

From teacher training to school leadership

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Introduction

Questions about representation, misrepresentation, recruitment, retention, withdrawal, promotion, and leadership concerning Black and Minority Ethnic communities in education generally, and in primary settings particularly, have persisted for a long time. Nevertheless, over the years, it is undeniable that some progress has been made at all strata of the hierarchy of the schooling system, some of which can be attributed to the widening participation in HE as a way of fulfilling social justice goals. That said, discriminatory systems persist as well. The (re)production of inequalities within HE encompasses different groups of students where they enrol, among other reasons, to enhance their economic well-being, but face challenges in realising their aims (Reay, Crozier, and Clayton 2010; Brooks 2012; Pilkington 2013; Kendall 2016; Bhopal 2018; Tereshchenko, Mills, and Bradbury 2020).

There appears to be a dearth of studies specifically examining the leadership perspectives and aspirations of trainees. In this context, this research contributes towards this end by presenting selected findings from BA and PGCE student teachers in a university in the West Midlands. It uncovers the experiences and aspirations of teachers who self-defined as being of Pakistani and Kashmiri heritage. The aim is to document understandings of leadership, their aspirations and/or apathy towards educational leadership as they become Early Career Teachers (ECT). These findings will add to existing literature and is significant as it offered these BAME trainees a first opportunity to express leadership aspirations in public.

Literature review

Research shows that Black and South Asian headteachers in the UK remain poorly underrepresented in British schools, whilst schools experience demographic changes. Figures from 2019 show that 85.6% of all teachers are White British (Tereshchenko, Mills, and Bradbury 2020). Over 33% of primary pupils are of minority ethnic origins and over 20% of pupils speak English as an additional language (DfE 2018). In some major UK cities, BAME students will soon constitute the majority population. Simultaneously, the underrepresentation of BAME teachers is across all leadership levels in education. However, it seems more acute at the highest level. Nationally, only 1.3% of head-teachers are black or black mixed-race. Among the Asians, only 0.8% are Indian, 0.4% Pakistani, 0.1%

Bangladeshi and 0.2% Asian other (DfE 2020). There are approximately 24, 281 head-teachers in England. Of the total number of head-teachers, approximately 277 are of BAME heritage. Of the approximately 20,000 qualified teachers from BAME heritages, just over 1200 are in a formal leadership position, including the 277 head-teachers noted above, and about 950 deputy and assistant head-teachers (Miller 2020, 988). In such a landscape, for some, it seems disingenuous to tell students from BAME backgrounds that they can be future leaders when they see that hierarchies within school staff are racialised (Sadiq 2021).

Barriers and responses to leadership

Scholars have pointed to a plethora of structural, institutional, communal, and individual factors which act as barriers, some are more persistent than others, such as racial/ethnic stereotyping. BAME teachers are much less likely to be promoted to leadership positions than White teachers (Osler, 1997, 48; Powney, Wilson, and Hall 2003; Arora 2005). The shortage of BAME educators and the reasons for their failure to progress into senior leadership positions has also been highlighted (Bush, Glover, and Krishan 2006; McNamara et al. 2009; Miller, 2016). More recently, based on an inductive review of extant literature, Miller (2020:988) named five sets of barriers: (a) unfair policy treatment, (b) racism/race discrimination, (c) institutional practices, (d) group membership or affiliation, and (e) religion (in particular, Islam). For the latter, there is evidence from Shah and Shaikh (2010, 23) on religion as a barrier. Some teachers fear talking to other visible Muslims in public because of the fear of being found guilty by association. Furthermore, Iqbal (2019) argued that being Muslim and male presented exceptional challenges towards head-teacher appointments.

Teachers are meant to be a fraternity However, isolation seems to be a major issue for many BAME teachers especially those who work in rural schools, predominantly White schools, and communities with little diversity. In profiling black teachers' experiences, Bariso (2001, 171) found that isolation was not only in terms of numbers but also experiences in educational institutes through a reduced sense of collegiality. A London based study recorded that much of the discrimination reported was covert. Certain factors were identified as a major contributing factor to this discrimination, including a lack of understanding of issues relating to diversity, Islamophobia, visibility, and religious/ethnic affiliations (Shah and Shaikh 2010).

