The NUT is delighted to support this research which makes some very interesting findings about the barriers to challenging racism in schools.

The NUT is totally committed to ensuring that our schools are safe places for all children. The Union continues to actively support and engage in raising the expectations of all children and young people seeking to make tangible their potential irrespective of their race, gender, disability, religion or sexual orientation.

Schools are at the heart of promoting social progress, equality and justice. It is therefore of vital importance that there is the collective responsibility in place to allow all young people to feel free to develop in an environment that enables, rather than hinders, their success.

Whilst teachers are totally committed to tackling racism there is no room for complacency. As this report demonstrates teachers are not always provided with the tools to address racism or promote equality in the classroom environment, either through initial teacher training or continuing professional development. It is therefore extremely important that teachers have the training and resources to tackle these issues in order to deal with them in a constructive and informed fashion.

The NUT welcomes the tremendous work that Show Racism the Red Card does in this field and the significant contribution they bring to opening up the debate about racism and inequality in our schools and society as a whole.

CHRISTINE BLOWER
General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers
ABSTRACT

This study has been conducted to investigate issues of racism and inequality in the education system and to identify the barriers to tackling racism and promoting race equality in the country’s classrooms. A mixed method approach was adopted; interviews were carried out with people working within the education system across four different geographical areas and these were triangulated with a quantitative questionnaire distributed to teachers across the country. Evidence was also gathered through observation and journals which recorded the responses of young people and teachers engaging in anti-racism education over the eighteen month period of the research project.

The study found that within the sample racist attitudes and behaviours are common amongst both pupils and teachers. However, many school leaders are not engaging with the issue of race equality and are often unaware of the attitudes that exist amongst their pupils. Most of the teachers surveyed had received little or no education with regards to tackling racism or promoting race equality whilst training or teaching. Resultantly they do not have the knowledge, skills or resources to be able to deal with these issues in the classroom. Many consider the best approach to be to adopt a colour-blind position of ignoring difference and attempting to treat all children the same. There is evidence of positive work being undertaken, however this appears in some part to be driven by a few committed individuals and there is a lack of evidence that the majority of institutions have made a serious attempt to embed race equality.

The study highlights that there is a need for widespread training, including in-service training to empower educators in England with the skills and knowledge required to consider issues of race equality in their lesson planning and delivery; to value and acknowledge differences and similarities amongst their pupils; to tackle racism and to create an environment of openness where young people develop positive attitudes and a critical awareness of the world.

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INTRODUCTION

There are many reasons to challenge racism and promote race equality in schools and colleges; the country is becoming more diverse and institutions face an increasing challenge to equip young people with an education that is appropriate for them to live harmoniously in a multi-ethnic society (Knowles and Ridley, 2006:5). Race equality is an issue for all schools and all pupils. In 1985 the Swann report stated that:

“For schools to allow racist attitudes to persist unchecked in fact constitutes a fundamental miseducation for their pupils” (DES, 1985).

If racism is left unchallenged white British pupils will develop a deep-seated intolerance and will be unable to value diversity (Ross, 2002). The Single Equality Act imposes a legal obligation on schools to engage with these issues and an institution which is promoting race equality and tackling racism provides a safe and supportive educational experience for pupils from black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds and groups (Gaine, 2005).

Throughout the UK, ethnicity still impacts on a child’s experience of the education system. Racism can lead to children from black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds and groups becoming disempowered and disenfranchised as learners (Ross, 2002: 3). African-Caribbean boys in particular begin their schooling at roughly the same level as other pupils but many fall further and further behind during the course of their education (Richardson, 2005:13). Black children are disproportionately excluded from school (DfES, 2006). Gypsy Roma and Traveller pupils are also particularly at risk, showing promise in primary education and then very low attainment at secondary level.

Racism needs to be confronted in schools because it is during these formative years that young people are developing their value systems and that racism can be most easily challenged and prevented (Ross, 2002: 3). The educational system cannot be expected to carry the burden of eliminating racism alone, as it pervades social and political structures outside the control of a school. However, racism in education leads to misery and underachievement and a waste of intellectual and economic resources in society (Arora, 2005:48). Young people need to be empowered with knowledge and skills to help them to identify, resist and combat racism when they meet it (Swann, 1985) and schools are uniquely placed to influence young people’s understanding of issues of racism and tackle intellectual and moral bias amongst young people (The Runnymede Trust, 2000: 146). The school curriculum has the power to counter oversimplified and stereotypical views and highlight the rich diversity within every culture which can enhance society as a whole (Richardson, 2008: 58). Unfortunately, despite this strong platform recent research suggests that rather than challenging racism many educational establishments actually reproduce it through a range of institutional and individual practices (Pearce, 2005: 3) (Gillborn and Youdell, 2000). Schools in areas of the country where there is the least diversity may be particularly ill-equipped as they do not have a history of dealing with these issues (Gaine, 2005).

This study has been conducted to investigate issues of racism and inequality in the education system and the barriers to tackling racism and promoting race equality in the country’s classrooms. Recent studies have demonstrated that combining different research methods can provide a more comprehensive overview than any individual methodology, so a mixed methods approach was adopted (Bryman, 2006: 676). Interviews were carried out with ten people working within the education system across four different areas and these were triangulated with a quantitative questionnaire distributed to teachers in schools across the country. Due to the subjective nature of participants’ responses, it was felt important to explore the knowledge and experiences of pupils, through other means. Show Racism the Red Card has teams of education workers working in North and South East England and delivering Teacher Training across the country. These workers kept a diary recording the attitudes of teachers and pupils encountered throughout the six months of the research project.
The terminology used when discussing these issues is complex and no term is without its problems. Racial boundaries are drawn up on the basis of physical markers. However, race is a social construction with no biological meaning. There are no different races; the genes which code for skin colour are just a handful amongst around 30,000 and are not connected to genes which code for other traits (Rewind, 2004). Despite this, the perception that race does exist is widespread and this has very real outcomes in society. There are dangers in using the term “race” of reinforcing the misconception that there are different races, however in absence of a suitable alternative, the term “race equality” is employed as this is the term widely accepted and used in government legislation.

Ethnic boundaries are defined using cultural markers. However, all of us have complex identities which are fluid and overlapping. Ethnicity is also a social construction which changes depending on time and circumstance and the terms race and ethnicity are often used interchangeably. When people are collecting data on ethnicity they use a mixture of markers: physical e.g. “black”, cultural e.g. “Traveller”, religious e.g. “Jewish” and geographical e.g. “Asian” to differentiate between different groups (Pilkington, 2003:24). In this assignment, though long, the term ‘people from black, Asian and other Minority Ethnic backgrounds or groups’ is employed to refer to people who experience racial discrimination in the UK as this is the term in current use which best incorporates these groups (Lane, 2008:6).

