. To ensure a consistent approach, the learning team decided the review would be undertaken by a primary reviewer (AF - Author). All identified issues were discussed with colleagues, and content developments were undertaken and reviewed collaboratively with the team to safeguard against any biases held by AF, and to ensure multiple perspectives were involved in the creation of materials.

Before commencing the audit, AF read over the tool, its topics, and guide questions several times. This reflective task required the reviewer to consider their own positionality and perspectives, and how they had either been diminished or validated in their own learning. AF is a Caucasian, Scottish, cis-gendered, heterosexual woman, and recognised that she held many privileges. Her experiences of learning were largely ones of inclusion, understanding, and empathy, with most of the materials she had engaged with written for people like her. Consequently, she adopted a critical stance of asking how she was being seen in the learning materials; where were her experiences and perspectives being validated, where was she being challenged, and how could this be diversified. AF held the topics and guide questions in mind while reading through each of the ten weeks of content across the six courses, returning to the tool regularly to reflect on the questions, document any examples of good practice, and any issues requiring further consideration.

Phase 2. Identifying examples of good practice

Overall, the course materials were aligned with EDI principles. A plethora of good practice examples were identified, with examples often supporting multiple questions across multiple review topics. For the purposes of this paper, one example of good practice has been selected for each review topic alongside an overall comment to illustrate the range of observations made. These are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Examples of good practice.

Review Topic	Overall Comment	Example of Good Practice	Relevant Guide Questions
Writing With the Audience in Mind	Sentences were kept short and the language simplified to support students with English as a second language. Idioms, colloquialisms, and other culturally specific references were avoided. The reader's background was not presumed or insinuated. Descriptor tags on images made no assumptions about the people depicted, for example, using <i>person</i> rather than <i>woman</i> or <i>man</i> . A wide range of case studies were used throughout the materials, with an emphasis on non-Western contexts. At the beginning of each module, students were directed to various student services to support their learning and wellbeing.	In <i>Cultural, Social, and Biological Determinants of Health (CSBD)</i> , the materials discussed the influence of culture on behaviour and beliefs. The language used did not insinuate that culture <i>determines</i> behaviour.	Q3 Avoiding assumptions about the lived experiences of students. Q5 Avoid limiting assumptions or stereotypes.
Opportunity for Exchange of Experiences	Opportunities and prompts for students to share ideas and experiences on moderated online platforms were integrated throughout the learning materials. Note-taking activities (NTAs) and assessment tips were included in every week of content that required students to engage in reflective tasks.	In <i>CSDB</i> , a NTA prompted students to reflect on the importance and impact of cultural perceptions and stereotypes in health care and to discuss with their classmates on the Class Space.	Q6 Opportunities to bring students together to share ideas and experiences and to enrich the understanding of other students.
Representation Through Different Lenses	The GMH MSc Programme critically assesses mental health service provision at a global level and consequently draws from a wide range of resources, considering different viewpoints from various contexts both within and outside of Europe.	In <i>Themes in GMH</i> , multiple case studies were presented to discuss challenges in clinical diagnoses of mental ill-health. The case studies drew from multiple Western and non-Western countries to illustrate different presentations of mental illness including case studies from Brazil, New Zealand, Sierra Leone, the UK, and Zimbabwe.	Q8 Including authors with different viewpoints. Q9 Including experiences from other countries, including outside of Europe.
Drawing on Different Student Experiences	The learning materials, NTAs, and assessment tips encourage students to reflect on their own experiences and consider how they may influence their viewpoints.	In <i>CSBD</i> , the learning materials discussed untranslatable words and their impact on adapting psychometric instruments across diverse contexts. Some examples were provided, for example, <i>Goya</i> in Urdu, which refers to a transporting sense of disbelief associated with storytelling, whereby fantasy can be so realistic and intense that it may appear to be temporarily real. A NTA asked students to think about an	Q12 Bringing student experiences to the forefront. Q13 Supporting students to be aware of how their experience and viewpoints are shaped by cultural, historical,