Over the years, family and community attitudes, unfair recruitment, and selection processes, and both covert and overt discrimination have been reported as barriers in progress. BAME teachers have experienced isolation as 'token blacks' and face a lack of acceptance by professional colleagues (Davidson 1997) and an assumption, especially Muslims, that they were unsociable which adds to the negative perception of 'them and us' (Shah and Shaikh 2010). Such feelings can be exacerbated with initiatives that attempt to ensure quotas for representations are met, without any meaningful changes to ethos and modes of thinking. Unsurprisingly, studies cite competence rather than positive discrimination as the main reason for the promotion of BAME staff. Many dispositions have been observed among those who have managed to secure various middle leadership positions. These include significant personal achievements made possible by candidates' leadership qualities, competence, credentials, good exam results and experience, as well as involvement in the professional development of other staff and promotion of school (spiritual) ethos (Mboyo 2019, 123).

Some BAME are acutely conscious of recruitments taking place within the circles of friends, where like-minded people are invited to apply. Tallerico (2000) discusses the invisible or 'behind the scenes' criteria for the promotion. It is through these subtle influences of informal networks from which ethnic minorities are excluded (Harris, Muijs, and Crawford 2003; Powney, Wilson, and Hall 2003). But concurrently, informal networks and social connections can work against or to one's advantage in career progression (Miller 2016). The attitudes of some school leaders and some parents in inhibiting BAME career development has been uncovered. Bush, Glover, and Krishan (2006) remarked that these problems are worsened for women who face a 'double bind' of racism and sexism.

Based on their literature review, McNamara et al. (2009, 19) found evidence about the factors, including discrimination, that impedes BAME teachers' advancement on the leadership scale, but little direct evidence on the selection process itself, and the values, beliefs and attitudes that inform appointment panels in making judgements about candidates for senior leadership posts.

Miller (2016, 217) outlined three types of BME staff responses to challenges of promotion. These consisted of (1) activism (taking part in the public debate through research, seminar and conference participation); (2) brokerage (forming/joining professional networks and the

following mentorship by another BME or white staff member), and (3) acquiescence (giving up on career progression due to persistent incidents of denial of a promotion).

The need for more BAME leaders at all levels of education is advanced from multiple perspectives, not least as there exists a moral imperative in teaching which is a profession concerned with social justice. It would supply role models that will encourage others towards leadership positions (Bush, Glover, and Krishan 2006; Johnson 2020) and make leadership teams of schools more representative (Miller and Callender 2018).

There appears to be paucity of research examining the leadership perspectives and aspirations of postgraduate and undergraduate trainees. This research presents selected findings from Pakistani and Kashmiri trainees. It explored concepts of leadership, and elicited critical episodes, if any, that influenced their aspiration and/or apathy towards educational leadership as they become (ECT). It is important to recognise that the South Asian population in England is diverse ethnically and in religion and non-religious affiliation. Likewise, the Pakistani and Kashmiri are heterogeneous communities. Johnson (2017; 2020) investigated the life histories of eight South Asian school leaders as part of a larger national study of three generations of 28 UK Black and South Asian headteachers across a 47-year-period (1968–2015). Her narrative analysis revealed varied social identities which intersect with their ethnic and religious backgrounds and geographic locations. Their hybrid social identities challenge essentialised notions of culture as well as media concerns about “encapsulated” Asian communities (Crozier 2009; Johnson 2020, 29). Thus, the self-defined social identities of these participants intersect with a range of factors.

Research aims and methods

The data was collected from student teachers of Pakistani and Kashmiri heritages in a large university situated in the city of Birmingham, England. Among other issues, it explored the importance, if any, that they attach to leadership, their aspirations, perceived enablers and barriers, experiences during the course, and future trajectories. To this end, a questionnaire-based survey method, adapted from McNamara et al. (2009), was considered most appropriate because it allowed a relatively swift and convenient collection of data covering these relevant issues (Lambert 2019). This was particularly important as the participants from the BA 3 primary education course were approaching the completion of the academic year in 2021, as were the PGCE students, although at the time of the research, the latter group were

on their final school-based training placement. The student teachers were recruited directly by adopting a criterion and stratified purposeful sampling method.

Ethical compliance

The ethics committee of the university granted ethical approval. Students were guaranteed anonymity of their identity. Pseudonyms have been created to reflect their religious and cultural backgrounds. In this ‘captive’ situation (Lambert 2019) the recruitment email highlighted the opt-in nature of participating in the research and informed consent. In addition, the online questionnaire included the participant research information and the consent form which they accepted and respected their autonomy and dignity (BERA 2018).

