

## A synthesis of research evidence.

# Black and minority ethnic (BME) students' participation in higher education: improving retention and success.

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### Core definition

Participation, retention and success all refer to the subjective and objective nature of a student's involvement in, and learning experience of, higher education measured through individual perceptions and material outcomes of achievement. In this synthesis the outcomes of achievement are primarily associated with degree attainment measured in relation to degree classification. Black and minority ethnic (BME) is an umbrella term that is used to incorporate a range of minority communities living in the UK. Over the past 20 years the term has gained wide currency within public and private sector organisations to distinguish individuals and groups whose ethnic origins are either: non-White, in the case of African Caribbean and Asians, or non-British, as in the case of Eastern Europeans and Irish people. The term 'BME student', for the purposes of this synthesis refers primarily to students from Asian and African Caribbean origin who are designated as home students, i.e. students who are not designated as 'overseas students'.

Generally, institutions involved in higher education (HE) use similar broad classifications for collating data on BME students. UCAS and the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) use the following categories for UK domiciled students:

- White; White - British; White - Irish; White - Scottish; Irish Traveller; Other White background.
- Black or Black British - Caribbean; Black or Black British - African; Other Black background.
- Asian or Asian British - Indian; Asian or Asian British - Pakistani; Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi; Chinese; Other Asian background.
- Mixed-White and Black Caribbean; Mixed-White and Black African; Mixed-White and Asian; Other mixed background.
- Other ethnic background.

These categorisations are often contested and are not without wide-ranging complexities reflected in internal disparities based on social class, background, experiences, pre-university education and cultural disposition, etc. Several reports question the validity of grouping together different ethnic groups to create the overarching BME ethnicity category. Connor et al. (2004), for instance, particularly noted the lack of homogeneity and advised studies of specific ethnic sub-groups to better understand the diversity of issues. This point was restated and reinforced

in the National BME Education Strategy Group conference report (2006) and the Equality in Higher Education Statistical report 2010 (ECU, 2010). Tolley and Rundle (2006) found that, in comparison to other groups, students of Indian and Chinese descent performed significantly well whereas other BME groups were performing relatively much worse than White groups.

Studies conducted in England have tended to adopt various approaches regarding research focus and target groups. In some cases the studies may have included international students. It can be difficult to separate non-UK EU ethnic minorities from the British students and it is not clear in some studies whether this was done. The seminal research led by Connor et al. (2003, 2004) defined the targeted groups as 'minority ethnic groups' (MEGs), whereas almost all later research reports referred to 'Black and minority ethnics' (BME) to cover the same ethnic categories (e.g. Equality Challenge Unit, 2010).

Putting these categorisation complexities aside, measuring 'success' and 'participation' is still by no means a straightforward task as the terms lend themselves to slightly different meanings in varying contexts.

### **Alternative definitions**

The notion of success is itself subject to a wide spectrum of interpretations and constructions, which can broadly be categorised into 'soft' and 'hard' measures. Soft measures of success are generally related to a student's sense of personal accomplishment and satisfaction with the educational experience. This might stem from the student's personal priorities, expectations of their chosen course of study and university life in general. While such measures tend to be highly subjective, they can nonetheless be important to register for building up a holistic picture of success. Hard measures of success are generally related to objective indicators based on some degree of statistical analysis. In this regard, with the advent of ethnic monitoring coupled with the proliferation of other student data, success is increasingly calculated through comparative measures based on such criteria as student recruitment data, completion rates, exam scores, degree classification, student satisfaction surveys and employment.

However, making comparisons of success, irrespective of how it is defined, based on 'racial' and ethnic differences is always fraught with dangers of definition (Singh, 2010). For example, 'Asian' can serve as a misleading and unhelpful term as it includes both Indians, who are often highly represented and successful in HE, and those from some of the

most disadvantaged groups such as Pakistanis and Bangladeshis (Broecke and Nicholls, 2007; Richardson, 2008). Moreover, the fact that an increasing number of students have multiple identities means that care is needed to attribute success correctly, e.g. the apparent success of any one ethnic group may be linked as much to their class location as to their ethnicity in particular instances.

As students of similar racial backgrounds do not necessarily share the same beliefs, values or attitudes towards education, it is important that generalisations are not simplistic and that the groups are treated with sensitivity. A whole range of socio-economic, cultural and personal experiences may skew the outcomes of in-depth analysis. For example, it is possible that faith, religion, culture and socio-historic permutations have direct links to educational attainment in higher education institutions, much as has been found to be the case in primary or secondary schools (Broecke and Hamed, 2008). Students from Traveller, newly arrived or refugee families, for example, come to university with a unique set of experiences and cultural/spiritual nuances, which will ultimately impact on their perception of the university as an institution along with its staff, practices and norms. Often, as Morrice (2009) points out, current pedagogic practice gives little recognition or value to some non-traditional students' skills. In relation to faith, Lee *et al.* (2007) argue, irrespective of 'race' there is a strong correlation between educational outcomes and religious devotion in post-secondary education. While one might hypothesise that higher levels of social and cultural capital (Gorard *et al.*, 2006; Vignoles *et al.*, 2008) may account for the relative success of students with strong commitments to faith, this is a relatively under-researched issue.

Finally, most of the research in relation to the BME student experience seeks to separate international and home students, which is based on a view that, while the two sets of students will, by and large, share the same learning environment, their respective backgrounds, educational trajectories, motivations, linguistic and cultural identities, and circumstances are likely to be quite different and will impact on their success accordingly (Sovic, 2008). Hence, although there are clearly issues of overlap between BME home and international students, the primary focus of this synthesis is the participation and success of home-domiciled BME students.

### **Explanatory context**

It is important to note that BME students seem to have taken advantage of widening participation policies introduced over the past 20 years in the wider policy context characterised by a move from an elite to a mass HE

system on the one hand, and a greater political imperative to actively promote 'race' equality and social justice on the other. Vignoles *et al.* (2008) and HEA/ECU (2008) point to significant increases in the numbers, in some cases representing double-digit increases in people from BME backgrounds taking up university degrees. Connor *et al.* (2004) suggest this may be because BME students perceive they need higher qualifications to prove their employability and skills.

Although unequal patterns of attainment between BME groups and White students were pointed out in the late 1990s by Bhattacharyya *et al.* (2003), up until recent times higher education (HE) in the UK has been relatively immune from scrutiny regarding the racial and ethnic dynamics of universities, which as a result have, by and large, been concealed (Deem *et al.*, 2005; Law *et al.*, 2004). Where there was scrutiny it has, as Gulam (2004) suggests, been through a 'colour blind' approach. While such a state of affairs was politically sustainable under conditions where HE was only accessed by a small and largely privileged section of the population, under Government policies of expansion, fair access and widening participation (DfES, 2003a) things have dramatically changed. As a consequence of greater scrutiny through such bodies as the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), tighter statutory requirements brought about as a consequence of the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000), and through various empirical studies, we now have an increasing body of evidence uncovering the experience of BME students in HE.

Though there are many positive stories to be told about HE and the student experience, for example, the higher rate of participation of students from minority ethnic groups compared to White students (Connor *et al.*, 2003, 2004), there is now a consistent body of evidence that indicates that BME students face inequality at all stages of the HE experience: they are less likely to be satisfied with their student experience; more likely to leave early; and are less likely to gain a good Honours degree (Connor *et al.*, 2003, 2004). Connor *et al.* also argue that progression to employment may not be as successful or straightforward for BME graduates. Of possible relevance in relation to this last point, there is clear evidence that students from certain BME groups underperform in relation to degree attainment on a range of measures compared to White students (Broecke and Nicholls, 2007; Higher Education Academy/Equality Challenge Unit, 2008). Although the research is still quite limited, reviewing the more reliable evidence led Richardson (2007) to conclude that:

*Relative to White students, those from every non-White ethnic group are less likely to obtain good degrees and less likely to obtain first class degrees ... The odds of an Asian student being awarded a good degree were half of those of a White student being awarded a good degree, whereas the odds of a Black student being awarded a good degree were a third of those of a White student being awarded a good degree. (Richardson, 2007, p. 10)*

The picture is, however, complex and the reasons why the degree attainment gap exists for any individual are varied (e.g. gender, disability, social deprivation, previous family educational experiences of HE, type of institution and whether student is home- or campus-based). Nonetheless, there is a growing body of evidence that confirms that “even after controlling for the majority of factors which we would expect to have an impact on attainment, being from a minority ethnic community ... is still statistically significant in explaining final attainment” (Broecke and Nichols, 2007, p. 3).

The cause for this statistically significant attainment gap is yet to be fully understood, although the possible role of racism is one factor that has in recent years been given increasing significance (Turney *et al.*, 2002; Back, 2004). Back (2004) suggests that the reason for the HE sector lagging behind the rest of the educational sector in addressing the question of racism could be that HE institutions and those who work in them are unique and that they are less disposed to discriminate. A more likely explanation according to Back is that the self-concept that ‘White’ academics align themselves to – as being “liberal minded rational intellectuals” – coupled with a notion that racism is the product of small-minded, morally degenerate hateful individuals, is the perfect formula for locating the problem somewhere else. He goes on to argue that there is a need for a shift in mindset to an acknowledgement that our capacity to reason is never absolute and “that racism has damaged reason, damaged academic and civic freedoms and damaged the project of education itself” (Back, 2004, p. 5). Hence, while it is not unreasonable to take pride in the broadly free, open and tolerant ethos that HE aspires to, at the same time there needs to be recognition that, like other institutions, universities are not immune from institutional racism.

In relation to policy development the literature suggests that there has been an important shift away from a defensive posture associated with fulfilling legislative and regulative requirements, to more proactive responses aimed at developing pedagogical strategies for addressing BME student attainment. In essence we can delineate three broad

historical phases in the way that the issue of BME student attainment has been positioned.

Phase 1 (pre-1990) can be characterised by a state of ignorance and apathy where there are low levels of awareness of the issues of equity and discrimination in general and a complete absence of any sense that a problem might exist (Heward and Taylor, 1993; Farish *et al.*, 1995; Neal, 1998). As highlighted in the introduction, this state of affairs reflects in parts a self-delusion on the part of 'White' academics that, as liberal-minded, rational intellectuals, they are in some ways immune from a racism based on lazy thinking and prejudiced behaviour and attitudes (Back, 2004).

Phase 2 (1990s) can be characterised by the massive expansion of HE and the widening participation agenda. Although perhaps an unintended consequence related to a policy focus on lower socio-economic groups, nonetheless the significant impact of this was to dramatically increase the percentage of BME students attending university and in this regard the policy was very successful. Coupled with the expansion was a significant programme of research into diversity designed to identify good practice (HEFCE, 2005a-d). The projects included a cross-sectoral study of six organisations outside the HE sector and a cross-national study of the approaches of universities to equality and diversity in five countries (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2005). The message from these studies was that change is most likely to happen when robust external drivers such as legislation are matched by internal 'enablers' such as: top-level commitment; accountability, ownership and development at all levels; and effective internal communication.

Phase 3 (2000 to present) really emerged in the context of the publication of the Macpherson report in 1999 into the death of Stephen Lawrence<sup>1</sup>, which not only significantly raised the profile of race equality and prompted a series of Government initiatives to promote race equality, but also for the first time made it a legal requirement for HEIs to look at and publish statistics on BME student attainment. Although it has taken some years for this to materialise, the colour blind initiatives had little impact at all in promoting race equality. The more targeted initiatives stemming from the Race Relations (Amendment) Act initially had an impact, but it is still the case that many universities either remain in a state of denial about the BME attainment gap, or tend to reduce the issue to one of

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<sup>1</sup> The high profile murder of a Black sixth-form student in 1993. It was widely assumed Stephen's death was racially motivated. The Sir William Macpherson inquiry reported that both the Police and Crown Prosecution Service failed the family due to institutional racist practices that prevented the perpetrators from being properly interrogated.

managing diversity and student deficit models where in effect their perceived lack of ability is seen as the primary cause for their relative lower attainment (Turney *et al.*, 2002; Jones and Thomas, 2005; Jacobs *et al.*, 2007; Ahmed, 2007a).

In the context of the above discussion, the overall aim of this synthesis is to provide the reader with access to the key knowledge base surrounding the experience of BME undergraduate students in full-time HE. It is hoped that the resource will inform practitioners, administrators and other stakeholders in developing their policies and practices to address the inequity that exists in HE. The resource is structured into broad sections providing: a brief summary of a selection of the key studies highlighting the BME student experience; a synthesis of the wider literature; a summary of key relevant literature reviews; implications for key stakeholder groups; practical applications; and other relevant websites and portals with bibliography. Given the very limited evidence relating to issues in BME participation and success, the synthesis focuses on England. Other parts of the British Isles have scant data, though literature relating to employability and skills is beginning to emerge in most quarters. Data and material from North America has been used by many in Europe for framing contextual issues as universities and policy there have a longer tradition of discussing various dimensions relating to BME experiences. Though the trajectories of students here are different, certain concepts now being taken up in this country have their roots in the United States, e.g. inclusive pedagogies and affirmative action support/policies aimed at disadvantaged groups.

### **Related terms and concepts**

Widening participation; access; employability; retention; equality and diversity; racism; discrimination; disadvantage; inclusion.

### **Key research reports**

#### **Introduction**

This section contains brief summaries of a selection of some of the key sources of data that address most directly the issue of BME student experience and attainment in HE. This is not an exhaustive list but together the selection of studies provides a bedrock of evidence from which a range of policies and practices can be developed. Finally, there is no significance in sequencing other than that sources are listed in chronological order, i.e. date published.

