

Decolonising Business Schools in Context: From Theory to Practice

Caroline Chapain, Emma Surman, Rweyemamu
Ndibalema and Anita Lateano

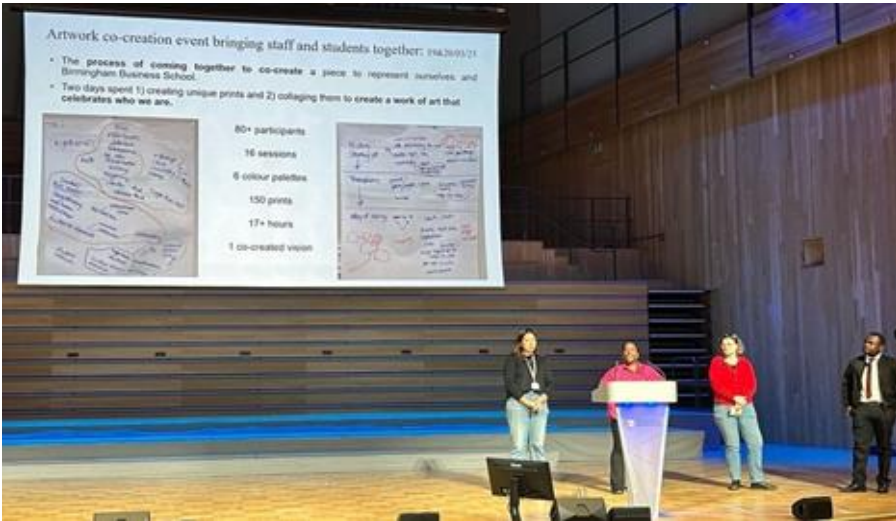
PRME Global Forum 2025
Tuesday 10th June 2025



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Who are we and why we are here (virtually) today?



What does decolonising mean within the current context?

Thinking about the personal and the professional – our positionality: What does decolonisation mean at an individual level?

Thinking about the organisational and professional levels: What does decolonisation mean in the context of the business school today?

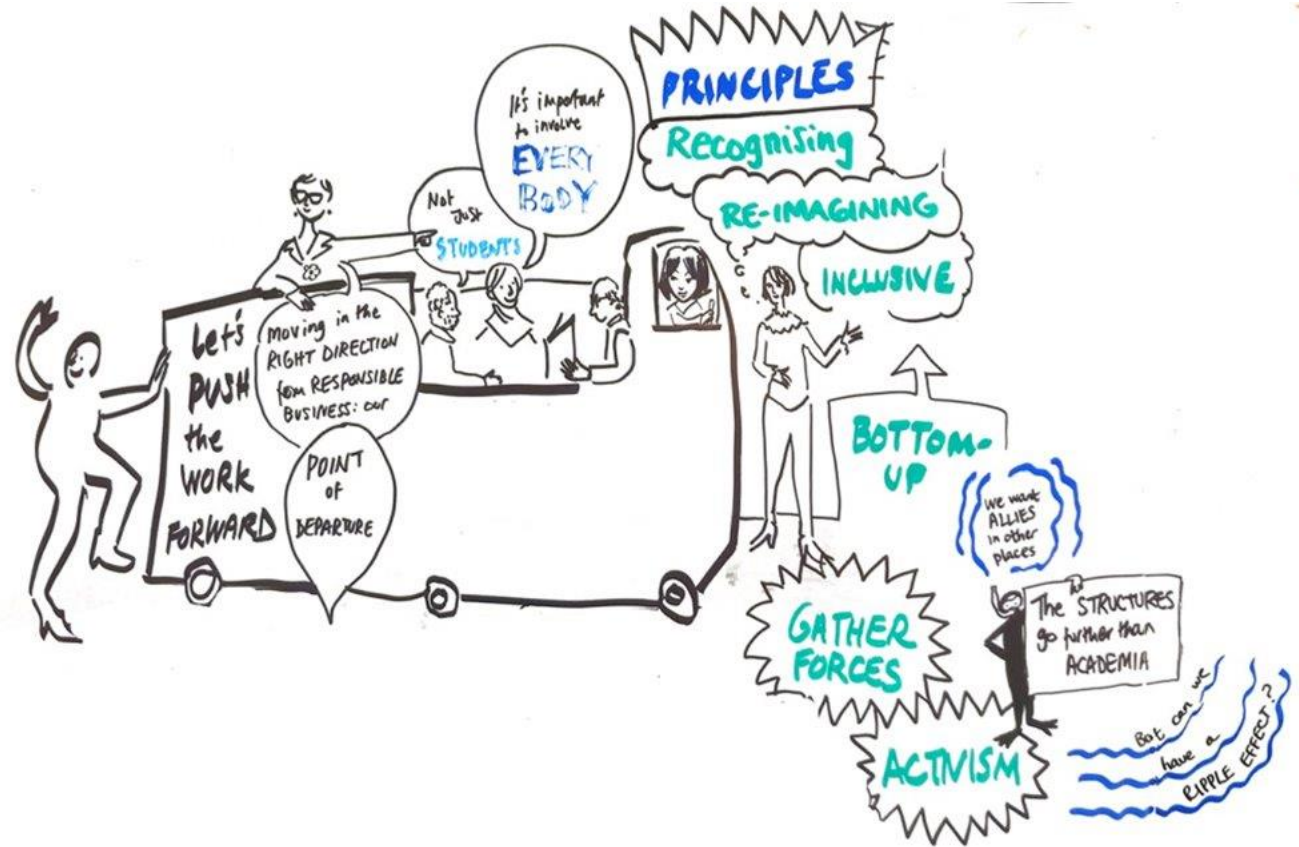
What does the current political context mean for everyone of us (& how can we develop this work forward within PRME?)



