Do we really know who our students are? Understanding, implementing and embedding a **culturally responsive pedagogy** in our everyday practice

Dr Aminul Hoque MBE
Goldsmiths College, University of London

About me

Dr Aminul Hoque MBE, @BrIslam2015

Lecturer/ researcher in Education, Goldsmiths College

PhD – 2011

Key research interests: identity, youth cultures, multiculturalism, race, migration studies, Islamic feminism

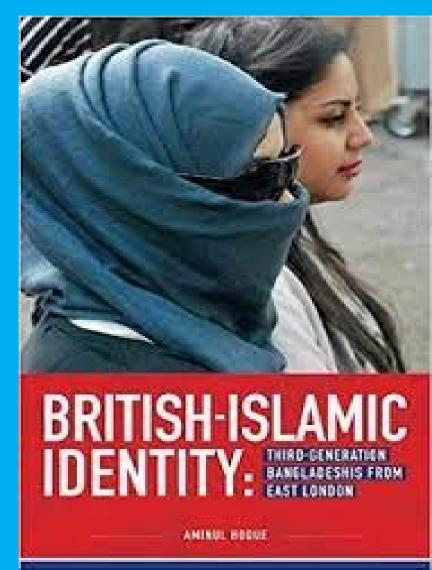Key publications: *British-Islamic Identity: Third Generation Bangladeshis from East London* (2015)

Presenter for *A Very British History: British Bangladeshis,* BBC4, Feb 2020

Londoner, dad, gardener, football-mad

Structure of today's talk/ workshop

- Draw on my own ethnographic research with young Bangladeshis from London, current work with Goldsmiths' students & my anti-racist work with the National Education Union (NEU)

- Provide insight to some of the everyday 'lived experiences' of exclusion and alienation that many BAME students from disadvantaged backgrounds live through

- I will argue that these areas of disparity and disadvantage have become even more problematic (and visible) during the Covid-19 pandemic

- I will offer some practical ways that educators can ensure that such students remain engaged and enthused in their educational journeys (focus on HE)

BRITISH-ISLAMIC IDENTITY: THIRD-GENERATION BANGLADESHIS FROM EAST LONDON

AMINUL HOQUE

Key questions

1. Do we really know who our students are? **Do/ should** we care?

2. Are we aware of the wider social, community and cultural issues that many of our students are living through?

3. **How** do we get to know our students and ensure that their views, interests, lived experiences, aspirations inform and guide our pedagogical practices?

No right or wrong answers…

- What is teaching?

- What is 'education'?

- HOW do we teach? (think about key skills, characteristics, support, infrastructure required for effective/ meaningful teaching)

- Is there an 'end' goal for educators? If so, what is it?

- Who are the key stakeholders in an individuals educational journey?

Educational/ Teaching Philosophy

- **John Dewey** (1859-1952) – child-centred approach, focus on the 'experience' of children, connecting the wider socio-cultural world of the child with the classroom, making education meaningful.

- **Paulo Freire** (1921-1997) – education as a dynamic, two-way, humanistic process, building positive relationships with people, understanding them, dialogue is important, raising the consciousness of people.

- **Antonio Gramsci** (1891-1937) – challenging the wider social structure (status quo) through counter-hegemonic education, raising the social and moral consciousness in people, focus on social justice and equity.

- **bell hooks** (1952-2021) – empowering students, education as a free space for exploring ideas, anyone can learn.

- **Bernard Crick** (1929-2008) – purpose of education is to make people better 'citizens'.

- **Rabindranath Tagore** (1861-1941) – education is about expression, creativity & self-realization.

- **Frank Furedi** (1947 - present) – 'politics' should be left out of education. Teachers should just 'teach'!

Culturally responsive pedagogy

In light of neoliberal reforms to education, there is a need to revert back to a more **inclusive** and **collaborative** form of education where the line between the school and the community is blurred and where the complex cultural, linguistic, ethnic, gender and religious identities of our pupils are explored within the curriculum. **As a teaching philosophy, a culturally responsive pedagogy is premised on the idea that valuing culture is central to learning.** Educators cannot trivialise or pay token attention to the cultural world and lived experiences of their pupils, and instead take time to understand their pupils and their sociocultural worlds, listen to them as well as valuing and maintaining their cultural identities and heritage within pedagogical practices. Such an approach empowers pupils intellectually, socially, emotionally and politically (Hoque, 2015b, 2018; Lucas and Villegas 2013; Nieto 2000).