**Bird, J. (1996) *Black Students and Higher Education: Rhetorics and Realities*. Buckingham: The Society for Research into Higher education and Open University Press.**





This publication provides an important historical context to the current debate on BME student attainment. Specifically, the study examines the three key stages associated with a student journey in higher education, namely: access, progression and employment. Based on a combination of secondary data analysis and two pieces of research in a group of schools and HE institutions in the West Country, the study examines barriers to access and progression for BME students and what can be done to overcome these. The publication includes chapters addressing such themes as working with schools, communities, parents and students, staff and curriculum development, Black support groups, ethnic monitoring and progression beyond HE.

Although the study is somewhat dated now and there has been much progress on a number of fronts, not least in relation to access such that BME students, if anything, are 'over-represented' in HE compared to White students, the study uncovers some important practice and policy insights. The key challenge posed is that, in relation to recognising the issue of racism, HE has lagged behind both schools and further education institutions and that where BME students succeed it is often against the background of discrimination. Moreover, when BME students leave HE, many go on to experience ongoing discrimination in the jobs market. In recognition that many BME students do not conform to the 'stereotypical' student, the study highlights the importance of offering flexible provision (e.g. culturally sensitive student services, part-time and full-time study, study support beyond the 'normal hours'), which not only enhances access for BME students but for all students. The study also highlights the issue of unequal outcomes in relation to progression and emphasises the importance of auditing all aspects of HE in relation to diversity and equality.

Regarding staff development, and unlike many other public sector organisations and schools, the study found that few HE institutions felt that ethnic diversity, let alone anti-racism awareness, was an appropriate subject for staff development. Some suggestions for overcoming this resistance in organising staff development events addressing diversity and racism are offered. These include: organising training with senior management backing; involving BME trainers with experience and expertise; making sure sessions are rooted in practice; and encouraging participants to develop short-and long-term action plans.

**Connor, H., Tyers, C., Davis, S. and Tackey, N.D. (with contributions from Modood, T.) (2003) *Minority Ethnic Students in Higher Education: Interim Report, Institute for Employment Studies* (Research Report No. 448). London: Department for Education and Skills. Available from:**

<http://www.employment-studies.co.uk/pdflibrary/rr448.pdf>

**Connor, H., Tyers, C., Modood, T. and Hillage, J. (2004) *Why the difference? A closer look at higher education minority ethnic students and graduates* (Research Report No. 552). London: Department for Education and Skills. Report RR448. Available from:**

<http://www.employment-studies.co.uk/pdflibrary/rr552.pdf>

These two linked reports are based on a key piece of research into the achievement and retention of minority ethnic students in HE conducted during 2002-03 by a team led by Helen Connor from the University of Bristol (Connor *et al.*, 2003, 2004). The research focused on undergraduate and sub-degree provision, both full-time and part-time, at all types of HE institution, including The Open University, for Black and minority ethnic groups (BMEGs). This was a broad multi-stranded research project based on a survey of 1,300 UK-domiciled undergraduate students, including 700 BME students at 33 English HE institutions. This was followed up with 30 in-depth face-to-face interviews with representatives from HE institutions taken from the wider sample. So, as well as providing some important statistical insights, the research offers a rich source of qualitative data that provides some insights into the nature of the BME student experience and their own perceptions and motivation. The conclusions reported that a higher than average HE participation rate for BME groups translated into lower than average overall attainment. However, it cautioned that the BMEG profile includes many different ethnic groups and great diversity in HE experience. In these communities, high participation and choice of study location is often driven by parental and family expectations. The study noted evidence of clustering of BME students at certain institutions, predominantly post-1992 universities, and low numbers at others. Many BME students stay local to their homes to study or choose to live at home and commute. The study also reported a tendency for bias according to choice of subjects, with Computer Science, Law and Medicine having the highest number of BME students, but with a fairly high number electing to study Business, Engineering or Mathematical Sciences. Arts and the humanities were found to have the

lowest number of BME students. Within the subject choice, there were variations correlating with ethnicity, gender and age. Finally, it was reported that BME graduates had higher than average initial unemployment rates.

The report includes an excellent analysis on ‘trajectories’ – the routes to and through HE of different BME categories. The major recommendation from this study was for more detailed research to be undertaken into the sub-groups within the BME category, and it was this that provided some of the impetus for the subsequent research carried out by HEFCE, the HEA and ECU on BME attainment between 2007 and 2008.

**Law, I., Philips, D. and Turney, L. (2004) *Institutional Racism in Higher Education*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.**

This book contains a collection of contributions from both Black and White social scientists researching and writing about racism in HE. It is based on write-ups of a number of HEFCE-funded projects examining the nature of institutional racism in HE in the UK, and in this regard represents the first major attempt to focus attention on this important issue. One of the major outcomes of the projects was the development of the ‘Building the anti-racist university: a toolkit’ resource, which can be accessed from:

<http://www.sociology.leeds.ac.uk/assets/files/research/cers/the-anti-racism-toolkit.pdf>

As well as offering a detailed discussion of some of the conceptual issues, the toolkit provided a number of very practical suggestions for assisting HEIs to integrate and evaluate anti-racist change at both organisational level and in relation to pedagogical strategies. A central and recurring argument presented by various authors is the high level of complacency in HE regarding the presence of racism. Like other institutions of society, universities tend to have a racialised past and present and it is only by developing a high level of critical reflexivity that they can begin to recognise and tackle the issue of institutional racism.

A particularly important feature of the collection is the way in which each chapter addresses different strands of the BME experience in HE. For example, Tyrer, reporting on fieldwork research on “institutionalised Islamophobia in British universities”, highlights the ease with which universities assimilated pathological constructions of Muslims as being dangerous resulting in the victimisation of Muslim students and staff on campus.

Housee, discussing her own research on South Asian female students, uncovers the many and unique pressures and tensions faced by them in embarking on university life. To counteract the stereotype of Asian women as being passive, she highlights the ways in which Asian female students, while having to deal with a wide variety of racist and sexist stereotypes, nonetheless “play an important role in the construction and reconstruction of their social and personal identities”.

Clark draws attention to the experience of Gypsies/Travellers in gaining access to education and HE. In highlighting how this group is virtually absent from any discussion of the minority student experience, he advocates a holistic approach to inclusion in education, taking into account such factors as accommodation and family work schedules.

As well as offering critiques and challenges, the book also offers positive ways forward through transforming the curriculum. Sharma, for instance, proposes a radical approach that underpins a multicultural curriculum with progressive critical pedagogical strategies. Such an approach, he suggests, would reject “the universality of knowledge and culture” as well as “resist the present university educational market-place, which increasingly demands packaged curriculum often defined by rationalistic learning outcomes”.

**Tolley, J. and Rundle, J. (2006) *A Review of Black and Minority Ethnic Participation in Higher Education*. London: Aimhigher. Available from:**

[http://www.ahgtm.ac.uk/uploads/documents/nov\\_07/aim\\_1195047372\\_BMEHEreview\\_.pdf](http://www.ahgtm.ac.uk/uploads/documents/nov_07/aim_1195047372_BMEHEreview_.pdf).

This report is based on a review of the activities of the Aimhigher National BME Education Strategy Group, which was established in 2005 with a remit to support the increased participation of BME students in HE by working at local, regional and national levels.

The aim of this report was to uncover the factors currently affecting the widening of participation, achievement and job prospects of BME students. Based on secondary data analysis, primarily focusing on reports produced by various Government departments and regulatory bodies with a remit for addressing education and training, this systematic review and synthesis is particularly useful in three respects. Firstly, it offers an excellent summary of statistical evidence relating to such issues as: Which BME groups participate in HE? How do BME students reach

HE? What do BME learners study? Where do BME learners study? How well do BME graduates achieve? Where do BME graduates go?

Secondly, the report provides some important pointers relating to policy development. Lastly, the extensive appendices provide some very useful case study examples of different organisations/projects across the UK and how they have sought to develop and implement the widening participation remit of Aimhigher.

A key finding of the report is that issues relating to BME access to HE, participation and achievement are complex, with different BME groups, sub-groups and individuals appearing to respond differently. Hence such complexity necessitates nuanced responses from higher education providers, i.e. a one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to be the most effective way forward. That said, it appears that, in contrast to the schools and FE sectors, there is reluctance by policy makers and institutions within the HE sector to actually consider BME issues in their own right.

The report recommends that HE institutions need to raise the profile of the BME learner and that one way to do this could be to establish of a group of “BME widening participation practitioners”. It is felt that they could make an impact in a number of ways, for example by: acting as a monitoring, disseminating and lobbying body; initiating more accessible and detailed benchmark data together with clear performance indicators to measure progress and drive action; and promoting stronger strategic partnerships to provide strength and depth of knowledge and greater lobbying power.

**Gorard, S., Smith, E., May, H., Thomas, L., Adnett, N. and Slack, K (2006) *Review of widening participation research: addressing the barriers to participation in higher education. A report to HEFCE by University of York, Higher Education Academy and Institute for Access Studies.* Bristol: HEFCE. Available from:**

[http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2006/rd13\\_06/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2006/rd13_06/)

The review of research discusses the differences in patterns of participation between socio-economic groups in HE. It specifically focuses on three types of barrier all students are faced by: situational, institutional and dispositional. Social determinants of lifelong participation in learning involve time, place, gender, family and initial schooling. Taking a life course approach, the report looks at barriers facing actual and potential students to participation in education and training from early-life educational experiences through to HE. Specifically in relation to BME

students, the report highlights the need for institutions to acknowledge and combat discrimination faced by ethnic minority students through student support services. Evidence is highlighted that suggests that in comparison to those classed as 'White', BME students experience greater financial difficulty, and are also less able to discuss problems with lecturers, relying instead on family and friends for support. Lastly, the report identifies differential barriers faced by BME students to securing graduate employment: explanations for this range from discrimination in the labour market through to language effects.

**Bagguley, P. and Hussain, Y. (2007) *The Role of Higher Education in Providing Opportunities for South Asian Women*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Available from:**

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/1997-education-ethnicity-poverty.pdf>.

This project examines South Asian women's experiences of higher education and the continuing barriers they face getting to university and into the labour market after graduation. The research was based on a sample of 114 young women from Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds. One third were still in the sixth form (39), one third at university (43) and a final third recent graduates (32).

The study found that women from Bangladeshi and Pakistani backgrounds are rapidly increasing their participation in higher education, but there still remain a number of obstacles to their continued success in education and in their access to graduate-level employment. In relation to access, the availability of local courses that South Asian women want to study continues to be important. Furthermore, it is still necessary to overcome assumptions in communities, schools, universities and among employers that South Asian women from certain communities are not serious about higher education.

The findings emphasise the importance of building links with local communities and related careers services for female South Asian students and graduates. Some local South Asian communities need to recognise the value of a wider range of degree subjects that young women could be encouraged to apply for and that might better suit their talents. Developing role models and a 'critical mass' of students within universities is also important to enable students to feel both comfortable and that their university belongs to them. Universities also need to ensure that equality and diversity policies are put into practice by successfully challenging unacceptable behaviour from staff and students. Finally, the report recognises that 'fears' and stereotypes can work both ways and

that, along with empowering South Asian women, much more work needs to be done to educate employers about the barriers facing this group. Hence, in removing barriers in relation to the labour market the report suggests that universities should ensure that South Asian women are employed within careers services in order to provide culturally appropriate advice and to act as role models. Further, it is suggested that careers staff could be more proactive in bringing employers and BME students together to discuss any concerns they have about cultural and religious issues, such as wearing the hijab to job interviews or in the workplace.

**Broecke, S. and Nicholls, T. (2007) *Ethnicity and Degree Attainment*. Department of Education and Skills Research Report No RW92. Available from:**

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/RW92>

This study of ethnicity and degree attainment represents something of a watershed in relation to the issue of BME student attainment in that it was the first sector-wide report to demonstrate that 'ethnicity' was statistically significant in determining degree attainment. The study was based on a statistical analysis of 65,000 qualifying English-domiciled undergraduate students taken from the 2004/05 Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data. The study highlighted that even after controlling for the main factors one might expect to impact attainment, such as prior entry qualifications, type of prior institution, parental attributes and language, there remains a statistically significant gap in attainment. In short, while participation in HE by students from BME communities is higher than for students from the White community, the attainment of those who complete their first degree, measured by classification, is significantly lower than for White students. This is the case across the university sector.

While a range of factors contributed to differential degree attainment in general (such as socio-economic background, age, gender, whether a student lives at home or on campus, term-time working, parental income and education, having English as an additional language, entry qualifications and prior institution attended), these alone could not account for the disparity in attainment between BME and White students. Using the existing HESA categories, the report concludes that "even after controlling for the majority of factors which we would expect to have an impact on attainment, being from a minority ethnic community (except the

'Other Black', 'Mixed' and 'Other' groups) is still statistically significant in explaining final attainment, although the gap has been significantly reduced" (p. 3). The question that the study does not answer is what the nature of the relationship between attainment and ethnicity is, although it is suggested that there are two possible explanations, namely, some kind of ethnic bias or other variables that were not controlled for. Given the significance and inconclusive nature of the findings, the study provided a basis for a further more detailed investigation by Fielding *et al.* (2008).

