Black at Higher Education

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Abstract   This is an exploratory paper, drawing on the author's experiences as well as those of three other black lecturers in Higher Education (HE). Three interviews were carried out, asking the same five questions around themes of concern to the author. These are about the learning and teaching approaches used by these lecturers; their experiences of racism in HE; the professional role that they feel they play in HE; their strategies for the empowerment of black students and finally the meaning of academic 'success' from their perspective. The individual narratives that emerge are explored and commonalities between them and with the author's own experiences and hopes are identified.It is the desire of this work to add to the scholarship on Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Critical Pedagogy and to emphasise the need for more counter-hegemonic narratives from the 'black' experience in HE. This is explored through the voices of these academics as they recount their strategies for a more equitable student experience in the classroom, on modules and on curricula, based on their lived experience and shared history of racism.

Keywords   Black, students, racism, lecturer, HE, white

1. Introduction

It might be argued that the common mainstream view in academia these days is that we are ethically sound, civilised and humane. Therefore, racism based on the colour of the skin is believed to be something of the past. Much seminal work [1-4] has advanced academic thinking about issues of identity linked to race, ethnicity, gender and class and it can be re-assuring to think that we have now emerged better balanced and more equal as a society today. Why was it then that I still found myself experiencing instances of inequality of treatment as a black lecturer in HE?Some of these were very subtle ones, of the kind identified by Rollock [5] as 'racial microaggressions'. They are powerful, often daily reminders that racism is still prevalent in the academic community.Others were more institutional, of the kind identified by the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU).

This paper uses the phrase 'Black at Higher Education' for two main reasons.The first one being that the 'at' in the phrase reinforces the commitment and attachment that I and my black colleagues have for HE.The second reason is to link with anti-racist work across the Atlantic and was inspired by the films 'Black at Yale' and 'Still Black, at Yale'.The films powerfully show how the experiences of racism by Yale black students in 1974 (captured by the student film maker Warrington Hudlin) had not necessarily shifted thirty years on in 2004 [6], when black students at this Ivy League university still felt that they were being considered 'suspicious' on campus by white staff and students, among other negative race-related experiences.

I argue that a cultural shift needs to happen everywhere, particularly in post-1992 English universities where the focus of my research is and where I am currently employed.These are former polytechnics and colleges of HE converted to universities by the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992. Carter et al. [7] had previously revealed that post-1992 universities may have had more instances of discriminatory practices towards BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) staff than pre-1992 longer established universities.

To begin with, there are not enough BME academics in the UK today and this is quite worrying, considering how multicultural the country is.The ECU [8] has reported that the proportion of UK BME national academics increased from 5.9% in 2003/04 to 7.0% in 2009/10, which compares quite poorly with the estimated figure of 16.7% for the country's BME population in 2009 [9]. In addition, BME staff are even less represented in the higher ranking echelons of academia. The ECU report a figure of 5.7% for BME professors. Goulbourne [10] also challenges the view that institutional racism is a thing of the past in UK universities today, pointing out that there were only 50 black professors (including only 10 black women) out of 14.385 – a situation that has not changed for the past 8 years.This is equivalent to 0.35% of the total professoriate in the UK. Goulbourne's article also argues that black talented students feel discouraged from participating in and achieving at university, as well as eventually wanting to be academics. Mirza [11] also points out how black women who successfully enter HE as students, do not end up entering it as employees. There have also been qualitative findings about BME academics' feelings of invisibility and devaluation [12]. In addition, black graduates seem to be twice as unemployed and with

markedly fewer firsts and 2:1s than their white counterparts, making it even less likely for them to secure graduate employment in the highly competitive world of today. Even when all variables are taken into account, such as prior attainment, disability, gender, deprivation, subject of study, type of higher education institution, term-time accommodation, and age 'there remained an "unexplained difference" between students from ethnic minority communities and white UK and Irish students.' [13]

As a response to these worrying trends and findings from recent literature, this paper reports on small scale exploratory work with three black academics, like myself, reflecting on their subjective experience of race and racism in academia today. It also addresses how these professional colleagues might be engaged in a 'black pedagogy' as separate from (but enhancing of) 'white pedagogy', in a bid to expand on the model of 'culturally relevant pedagogy' of Ladson-Billings' [14]. It is also informed by the critical pedagogy work of Canaan, Amsler and hooks [15-17].Their work, which starts with an exploration of the unequal world in which we live, challenges us to question the status quo, so that a better, more equal world can be hoped for by both student and teacher. Indeed, Canaan's thesis is that 'a better world is not just possible, it is essential.' This hones in the deeper philosophical considerations that I felt I needed to get from my research, as ultimately I am engaged in a 'pedagogy of hope'.

