

Decolonisation

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THEME

Decolonisation

CONTEXT

Recently, the term decolonisation has increasingly gained popularity in public, academic and institutional domains despite the mixed understanding, and lack of adequately satisfying definition. To date, several civil entities do acknowledge the better way to respectfully address and unite our cosmopolitan societies is to reconcile our colonial pasts, and thoughtfully live as well as interact with the victims of our dark history. At the same time collectively challenge the embedded systemic colonial establishments in our domestic structures. However, genuine understanding of the concept of decolonisation requires reflective journey through the history, and honest review of current status quo.

This activity plan consists of two separate activities, all of which are intended to offer students/participants space to actively engage in learning about the topic of decolonisation.

GOALS

- Increasing knowledge and awareness on the topic of decolonisation
- Promote an understanding of colonialism chronologically (events across time)
- Provide insight into the concept of decolonisation
- Reflect on the involvement and roles of our respective countries in the history of colonisation
- Identify and learn about remnants of colonialism in our cities such as monuments, streets, buildings, museums, school textbooks, and colonial structures/systems in public/private institutions
- Raising awareness and sensitivity about cultural appropriation

METHODOLOGY

Group work, research, presentations, and feedback

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students/participants can open-mindedly learn about the reality of colonial history.
- Students/participants can objectively evaluate the information and knowledge they learnt in school about colonialism.
- Students/participants can acquire ideas that lead to a better understanding of racial inequality, racism, and other current global issues that have their roots in the colonial past.
- Students/participants gain a sense of respect and sensitivity towards multiculturalism in their schools and communities.

MATERIAL & EQUIPMENT NEEDED

- Flipchart, papers, markers, and masking tape.
- Smartphones/tablets/laptops and Internet connection

Activity overviews and description

ACTIVITY 1: 75 MINUTES APPROX.

Introduction: 10 minutes

The teacher/educator introduces the activity, explains the procedure to the students/participants as part of the preparation, followed by creating groups (smaller groups of 4 – 6 students/participants preferred). Each group selects a leader, who facilitates the activities within the group. Tasks such as note taking and presentation can be assigned to other members of the group to promote active participation. As part of preparation, prior to the exercise, students/participants should be warned that the content they are about to discover may be emotionally challenging.

Groupwork: 65 minutes

After forming the groups, the teacher/educator assigns a task to each group to write down what they have learned about colonialism in school thus far, encouraging them to include any relevant information from school textbooks. Ask them to include the names of school textbooks or resources from which they acquired this information, if possible. Recognizing that students/participants may not be familiar with specific books on the subject, the educator should focus on exploring the students'/participants' existing knowledge on the topic. After the groups complete the task, each group briefly presents their answers. **(15 minutes)**.

Following that, the teacher/educator distributes selected data highlighting significant events in the history of colonial timelines from the list provided below. The number of tasks assigned should align with the available time and the capacity of each group. For optimal effectiveness, assigning two tasks per group is recommended.

- Conquest of Ceuta 1415
- Christopher Columbus 1492
- 1493 Papa bull Inter caetera
- The Dutch Slave Trade in the Atlantic (1600 –1800)
- The 1619 Landing
- Age of Enlightenment
- July 4th, 1776
- Trail of Tears (1830 - 1850)
- December 6, 1865
- The Berlin Conference (1884-1885)
- Congo Free State (1885 - 1908)
- Namibia (1904 - 1907)
- South Africa (1918 – 2013)
- Mohandas K Gandhi
- Algeria 1954-1962
- The General Assembly Resolution 1514

Using smartphones/iPads/laptops, groups explore each given event or history period and write the most important information for each given event or person on the flipchart paper.

The objective is to acquaint students/participants with certain colonial events and periods, allowing them to compare whether these topics align with their prior education or if they are entirely new to them. The teacher/educator should consider the possibility that some students/participants may have come across this information through alternative resources like the media, discussion with parents, interactions with friends, or participation in seminars. Therefore, it is recommended for the teacher/educator to address this early in the exercise. **(20 minutes)**

When finished, the teacher/educator calls students/participants back to a plenary session and opens the space for group presentations.

Presentations: 20 minutes

Each group takes a maximum of 5 minutes to display their sheets on the wall and present them. The presentation should be guided by the questions below:

Have you identified any shared themes or common elements? Were there any surprising or unexpected facts that emerged from the presentations? Did you come across anything that seemed unusual?

Remarks/debrief: 10 minutes

The teacher/educator highlights important issues brought up in each group presentation. Emphasis should be directed to things students/participants found very crucial, but they were never taught, while exploring possible reasons why some of these histories were not included in school textbooks. It is essential that the teacher/educator checks the mood of the group and asks the students/participants some debriefing questions such as:

- What was it like for you to engage in this activity?
- Did you experience any emotions or feelings during the activity?
- How do you feel now, at the end of the activity?
- Is there anything more you would like to share with the rest of the group?