Racism historically arises from the belief that different races are hierarchically ordered, with the White race at the top. Today, people rarely speak explicitly in this way, but racism still manifests itself as processes and acts which disadvantage or discriminate against people because of their skin colour, ethnicity, religion, nationality or language (Lane, 2008). Racism is often seen as an aberration, separate from the mainstream; when people think about racism they often imagine images of far-right marches and violent attacks and because of this perception people are often very defensive when it comes to any suggestion that they may be acting in a racist way (Gillborn, 2008: 3). However racism is complex, constantly changing and part of mainstream society (Gillborn and Billings, 2004). Institutional racism occurs when the policies and practices of an organisation unfairly discriminate against people from black, Asian or other minority ethnic backgrounds or groups. This can occur without conscious intention and even well intentioned acts could be considered racist if they have racist consequences (Gillborn, 2008: 4).
CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND

Racism and Inequalities in Education

In 2003 the DfES set out the following statement:

“All children and young people should be able to achieve their potential, whatever their ethnic and cultural background and whichever school they attend” (DfES, 2003: 4)

However, in the same year statistics published by the same department showed that Black children were further behind their White counterparts than they were in 1989 (DfES, 2004) and that:

“The performance of Black Caribbean pupils appears to get worse compared with that of other pupils as they go through primary school” (DfES, 2003).

In 2004, 54% of white pupils achieved five A* to C grades at GCSE, compared with 37% of pupils with Pakistani heritage and 34% of black pupils. The DfE argues that the gaps between the different groups are closing, (DfES, 2006) but at the current rate of improvement pass rates for White pupils will reach 100% long before equal outcomes are achieved (Gillborn, 2008:67).

Furthermore, by the time they reach sixteen a significant number of children from black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds or groups are no longer in school. Black boys are three times more likely to be excluded than White boys; Gypsies, Roma and Travellers and pupils with mixed white and black Caribbean heritage are also disproportionately excluded (Miles, 2009: 2). Exclusion from school is highly correlated with unemployment and involvement in crime (Narey, 2001 cited in DfES 2006).

The blame for these unequal outcomes has often been unfairly laid at the door of the children and their families (Pilkington, 2002:132). For example it has been argued that black families are unsupportive of their children’s education and that black children lack drive and ambition: This contradicts evidence which shows that black communities have a history of organising supplementary schools to improve their children’s achievement (Gillborn, 2008:160) (Richardson, 2005). Arguments still resurface that the intelligence of black people is fundamentally lower, recent proponents include Dr Frank Ellis a lecturer at Leeds University and Dr James Watson, one of the team who discovered the helical nature of DNA. Despite the fact that these theories have long been discredited they still attract extensive interest, publicity and support from some areas of the media. It is important to note that there is no pre-determined order of achievement and there is no ethnic group which is intrinsically less capable of academic success (Pilkington, 2002:127). In a study conducted in 2000, for each of the main ethnic groups, there was at least one Local Authority where that group was the highest achieving (Gillborn and Youdell, 2000).

There is an increasing body of evidence which demonstrates that many of the unequal outcomes for pupils from black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds or groups occur through processes within the education system. Everyone within a school is affected by external influences; every teacher brings a set of cultural norms and practices into the classroom, which influences their conscious and subconscious behaviour and attitudes (Ross, 2002: 2). Many white people do not see themselves as belonging to a racial group; they can feel that they have a neutral identity. However being white has a big influence on an individual and how they see the world (Pearce, 2005:2). If teachers are not aware of the unconscious prejudice and stereotypes that they carry it can result in negative outcomes for the young people in their care. Evidence suggests that black pupils are disciplined more frequently, more harshly and for less serious misbehaviour and that they are less likely to be praised than other pupils; even from very early on in their education (Pilkington, 2002). DfES research conducted in 2006 found that there was “largely unwitting but systematic racial discrimination in the application of disciplinary and exclusion policies” (DfES, 2006). Travelling communities are so aware of the prejudicial attitudes they may encounter that 60% of Travellers do not want schools to know their ethnicity (Miles, 2005: 26).

Discriminatory practices may stem from long-standing social conditioning, involving for example negative images of black men, which stereotype them as threatening. Such conditioning is reinforced by the media portrayal of black ‘street culture’. It encourages school staff to expect black pupils to be worse behaved and that they are a greater level of threat and challenge (DfES, 2006). Another example of the media’s influence in shaping thoughts around black, Asian and other minority ethnic communities is when reporting on crime. If someone from one of these backgrounds is suspected, their colour or religion is often highlighted in the report. When this is done it stereotypes whole communities as being violent and crime orientated.

Research has shown that teachers can wittingly or unwittingly affect the performance of pupils by being openly prejudiced, by
being patronising or by having unjustified low expectations of the child’s abilities (Richardson, 2005:37). South Asian girls are often seen as passive and lacking in ambition and where in the past Asian boys were stereotyped as hard-working, Muslim boys are now perceived as challenging (Pearce, 2005:100). In the Ofsted report “Raising the Attainment of Minority Ethnic Pupils: School and LEA responses” an example is given where Key Stage 2 teacher assessment scores for Pakistani heritage pupils were significantly lower than their National Curriculum test results (Ofsted, 1999:17). Evidence also shows that black pupils are disproportionately put in bottom sets (DfES, 2006). Pupils placed in lower sets suffer from lower expectations and often receive a less stimulating curriculum and are entered into less challenging exams. Where examinations are tiered this can have the effect of preventing these pupils from gaining the highest grades. For example, prior to 2006 the Mathematics GCSE had a three tier system; pupils entered for the higher exam were able to achieve grades A*-D. Pupils entered for the foundation tier exam could only achieve grades D-G. White students are twice as likely as black to be placed in the top maths sets. In London in 2005 two-thirds of black students were entered into the lowest tier, where the highest grade they could achieve was a D. In effect, they were marked out for failure before they even sat the paper (Gillborn, 2008:96).

It is often assumed that trainee teachers and other students in higher education are free from racist views and influences, despite the fact that many of them will have come from schools where these issues have not been discussed (Tomlinson, 2008). Initial Teacher Training (ITT) institutions often avoid discussions on racism as they feel uncomfortable with such ‘delicate’ topics. (Sherwood, 2007:45). Additionally, more people are entering teaching through a one-year PGCE course rather than a three or four year B Ed. Degree, and this can often be almost entirely classroom based, which means that even where there is a will to do so, there is much less time for such issues to be addressed (Jones, 1999).