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		untranslatable word from their first language, or a word from another foreign language, relating to mental health and consider the implications of linguistic diversity on cross-cultural psychiatric assessment.	geographical, economic and other contexts.
Diversity as the Subject Matter	Case studies across the learning materials drew from diverse demographics including case studies highlighting the lived experience of people with disabilities, women, and the elderly across global contexts. Course materials explored the complexities of scaling-up mental health services in different cultural, economic, and environmental settings, and the additional barriers faced by marginalised groups. The role of social and cultural factors in how mental health difficulties are understood and treated across the globe was considered and centred in discussions. Ideas of normality were frequently challenged, and their links to Western perspectives were exposed.	In <i>Themes in GMH</i> , week three content centred around disability. Concepts of disability were considered, alongside environmental and organic influences on disability.	Q14 Opportunities for direct discussion of age, culture, disability, gender, language, race, religion, sexual orientation or other aspects of identity. Q15 Opportunities for direct discussion of racism, sexism, ageism, heterosexism, and/or religious intolerance.

Phase 3. Identifying issues for consideration and actioning small adaptations

As well as examples of good practice, areas where practice could be improved were identified. Issues were documented, consulted on with the review team, and responded to. The extent of modification and development varied significantly, ranging from small adaptations where wording was changed to larger course developments where existing content was expanded, and in some cases, whole sections of new material were developed. Twenty-seven new reflective tasks were integrated across the curriculum in the form of NTAs, assessment tips, and self-care prompts when potentially distressing topics were discussed. Where appropriate, students were asked to engage with materials through the lens of their own culture, background, experiences, or a country of interest to integrate new learning with past experiences, promote peer learning, and encourage an appreciation of different perspectives. Table 4 details some examples of small adaptations under each review topic.

Table 4 Examples of small adaptations.

Review Topic	Identified Issue	Adaptation Made	Relevant Guide Questions
Writing With the Audience in Mind	In <i>CSBD</i> , various medical models were being introduced. The biomedical model was introduced as the <i>traditional</i> biomedical model. This was considered problematic, as the biomedical model is only traditional to Western culture/medicine. Traditional models of health are often not biomedical in non-Western cultures.	The phrase was reworded to “The biomedical model of health... traditionally adopted by Western evidence-based systems of health.”	Q1 Avoiding culturally specific references. Q3 Avoiding assumptions about the lived experiences of students.
Opportunity for Exchange of Experiences	In <i>Themes in GMH</i> , when definitions and models of health were introduced, AF felt students could offer valuable insight into ideas around health and that this would be a good time to encourage students to start thinking about their own wellbeing.	A NTA was developed to encourage reflection on and discussion of ideas surrounding health: “Reflect on the different models and definitions of health. Take notes on what health means to you. What activities do you engage in to keep yourself well, and how do you plan on incorporating these into your weekly schedule? You are welcome to share in the Class Space.”	Q6 Creating opportunities to bring students together to share ideas and experiences and to enrich the understanding of other students.
Representation Through Different Lenses	In <i>International Law and Policy</i> , an interactive world map was presented showing regional human rights treaties. It was noted that there was no regional example given for Asia.	The Association of Southeast Asian Nations’ (ASEAN) Human Rights Declaration was integrated into the interactive map.	Q9 Including examples from other countries, including outside of Europe.
Drawing on Different Student Experiences	In <i>CSBD</i> , idioms of distress are introduced. Idioms of distress are culturally specific expressions used to describe symptoms or experiences of emotional suffering. Idioms of distress are challenging concepts, and their understanding is entrenched in cultural reference and language. Cultural idioms can be so embedded that they go unnoticed and may other some cultures if idioms are only presented from one world region. The GMH	A NTA was created: Whilst developing the resources, the teaching team tried to think of idioms of distress within Scotland. A couple we came up with were 'butterflies in my stomach' and 'a lump in my throat', which may not be universally understood expressions of distress or anxiety. Think of any examples of an idiom of distress from your own country and share these in the Class Space.”	Q13 Supporting students to be aware of how their experience and viewpoints are shaped by cultural, historical, geographical, economic and other contexts.

