

Mainstreaming issues of race and the curriculum in Further and Higher Education - Jim Thakoordin

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1. Introduction

Reforms to the further and higher education sectors reflect the wider reform agenda of providing services that are built around user needs and aspirations; social inclusion and empowerment of all learners and providers. *DfES, Success for All, The Strategy for Lifelong Learning, The Future of Higher Education* and The Race Relations Amendment Act set out plans for reforming post-16 and higher education. A clearer focus on outcomes, on improving access, on increasing participation in learning, addressing skills needs and supporting a diverse workforce in education which reflect at all levels the make-up of the local population are central to successful implementation of all these strategies.

Promoting equal access to learning and employment opportunities and resources, raising standards in learning, teaching, research, encouraging the development and promotion of equal opportunities and race equality through consultation, good policies and practices, leadership and management development and structures also underpin the strategies.

If X College is to maintain and build on Beacon Status and acknowledged excellence which followed the last inspection by ALI it must continue to focus on promoting equality, quality and good management practice in delivering quality education and other services which address the diverse needs of all students, learners, staff and employers. The College will need to continue to develop, monitor, evaluate and review all aspects of planning and delivery of services. Equality should be at the heart of all that the College does.

This document is intended to help X College managers to effectively meet the challenges ahead through mainstreaming equality and diversity within all areas of our work. It picks up some of the main equality challenges facing the College and build on the advice set out in the *Race Relations Act; Statutory Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality; Disability Discrimination Act 1995, Sex Discrimination Act 1975; Regulation on Religion and Belief and Regulation on Sexual Orientation*. It identifies how the equality duty can help to support College managers in focusing on equality outcomes and it provides advice on the kind of targets that could be set so as to constantly monitor and improve performance; address issues around under achievement by certain groups; tackle under and/or over representation of groups of students and staff in certain delivery areas, and improve additional support for learners and staff through positive measures. The delivery on equality will be a litmus test against which the College's wider performance can be measured.

2. Key facts on inequality

- Minority ethnic students represent around 35 % of the student population whilst only around 8 % of staff are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Minority ethnic staff are mainly represented in basic teaching and business support grades, part-time, sessional and temporary work within the college;
- Minority ethnic and staff with disabilities are under-represented in teaching posts. The levels of under-representation are greater in senior and management positions;
- There is no plan to redress the minority ethnic imbalances within the college's workforce especially within management grades and permanent posts;

- The majority of minority ethnic students, those with disabilities and a number of women generally have to achieve higher qualifications and perform better than the rest of their peers in order to secure employment leading to good career development;
- Minority ethnic students are less likely than white students to be studying certain types of subject, e.g. Hotel and Catering, Art Design and Media, Engineering and Construction;
- As groups, minority ethnic students and learners with disabilities have lower levels of achievement than white students in the secondary education and post-16 sector. However certain groups such as Chinese and Indians make more progress than their white peers once they are in the sector;
- There are differences between ethnic groups in the levels and patterns of satisfaction with post-16 learning provision;
- In the post-16 sector generally, adults from some minority ethnic groups, most notably Pakistani (55%) and Bangladeshi (45%), are much less likely than other adults (68%) to participate in some form of learning;
- There is no systematic collection analysis and reporting of data by the College to assess performance, achievement, progression and retention of minority ethnic students and staff;
- There is no planned strategy beyond the half day training sessions available to all staff on equal opportunities to train and develop managers to acknowledge, understand, develop their personal skills and commitment necessary to implement the College's equality strategy;
- There is no strategy to link management responsibilities with organisational performance in the implementation of race equality and diversity strategies; and
- A significant number of staff in FE say that they have experienced racism, racial harassment and marginalisation at some time in their career.

The College failed to address substantially most of the tasks listed above as well as consulting with the local community and engaging all stakeholders in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Race Equality Policy.

3. The Race Equality Duty as a lever for change

The amended Race Relations Act 1976 places a general duty on further and higher education institutions to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between different racial groups. Further and higher education institutions also have specific duties to:

- Prepare (before 31st May 2002) and maintain a written Race Equality Policy. The College has such a policy in place. The planned review of the Race Equality Scheme in 2003 did not take place as originally envisaged;
- Assess the impact of policies on students and staff by racial group;
- Monitor the admission and progression of students and the recruitment and career development of staff by racial group;
- Include in its Race Equality Policy arrangements for publishing the policy and the results of monitoring and assessments; and
- Where practicable, to publish annually the results of monitoring.

