Telling tall tales – exploring our single stories of learning and teaching in UK higher education

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If we are to diversify the curriculum, we need to move beyond the single story of learning and teaching. We need to represent the diverse body of our staff and students.
The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story. (Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie)
What are ‘single stories’?

Effect?
Role of ‘shame’?
It all depends on where you start the story?
Unravelling these single stories

• As a teacher, who am I? What are my assumptions? What is my ‘single story’?

• Who are my students? Where do they come from? Where do we want to go?

• What am I teaching? Why? What is my responsibility as a teacher and learner to my discipline?
To be more precise, intercultural/indigenous universities represent a general attempt to let knowledge, which is “other” and for that reason previously not considered as such, breathe, grow and dialog, on an equity basis, with previously established knowledge. (Guilherme & Dietz, 2016: 5, my emphasis)

‘A pedagogy of the encounter’ (Gill, 2016)
“We are all migrants through time”
Hamid, 2017
Role of interculturalism in the curriculum

‘Intercultural’ is a superordinate that encapsulates linguistic, cultural (in the traditional sense of ethnicity, community and tradition), socio-economic and educational aspects.

Murray, 2016: 169
How does interculturalism help us dismantle single stories?

Actively encourages different perspectives to come into the classroom
(how do we negotiate those ‘hot moments’?)

Enables students and teachers to co-create the curriculum
(is it easy to let go of our own assumptions, or indeed our own language?)

Refuses a dominant discourse to control and rule the curriculum
(is this feasible in the grand narratives of HE in the UK in our current landscape?)
• 4 x Focus groups ‘Connecting Cultures’ (May-June 2016)
  - Postgraduates who teach
  - PG Cert participants/early career, pre-pilot
  - PG Cert participants/early career, post-pilot
  - Experienced academic colleagues

• Intercultural Colloquium (August 2016)
  Created a desire for interdisciplinary, cross-institutional module on embedding interculturalism in the curriculum

• Pilot of Module 1 of PCLTHE (Autumn 2016)
  Interculturalism as pedagogical ethos

• Pilot of Programme Leader toolkit (Spring 2017)
  Developed by undergraduate student on placement Module with Academic Development