Results

The first aim was to ascertain their demographic characteristics including age, ethnic heritage, gender, religion, and course.

Characteristics

Despite assurances of confidentiality, anonymity, and the importance of the study, 29 responses were received from a population of 136 Pakistanis and Kashmiris. In this unrepresented sample, fourteen participants (48%) were on the BA and fifteen (52%) on the PGCE. 21 self-identified as Pakistani (72%), 6 Kashmiri (21%) and 2 (7%) dual heritage (Pakistani/Kashmiri with ‘other’). There were 26 (90%) females and 3 (10%) males. All indicated that Islam was their religion. Participants’ ages ranged from 21 to 40 years. An additional question was asked of the PGCE group to determine their social biography, previous degree, and careers if any. They had degrees in a variety of disciplines.

Importance of having a leadership position

They were asked to explain whether having a leadership position in a primary school was important to them. Of the twenty-eight responses received, four thought otherwise, such as Halah, a PG, who emphasised the idea of the teacher-as-leader saying ‘a class teacher is the role of leader in its own right. I can influence and lead change, from [the] front of the class.’ Similarly, Bareerah an UG, remarked ‘it isn’t very important as a lot of stressful and large responsibilities come with it, but if an opportunity came along, I would consider it’. Rayhanah, with a degree in English, tactfully posited, ‘I’d like to build upon my experiences and slowly reach a higher position.’

Unlike, the above group, the majority (24) considered it important. Collectively, there were at least five main themes wherein they grounded their importance. Leadership in any field is important. However, the likes of Khadijah and Aliyah echo a moral purpose emphasised by some UK South Asian head-teachers (Johnson 2020), recording, it ‘was most important in teaching as it is related to children and their educational outcomes’ and for involving ‘in the wider ethos of schools.’ Likewise, a participant considered the academic achievement as well as well-being dimension as leadership was a means to guide teachers towards subject knowledge. Hassan, eager to draw on his cultural and academic capital, explained:

I feel like achieving a leadership position within a primary school is something I aim for. Not only will it be a fantastic achievement in itself, [but] I would like the opportunity to display a range of other skills and attributes [which] I feel I have learnt through life to support the school I am working for in order to provide a greater learning experience for the pupils.

There was a sense that leadership was important for order. According to Sawdah, it would ‘avoid issues being passed from a person to person without it being solved.’ Significantly, its importance was also related to a sense of duty. Mulayka stated, ‘it is important because it shows you are responsible and committed to what you do.’ In essence, this group conceived leadership in transactional terms (Northouse 2016) to exert influence as summarised by Maymunah, ‘in general I strive for the best in anything I do and if I feel things are not meeting that standard, I would like to be in a position to change that.’

The third theme focussed on supportive leadership (Spears 2010), where they envisaged autonomy, collectively, and personal initiatives taking place. It was ‘very important’ for Fatimah, ‘because teachers need a leader to follow if they overcome any difficulties or need assistance. A leader can direct you to success and show you how to improve.’

Leadership was also considered important as it offers opportunities for professional learning and variety. A male participant explicated, ‘I think it is important for my professional development it allows me to grow and help others around me in their professional development.’ (Bilal PG male). A female, scrutinising the praxis, commented, ‘It is, progression is always important for me, remaining in one position is unsettling.’ (Jamilah BA female).

Finally, and interestingly, some attached a personal dimension to leadership and the future. Nusaybah, a BA female trainee, admitted optimistically, ‘having a leadership position in a primary school would be something I would like to achieve one day, as it would be an accomplishment of everything I have worked for over the years.’ Another resolve came from Hanzalah (PG male):

Yes, there are a lot of changes that still need to be implemented. Being someone who is new to the profession, I do have recommendations for change. It is only in a leadership position that you can be an agent of that change else your views get lost in the crowd or are not raised enough.

Leadership aspirations

Following their revelation of the importance they attached to leadership, the next section concentrates on the barriers and enablers to progression. However, before that, they were involved in thinking about their aspirations as these are linked to self-worth and their beliefs to achieve their ambitions. When asked about their aspiration to be leaders, 18 (62%) responded in the affirmative, whereas 4 (14%) did not. There were 7 (24%) who selected ‘maybe’. Figure 1 shows that more than four times as many of these students aspired to be leaders in primary schools than not.

