How can and should University leadership deliver greater inclusion?

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A Thought…

• Universities are often regarded as a site for embracing multiculturalism, inclusivity and diversity; however, historically this has often conflicted with an enduring legacy of racial inequality and discrimination…

(Alexander and Arday, 2015).
The Context...

• The universities minister has criticised UK higher education institutions for their failure to recruit and promote **Black and minority ethnic academics**, after figures showed that no black staff were employed at the most senior levels...

• Chris Skidmore, Higher Education Minister for England, has suggested that the unacceptable number of black academics in the **most senior leadership roles** had fallen from an estimated five in 2017-18 to possibly zero in the last academic year...

Painting a picture…

• According to figures published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA):

• In 2018-19, there were 535 staff employed as ‘managers, directors or senior officials’ across British universities…

• Of the number identified… 475 identified as white, 25 as Asian, Mixed or Other ethnicity, and none as Black. The ethnicity of the remaining 35 was not known…

(HESA, 2019).
Portraying the false narrative…

• The HESA employment statistics are rounded to the nearest five, meaning that one or two Black senior staff would be rounded down to nil…

• HESA’s workforce figures showed that 16% of the total UK academic staff identified as Black…

• This figure (16%) is misleading because this does not disclose the types of contracts these staff hold and what capacity this breaks down within whether professional, senior leadership or academic…

• The majority of precarious contracts awarded in higher education have historically been provided to Black and ethnic minority staff… (Arday, 2018).
The Soundbite… Penetrative Action?!!

In the recent Guardian (2020) article Skidmore stated:

• ‘It is unacceptable that the number of Black academic staff in senior positions has fallen, as this does not represent our British society…’

Further he states:

• ‘Universities need to make more progress and I urge all vice-chancellors to address the barriers that are holding back black and ethnic minority staff from senior positions…’

He concludes by summarising that:

• ‘A true representation of Britain at the top levels of our universities will support the progression of [Black and minority ethnic] staff, as well as improving students’ experience…’
Poultry Numbers…

Figures also demonstrate the paucity of Black Academic Leaders:

• With only 185 out of 11,860 non-academic managerial roles within higher education being filled by Black staff, compared with 10,510 who identified as White, 410 as Asian and 165 from a mixed background…

(HESA, 2019).
The Sad Reality…

• In 2018, the BBC undertook a **Freedom of Information request to all 24 universities in the Russell Group** of highly selective, research-based universities, and 22 responded…

• At these universities, **the data showed average salaries of:**

  • £52,000 for white academics
  • £38,000 for black academics
  • £37,000 for academics from an Arab background

• This means that Black and Arab academics at the **UK's top universities earn an average 26% less than White colleagues...**

• And BAME Female academics fare even worse, **with an ethnicity pay gap on top of the gender pay gap...**
The Importance of Diverse Leadership…

• ‘The types of leadership that students and staff within higher education are exposed to have a significant bearing on their constructions of leadership, particularly when this is not reflective of the values embodying social and cultural pluralism and equity…’

(Adams, 2017; Aguirre and Martinez, 2006; Chun and Evans, 2009; Williams, 2013).
Structural inequality in the Academy...

• While university institutions concern themselves with developing **tokenistic equality and diversity widening participation interventions**...

• The spiral of inequality which pervades continues to disadvantage potential BME leaders, **who continue to experience a paucity of leadership opportunities available to them**...

(Miller, 2018; Mirza, 2017; Rollock, 2016).
Capturing the lived experience...

• It has been very difficult. . . you actually become paranoid because you realize that everything you do is unfairly scrutinized and your authority is constantly undermined by people around you...

• This becomes so disheartening, particularly in a so-called position of leadership... Higher education is racist, and the type of racism it uses is so insidious and intelligent... The sophistication of racism in the sector now makes it harder to quantify to someone. . . in particular White people who can sometimes trivialize racism. It sometimes benefits Whites for there to continue to be a lack of BME leaders within the sector...

(Female, Black, University Senior Leader).
Recommendations…

• Strategic agency as well as policy-driven intervention is required if BME academics are to gain access and opportunity to senior leadership hierarchies (Shepherd, 2017).

• University diversity agendas and interventions must endeavour to change organizational cultures which exclude BME academics from leadership hierarchies.

• Support mechanisms for BME academics wishing to pursue leadership trajectories must be focused on developing mentoring interventions situated within formal and informal capacities at institutional and departmental levels.

• This type of mentoring must have targeted focus on equipping BME academics with the necessary tools to navigate senior leadership.
Recommendations...

• For better representation to be achieved, particularly at senior leadership levels, affirmative action is required which guarantees a set quota of BME applicants proceeding to shortlisting to ensure that applicants are being selected from a diverse applicant pool.

• For this process to be effective, universities must ensure that BME academics are involved in selection and recruitment processes. It is essential for universities to actively disrupt cycles of unconscious bias that reinforce cloning and perpetuating unequal representation (Gronn and Lacey, 2006).

• Targeted programmes must provide BME applicants with access to relevant training, which focuses on developing leadership capabilities, extending academic networks, and engaging in communities of practice with other BME senior leaders within the Academy.
Concluding Thought...

• ‘Are you gonna try to make this work... Or spend your days down in the dirt... You see things can change... Yes and walls can come tumbling down...’

(The Style Council, Paul Weller).