Alongside critical pedagogy, Critical Race Theory (CRT) has also had tremendous impact on raising consciousness on race and racism, such as Gillborn's work [18]. Consequently, 'storying' [19] of the lived experience of a fellow black academic in the same institution as mine and with whom I had reflective interactive dialogue, became a way for me to explore my concerns and see how they matched with what my three colleagues were telling me.

These concerns led to the central question of 'am I still, black at HE?', or 'what is the subjective reality of being 'black at HE'?'

2. Frameworks and literature

In this paper, critical pedagogy and CRT are my theoretical and ethical frameworks. Alongside these frameworks, Critical White Studies and Critical Discourse Analysis, as well as post-colonial literary criticism enhance the central view of there being many worlds in the one we know today and that the HE community is in need of more inclusive epistemologies of knowledge.

In the social science literature on whiteness and anti-racism [20-22], much has been done in the classroom to unpick the discourses with engrained ideologies that white students hide behind, in order to claim that racism has either been eradicated in today's 'multicultural society', or, simply is part of a 'confrontational' other. As Rebollo-Gill et al. state [23:383]:'By the time they reach our classrooms, most white students are invested in a system of white privilege that

provides them with opportunities based on their skin colour, and, most importantly, that denies the reality of this privilege.'

In a previous article, using Popular Education methods of empowerment in the classroom, I argue that white students (especially those who are socially privileged) need to be encouraged to access the black perspective on language and linguistics. There seemed to be a culture of 'deprivation' among the white English Literature students I taught who did not seem to have been introduced to African and Asian literature in English, and who, consequently, did not engage with colonialism and racism from a black perspective. Marx [24] and Ladson-Billings [25] advise that, because most educators are white, the effect of whiteness needs to be explored, particularly in the face of statistics about educational failure among BME children. A more inclusive approach would after all empower all students to become 'change agents', as experienced by Chatterton [26: 37]: 'What I saw in my students was proof of a huge amount of talent and commitment which, if directed towards social justice, can have a real impact on the immediate surrounding world.'

It seems to me that, whilst recognising the presence of racism at a personal and institutional level, as well as the impact of whiteness in education, we owe it to ourselves as educators to pursue a deliberate course of action. Critical pedagogy lets us do that. It is defined by Burbules et al. [27:5] as: 'An effort to work within educational institutions and other media to raise questions about inequalities of power, about the false myths of opportunity and merit for many students and about the way belief systems become internalised to the point where individuals and groups abandon the very aspiration to question or change their lot in life.'

Indeed, for Freire [28], Education is about recognising oppression and how one's place into that system is not about being fatalistically accepting of the status-quo, but equipped to construct a discourse of 'counter hegemonic' practices in schools. Both Freire and Giroux [29] saw schools as being reproduction 'machines' of dominant capitalistic ideologies stripping the individual learner from his or her basic freedom.

CRT gives one the tools for addressing inequalities from the perspective of the 'oppressed'. It looks at the 'lived experience' of black people to uncover the racism at play, ingrained in the way ideology operates in society [30]. Issues surrounding voice and who speaks for whom are central to the research methodologies of CRT academics. For example, the narrative of a young black man leads Ellis [31] to her self-critique of being a white privileged scholar with authority to speak on behalf of others in her narrative about issues of race. Qualitative CRT research, through interviews and narratives, fits well with the quest in this paper for documenting the shared lived experience between my black colleagues and I, as stated by Gillborn [32:126]:'This way of doing research reveals the pathways for common understandings of the lived experience between the

researcher and the researched.'

In addition, this paper is framed by an understanding of the world in its post-colonial, post-modernist phase and as needing to be represented in a fairer way, as a 'one world' with many enlightening worlds within it. The teacher, within this understanding, needs to have a balanced and critical world view. He or she becomes a facilitator of learning that empowers students (black and white) to free themselves from the shackles of inequality, exacerbated by the (structurally constructed) remnants of a colonial and imperialistic past. Indeed, teachers need to give voice to (and speak the voice of) the 'subaltern' in their day to day activities with students. Young [33:160-1] stresses the importance of a more inclusive epistemology of knowledge: 'Said's emphasis on the question of representation has at best been balanced by attention to the reality which that representation missed or excluded: not only the suppressed 'voice of the Other', but also the history of the subaltern, both in terms of the objective experience and history of subaltern or dominated, marginalised groups, and in terms of the subjective experience of the effects of colonialism and domination, an area most searchingly investigated by the founding father of modern colonial critiques, Frantz Fanon.'

Similarly, Spivak [34] argues that the voice of the black minority woman is equally under-represented, whilst Ahmad [35:25] argues that there is no specific 'third world' but 'one world' in which 'we are not each other's civilisational others'. The story of the subaltern, within this understanding, ceases with time from being a marker of the 'other', less equal and less civilised, and becomes our story, all of us, especially those in education. It seems clear to me that there is an even more urgent need for empowering methodologies, like CRT, that give voice to scholarship from the black perspective.