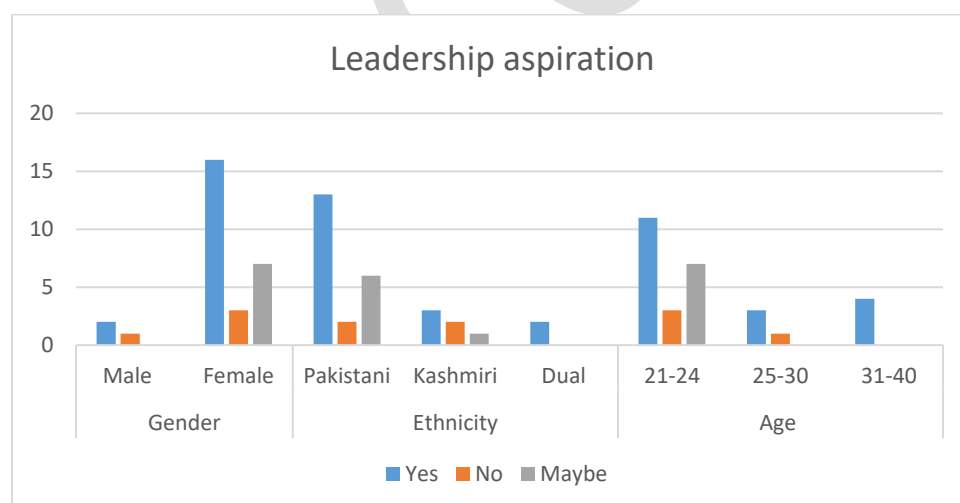


Figure 1: Aspiring to be a leader

To ascertain what they aspired for and their justifications, it was interesting to find all BA students, except for one, aspire for phase, year, subject, DSL, SENCO assistant head-teacher

and team leadership positions, but not a deputy or head-teacher. In contrast, only two from the PG group specifically referred to head-teacher including other positions. In both groups, no one specifically mentioned deputy headship. Nevertheless, overall, it was encouraging to discover a wide range of positions being aspired for. Notable among their reasons was an absence of financial incentives and reputations. Their aspiration reflects their sense of belief in their abilities and conviction of their directions. One of them targeted the enhancement of the quality of provisions.

I aspire to be the leader of a primary school (head-teacher). This is my goal that I would like to achieve because I want to lead a school and help to improve schools that are not doing so well at the moment. (Sawdah PG female)

PSHE, SMSC, RE and Art were preferred by Hanzalah as they enable him to promote creativity. Looking to the future, Atiqa alluded that she would 'like to be a Science, DT and computing lead as [she] enjoy[s] the[se] subject[s] and believe[s] it should be incorporated into the curriculum more.' As an advocate of a broad and balanced curriculum which was also contextually relevant, Jamilah aspired to be a 'Curriculum or Year Lead' to ...change the curriculum to reflect our children.' Asma, with an honours degree in Early Childhood Studies, was passionate for English'. During her placement it was her 'strongest subject that [she] planned for and taught, this was noted by [her] leadership team'. She felt it will allow her 'to improve the outcomes for English across the school in order to support children.'

At least seven aspired to leadership without any specification. Comments included, 'I would like to have some sort of a leadership role' and 'Yes, because school leaders can foster relationships with students, staff and parents that will last a whole lifetime. They help create a more engaging learning environment, and they get to work in one of the best professions.'

This variation represents the varied leadership positions they aim for within the school hierarchy and contexts. Some felt strongly about their agentic role, as evident above.

Uncertainty into leadership

Figure 1 also shows that eleven embraced uncertainty or declared 'no' as a reflection on the demands of the role, their well-being and current status. At this stage, a graduate, Rayhanah, was not aspiring to be a leader because 'she would like to develop her experience as a class teacher first.' Nevertheless, in 20 years or more, 'she does see herself in a leadership role'.

Similarly, some felt uncomfortable to a role' whereas others did not think they had 'the right qualities as of yet to become a leader where people look up to [them].' The challenges that a leadership role brings with it was close in the minds of several students as one ruminated, 'too much stress, high workload. Is the pay worth it? Burn out.' Hanzalah expressed other reservations:

The pay is not motivating enough, and you face significant challenges in being pulled out of your class if the leadership team is not supportive (as I have seen on placement). Ability to enforce your views are also restricted by budgeting hence, your position is sometimes more advisory, or consulting based.

