

Black and Minority Ethnic Teachers' Consultation Conference 2015

Celebrating Diversity, Promoting Equality and Justice



ACT FOR RACIAL JUSTICE



To tackle discrimination facing BME teachers, pupils and the community, the NASUWT launched at the conference a campaign to tackle racial injustice.

The #ActForRacialJustice campaign will gather evidence and raise awareness of the issues surrounding racial justice, with an overall goal of making informed recommendations to tackle this ongoing issue within schools and the wider community.

In too many schools, black and minority ethnic (BME) teachers are reluctant to voice their professional concerns for fear of reprisals such as redundancy or capability, NASUWT members have been told.

Launching the Act for Racial Justice campaign, Chris Keates, General Secretary of the NASUWT [pictured right], attacked the record of the current Government on race, which was building on the "shameful legacy" of the previous Coalition.

Ministers had allowed injustice and inequality to flourish, which were the result of "callous fiscal and social policies driven by a free-market philosophy", Ms Keates told members, speaking at the annual BME Consultation Conference in Birmingham, attended by hundreds of BME teachers.

The event is now the largest BME event of its kind in Europe.

Ms Keates highlighted the injustice and inequality faced by many in the BME community, brought about in part by the Government's attempts to tackle terrorism and extremism.

She also questioned whether BME pupils were getting justice and equality when they were no longer entitled to be taught by a qualified teacher and had seen the removal of the entitlement to a broad-based national curriculum.

Ms Keates highlighted NASUWT research which showed that more than half of BME teachers last year had not received the pay progression to which they are entitled and faced "crippling data-driven targets".



Sabeena Kauser, Walsall



"When you come to a Conference like this today and see so many people here, racial justice has to be at the core of society, ensuring people get what they deserve in terms of their employment rights and career progression. British fundamental values are very high on the agenda. Conferences like the BME consultation conference bring that to light. We need to make sure that teaching staff are aware of what the Union can do to support you and give you the knowledge that eventually becomes power."

Dr Pushpalata Chaure, Oxford City



"Growing up in India as a person in a downtrodden class, I had to fight all my way in education, getting a PhD and showing the world I can do it. With education, things can change and as teachers we believe in educating each and every child. The NASUWT is the best union for supporting not only ethnic minority members but all members. They are doing an excellent job."

Kenneth Wong, Halton



What is the main issue you face as a teacher?

"Workload. There is just too much work to do, and it's constant."

Was workload part of the reason you moved from secondary to FE?

"Yes and also I had two new babies and decided to make the move. The way teaching is moving now, you've got to make a commitment as to whether you want to spend most of your time with your family or whether you will spend your time with your job. You can't give 100% to both."

Siddhartha Nandi-Purkayashtha, Luton



What are some of the issues you've seen or you feel are important to you as a teacher?

"I come from a different country so when I first started teaching in this country I had very little knowledge of the rights we have got in the classroom. There was a lack of help and support so I found it difficult during my teacher training. It was only after I started to get to know people in the Union and get involved in the Union that I have been able to empower myself with knowledge, skills and expertise."

BME teachers have their say

A real-time poll at the Conference revealed BME teachers' views on issues affecting their career.

Unfair treatment

70%

Seven in ten BME teachers (70%) do not feel progress has been made in ensuring that BME teachers are treated fairly when applying for jobs or promotion.

"I taught at a school for seven years in the computing department. When the head of computing left, I applied for the job. Then someone else who was not in the IT department applied and they got the job. They were not a specialist computing teacher and when they got into this department I ended up doing all of the work."

Discrimination and harassment

54%

Over half (54%) believe they have been subject to discrimination or harassment at work because of their race or ethnicity.

"I was booked as a supply teacher and when I arrived in school the headteacher asked me how I was going to explain what I was wearing to the pupils. I said it was not a problem, but she told me they all have blonde hair and blue eyes. I was supposed to teach the whole day but at 10am the receptionist came to tell me that the headteacher would cover the afternoon, so I was only needed until 12pm. I was in tears. Then I found out that the school refused to pay for the day as they said the agency had sent an inappropriate teacher."

Racist views and behaviours

73%

Nearly three quarters (73%) said in the last 12 months they have witnessed or been subject to racially derogatory views or behaviours from pupils, parents or colleagues.