Indeed, this question of 'the suppressed voice' of the 'subaltern' is not unique to literary theory only. It was also systematically raised as an issue for education researchers working on race inequality in HE, as early as the 1980s. In a quest to tackle what they called the 'brown-on-brown research taboo', Reyes et al. [36:306] expressed feelings of being 'tired of reading about ourselves in the social science literature written by non-minorities, we want to speak for ourselves, to define, label, describe and interpret our own condition from the "inside out". We feel strongly about providing a balance to the existing literature and research on Chicanos.'

Reyes et al. had already been concerned with the various 'guises' of racism in HE. Their qualitative interviews led them to a model for covert and overt racism in academia in the US, based on three syndromes: Tokenism, Typecasting and the one-minority-per-pot syndrome. Each syndrome, respectively, implied that academic institutions either regarded black academics as; lacking in academic credentials when hired; more suited to ethnically related fields, or finally, worth demeaning publicly. This is totally in line with some of the findings of the ECU's comprehensive literature review of research on the experiences of BME staff in HE, in both the UK and the US.

When I interviewed Black Lecturer 3 (BL3), he talked about how being a historian was 'suspect' because Asians in the UK tended to study science and technology, or, if not academically-inclined, worked as administrators in London universities. This 'typecasting' syndrome can, in turn, impact negatively on black people's credibility as academics, as reported by the ECU [37:28]: 'Research evidence suggests that BME staff in higher education in the UK feel marginalised and in many ways invisible in UK HEIs.'

If manifestations of racism keep persisting in academia unhindered and unexposed, then 'we will find ourselves a generation from now still 'facing the same "old wolf" in yet another fleecy robe' [see again 36:312 and 38].

3. Research Methodology and Design of the Research

The approach taken for this exploratory piece of research started with my own concerns as a black scholar and translating those into five areas worth reflecting on with like-minded academics in HE today. These concerns stem from my own experience as a black lecturer in HE, as well as dialogues with colleagues, reflections, readings and writings on the topics of race, education and pedagogy. They also come from my own trajectory in an HE system that I entered in 1980, left it for a while to work in the Adult Education sector (between 1994 and 2004) and re-entered it, expecting somehow to not feel 'still, black'. This is why I identify with the 'Black (and still, black) at Yale' films, as well as with the 1980s research by Reyes et al in the US that map well against my own trajectory.

I used purposive sampling and chose three like-minded scholars who have a 'black' perspective on their work in HE, particularly in the classroom. These three academics seemed to me to be 'successful' at their job and committed to working in the system positively, for the sake of their students mostly, but also for their own scholarship. Because I knew two of them very well, I was aware that these academics had a positive outlook and believed that their place was certainly in the post-1992 HE system. In a way, I was interested in finding out what lessons can be gained from black academics, like myself, who have survived and done very well for themselves and for their students within this sector. In addition, apart from being permanently employed in HE, respected by their students and contributing to scholarship and research in their disciplines, their success with students (black and white) struck me as being also akin to what Ladson-Billings found was a key ingredient for her 'culturally relevant pedagogy'- [see again 14:118]: 'My research on successful teachers of African American students allowed me to build the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy where we could see that success in a classroom of African American students rests on three propositions: focus on student learning, development of cultural competence and promotion of socio-political consciousness.'

As it will transpire later in the analysis section, the three academics interviewed were particularly focused on those three propositions quoted above.

Although these three academics are from different non-white ethnicities (Anglo-Indian, African-Caribbean and South Asian), they (and I) call their perspective 'black' in the political sense of it not being a white-only perspective. This is based on their (and my) shared understanding of a post-colonial world and the experience of racism. This socio-political construct of 'Blackness' does not essentialise race, but rather raises consciousness of a UK divided along colour lines, with global echoes, such as in Post-Apartheid South Africa [39]. These lecturers are indeed perceived as visibly non-white and have experienced the impact of colour-based racism in academia. They also have strong feminist and anti-racist perspectives, crucially in their learning and teaching practice. The term 'black' becomes, therefore, an inclusive term based on shared personal experiences of racism and the impact of these on lecturers' perspectives. These perspectives are greatly needed in HE so that they can effectively help develop more critical, inclusive and empowering pedagogies and curricula, for the benefit of all students, black and white. For example, in terms of employability, global consciousness and competency, which are essential graduate attributes for succeeding in today's world [40], can only be enhanced from the knowledge and wisdom of black lecturers, working alongside their white counterparts, on an equal footing.

Incidentally, the term BME was contested by these lecturers when talking about racism as it was felt to be trying to objectify the shared personal experiences of non-white people and lumping them together with minority ethnic white people who have not gone through the dehumanizing experience of colour-based racism. This article, therefore, uses the term BME only when reporting on trends and official statistics that are nevertheless very useful to have in the UK.

