

Survey of Liverpool's Black teachers reveals culture of prejudice

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A survey of Liverpool's tiny population of black teachers has revealed a culture of racial prejudice and discrimination both in finding jobs and getting promotion.

The study was carried out by Professor Bill Boyle and Marie Charles from The University of Manchester, which also details the harrowing experiences of some of the teachers as black pupils themselves.

The authors say that just 22 Liverpoolian teachers are from an Afro-Caribbean background, out of 4,192.

The low figure which has remained stagnant for at least 27 years, say the authors, shows underrepresentation of Afro-Caribbeans from Europe's oldest black community in education and needs urgent action.

Their study, in which fifteen of the 22 returned completed questionnaires and three were interviewed, revisits the 1985 Swann report commissioned by the Thatcher Government.

In a 27-year-old echo of the Manchester team's survey, Swann said the under-representation of Black teachers in Liverpool 'was a matter of great concern.

Liverpool's Black teachers of the 1980s, Swann wrote, were also held back from finding jobs and advancing their careers.

Their research is to be published in the prestigious Journal of Black Studies, in the United States.

Professor Boyle said: “Liverpool is a city which has long viewed black children as an educational problem and a threat to the educational standards of the white community.

“This is scandalous in a city which has had an Afro-Caribbean community for over 400 years - probably Europe’s oldest.

“Government data shows that England, though one fifth of the school population is multicultural, 95% of our teachers are White.

“In Liverpool, the percentage is even higher: an overwhelming 98% of the city's teachers are White. This almost unanimously white workforce compares unfavourably with London, another city with a traditional Black community/population, which has an 83% White teaching workforce.”

Government Department of Education data - as analysed by the authors - show that in 2010, Liverpool employed two black Caribbean teachers, two black Africans, 12 from other black backgrounds, one white/black Caribbean and five white/black Africans.

The figures- say the team - compare poorly to other parts of the country, especially Inner London and Outer London where 11% and 5% of the teaching workforce are black respectively.

Five of the teachers who took part in the survey are Black Caribbean, six are Black African and four are Black Mixed.

From the sample, 66% of respondents complained of poor career advancement, racial harassment and inadequate black teacher

representation in schools.

Professor Boyle added: “Twenty seven years after Swann, our sample detailed the same concerns over racial [prejudice](#) and discrimination both in gaining employment and advancing their careers in the city.

“Surely, there needs to be an urgent and focused strategy to address what is in effect a White hegemony.

“If it cannot be supplied at local level it must come from a national strategy with legal force.”

Some comments from the survey

‘I am at the point where I want out of teaching...I applied for five deputy headteacher positions last year and from every single one of them of them I did not get shortlisted. I showed my application form to my old headteacher and a previous head in another school and they both said that with that application I should be getting called for interview at least.’

‘I suffered horrendous racism, I was in a predominantly white school and you don’t realise as a child what is happening but when you reflect later, you think, ‘gosh, even my best friend was racist’. That’s what you used to get and you accepted that as a child. With regards to teachers I had a horrendous time with them. I remember preparing to take a Maths test and I knew that I had done well, I just knew. But when it came to the teacher giving out the results she left my paper to the last and called everybody else’s out. When she said my name she said ‘you must have been cheating’ and ripped it up and threw it in the bin in front of the whole class. When you reflect as an adult you realise that she was racist but you don’t know that as a child. I remember feeling absolutely gutted in my stomach.’

“When I worked in my last school I had some children when I told them off they came out with ‘Nigger, you can’t tell me off you nigger!’. I have had: ‘Oh my god, she is Black’. Then I am just walking down to Asda to get my lunchtime sandwich and young guys are shouting out of the car ‘Nigger’. I thought, you don’t even know me. There are lots of incidents. Just this week, we had a child call another child: ‘You big fat nigger’. It is difficult but I can deal with it.”

“When I do something, I do not get the credit but when someone else does something is blown into ‘look what ‘X’ has done’ I feel miserable. I feel that I have to work harder just to be equal’.

“Racial discrimination is very common. Some teachers discriminate openly. One of my colleagues withdrew from the training programme because of it.”

“I feel that Black people need to work in schools more- I have never been taught by a black person which worries me.”

Provided by University of Manchester

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