Rethinking Pharmacy Education and Training for Equal Academic Performance for ALL

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Overview

Context

Challenges and barriers faced by BME students and trainees

GPhC study vs. other research/evidence

Good practice / Diversity competence in person-centred care

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Background – Race, Ethnicity and HE

• **Phase 1** – Pre 1990 – ‘state of ignorance’ – colour blind – cultural deficit.

• **Phase 2** – 1990’s – Widening participation – disproportionate numbers of BME students in HE, but largely in New Universities. Emphasis on removing barriers to entry.


Source: Cousin and Singh 2012
Early recognition of the issue

Connor et al. (1996) surveyed students who had graduated from four UK institutions of higher education in 1993: 65% of the White students had obtained good degrees, but only 39% of the non-White students had obtained good degrees.

Subsequently, this pattern was confirmed in datasets based on all UK-domiciled graduates from all UK institutions. For example:

- Connor et al. (2004): 2001–02
- Elias et al. (2005): 1996–97 to 2001–02
- Richardson (2007): 2004–05*
- *Subsets of these data were analysed by Broecke and Nicholls (2007) and Fielding et al. (2008).
- ECU (2012): 2010/11
• ‘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: 10)
“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).
Relevant research/reports [1]


• Cotton, George and Joyner (2103) *The Gender and Ethnicity Attainment Gap Research Project*. Plymouth: Pedagogical Research Institute and Observatory.


• HEFCE (2014) *Differences in Degree Outcome: Key findings* (HEFCE report 2014/03). Bristol: HEFCE

Relevant research/reports [2]


- **Woolf, Potts and McManus [2011]** *Ethnicity and academic performance in UK trained doctors and medical students: systematic review and meta-analysis* BMJ:342:d901
Summary of Findings: Explanatory narratives

- Belated recognition of the issue
- Institutional racism/cultural bias among lecturers; or student deficit models
- Previous educational experience
- Academic preparedness and development
- Different student/staff perspectives
- Problems with the curriculum, academic environment, teaching quality, assessment, and academic support
- Mistrust of the integrity of institutions to deal with complaints fairly
- Greater financial burdens e.g. high rate of fees a source of frustration
- Support of the students’ unions
- Language, communication barriers and difficulties
- Feelings of isolation and alienation
Recommendations

- Increased prominence: Raising the profile of the issue
- Institutional approaches: policies and practices (LTA)
- Engaging students to create a positive sense of belonging
- Resilience and self agency
- Language use and academic literacies
- Student and tutor expectations
  - Clear expectations of achievement for all
  - Challenging low tutor expectations and lack of intellectual challenge
  - Communicating high expectations
- Building competence and confidence
- Promoting inclusive leadership and structural equality
Address all factors to ensure equal performance for ALL
A positive learning environment for a positive learning experience
Plymouth University: Ways in which staff might enhance their teaching to the benefit of all students

- More explicit guidance on autonomous learning;
- Demonstrating what a ‘good assignment’ looks like;
- Help students understand plagiarism;
- Be explicit about the need for criticality and analytical thinking;
- Change teaching methods to ensure that all can participate in classes where;
- Allocating students to groups, rather than allowing them to self select on all occasions;
- Provide learning opportunities which require all students to participate;
- Check students’ understanding ensuring that there is a safe environment for students to ask questions;
- Use more diverse modes of assessment which draw on all skills and enable self-assessment;
- Build up the level of writing in assignments gradually, in order to ‘scaffold’ development of writing abilities in the discipline and signposts students to available resources;
- draw on the experiences and expertise of [international] students where possible by including course content which refers to contexts outside the UK.
Critical Success Factors

- Establish senior leaders and managers as sponsors and role models for inclusion
- Build a group of change agents equipped to embed inclusive leadership
- Position inclusive practices as part of an overall organisational programme of change
- Create structural equality and ‘de–bias’ organisational practices and procedures
Framework for change

- **Vision** – set out why promoting equality for all students and trainees matters to your institution and set achievable targets
- **Lead** – build a group of sponsors from across the institution
- **Develop** – put inclusive capabilities into the core of management and leadership
- **Embed** – make inclusive practices sustainable by embedding in day-to-day process
- **Evaluate** – track impact and ensure accountability at the senior level
Become an Inclusive Leader

- Develop people
  - Value individuals
  - Champion diversity
  - Promote strategic diversity focus

Inclusion is not just what you do but also the spirit behind what you do - how and why you do it. To do it well, inclusion must be embraced enthusiastically rather than approached as something you have to do.
Final Thoughts

• Focusing on categories and student achievement/performance may actually take our attention away from ‘institutional structures and pedagogical practices’

• Reduces the historical struggle of justice and equality (political and pedagogical) to an endless wild goose chase for the ‘absolute truth’

• We can get lost in the numbers game