Racism between pupils remains widespread in schools and is a regular fact of life for many pupils (Richardson and Miles, 2008). Targeted pupils may become scared, depressed and lacking in self-confidence and this can impact heavily on their progress at school (Teachernet, 2006). However, teachers may genuinely be unaware of racism amongst their pupils: children as young as four can be aware that they should not express racist attitudes in front of adults and this awareness increases as they become older (Lane, 2008: 102), with the vast majority of pupils taking care not to use racially abusive language in front of teachers (Pearce, 2005: 31). They are often wary of reporting their experiences with worries about ‘grassing’, being dismissed or making the situation worse. If staff are not open and confident about the issues, pupils will not feel able to raise their concerns (Ofsted, 1999) as demonstrated by the following pupil quote:

“The teachers are mostly white. You can’t look at a white person and tell if they are a racist, so if they haven’t told you their views you can’t go to a white person and complain about white racism” (Richardson and Miles, 2006:9).
Despite this fact, in a poll conducted by Teachers TV in 2009, 48% of teachers who responded stated that they were aware of race-related bullying in schools. 68% of them also stated that their school had no strategy to combat this bullying (Teachers TV, 2009). A lot of teachers lack confidence and are unprepared to deal with antagonism between different ethnic groups (Pearce, 2005). Many are not clear how racist behaviour amongst pupils differs from other kinds of unacceptable behaviour (Teachernet, 2006). Teachers may feel that it is just ‘banter’ or the children being racially abused ‘give as good as they get’ (Jones, 1999). This ignores the fact that racism is an attack on the central values and identity of the victim, who is attacked not as an individual but as a member of a community or group and the result can be that all members of the community or group feel threatened (DfES, 2004). Perpetrators often feel that they are acting on behalf of a community and if not challenged, they can believe that their actions are correct and that they have the support of their peers. Young people who do not have their racist behaviour challenged are likely to repeat the behaviour in increasingly damaging ways (DfES, 2004). In the absence of any action being taken to support them, victims may perceive that the perpetrator has the support of the school and feel that they “don’t fully belong” (Miles and Richardson, 2008:39). Evidence shows that where action is taken by schools it is overwhelmingly punitive, with suspension of the perpetrator being the most common result. However, if this occurs without education and an exploration of the underlying issues then it is likely to merely breed resentment and unlikely to lead to a long-term change in attitudes or behaviour. (Miles and Richardson, 2008:45)

Some commentators have observed that the curriculum taught in most schools is overwhelmingly Eurocentric (Gillborn, 2008) and can portray that all significant human achievements arose in the West (Richardson and Miles, 2008:56). Marika Sherwood, vice-chair of the Black and Asian Studies Association argues that: “Racism has been and continues to be embedded in the history taught in schools... and all topics within the curriculum.” (Sherwood, 2009:15)

Racist assumptions and ideals permeate many text books and courses and unless these are challenged they will perpetuate racist beliefs. All elements of the curriculum need to be examined to ensure that they are accessible for all children. For example, a common piece of history homework in the last 20 years has been for young people to go home and speak with a relative about their experiences on the home front in World War II, but not all young people in our schools have relatives who were living in Britain at that time. In 2007 the government announced that it would be introducing the transatlantic slave trade into the KS3 History curriculum. The subject could provide an area to tackle racist assumptions amongst young people; teachers could introduce the subject by looking at life in West Africa prior to the arrival of slave traders and move on to examine the role of Black British abolitionists in ending the slave trade (Miles quoted in Sherwood, 2007:44). However, no extra support or training has been provided for teachers who have never themselves been taught in this area and who are likely to have learnt from colonial textbooks. Reports are already emerging of young people being called “slave” as an insult in the playground after insensitive and poorly informed teaching. (Richardson and Miles, 2008:73).

Research has shown that due to the ethnocentric nature of the curriculum and the over representation of white teachers, young pupils from black, Asian and other minority backgrounds or groups have a likelihood of producing Eurocentric material themselves (Pearce, 2005). For example, young black and Asian people often use white characters in their creative writing and where they create characters who are not white they often rely on stereotypical images, despite this being completely different to their lived experience; in effect adopting “one identity for school and one for home” (Warner, 2008:42). In classrooms where a global dimension has been embedded into the curriculum and the history and contributions of all sectors of society have been included, attainment levels amongst black, Asian and other minority ethnic pupils have risen (Ofsted, 1999) (Sherwood, 2009:18).

Government Policy and Legislation

Over the past ten years several duties have been imposed on schools in relation to their duties in promoting equality and tackling racism. The murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993 and the subsequent mishandling of the case by the police led to the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry in 1999. The Macpherson Report, produced from this inquiry brought the concept of Institutional Racism into the public domain and led to the passing of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 (RRAA). The act placed a duty on all public bodies to proactively eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and promote race equality. In addition, from 2002 specific duties were placed on schools to:

- Prepare and maintain a Race Equality Policy, with an action plan
- Assess the impact of all policies on pupils, staff and parents of different racial groups, including the attainment levels of such pupils
- Monitor, by reference to their impact on such pupils, the operation of such policies, including the attainment levels of such pupils
- Take reasonable steps to report on progress annually and review and revise the scheme at least every three years. (Qcda, 2009)

Despite these duties, an evaluation conducted by the CRE in 2003 demonstrated that schools were relatively inactive in response to this legislation. They found that two thirds of schools had no targets to change the achievement gaps between different ethnic groups and worryingly that they did not think that they needed more guidance in regards to promoting equality and tackling racism (Gillborn, 2009:10). Four years later in 2007 the situation was not greatly improved; the Ajegbo report found that many schools were not compliant with the RRAA and that only two thirds of schools had taken the initial step of developing a Race Equality Policy (DfES 2007:34).

One of the duties imposed on schools was to respond and record and report all racist incidents to the Local Authority. The definition of a racist incident is “any incident that is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person”. The purpose of the definition is to remove the onus on a teacher determining whether an incident is racist; to include unwitting and
unintentional racism, which still has a damaging effect on the victim and to include apparently victimless racism such as racist graffiti (Teachernet, 2006). However, schools are often worried that by submitting large numbers of reports they will be seen as having a problem with racism (Miles, 2009:31). The press have not been helpful in this respect, running sensationalist headlines where the number of racist incidents have risen and praising areas where the number recorded has fallen. The problem of under-reporting remains widespread. The RRAA has now been superseded by the Equality Act (2010) but the general and specific duties for schools remain the same until April 2011.

Since 2002, in response to the Crick report, which argued that controversial issues should be tackled in schools (Crick, 1998), schools have been obliged to teach Citizenship education. Through Citizenship education teachers are expected to educate pupils to develop social, moral and, political responsibility and enable them to become responsible citizens. This can provide a forum where areas of racism and equality can be discussed. However, there is only one directly relevant Unit in the Citizenship Curriculum “Challenging racism and discrimination” and it is not encountered until Key Stage 4 (Sherwood, 2009:17). Some commentators have argued that in an education system embedded in institutional racism, instead of promoting anti-racism, Citizenship education can act as a ‘placebo’ leaving issues untouched, but allowing the institutions to assert that they are fulfilling their duty in this respect (Gillborn, 2006:85) (Osler, 2009:26).

Finally, the Cantle report identified the role of schools as being central to breaking down barriers between young people and helping to create cohesive communities (Home Office, 2001). In response to this, the Education and Inspections Act 2006 introduced a duty for all schools in England to promote community cohesion. The act also imposed a duty for Ofsted to report on how schools are meeting this duty. The duty for schools came into effect on the 1st September 2007 and for Ofsted on the 1st September 2008.