In addition to being active and successful at their jobs, they were of different genders (two female and one male), locations (southern and northern England), positions (lecturer, senior lecturer and principal lecturer) and ages (30s, 40s and 50s) in three different post-1992 universities (one with mostly white students and staff and two with large intakes of BME students and some BME staff), in different cities in the UK today (London and two northern cities).

The concerns that I had and that I explored with them were translated into five key interview questions as follows:

(1) Learning and Teaching approaches
(2) Racism in HE (experienced or perceived)
(3) Empowerment of black students
(4) Role as a black lecturer
(5) Success in HE

These questions were introduced to them by email stating the overall research question, as follows:

'I have been concerned for a while about the experiences of successful BME academic staff currently employed in HE. My research question stems from this concern and simply is: What is it like to be black at HE in England? I hope to carry out a small-scale piece of research, conducting a structured interview with three academics who are from a non-white perspective.'

I carried out three completely separate and individual structured interviews with them, exactly along the lines of those five concerns of mine, as I was interested in getting answers to my own questions as well. I stuck to exactly the same questions but, at the same time, allowed for the stories to emerge. This was feasible, as two of them knew me very well and one of them was selected for sharing the same anti-racist and feminist perspectives as the rest of us. These interviews were completely anonymised and the identity of the academics entirely obscured. I also shared the transcripts with them to allow for maximum transparency and accuracy of content. I stressed that what I was interested in was a story and an exploration of commonalities with my own experiences. This was an exploration of the subjective experience of three carefully selected and like-minded academics who may help me find answers to those concerns of mine, or, illuminate for me a way towards theorising further at a later date.

I transcribed the stories that they told me and analysed them, using a mix of thematic and text analysis, counting how often content words of concern occurred in their narratives within the identified themes.

For the sake of the anonymised transcription and analysis of the material produced, I used a code of identification based on the initials of 'black lecturer' (BL) and steered away from giving them pseudonyms. The power of Language is such that names can become subjective labels of identity imposed by the researcher on people that he/she is working with.

In this paper, extracts from the interviews are presented, preceded by a statement, for each of the three lecturers, highlighting the themes emerging from the text analysis of each of the five key questions asked. This way, the relation between narrative and text analysis is made, whereby the narrative extracts support and illustrate the overall concerns expressed in each text.

In foundational Sociolinguistics research, various variables of speech (such as words or sounds) are counted and quantified to report on the trends associated with different types of discourses [41,42]. Labov was also instrumental in introducing the notion of Critical Discourse Analysis, inclusive of minority discourses, to traditional linguistics research, in a quest to prove that less equal varieties of speech or discourses (such as those used by working class and/or African American speakers in his research) were highly structured and had as much validity and complexity as those of the more 'powerful' standard dialects or discourses. In his examination of non-standard speech and narrative structure, Labov introduced the 'change from below' concept. In his work, minority narratives, deemed less equal, and their speech patterns, have the power to change the 'dominant' language. As a sociolinguist at source, I cannot help also but give credibility to the discourse

of those deemed less equal, including my own discourse, in the hope that this might influence mainstream 'hegemonic' HE thinking. Critical Discourse Analysis, in its emphasis on inclusive language interpretation, joins in with CRT in its emphasis on the power of the personal story. It also allows the researcher to begin theorising about likely 'changes from below' that might influence the dominant view.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1 Learning and Teaching (L&T) Approaches

On the question of L&T approaches used, three key themes emerged from the text analysis of the narratives. These were: Own culture, self and own knowledge (BL1); Student-centredness (BL2) and Inclusion (BL3).

BL1 felt that students' learning was dependent on an understanding of their history, via, very often, her own history. She, being the younger and fairly new black lecturer, more than the other two lecturers, focused more on the need to use her personal story as an example in her classes.

'I bring in my culture, my race, books for different cultural and racial perspectives. I use myself as an example. When I use myself as a learning and teaching resource, It's me. If I teach a subject it's about how it was for me as a black youth. Black history, which history? And whose history?'

BL2, the more experienced senior lecturer and in her 40s, was more concerned with making her teaching student-centred, in order to empower all students. She teaches very ethnically diverse students and is more centred around 'their' story, whilst still thinking back at her own negative experiences of education. Parts of her narrative give importance to an affinity with her students which is important, I think, when trying to empower minority students, in a mixed-race class:

'In class I try to be inclusive because I didn't feel I was included or confident enough when I was a student. I'm conscious of who is in my group and of who is silent. I have cultural affinity with the students to bring out the black experience.'