**Jacobs, S., Owen, J., Sergeant, P. and Schostak, J. (2007) *Ethnicity and gender in degree attainment: an extensive survey of views and activities in English HEIs*. York: The Higher Education Academy. Available from:**

[http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/research/S\\_Jacobs\\_obs\\_perceptions\\_survey\\_Feb08.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/research/S_Jacobs_obs_perceptions_survey_Feb08.pdf)

Constituting one of the series of studies undertaken as part of the HEA and ECU Ethnicity and Gender Degree Attainment project, this report consists of a survey of English HEIs and 22 follow-up semi-structured interviews. In total 54 out of 133 HEIs responded. Key findings were that 67% of HEIs had compiled and analysed data according to ethnicity and degree attainment and had confirmed the attainment gap found by Broecke and Nicholls (2007). In explanations for the differential, respondents tended to locate the problem with socio-economic factors or 'family background'. Moreover, while some identified factors related to institutional discrimination, others favoured the contrary 'deficit-type' explanations.

In relation to strategies for addressing the differential there seems to be limited evidence of actions being taken, with the primary focus being on recruitment and widening participation rather than enhancing BME student success and progression. However, a number of HEIs reported mentoring and individual support for BME students as an option, although the general ethos of institutions was to foster inclusivity and avoid differentiating between students along the lines of ethnicity.

**Sims, J.M. (2007) *Not enough understanding? Student experiences of diversity in UK universities*. London: Runnymede Trust. Available from:**

<http://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/file/Not%20Enough%20Understanding%20-%20final.pdf>.

The Runnymede Trust conducts interesting research focused on communities in the United Kingdom's dynamic multicultural environment.





Their work provides critical analysis of the changing demography and how this impacts on broader political and social issues. This ‘community study’ looks at the day-to-day experiences of BME students on campus, focusing on undergraduate student experiences of diversity at one London university. A further linked aim is to uncover the “racial dynamics amongst university student communities”. It is based on an analysis of existing research on the BME student experience as well as empirical data obtained from a single case study analysing institutional data. Two focus groups of ten students each and two follow-up in-depth interviews are used.

The report argues that, in comparison to other organisational settings, the relation between UK universities and diversity in student populations is largely positive, although there are issues of concern raised by the authors about campus racism in general and segregation in particular and the impact that this can have on student integration. Specific findings relating to the nature of BME student engagement suggest that:

- BME students are less likely to travel away from home than their White counterparts, which means they often miss out on certain campus activities;
- depending on where they are based, they tend to join newer universities, which are less likely to produce ‘employable students’, i.e. students with “a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes - that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy” (Yorke, 2004). Therefore, thought needs to be put into addressing this issue through careers support;
- there should be greater efforts on both acceptance of different faith traditions and on inter-faith dialogue as failure to do so could lead to isolation;
- students who make new friends and interact with friends from a different ethnicity than their own tend to develop enhanced confidence, motivation, intellectual and civic development;
- the promotion of a cohesive, integrated student population that is ‘comfortable’ with its ethnic ‘character’ is a key ingredient of a successful modern university.

**The Higher Education Academy and Equality Challenge Unit (2008) *Ethnicity, Gender and Degree Attainment Project, Final Report*. Commissioned by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW).**



**York: The Higher Education Academy. Available from:**

[http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/research/Ethnicity\\_Gender\\_Degree\\_Attainment\\_Jan08.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/research/Ethnicity_Gender_Degree_Attainment_Jan08.pdf)

This report provides an outline of key findings from the various strands of research activity carried out by the Ethnicity, Gender and Degree Attainment Project, which was undertaken by the HEA and ECU between 2007 and 2008. The work was triggered by the study carried out by Broecke and Nicholls (2007), which highlighted patterns of differential degree attainment of BME students in comparison to White students. Specifically the project focused on an exploration of: understandings and perceptions of degree attainment variation across institutions and among academics and students; ways in which current Race Equality Policies and Gender Equality Schemes helped higher education institutions in addressing issues of attainment variation; and relevant teaching, learning and assessment activities and issues (p. 2).

While in some ways the study raises more questions than it answers, significantly, by failing to identify any contradictory evidence, the study team confirmed and was able to go some way to validating the findings in relation to gaps in degree attainment identified by the above-mentioned study by Broecke and Nicholls (2007). The key findings and recommendations of the report are reproduced below:

- Causal factors: the causes of degree attainment variation with respect to gender and ethnicity were found to be unlikely to be reducible to single, knowable factors.
- Data collection and analysis: while quantitative data collection at institutions was often found to be sophisticated, in some cases the research indicated a gap between the collection of data and subsequent analysis and action.
- Perceptions and understandings: institutional perceptions of the reasons for differential attainment according to ethnicity and gender appear more certain on a general level, but there is less clarity about contributory factors at the individual institutional level.
- Learning and teaching development: further linkage and co-ordination is needed at governance, strategic and curriculum development levels between principles and practice of equality and diversity, and learning, teaching and assessment functions.

- Assessment and feedback: more research and development activities are needed to strengthen demonstrably fair, inclusive and helpful assessment and feedback regimes for all students.
- Student support: while a good level of student support activities are provided by institutions, it is important to resist a tendency to view students as the core problem, instead of other factors.
- Institutional infrastructure and management: while the general importance of equality and diversity committees is well recognised across the sector, these committees are not always sufficiently empowered to support the effective integration of equality and diversity principles across the university. Strategic attention to the role, level of representation and responsibilities of these committees is vital for the generation of an inclusive ethos and supportive policy and practice.
- Policies and practice: Race Equality Policies and Gender Equality Schemes do not appear to inform HEIs' engagement with attainment issues. A report of the institution's relevant activities, to include indications of progress against actions, should be a prominent feature of a university's profile.

**Fielding, A., Charlton, C., Kounali, D. and Leckie, G. (2008) *Degree Attainment, Ethnicity and Gender: Interactions and the modification of effects - A quantitative analysis*. York: Higher Education Academy. Available from:**

[http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/research/EDA\\_Quantitative\\_Report\\_March08.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/research/EDA_Quantitative_Report_March08.pdf).

This report, constituting one of a series commissioned by the HEA/ECU under the Ethnicity, Gender and Degree Attainment Project, seeks to follow up previous studies in investigating the extent and nature of the degree attainment gap in relation to ethnicity and gender. The study is based on a complex statistical modelling method that examines the circumstances of degree attainment through the further analysis of relevant quantitative data from HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) and the National Student Survey (NSS). The analysis aims to build on existing published work. Specifically, by adopting a multilevel approach to elucidate the role of factors such as institution, subject area and demographic background in relation to minority ethnic and gender-related differences in degree attainment, the study seeks to look at how such factors interact with ethnicity (and/or gender) to modify the main

effect of ethnicity (or gender) on degree performance. The main findings regarding ethnicity effects are:

- Entry qualification: there is some indication that lower entry qualification can influence achievement but this varies across academic disciplines. Also, for BME students with 'A-level only' entry, achievements are a little higher.
- Age: the "net gap between various BME groups and White students is much wider for mature students" with Bangladeshi and Chinese students faring the worst.
- Gender: there is some indication that BME male students do less well than female students.
- Residence: the net gap in achievement between various Asian groups and White students is narrower for those students living at home.
- Institution: while there is considerable variation between institutions in relation to BME attainment, it tends to be smaller in HEIs with higher BME intakes, particularly so in more 'elite' institutions.
- Subject: generally the study found the effects to be quite varied but not statistically significant.
- Deprivation: there is some evidence of a small but significant impact of social deprivation. Indeed, for areas of high deprivation the gap between BME students and their White peers narrows and "possibly reverses".
- Type of institution: broadly speaking the higher the proportion of BME students in the institution, the higher the differential in degree attainment. Most strikingly, in institutions with low numbers of BME students they actually outperform the White students.

**Equality Challenge Unit (2010) *Equality in higher education: statistical report 2010*. London: ECU. Available from:**  
<http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/equality-in-he-stats-10>

This is the third annual report produced by ECU focusing on a wide range of statistical data relating to the gender, ethnicity, disability and age of staff and students in higher education. The primary source is the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data covering the last six academic years (2003-04 to 2008-09). Annual reporting has made it possible to make some cursory observations about trends. The report aims to allow institutions to benchmark their performance against wider national trends.

Structured in two broad parts, the first part concentrates on equality statistics relating to staff data and the second on students. The various

equality categories expounded include gender, ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation and socio-economic status.

While the report highlights some important positive improvements in relation to equality over the past few years, it also reveals significant disparities in student and staff experiences. Regarding the BME experience, key findings in relation to UK-national academic staff included: an increasing number of BME staff in HE – 6.7% in 2008-09 compared with 5.9% in 2003-04; BME staff continue to be less likely than White staff to be in senior academic grades; BME staff were better represented in research-only roles than White staff; BME staff were slightly less likely than White staff to be earning a high salary; and the gender breakdown of BME staff matched that of White staff (ECU, 2010).

Looking at the data on students the report confirms a steady increase in the numbers of BME students entering HE, from 14.9% of the total student population in 2003-04 to 17.8% in 2008-09. However, in relation to their degree attainment (i.e. obtaining a first or upper second class degree classification) over the same period, the report highlights a consistent deficit of approximately 18% between BME students and white students. Mirroring this was the trend for a lower second, third and pass degree, where the gap was 18% in favour of BME students compared to White students. The importance of this report is that, while it offers little in relation to identifying the reasons behind the statistics, it provides clear and unambiguous evidence for differential degree attainment on the grounds of ethnicity. In this sense as well as enabling each institution to make some broad comparisons with the national picture, it can act as a powerful reason/catalyst for action.

**Dhanda, M. (2010) Understanding Disparities in Student Attainment: Black and Minority Ethnic Students' Experience. Wolverhampton: University of Wolverhampton. Available from:**  
<http://www2.wlv.ac.uk/equalopps/mdsummary.pdf>

Based on a mixed-methods analysis, this study unpacks the experiences of BME students in a university in the West Midlands with a high percentage of non-White students. The study suggests the students' unpleasant experiences can be managed more positively with structural and institutional change that encourages better inclusion.

Some of the key issues to be uncovered include: lack of contact time with and support from tutors; mistrust and perception of unfairness in moderation processes; vulnerability where English is not a first language; lack of BME staff; lack of intellectual challenge; and low expectations.

The report makes a series of concrete recommendations as follows:

- mentoring of new entrants;
- trans-cultural activities;
- increasing face-to-face contact;
- year-level tutors;
- monitoring moderation processes;
- integrating study skills within modules;
- raising staff expectations of BME students' academic attainment;
- creating a repository of measures that work to improve achievement.

**NUS (2011) Race for equality: A report on the experiences of Black students in further and higher education. London: National Union of Students. Available from:**

[http://www.nus.org.uk/PageFiles/12350/NUS\\_Race\\_for\\_Equality\\_web.pdf](http://www.nus.org.uk/PageFiles/12350/NUS_Race_for_Equality_web.pdf)

The report is unique in that it is one of the largest studies actually capturing 'the voice' of BME students. It is based on an online survey of over 900 Black 'home' and 'international' students from across the UK and a series of regional focus groups. Specifically in relation to the gap in BME attainment and satisfaction, the report argues that although a complex range of causal factors are at play there are discernable 'common concerns among Black Students' which are clearly linked to their attainment and

overall satisfaction yet often overlooked by institutions p3) Significantly the findings of the research indicate that BME students are not getting an education equal to that of their White peers. the data suggest that BME students are not satisfied with their learning environment and that inequalities are perpetuated by institutional practices. Specifically, the data identified a complex interplay between previous educational experiences, wider societal factors and the HE experience of BME students. In relation to teaching and learning, the data highlight problems with every aspect, from assessment, curriculum content and design to academic support. Last, while the data highlight a broadly positive evaluation of teaching and learning environments, "a significant minority expressed a more negative opinion of their institution's culture, with 16.7% describing it as 'isolating,' 23.4% as 'cliquey,' 8.05 as 'hostile,' and 6.7% as 'racist'" (p. 3).

Based on what the students themselves felt, the report offers a wide range of recommendations covering every aspect of the student experience as illustrated in the below summary::

- Educate and encourage: Promote further education to Black students in primary and secondary school.
- Awareness: Increase awareness of the unique challenges Black students may face.
- Diversity: Increase cultural diversity of staff and students.
- Equal treatment: Ensure equal treatment by employing policies such as anonymous marking.
- Role models: Increase the number of Black academics and invite successful Black individuals to come to speak at institutions.
- Representation: Provide international and Black students' officers in all students' unions.
- Academic support: Provide academic support systems, such as skill-building workshops.
- Pastoral care: Assign students an adviser who can monitor their progress and offer them advice.
- Teaching: Use different teaching approaches to ensure all students are engaged.
- Information: Increase awareness of how courses are taught and the services offered by the institution.
- Financial support: Increase funding available to Black students.