In their last 10 years of office, the Labour government (1997-2010) confusingly implemented contradictory policy: ostensibly working for race equality, community cohesion, citizenship education and encouraging immigrant labour, whilst implementing harsher immigration and asylum legislation (Tomlinson, 2008: 174). Politicians and many areas of the media have led a discourse on “Britishness”, laden with negative and xenophobic language, anti-asylum and Islamophobic messages. When reforms are introduced, those proposing them often assume that teachers already have the appropriate attitudes, skills, commitment and ability to implement them (Rizri, 1994:313). However, teachers may be reluctant to engage with issues of racism and race equality for several reasons; they may have a lack of knowledge, or be scared of saying the wrong thing. There are also a multitude of external pressures on teachers which restrict their ability to spend time educating young people against racism and finding out about the pupils’ views and understanding.

The coalition government (2010) is currently reviewing the duty to report racist incidents, the teaching of Citizenship education and the duty to promote community cohesion and there is a real possibility that all three may be dropped. Limited as they have been, they have been positive drivers to encourage schools who may previously not have engaged to begin engaging with issues of race equality and there is a worry that many hard-won gains in this area may be lost.
The Challenges Facing Schools in Mainly White Areas

In many areas across the country teachers may not encounter daily incidents of racist behaviour due to the lack of a highly visible presence of pupils from black, Asian and other minority backgrounds and groups. Because of this, it may appear that racism does not exist amongst the young people and issues such as promoting race equality and educating to counter racism can often be dismissed as irrelevant; there’s “no problem here”. However as Chris Gaine wrote in 2005:

“Colour remains a critical distorting and dangerous signifier of difference and inequality and... this is truer of white areas than more ethnically mixed ones” (Gaine, 2005: 4).

A study commissioned by the Home Office in 2005 demonstrated that white children who were segregated had more intolerant attitudes and were more likely to believe that they were superior to other “races” than those who mixed with other groups (Tomlinson, 2006). In areas with little diversity, people often have increased levels of “learned misinformation” (Gaine, 2005:86) about black, Asian and people from other minority ethnic groups, which can lead to high levels of prejudice and stereotyping. These attitudes may only be brought to light once a pupil from a minority background arrives at the school. On occasions such as these the victim of the racism can be blamed as though they have brought racism with them when they arrived (Ullmann, 2009:36).

In 2002 Cline et al. conducted research into the experiences of minority ethnic children in mainly white schools and found that in 6 out of 14 schools no teacher mentioned multicultural education or any related theme in any aspect of the curriculum (Cline et al, 2002:97). Where multicultural education does exist it can often be as tokenistic attempts to showcase stereotypical foods, clothes and cultures, often described as the “steel bands, saris and samosas” approach (Richardson, 2005:131). However, understanding gained through this kind of education is unavoidably superficial and ultimately can be highly ineffective, ignoring as it does power structures, socio-economic injustice and racist practices (Arora, 2005:34). Additionally, within every cultural tradition there is a diversity of viewpoints, lifestyle and beliefs; if multicultural education is delivered without this in mind there is a danger of presenting over-simplified and stereotypical information (Miles and Richardson, 2008:81). Additionally all pupils have an ethnicity and a culture; if White British pupils are not made aware of this and understand their place within multicultural education they can become resentful of the celebration of cultures other than their own (Cockburn, 2007: 554).

Explicit anti-racism education is much less common. Research has shown that in areas with little diversity there sometimes exists a fear that discussing issues of ethnicity and racism could introduce a problem where one did not previously exist or by tackling racist incidents the situation could be made worse (Pearce, 2005: 39).
However, racism in mainly white areas is a reality. In the DfES research mentioned above, 26% of pupils from black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds in the mainly white schools reported that they had received race related verbal abuse whilst at school or travelling to school in the previous week (Cline et al, 2002). Pupils from black, Asian and other minority backgrounds or groups living in mainly White schools are more likely to suffer from racist incidents and can feel very isolated, they often “play white” in order to fit in with their peers (Ullmann, 2009:36).

Teachers who do not have strategies for promoting race equality often play down ethnic and cultural differences in efforts to treat all children the same. (Cline et al, 2002:49;Gaine, 2005:25). In mainly white areas there is less confidence among teachers about when and how they should “notice” ethnicity and a lack of familiarity with the issues. This can lead to a belief that the ideal response is to be “colour-blind”. However this is only a position which can be adopted by the White majority. Back in 1985 the Swann Report highlighted “Colour-blindness” as an issue, stating that it was:

“Potentially just as negative as a straightforward rejection of people with different skin colour since both types of attitude seek to deny the validity of an important aspect of a person’s identity” (DES, 1985: 26-27).

Therefore, to say a statement such as “I don’t see colour” is not only untrue, but it also denies something which is important to the young people (Gaine, 2005:21) who often have pride in their colour; it is a signifier of their history and aspects of ethnicity can be central to pupils’ self-identification (Cline et al, 2002). It is vital that teachers recognise a child’s ethnicity and colour in order to ensure that their needs are catered for and this is recognised by the Teacher Training Agency:

“An inclusive education cannot be achieved by treating all pupils the same way. To be effective, schooling has to take account of the often very varied life experiences, assumptions and interests of different pupils and different groups” (TTA, 2000).

“Colour-blindness” demonstrated by teachers also has an impact on White young people. Many young people in mainly white areas are afraid to discuss differences in skin colour as they have learnt, wrongly, that it is rude to do so. This in turn can lead the young people to believe that being black is somehow embarrassing or shameful (Knowles and Ridley, 2006:12).

In summary, institutionally racist practices are present in schools throughout the UK which have adverse impacts on the attainment levels of young people from black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds or groups. Despite the duties imposed on schools through the RRAA, provision of citizenship education and duty to promote community cohesion there remains little evidence of a proactive movement to inform all young people, especially those in mainly white areas of the reality of the society that they live in (Tomlinson, 2008:168). Research has shown that young people from black, Asian or other minority ethnic backgrounds or groups living in mainly white areas are more likely to be subject to racist abuse, whilst white British pupils are more likely to believe in racial superiority. However, lack of training and familiarity with the issues can mean that many teachers are ill-equipped to recognise their own prejudices, tackle racist attitudes amongst pupils or to provide a rich and diverse curriculum where all cultures are equally valued.
CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the issues of racism in Schools and whether there were barriers to tackling racism and promoting race equality within educational institutions in the country. In order to obtain as complete a picture as possible, several different research techniques were employed, including semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, a research journal and pupil observation. Multiple methods can add validity to the work and reinforce findings (Denscombe, 1998:23). However, this remains a relatively small scale study and it is not possible to generalise from individual teachers and individual schools to all schools. The purpose of this study is not to paint a complete picture of the situation throughout the country but to highlight some of the issues which exist in some education institutions.