BL3 talked about L&T with a multi-perspective approach embedding ethnicity, class and gender, in a continuum from schools to HE. He, being at a more senior level in a London university, and older, had a more strategic view and, for example, narrated his role in giving birth to a key module that transformed many pupils and students over the years.

'Had a module called 'Britain and the wider world', met interesting people – many cultures and pluralism and many histories, so I got the perspective from Sociology plus my historical content and knowledge This was a flagship module which every history student did for 12 years. Gave multiperspectivity and included gender, social class, cultural diversity and relationships. This was done in schools before it was done in HE and gave synergy between frontline research and HE, via a 2-way intellectual conversation.'

One can see a combined story emerging from the text analysis and the extracts above, with the emphasis that BL1 puts on starting with herself in the 'white' classroom, to BL2, giving voice to all of her 'diverse' students (consciously aware of those who are silent), and, finally, BL3, making links between his own knowledge and that of other perspectives that he embraced and embedded into the curriculum. It is clear that all three academics are concerned about ensuring that their L&T approaches embed the views of their students, as well as their own and of the many (perhaps untold, otherwise) 'histories' that exist around them. Student-centred methods, spanning from using self, to encouraging student potential, to changing the curriculum for full inclusion, are at the heart of the narratives of these academics, who ultimately use their own creative knowledge, supported by the lived experiences that they have had, to build on to the knowledge of their students.

To me the theme of inclusion in HE pedagogy is slightly altered here by including the subjective experience of the lecturer in shaping classroom L&T, modules and the curriculum.

4.2 Racism in HE

On the second question worded 'Have you experienced racism in HE? And how did you cope with it?', the following three themes emerged with three key foci: Defining the racism perceived (BL1); Challenging racism (BL2) and Awareness of exclusion (BL3).

The text analysis of the narrative of BL1 revealed a focus on being a self-aware black academic, including when dealing with other staff. She had experienced some form of racism, as in, for example, when she talked about an incident in a university, other than hers, when she was shown the kitchen, as soon as she asked for the staff room. She talked about how, having survived racism in her life, had given her vigour in re-asserting herself and re-defining the labels in other similar encounters**:**

'My response to a senior manager (as I'm the only black academic there) who said 'you're the only coloured member of staff' (in 2010) was: "Oh that's interesting, I've spoken to my admin. and I know I'm the only black academic". It was just a level of lack of awareness.'

This coping strategy seemed to me to be in line with a dialogue I had with another black colleague who said that, in a mostly white HE institution, we cope by being 'white' most of the time, but also remind others, on occasions such as the one related by BL1, that we are also grounded, at a deeper level, in the 'story' of being black. That story is not just about colour, but is also structurally about history, conceptualisations of power and the expression of all of that through language, so that the word 'black' becomes critical. The label becomes all the more significant in this context.

BL2 narrated with a focus around race and its essentialism, including by other white colleagues. She remembered a key moment in her early life as an academic when she had been put under undue pressure to teach on race-specific modules because of her colour, and, had confronted that issue by these

words, retold in the interview.

'I was expected to teach subjects on Race and Racism. As if we have natural knowledge based on experience. I refused to do it. "Will you do a lecture on Race?" "What makes you think I know more about it? I'll have to read the books you're reading." But that doesn't mean I have expertise in all topics and shouldn't be expected to teach on any race-specific courses just because I'm black.'

This extract links to the 'typecasting' and 'tokenism' of the 1980s research by US scholars Reyes et al. [see 36] and the ECU research by UK scholars. It seems to me that part of the success of BL2 is that she managed to re-define the terms of her expertise in L&T by advancing the thesis that black lecturers can teach other subjects.

The text analysis of BL3's response to this question revealed that he was mostly concerned with the differences between the north and the south of the country in terms of the racism that he experienced - the north being institutional and the south subtle and personal. He told stories about how, even in the ethnically diverse university where he works, white colleagues, for example, seldom invited him for a drink. It is interesting also that he considers his own promotion to Senior Management to be purely accidental – 'Accidentally, I managed to push upwards.' – An extract from his text summarises his perception of racism in HE across regions:

'When I worked in North Yorkshire, it was unusual to have black people in those positions, which was like a step back for me from London.Yes there is racism. In the North it's inhibition through lack of promotion and in the South it's more complex and not just based on ethnicity. In HEIs, people can't show the true colours, so it's about my perception…Even when you have compassionate colleagues and experience a kind of socialist glue, there is something deeper there, a kind of tribalism in many places – cliques. Racism is when you feel excluded – plenty of policies but the cleaners are black and those on the desk are Asian.'