Some of these uncertainties resonate with other findings. Overall, the greatest barrier to leadership aspiration in the study of McNamara et al. (2009) was found to be workload.

Hind, a BA female, was the only one referencing her personal-cultural expectations.

I think having to take the responsibility if things go wrong is something, I would avoid which would make me not want to do it. I feel that as a Pakistani Kashmiri, looking and being good at things is really important as it's something I have grown up with. So, it's hard to break out of being perfect at everything when I'm not which lowers my confidence and makes me feel that I'm not good enough.

Hind's general acceptance of Pakistani Kashmiri identification and her experience of 'social discrimination' as a Muslim 'wearing a scarf' in lectures, despite there being over 80 students of Pakistani Kashmiri heritage alone in her cohort, sheds light on the complexity of their self-understanding and lifeworld in education.

Enablers and barriers to achieving leadership positions

As shown in Table 3, the barriers for the majority in achieving a future leadership position include: negative discrimination, caring/family responsibilities, age, ethnicity, religion, negative social and cultural factors. The enablers for the majority included: qualifications and experience, positive discrimination, access to mentoring and coaching, access to leadership programmes, access to fast-track programmes, access to CPD opportunities, BAME role models, specific leadership training for BAME, BAME networks, and positive social and cultural factors.

Item		F	M	21- 24	25- 30	31- 40	Dual	K	P	Total
Qualifications and experience	Barrier	2	1	3	0	0	1	0	2	3
	enabler	24	2	18	4	4	1	6	19	26
Self- confidence	Barrier	17	0	15	0	2	1	5	11	17
	enabler	9	3	6	4	2	1	1	10	12
Recruitment policies and procedures	Barrier	15	3	14	3	1	2	5	11	18
	enabler	11	0	7	1	3	0	1	10	11
Positive discrimination	Barrier	6	2	6	2	0	1	0	7	8
	enabler	20	1	15	2	4	1	6	14	21
Negative discrimination	Barrier	25	3	21	4	3	2	6	20	28
	enabler	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
Performance management	Barrier	10	2	9	3	0	1	3	8	12
	enabler	16	1	12	1	4	1	3	13	17
Access to mentoring and coaching	Barrier	4	0	3	0	1	1	1	2	4
	enabler	22	3	18	4	3	1	5	19	25
Access to leadership programmes	Barrier	5	0	3	0	2	1	1	3	5
	enabler	21	3	18	4	2	1	5	18	24
Access to Fast Track programmes	Barrier	5	0	3	0	2	1	1	3	5
	enabler	21	3	18	4	2	1	5	18	24
Access to CPD opportunities	Barrier	3	0	2	0	1	1	0	2	3
	enabler	23	3	19	4	3	1	6	19	26
Involvement in professional networks	Barrier	5	0	4	0	1	1	0	4	5
	enabler	21	3	17	4	2	1	6	17	24
BAME role models	Barrier	6	0	5	0	1	1	0	5	6
	enabler	20	3	16	4	3	1	6	16	23
Specific leadership	Barrier	9	0	7	0	2	2	2	5	9
	enabler	17	3	14	4	2	0	4	16	20

training for BAME										
BAME	Barrier	8	0	6	0	2	2	1	5	8
Networks	enabler	18	3	15	4	2	0	5	16	21
Caring/family responsibilities	Barrier	16	3	15	2	2	1	6	12	19
	enabler	10	0	6	2	2	1	0	9	10
My age	Barrier	18	2	16	2	2	2	4	14	20
	enabler	8	1	5	2	2	0	2	7	9
My ethnicity	Barrier	18	3	14	4	2	1	5	15	21
	enabler	8	0	7	0	1	1	1	6	8
My religion	Barrier	18	3	14	4	3	1	5	15	21
	enabler	8	0	7	0	1	1	1	6	8
Negative social and cultural factors	Barrier	23	2	18	3	4	2	5	18	25
	enabler	3	1	3	1	0	0	1	3	4
Positive social and cultural factors	Barrier	4	0	2	2	0	0	1	3	4
	enabler	22	3	19	2	4	2	5	18	25

