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PSYCHOLOGY & THE CURRICULUM: INCLUDING THOSE MOST AT RISK

Union Notes

1. The majority of psychological studies and research more broadly are cisnormative, heteronormative, ethnocentric, and malecentric – that is, they are undertaken with almost entirely cisgender, straight, white, western male participants, the results of which are then generalised to the entirety of society.
2. The British Psychological Society (BPS) released a statement saying 'people of same-sex sexual orientations' and 'people of all genders and identities should be regarded as equal members of society' (1)
3. BPS has recently looked into altering its Undergraduate accreditation but only mentioned 'sexual difference' once.
4. The Psychology curriculum at Leeds Beckett University and other universities is bound by the accreditation criteria set by BPS, which limits what universities can include in their psychology curriculum whilst still giving students highly valued accredited degrees.
5. That in the Leeds Beckett Psychology curriculum (which includes recommended readings and lecture materials), the authors are:
 - a. 99% white
 - b. 68% men
 - c. 100% Western
 Meaning that there is almost no representation from any BME persons in the curriculum. (2)
6. Nationally there still exists a wide BME-attainment gap – in Leeds Beckett University Psychology, in both the 2013/14 and 2014/15 academic years, white students were more likely to receive 'good honours' (a 1st or a 2:1) while BME students were more likely to receive honours (2:2 or 3rd) or fail. (3)

Union Believes

1. The generalised use of data taken from samples of only white, middle class, able-bodied, cisgender, heterosexual men contributes to the normalisation of this group and the 'othering' of any group that differs from this 'norm'
2. The results of research that is conducted on entirely white, western, cisgender, straight men cannot be generalised to other groups.
3. That any and all students should be able to be part of a psychological study and should be able to thrive in their psychology course.
4. Critical and inclusive study is generally not represented until a postgraduate or even research employment level.
5. Undergraduates need to be trained to be more inclusive to tackle the issue at an early level.

6. At Leeds Beckett University, undergraduate Psychology students are not taught specific critical psychology material until their final year, meaning they go through almost the entirety of their degree learning about research that is unrepresentative of some of the most marginalised groups in society.
7. By not having an inclusive curriculum we cannot expect to retain students who feel unrepresented in their subject area; this is an issue affecting progression as well as attainment.
8. That universities are institutionally racist and that only by challenging this at every level can we hope to start to change this.
9. BPS has made the first steps into being more inclusive but needs a lot of work and support.

Union Resolves

1. To work with relevant student representatives and societies as well as Psychology Societies/students to better understand the current standards of the Psychology and Social Sciences curricula and other curricula more generally.
2. To lobby the Psychology department of the University to open up a dialogue and work with BPS and Psychology organisations to help improve the psychology curriculum for accredited courses.
3. Gather evidence and knowledge to help put pressure on these services, if discussion is ineffective.
4. To support the Why Is My Curriculum White? campaign nationally and locally, supporting any local events and supporting any initiatives at Leeds Beckett University to diversify the curriculum both in terms of recommended readings and module content, including but not limited to the current (2016/17) research being undertaken by staff at Leeds Beckett University into the effect of the White Curriculum on BME students.

References

1. http://www.bps.org.uk/system/files/images/therapies_attempting_to_change_sexual_orientation.pdf
2. Broad Content Analysis – Preliminary findings. *Curriculum Diversification Project*, G. Jankowski (2015) Leeds Beckett University
3. HESA Student Data – 2013/14 and 2014/15