

A whole school approach towards race equality and anti-racism: what factors can affect this?

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Introduction

I have always had a keen interest, throughout my initial teacher training, towards achieving social justice and the past year's Black Lives Matter movement has shown me that more must be done in education to support Black and Global Majority (BGM) children's education and mental health (appendix 1). Therefore, I decided to explore a proposal focusing on a whole school approach towards race equality and anti-racism. This has involved discussion on why a whole school approach is necessary, the barriers to implementing a whole school approach and how it can be supported.

Why should there be a whole school approach towards race equality and anti-racism?

The minority stress theory proposed by Meyer (2003) suggests that an individual's race and ethnicity may cause unique stressors due to their marginalised position. Unique social stressors can elevate risk of negative mental health outcomes for

BGM children due to increased discrimination. Concerns are raised by Basit and Santoro (2011), Demie (2019), Tereshchenko, Bradbury and Archer (2019), Alexander and Shankley (2020) Gillborn et al (2021) that BGM children's educational experiences are under-researched due to a focus in the English education system on White British free school meal children therefore BGM children are not receiving tailored mental health support. A plethora of research from Kohli and Solóranzo (2012), Burton, Pavord and Williams (2014), Wilson (2018), Doharty (2019), Hoskins (2020) and Northouse (2021) explores the educational experiences of some BGM children as they strive to gain equal status and treatment. Research provided by Rhamie, Bhopal and Bhatti (2012) and Pearce and Lewis (2019) suggests that BGM children's educational experiences can heighten levels of anxiety and feelings of exclusion, leading them to internalise racism, lowering their sense of belonging and self-worth.

Findings from Macpherson (1999) confirmed the existence of institutional racism, called for a diverse education in schools and urged efforts to close the attainment gap of BGM children. Despite initial advancements following Macpherson's (1999) report, Warmington et al (2018) and Arday (2020) posit that race equality progress has diminished over time because of a lack of priority to race and racism in education. Further support for the proposal has been gained from the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) which identifies that schools should actively promote race equality. Despite this, Lander (2015) and Chadderton (2020) argue that the progress of this Act has neither been fully supported by the government or effectively implemented in education. It is emphasised by Burton, Pavord and Williams (2014) and Stephens, Glazzard and Stones (2020) that the Equality Act (2010) helps to ensure that BGM children are protected from discrimination. Differing beliefs from Wilson (2018) and Miller, Roofe and García-Carmona (2019) suggest that the Act is an instrument that promotes, but does not guarantee equality for BGM children because the government fails effectively to monitor how schools fulfil obligations to race equality. The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (2021) report identifies that there is no evidence that England is institutionally racist and that there has been success in removing racial barriers in education. Contrary to this, CRED (2021), Gillborn et al (2021) and the Runnymede Trust (2021) argue that the

report's conclusion denies the lived experiences of some BGM children because it mostly utilised evidence from high achieving ethnic groups.

Race and racism are issues that confront all stakeholders in schools on a daily basis but have declined in salience (Warmington et al, 2018, Tembo, 2020 and Miller, 2021). Research from Lander (2011), Modica (2015), Joseph-Sailsbury (2020) and Arday (2020) raise concerns that some staff in schools are inadequately prepared and under skilled to deal with race issues and to properly support BGM children. Some staff utilise culturally insensitive pedagogies and this can result in BGM children suffering racial microaggressions, such as a child's name being deliberately mispronounced or ridiculed (Sant, 2020 and Patel, 2020) This can devalue BGM children's cultural heritage and exacerbate their anxieties (Kohli and Solóranzo, 2012 and Tereshchenko, Bradbury and Archer, 2019).

In 2011, the proportion of BGM in all schools was 24.3% (DfE, 2011) but by 2020 (DfE, 2020a) had increased to 33.9% in primary and 32.3% in secondary schools. Despite this growth of BGM children, Lander (2015), Burns (2019), Alexander and Shankley (2020) and Joseph-Sailsbury (2020) believe little progress has been made in diversifying the narrow national curriculum (DfE, 2014a) which does not reflect the diversity of contemporary society and ignores the achievements and histories of BGM individuals. Additionally, Doharty (2019) and Arday (2020) maintain that the curriculum is dominated by the majority ethnic group. They cite that because only 8.7% of teachers are BGM (DfE, 2020b), that teachers from the majority ethnic group heavily control the narrative and knowledge that is prioritised and taught to children. The disconnection between what BGM children are taught in schools and their lived experiences can directly impact their mental health because they may experience alienation, a lack of belonging and feel pathologised (Harris and Reynolds, 2014; Demie, 2019; Tereshchenko, Bradbury and Archer, 2019 and Patel, 2020).

What are the barriers to a whole school approach towards race equality and anti-racism?