Table 3: Enablers and barriers

The role of policies

It was decided to engage participants to think about specific actions which would help them overcome these barriers. Gillborn (2019) notes that, in the UK, it is illegal to exclude someone from a job based on their ethnicity except in very few exceptional circumstances. However, taking ‘positive action’ to try to raise the proportion of under-represented groups is legal and encouraged by race equality legislation. These students may well be unaware of these legislative nuances. Nevertheless, the role of policy was not oblivious to some of them. They recognised that they had to ‘become more aware of policies and procedures.’ However, whilst policies have a role, their actualisation is crucial. Therefore, Layla, a BA female, suggested that ‘people [should] actually be inclusive rather than act’ inclusive. Maymunah, with a degree in Law and a PG in LPC, was the only participant to specifically identify meritocracy as a way forward to help her overcome barriers to her leadership ambitions. Be

that as it may, this notion was contested by Atiqa, who was pragmatic and observed, ‘there first had to be job opportunities in the area she lived’ before anything else.

Increase representation

More generally, Khadijah, possessing a degree in criminology, after having had a baby, ‘searched for a rewarding yet more child-friendly occupation with holidays and weekends’, therefore she chose to teach. Bush, Glover, and Krishan (2006) did not find religion as an influencer among their BME teachers, but Khadijah justified her decision: ‘in my religion being a teacher is seen as a rewarding job, not only that I love children and working with them’. Just as the importance of BME teachers capable of acting as role models has been discussed widely in the context of the concerns about underachievement and disaffection (McNamara et al. 2009), by the same token, Salma asserted:

To see more representation of BAME staff within leadership to ensure that my Pakistani heritage is recognised and valued. I also believe there is a need for well organised and meaningful organisations that support minorities into leadership, thus increasing the number of Pakistani leaders within all hierarchies, particularly in the position of authority.

The importance of acceptance and experience

Other themes to emerge from the data were ‘acceptance’ and gaining ‘experience’.

Ogunbawo (2012) reiterated that BME teachers, in addition to isolation and exclusion, often contend, among other negative experiences, with lack of acceptance and negative experiences which lead to low self-esteem and loss of confidence, these may be responsible, in part, for lower levels of participation in leadership roles (Powney, Wilson, and Hall 2003).

The likes of Hanzalah, who had been a manager in a company, contemplated post-16 teaching and lecturing but he decided in favour of primary teaching as it allowed him to celebrate his ‘inner child and accept/encourage [his] own creativity, since lesson planning and teaching involved problem-solving and being adaptive to the needs of students.’

According to Mulayka, acceptance must come ‘from teachers within the school and community’. For three PG females, their responses included mention of their religious background and fragility but looked to a different future with confidence as exemplified here.

I think having more experience as I age and progress in school would help me to overcome these barriers. I also think that sometimes women (specifically Muslim

women) are not seen as a leader figure because they do not come across as strong. This is something I hope changes. (Sawdah)

There is an element of reconfiguration in these responses from these female teachers as they highlight a historical perpetuation of their religious and cultural belonging, where the narrative of British-Asian-Muslim females is constructed as 'passive', and that these traditions are barriers in their life and profession. Zaynab contested several issues:

Equality and Inclusion. I might be young that doesn't mean I can't take the role. I am a Muslim female and practice my religion through dress code that doesn't mean my role will be biased to my community. I would encourage everyone to acknowledge our skills, practice and ambitions as human characteristics not any other such as faith/culture/age/gender.

She had worked as a teaching assistant before the course and had indicated her age as 25-30. In her experience, the leadership role included her intersecting identities as a young graduate Pakistani Muslim woman professional who exhibited her religious dress code. Frustratingly, Safiyyah was explicit in what mattered to her:

Potential employers to see me in action, rather than just going by my application. In the past, I have applied to teaching roles where my application is really strong, but I believe my religion becomes a barrier to take me further.

Training and support

The question about overcoming barriers seems to have provided an opportunity to these participants for introspection and think about personal growth. McNamara et al. (2009) had found that lack of self-confidence was overall rated second and was cited in the top four barriers for all groups of respondents, except men and African teachers, where it dropped to the eighth position. In this study, some felt the need to enhance 'self-confidence', 'positive attitude', and said 'just being myself'. The affordance of training and support, as shown below, is featured as the most frequently mentioned theme to help overcome barriers to their leadership ambitions. Bilal was frank and appealed for 'clear honest discussion ... to overcome these barriers' whereas, Rayhanah, hinting at a sense of solidarity, requested working 'with teachers [of her] ethnicity/religion.' Hassan encapsulated these ideas:

Extra support in all ways possible, whether that be support to becoming a better professional through specific training or support in becoming more confident to truly

showcase the skills and attribute you may have which would make you perfect for a role in leadership. (BA male)

The findings from Haque and Elliott (2016) would reassure these participants as they reported many positive and collective forms of support by senior leadership teams and no tolerance to racism by headteachers and leaders within schools.