This duty has recently been extended to include sex and disability

The specific duties are intended to help institutions meet their general duty. Further and higher education institutions therefore need to take action to address any discrimination or inequalities that are identified as a result of implementing the specific duties.

There is a clear link between equality and institution performance. Successful promotion of equality will have wider benefits and this may include:

- Attracting a wide range of applicants from various ethnic backgrounds;
- Enabling all students and staff to contribute fully to the institution and benefit fully from what the College has to offer;
- Greater diversity and skills within the workforce;
- Enabling all students and staff to achieve to their full potential;
- Increasing the confidence of all students and staff in the institution;
- Making planning and decision making more open, transparent and effective;
- Increasing retention of students and staff;
- Widening participation, community involvement and promoting social inclusion and community and college cohesion;
- Having the information to make more informed decisions;
- Having a workforce that is representative of the populations from which posts are filled;
- Enhancing the institution's ability to attract, retain and develop the most able staff;
- The institution being able to draw upon the diverse range of experiences, skills and expertise within the local community;
- Reducing harassment and bullying, racist, sexist and homophobic incidents, complaints, disciplinary and grievance procedures; and
- Avoiding claims of unlawful racial discrimination.

The benefits of the duty are clear, and to some extent the College has established a measure of good practice, but there is still a long way to go. Examples of good and developing practice on race is available from the CRE web-site, www.cre.gov.uk .

4. From policies to practices

The College needs to think strategically about the equality outcomes that it wants to achieve so that it can set appropriate equality objectives and targets. Wherever possible, equality objectives and targets should draw from and build into existing planning processes. These objectives and targets will be influenced by local and national requirements and priorities such as that set by government and the local LSC, as well as local circumstances and priorities identified by employers, the community and the institution.

To effectively mainstream equality, the College needs to set targets against recognised benchmarks and to monitor, evaluate and review progress at regular intervals. In some instances this will involve setting race specific targets to close any equality gaps (e.g. in admissions, retention rates, staff promotion). In other instances it will involve measuring the

equality impact of existing activities (e.g. strategies to improve the reporting and effective handling of incidents relating to race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, culture and age in relation to harassment, bullying and complaints.) Different targets will require different blends of qualitative and quantitative information.

Some equality objectives may be achievable in the short term. Other objectives may take longer to achieve. For example, it might take 5 years to achieve a long-term objective such

as a workforce reflecting the ethnic make-up of the local community. In such instances it may be appropriate to set targets with phased milestones and to assess progress towards achieving this objective by the setting of year on year targets.

The College should aim to measure outcomes as well as inputs and to identify added value. It should identify the actual changes arising from action as well as the resources employed.

Effective promotion of equality depends on gaining greater levels of trust and confidence between all stakeholders. Consulting on and communicating progress against targets and outcomes is therefore critical in the continual development of the College and maintenance of beacon status.

Management as well as members of the Incorporation should share the equality vision and demonstrate commitment and ownership to equality by engaging in regular:

- Consultation with stakeholders
- Policy formulation and development
- Policy monitoring, review, analysis and implementation
- Target setting and action planning
- Review of the level of resources required to support equality and diversity
- Review of the structures, practices and arrangements to promote equality and diversity
- Assessment of the level of skills, experience, competence, information and support necessary to meet equality targets

5. Curriculum planning, design and delivery

Key questions for managers:

- Are data on ethnicity, culture, religion and local social and economic factors taken into consideration when planning the curriculum?
- Does the College consult with the local community and stakeholders in the planning and delivery of the curriculum?
- Are admissions, performance, assessment, and progression arrangements free from any bias in favour or against any group of students?
- Has the College developed a curriculum plan that meets the needs of the whole community?
- Are learning programmes, materials, timetables, support and facilities free from any arrangements which may disadvantage certain groups?
- Do the curriculum arrangements support the College's equality and diversity strategies?

6. Key performance outcomes:

Admissions

The College's student population reflects the ethnic backgrounds of the communities that it serves and the areas from which students are drawn. However there are disproportionate differences in the ethnic and gender make-up of students on certain courses and in certain departments.