## Synthesis of research findings

### Introduction

Attempts to increase the proportion of university students from ethnic minorities was a focus of the last Government's HE policies and strategically linked to the target of 50% of young people entering HE (Dearing, 1997). While universities have been praised for their efforts in recruiting BME students, less focus has been placed on ensuring these learners are well supported during their time at university. Moreover, although the term 'widening participation' never explicitly covered BME students, the spirit and tone of the policy, as the following quote suggests, certainly established some important principles addressing the needs of these students:

*... the force for opportunity and social justice, not for the entrenchment of privilege. We must be certain that the opportunities that a higher education brings are available to all those who have the potential to benefit from them, regardless of their background. This is not just about preventing active discrimination; it is about working actively to make sure that*

*potential is recognised and fostered wherever it is found.* (DfES, 2003b, p. 67)

Although the widening participation agenda has been instrumental in increasing the numbers of BME students in HE, it is clear from the literature that pre-university attainment does have a bearing on subsequent performance in HE (Gorard *et al.*, 2006; Broecke and Nicholls, 2007; Richardson, 2008; Morrice, 2009). Nonetheless, however appealing it might be to identify one single major cause that could explain the BME attainment gap, all the evidence points to a complex range of differently connected factors being at play such as: previous educational experiences; curriculum content and design; teaching, learning and assessment approaches; the learning environment; and direct and indirect racism (Bird, 1996; Turney *et al.*, 2002; Back, 2004; Tolley and Rundle, 2006; NUS, 2011).

The aim of this synthesis is to identify what the literature tells us about the underlying factors as a basis for identifying strategies to improve the retention and success of BME students in HE. This concern is based in part on well-established research findings pointing to a wide degree classification attainment gap between White and some BME groups. Broecke and Nicholls (2007) research for the DfES showed that 66% of White students got a first or upper second class degree in 2005 compared with 45% of Black Caribbean and 43% of Black African students. However, a potential problem with the research on the BME student experience in England is that it is reliant on categories that are quite broad and unstable (Vertovec, 2006; Platt, 2009). Defining ethnic groups is not without its difficulties and there is a need for careful distinction between ethnic categories when defining target groups. Bird and Eyre's (2000) work suggests that BME students would like to honour their dual nationality, i.e. British Indian or British Pakistani instead of the broad Asian British category. Some of their respondents even suggested an Asian/African British category for those of Indian or Pakistani origin who have links to both Africa and Britain. Hence, while broad categories can be beneficial in identifying general patterns of exclusion and discrimination, in order to improve student success, and ultimately degree attainment, the true focus should be on the individual.

Finally, one further difficulty with the existing research on BME participation is its tendency to focus on BME working-class students. Qualitative data in particular tend to draw upon the negative experiences of students who have continuing economic and cultural integration issues. Such a narrow focus can result in not only focusing simply on negative aspects of the student experience, but also underestimating the



complexity of the BME student experience with respect to such things as the age, gender, mode of study (part-time or distance learning, etc) and their disability if any. Notwithstanding these methodological limitations, there is now a growing body of literature that offers important insights into the nature of the BME experience in HE and its implications for student success.

### **Measuring success**

Most of the empirical research on BME success tends to measure success in relation to four things: participation, retention, degree attainment and employability on graduation. These will be explored in turn below.

### **Participation rates**

Generally speaking one of the success stories of HE in the UK is the relatively high participation rates for BME students, which is discussed in a number of publications (Connor *et al.*, 2004; Broecke and Nicholls, 2007; Simms, 2007; Vignoles *et al.*, 2008). From the turn of this century, BME students were reported to comprise 16% of the undergraduate population in England as opposed to 9% of the working population (Connor *et al.*, 2004). For Bagguley and Hussain (2007) this higher rate can be partly explained as a consequence of BME students having “higher occupational aspirations and high levels of parental support” (p. 4). Mirza (2009) characterises this change as a new social movement among Blacks, with Black female, often mature, students in particular entering HE through a variety of unconventional routes. The widening participation agenda aimed to encourage students from low socio-economic backgrounds to participate in higher education and successive policies across the board have also contributed to significantly improved numbers of BME students applying for and starting university degrees (Torgerson *et al.*, 2007; Vignoles *et al.*, 2008).

However, while the overall figures may seem positive, further drilling down does expose some important disparities. For instance, there are some significant variations across gender and ethnicity. Most notably, the participation rate of Bangladeshi women drops below that of their White counterparts and the participation rate of Caribbean men is only marginally higher than that of Whites as a whole (Connor *et al.*, 2004). Likewise, a number of studies based on official statistical sources uncover significant variation in participation and success between different ethnic groups, in relation to both institutions and subjects. For instance, African, African-Asian, Chinese and Indian groups are better represented in comparison to Bangladeshi and Pakistani groups both in relation to gaining entry to more prestigious institutions and courses and

in relation to degree attainment (Connor *et al.*, 2004; Shiner and Modood, 2002; Fielding *et al.*, 2008; Race for Opportunity, 2010; HEFCE, 2010). Vignoles *et al.* (2008) in a large-scale quantitative study on widening participation identified that BME students are more likely than White students to participate in HE, but that on average, in contrast to Chinese, Other Asian and Mixed Ethnicity students, students from Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi backgrounds were more likely to be concentrated in low status institutions.

Leslie (2005) argued that the over-representation of BME students and preference for more challenging subjects, such as Law and Computing, contributes anomalies with respect to retention and attainment, echoing earlier views expressed about this aspect of participation (Connor *et al.*, 2004). The same issue emerged from the evaluation of the Bristol Aiming High study (Tikly *et al.*, 2006) focusing on pre-university education. Tikly *et al.* assessed the impact of intervention strategies on African Caribbean achievement, particularly evaluating institutional approaches to the problem of low BME attainment, suggesting that students may choose modules solely on the basis of employability or recognition.

Regarding sector segmentation there is clear evidence that BME students, with the exception of those from a Chinese background, tend to be concentrated in the post-1992 institutions (Connor *et al.*, 2004; Race for Opportunity, 2010). The Higher Education Statistics Agency figures for 2004 show that the former polytechnic, London Metropolitan University, admits more Black Caribbean students than all the country's top universities put together, inclusive of the prestigious Oxford, Cambridge and Imperial College London. It has been argued that the reason for this disparity is that students from BME groups have disproportionately higher vocational instead of academic qualifications (Bhattacharyya *et al.*, 2003). The tendency for BME students to favour post-92 universities was seen as a potential problem by both Connor *et al.* (2004) and HEA/ECU (2008) specifically in the context that "old universities tended to be better resourced and degrees from such institutions had a higher premium in the jobs market" (Bahra *et al.*, 2002). The Runnymede Trust report (2006) proposed that this was less of a problem if equivalent quality of experience and education could be assumed in the post-92 sector when compared to pre-92 universities.

Both the Runnymede Trust report (2006) and Connor *et al.* (2004) pointed out that even if/where this was true, the pre-92 sector still had an obligation to address this disparity through widening participation activities. Fielding *et al.* (2008) went further by observing that institutions with a high proportion of BME students experience a lower student

satisfaction rating than those with proportionally less BME students (see also Richardson, 2008). This might suggest three things: either that institutions with higher proportions of BME students are less well resourced; or that where BME students are less prominent, there may be a 'novelty' factor resulting in disproportionate attention; and/or that such students might have higher levels of motivation (Jessop and Williams, 2009). However, contradicting these findings Hussein *et al.* (2009), in a study of social work education based on a large dataset of over 50,000 students enrolling between 1995 and 2007 and commenting on peer group effect, found that where BME students formed a higher percentage than the average they were more likely to pass and less likely to withdraw.

### Retention

In relation to the raw data on BME student retention, there is very little in the public domain, although one could theoretically access the data from HE institutions, which are, under equality legislation, increasingly required to publish such data. Nonetheless, the HEFCE report on the profile and progression of UK-domiciled entrants to full-time, first-degree courses in 2002-03 published in 2010 identifies some important trends. Overall it was found that young BME students tended to take longer than mature BME students to complete their courses. Among young entrants 88% of Chinese entrants continued into their second year, compared to 86% of White entrants, 82% of Black entrants and 79% of Pakistani and Bangladeshi entrants.

Although a little dated now, Smith and Naylor (2001), in a statistical analysis on 'Dropping out of University' based on a cohort of students in pre-1992 universities, found two key factors that impact outcomes; namely, prior academic preparedness and social integration at university. These findings are corroborated in a number of later studies, most notably, Shiner and Modood (2002), Connor *et al.* (2004) and Chang *et al.* (2006).

Altogether there has been little direct focus on strategies for improving BME student retention in England. However, a number of studies from the United States (where many more BME disparity studies are undertaken) highlight the importance of strategies for addressing BME students' psychological well-being, sense of belonging, self-esteem and self-actualisation needs (Donnell *et al.*, 2002). Dumas-Hines (2001) suggests that retention strategies need to provide counselling, tutoring, academic support, career planning and placement services, as well as work to improve the social and racial climate on campus and cultural

competency skills of academic support staff (Smith and Naylor, 2001; Connor *et al.*, 2004; Chang *et al.*, 2006).

Dumas-Hines (2001) suggests that there are two main indicators that can be used to analyse retention rates: the students' preparedness and the student experience. Each one of these indicators is explored below.

### **Preparedness for success**

Preparedness for success is related to such things as material wealth, previous educational experiences, parental involvement, social and cultural capital and the impact this has in determining not only choice of institution but also subsequent success and failure through and beyond university life (Gorard *et al.*, 2006; Vignoles *et al.*, 2008). An important consideration in seeking to improve BME attainment is to understand the way in which socio-cultural factors can impact how students perceive success and attainment. Hernandez-Martinez *et al.* (2008), for instance, looking at the experiences of Maths students, reported that students' aspirations are expressed in distinct, culturally mediated, ways that are deployed by students to reconcile notions of 'success'. The data on patterns of participation offer some important insights on the implications for their future success in HE.

It is important to note that a full understanding of the links between participation, choice, motivation and retention involves unpacking the complex factors linked to gender, class, family and ethnicity (Ball *et al.*, 2002; Reay *et al.*, 2005, Gorard *et al.*, 2006). The aforementioned studies also suggested that BME students tended to choose those institutions that had the highest rates of BME drop-out. One of the clearest explanations for this was the relative lack of information and direct experiential knowledge prior to acceptance into HE among BME students. As well as generating a general sense of discomfort, as Ozga and Sukhandan (1998) in a study of HE non-completers suggest, this could also indicate a degree of "lack of preparedness for university life – inadequate sources of information and unrealistic expectations and compatibility of choice" (p. 321). Essentially because these students choose unsuitable institutions and courses, fail to plan adequately for their new study experience or map successful and efficient trajectories early exit is almost guaranteed. It is also clear from studies looking at non-completion that student integration into the university culture is important, in particular during the first few weeks and months of their educational journey (Yorke *et al.*, 1997; Ozga and Sukhandan, 1998). One of the factors that militates against integration of BME students into university life is the fact that BME students are less likely to travel away from home than their White counterparts, which means they often miss

out on certain campus activities and suffer a general sense of alienation from university life (Sims, 2007; Gorard *et al.*, 2006). This shows that a student's university experience is ultimately linked to their potential to succeed.

### **BME student experience**

The HEA published John Richardson's Degree Attainment, Ethnicity and Gender: a Literature Review (2008) as a preliminary study prior to the wider HEA research project reported later (HEA/ECU, 2008). Richardson's report usefully cross-references and correlates evidence in various reports and presents the statistical case for inequality of degree attainment outcomes by gender and ethnicity. Much of the literature dates to the 1990s and one report was published in 1960, therefore some evidence may be of limited relevance to the current situation. However, the review highlights a number of important insights into factors associated with BME students' attainment, such as previous educational experience, gender (largely speaking women do better than men), racial category (most Asian categories tend to outperform Black Caribbean students; White part-time students do significantly better than BME students studying part-time), subject choice and kind of institution attended, with old universities performing significantly better than post-1992 institutions. This last observation tends to run counter to the generally held belief that "new universities because of their 'widening participation' remit will be better at supporting BME students" (Richardson, 2007).

If research studies so far are largely inconclusive in showing clear 'cause and effect' models relating to BME attainment, there is, however, some evidence showing that the student experience for BME cohorts is largely unsatisfactory (Dhanda, 2010; SurrIDGE, 2008). A recurring theme in many studies is the lack of support and isolation that many BME students feel. Research into the achievement and retention of minority ethnic students by Connor *et al.* (2004) found a lack of staff support and isolation due to a lack of cultural diversity (including lack of BME staff as role models and mentors) and opportunities to integrate with other students. A report from the National Black and Minority Ethnic Education Strategy Group (2006), building on the earlier work of Connor, raised concerns about the lack of action and progress in the intervening two years. Moreover, the 2006 conference highlighted the complacency in educators that was perceived to be developing around this phenomenon and recommended more specific focus and detailed research to better understand the needs of sub-groups under the BME umbrella.

Quantitative research, supported by the Higher Education Academy and conducted by a team led by Fielding from the University of Birmingham (Fielding *et al.*, 2008), found that student satisfaction is “significantly lower across the board” in universities with a high proportion of BME students (see also Leslie, 2005). A small-scale qualitative study by Jessop and Williams (2009) on BME students at the University of Winchester, a predominantly White institution, reported a sense of alienation and awareness of being part of a small minority, but “paradoxically, the extreme minority status appeared to facilitate greater integration”. The report suggests an urgent need to develop a more inclusive HE curriculum as one strategy for developing a more inclusive experience for all students.

The University of Wolverhampton and Policy Research Institute carried out research between 2005 and 2008 in the form of an internal survey into equality and diversity at the University (Ahmad *et al.*, 2006; Pinnock, 2008). Although it covers the full spectrum of equality and diversity issues, in relation to BME students the report highlights a concern about segregation and the importance of encouraging students to bond outside of their current friendship groups. In relation to staff, the report highlights the need to develop active staff training programmes relating to equality and diversity issues.