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1. BBS Decolonisation Project



Main aim:

To recognise colonisation within BBS programmes, teaching, research and the way the school operates and to find effective ways to dismantle it, enabling a decolonised reimagining of our business school curriculum and research and related activities.

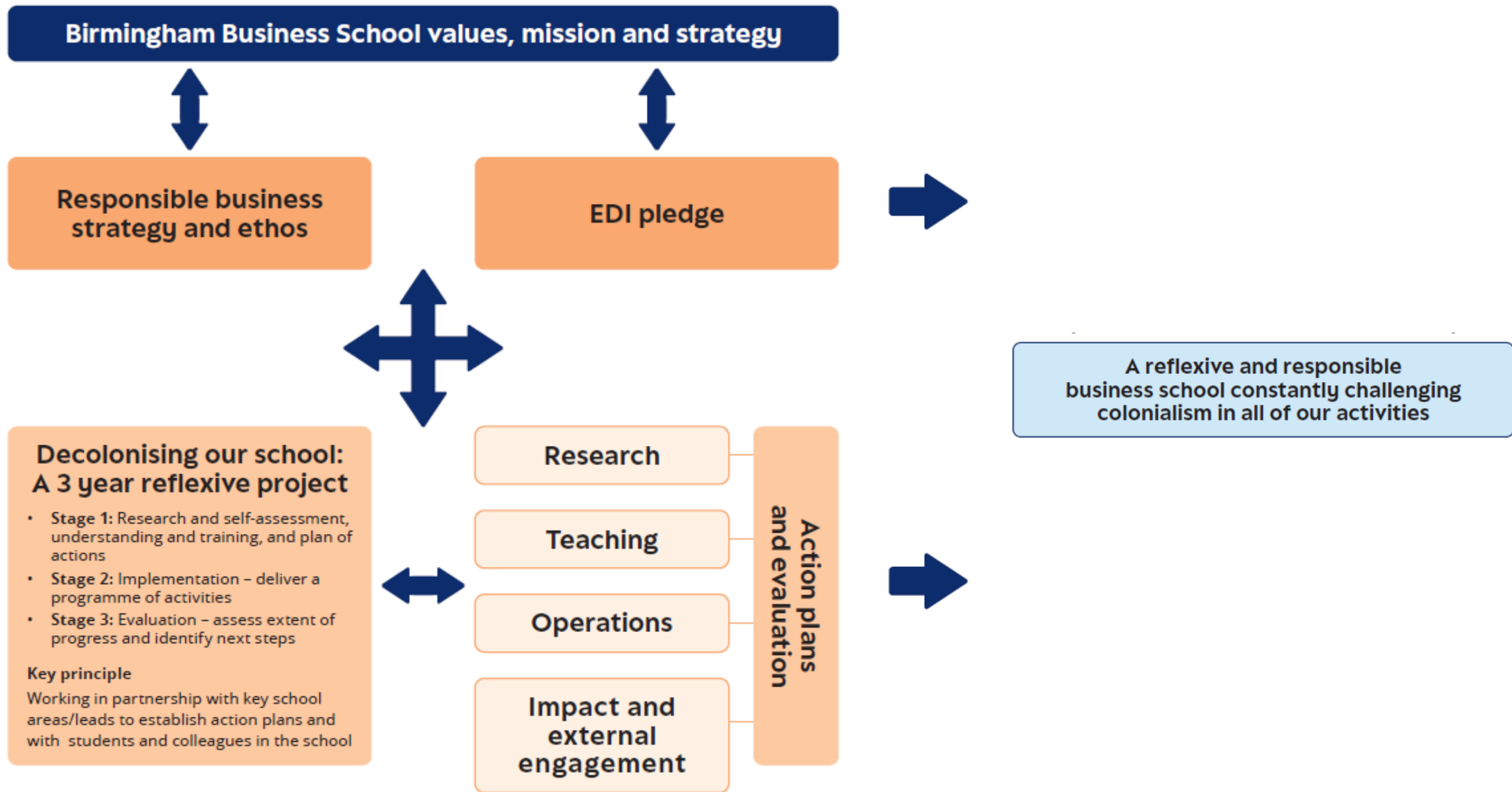


Cultural change



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Principles of the project

- This is not something that can be imposed but must be debated, collaborated on and co-created
- A safe, supportive environment where decolonisation and issues of coloniality can be discussed is crucial.
- The project needs to be inclusive, allowing everyone within the School to be involved in its evolution.
- This is an ongoing journey, not a finite process and shouldn't be treated as a tick box exercise but more a life-long commitment to continue reimagining and relearning.



Values we ground this work in