This extract struck a chord with me as I remember working in HE, in the north (in the 1980s) and then in London (in the early 1990s), and, I remember those subtle ways of feeling excluded from day to day activities, even social events, in London. I socialised more with students than I did with my colleagues. One of them made the following remark to me 'you are being very ambitious' (for applying for a basic lectureship) even though he was the one without the PhD, unlike me. However, in the north, I was the only black doctoral student who was given the opportunity to give substitute lectures in sociolinguistics by my (Scottish) supervisor. I remember the outrage that that created in one of his colleagues. Did I also accidentally 'push upwards'?

In the dialogues of these lecturers, there is no doubt that the experience of racism is real. It seems to be embedded and to manifest itself quite openly (until it is sometimes challenged at a personal level). These views fully support Gillborn's analysis that racism is ever present for black people in education.

4.3 Empowerment of Black Students

On the third question worded 'give one example of empowerment of black students from your learning and teaching', two key themes emerged around; Black Britishness and identity (BL1 and BL3 mostly) and Improvement of prospects for black students (all and BL2).

For BL1 the most important concerns were about witnessing the 'dream' of biculturalism and becoming strong whilst different, 'like Obama'. She discussed how she recognises those of her black students who are 'not feeling strong from the pain of the past' and tells them to remember that:

'Martin Luther King had a dream "and so what is your dream now? With Obama, what is the dream you see now? Let's hold hands as we've gone past a stage." The formation of racism is so complex today and hatred is internalised and becomes internalised racism. So instead of harking back to America, look at the strength of being black now or biculturality, black and British with a very different reality of Britain.'

This might be seen as exemplifying Richards' argument [see again 19] that the binary distinction serves the needs of the oppressor and that it is time for all of us to find the 'paradoxical' space that articulates who we are, outside of the power-based conceptualised world of binary distinctions. Like the universal and intelligent 'trickster' in his story, he argues that we need to subvert the perceived reality of there being a world of one (white) and the 'other' (black).

For BL2, the text analysis revealed a strong anti-racist stance and giving black students a positive and different role model. She recounts how one black student said to her 'you don't make me feel insecure' and how being black has made her easier to approach. 'They select me. Equal in my esteem and appreciated in my different anti-racist and feminist voice.' She also states that she wants:

'black students to be better than they are, complete work and so I guide them in reading and curriculum issues. Through engagement to believe in themselves and helping them with academic and personal issues, I try to develop a positive way of looking at themselves.'

This is by no means easy in the university where she teaches and where countless black students take up academic study against the odds, having had poor grades in their prior attainment. Hers is a particularly challenging situation and the rewards she reaps from having turned round many students are constantly at the forefront of her L&T and commitment to equal access. She told the story of having knocked on the council flat door of a black female student who she had not seen in class for a while, after she failed an assignment. After a heart-to-heart dialogue, she managed to get the student back on-course, engaging her and helping her do the work necessary for fulfillment of a good degree.

For BL3, it was more about the contribution of black men and the passing on of the positive experience to children. He particularly, as was seen before, stresses the continuity between school and HE education, having had a strong

school background, before his days in academia. He is particularly noted for his awareness of impact on student teachers who he sees as agents for changing the early years' curriculum and states that:

'there are few black men in Primary Education. One black man I taught said "I teach Britishness and the wider world to my children." He was pleased to be making a contribution in his school.'

This in itself is what BL3 did when he had a career in schools and he was especially committed to seeing that continuation of his 'flagship module'. It is interesting how this lecturer, who accidentally managed to 'push upwards' (as seen in the previous section) and is now a senior manager in HE, is still concerned about what children are learning in school and is passing on his legacy to the next generation of teachers.

4.4 Role as a Black Lecturer

On the fourth question of 'what do you think is your role as a black lecturer in HE'; three themes emerged, to do with Anti-racist and feminist stances (BL2 and BL3); Empowerment of black students (BL1) Assertiveness of black lecturers in HE (all).

In the text analysis of BL1, there emerged a sense of having overcome pain and transforming it into strengths which has led her to want her students to be empowered and strong. She recounted how it is important to not live with the pain of the abuse of racism and to come out of it a stronger person, so that 'we can make an impact now and start to shift the students'. An extract from her narrative encapsulates the essence of her understanding of her important role in HE:

'I'm analysing my journey recognising my strengths and seeing myself as a resource because of the pain of the past.I don't live on the pain anymore. I've learnt from it.' And later on adds: 'My PhD is going to be about me. How I tackle racism is different. I got my strength from coming through it!'

We know, indeed, from the previous section, that this lecturer calmly re-labels reality when confronted with racism and has ceased to feel personally hurt, through the articulation of simple but powerful messages.

Her statement in the extract above is about how the personal has been transcended and changed into something more hopeful that can be used as a positive tool for the next generation. She stated how she often reminds her students about how 'a hundred years ago, we wasn't allowed to read and look at us now!' and that this in itself should encourage them to pursue achievement positively, almost as a counter reaction to a prevalent interpellation in HE of 'black students don't achieve as well as white students.'