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	team wanted to create an opportunity for reflection on idioms of distress to support learning and show that idioms of distress are ubiquitous.		
Diversity as the Subject Matter	In <i>CSBD</i> , the social determinants of health are introduced. The content identified education, income, occupation, ethnicity and race, religion, political landscape, and geographic region as social determinants of health with short explanations of each provided. It was felt that gender and sexuality should also be recognised as social determinants.	Additional materials were developed providing information on gender and sexuality and how they can impact health outcomes.	Q14 Providing opportunity for direct discussion of age, culture, disability, gender, language, race, religion, sexual orientation or other aspects of identity. Q15 Providing opportunity for direct discussion of racism, sexism, ageism, heterosexism, religion, sexual orientation or other aspects of identity.

Phase 4. Initiating larger course developments

To respond to issues raised in the review, several new sections of curriculum were developed, and many topics within the learning materials were expanded on. Larger course developments addressed multiple review topics and questions. Three key themes emerged through the review process. Examples of larger development projects for each theme are provided.

Theme 1. Diversifying case studies of low, middle, and high-income countries

The first theme recognised that a disproportionate number of case studies from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) were used to illustrate treatment gaps and substandard healthcare practices. This contributes towards false ideas that global healthcare challenges belong only to LMICs. Consequently, both positive case studies from LMICs and negative case studies from high-income countries (HICs) were developed to balance discussions and highlight the diversity of mental health care provision across the globe.

Example: In *Themes in GMH*, the role of the community and the treatment gap is discussed. The learning content considered the burden of care on caregivers in LMICs, where there is a severe treatment gap. The reviewer felt that the content failed to recognise the role informal carers play in HICs where, despite having more integrated health and social care systems, there continues to be a reliance on informal carers. Many students may have personal experiences of being carers, or being cared for informally, and the review team felt it was important to capture the diverse experiences and prevalence of informal carers across multiple healthcare contexts. The extant content was expanded to recognise the reliance on informal caregiving in both LMIC and HIC countries. A NTA was integrated that provided three qualitative studies on the experiences of informal carers in a low- income, middle- income, and a high- income country. Students were asked to read these studies, reflect on and discuss the similarities and differences in caregiver burden across different income settings, consider participant demographics and how different health systems compare. This development addressed the review topics *writing with the audience in mind*, *opportunity for exchange of experiences*, *representation through different lenses*, and *diversity as the subject matter*.

Theme 2. Increasing discussion of gender and sexuality

The second theme pertains to an identified imbalance in discussion of different diversity characteristics. Whilst discussions of culture and ethnicity were embedded within the materials, there was less opportunity to discuss other diversity characteristics such as gender and sexuality. New sections of content were developed including an expansion of content on gender-based violence (GBV) and new learning materials that critiqued the link between Western psychiatry and the continued pathologisation of LGBTQIA+ communities.

Example: In discussions of GBV, a United Nations (UN) definition was provided that only recognised violence towards women. The subsequent content focused on violence against women and girls in various global contexts. The review team recognised that whilst some genders are more affected than others, any gender can experience GBV, and a person's vulnerability varies considerably across settings. This led to an expansion of the definition to include all genders, a diversification of the learning materials to include case studies and data on GBV towards non-cisgendered people, and a discussion of increased vulnerability to GBV predicated on a person's country or place of residence. The teaching team was aware that some

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students may have first-hand experiences of GBV. Rather than a discursive task, a reflective self-care prompt was integrated at the end of the materials. The expansion of content on GBV contributes towards the review topics *writing with the audience in mind*, *representation through different lenses*, and *diversity as the subject matter*.

Example: New learning materials were developed and integrated into *International Law and Policy* that considered the pathologisation and persecution of LGBTQIA+ communities, as well as the use of so-called conversion therapies across global contexts through a human rights framework. The learning materials acknowledged that the pathologisation of LGBTQIA+ groups have been linked to the exportation of Western diagnostic manuals such as the International Classification of Disease and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders that have historically identified homosexuality and gender incongruence as mental disorders. The new learning materials provided information on current legislation and the prevalence of so-called conversion therapies across Western and non-Western contexts, alongside two reflective NTAs that prompted students to discuss the learning materials in groups, reflect on cultural drivers of the use of so-called conversion therapies, and the implicated human rights abuses. The review team noted that some students may identify as LGBTQIA+ or may find the content distressing and made it clear that these reflective tasks were optional. This development contributed to the review topics *writing with the audience in mind*, *opportunity for exchange of experiences*, *representation through different lenses*, and *diversity as the subject matter*.

