

An investigation into BAME university students course experiences, achievement, aspirations and social inequalities

Antonette Hall (URB@N student researcher)

Dr Emel Thomas (Faculty of Health, Education and Society)

For further information about this project please email: emel.thomas@northampton.ac.uk

Background and Literature

Historically, it was claimed that BAME university students continue to experience various magnitudes of disparity in higher education in comparison to their white counterparts (Pilkington, 2013). On average, when compared to BAME students' white students are more likely to leave university with a first-class or upper 2:1 degree (Universities UK and NUS, 2019). The disparity between BAME students and their white counterparts is a matter that is of great importance for HEI. According to Giddens and Suttons, (2017, p.581) education shapes the economy and narrows the gap on social inequalities. Emergent literature themes included: BAME educational achievement and outcomes; BAME experiences and attitudes; and staff actions to reduce inequalities.

Methodology

An interpretivist perspective was taken where mixed methods were applied in one university site. Semi-structured interviews and an online questionnaire was used to collect qualitative data. In total five BAME students were interviewed and then 31 BAME students completed an online questionnaire. Three academic lecturers and two university support staff took part in the semi-structured interviews.

Research Objectives

To critically explore and analyse the views and experiences of BAME university students (from varying socio-economic backgrounds) concerning their studies (degree course) and university support system/ services (such as Learning support, personal tutor etc).

To collect the experiences and attitudes of BAME students (from varying socio-economic backgrounds) in relation to their studies and university support system/services.

To use the findings to highlight future opportunities for engaging with BAME groups within university.

Research Questions

1. How do BAME university students account for inequalities that might influence their attainment?
2. What are BAME university students' aspirations for after they complete their degree programme of study?
3. In what way do university staff seek to motivate and reduce social inequalities amongst BAME students?

Findings

Multiple choice questions	YES	NO
Do you feel motivated by your studies/university work?	19	12
Do you feel you have been discriminated against because of your ethnicity?	16	15
Do you feel you have been discriminated against because of your socio-economic status?	7	24

Student

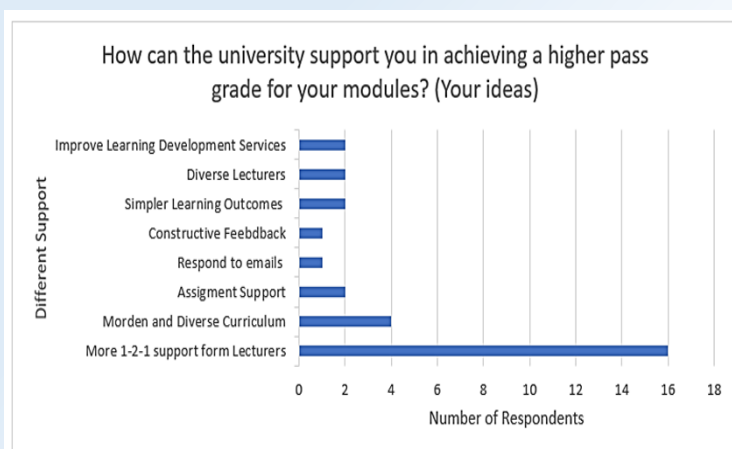
"Yes, 100% I struggle with assignments, but I know I can do better only if I get the same help they give to the white students... I mean more 1-2-1 support would be nice".

Academic Staff

"The institution.... it's not at a student level... I think the inequalities. I don't think it's those individuals, although they are the ones that suffer... But I think the problem is much more deep-seated in the way that universities operates and functions".

Support Staff

"In my department we are all white with very few BAME staff ... we are completely white and that's an issue and we recognised that. The university is somewhat diverse however, they still have a lot of work to do in term of cultural knowledge and diversity".



Recommendations

The findings suggest that universities can better support BAME students by employing more BAME lecturers and support staff, offering tailored support for BAME students from a working-class backgrounds and implementing training to improve cultural awareness and inclusive practices amongst all staff.

References

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