Questionnaires

A self-completion questionnaire was utilised and 148 were completed. All of those who completed a questionnaire were provided with information which outlined the purpose of the research and told that steps would be taken to ensure complete confidentiality. The first page of the questionnaire focused on the opinions of participants, which were gauged using a 5 point Likert Scale ranging from ‘agree strongly’, to ‘disagree strongly’. There was also the option to tick ‘prefer not to answer’, comments boxes were included to afford participants the opportunity to expand on any answers. The second page of the questionnaire focused on the background of the participants in terms of experience and training. A password protected SPSS file was created and interrogated to analyse the responses received.

Semi-Structured Interviews

We undertook ten semi-structured interviews with people working in the education profession. These included teachers, head teachers, lecturers and local authority employees. Semi-structured interviews are a well-established and frequently used way of collecting data in social-science research and can provide a rich amount of data for analysis (Bryman, 2008). Interviews took place without interruption in comfortable, quiet locations. Informed consent was acquired from the participants who gave written permission for the interview data to be used. Participants were made aware that they were free to refuse to answer a question or stop the interview at any time. Names have been changed and details of schools and local authorities have been generalised in order to protect confidentiality.

Interviews were recorded and transcripts created. The transcript is a verbatim record of the interview and the original recordings have now been destroyed.

Staff Journals

Show Racism the Red Card delivers anti-racism workshops in schools and colleges. The majority of our work is with young people aged eight to eighteen; working with approximately twelve schools and colleges a week during term time. During the eighteen months of this research project staff kept journals in which they recorded many of the experiences they had whilst working in schools and delivering teacher training. The journals were valuable as they had the potential to provide rich information which could not necessarily be gathered through the other methods where worries about how they would be perceived may have created a contradiction between real attitudes and a desire to create an impression of not being racist (Gillborn, 2008:16). Throughout our research we were as open as possible about the research that we were undertaking. All schools were informed of this when booking workshops and teachers attending training days were informed at the start of each event. Every effort has been made to safeguard the anonymity of the settings and participants.

Notes were also taken during the interview and observations were added to the transcripts. Transcripts were analysed in order for key themes to be identified and these are outlined in the results. It is, however, important to remember that the interviews may not have provided an accurate reflection of the facts; interviews only collect the subjective perspective of the interviewee and it is not always possible to separate the facts from the context of the interview (Mason, 2002:65). Responses are limited by language and can only provide an indirect representation of the facts and experiences. All of the interviewees are trained teachers. They are employed in four different Local Authorities. Many of the interviewees had worked in a variety of schools and positions and all participants were able to speak at length with each interview lasting at least forty minutes. Time constraints limited the number of interviewees.
CHAPTER 3: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

IS RACISM A PROBLEM IN ENGLAND’S SCHOOLS?

Racism amongst Pupils

During the course of the research we met several people who felt that racism was no longer an issue which needs to be dealt with, as demonstrated by the following quote from a male secondary school teacher:

“Surely delivering anti-racism workshops is a bit outdated now? I mean, there isn’t really a problem of racism any more.”

Two of the interviewees Sharon and Chris, assistant principals in a further education college, felt that racism was not really an issue amongst the young people with whom they worked:

Sharon: “It doesn’t happen now.... [In the past] you’d get kids who’d make casual racist and sexist comments, but it doesn’t happen now. “

They cited three serious incidents which had happened in recent years, including one where young people had thrown missiles at a woman in Muslim dress. In all three incidences action had been taken and they felt that these were aberrations rather than being a widespread issue:

Chris: “It is kids who are not really socialised ... kids who are not coping with college, who are not ready for college, who have not learnt the social things like being shocked by racism..... it’s very rare......by the time that students get to us they have been through 11 years of school......they’ve actually had over the years quite a lot of training in this area one way or another, which is why we’re finding young people now who are shocked at racism.”

A few weeks after the interview took place we delivered an anti-racism workshop to a group of 18 young people in the same college and it became clear that the interviewees’ perceptions were not entirely correct. Whilst there were some young people in the group who argued strongly against racism there were a significant number who held strong negative opinions and there was casual use of racist terminology. Below are two of the quotes from the session:

“We are at war with Islam, they are our enemy and so of course we don’t like them”

“They’re invading us and taking over the corner shops.....I wouldn’t want to go in them anyway, they stink.”

After the workshop one of the lecturers said:

“We know there are some strong opinions amongst the students..... they use terms such as Paki all the time, but they don’t really know or understand that it is wrong.”

This is in stark contrast to the opinions of Sharon who thought that staff would feel able to challenge young people and would immediately make the management team aware if there were any issues.

“If a lecturer is confronted with such an issue they recognise that it is something potentially serious, staff do come for advice...staff are quite sophisticated in their understanding”

When we visit schools we ask pupils to write down their “burning questions” at the start of the session. These questions highlight a huge amount of confusion amongst pupils about the issues. The vast amount of questions are about terminology. For example:

“What is the polite word for Paki?”

“Why can black people use the word Nigger and we get in trouble for using it?”
“Is saying blackboard racist?”
“Is it ok to use the word Chinki?”

Others highlight confusion amongst young people:

“Why are there black people in the world when Adam and Eve were white?”

“Is it true that black people have an extra bone in their heel and that’s why they sink in water?”

“Why do they wear funny things on their heads?”

Some highlight anger and resentment and an “us” and “them” mentality:

“Why don’t they just stay in their own countries?”

“I’m not being nasty but I don’t like people coming into our country as they are stealing our jobs and taking our money and taking over our land”

“Why is it ok for black people to be racist but not the other way round?”

We have found questions along these lines in nearly every school, in every area of the country where we have worked. If young people are not provided with a platform to discuss these issues they will not have an opportunity to be resolved.

As outlined above, there is a lack of awareness about the prevalence of racism in areas where there are few people from black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds or groups. When working with trainee teachers in a very non-diverse area, we asked the participants to write down what they wanted to get out of the training, some of these responses are outlined below:

- Is racism a problem in this area – if not how do we raise awareness of children here?
- How do you educate children, especially here about racism?
- How can we talk about racism in an area with little diversity?

One of our interviewees, a Head teacher in a mainly white primary school cited that she had not seen any racist attitudes or incidents amongst her pupils. However, other teachers in primary schools with similar levels of diversity cited the use of racist terminology to describe “Paki Shops” and “Chinki restaurants”, a white child shouting “Here comes the Taliban” as an Asian girl entered the room. Several cited racist terminology being used as an insult between white pupils, for example; “Haven’t you got that Paki in goal?”

It is interesting that the three interviewees who did not feel that there was a problem of racism in their institutions were all managers. It is possible that in some schools information is not being passed on; the lecturer mentioned above at the college had clearly not passed on the level of racist attitudes and casual use of racist terminology amongst the young people that she was working with. This is worrying as it is the leaders in an institution who have the power to implement change. Maud Blair at the DCSF has shown that “strong leadership, clear management and a positive school ethos that facilitates open discussion about issues” have the potential to make a real difference in promoting equality and tackling discriminatory attitudes amongst pupils (DfES, 2004). If the leaders are not aware of the issues and believe that there is not a problem then this is not going to happen.

In Rosetree secondary school, where over one third of the pupils are from black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds or groups, Tom felt that there were some significant issues.

