



#GlobalJustice?: Social Media, Pedagogy and Activism

Dr Madeleine Le Bourdon

BlueSky: @DrMLeBourdon



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

UK Education and global challenges

Policy

- Market orientated policies (Bhopal and Shain 2014)
- Knowledge 'production' rather than 'cultivation' (Shilliam 2015, Rutazibwa 2023)

Teacher training

- Lack of training, time and space on how to teach global issues= lack of confidence (Maylor et al 2007, Maylor 2021, Hicks and Holden 2007)

Funding

- School funding linked to curriculum rules, student fees increasing and lack of state funding (Ross 2021)

Systemic inequalities

- 'Race rather than class/gender trumps your educational experience' (Bhopal, 2018)
- Huge inequalities in authority positions in schools (Weale 2021, Hill 2022; UK Government 2023)
- **2020/21 UK HE - 29% professors are female.** 11% Black, Asian or other minority ethnic backgrounds, while 82 % White. **1% Professors are Black.**

Put our colonial history on the curriculum - then we'll understand who we really are
Maya Goodfellow



Britain's past weighs on our present; learning about it would mean a better debate about race and migration



'There is absolutely systemic racism': BAME headteachers share their views

Four headteachers describe the obstacles they have had to overcome to reach senior leadership roles
© School governors in England to be offered anti-racism training



Schools minister rejects lessons about colonialism and slave trade in case they 'lower standards'

Petition condemning curriculum for failing to teach 'Britain's role in colonisation' is rebuffed

Rob Richards, Deputy Political Editor • Thursday 25 February 2021 19:30 • 26 Comments

INDEPENDENT tv
Compulsory lessons about Empire risk 'lower standards', says schools minister

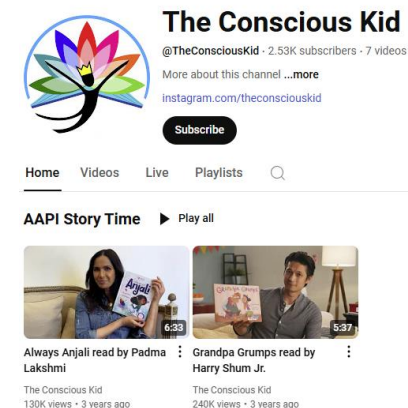
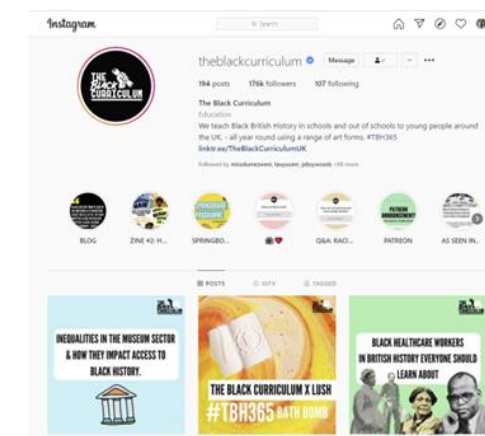
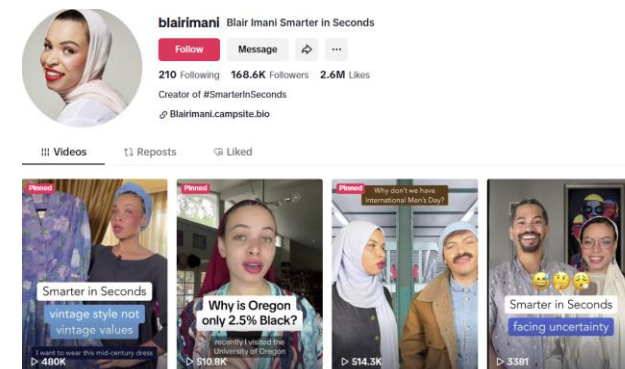
'[UK schools teach] a form of 'whiteness' that is a set of rules of engagement for maximum market participation, where grit and resilience are just code words for putting up and shutting up'
(Clennon 2018: 78)

Social Media and Political Pedagogy

Research on the role of social media as pedagogical space has largely **focused top-down perspectives that evaluate particular political knowledges** gained or the level of online political participation (Park 2017; Kim et al 2020; Intyaswati et al 2021).