Evidence is available to support this situation and the College may wish to address the following:

- In order to tackle issues around under/over representation it is necessary to monitor applications, initial offers, acceptances, confirmation of offers and enrolments as a whole and by subject and department. Admissions criteria should be explicit and transparent so that judgements can be made about how the criteria affects students from different ethnic and gender backgrounds;
- It may be appropriate to establish the reasons why students from some ethnic groups and gender are under-represented within, or do not apply to, the College. This could involve consulting young people from the ethnic groups and gender concerned, including students at the College, consulting schools, and consulting relevant minority ethnic and community groups;
- Depending on the results of the assessment and consultation, the College may need to revise its admissions policy and/or any related procedures and practice;
- The College will need to set targets and use these to measure performance and progress in increasing representation and closing gaps between under/over represented groups;
- Positive guidance should be available before and on entry to the College to ensure that they are included on the appropriate course and that any additional support is acknowledged and readily available on entry;
- It may be appropriate to communicate the policy and related action through newsletters to staff and students, the intranet, web-site, and reports to student and staff groups. It may also be appropriate to use media that are aimed at schools or at community groups; and
- Staff participating in marketing the College and admissions should have received training in cultural, religious and community awareness as well as some basic understanding of the various equality legislation.

Retention

The College should systematically monitor and analyse the retention rates for students and staff based on ethnicity, gender, disability, age in relation to delivery areas and departments. The following suggestions may be useful in addressing any concerns:

- This will require monitoring the numbers of students dropping out of courses and monitoring reasons for leaving by ethnicity, age and gender. This should be done on a College wide basis, by department and, where appropriate, by subject. It may also be appropriate to gather qualitative data on reasons for leaving, e.g. sending a questionnaire to all students who leave courses early, or periodically doing follow up surveys of students who have left courses early;
- The College may need to monitor particular services aimed at supporting students. It will be appropriate to gather information on levels of satisfaction with, and the appropriateness of the service(s) provided. It may also be appropriate to use data collected by these services to identify why students leave;
- Once the main reasons for students 'dropping out' have been identified, the College may need to revise specific policies and practices. It may also be appropriate to develop specific strategies to improve retention rates;
- The College should set year on year targets and use these to measure performance in improving rates of retention and closing gaps between under/over represented groups;
- The College should ensure that students and staff know about the policies and practices and understand what these mean for them. It may be appropriate to publish information on the intranet, web-site, in College newsletters, and to target information at particular services and user groups.

Achievement

Levels of achievement are high for some students from ethnic backgrounds and students with disabilities but a sizeable proportion of students continue to under-perform. For many minority ethnic groups they have under-achieved during most, if not all of their involvement in secondary education and this continues into post 16 education. Many students 14-16 entering the post 16 sector early are also likely to have additional learning needs which will need urgent attention if they are to progress to levels 3 and beyond.

The following suggestions may help in addressing some of the issues around achievements:

- The College will need to assess student performance and progress, the assessment process and methods of assessment. It may be appropriate to benchmark attainment and progress against entry qualifications;
- The College will need to assess policies to see whether they affect students from different ethnic and gender backgrounds in different ways. It will be appropriate to assess policies that deal with student assessment, student support and the curriculum. It may be appropriate to consult students and groups representing the interests of particular groups of students to identify barriers, and to highlight particular issues and needs. It may be appropriate to hold focus groups, undertake surveys, follow up complaints, etc.;
- Depending on the results of consultations and assessments, the College may need to revise particular policies and procedures. It may be appropriate to establish programmes to address the barriers faced by particular groups of students;
- Targets may need to be set to close gaps in levels of attainment and rates of progress. Targets may also need to be set for measuring the effectiveness and impact of strategies for supporting and developing particular groups of students;
- It will be appropriate to provide information on the results of monitoring to the governing body and to the Standards & Quality Committee which deals with academic and related matters; and
- It may be appropriate to provide staff and students with details on action that is being taken to address specific issues, along with any progress that is being made. Staff may also need information and training on complying with changes to policy.

Student experience

The College will need to monitor and address issues concerning student's learning, support, achievements, retention, progression, complaints and satisfaction. The design, delivery, monitoring and management of the curriculum should be carefully considered in order to avoid any hidden barriers, inappropriate material, teaching methods and style.