The pressure that staff in schools encounter is a key barrier. Leaders are subject to numerous direct and indirect influences contributing to diverse barriers (Bush, 2019

and Northouse, 2021). Basit and Santoro (2011), Rosenberg and Mosca (2011), Pearce and Lewis (2019) and Henry and Moogan (2020) propose that staff duties, increased workload and multifaceted roles of school staff may impact time spent on a whole school approach towards race equality and anti-racism. Some schools focus exclusively on issues relating to their Ofsted report and achieving strong academic performance which can reduce efforts to support race equality (Bush, 2019; Chadderton, 2020; Hoskins, 2020 and Joseph-Sailsbury, 2020). Additionally, the national curriculum (DfE, 2014a) is considered by Harris and Reynolds (2014), Warmington et al (2018) and Arday (2020) to be politically divisive because it lacks opportunities to focus on critical understandings of race and racism.

Negative attitudes held by staff in schools towards race equality can have a detrimental impact on the attitudes, experiences and outcomes of all children (Harris and Reynolds, 2014, Stanley, 2017 and Patel, 2020). It has been posited by Modica (2015), Diem, Carpenter and Lewis-Durham (2019) and Joseph-Sailsbury (2020) that some educators adopt a colourblind approach to race, which is considered a powerful political tool to address racism but denies the inequalities and experiences of BGM children and maintains existing privileges. Subsequently, this reduces children's skills to discuss race sensitively and can increase racism (Wilson, 2018 and Tembo, 2020). Different understandings of social justice, low ethnic diversity in the school population and ingrained ethnocentric practices can undermine race equality efforts (Demie, 2019; Doharty, 2019; Alexander and Shankley, 2020; Arday, 2020 and Sant, 2020). Findings from Heaton (2018), Burns (2019), Tereshchenko, Bradbury and Archer (2019) and Chadderton (2020) suggest that children's beliefs about race equality and anti-racism can be shaped by their social interactions, world events such as terrorist attacks, the decision for Britain to leave the European Union and negative media attention leading to increased incidents of race hatred. Since 2014 schools have legally had to promote and not undermine the fundamental British values (DfE, 2014b). These values have been suggested by Crozier (2015) and Miller, Rooft and García-Carmona (2019) to exemplify disrespect and exclude BGM individuals and demonstrate superiority of Britain. Additionally, Lander (2015) and Warmington et al (2018) believe that limited training opportunities on fundamental British values (DfE, 2014b) mean that the insidious racialising implications are often unchallenged.

Schooling policies and practices have contributed to a neglect of cultural difference and have a damaging impact on BGM children's mental health, therefore Diem, Carpenter and Lewis-Durham (2019), Pearce and Lewis (2019), Tereshchenko, Bradbury and Archer (2019) and Miller (2021) note that greater training should be provided. Without this staff anxieties will remain high because they lack the knowledge to support race equality fully (Diem, Carpenter and Lewis-Durham 2019; Pearce and Lewis, 2019; Tereshchenko, Bradbury and Archer, 2019 and Miller, 2021). It is argued by Lander (2015) and Joseph-Sailsbury (2020) that there is a lack of institutional encouragement to develop racially literate staff due to the removal of race, ethnicity, racism and cultural diversity in the Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2013).

How can a whole school approach towards race equality and anti-racism be supported?

Courageous leadership is imperative because it encourages all stakeholders' commitment to a whole school approach towards race equality and anti-racism (Jambawo, 2018; Henry and Moogan, 2020 and Northouse, 2021). Just over forty-three percent of children in England achieved a strong pass (grade 5 or above) in English and mathematics GCSE in the 2018 to 2019 school year (DfE, 2020c) but, data shows that Black children's attainment is 37.8% and Black Caribbean children's achievement is 26.5%. The reasons for this underachievement of some BGM children are multifaceted but Lander (2011), Kohli and Solóranzo (2012), Rhamie, Bhopal and Bhatti (2012), Burns (2019) and Sant (2020) suggest that culturally relevant pedagogies and enriching learning experiences can increase BGM children's identity, sense of belonging, confidence and subsequently their educational attainment. An anti-racist education which actively tackles injustices, challenges stereotypes and focuses on critically engaging universal values can also increase positive attitudes towards acceptance and understanding (Crozier, 2015; Heaton, 2018 and Hoskins, 2020). Furthermore, BGM children can feel empowered by visible, positive and influential role models at all levels in schools because this can support their academic performance and aspirations (Harris and Reynolds, 2014; Patel, 2020; Tembo, 2020 and Arday, 2020). However, Joseph-Sailsbury (2020) and Miller (2021) acknowledge that the presence of BGM educators and role

models alone is not a panacea to promoting anti-racism and improving the educational experiences and mental health of BGM children particularly because this notion can increase the workload of BGM staff. BGM educators, who do not reinforce negative stereotypes, can promote a diverse curriculum and are well-positioned to establish positive relationships with BGM children by assisting them in preparation for life in a multicultural society in a manner that white educators cannot, despite their intentions and dedication to race equality and anti-racism (Burton, Pavord and Williams, 2014; Demie, 2019 and Alexander and Shankley, 2020).