“I would love to say no and turn a blind eye like a lot of our teachers probably do, but yes it happens a lot…. bullying, name calling and then the word “them”… “they’re that” and “we’re this”, segregation couldn’t be more evident. A lot has been done, but... once it starts it just escalates...”

The interviewees who were undertaking explicit anti-racism work with the young people found that some of the young people held strong racist attitudes and that as they became older these became more clearly pronounced.

Rachel: “There are a number of students who; and I think that it’s becoming worse, will be very cruel and very racist when we’re discussing it. In the past I think that they were shouted down a little more by their peers, and I don’t think that they are these days. The blanket covering of they’re nicking all our jobs, they smell, they don’t know about birth control... Islamophobia is really growing...”

One of the respondents to the questionnaire wrote:

“By the time they reach High School there are deeply entrenched attitudes which are difficult to challenge.”

Despite the potentially hidden nature of much of the racism amongst young people, 83% of respondents to the research questionnaire replied that they had witnessed racist attitudes or behaviours amongst their students, including name calling, comments, jokes, stereotyping and “a tendency to use asylum seekers as scapegoats for a wide range of problems in society”. All of the evidence above points clearly to the need for young people to be given a platform to discuss racism and terminology and that racism is still a very real issue in our schools.

Racism amongst Teachers

Racist attitudes do not appear to be restricted to the young people. 31% of respondents had witnessed racist attitudes or behaviour amongst teachers and most of those interviewed had frequently encountered them:

Kirsty: “In every school, in every classroom, in every job, in every position.”

Rachel: “I think that it’s supposed to be joking but it doesn’t help.”

Cath and Michelle had encountered similar negative attitudes as appear prevalent amongst some pupils, witnessing comments such as “it’s all very well, but ‘they’ can say what they like to us and the minute we say something back we’re being racist” and “all those Muslims coming over here to blow us up”.

All of the interviewees who had worked in schools with a high intake of black, Asian and other minority ethnic pupils had come across teachers with racist attitudes, for example those who were dismissive of the Asian pupils due to perceived language issues:
**THE BARRIERS TO CHALLENGING RACISM AND PROMOTING RACE EQUALITY IN ENGLAND’S SCHOOLS**

**Kirsty:** “Some of the teachers...had the mentality that “Well these kids they don’t have a chance, they’ll go home and speak in their first language, their English is never going to improve”

**Alex:** “We had some students who were doing a placement in a school which was predominantly Asian, mostly Bangladeshi and the teacher was introducing the class and said “Some of these children, you wouldn’t believe it but some of them are actually quite clever”....”

Worryingly racist attitudes do not appear to be restricted to older teachers or teachers who qualified a long time ago.

**Michelle:** “some of the attitudes of the young teachers are like... scary. Just their lack of understanding... you’d like to think that people are more aware and switched on but I don’t know where some of them have been living... in a bubble I think”

Alex delivers a module on equality issues for trainee teachers. Below she gives some examples of the attitudes that she encounters on the course:

“Who are you to tell me what I’m saying is offensive to anyone, I don’t mean any offence” or lots of very racist views which are usually prefixed by “I’m not racist but...” “they should go back to their own country”...... and there is a prevalence of a deficit view..... viewing any child who is not white as having some kind of problem...”

Show Racism the Red Card staff have encountered similar levels of resistance. Below is the response from a trainee teacher when discussing terminology:

“Where I live everybody says Paki shop and I totally don’t think its racist so if I saw it I wouldn’t challenge it or report it because I don’t perceive it to be racist...that’s what I have learnt growing up and I don’t know any better”

The use of racist terminology was highlighted as an issue by many interviewees and also emerged as a theme in our records of experiences in schools.

During our delivery of anti-racism workshops we discuss the use of racist terminology such as ‘Paki’ and ‘Chinki’ to help young people to understand the harm that using these terms can cause and encourage them to change their language use. On several occasions during the course of the research a teacher has defended their own use of these terms, some examples are below:

“Surely, using the term “Paki” is just a shortening of the word, like using “Marksy’s” instead of Marks and Spencers?”

“Well, I use the term “Chinki” all the time, everyone does; we don’t mean any offence by it, so I don’t think that it is wrong”

“It’s just political correctness; as long as you aren’t calling anyone [names] I don’t see the harm in it.”

Sometimes these views were expressed in the staff room over lunch, but on occasion the teacher spoke out in front of the pupils. Many other teachers, whilst not intending to be racist, do not have knowledge of the correct terms to use when discussing issues of race and ethnicity:

“I think that the word “coloured” is inappropriate, but I’ve heard us adults; teachers; role models using such terminology”

One of the respondents to the questionnaire wrote:

“I find the language needed to discuss racism issues can be a real challenge”

The following excerpts from staff journals highlight other ways in which this lack of knowledge impacts on teachers’ practice:

“I delivered a workshop for both students and lecturers in an FE college in a mainly White area and terminology emerged as a hot issue. At one point one of the students had said “Chinki is not a racist term, if I called them “slanty-eyed yellow men” that would be racist” at which the majority of the group had laughed. At the end of the session, one of the lecturers came up to me and said “We don’t want to be offensive, we want to be polite, but we just don’t know the correct language to use.””

“I was delivering an anti-racism workshop in a secondary school and was explaining to the class the reasons why the term “black” was more appropriate than the term “coloured”. One of the students became very animated and started pointing at her teacher and saying “You see!” A week previously he had challenged her when she had used the term black and told her to use coloured instead. The teacher replied “well, today has been a big learning experience for me as well.””

Where teachers cannot see a problem with the use of racist terms they will not be challenging their use amongst pupils and if teachers do not have the language to talk about issues of race and ethnicity they will be unable to discuss issues and educate the young people in their care.

**TRAINING PROVISION**

**Training provision during Initial Teacher Training**

The chart over the page shows the collated questionnaire responses with regards to respondents training provision during initial teacher education.

The vast majority of the respondents had not received training on any of the issues during ITT and the majority of those who had received training had qualified in the last ten years. This is reassuring in one respect as it demonstrates that ITT providers appear to be increasingly engaging with these topics. However, across all areas even amongst those who had qualified in the last ten years fewer than half had received training. Only 35% of those who had graduated in the last ten years had received training on tackling racism and only 12% had been provided with strategies for supporting asylum-seeking and refugee pupils. This demonstrates that the majority of teachers within the sample graduated without issues of tackling racism and promoting race equality featuring during their course. For those who had received training, the nature of questionnaire responses
meant that it was not possible to ascertain the quality of the training or the attitudes of the teacher towards the training that they received. When studying trainee teachers in 1999 Russell Jones found that some of the students had an “idealised naivety” and felt that this was not really an area that they needed to address. Others felt that it was a lesson in political correctness and a game which they should play along with. These attitudes meant that the trainees had not properly engaged with the training that had been put on for them (Jones, 1999:45).