The following may assist in addressing some of the issues mentioned above:

- The College will need to monitor all forms of complaint, including complaints of racial harassment, by ethnicity. The institution will need to consult students to identify the full range of issues and needs. It may be appropriate to monitor the specific experiences of overseas students, including their experiences in accessing and using various services. It may also be appropriate to monitor experiences in relation to teaching, the curriculum, assessment, academic support, student support services, facilities and resources and student accommodation. It may be appropriate to undertake satisfaction surveys, hold focus group meetings, assess complaints, etc;

- The College will need to assess whether its policies affect students from different ethnic and gender groups in different ways and, if so, whether the differences are positive or negative. Depending on the results of monitoring and consultation, it may be appropriate to revise specific policies, procedures and practices. It may be appropriate to adapt existing services or develop new services to address to meet particular needs;
- The College will need to set targets and measure its performance and progress in reducing complaints, in removing differences in levels of satisfaction between different groups, and in meeting the specific needs of particular groups of students; and
- The College should keep staff and students, particularly those students most affected by the issues, informed of the action they are taking to address the issues that have been highlighted.

7. Improvements in good relations

The College should implement, monitor and review effective policies and strategies for challenging and dealing with inequality, discrimination, lack of opportunities and resources, and for actively promoting good relations between students and staff. The College should have an active and positive relationship with local minority ethnic and community groups and minority ethnic and community groups should contribute to the life and development of the College. Positive relationships should be fostered between all students, staff and the local community from different ethnic, social, cultural, religious and age backgrounds, and the following actions be promoted by the College:

- Racism, sexism and homophobic incidents including harassment and bullying should be monitored and the number of incidents reported;
- The College should understand the relationship between reported incidents and actual incidents and examines the relationships and interaction between groups of students which may identify a measure of segregation, isolation or marginalisation;
- The College must promote awareness amongst staff and students of policies for dealing with racism, discrimination, diversity and equality;
- It is important to monitor and address the extent to which staff and students feel equipped to challenge and deal with racist, sexist, homophobic and other incidents;
- The College must take appropriate action to the extent to which staff and students feel that incidents of racism are dealt with appropriately and sensitively with issues relating to discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping;
- Victims of discrimination and harassment should feel that they are supported and protected by the College;
- The College should be mindful of the potential of racist groups to disrupt the learning and working environment and should introduce guidelines and train staff to challenge such activities and to minimise disagreements within the College;
- Promoting good relations between groups of students, and staff and students should be a high priority for the College and every member of staff, especially managers, should be trained and supported to implement the equality and diversity strategy throughout the learning and working environment;
- It will be appropriate to make use of monitoring data on racist incidents and also to take appropriate measures to communicate with students and staff and find out about their experiences. It may be appropriate to hold focus groups. It will be appropriate to involve and liaise with groups that represent the interests of Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff and students;

- The College must develop relations with and involvement of local minority ethnic communities: It will be appropriate to assess how the College contributes to local community relations and to assess how local minority ethnic communities are involved in the life of the College;
- It will also be appropriate to identify the range and quality of internal and external work to promote good race relations;
- The College should monitor representation on the governing body by ethnicity, gender and disability as well as representation on various committees and groups within the institution;
- The College should also ethnically monitor the use of facilities and services that are available to the public. It will be appropriate to monitor responses to consultations in order to make judgements about the level and quality of involvement of minority ethnic community and disadvantaged groups;
- It may be appropriate to use satisfaction surveys, to consider undertaking community based surveys which target specific groups, and to monitor specific events;
- The College should set short and long term targets and use these to measure performance in improving levels of reporting of and reducing incidents associated with discrimination and prejudice; improving levels of satisfaction and removing any differences in levels between ethnic, gender, religious and cultural groups, and improving rates of representation and involvement. It is also appropriate to assess the impact of specific strategies; and
- The College needs to communicate the results of consultations and monitoring and critically, the action it is taking to deal with the issues that have been highlighted. It may be appropriate to include information in newsletters, posters and materials that target specific groups.