Experiences and perceptions of discrimination

The study also aimed to explore their feelings about experiencing positive discrimination during their course. 28% selected 'yes', 41% said 'no' and 31% chose 'don't know'. In terms of negative discrimination, 31% selected 'yes', 48% said 'no' and 21% said they 'don't know'. A subsequent question invited them to identify where they felt they could attribute this towards from their ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, age, or sexual orientation.

Just under half recorded that they felt they did not experience negative discrimination during their course. Amra documented, 'No, I did not face any negative discrimination during the course. I was treated with respect and dignity by all members of staff' (PG female) and a BA male declared, 'I don't feel like I have experienced any form of discrimination.' (Hassan)

Previous studies repeatedly report the racism and discrimination experienced by BME teachers during their career and in the appointment process (Bush, Glover, and Krishan 2006; McNamara et al. 2009; Johnson 2017; Miller 2020). Among those who felt they had experienced negative discrimination, ethnicity, race or religion, or both were mentioned by at least eight. A female student framed this experience within majoritarian norms: 'Race - have frequently been isolated in the team as I do not drink- Christmas parties, work events, jokes etc.' (Jamilah)

Race was not the only identity that these participants felt impacted their experiences. Like other experienced teachers, their race, gender, culture and religion are interwoven, often uneasy to untangle (Mogra 2009). They also directed its intersection with religion in their lectures and during their placements:

I believe that I have faced negative discrimination due to my religion and ethnicity as I was in a predominantly white school in a predominantly white area, where many had negative perceptions about Islam. (Salma)

Islamophobic tendencies were sensed too:

It was due to religion, as I missed time for placement the teacher encouraged me to work on Eid day as I've missed time and to go home and celebrate after. (Khadijah PG)

I think I found that white peers tended to stick to other white peers or Poc [peers] that were not Muslim. (Obviously not all). ... But I found that for myself non-Muslims were slightly hesitant to speak to me, but I wouldn't call it discrimination. (Hind)

Another felt ostracised:

Wearing a scarf might have made some teachers slightly more reluctant to speak to me and be as sociable because it might have been something they were not used to. It was only identified when I went to converse, and they were more talkative to my white placement buddy even though I was showing the same level of interaction. They might have identified with her better but after they got to know me, I didn't really notice a significant difference. (Hind)

Gender and age were mentioned by two females. One of them was a BA student who had indicated their age as 21-24. The other, a PG aged 25-30, poignantly described the nature of incompetency that can subtly be conveyed:

My age and experience. I have a wealth of experience as a teaching assistant in the BAME. When verbalised some precious strategies I was told I'm a student and your new to the careers. My views were not valued although they resolved problems on many occasions.

Securing leadership posts

Given the focus of the study, when these potential future leaders were asked about their feelings regarding teachers from Pakistani and Kashmiri heritage finding it harder to secure leadership posts than other teachers, it became apparent from nine responses that they did not think so. Ruqayyah, a BA student, captured this thinking starkly: 'I don't think so, I think it's based on you individually and your experience and ability to manage a team'.

However, sixteen gave affirmative responses. Seemingly, in addition to issues representation, some shared insights from the workings of some schools and others focussed on the actions required. For example, like others, Sawdah, rehearsed her observations about representation, saying, ‘I think so yes. As I said previously it is because of the representation. There are hardly any role models in leadership roles for other Pakistanis to look up to and aspire to be.’

Miller (2020) noted that social connections proved as an advantage for some whereas a disadvantage for others in recruitment and progression. This kind of operational practice came under scrutiny in the following observation, ‘Yes because I haven’t seen many in that post or advertised, they are just internally given to some staff who are not of the heritage.’ (Zaynab PG), and ‘someone who is not BAME.’ (Layla BA female). The overlap of more than one factor was highlighted by Jumanah, ‘Yes due to their ethnicity and religion being a barrier, some schools wouldn’t choose that outlook for their pupils.’