Training opportunities should be provided to staff that enable them to become racially literate, evaluate the effects of racism on BGM children and how to effectively respond to racism (Lander, 2011, Modica, 2015, Joseph-Sailsbury, 2020 and Miller, 2021). It is suggested by Wilson (2018) and Arday (2020) that effective and engaging training should involve evidence to encourage reflection and awareness of systemic injustices. An example could be to utilise data from the Department for Education (2020d) which identifies that the fixed period exclusion rate for most ethnic groups is increasing. Research from Chadderton (2020), Hoskins (2020) and Tembo (2020) suggests that some BGM children are overrepresented in school exclusions because of the negative perceptions of them as challenging and underachievers. Since the implementation of the Education Act (2011) schools have had greater freedom on exclusion decisions and this has disproportionately affected BGM children (Tereshchenko, Bradbury and Archer, 2019 and Chadderton, 2020). This information could be shared with staff and could stimulate discussion, acknowledgment of perspectives and empower staff to reflect on their practice. Additional training opportunities should assist staff in forming effective partnerships with BGM children's parents and carers enabling their child's education to flourish (Basit and Santoro, 2011; Demie, 2019; Pearce and Lewis, 2019 and Patel, 2020).

Staff should also be involved in training to ensure that all school policies, including policies that appear to be race-neutral such as uniform and hair, are clear in promoting race equality and anti-racism so that BGM children are not systematically disadvantaged (Miller, Rooft and García-Carmona, 2019 and Chadderton, 2020). These policies should celebrate BGM children's racial identities in a manner that is not tokenistic (Burns, 2019, Arday, 2020). Tokenistic practices that have been

employed by some schools include: Africa week, themed cultural days and only covering slavery, civil rights and Martin Luther King in Black History Month (Kohli and Solóranzo, 2012; Doharty, 2019 and Tembo, 2020). It is integral that learning opportunities focused on race and diversity are not relegated to short time periods or particular occasions but instead they must be permeated throughout the curriculum and the entire academic school year in a meaningful manner by practical experiences, for instance attending exchange visits and linking events between schools (Demie, 2019; Patel, 2020 and Sant, 2020). Scholars (Harris and Reynolds, 2014; Joseph-Sailsbury, 2020 and Gillborn et al, 2021) believe that educators should be more self-aware of their practices and positively reflect the individuality of every ethnic diverse community enabling representation of all children's cultural heritages and prevention of tokenistic practices which can reinforce negative, racist stereotypes.

Staff may feel unconfident with methods to promote race equality however training will help all staff feel more assured in their abilities to support anti-racism practice. Clear school policies can also offer guidance to staff and children about challenging racism enabling them to feel emboldened (Hoskins, 2020 and Joseph-Sailsbury, 2020). Utilisation of Leeds Beckett University's (2020) Anti-Racist School Award can aid the development of a positive whole school culture which supports race equality. Additionally, assistance from charities including the Anthony Walker Foundation (2021) and the Stephen Lawrence Day Foundation (2021) could enable a school's approach towards race equality and anti-racism to be successful.

What should educators remember when supporting race equality and anti-racism?

All staff must demonstrate an unwavering commitment to eliminating racial injustice for BGM children (Tereshchenko, Bradbury and Archer, 2019, Demie, 2019 and Henry and Moogan, 2020). This is because staff can play a vital role in providing BGM children with empowering and relevant learning experiences that enable their academic achievement to thrive, reduce exclusions and ameliorate poor mental health (Rhamie, Bhopal and Bhatti, 2012; Hoskins, 2020; Sant, 2020 and Miller, 2021). It is paramount that the whole school approach towards race equality and

anti-racism prepares children for life in a multicultural society where they have a strong sense of identity and belonging (Lander, 2015, Joseph-Sailsbury, 2020 and Arday, 2020).

Appendix 1 – The term Black and Global Majority

Black and Global Majority is utilised instead of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) because it is considered (Tereshchenko, Bradbury and Archer, 2019 and Campbell-Stephens, 2021) a problematic term and has the effect of homogenising diverse communities therefore providing limited consideration to authentic, diverse identities, cultures and backgrounds. Additionally, the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (2021) and Gillborn et al (2021) believe BAME is a conveniently used term that can pathologise and demean some individuals by implying disadvantage. Furthermore, the term BAME is not an identity which individuals have chosen themselves and does not recognise that African, Asian and all non-white individuals are the global majority (Alexander and Shankley, 2020 and CRED, 2021).

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