### **Attainment**

There is a strong and growing body of evidence pointing to real disparities in attainment levels measured by degree classification (Broecke and Nichols, 2007; Fielding *et al.*, 2008; HEFCE, 2010). In relation to being awarded a first or upper second, a recent HEFCE study of a cohort of first degree course entrants in 2002 found large differences where, among young students, White students had a rate 25% higher than the rate for Black finalists, and 20% higher than Pakistani and Bangladeshi students. For mature students the figures are equally stark with 25% of Black final-year students being awarded a first or upper second class degree, compared to 29% of Pakistani and Bangladeshi and 61% of White students (HEFCE, 2010).

There is little evidence to show that the causality for degree differentials for BME students is based on some kind of deficit (Broecke and Nichols, 2007). In relation to explanations for the underperformance of BME students, Connor *et al.* (2004) found that a lack of family support necessitating more time engaged in paid employment was a significant factor for Black Caribbean students. Similarly, Tikly *et al.* (2006) and the National BME Education Strategy Group (2006) both alluded to problems of segregation, with Black students experiencing difficulties in forming

relationships with other students and/or staff, and low teacher expectations of them. Dhanda (2009 and 2010) in a qualitative study of 35 BME students found factors ranging from financial hardship and lack of role models, to differential staff expectations and prejudiced attitudes associated with linguistic competence, were significant in determining attainment levels. Ball *et al.* (2002), for instance, in a study looking at ethnicity, class and HE choice highlighted evidence that BME students tend to have lower expectations than White students.

Leslie (2005) found that when controlling for prior entry qualifications, disparities in degree attainment still existed, implying other factors were at play. Indeed, some studies looking at attainment that have controlled for such factors as age, gender, entry qualifications and social class have discovered that there still remains a disparity in outcomes between ethnic groups (Richardson, 2008; Fielding *et al.*, 2008). This would suggest that in part, BME students are subject to some form of discriminatory practice in relation to teaching, student support and assessment (Osler, 1999).

Dhanda's work (2009 and 2010) also suggests that BME students may be undervalued and underchallenged in university settings. To some extent forms of disillusionment and alienation may be linked to a cultural and institutional disconnect, or even the looming prospect of facing unemployment after graduation.

### **Gender and BME participation and success in HE**

The relationship between gender and BME participation is very complex and participation rates by gender can vary across different ethnic groups and subject disciplines (Fielding *et al.*, 2008). Although not always the case, a number of studies on BME achievement do identify gender specific issues. Some studies, for example two projects at the University of Wolverhampton (see Ahmad *et al.*, 2006 and Pinnock, 2008) and the Ethnicity, Gender and Degree Attainment Project (HEA/ECU 2008), have looked at the wider issue of gender effects on attainment. However, typically BME studies to date have expressed most interest in the underachievement of male students. The Aiming Higher project evaluation (Tikly *et al.*, 2006) noted that there were specific issues, such as family expectations and aspirations about careers and marriage and female role prejudices, which could disadvantage female BME students in relation to completion, attainment and employment options. However, Fielding *et al.* (2008) noted, via complex quantitative analysis, that gender indeed has a profound effect on the ethnicity gap as BME females outperform their male counterparts in most subjects.

A number of studies highlight the complex interplay between institutional factors associated with 'race', gender and class on the one hand and BME women's desire to exercise agency and resist oppression. In a quantitative analysis of young women's participation in HE, Broecke and Hamed (2008) uncover the ways in which disadvantage at different points of the educational journey can have cumulative effects revealing the significance of socio-economic factors alongside ethnicity (see HEA/ECU, 2008). However, while such studies serve an important role in uncovering some of the patterns of disadvantage, they say little about the day-to-day experiences of students. In a study of Muslim women across ten universities in the UK, Tyrer and Ahmad (2006) report experiences ranging from feeling like being an 'alien' to being excluded from many of the social aspects of university life. Housee (Law *et al.*, 2004), in her research on South Asian female students in HE and identity, highlights the ways in which, despite pressures they face from community, family and university, they manage to develop confidence and their identities. A study by Ahmad *et al.* (2003) found that in contrast to certain stereotypes of 'restrictive' Asian families, there is evidence that a large number of such families see the positive consequence of HE in relation to career enhancement and improved marriage prospects and greater choices in issues of marriage. Similarly, Mirza (2009), researching Black women's struggles for education as well as highlighting the continuing blocks faced by them, also uncovers a desire to succeed and to develop strategies to circumvent the institutional blocks through collective action (see also Tyrer and Ahmad, 2006). However, while participation rates have increased among South Asian women, as Bagguley and Hussain (2007) found, there is much work to be done in relation to broadening subject choices, improving the university experience and improving future career prospects.

### **Disciplinary perspectives**

Overall, while there is now an emerging disciplinary literature, much of it tends to focus on statistical aspects, which reveal that while BME participation is quite variable across ethnic groups, in relation to success the broad pattern is one of BME under attainment across the subject disciplines (Connor *et al.*, 2003, 2004; Fielding *et al.*, 2008). Connor *et al.* (2003) found that on undergraduate degree courses, Black and minority ethnic students seem to be concentrated on traditional, professional degree programmes. They used figures from the Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) 2001 student cohort; the percentages below show BME students as a percentage of total undergraduate numbers by main subject areas in HEIs in England:

- Medicine/Dentistry 35% Over-represented





- Computer Science 38%
- Law 31%
- Business and Admin Studies 24%
- Mathematical Sciences 22%
- Engineering/Technology 21%
- Education 6% Under-represented
- Humanities 6%
- Physical Sciences <10%
- Creative Arts/Design <10%

Connor et al. (2003, 2004) suggested that disciplinary choices for BME students are far from independent. They point to strong parental influences, financial burdens and employment opportunities in fields that have increasingly favoured BME professionals. In such circumstances BME students sometimes apply for courses they have no personal interest in, or have poor entry qualifications for (Connor et al., 2004). More recent figures for 2008-09 (ECU, 2010) show the noticeable over-representation of UK-domiciled BME students in SET subject areas (45.3% compared to 40.9% of White students, rising to 49% of Chinese students), Law (6.3% of BME students compared to 3.1% of White students) and Business and Administrative Studies (17.3% of BME students, rising to 19.6% of Chinese students compared to 9.9% of White students). BME groups were particularly under-represented in Education.

There is very little research on BME participation and attainment in the context of specific disciplines. However, there is growing interest in this area.

### ***Art and Design***

Purwar (2004) points out that the curriculum of Art and Design degrees easily supposes that some Eurocentric tacit values are universal: “specific emotions, tastes and associations can be unthinking, placed as universal; while another set of sentiments and aesthetics is designated as particularised and located in an ethnically marked position” (2004, p. 49). Illustrating the point Puwar quotes artist Steve Rodney McQueen: “I was expected to produce carnival masks, but not to contribute to general questions on abstract art for instance”. McQueen actually hated this practice of lecturers constantly obliging BME students to explore their cultural identities while studying at Goldsmiths College. BME students in

similar circumstances may encounter these types of situations that some argue are shaped by racism (Law et al., 2004). For example, because they may be the only non-White student studying on some modules or even in whole colleges some insensitive comments can be made that BME students say “make them feel different and unwanted” (Acland and Azmi, 1998).

Black artists, Honey, Heron and Jackson (1997) argue, could also feel their presence at art school is merely symbolic. The perfunctory institutional attitude they assert makes them feel alienated and often isolated from ‘White’ aspects of the curriculum

### **Architecture**

In this profession data are often unavailable and poor; however, a CABE (undated) study shows that:

*There is good evidence to suggest that BME students are now well represented on architecture courses, making up around 18% of all architecture undergraduates (compared to 16% of all undergraduates). However, even if all these current students went on to practise as architects, it would be decades before these levels of representation applied to the profession as a whole as, currently, only 2% of registered architects are non-white.*

Qualifying to be an architect is an expensive seven-year process and BME students may be disadvantaged because they do not get structured financial support. There is also evidence that European designs are taken for granted on many courses.

### **Sciences: Physics and Chemistry**

BME students would rather study courses that improve employment opportunities, i.e. applied sciences. Indeed, “some black African and black Caribbean students were told by their families that they have to work twice as hard as other groups to overcome disadvantage” (Springate et al., 2008). There is also evidence that some BME students may perform better if they have mentors who can explain the relevance of the courses to life.

### **Medicine**

This is another course that requires substantial financial commitment and BME students who undertake such degrees choose not to borrow from student loan services; rather they rely on parental contributions and wages from part-time work (Owen et al., 2000). Part-time work for these groups could be demanding and detract from the main focus of studying.

**Progression and employability**

Most data seem to suggest a significant link between the courses BME students choose and their potential for high bracket incomes. As a result many mature BME students take up sandwich courses (Hills, 2003). Professional courses, work placements and skill-oriented modules are generally also popular for the same reason (Kirton, 2009). The skills accrued are specific and in high demand. Though these imperatives seem to drive BME students in general towards higher education and vocational courses in particular, they still remain disadvantaged in the labour market (Cabinet Office, 2003; Machin *et al.*, 2009; Weekes-Bernard, 2010).

A study by Mok (2008) examining destinations of BME graduates from 2003-04 to 2005-06 offers a glimmer of hope in highlighting that while unemployment rates were higher, “all groups saw increases” and BME graduates are “becoming more successful in entering management level occupations” (Para 2) However, Okon (2005) and Cooke *et al.* (2003) suggest institutional racism shuts BME groups out of top positions inside professional industries and the frustration and pessimism encountered by past generations continues to trickle down. A study by the AGCAS (Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services) (2008) on first destinations of graduates suggests that some 30-40% of BME students work in non-graduate jobs when they graduate and that the proportion not in employment is comparatively higher than for their White peers.

Table 1: AGCAS Destinations of Graduates, 2006

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Full-time paid work only (including self-employed)</b>	<b>Part-time paid work only</b>	<b>Voluntary/unpaid work only</b>	<b>Work and further study</b>	<b>Further study only</b>	<b>Assumed to be unemployed</b>	<b>Not available for employment</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>White</b>	<b>56.2%</b>	<b>8.0%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>8.4%</b>	<b>14.9%</b>	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Black or Black British - Caribbean</b>	<b>49.4%</b>	<b>14.4%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>10.1%</b>	<b>9.8%</b>	<b>9.4%</b>	<b>3.7%</b>	<b>1.5%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Black or Black British - African</b>	<b>44.3%</b>	<b>10.6%</b>	<b>2.0%</b>	<b>8.7%</b>	<b>14.9%</b>	<b>13.3%</b>	<b>4.3%</b>	<b>1.9%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Other Black background</b>	<b>49.4%</b>	<b>10.6%</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>9.1%</b>	<b>14.4%</b>	<b>8.2%</b>	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Asian or Asian British - Indian</b>	<b>52.0%</b>	<b>7.8%</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>9.7%</b>	<b>16.3%</b>	<b>8.3%</b>	<b>3.1%</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Asian or Asian British - Pakistani</b>	<b>43.5%</b>	<b>10.5%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>7.8%</b>	<b>19.3%</b>	<b>12.3%</b>	<b>3.0%</b>	<b>2.5%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi</b>	<b>42.6%</b>	<b>14.2%</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>7.4%</b>	<b>16.4%</b>	<b>12.6%</b>	<b>2.7%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Chinese</b>	<b>44.7%</b>	<b>8.0%</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>7.3%</b>	<b>20.5%</b>	<b>11.6%</b>	<b>4.4%</b>	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Other Asian background</b>	<b>48.9%</b>	<b>8.0%</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>8.1%</b>	<b>18.9%</b>	<b>9.0%</b>	<b>4.0%</b>	<b>1.9%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Other (including mixed)</b>	<b>50.1%</b>	<b>8.6%</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>7.6%</b>	<b>16.9%</b>	<b>8.5%</b>	<b>5.0%</b>	<b>2.1%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>55.0%</b>	<b>8.2%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>8.4%</b>	<b>15.1%</b>	<b>6.4%</b>	<b>4.7%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Research commissioned by the last Labour Government found that ethnic minorities face a “chronic ethnic penalty” in the UK labour market (Cabinet Office, 2003). The evidence shows that this disadvantage could not be linked to the variance in levels of education and skills and that “the persistence of workplace discrimination is an important reason for this. Limited access to job and social networks is also critical and subtle in its impact” (Cabinet Office, 2003, p. 8).

According to Rutherford *et al.* (2003) the employment preferences for BME young people are characterised by the limited opportunities they have in the wider job market. Firstly, in an effort to avoid low-paid, unskilled jobs a significant portion of BME graduates seek self-employment. Those with considerable enterprise and zeal do so to expand their family businesses or pursue pet projects. Secondly, as BME graduates often find that the sectors they wish to be employed in are congested, many are obliged to start jobs that underutilise their skills and expertise. Thirdly, BME graduates do not have access to work-based mentors who can readily give advice on how to apply for jobs in prominent fields or even how to do well in such careers and make quick progression. Okon (2005) also suggests that BME graduates seem to lack the ability to access special initiatives that could give them an edge. Instead BME graduates may opt for postgraduate degrees or further training (Machin *et al.*, 2009; Connor *et al.*, 2004). A number of studies point out that BME graduate employment and/or options for postgraduate studies are likely to be subject to a number of other factors, such as what institution they attended, degree classification, social networks and course studied (Connor *et al.*, 2004; Weekes-Bernard, 2010; Machin *et al.*, 2009).