For BL2, the text analysis revealed a need for there being an anti-racist perspective, different and allowing BME students to have high aspirations. She talked about how the diverse students in her classes needed to learn from each other too and that she can be a conduit for that by

'selecting the materials and L&T approach, engaging students with learning and valuing student experience in learning. Empowering students individually by drawing on their cultural differences which are valuable to knowledge-making in class.'

She saw her role very much as a facilitator of knowledge among students. She also likened these cultural differences with the way she aspires to be respected within her place of work, stating that:

'ultimately, I aspire to be seen as valuable and as important to the department as anyone else. Equal to all. I also want the institute to acknowledge that I am different and to respect that.'

The text analysis of BL3 revealed a link to the feminist perspective and an awareness of white domination which can harm students' and staff's perceptions, as in:

'We are in need of a healthy revisionism, just like how the feminist movement changed things in the 1960s. In a white-dominated society, good history is needed, that challenges embedded perceptions and develops critical thinking for certain students. I challenge usual perceptions that students have about black presence in HE.'

He then related an incident when he challenged a white student in his class and asked him to consider for a moment the historical fact that, after all, 'black people were here before the English arrived' and quoted to him from 'Staying Power' [43] within the context of the history of the Adrian Wall, when the Romans brought black people over to England to help with their building work. BL3, because of his untypical position in HE, is also acutely aware of how typecasting operates in HE and states that.

'many students/people have a perception that Asian men in education are in scientific disciplines rather than the (softer boundaried) humanities/education. So I break the mould as I'm not the type associated with people that can and should be involved in teaching and learning for this subject. I lend weight to the legitimacy of these other perspectives.'

He is the archetypal 'trickster' in the story of Richards [see again 19], challenging authority and accepted wisdoms about who should teach what, and, consequently, illuminating an alternative route for his students.

4.5 Success in HE

On the final question about what constitutes success in HE from a black perspective, three key themes emerged from the three narratives: Success in Learning and Teaching (BL1); Supportive networks and partnerships (BL2) and Critiquing the current HE system (BL3).

The text analysis of BL1's narrative pointed to her awareness of herself as a powerful lecturer with dynamic impact on her students. She is the only lecturer in the sample who did not make reference to the building of supportive networks and partnerships, perhaps because she is at the start of her career, and still working on a PhD which takes up most of her spare time. She is at a crucial stage of establishing herself as a lecturer and has classroom teaching at the forefront of her thinking, perhaps more than is the case for

the other two more experienced and older lecturers. She is also aware of the power she has to mould her students' thinking and enjoys the attention she has as a successful teacher. She states, for example, when defining her success, that it is about

'the power I have standing in the classroom as an educator. Able to impact, shape, challenge, renew. It's a powerful role. Students love me teaching and they want to have me. My teaching is dynamic.'

For BL2, the text analysis of the narrative revealed a more advanced stage in academia with the need to develop networks, talks at conferences and introduce new modules with like-minded HE professionals. The best passage from her narrative stressed the need to achieve beyond the contracted teaching job in one institution and she stated that the

'core of success is collegial supportive networks within and across HE institutions. There are key networks for L&T, race, international and national where there is a strong black voice of academics coming together, developing conferences and meetings for learning together. This way you can achieve. My confidence came from being encouraged to go to conferences and write. I value myself as an academic and seek beyond my institution for people like us. Kind of 'Academic mentoring'. I want to achieve in writing, developing curriculum, compiling interesting modules that centre race and gender debates. Politically, modules need to make sense to put anti-racist and anti-sexist hats on my students and critical thinking and then applying that in everyday life in society.'

The scholarly (black) community of practice that BL2 talks about is indeed growing by the day and the hope is that it will bring about changes and alleviate concerns about there being a tendency to focus on perpetuating the status-quo of a dominant ideology – or 'whitearchy', as she calls it - that does not see (full) equality as an advantage and pays lip service to it.

For BL3, The key words in the text analysis gave a sense of success being about resisting measures that do not fully yet encourage compassion and the need for a transformative education system. BL3 is concerned about how the education system has become less and less committed to the human experience and more and more attached to figures. He states that

'my measures of success are to be a more prominent ambassador for the university and knowledge generation. Make partnerships between the universities, carry ideas and have a project. Be able to change people and the way they frame things. Managerialism in HE doesn't value compassion which maybe an issue for black people and others. A culture of measures which produces values which don't fit with education. If education is transformative, then it must be more than league tables and measurement.'

This is the lecturer who started the whole interview by stating 'I taught slavery from a black perspective before it was on the National Curriculum, for which I contributed to getting it written in there in the 1990s.' He has mentioned the need to get back to a revision of the curriculum and the system of education again, embedding even more perspectives than the ones he had the opportunity to include and roll out. To me, he is the future, because of his past. On the other hand, it is encouraging to know that, as seen in the previous narrative of BL2, that a community of practice is gathering momentum, both nationally and internationally.