- Everyone is welcome and we encourage everyone to share their views, as long as it is consistent with our principles.
- This is a learning space. It's OK to make mistakes.
- This is a confidential space.
- Challenging ourselves / not being afraid of asking questions
- This topic is about embodied human beings, we all have emotions about this, recognise them, be **RESPECTFUL** – what happens to me happens to you.
- This is about talking but also about listening and hearing.
- Take responsibility for what you say and the impact it may have.
- What could you, we, we all do differently? Take agency in your learning journey.
- It may be uncomfortable, but it is hopeful.



Our project's 5 Cs

Context

Conversation

(Dis)Comfort

Co-producers

Creativity & co-creation



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Sage

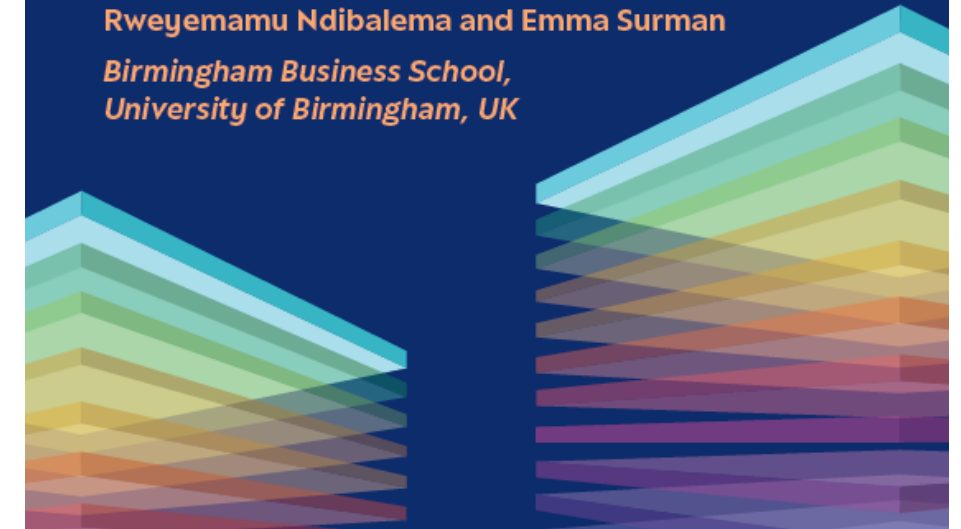
Case Report

Decolonising a business school in context: from theory to practice

Authored by:

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Rweyemamu Ndibalema and Emma Surman