Research on **Social media activism/Slacktivism** grown in momentum over past decade, **questioning its influence on mobilizing groups.**(Alva et al 2017; Chon & Park, 2020).

COVID-19 activism moved online- Protests, Campaigns, Solidarity, **Education.** Inspired by hooks (1994) and Freire(1970) **what is the lived-experience of an informal space** (Le Bourdon 2018), **such as social media as a space for learning.**



Research Step 1 (2021/22)

High school students

- To understand how young people engage with global issues through social media.
- To investigate if and how young people's participation with social media and global issues changed during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- To explore how social media could as an informal space for learning and participation could support Global Education and activism.

School	Type	Student no.	Ofsted report rating	Participants
Cumbria (C)	Foundation school (non-selective)	Approx. 1,409 (2019)	Requires improvements	7 Year 9 and 10 mixed
Yorkshire A (YA)	Community school (non-selective)	Approx. 1,782 (2013)	Outstanding	18 Year 9- 6 Year 10- 7 Year 11- 5
Yorkshire B (YB)	Academy sponsored (non-selective)	Approx. 612 (2017)	Good	25 Year 10
Greater London (GL)	Academy Church of England (non-selective)	Approx. 1135	Outstanding	5 Year 9 and 10 mixed



Caution

“Social media is a really powerful tool for spreading good information, but it is really fast to spread bad information, and you can’t really tell which is good or bad until someone points out like the slightest mistake.” (Student, Cumbria)



Lived- experience

“Posts are more than just the news, it’s the real life, personal stories, rather than just anecdotes from the news. It’s from people living there, the facts. You can hear all those real experiences a lot more than in the news.” (Student, Yorkshire A)



Connection

‘I will only really post stuff if it really means stuff for me, like if it hits a spot in my body [thumps chest] or means a lot to my family, I will post about it (Student, London)



Catalyst

‘When the Edward Colston statue was torn down, I was so confused about who he was. So I looked it up and realized he was a slave trader...I spoke to my mum and realized my grandparents had lived xx and yy..So I guess, without seeing that on Instagram I would have not totally understood my history but I did my own research.” (Student, Yorkshire A)

Research Step 2 (2023/24)

University students

- To understand how university students engage with global issues through social media.
- To investigate if and how they participate with social media and global issues.
- To explore the relationship and potential between teaching on global challenges and social media.
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University	Location	Student no.	University Rankings (median of tables)	Participants
University of Leeds	North of England (City)	Approx. 37500	23	Three focus groups: 26 participants
Queen Mary University of London	East London (City)	Approx. 32,000	50	Two focus groups: 18 participants
University of Gloucestershire	South-west England (Rural)	Approx. 12,000	88	One focus group: 5 participants



Co-PI's: Dr Louise Pears, Dr Andreas Papamichail, Dr Nat Jester



Critical

“I think most people do have a bit more media literacy at university than high school, or people that didn't go to uni. I think it should start earlier in high school, like, realistically, it's the 16-year-olds are the most active on social media and the most exposed to misinformation.” (UoL Student)



Access and Speed

“I'm just straightaway, constantly aware what is going on in the world, just because of what I'm following, but also, I keep a track of the trending tab, because as soon as something happens, it's just straightaway trending and obviously a million people just talk about one topic straightaway.” (QMUL student)



Diversifying of information

“It's because the main form of consuming news is TV based news and that's really influenced by all the businessmen and politicians in our country. So, a lot of people from our generation don't really watch the TV anymore. So it's more finding your own sources, and then you can verify it later on.” (QMUL student)



Skills

“We're encouraged to look at mainstream media, but I am scared of using social media in an essay I worry I would get marked down or it's misinformed. I guess, knowing how to or being encouraged to use critical skills and how to reference would be good.” (UoL Student)



Forward reflections...

How can we create space for acknowledging social media in our teaching?

Where can we bring social media into our teaching?

How do we factor in the biases/algorithms/misinformation of this ambivalent space?

How can we support students in critical engaging with content online?



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Thank you

Email: m.lebourdon@leeds.ac.uk

Bluesky: @DrMLeBourdon