After gaining various inputs, the teacher/educator then concludes the activity.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

There are no agreed upon definitions of decolonisation as a concept. The available definitions seem largely influenced by respective interest groups such as native/indigenous groups, environmentalists, anti-racism movements, international organisations, and governments. The existing UN definition of decolonisation is technically limited as it focuses mostly on the political independence of Nation States and its populations and does not address the complex colonial structures still existing in our societies. Bearing in mind that the powerful nations behind the formation of UN are the same colonial powers. <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/decolonization>

ADAPTATION ALTERNATIVES

This exercise can be adjusted depending on the time availability. In settings where there are plenty of time available for the activity, the students/participants could be given sufficient time to identify the most reliable, important, and interesting sources of information. The students/participants could for instance be offered more options for information collection to include photos, videos, statistics, and interviews for facts checking and diverse perspectives. Presentations can be accompanied by guided general discussion where students/participants can individually express their views (personal opinions).

ACTIVITY 2: 90 MINUTES

Students/participants use laptops, smartphones, or tablets.

Introduction and task: 10 minutes

The teacher/educator provides short background information prior to the activity, explains the procedure to students/participants as part of the preparation, and creates small groups (of 4 – 6 students/participants). Each group selects a leader, who facilitates the activities within the group. Tasks such as note taking and presentation can be assigned to other members of the group to cultivate active participation.

Groupwork: 30 minutes

Once groups have been created the teacher/educator labels the groups A, B, C, D, etc, and then proceeds with the instruction as follows:

Group A should undertake research and list on a flipchart paper all streets in their community named after colonial rulers, masters, warriors, veterans, administrators, and other individuals associated with colonialism. Additionally, they are tasked with exploring the specific roles played by these individuals in the process of colonization, both abroad and at home. It is recommended that Group A utilizes a map of their city or town for reference during this investigation.

Group B is assigned the task of identifying public buildings and monuments in their community dedicated to honoring individuals who contributed to the process of colonialism abroad. Their focus should be on pinpointing the specific achievements or actions that made these individuals famous. The information gathered should be presented on a flipchart.

Group C is tasked with exploring an online archive of a local museum or a museum in another city within their country. Their objective is to identify foreign artifacts in the collection whose origin or heritage can be traced back to former colonies. Additionally, Group C should strive to understand how these artifacts ended up in the museum.

If there are more groups, the identical task should be assigned to each of them. The teacher/educator might need to assist the groups with finding the most appropriate online resources, so that students/participants can easily access the data they need for their tasks. Preliminary preparation is advised in this regard.

At the end of this part of the activity, the teacher/educator recreates the larger group.

Presentation: 30 minutes

Each group is given a maximum of 7 minutes to present their findings, preferably guided by some key questions. Questions are allowed at the end of each presentation for clarification.

Remarks/debrief: 15 minutes

The teacher/educator reflects on the most important findings from each group, while critically highlighting controversies, missed opportunities, and the power dynamics associated with colonial memorization. Some key questions can also be presented such as:

- Where do the victims fit within the process of commemorating colonial history?
- What does honouring perpetrators mean to the victims of colonialism and their descendants?
- What about those who are still suffering from the consequences of colonialism?
- In this part, it is crucial to emphasize that the colonial legacy persists, evident in public buildings, street names, statues, academic texts, school literature, museums, institutional systems, treaties, racism, and racial inequalities within countries.

Before concluding all activities and discussions, the teacher/educator must check in with the students/participants about their experience with the activity. This includes exploring their thoughts, and feelings, and determining if there is a need for any follow-up. **(5 minutes)**

ADAPTATION ALTERNATIVES

Option 1: This activity can be extended if time is available. In a large city, there will potentially be more streets bearing the names of former colonists. Therefore, more time might be needed. If possible, the teacher/educator can invite representatives of Human Rights NGOs, particularly those focusing on colonial issues, to speak to the students/participants. This would provide valuable insight and perspectives on the subject matter.

Option 2: Teacher/educator can invite officials from specific departments to visit the school, especially those from the following areas: (i) an official from the district administrative office, who can provide insights into the naming and dedication of streets, public buildings, or monuments; (ii) a museum guide to share information about artifacts and their origins.

Option 3: Students/participants can increase their awareness of the lingering effects of colonialism and discover ways to address these remnants in their daily lives and schoolwork. Teachers/educators can collaborate with students/participants to develop activities within the school and local communities to raise awareness. A straightforward example could be launching a small project to create awareness about decolonization within the school through the use of posters.

Option 4: Certain cities offer 'black history tours' that provide insights into colonial histories. It might be worth exploring the option of organizing an additional activity and taking students/participants on one of these informative tours.



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