Cracking the concrete ceiling: Tracking the impact of the Diversifying Leadership programme

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Assessing the impact on participants and institutions
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- Dr Terri Kim, Reader in Comparative Higher Education, University of East London
- Dr Amanda Aldercottle, Head of Knowledge and Research, Advance HE
Overview

• Commissioned by Advance HE (formerly the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education)

• Examine how leadership development can address contextual and institutional issues surrounding the black and minority ethnic (BME) staff pipeline in higher education; and how leadership development for BME staff impacts, and can impact, on facilitating the path to BME leadership in higher education (HE).

• The main aim of the project was to investigate the impact of the Diversifying Leadership (DL) programme on:
  – The in-depth and complex experiences of participants in the programme, including how this changed over time and how it was affected by the institutional context.
  – The institutional context with regard to the BME pipeline and BME leadership.

In addition to the overarching aims above, the current research also addressed the question of how this impact might be sustained and improved.

• Overall the project aimed to provide a holistic picture of the intersections of contextual factors with personal experiences and how they contribute to the construction of experiences of marginalisation for BME staff working in the UK HE sector and the impact of these intersecting factors on the leadership development of BME staff.
Context

- Accounts of poor experiences of BME staff in HE
- Clear under-representation of BME leaders in UK HEIs
- Ethnicity Pay Gap greater than Gender Pay Gap
- Need to:
  - understand complexity of BME identities
  - address issues relating to racial equality in HE and the associated impact of intersectionality
  - better understand the policies and practice that are in place and how these impact upon BME career progression
  - assess the impact and effectiveness of policies and programmes
Approach

- A multi-dimensional methodological approach
- A comprehensive literature review and analysis
- Methods to address 2 research questions:
  - *What is the impact of the DL programme on individuals’ leadership strategies and career progression?*
    - Interviews with 20 Diversifying Leadership participants and a sponsor
  - *What is the impact of the DL programme on institutional context?*
    - In-depth case studies of two higher education institutions
      - Secondary data analysis HESA staff records
      - A longitudinal survey of 69 BME and 18 white staff who had either:
        (i) attended the DL programme, or (ii) were working within selected HEIs – at the onset of the project and one year later.
      - Interview with 5 staff in Equality and Diversity Positions
Findings: Impact of the DL programme on individuals

- Reasons for joining the DL programme
- Overall experience of the programme
- Benefits of the programme: networking
- Benefits of the programme: confidence, identity development and expansion of thinking and focus
- Changes since attending the programme
- Suggested changes to the programme
Findings: Impact of the DL programme on organisational context

• The two case studies designed to:
  – give an insight into the institutional culture and context in which DL attendees would be using the skills they learnt during the programme.
  – explore whether the DL programme might influence the institutional context, in particular considering the institution’s BME staff profile, the career pipeline of BME staff and BME leadership.

• Three sets of data were used to explore these aims:
  – + Secondary analysis of the HESA staff records data from 2015/16 and 2016/17 was used to explore the staff profile.
  – + Survey data from BME academic and professional and support staff at two time points (12 months apart) was used to explore the thoughts of staff members.
  – + In-depth interviews with key members of staff working in equality and diversity were conducted to consider the institutional environment.
### HEI B: Comparisons between BME staff profiles and the national level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HEI B 2015/16</th>
<th>HEI B 2016/17</th>
<th>National level 2015/16</th>
<th>National level 2016/17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total proportion of BME staff</strong></td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proportion of BME staff on fixed-term contracts</strong></td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proportion of BME staff on part-time contracts</strong></td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proportion of BME staff in senior posts</strong></td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median pay gap</strong></td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean pay gap</strong></td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HEI B: Survey Result

16 individuals from HEI B completed the survey at TimePoint 1 and 17 completed this at TimePoint 2