None of the ten interviewees had received any education on issues of tackling racism, or promoting race equality during the core part of their teacher training. 6 had undertaken their training over 25 years ago and felt that this was symptomatic of the time and that things may be different now. However the people who had trained more recently did not have a more positive response:

“(long pause) Do you know offhand, (pause) as far as I can remember...it wasn’t a specific or different subject...Actually I must admit looking back at it, no, there was nothing explicit mentioned...”

“I’ve heard from other colleagues that they received like an hour in their whole PGCE, I didn’t even have that one hour. So I started teaching almost unaware that there were going to be students from different backgrounds. Because where I practiced I didn’t come across any, so it was quite a shock”

For Lucy, her teacher training was the first time that she had been away from her home town, which is 99% White British. She trained in a multicultural city and her school placement was in a very diverse school. It was this that sparked her interest in race equality:

“When I did teacher training ... it was much more multicultural and multiracial than it is here... I had to be aware of what it was like, because this was their culture....”

Int: “Was there anything explicit in your course?”

“I think more what I took away from it myself...from what I’d seen. Even, I remember one time...I got a class list and there were a lot of foreign names there and I was sitting with the teacher and she was saying that you have to take extra care when pronouncing names. Because, it perhaps sounds daft doesn’t it? But that was not a normal thing for me coming from up here”.

Training Provision during Employment

More of the questionnaire respondents had received training on issue of tackling racism and promoting equality whilst working, though this remained at only 44% on issues of tackling racism; a statutory requirement, and fell to 23% for meeting the needs of asylum seeking and refugee pupils.

Overwhelmingly, among the interviewees very few had received any formal training whilst teaching. Lucy gone on to become a lead in this area in her school; however, she had not received any training provided by the school or local authority:

“Formal training.... I can’t think... It’s about keeping your hand in; I’m self-taught in a lot of ways.... I think that because ... I’m interested in it personally, I’m self-taught. I’ve done a lot of work with different RE teachers around the area and with Show Racism the Red Card....I’ve been to Newcastle and travelled around the multicultural areas there.”
Cath and Michelle who had gone on to work in race equality for a local authority had both been sparked to first pursue their own education in these issues through direct contact with black, Asian and young people from other minority ethnic backgrounds and groups which had made them realise the gaps in their knowledge. They were able to reflect upon how their lack of training had impacted on their practice, from giving Muslim children sausage rolls, to a lack of awareness that race equality was an issue for all children.

Very interestingly, though none of the teachers interviewed were able to cite any examples of formal training with regards to promoting race equality and tackling racism in general, three interviewees cited training around Islam in the last year and two of these mentioned preventing terrorism:

“Last month just before the holidays I went to a conference”

Int: “So is that the first time that you have had any training?”

“Yes, I’d say that it’s the first time that I’ve ever been to a conference on these issues. It was quite emotive. They talked about cultural differences, but then they talked about Al Qaeda, terrorism, extremism. Talked about violent extremism in schools and how we can prevent it.”

In 24 years of teaching this was the first ‘anti-racism’ education that she had received. Amongst teachers who have had very little training, this has the potential to do more harm than good in promoting equality and tackling racism in schools.

Responses from 148 teachers completing questionnaires

As can be seen from the graph above, many respondents had not received any training at all. There was also evidence of resistance to the idea of training on issues of racism and equality. Cath and Michelle referred to strong resistance to training from their local authority, head teachers and class teachers:

“One of the hardest thing has been the race equality agenda in the local authority, we still get schools who think it doesn’t matter to them as “they haven’t got any”, that’s the phrase that we hear “oh we don’t have any of those” we still hear that.....if the race equality agenda was to drop off the planet I don’t think that we would get any complaints, we’re not pushing against an open door.”

Alex referred to resistance in her University:

“We have colleagues who whenever there’s anything to do with race equality their whole body language changes and they become irritated and they do not want to engage at all.”

It would appear from this research that there is a widespread need for well planned and delivered training on issues of tackling racism and promoting race equality, but in order for this to be successfully received and taken on board by educators, there is a need to overcome the barrier of resistance in the minds of many of those working within the education system.
Tackling Racism in the Classroom, Reporting and Responding to Racist Incidents

As demonstrated above, many teachers have not received any training and may hold prejudicial attitudes themselves. This may lead them to be unable to recognise racist attitudes amongst their pupils, as demonstrated by the following journal extract:

‘James (a Show Racism the Red Card employee) raised concerns about a year 5 boy’s attitudes towards a picture of an Asian man that he was using during an activity. The pupil had said: “He looks exactly like a terrorist, I have seen people like him on TV, he belongs to that Taliban thing, yeah I bet he is a suicide bomber”. When James repeated this to the teacher, the teacher’s response was to explain that the boy was very good at English and had a great way of articulating himself. She didn’t appear concerned and actually didn’t make any reference at all to the boy’s strong racist and stereotypical ideas.’

On another occasion we delivered a day of anti-racism education in an urban secondary school where we encountered young people who were extremely misinformed and had some very strong racist views:

‘the day was very challenging and we spoke to the teachers and raised concerns that the dangerous attitudes held by the young people had not previously been challenged. The teacher was apologetic but her main reason for this was: “It’s this area, it’s what it’s like, they are all like that, it happens everywhere”

If teachers do not recognise that an attitude is racist or if they feel overwhelmed by the scale of the problem, they are not going to be equipped to tackle racist attitudes amongst their pupils.

93% of teachers who completed a questionnaire responded that if they witnessed a racist incident they would feel able to report it. However the responses from the interviews revealed a much muddier understanding and implementation of the duty. Kirsty responded that:

“It is dealt with straight away. If there is a racist word said, the child’s name is recorded, and it is reported to the council”

However, we went on to discuss two recent incidents in the school where a young person had shouted a racist insult at another. For each incident, Kirsty talked about explaining to the child why it was wrong and discussing the incident as a class, but both times she had warned the child that if they “did it again then it would be reported” and the incidents were left unrecorded. Others were not really sure of the procedure around reporting and responding to incidents.

“I know if it happens in our school once it is reported to the deputy head, twice or three times it becomes a police matter. But I’ve never had training on how to report a racist incident; I don’t know what to do, other than see the head of house or the deputy head. I don’t know what a form looks like.”

Again, it would appear from this response that the first time that a young person commits an offence it is not reported. Amongst other respondents there was some lack of understanding that a racist incident is one where the victim or any other person perceives it to be racist. One respondent to the questionnaires who had ticked that they would feel able to report a racist incident qualified their answer in the comments box with:

“It would depend on the nature/severity of the incident, the extent to which the person on the receiving end was affected and the intentions of the person being ‘racial’”

Cath felt that schools had many issues when it came to reporting incidents:

“They don’t understand the mechanisms, about what happens when they fill the form in, will it label the child? Will it look bad for my setting? Natural concerns, I think that it’s just by getting out and doing that training, and letting them know, it’s about gathering a body of evidence, it’s not specifically about that child unless there’s several reports come in, but people are very nervous...There’s a lot of work still to be done.”