*Birmingham Business School,
University of Birmingham, UK*



**2. What does
decolonisation mean
to you in your context?**



*1. How does it feel to be/work in a Business School today?
(5 min)*

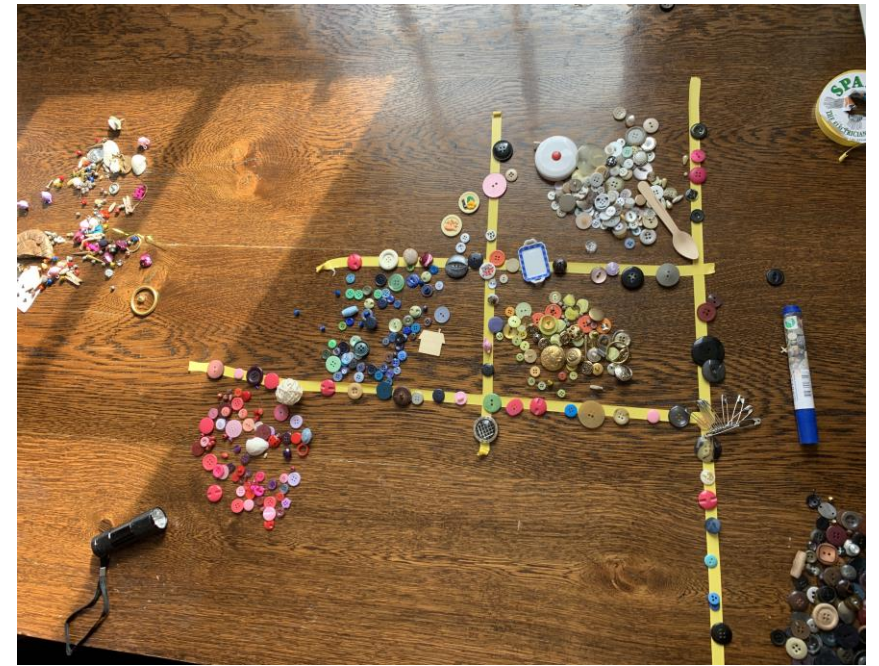
How does it feel to be/work in a Business School today?

A word cloud visualization of responses to the question 'How does it feel to be/work in a Business School today?'. The words are arranged in a circular pattern, with the most prominent words in the center and smaller words towards the edges. The words are in various shades of gray and yellow. The most prominent words are 'tough', 'change', 'powerful', 'impactful', 'overworked', 'challenging', 'promising', 'exciting', 'stressful', 'urgent', 'global future', 'inspirational', 'stressed', 'worrying yet hopeful', 'multi-stakeholder', 'harm', 'patriarchal', 'slow paced', 'rush', 'fight', 'battle', 'under-resourced', 'opportunity', 'positive', 'inspiring', and 'stressed'.

challenging
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positive
urgent
global future
inspirational
powerful
overworked
stressed
fight
battle

2. In your groups (Task 1 - 5min)

First task - reflect on what you make of the words that people have used: First, what do you think of the words that appeared on the screen? Which ones particularly resonate with you (5min)



2. *In your groups (Task 2 - 10min)*

Second task - if you were to create a decolonised business school? What would it be/feel like? What words could you use to describe it? (10min) => write on post-it



2. What would
a decolonised
business
school be/feel
like? (5 min)

What would a decolonised business school be/feel like?

for the greater good
flat (non-hierarchical) international
room for voice
values are different
generosity
left-brained
natural artistic
meaningful diverse loving
safe authentic holistic organic
matriarchy active joyful
local embedded respect collaborative
diversity not competitive less patriarchal
welcoming equality stories
not dominating inviting
connect(ed) openness equal
non-performative expressive
courage
lived experience empowering represent
cultural aware

sustainable
inclusive
open
creative
circular

3. In your group, create a cinquain i.e. a 5 line poem (5 +10 minutes) & Meredith will upload a picture

1 word = The problem (how you see the business school now)