"I have faced racism for most of the 20 years I have been teaching. I have recently joined a new school and within the first week I faced an incident of racism. I was very pleased with the way the senior management dealt with it."

Lack of pupil support

84%

Around four fifths (84%) do not feel that schools and colleges treat BME pupils fairly and support them to fulfil their potential.

Ignored at work

32%

A third (32%) do not feel their views are listened to or welcomed.

"You can feel very unwelcome by the children and by the members of staff."

Issues getting worse

61%

Nearly two thirds (61%) feel the problem of racism and racial prejudice in schools/colleges is taken less seriously or the same as when they started their teaching career.

"Issues of discrimination have led to a lot of teachers resigning."

"It's not just discrimination, it's exploitation as well. If you're a supply teacher there is a higher ratio of BME teachers. Discrimination is rife and they are not given CPD opportunities, or the rights and responsibilities they are entitled to, and they are exploited through their pay. And if allegations are made against them, they are shown the door."

Discriminatory attitudes barring progress

26%

Over a quarter (26%) said the discriminatory attitude or behaviour of their manager/employer was the most significant issue affecting access to career progression and a higher salary.

51%

Over a half said they believed that discrimination related to their ethnic background, religion or belief would be the greatest barrier to their future career in teaching.

"I applied for fast-track leadership and was shortlisted, so I had to provide a reference. My headteacher came to me and told me how could I imagine I would ever be in that position; she said it's not meant for people like myself. She left me in tears and she just walked away."

Body language explained

An engaging and interactive session run by NASUWT Principal Official Michelle Williams offered teachers valuable advice on how to read the body language of others, while asserting oneself by using different actions and techniques.

Teachers were shown a range of examples to help them read body language, including gauging someone's feelings in a meeting and knowing if someone is lying or does not believe what you are saying.

Teachers also received advice on giving presentations, techniques to encourage other people to warm to you, how to maintain control in the classroom and how to de-escalate a potentially violent situation.

One of Ms Williams' tips included the importance of keeping your palms down when talking, which suggests the maintaining of control, rather than palms facing up which is a submissive stance.

Teachers were also encouraged to use body language to back up what they were saying, to create congruence between words and actions which leads to increased credibility and projects self-confidence.

Workshop opportunities

Conference attendees were able to attend a range of workshops:

- Key leadership skills;
- Securing your pay entitlements;
- Assertiveness in the classroom;
- Identifying and dealing with bullying and harassment;
- Race, wellbeing and success;
- Body language – building positive relationships;
- Flexible working – your rights and entitlements;
- Inspections;
- Fundamental British Values – meeting the duties.



Teachers given valuable assertiveness advice



BME teachers were given help and advice on how to deal with situations in school such as disruptive pupils and manipulative managers.

Teachers watched and discussed realistic scenarios played out with actors and were given advice on using their voice and body language to take control of difficult situations, designed to help build assertiveness and confidence.

They were given strategies on coming across a senior manager using praise and flattery when expecting a teacher to take on an extra coursework club, as well as a difficult and angry pupil coming into a class late.

The engaging and interactive session was run by education consultant Emily Hunter [left] who told members that how they asserted themselves in their school was vitally important in their careers.

Key leadership skills



Having a wide range of teaching experiences and having encountered different leadership styles is an important part of securing and performing well in a leadership role, a seminar heard.

Education Consultant Dr Michele Crichton [left] began the key leadership skills session with an overview of applying for leadership roles, tips for developing a strong CV and advice on performing well in interviews.

Dr Crichton also offered her experiences of the necessary

qualities to become a leader, as well as the characteristics of effective leaders at middle, senior and headteacher level.

Giving advice on how to develop as a leader, she said: "There are a variety of leadership styles, and you've got to be acquiring as a leader what your style is.

"There are lots of negative behaviours which you can easily say you don't want to be like, but it's important to also experience those skills that you do want to emulate as a leader."

Dr Crichton also recommended that applying for roles in different types of establishment, including free schools, special education, further education and PRUs, can help teachers to develop an enriched teaching career, which can help when looking to move into higher roles.

Research has shown that out of the 18,000 currently qualified BME teachers, only 1,000 are in any level of leadership position.



NEXT CONFERENCE

BME Teachers' Consultation Conference 2016

Saturday 3 December 2016
ICC, Birmingham

BOOK NOW ON

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www.nasuw.org.uk