5. Conclusions

In addition to the results above, I carried out a count of content words in the whole narratives of the lecturers, to get a feel for their overall individual philosophy and concerns regarding the central theme of being 'Black at HE'. This overall text analysis revealed that:

(1) BL1 is concerned with 'black students and pain (including her own) and how that leads to a dream focusing on the learning now' (Most used words: Black, Students, Pain, Dream, Learning, Now)

(2) BL2 is concerned overall with 'black students and their modules by virtue of her race. She refused and challenged this 'typecasting' guise of racism, growing HE connections.

BL3 has contributed to curricula, including the National Curriculum for schools in England, making sure that the black voice and experience were (and still are) embedded in it. He aspires to changing the current system that tends to give importance to measures of success based on figures only.

There is a sense again that these lecturers are commonly concerned (like I am) with success, L&T practice; including classroom teaching, curricula and systems. Their personal experience and how that leads to anti-racist modules and approach' (Most used words: Black, Students, Experience, Anti-racist, Modules, Approach)

(3) BL3 is concerned with 'black people and perspectives and how that leads to deconstructing Britishness, history and measures' (Most used words: Black, People, Perspectives, Britishness, History, Measures)

There is a sense that these lecturers are commonly concerned (like I am) with blackness and students/people but also with wider aspects of the L&T practice; including classroom teaching, curricula and systems. Their personal (success) stories and their commitment to HE link with my own commitments for a 'pedagogy of hope'. I felt in tune with the 'now learning' (in the classroom) of BL1, to the modular approach and content/design of BL2, to the need for introducing measures that reshuffle thinking altogether and history of BL3. In that sense, these three pedagogues are having an impact at three crucial levels of HE and their perspectives are, therefore, very important. They seemed to be building onto each other's experience and brining into their practice three varied, but integrated ways of doing a successful job. In general, the 'dream' of BL1 (a keyword in the whole of her text) is supported by the two more experienced academic on either side of her, as well as by myself.

When BL1 says: 'Black history, which history? And whose history?' perhaps she is also (unknowingly, of course) trying to make links with BL3's strategic concerns for a more equal curriculum and education system, via BL2's supportive networks and associations with like-minded people. They, with me, know that race is a construct originating from the plantations era and the pseudo-scientific world of the 18th and 19th centuries, but in the lived experience of day to day work, it still carries enormous weight, as seen in the incidents narrated by my colleagues and I.

In terms of critical pedagogy, there seems to be 'grounded hope' at play [44] as a progressive pedagogy of hope, that promotes agency, may well be what sustains these lecturers (and me) in a white-dominated HE system.

BL1 has gone through the pain of the abusive nature of racism and has learned to instill strength in her students, ensuring they survive positively her own 'storied' abuse and that of their forebears. She takes refuge in knowing that the love they have for her dynamic teaching will stimulate them to pursue achievement in HE. Her strategy is one of critical resilience in the face of adversity.

BL2 has been positioned as black and asked to teach race words in the extracts suggest very clearly that these three academics have a common pedagogical purpose for empowerment, student-centredness and critical thinking, thus arming students with the tools to want to change themselves and the world/s around them. They themselves, as academics, have experienced racism in its 'guises' and have transformed their lived experience, in the classroom and in HE, into one of profound concern for full inclusion and development of critical thinking. They also all seemed to be engaged in a critical, feminist and anti-racist approach to Education, whether in the classroom, in the design of modules or in the influence they had on policy (including national policy). Are they all, with me, playing the role of the subversive 'trickster' or is it what 'black pedagogy' is all about? Or is it even what Ladson-Billings calls 'culturally relevant pedagogy'? Whatever the label I give to myself and to these colleagues, I know for certain that there is an even stronger need for me now to document further the experiences of 'black' academics in HE.

Much work still needs to be done to have in place a system where black lecturers are neither marginalised nor typecast, but rather, encouraged to deploy themselves entirely as positive role models for all, black and white, in the daily professional life of HE institutions. Until this happens, we must continue to reveal the stories beneath the apparent silence on race and racism in HE today, so that we contribute our part to the building of a true inclusive world for ourselves and for our students. This might also have the desired outcomes that many concerned HE professionals have been asking about, regarding addressing the attainment gap of BME students. To me, the attainment gap cannot begin to be addressed until we dig down beneath the surface of how black lecturers are perceived and treated in HE, how some manage to survive successfully 'against the odds' and what

benefits they consequently bring to HE curricula, pedagogies and epistemologies of knowledge. The latter is all the more important for today's post-colonial world where globalization and internationalization are key to the success of all universities and their students.

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