### **Enabling BME student success**

As has been previously discussed, the reasons for the disparity in attainment is associated with a range of personal, cultural, institutional and structural factors (Connor *et al.*, 2004; Broecke and Nicholls, 2007) overlaid with instances of direct and indirect racism (Turney *et al.*, 2002; Jacobs *et al.*, 2007; Howson, 2008; Jessop and Williams, 2009). It would therefore follow that enabling success will require a multi-pronged response. A study carried out Byfield (2008), comparing the educational experiences of Black male students at both elite and less selective universities in the UK and the US, highlights the factors that can lead to improved attainment. Her book documents educational problems and barriers for this group, but focuses on the evidence of those from this minority group that aim high and succeed. The book proposes strategies that have been adopted by Black students, with support from their parents and teachers, to raise expectations and achieve good results. Some of the key negative factors identified in her research include social deprivation, low social capital, racism and poor self-esteem. However,

measures she found that make a positive difference include engaging parents in the educational experience, making positive links between universities and the wider community and, significantly, the influence of the church.

The possibilities that Byfield talks about are echoed in the work of Sewell (2009) who, in his book entitled *Generating Genius*, describes the ways in which, despite the odds, Black boys can achieve the highest grades. His arguments are based on a project in which some Black boys in England spent their summers at Imperial College London and likewise some Jamaican boys attended Summer schools at the University of the West Indies. His argument is that, while institutional racism plays a significant role in affecting the attainment of Black boys, there are other complex factors related to the internalisation of negative attitudes, identities and behaviours that can be addressed through the correct pedagogical strategies. The trick is, through a framework of love and positive and consistent interventions, dramatic changes can occur. Moreover, Sewell emphasises the importance of 'intellectual rigour' underpinned by caring and reliable support and stimulating physical and cultural pursuits. While the research findings are patchy, there is some evidence that, perhaps due to low teacher expectations, BME students do not feel intellectually stretched (Connor *et al.*, 2004; HEA/ECU, 2008; Dhanda, 2009, 2010).

The important issue in these and other studies (see, for example, Ainley, 2008) that seek to work with the learner is the value of developing self-efficacy, critical self-reflexivity, resilience and cultural capital. These outcomes are associated with the long-established traditions of critical pedagogy based on the work of Paulo Freire (1970). While there are some dangers in focusing attention away from wider institutional practices and social oppression, towards the behaviour and attitudes of BME students, it is important to challenge the idea of BME as victims only. As Housee (2004) reports in her research on South Asian female undergraduate students, such students do display a remarkable degree of agency, findings that are corroborated in other similar studies (Tyrer and Ahmad, 2006; Mirza, 2009).

Another strategy for enabling success that emerges from the literature is that of the use of role models. The benefit of using high-achieving BME professionals and academic staff as role models and mentors particularly featured in research and recommendations from a number of studies (Connor *et al.*, 2004; HEA/ECU, 2008; Dhanda, 2009). Also the University and College Union (UCU) survey of university staff made recommendations about encouraging recruitment from the BME

community, particularly into senior roles (see also Deem *et al.*, 2005; HEFCE, 2005a; Leathwood *et al.*, 2009).

Local interventions by local authorities, universities and other organisations feature in some studies. Most interventions have involved mentoring, consultancy or support provision. The Leeds project (2003-04), for instance, involved BME students from the University of Leeds and Leeds Metropolitan University mentoring BME pupils in local schools (Learning and Skills Development Agency (2006). Two projects were completed at the University of Wolverhampton, with support from the Policy Research Institute (Ahmad *et al.*, 2006; Pinnock, 2008), investigating on-campus experiences, focusing on ethnicity and gender. From the second Wolverhampton project it was found that the widening participation agenda to attract non-traditional students, if not backed by additional support structures once the students are enrolled, could actually lead to problems. The report by Tolley and Rundle (2006) identifies that, unlike the schools and FE sectors, there has been reluctance by HE institutions to develop explicit diversity policies that recognise the different needs of BME students.

While the arguments for focusing on the needs of BME students are well made in the literature, a number of studies warn of the dangers of directly targeting BME students for 'special treatment' as one could, in so doing, create a negative impact by labelling and reinforcing negative racial and cultural stereotypes (Law *et al.*, 2004; Jacobs *et al.*, 2007). Although this did not involve university students, a randomised control group study by Defty and Fitz-Gibbon (2002) on a sample of 120 'underachieving' 15-year-old children across four different schools found that the children who were identified and provided with additional support performed significantly less well than the control group. Indeed, the more 'counselling' they were given the worse their results.

The likely negative impact of labelling, stigmatisation and teacher/student expectations has been extensively researched in primary and secondary education (see for example the seminar study by Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968). In short, this body of research evidence suggests that prior negative perceptions of student ability discourage learning. A more recent study by Rubie-Davies (2007) on 12 primary school teachers from eight schools found that teachers with high expectations of pupils tended to have "spent more time providing a framework for students' learning, provided their students with more feedback, questioned their students using more higher-order questions, and managed their students' behaviour more positively" (p. 289). However, the issue of teacher bias has received much less attention in HE.

### Learning the lessons from schools

While the debate about BME underachievement in HE is relatively recent, the issue in schools has been the subject of considerable research and policy debates since the 1960s. A systematic review of the data on primary and secondary education by Bhattacharyya *et al.* (2003) confirms that patterns of underachievement broadly mirror those in HE. Indian and Chinese pupils are more likely to achieve the expected level whereas Black, Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils perform less well, and while socio-economic factors explain a large part of inequality of attainment, there are still statistically significant differences in attainment between ethnic groups that are not accounted for by factors such as social class.

In relation to strategies for addressing the problem a number of important messages emerge from the literature. At the policy level, in an analysis of local education authorities' strategies for raising BME attainment, Tikly (2002) reported that successful educational institutions focus on pupils' attendance, support for supplementary schooling, provision of mentoring, excellent staff development opportunities and a broad range of strategies for parent/community liaison and outreach.

An Ofsted report into schools in 2002 entitled *Achievement of Black Caribbean pupils: Good practice in secondary schools* reported that schools that successfully help minority ethnic children have strong leadership and strong systems in relation to dealing with such things as racism, student discipline and parental involvement. Moreover, successful schools were those that had a strong culture of achievement, that promoted intellectual engagement and that underpinned these expectations by providing intensive support for pupils. MacBeth *et al.* (2001), looking at the impact of study support, conclude that good study support, including out-of-school-hours learning, drop-in support, subject-focused support and aesthetic activities show a significant positive impact on BME student attainment. A study by Blair and Bourne (1998) echoes the importance of an ethos of respect and a clear commitment to tackling racism together with high expectations of BME pupils and an **inclusive** curriculum where BME pupils' experience, heritage and participation in British life is adequately acknowledged (see also HMIE, 2005).

### The role of the curriculum

One of the key recommendations made by HEA and ECU (2008) was the need to establish more coherence between principles and practice of equality and diversity, and curriculum development, specifically in relation to learning, teaching and assessment functions. Such aspirations are more widely expressed in the literature within the notion of the 'inclusive curriculum'. The importance of developing an inclusive curriculum



supporting the retention and success of BME students cannot be understated. Hockings (2010) in an extensive review of the research literature argues that such an inclusive curriculum is central to delivering “equity and fairness”. Underpinning the concept of inclusive learning and teaching are values of equity and fairness. This means taking account of, and valuing, students’ differences within mainstream curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. Hockings *et al.* (2008) in an ESRC project looking at addressing diversity in learning and teaching talk of the importance of creating “enriched and inclusive learning environments”; this would involve teachers becoming aware of the impact of staff and student diversity on the learning process, and the importance of avoiding stereotypical constructs of BME students as ‘non-traditional’ students and therefore lacking ability to excel (see also Dhanda, 2010).

It is worth reflecting on the different ways in which the notion of inclusive curriculum is conceptualised within the literature. While some take what might be seen as a rather narrow view associated primarily with the content of what is taught, others adopt a much broader perspective relating to such things as course design, teaching and learning and assessment methods and strategies, as well as course content and pedagogy (Universities Scotland, 2010; Jessop and Williams, 2009). In addition, Hockings (2010) in what might be conceptualised as a student-centred approach to curriculum design suggests that all aspects need to be designed in ways that can “engage and include the needs, interests and aspirations of all students” (p. 22; see also Wolff *et al.*, 2008).

Clegg *et al.* (2003) in a small study looking at motivational problems among their first-year undergraduates and staff attitudes found that the discussion of motivation was often overlaid by a ‘racialising discourse’ and that curriculum can be perceived as exclusionary by students. A similar study by Woolf *et al.* (2008), looking at the experience of medical students, also suggests that unconscious ethnic stereotypes can affect curriculum design, delivery and most importantly assessment strategies, which may inevitably lead to the underachievement of BME medical students (see also Dhanda, 2010; NUS, 2011).

One of the ways in which one might counteract the impact of bias is to develop strategies for integrations among diverse student groups. In a study looking at student interaction Chang *et al.* (2006) found that greater levels of ‘cross-racial’ interaction had positive effects on students’ openness to diversity, cognitive development and self-confidence. Significantly the study suggests a correlation between students’ reported development, attainment and degree of mixing:

*... students who have higher levels of cross-racial interaction at university tend to report significantly larger gains made in their knowledge of and ability to accept different races and cultures, growth in general knowledge, critical thinking ability, and problem-solving skills, and intellectual and social self-confidence than their peers who had lower levels of interaction. (Chang et al., 2006, p. 449)*

Much of the literature on inclusive curriculum and cultural difference is framed around the internationalisation agenda (Bourn *et al.*, 2006; Caruana and Spurling, 2007; Universities Scotland, 2010). Bourn *et al.* (2006), in a collection of essays and institutional case studies discussing the role of curriculum in the *Global University*, offer a number of insights on specific curriculum principles and practices. The report concludes by offering academics and curriculum developers a number of pointers to reflect on: How might their particular subject area be broadened to include global perspectives? How might the curriculum and the extra-curricular experience be developed, such that students feel empowered to champion change? What networks could they join, or lever, to influence change, and which 'significant others' within their own institution, such as chaplains, heads of learning and teaching and pro-vice-chancellors, might provide support and encouragement to establish momentum for change? Caruana and Spurling (2007) argue that internationalising the curriculum has the added advantage of positively empowering students for international employability and volunteering across the globe.

It is worth noting here the comprehensive literature on internationalisation and higher education, much of which focuses heavily on the curriculum in relation to content, design and pedagogy in multicultural contexts. While it would be wrong to overly conflate home BME domiciled students with international students, there is much to be gleaned from this literature in relation to how strategies might be developed. A useful resource is the Internationalising the Curriculum Resource Kit, which can be accessed at the Centre for International Curriculum Inquiry and Networking at Oxford Brookes University

(<http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocslid/ioc/index.html>). Some pointers from the toolkit in relation to teaching and learning activities include:

- encourage students to use examples from their own experiences;
- require students to consider issues and problems from a variety of cultural perspectives;

- require the establishment of working relationships with fellow students from diverse backgrounds and cultures;
- include problem-solving exercises and/or research assignments with an international or intercultural component;
- require fieldwork with local organisations working on international projects or national projects with an intercultural focus;
- include internships/placements in international or intercultural agencies;
- involve reflective writing activities/tasks focusing on international or intercultural matters;
- explicitly outline the thinking processes used in the discipline and discuss and analyse any cultural aspects of these;
- require students to analyse the cultural construction of knowledge and cross-cultural practices;
- include examples of the various value positions in multicultural UK and their implications for the field or profession;
- compare and contrast approaches to cultural pluralism in different nations and their implications for citizens and for professional practice in the discipline;
- examine ways in which particular cultural interpretations of social, scientific or technological applications of knowledge may include or exclude, advantage or disadvantage people from different cultural groups;
- include analysis of the cultural foundations of alternative approaches to the profession/discipline;
- require analysis of the issues, methodologies and possible solutions associated with current areas of debate within the discipline from a range of cultural perspectives;
- explore cultural and regional differences in values and assumptions affecting the discipline and how these might impact on the actions of individuals;
- include consideration of cultural assumptions in any analysis of possible responses to ethical and social issues related to the discipline/professional area;
- explore comparative professional practices and their relationship to cultural values.

The Race Equality Toolkit, produced for Universities Scotland and revised in 2010, also makes explicit the link between the internationalisation and equality and diversity agendas when it comes to curriculum. It offers a strategy for developing a curriculum that can be characterised as a combination of discrete interventions that enable students to engage with

issues of racism directly and integrated activities that constitute part of the 'core curriculum' for each discipline. In relation to assessment the toolkit suggests that a variety of assessment methods and formats, underpinned by very clear criteria "explained in clear and simple English", is likely to be beneficial.

Another important aspect of curriculum that is associated with BME attainment in a wide number of studies is that of unfair assessment. Some of the concerns identified are related to students feeling that they have been inadequately prepared for the more traditional forms of academic assessment at university (see Hatt and Baxter, 2003; Hoelscher *et al.*, 2008; NUS, 2011). There is now a growing body of statistical evidence suggesting that BME students generally feel less happy with their experience of assessment when compared to White students (SurrIDGE, 2008; NUS, 2011). The NUS survey of Black students in FE and HE identifies unfair assessment and insufficient transparency in marking procedures as a key area of concern for many BME students. A key demand was robust procedures for anonymous marking.