Theme 3. Framing Western culture

Discussions surrounding culture and ethnicity often focused on non-Western contexts or refugee/migrant populations within Western countries. This centres and normalises Western ideas and behaviour and fails to present Western health outcomes and systems as culturally embedded. In research, literature, and practice, culture is often framed as something that exists in other countries or is brought-in (Fernando, 2010). This is pertinent to the field of GMH, which is criticised for inappropriately applying psychology and psychiatry to culturally diverse groups without adequate evidence that the interventions will work outside of Western cultural frameworks (Fernando, 2010). Content was integrated that framed Western culture and spoke about Western practices through a cultural lens.

Example: It should be noted that the person developing these new learning materials (MW – co-author) struggled to source publications and research that framed Western practices as culturally embedded, which is indicative of the extent to which Western interventions are considered universal and normalised. Cultural differences in French psychiatry were identified, where there is still prevalent use of psychoanalysis as opposed to biological psychiatry, as is the trend in other Western countries (Botbol & Gourbil, 2018). This has impacted treatment and diagnosis, especially for autism (Chamak & Bonniau, 2013). Content was developed and integrated into *CSBD* that distinguished between psychoanalysis and biological psychiatry, explained how French history and university culture has contributed to this difference, and detailed the impact of French psychiatric culture on diagnosis, with a focus on autism. This example illustrates how beliefs surrounding mental illness and/or neurodiversity and their diagnosis and treatment are culturally embedded and can vary across Western settings despite evolving under the broader category of Western schools of thought. This content contributed to the W.O.R.D.D. review topics *representation through different lenses*, and *diversity as the subject matter*.

Phase 5. Expanding the review and disseminating learning

Following the review of the GMH learning materials, *Whose W.O.R.D.D. counts?* has since been applied to three short courses run by the GMH teaching team: *Impact of Trauma on Mental Health, Distress or Disorder*, and *Patent Empowerment*. The review was carried out in the same way with good practice identified and any issues actioned. The process was faster due to the courses being 10 credits. However, the review team felt that the questions and topics posed by the *Whose W.O.R.D.D. counts?* tool were no less relevant, demonstrating the flexibility of the tool across disciplines, although all courses are still health related.

The GMH teaching team have disseminated learning from the tool and the findings of the review across several academic platforms. This includes presenting the review process and findings at the UoG's 15th Annual Learning and Teaching Conference (Frew et al., 2022), publishing a summary in the October 2022 special edition of Hawkeye, the UoG School of Health and Wellbeing (SHW) newsletter, and presenting to colleagues at the SHW 2024 away day.

Impact

Although there has been no formal route to directly assess the impact of the diversity review on student experiences and outcomes, student feedback is largely positive. For example, in the 2022/23 GMH Programme review, 92.8% (n= 13/14) of respondents were satisfied with the diversity of contributors to the GMH Programme, and 100% felt that the online resources were diverse, inclusive, and accessible. Relevant student feedback has been analysed and categorised into three themes: opportunity for interaction, accessible and dynamic materials, and diverse perspectives. Each theme is detailed, with supporting examples of student feedback.

Impact theme A. Opportunity for interaction

The first theme captures students' perspectives on opportunities for interaction. The review contributed to the development and integration of several NTAs, assignment tips, and self-care activities to facilitate reflection and online student discussions. These supported the review topics *opportunity for exchange of experiences*, and *drawing on different student experiences*. From the 2022/23 GMH cohort, 43% (n=6/14) were satisfied with the opportunities to engage with other students online, and 36% (n=5/14) gave a neutral response. Student feedback reflects the positive impact of NTAs in providing "[l]ots of opportunities for interaction" and helping guide "thoughts to what's important and aiding ... reflections".