Conclusion and discussion

This chapter revealed the importance that Pakistani and Kashmiri student teachers attach to leadership. It showed their aspirations and identified their perceived enablers and barriers towards achieving a leadership role. It also analysed their experiences during the course and ascertained their future trajectories.

Teacher training providers have an initial role to play. There was widespread agreement amongst BME participants for more BME staff in the school workforce (Haque and Elliott 2016). The emergence of a more representative and unbiased teaching profession, as envisioned by these participants, is a long-term endeavour which begins with a change in mindset. The issues linked with structural racism and institutional bias take long to address. Therefore, to keep a robust supply of teachers from the BAME communities the provision of a schooling experience which raises their aspirations to become teachers is necessary. Recruitment must work with retention. ITE providers focus on retention for many reasons and withdrawal is monitored. During exit interviews, individual stories are important for understanding intersections of their identities rather than adopting a homogenised perspective of their withdrawal (Joseph-Salisbury 2019).

The self-narratives captured the degree and careers of the PGCE group. These, combined with the BA responses, make it clear that their vision of leadership is considerably wide-

ranging. Implicitly, they are challenging a complaint from BME teachers from all ethnic groups about being given stereotypical responsibilities such as Black History Month (Haque and Elliott 2016) and of being placed in ‘curriculum ghettos’ including matters to do with race, multi-cultural education or English as an additional language (Ross 2003), and matters related to faith could be added.

Most considered it important to have a leadership position. Their justification is related to children, their educational outcomes, professional learning, and personal achievement. However, BME teachers experience barriers to career progression. Haque and Elliott (2016) noted that structural barriers such as racism, including assumptions about capability based on racial/ethnic stereotypes, were everyday experiences for such teachers. Teachers spoke about an invisible glass ceiling and a widespread perception among senior leadership teams (SLT) that BME teachers “have a certain level and don’t go beyond it.” (Haque and Elliott 2016, 6).

Within the limitations of the study, the data has shown multiple individual factors and broader social constructs at play among these participants and their leadership aspirations. Some of them posit their faith and cultural pride as stimuli for career progress and leadership opportunities. Others focus on personal ambitions and an expectation to naturally progress over time, for those who want to. Like the parents in the study of Crozier (2009), these teachers have high aspirations for themselves. They should not be trapped by stereotypes that are largely based on misconceptions and notions of culture that limit expectations of them and that potentially constrain their educational opportunities (Crozier 2009).

Ostensibly, there are in favour of many positive actions which range from policy to practice. Importantly, they appear to call for the elimination of negative discrimination, stereotypes and barriers imposed upon them externally, as they see fewer barriers within themselves. Where they have decided that they need personal and professional improvement, some of them recognise these ‘gaps’. Therefore, it remains for them, their respective employees, and the wider teacher fraternity to nurture their talents further.

Overall, there is a sense among some participants that white privilege, particularly male, operates in favour of leadership in primary schools. In the context of HE, Bhopal (2018) has argued that mechanisms are in place which systematically serve to protect white elitism and powers to continue maintaining white privilege. These students are advocating a change to

the perpetuation of the status-quo by having access to leadership ‘demystified’ at their course level for the benefit of all that enter the profession.

Discrimination still plays a part in both acquiring jobs after qualification and in subsequent promotions to the various strata of leadership in schools. It is clear from these participants that some individuals realise that they are not initially ready for a promotion or may not seek headships. Nevertheless, in school, leadership is of many kinds, therefore, student trainees can be shown and invited to scrutinise data representing the educational workforce, especially that of teachers in the primary sector. They should also have opportunities to converse with experienced BAME leaders whilst training, so they learn from them.

In addition to becoming aware of the potential enablers and barriers and the enhancement of their experiences and confidence, it is necessary, as part of their operative curriculum, to introduce trainees to networking opportunities, to join organisations and be informed of leadership programmes, such as the Future Leaders programme and National Professional Qualifications. To join professional, (e.g., BAMEed Network), or informal networks which are helpful (Miller 2019). Moreover, exposure to grassroots movements like #WomenEd help to connect with existing and aspiring women leaders.

There are methodological, sample size and geographical limitations in this study. Nevertheless, most of these Pakistani and Kashmir teachers look ahead with optimism and commitment to their careers, knowing full well that teaching is a demanding endeavour and the structures uneasy to navigate. Still, collectively, their leadership responses provide pertinent messages some of which are concerned with bringing changes to schools and with higher aspirations for children.

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