- Respondents were relatively positive in their self-ratings related to leadership abilities, cross-cultural competencies, and attitude towards promotion and career strategies.
- Items related to understanding of promotion and life in their current department was viewed slightly less positively, with respondents tending to report that opportunities for training and career development were more accessible to white individuals, and it was easier for white individuals to obtain senior posts compared to BME individuals.
- Comparing the two time points, participants felt significantly more at ease with people from cultural backgrounds other than their own at the second time point and reported their formal appraisal / performance review as significantly more useful/valuable at the second time point.
- Free-text responses - Respondents perceived several barriers in their institution, including those relating to:
  - Unconscious bias and discrimination
  - The importance of who you know regarding recruitment and promotion
  - A lack of BME representation in senior posts

Interviews with 3 staff in equality and diversity positions

- Interviewees reported the overall institutional environment to be inclusive and supportive of diversity for both staff and students.
- Interviewees commented on support for BME individuals being greater for students compared to staff, with gaps in support for BME staff from senior management and regarding leadership roles in particular.
- One interviewee commented that greater support for and development of individual BME staff members was needed, as well as making institution-wide changes.
HEI C: Comparisons between BME staff profiles and the national level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>National level 2015/16</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total proportion of BME staff</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proportion of BME staff on fixed-term contracts</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proportion of BME staff on part-time contracts</td>
<td>57.4%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
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<td>28.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proportion of BME staff in senior posts</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median pay gap</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean pay gap</td>
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<td>23.9%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
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HEI C: Survey Result

19 individuals from HEI C completed the survey at TimePoint 1 and 20 completed this at TimePoint 2

- Respondents were relatively positive in their self-ratings related to leadership abilities, cross-cultural competencies, and attitude towards promotion and career strategies.
- Items related to understanding of promotion and life in their current department was viewed relatively negatively.
- Respondents indicated a desire to progress their careers but reported a lack of information about promotion processes and criteria, and they felt there was a bias in their department related to the representation of BME staff on major decision-making bodies and the amount of positive attention BME staff receive from senior management.
- Respondents at the second time point reported being significantly more likely to feel that their successes were in part due to their ability to navigate cross-cultural environments compared to respondents at the first time point.
- Participants felt significantly more at ease with people from cultural backgrounds other than their own at the second time point and reported their formal appraisal / performance review as significantly more useful/valuable at the second time point.

Free-text –

- Confident in leadership skills and abilities to build positive relationships with team members.
- Respondents also indicated this confidence was hampered by feelings of being an ‘outsider’ and not fitting into the ‘hidden culture’ in the institution.
- Respondents described incidents of racism, discrimination and feeling unappreciated, and only one respondent over the two time points commented that they valued the diversity in the institution and felt they were valued and respected.
- Race issues attributed to societal factors, unconscious bias and financial restrictions.
- There were also more comments about the underrepresentation of BME staff at senior levels and that the institution needed to be actively engaged in equality issues related to race.

Interviews with 2 staff in equality and diversity positions

- A welcoming attitude in general with report of a distinct lack of support when applying for promotion
- Other incidents were described, including BME staff being seen as too aggressive when they ask for a pay rise and BME staff being encouraged to pursue career progression then subsequently being unsuccessful
- Lack of BME staff at Exec level
Recommendations for the DL Programme

- Individual differences
- Separate cohorts and sub-cohorts
- Expand to include religious identities and how they intersect with ethnic identities
- Follow up sessions for participants and sponsors
- Clarity and modification of roles/responsibilities of sponsors/sponsorship
- Action learning sets based on ambition and interest not geographical location; allowing for virtual meetings
- Additional reflective session on individual identities and how they relate to the programme
Recommendations for Institutions and UK HE Sector

- Address unconscious bias and discrimination
- Fair promotion and recruitment to improve the BME staff pipeline
- Better representation on decision making bodies
- Ensure engagement in equality issues relating to race across HEIs
- Ensure work on equality issues related to race is promoted to demonstrate a commitment to staff
Study Limitations

- Small sample size
- 2 Case Studies based in Greater London Area
- Short timeframe of the study

Future Studies

- Further studies to assess the impact of the DL programme on organisational context
- More work on intersectional factors
- Parity of research approach as that utilized in other identity specific leadership programme e.g. AURORA