### **Institutional responses to BME success**

The general picture regarding institutional responses to BME success in HE is that it is somewhat mixed and unfocused. A survey by Willott and Stevenson (2007), undertaken as part of the HEA/EQU 2008 project, looked at 61 HEIs for references to student attainment and 'race' policies. It revealed that, while most universities had equality schemes in place, only a minority had publicly available associated action plans and even fewer had reporting mechanisms on progress. Most concerning was that there was very little evidence of any specific projects being undertaken to address BME success in general and/or differential degree attainment between ethnic groups in particular. These findings confirm an earlier study by Strebler and O'Regan (2005), who, in an anonymised survey of people working in HE, revealed a widespread lack of awareness of equal opportunity policies and significant scepticism that such policies are effective. 17% of respondents even reported experiencing harassment in the previous 12 months, although few had made formal complaints. Most staff had received no training in equal opportunities, but those who had thought that it had been effective and that it had a positive impact in increasing awareness. A study by Deem *et al.* (2005) involving six case studies of HEIs found that while as a consequence of recently introduced legislative requirements there was a preponderance of 'race' policies, most staff were not familiar with these and many saw them as being irrelevant to HE. Indeed there was a widespread sense that issues relating to equality were very much subsidiary to other issues such as the quality of the student experience or the quality of research.

The Universities Scotland (2010) Race Equality Toolkit identifies the need for institutional leadership that emphasises the importance of race equality to all staff, provides mechanisms for supporting academics in implementing race equality, and ensures mechanisms exist to integrate and align race equality into all activities, from teaching and learning strategies and quality assurance mechanisms through to the development of student support services.

Among a series of recommendations, Willott and Stevenson (2007) emphasise the need for HEIs to develop a more holistic approach to 'race' equality policies, whereby the whole student cycle receives attention, from recruitment through to progression/retention, achievement and employability. Specifically, they make a strong case for HEIs to develop comprehensive schemes and plans to address the issue of BME student attainment, including the recruitment of BME staff.

The September 2006 UCU report, *Further, Higher, Better*, summarised ethnicity profiles for FE and HE teachers, managers and non-academic professional (NAP) support staff. The report recommended that the under-representation of BME staff should be addressed in any recruitment drives for new staff. The report indicated that the percentage of BME academic staff employed in UK universities compared to White staff (10.5% and 89.5%) is marginally higher than the demographic profile of those qualified for such employment (10.8% and 89.2%). This was said to vary between institutions and subject disciplines. In relation to managerial and NAP positions in universities, BME staff were found to be slightly under-represented compared to the population profile. The conclusions pointed to under-representation of BME staff at the higher levels and poor retention of staff in some areas (see also Equality Challenge Unit, 2010).

These findings are confirmed in a systematic review of literature on BME staff experiences in HE by Leathwood *et al.* (2009). This and other research highlights that while the proportion of BME staff in HE has increased, they are concentrated in lower grades. Moreover, BME staff at all levels experience discriminatory treatment in every aspect of their role (HEFCE, 2008; Leathwood *et al.*, 2009). Evidence of any positive action being taken by institutions to address these issues is patchy, although Tony Tysome reported in the *Times Higher Education* on 7 July 2007 on a 'positive action' scheme by the University of Manchester in planning to recruit more BME senior staff to act as role models to encourage and support BME students.

### Implications for policy and practice

The overall aim of this resource has been to provide the reader with access to the key knowledge base surrounding the experience of BME student participation in higher education. The picture that emerges is one of complexity and contestation. If one takes the overall picture across the sector, as clearly uncovered in the latest Equality Challenge Unit (2010) *Equality in Higher Education: statistical report*, there can be no denying a significant and sustained attainment gap between BME and White students. However, as a consequence of the dynamics of diversity, both in the make-up of HE institutions and the categories used to identify 'ethnic' differences (Vertovec, 2006; Ahmed, 2007b, both of which are in a constant state of flux, questions about what is actually being measured and the relative impact of different causal factors – such as relative deprivation, social capital, institutional and direct discrimination and family and cultural background – remain open to debate.

Almost all reports and summaries looked at suggest that there is a need to further understand the complexity of the problem. HEA/ECU (2008) in particular, recognising the complexity of the problem, suggest that there should be not only more focused research into specific sub-categories within the BME spectrum but also a commitment to action (HEA/ECU, 2008). Indeed, as a consequence of the various initiatives supported by the HEA and ECU following the 2008 report there is now a growing body of knowledge, much of it based on small-scale, institutional, action-orientated projects, as, for example, undertaken through the HEA/ECU developmental programme in 2009-10. This would suggest that if one were to envisage a phase 4 in the 'story' outlined earlier under the Explanatory context section, then this might be the need to both expand on these small-scale studies and develop more effective mechanisms for dissemination across the sector.

One strategy for improving BME attainment and success that is most evident across the sector is the use of different forms of mentoring and the use of role models (Dhanda, 2010; NUS, 2011). These are the most popular approaches adopted in the research studied. However, it is important to note that any intervention aimed at supporting BME students needs to be done in a sensitive way so as to not reinforce stigma, which may result in negative outcomes. Thus it is worth highlighting that many researchers recommend, where possible, embedding assertive support activities for the benefit of all students rather than explicitly and openly targeting BME students as a 'special needs' category. Such a policy would have the added benefit of potentially providing support for non-BME students known to be at risk, such as White working-class males. Given that the challenge of diversity in HE spreads beyond the issue of

ethnicity, the ultimate challenge would be to develop pedagogical strategies that are holistic and inclusive across a range of social differences.

A clear message from the research is that universities have tended to lag behind many other public institutions in facing up to the issue of institutional racism that was highlighted in the Macpherson Report. As Bahra suggests in the *Guardian*:

*While many organisations such as the NHS, the Crown Prosecution Service, and the Metropolitan police have accepted the existence of institutional racism and how it covertly and insidiously pervades the organisation, universities have stayed surprisingly quiet. Although academics have sought to carry out research on BME communities and question other public services, the same sort of academic rigour and critical inquiry has been lacking within universities. (2007, para 6)*

While important to developing a will to change, in and of itself, simply accepting the reality of institutional racism is not going to be enough. The point is not simply to understand the problem better but to change what is clearly an unjust situation. What is needed is a clear set of policy and practice strategies and in this regard there are some clear messages from the literature outlined in the next section.

### **Implications for stakeholder groups**

Having provided a detailed review of some of the relevant literature in relation to improving BME student attainment and success, this section seeks to synthesise and condense the findings further into a series of recommendations for various stakeholder groups in HE. It must be noted that some recommendations will have more relevance to particular groups than others depending on their role within the institution.

#### **A: Teaching, learning, curriculum and assessment**

1. As a general principle all new course development and provision should be impact assessed against diversity and non-discrimination requirements, with the onus being on course developers to demonstrate how these requirements have been addressed. However, to avoid a simple mechanical response, a 'tick-box' approach should not be used.
2. More often than not a series of small steps is likely to be more successful than one big intervention, therefore a broad range of teaching and learning strategies need to be adopted.

3. In developing teaching and learning strategies care should be taken to avoid ethnic segregation in seminar and project groups.
4. Tutors need to develop creative teaching and assessment methods for enabling the development of critical thinking and academic identities among ALL students.
5. Every effort must be made to avoid pathologising lower attainment and therefore it is important to focus on strategies for success and not reasons for failure when seeking to enable students to improve on their performance.
6. ALL courses should seek to integrate teaching on social justice and global citizenship, both discretely and through the provision of specific components/modules.
7. In an increasingly globalised higher education system, for the benefit of 'home' and 'international students', the academic curriculum needs to be genuinely international in relation to content.
8. Course materials and case studies should seek to represent 'non-western' minorities in a balanced way and not just in the context of social problems or as victims.
9. Diverse and creative assessment strategies should be developed although all existing and new strategies should be reviewed and changed to avoid/minimise bias.
10. In recognising the real impact that teacher expectations can have on outcomes, academic staff, through mechanisms such as peer review, appraisal, personal development and module evaluation, should reflect on their own practices and examine if and how they may be consciously and unconsciously impacting student attainment.

#### **B: Leadership and management**

1. There should be a clear expression of ownership of the issue of BME student attainment and success from the very top; this should be done through clear recognition of the issue and a commitment to addressing disparities in the development of missions, policies, strategies and resource allocation.
2. Heads of department should be required to develop action plans to address the issue of BME attainment and these should be reported



back periodically at board meetings and other appropriate arenas, including student forums.

3. The institutional human resources strategy in relation to recruitment, selection, retention and development should be informed by the need to develop a culturally diverse and competent workforce.
4. All university staff should be required to undergo racism and diversity awareness training, and induction, supervision and performance appraisal systems should be utilised to ensure that each member of staff is clear about their legal and organisational duties for addressing discrimination and promoting cohesion.
5. Universities should ensure that race equality policies are kept up to date and relevant.
6. The university registry should establish an effective system to generate data in relation to ethnicity and attainment that can be drilled down to different levels (university, faculty, department, course and module) and which is easily accessible to staff. Staff at each level should regularly review the data and where discrepancies are found they need to offer explanations and actions to address these.
7. Although the categories used for ethnic monitoring are heavily influenced by HESA, these should nonetheless be kept under review given the rapidly changing demographic make-up of the student population. In particular, greater thought needs to be put into the impact of the growing 'mixed' category.
8. Universities need to challenge campus racism, actively discourage segregation and encourage cohesion among students through a range of reactive and proactive actions.
9. Universities need to identify successful interventions and develop mechanisms to disseminate and communicate best practice within and beyond the institution.
10. While it is important to reflect diversity in all university publicity material, care should be taken to ensure that external representation of diversity and harmony is a true reflection of the internal culture and experience of students.

### C: Student support services

1. Facility managers should regularly review provision of catering, accommodation and other student facilities on campus and act where it becomes clear that they are not meeting the needs of a diverse student population.
2. While the core of university life should be based on a secular ideal, given that for significant numbers of students faith and spirituality are important dimensions of their lives, universities should proactively recognise and accommodate these students' needs.
3. While BME students' particular needs as learners should be addressed, this should be done in a non-stigmatising way that does not reinforce a 'deficit model'. This is best done by developing comprehensive, high quality universal student support services accessible by all and adequately equipped to meet specific needs. Attention will also be needed to ensure that BME students are accessing such services.
4. Mentoring schemes and positive role models can be very effective, but as with the point above, these should be developed in ways that do not end up reinforcing a deficit model and/or the segregation of BME students.
5. Institutions, irrespective of where they are located, need to work to establish meaningful and sustained links and partnerships with BME communities and organisations at a local, regional and, in some instances, national and international level.

### Literature reviews

**Richardson, J. (2008) *Degree attainment, ethnicity and gender: a literature review*. York: Higher Education Academy. Available from:**

<http://www.ecu.ac.uk/documents/project-files/ethnicity-and-degree-attainment-files/j-richardson-literature-review-jan08.pdf> [19 pages]

This literature review was produced to inform the Higher Education Academy and Equality Challenge Unit's project on degree attainment, ethnicity and gender. Attainment here is understood as the class of Honours awarded to students on their completion of first degrees at UK higher education institutions. The key finding of the research reviewed is that, "White students are more likely to obtain good degrees than students from other ethnic groups and that White students are more likely to obtain first-class honours than students from other ethnic groups"



(Richardson, 2008, p. 10). The study also highlights variations in attainment within the BME category along the lines of ethnic group, gender and age, subject area and type of institution. In relation to explanations for these differences, the report finds the literature inconclusive although it is suggested that this may be related to such things as quality of the learning, approaches to learning, cultural differences, self-efficacy and previous educational experience. Taken together the report calls for more research into the phenomena of BME underattainment that is clearly evident.

**Leathwood, C., Maylor, U. and Moreau, M. (2009) *Experiences of Black and minority ethnic staff working in higher education: literature review*. London: Equality Challenge Unit/London Metropolitan University. Available from:**

<http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/experience-of-bme-staff-in-he> [54 pages]

This literature review was commissioned by ECU as the first stage in building an evidence base on the position and experiences of BME staff working in higher education. Key findings from the review suggest that BME staff experience inferior pay and conditions, and are more likely to feel isolation, marginalisation, lower status and discrimination than their non-BME peers. Moreover, BME staff report that they face disproportionate levels of scrutiny and barriers to career development, specifically in relation to opportunities for research. Lastly, particularly at senior levels, the review suggests that BME staff are more likely than White staff to have their authority questioned.

**Torgerson, C.J., See, B.H., Low, G., Wright, K. and Gorard, S. (2007) *What are the factors that drive high post-16 participation of many minority ethnic groups, and what strategies are effective in encouraging participation? A systematic map, and a focused review of the international intervention studies*. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London. Available from:**

<http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Default.aspx?tabid=2302> [37 pages]

This report summarises the results of the first part of a study to look at the participation of ethnic minority groups in post-16 participation. Its overall aim was to attempt to determine the factors that drive high post-16 participation of many minority ethnic groups and to identify strategies and interventions that have successfully increased BME participation through

a scoping of the international research literature and an in-depth review of five studies focusing on interventions. The most significant finding for post-16 HE settings is that mentoring strategies have measurable positive effect on the academic performance of BME students.

**Torgerson, C.J., Gorard, S., Low, G., Ainsworth, H., See, B.H. and Wright, K. (2008) *What are the factors that promote high post-16 participation of many minority ethnic groups? A focused review of the UK-based aspirations literature.* London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London. Available from:**

<http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Default.aspx?tabid=2386> [42 pages].