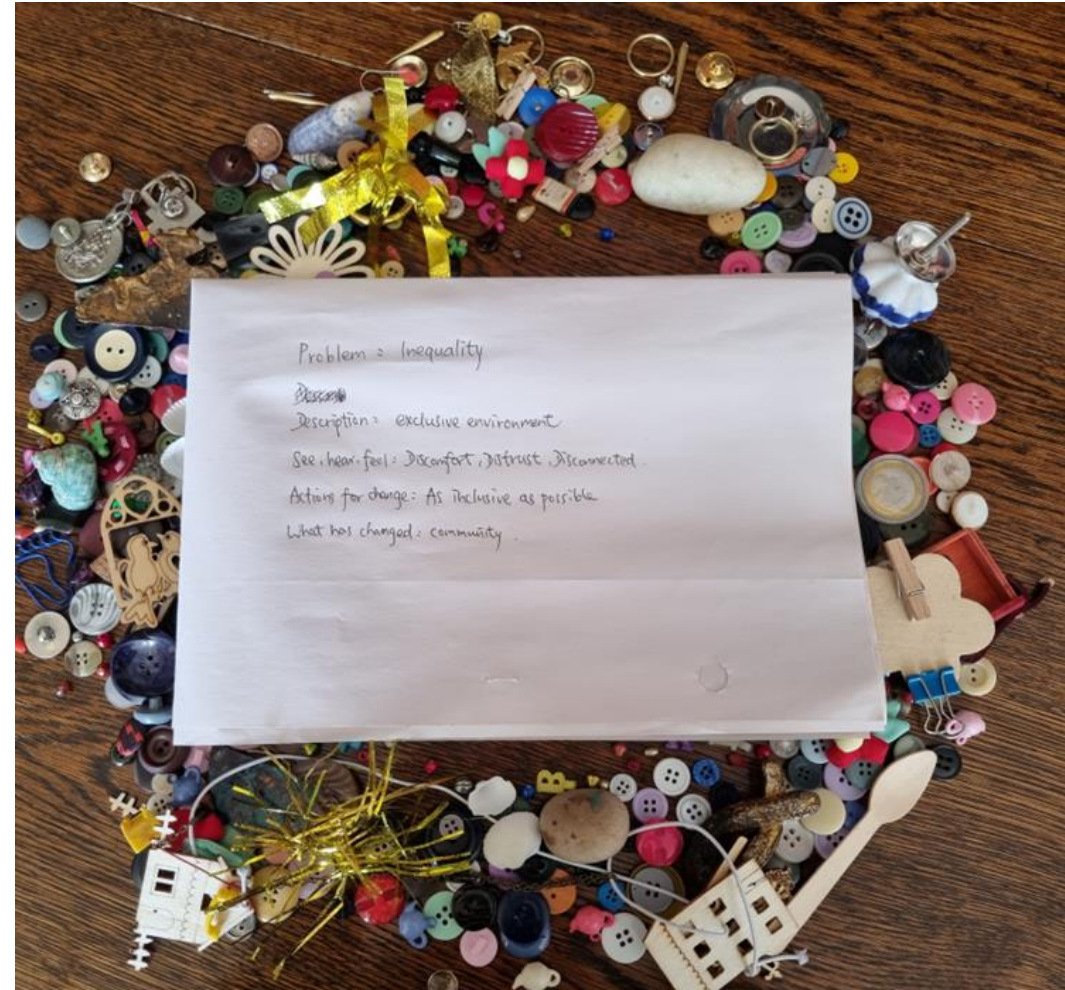
2 words = Describe the problem

3 words = What do you see? What do you hear? What do you feel?

4 words = What are the actions for change?

1 word = How is it different? (a decolonised business school)

Sharing with
the room
(10min)



Ignorance

unaware, blind

harm can't find

seek to reveal light

SEE! (sight)

Gate-kept

Lonely Uncollaborative

Privilege Silence

Disconnect

Communication Compassion

Innovative Humble

Progressive

DOWN FACED

UREAUCRATIC, STALLING

STAGNATION, 'NO' ANTICIPATION...

EMPOWERING DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES NOW

PROGRESS

DOMINATING

COMPETITIVE
HIERARCHY/
PATRIARCHY

TREASURED
TENSION
EXCLUSION

EMPOWER
INCLUDE
CREATE
~~CREATE~~
~~SUPPRESS~~
CONNECT

CIRCULAR

3. Moving forward

Key lessons learnt...

1. Starting point – thinking and reflecting

- Identify why you want to do this work (personal and professionally – your positionality). Remember to check in with yourself as the work progresses.
- Understand the **context**: explore what decolonisation means for your institution, the local and national contexts, and your discipline => what can be adapted to YOUR context?
- It is about long term cultural change
- Integrate decolonising work into existing agendas where relevant: aligning with broader institutional priorities such as EDB or environmental and social sustainability.

2. On the way - the doing

- Foster open dialogues – with all stakeholders - create a range of platforms for **conversations** and **co-creation** and be open to diverse views and starting points. Empower them to make changes.
- Explore decolonial methods to allow people to engage in a way that is meaningful to them, consider methodologies (include **creative** methods) to enable you to do this.
- Undertake research and reflect along the way to learn, adjust and understand progress with regards to the work and how you and others feel about it.
- Find ways to make the work visible and accessible in a variety of formats.

3. To keep you going on your journey– interacting and continued reflection

- Find hope and joy in the work by doing things that you love and **celebrate progress**.
- Create space to care for yourself – balance the emotional toll.
- Connect with others – **co-produce** with allies- find and give group support and encouragement.
- Consider that decolonising work is a way to think deeply about what we do and how we do it with the hope of changing things for the better.



Moving forward with decolonisation practice in the current context and within PRME (chaired by Anita & Meredith)

- Is there anything from this that you can take forward?
- How can we develop a community of practice around this? Would it be useful?
- How to account for the current context?
- We have started a mailing list with the aim of creating a supportive online network to share practices and ideas – if you would like to join us please scan the QR code to be added.
- Any further ideas?



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- Scan the QR code to download a copy of the case report
- Pick up a printed copy of the report at the Sage stand during the RME Week evening reception on Wednesday from 5:30 – 7:30pm, at The Sanctuary.