However, some students commented that they found the NTAs to be "time consuming and feeling a need to complete them [was] overwhelming". In response to this feedback, the teaching team have restricted the number of NTAs that direct students to engage in discussion to three for each week of content. In addition, development work has been undertaken to minimise the time burden of NTAs, for example, by offering a summary of articles or key points, rather than expecting students to read full publications to engage in reflective tasks.

Impact theme B. Accessible and dynamic materials

The second theme captures the accessibility of online materials and their engaging and interactive format. This theme is most relevant to the review topic *writing with the audience in mind* and applies more broadly to EDI principles. All respondents (100%, n=14/14) from the 2022/23 GMH cohort felt that the online learning materials were accessible. Students reported that the learning materials were “dynamic, analytical... [and] diverse”. The organisation of the online resources was recognised, with one student commenting that “the learning materials were very organi[s]ed and encouraged interactive learning”.

Impact theme C. Diverse perspectives

The final theme relates to the diversity of learning materials, supporting the review topics *representation through different lenses* and *diversity as the subject matter*. Student feedback captured the appreciation for the pedagogical considerations in creating learning materials that offer a “good break down of knowledge and in-depth exploration of topics”. The review process facilitated the integration of diverse case studies, and this was reflected positively in student feedback. Students commented that “the teaching material was great, videos and case studies used were informative and interesting”, placing “great emphasis on inequalities... and [drawing] examples from practitioners and service users.”

Food for thought

The cyclical improvement approach means that the GMH teaching team are continuously reviewing the learning materials to optimise their inclusivity and accessibility. *The Whose W.O.R.D.D. counts?* review tool has been invaluable in guiding the teaching team to consider issues of diversity in the learning materials and has initiated a process and approach to teaching and content creation that goes beyond a post-hoc review. Due to the reflective nature, the guiding principles of the review tool have become embedded in our daily practice, informing how learning materials, student workshops, and assessments are developed.

However, diversity projects, whilst valuable, have been criticised for expecting minority groups to fit in and conform to Eurocentric practices and ideals by simply *making space* for people, rather than challenging and uprooting the systems that disadvantage them (Albayrak-Aydemir, 2018). Critics argue that for true equity and equality to be achieved in higher education, the curriculum and institutions must be decolonised (Albayrak-Aydemir, 2018).

The process of decolonising the curriculum has been initiated for the GMH Programme to build on the work undertaken in the diversity project. HEIs are entrenched in colonial histories and continue to perpetuate colonial ideologies through the way education is taught and assessed (Albayrak-Aydemir, 2018).

Decolonising the curriculum builds on diversity projects through acknowledging and challenging colonial systems, practices, and constitutions (University of Essex, 2024). The process of decolonisation goes further than integrating non-White perspectives or substituting content with alternative information (Albayrak-Aydemir, 2018). Decolonisation requires an understanding and critique of knowledge systems and their production, as well as an exploration and uprooting of extant power structures and relations in a radical, disruptive, and transformative way (Behari-Leak, 2019; Keele University, 2018).

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Decolonising the GMH curriculum places a greater emphasis on power imbalances within the field of GMH and the impact of White supremacy and colonialism on the evolution of mental health theory and practice. Ultimately, the teaching team aims to create learning materials that challenge ideas of common knowledge and encourage students to critically engage with and question all knowledge presented to them.

Due to the positions of power held by academic teams, it is vital for the process of decolonising the curriculum to be led by the voices and experiences of students, especially those from ethnic minority groups. Workshops are being planned and piloted to embed student involvement into the curriculum review process, and opportunities are being created to encourage students to develop their ideas so that the process of decolonisation is continual and builds on itself.

Closing remarks

Conducting a diversity review of the entire GMH learning materials was time and labour intensive. However, the process was extremely valuable. Through reviewing the existing materials, the *Whose W.O.R.D.D. counts?* tool has been embedded into our working practice and informs how new learning content is developed. Issues of diversity, representation, and questioning ideas of normality are now integral to our approach to teaching and has inspired us to embark on the process of decolonisation.

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