8. Workforce representation at all levels

The College has a duty to ensure that minority ethnic staff are well represented at all levels throughout the institution and there are no notable differences between ethnic groups. The College also has a specific duty to:

- Monitor the recruitment and development of staff by racial group;
- Monitor each stage of the recruitment process including advertising of vacancies, applications, short-listing, interviews, and selection. The College will need to monitor by type of post, monitor by grade and seniority, monitor by type of contract and full-time/part-time/ fractional status;
- Monitor all aspects of career development and progress including training applications, training undertaken, applications for promotion, and promotions, departures and reasons for leaving;
- Monitor data which may highlight differences between ethnic groups, gender and age including under-representation. The College will need to identify the reasons for these differences and look at how particular policies and procedures address these issues. In addition to using quantitative data, it may be appropriate to collect qualitative data (e.g. through surveys, interviews) to explore specific issues;
- Assess policies to see if they have a positive or negative affect on particular groups. Depending on the findings, the College may need to revise specific policies and procedures, and to target action to address specific issues;
- Measure against year on year targets to close gaps in levels of under-representation, the impact of particular strategies (such as positive action strategies) to improve

representation and the levels of satisfaction with the career and development opportunities open to staff. Measurement is likely to draw on monitoring data, surveys including exit interviews, and consultations;

- Keep staff informed of monitoring and assessment findings, of action being taken and of performance to meet targets. It will be appropriate to provide information to unions and staff representative groups; and
- Identify and implement methods that will reach groups of staff that are not union or staff group members (e.g. newsletters, staff meetings).

9. Employee experiences

The College works towards ensuring that the general level of staff complaints is low for all groups; that there are no noticeable differences between staff from different ethnic backgrounds, and staff from all ethnic groups have high levels of confidence in the College through the following:

- The College should monitor staff experiences by grade and type of post, type of contract, location, department or faculty. It will be appropriate to monitor overall levels of satisfaction, complaints, racist incidents, grievances, disciplinaries, departures and reasons for leaving and to examine the data to see if there are differences between ethnic groups. In addition to collecting and using quantitative data, it will also be appropriate to use qualitative data. This could include satisfaction surveys and exit interviews;
- If differences between ethnic groups are identified then the College will need to establish the reasons for these differences. It may need to revise policies and procedures, provide training and guidance to managers and other staff. The College may also need to develop strategies to deal with particular needs;
- The College should consult staff, including groups that represent staff interests, to identify barriers, issues and needs;
- Performance should be measured against targets to improve employee satisfaction and to address any differences between staff from different ethnic backgrounds; and
- The College should keep staff informed of developments, action and progress. It may be appropriate to do this via the intranet, web-site, through newsletters, information to representative groups, and staff meetings.

10. Procurement

Contractors should not discriminate within their own workforce or in the services that they provide within the College. Contractors should also promote equality and good relations as part of their contractual duties. The following measures may be useful:

- The College should establish systems for ensuring that the equality duty is built into all contractual and procurement arrangements;
- The College will need to monitor all steps of the procurement process from advertising through to selection, and monitor delivery of services, and assess whether policies and procedures relating to procurement present impact differently on different ethnic groups. If they do then the College will need to take action to address under-representation or barriers faced by specific groups. For example, the College may need to consider strategies for increasing the number of minority ethnic businesses that bid to deliver services; and

- It may be appropriate to look at levels of complaints and levels of satisfaction by staff or service users by ethnic group to make judgements about the extent to which a contractor complies with the equality duty.

11. Conclusion

In order to maintain and develop the progress on equality, diversity and cultural awareness in future years the College will need to continue to develop its strategy improve access to learning and employment opportunities for everyone. Equality issues and considerations must transcend all areas of planning, resources allocation, training and development, quality assurance, management and leadership, support for students and staff, curriculum design and delivery, recruitment, development and promotion practices, performance and management reviews, and the overall mission statement of the College. The Local Learning Skills Council, the Inspection body and the DfES will increasingly expect post 16 education institutions to implement the amended Race Relations Act. Managing race equality and diversity will continue to present a challenge for the College and it is important that the Vice Principal for Staffing and Curriculum issues continue to lead in the development, promotion, implementation, monitoring and review of the College's equality and diversity strategy.

12. Acknowledgements

- a) Various documents produced by the CRE
- b) Various documents produced by the Commission for Black Staff in Further Education
- c) Various documents produced by NATFHE

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