Students/ pupils/ young people do not leave their sociocultural worlds and identities behind once they enter the school gates – and nor should they!

(Bullock Report, 1975)

'Decolonising' education

'A decolonial culturally responsive pedagogy not only foregrounds students' social and cultural backgrounds, but criticises the dominant knowledge that shape mainstream educational learning contexts'

(Hickey-Moody & Horn, 2022: 5)

'Ideal' univeristy student – key characteristics/ background required

(relative) financial stability. **Flexibility.** *Access to networks of 'critical' friends.* Literate ('professional') parents/ siblings. **Access to stationery/ digital equipment/ wi-fi/ homework space etc.** Confidence to ask questions. Knowledge of the university (HE) system. **Ability to read CRITICALLY.** *Career plan?* **Time** (to 'hang out' at university and not always rushing to get home; to do my reading and not feel 'tired' all the time). Not having to work (help family, pay for mobile bills/ travel). **Well travelled ('worldly').** Independent study skills.

Case study – Fatima, aged 19, female, Bangladeshi, from London. Wants to become a teacher. 'My typical week'.

I love my family and my very close-knit Bangladeshi community. My culture and community mean a great deal to me, although it can be sometimes overwhelming – the private is nearly always public. I have a large family. I am the second oldest of 5 siblings, and also the first person to go university (a great source of pride for my family). So the pressure is on! My parents are amazing and super-supportive, but are always busy managing the house. My father grew up in Bangladesh and cannot speak much English. He is always working all sorts of hours in a grocery store. My mum is a housewife and also has a disability which means that my older sister and I have to help out a lot at home. It is chaotic at home, but I love it. I share a room with 2 of my sisters, and we are constantly fighting for the one working laptop that we have. My grandparents also live with us and frequently I have to take them for hospital appointments because I can speak English. And often, either myself or my older sister have to drop my younger siblings off to school and pick them up. My day starts at 6.30am because I have to get them ready for school and then rush to university to make the 10am lecture. And then I'm rushing back afterwards for the pick up. Oh did I also tell you that I am online for Arabic classes everyday between 5-7pm, and I have a part-time weekend job. I am always 'running' and 'juggling'. 'Multitasking' has become part of my identity.

What barriers/ challenges/ opportunities can you identify?

The intersectional 'lived experiences' of many students from BAME backgrounds

These pupils also happen to come from low income socio-economic backgrounds and also have been disproportionately affected (recently) by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The wider empirical research highlights that many of these students have an intersectional lived experience focused around cultural barriers to higher education, part time employment commitments, care responsibilities, apathy towards wider university social education, poverty of (low) aspirations (Archer et al, 2010; Hoque, 2015a, 2018).

These students are also overwhelmingly of Muslim/ Islamic background and there is an additional institutional and societal barrier of discrimination (Islamophobia) that they need to negotiate? (Allen, 2010; Shain, 2003, 2010; Hoque, 2015a, 2018).

Covid-19 – a working class reality

- Intergenerational households
- Overcrowded houses
- Digital poverty
- Caring responsibilities (cultural)
- Service sector employment ('too nice & compliant')
- Mistrust in the health service ('institutionalised' racism) -Discrimination
- Underlying health issues?
- Mental health

A culturally inclusive pedagogy: Some practical suggestions

- There must be 'buy in' from management/ hierarchy.
- Get to know your students. Listen and talk to your pupils. Give them space to tell you 'their' stories.
- Activities, readings, sports, curriculum, discussions to reflect diverse student population.
- Continuous staff training.
- Take a 'walk' in the community (events, read local papers, gov data, etc).
- As a teacher, if you don't understand something about your pupils, **ask them to tell you about it!** Be non-judgemental and don't just fall back on your own prejudices and bias. Take a reflexive approach.
- Encourage parental/ family/ community engagement in the child's learning.
- Make the 'national' curriculum a 'relevant' one.

The debate continues.......

Stay in touch

Dr Aminul Hoque
Department of Educational Studies
Goldsmiths, University of London

E: **a.hoque@gold.ac.uk**

Twitter: @BrIslam2015

Questions?

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