The question for this focused review is: what are the factors that drive high post-16 participation of many ethnic minority groups? It is the second of the two studies on this topic and based on the UK literature.

The desire to widen participation in formal post-compulsory education and training is a policy agenda common to most developed countries, and political attention in the UK has largely focused on young (potential) students aged 16-21. Given that some minority ethnic groups have higher rates of participation in the UK at both age 16 and 18 than both the majority White cohort and some other minorities, identifying potential determinants could lead to a method of increasing participation for all. The overall aim of this review, therefore, was to determine the factors that drive high post-16 participation of many minority ethnic groups. A total of 23 studies were selected.

Key findings include: differences between ethnic groups are largely explained by differences in cultural attitudes towards education in general and higher education in particular; minority ethnic groups with high participation tend to have a high cultural awareness of the value of extending young people's education; financial assistance may be more important among those groups with low expectations and low emphasis on the value of post-16 and higher education; and work experience is generally highly valued in providing a reason for subsequent training.

### **Practical applications**

This section provides further information and useful resources on various aspects and dimensions of the BME retention and success agenda.

### **Improving the Degree Attainment of Black and Minority Ethnic Students**

[http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/ourwork/inclusion/Ethnicity Summit](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/ourwork/inclusion/Ethnicity_Summit)

This site contains links to 14 mini projects undertaken by HEIs participating in a developmental summit programme co-sponsored by the HEA and ECU, which sought to support institutions in addressing the recommendations of the Ethnicity, Gender and Degree Attainment Project. Reflective papers, presentations and related materials are available for download; also a commentary on the learning for the sector to include ideas, strategies and examples of initiatives to better support the success of BME students.

### **Internationalising the Curriculum Resource Kit**

<http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocslid/ioc/resourcekit.html>

Developed by the Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development at Oxford Brookes University, this kit offers a range of resources to support the internationalisation of the curriculum. The kit provides the following resources: questionnaires to stimulate thinking; ideas for internationalising curricula and pedagogy; articles; case studies; and links to external resources.

### **Internationalisation good practice: tools and resources**

[http://www.leedsmet.ac.uk/4\\_Tools\\_and\\_Resources.pdf](http://www.leedsmet.ac.uk/4_Tools_and_Resources.pdf)

This practical resource offers a wide variety of materials to assist in various aspects of teaching, learning and curriculum development aimed at developing “cross-cultural capability, international perspectives and global citizenship”.

### **Institutional Racism in Higher Education Toolkit**

<http://www.sociology.leeds.ac.uk/assets/files/research/cers/the-anti-racism-toolkit.pdf>

This web-based resource seeks to offer a ‘holistic view’ of the workings of a university, taking in aspects from the BME staff and student experiences, to the core functions of research, teaching and learning and assessment. It offers a critical explanation of the key conceptual tools, namely, ‘institutional racism’, ‘eurocentricism’, ‘Whiteness’ and ‘critical



boundaries'. Moving from the conceptual arena to practical application, the toolkit offers detailed guidance for developing strategy in areas such as: employment, student recruitment, support and transition to employment; teaching and learning; research; contracting and purchasing; and external affairs.

### **Race Equality Toolkit: Learning and Teaching**

<http://www.universities-scotland.ac.uk/raceequalitytoolkit/index.htm>

Updated in 2010, this toolkit is specifically aimed at academic staff to assist them in inculcating 'race' equality into all aspects of learning and teaching. The various sections of this extensive resource cover curriculum design, teaching, assessment and institutional practices. The material is based on interviews with staff and students and an examination of best practices across a number of Scottish universities regarding the issue of ethnicity, race and HE. One of the key recommendations in relation to curriculum development is the importance of giving students opportunities, no matter what the discipline, to explore racism and diversity as part of their study.

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### **Useful web-based resources**

This section contains a selection of websites that provide useful teaching and learning materials relating to diversity, equality, 'race' and anti-racism.

**Association of American Colleges and Universities – Liberal Education and Global Citizenship: The Arts of Democracy :** The first project of the Shared Futures: Learning for a World Lived in Common, Liberal Education and Global Citizenship: The Arts of Democracy, supported by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, is designed to work with colleges and universities to develop societal, civic and global knowledge in their graduates by linking liberal education and democracy in the context of our interdependent but unequal world.

<http://www.aacu.org/SharedFutures/globalcitizenship/index.cfm>

**Artists against Racism:** 'Artists against Racism' lists ways in which students, teachers, businesses and others can become involved in the crusade to end racism.

<http://www.artistsagainstracism.com/getinvolved.html>

**Black Nurses in History:** A website with links to sites and articles about the history of Black nurses and their struggle for equality in the profession.

<http://www.umdj.edu/camlbweb/Blacknurses.html>

**Black Presence in Britain:** Find out about Britain's slave history and learn about the first Black people in Britain. There are many Black Britons listed here on this site, some famous some just ordinary citizens. They all contribute to Britain's fascinating hidden history.

<http://www.blackpresence.co.uk>

**Blacknet:** As well as offering a brief chronology of Black British history the website provides a compilation of some of the most influential Black

people to live in Britain before the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It also has an excellent section on slavery.

<http://www.Blacknet.co.uk/history/index.html>

**Campaign against Racism and Fascism:** CARF is an anti-racist magazine, documenting resistance against racism – from Black and refugee organisations, monitoring groups, anti-deportation campaigns, football fans, and much more. As well as producing the magazine and webzine, the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism collective also campaigns actively against racism and provides information, support and speakers on race issues.

[http://www.carf.org.uk/](http://www.carf.org.uk)

**Casbah:** This website offers research resources relating to Caribbean Studies and the history of Black and Asian peoples in the UK. Along with full-text resources it provides links to multimedia archives.

<http://www.casbah.ac.uk>

### **Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning**

**Diversity Resource Pages:** The Centre for Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning (CIRTL) is a national organisation dedicated to advancing teaching practices for faculty in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines. One of its foundational pillars, 'Learning through Diversity' promotes diversity as a function of educational excellence, encouraging faculty to engage with new teaching methods, understanding classroom diversity, addressing inequities, and fostering collaboration. To that end, CIRTL offers an in-depth resource page on diversity. This page provides rationale for infusing diversity into STEM disciplines, an inclusive syllabi project, a diversity institution, literature review, and resource book to download.

<http://www.cirtl.net/DiversityResources/>

**Channel 4 Origin:** This site offers some cutting-edge debate about the issue of race and ethnicity in the UK. It includes a really useful interactive 'ethnicity map' of the UK.

<http://www.channel4.com/culture/microsites/R/racedebate/>

**C-SAP Teaching Race and Ethnicity Resources:** "The Teaching Race and Ethnicity website is intended for all interested scholars, researchers, teachers and others who want to engage with key issues of race, ethnicity, diversity, multiculturalism and racism. The aim is to provide critical resources and suggestions for teaching, learning and assessment. It is

hoped that the site will become a focal point for discussion and progressive ideas for enabling understanding, eradicating misconceptions and confronting racisms in educational practice and in society more generally.”

<http://www.teachingrace.bham.ac.uk/>

**The Diversity Training Group:** This Canadian-based site contains a range of teaching and learning materials on diversity and an excellent collection of articles on diversity training.

<http://www.diversitydtg.com>

**Diversity Training Multimedia Resources:** California Newsreel provides a collection of videos on diversity training, student life, faculty development and related issues.

<http://www.newsreel.org/nav/topics.asp?cat=3>

**Diversity Web:** This is an ‘interactive hub’ provided by the American Association of College and Universities, which, as well as providing a forum for debate on issues related to diversity in HE, offers extensive resources in this regard. Most notably one can freely download copies of a journal entitled *Diversity and Democracy* that carries a wide range of research and practice articles in all aspects diversity and equality on the campus.

<http://www.diversityweb.org/index.cfm>

**Equality Challenge Unit – Race Forum (ECU):** Promotes diversity and equality of opportunity for all who work or seek to work in higher education. ECU works within the Equality Challenge Framework agreed between the representative bodies (GuildHE and Universities UK), the four HE funding bodies, and the HE trades unions. ‘The Race Forum’ provides a locus for dialogue and action on race equality in HE.

<http://www.ecu.ac.uk/our-projects/race-forum>

**European Network Against Racism:** This network of European Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) aims to combat racism, and to this aim, the website provides current updates on legislation and campaigns and information on interested NGOs. The website provides full-text fact sheets, details of campaigns, relevant full-text publications, details of national activities, events of interest and press releases.

<http://www.enar-eu.org/>

**Every Generation:** Every Generation is an online community resource targeted specifically towards the Black community to facilitate the personal development and empowerment of young people and to bridge the gap with the older generation through history, family genealogy and heritage. The site is also a resource to schools, statutory services, voluntary sectors, mentoring and youth organisations that are supporting and engaging with Black clients.

<http://www.everygeneration.co.uk>

**Higher Education Academy:** The HEA has funded various projects in relation to widening participation, inclusive education and BME disparity (see also Practical Applications section). Resources on the website include reports and publications that help to unpack the complexity and depth of the BME student experience in HE and that recommend a range of different approaches, both internal and external, aimed at supporting students' access, participation and success in HE. Resources relevant to this synthesis include:-

*Inclusive Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: a synthesis of research*

[http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/evidencenet/Inclusive\\_learning\\_and\\_teaching\\_in\\_higher\\_education\\_synthesis](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/evidencenet/Inclusive_learning_and_teaching_in_higher_education_synthesis)

*Inclusive Learning and Teaching in Higher Education – final report*

This is a commentary on a developmental summit programme to support HE institutions in developing inclusive learning and teaching.

[http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/inclusion/LTsummit\\_final\\_report](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/inclusion/LTsummit_final_report)

*Social Class and Widening Participation: a synthesis of research*

[http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/evidencenet/Social\\_class\\_and\\_higher\\_education\\_synthesis](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/evidencenet/Social_class_and_higher_education_synthesis)

**iCoCo – Institute of Community Cohesion:** Built on a collaboration between four Midlands universities, based at Coventry University, iCoCo is a not for profit partnership, which aims to build capacity at all levels and in all local and national agencies to promote community cohesion. The site contains a wide range of excellent freely available resource guides.

<http://www.cohesioninstitute.org.uk/home>

**Institute of Race Relations:** The London-based Institute of Race Relations (IRR) conducts research and produces educational resources that are at the cutting edge of the struggle for racial justice in Britain and



internationally. It seeks to reflect the experience of those who suffer racial oppression and draws its perspectives from the most vulnerable in society.

<http://www.homebeats.co.uk>

**Michigan State University Online Instructional Resources Pages for Diversity:** Michigan State University's website offers a series of resources pages focusing on diversity, multiculturalism, and inclusive classrooms. Specifically, these pages provide links to publications and syllabi that highlight inclusive teaching methods (for general and identity-specific groups), incorporate multicultural content, and teach for diverse populations. The Office of Faculty and Organizational Development also offers Faculty Learning Communities, teaching fellowships, and academies for development, among other resources.

<http://fod.msu.edu/OIR/Diversity/inclusive-teaching.asp>

**Moving Here:** Moving Here is the biggest database of digitised photographs, maps, objects, documents and audio items from 30 local and national archives, museums and libraries that record migration experiences of the last 200 years.

<http://www.movinghere.org.uk>

**MELTING:** The 'multi-ethnic teaching and learning in nursing project' website is an extensive, well-designed educational resource on raising awareness in relation to ethnicity, culture and health care. It can be used as a foundational module for the RCN learning unit 'Trans-cultural Health Care Practice: An educational resource for nurses and health care practitioners'. It critically addresses cultural diversity, models of trans-cultural care, essential aspects of care and the lifespan approach, including scenarios.

<http://www.maryseacole.com/maryseacole/melting/validated.asp>

**The Museum of Tolerance's Online Multimedia Learning Centre Teacher Resources:** Sponsored by the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, the Museum of Tolerance teaches about the Holocaust. With curricular resources for teachers and materials resources for librarians, this is an important site to look at. Includes important features like 'Coming to Grips with Teaching About the Holocaust', bibliographies, articles and a timeline.

<http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/>





**The Runnymede Trust:** Founded in 1968, the Runnymede Trust is an independent thinktank on issues of ethnicity and cultural diversity. Its core mandate is to challenge racial discrimination, to influence anti-racist legislation and to promote a successful multi-ethnic Britain.

<http://www.runnymedetrust.org>

**SALIDAA – South Asian Diaspora Literature and Arts Archive:** SALIDAA's digital archive is a free online resource featuring collections of South Asian literature, art, theatre, dance and music by British-based artists and organisations. New collections are added regularly. However, the archive showcases only the works of those who have agreed to participate in this project, and therefore is not comprehensive. Through its digital archive, SALIDAA aims to provide a window on the development of South Asian arts and literature in Britain.

<http://www.vads.ac.uk/collections/SALIDAA.html>

**Teaching Tolerance:** Founded in 1991 by the Southern Poverty Law Centre, Teaching Tolerance provides educators with free educational materials that promote respect for differences and appreciation of diversity in the classroom and beyond.

<http://www.tolerance.org>

**World of Ages:** The World of Ages Archive contains lots of links to materials regarding the ancient world. It has a very interesting section on myths about White European civilisation. There are particularly useful teaching materials in introducing discussions about the history and legacy of racism.

<http://www.worldagesarchive.com>