As well as reporting incidents, interviewees were also asked how they responded to the racist incidents within school:

Michelle: “It would go straight to gross misconduct... a third stage disciplinary interview and the outcome of that could be a recommendation to the principal for exclusion or could be a final written warning, every incident is different and would be treated as such but it would be treated as gross misconduct and could result in exclusion.”

Lucy: “[I] try and educate the young people about the importance of what they’re saying to acknowledge what they’re saying is inappropriate and why it’s inappropriate.”

As can be seen from the two responses above, there was a wide variety of approaches to incidents, and this was identified as an issue by Cath who sits on the racist incident panel in her authority.

“There’s no consistency in approach in how it’s dealt with from schools... there was two incidents where a child had called another child a “Paki” and the response from one school was to exclude the pupil for three days, and the response from the other was” child spoken to, incident recorded.” So there’s inconsistency. … I’d say 96% if not more it’s punitive. Very, very rarely “we’re going to be talking about this in assembly” or “we’re going to talk about this in circle time.”

Research shows that between the ages of 11 and 16 young people’s views are heavily influenced by the media (DFID, 2005). Many areas of the media continually expound negative, divisionary and xenophobic messages, therefore pupils need to be empowered with skills which will allow them to think critically about the information that they receive. Educators also need to be prepared to look for new and emerging issues such as the recent rise in Islamophobia and develop opportunities to address these in the classroom.

As mentioned previously, research has shown that solely implementing punishments can make attitudes more entrenched. Prejudice can be driven by anxiety and a well-thought out approach is required, which allows teachers to support the victim, engage with the anxieties of the perpetrator, explain why the behaviour was wrong and lead them to take responsibility for their actions and make amends (Richardson and Miles, 2008: 43). However, at the moment there is no statutory procedure and the approach taken is left to individual schools and authorities.
Meeting the Needs of All Pupils

Often with best intentions, lack of training in issues of race equality and cultural diversity appears to have led the vast majority of teachers in the sample to adopt a “colour-blind” position. In response to the statement “I don’t see colour I treat all pupils the same” an overwhelming 125 of the 148 (84%) of respondents to the questionnaire ticked “strongly agree” and a further 16 ticked “slightly agree”. Only 6 of the respondents ticked that they disagreed, it appeared that those completing the questionnaire felt that ‘strongly agree’ was the answer that I was hoping for, as all who did not tick that they agreed with the statement felt the need to qualify their answers with comments. One respondent did not give a response at all, but wrote next to the statement:

“I think that this is a poorly worded question (sorry!). Students have different needs and these need to be addressed.”

He could simply have ticked that he disagreed with the statement, however the fact that he did not offer an answer and that he challenged the wording of the statement implies that he wanted to agree with the “not seeing colour” part, but rightly was aware that teachers cannot and do not treat all pupils the same. It appears that most of the teachers who responded are striving for an unobtainable and undesirable ideal: not to recognise the ethnicity of their pupils. This is clearly demonstrated in the following incident from my journal. I was delivering a workshop to a class of Year 5 pupils when:

‘I was undertaking an activity with the class entitled ‘Racist/Not Racist.’ During this exercise I ask the pupils to discuss amongst themselves and then decide individually whether a statement is racist or not. On this occasion the statement was “None of my friends are black”.

Most of the young people in the class felt that the statement wasn’t or that it might or might not be racist. However, the teacher was in no doubt that it was. When asked “why?” she replied “Because you have mentioned their colour and you shouldn’t notice what colour people are.”

Some of the interviewees also adopted this approach. Kirsty’s efforts to uphold a colour-blind ideal may also have inadvertently lead to confusion and misinformation among her pupils.

“...A child today said “Oh, so and so said a racist word” and so I asked what it was and she replied that he had said his dog was black, so I explained, “no, no, no that’s not racist.” Because what we had spoken about was this, I said “What we’re really heading towards now guys is not actually pointing out colour whatsoever; this is what we really need to head for.”

This evidence clearly demonstrates that there is a lack of understanding of the importance of acknowledging and understanding ethnicity in the classroom. As outlined earlier Cline et al. found similar attitudes in most of the white teachers that they interviewed when researching the experiences of minority ethnic pupils in mainly white schools:

“The teachers we interviewed often argued that in the interest of fairness and equality, ethnic differences should be ignored in the classroom and in discussing pupils” (Cline et al, 2002: 42)

Ethnicity is key to many children’s sense of identity and it is important for teachers and pupils alike to understand difference, learn and explore each others’ identity and cultures and not to be afraid to discuss them. There is a need to discriminate between people to be able to prevent discrimination against them (Gaine, 2005: 27).
It appears that most schools take action when pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) arrive. Mary spoke about the positive actions that she had taken:

“Yes, we had a pupil in the nursery who had no English. For me it’s about making phone calls, accessing support, up-skilling the teacher. Unfortunately they moved on again, but they had a really positive experience with us. I feel quite confident that anybody could come here and we would deal with it.”

Cath and Michelle echoed that this was an area where schools often asked for support:

Cath: “That makes them sit up mind and ask for help and support and strategies and things when they are faced with a pupil who comes in with little or no English.”

Michelle: “But it doesn’t always prompt them to move on to the diversity and equality agenda.”

However, it would appear even in this area, the training and support doesn’t necessarily get through to the class teacher. Alex spoke with her experience of working with schools:

“EAL pupils are so frequently put in low ability groups. Teachers can hold their hands up and say “He doesn’t speak a word of English I can’t do a thing with him”

Rachel mentioned lack of training and support when pupils arrived in her school, which appears to have been particularly damaging for the pupils concerned:

“...we had two pupils with EAL last year and we didn’t receive any training or support whatsoever and one of them barely spoke English.....They had to do different tasks at times. In the end the lad who didn’t speak hardly any English opted with his feet as well as there was no way she was going to pass. There may have been some support for them, but none that I was made aware of.... perhaps I should have asked.”

Educating Against Racism and Promoting Race Equality through the Curriculum

As mentioned previously some interviewees cited that many mainly White schools feel that Race Equality is not an issue for them: Alex was able to cite examples where trainee teachers had tried to engage with issues of race equality in non-diverse schools only to be told by their mentors “oh you don’t need to bother with that”. Other schools have adopted simplistic or tokenistic approaches to the issue:

Michelle: “A lot of schools feel that they are addressing Race Equality as they have a cross-curriculum day once a year, they think that’s it”.

However there was awareness amongst some of the teachers interviewed that these issues did need special attention in mainly white areas:

Rachel: “I wish that there was more opportunity to educate our students about it, up here we’re so isolated.”

Mary: “If some of my children moved out of my school and went to another school in City, they could find themselves in the minority, or they could move somewhere completely different like Manchester. Would they survive in that school or would they find it completely alien?”

A head-teacher who attended one of our teacher training events spoke about the work that he had done in his seemingly non-diverse school.

“The school is situated in a small town and on the surface it appears very mono-cultural, so I asked all of the young people to go and research their family tree back just two generations, to their grand-parents. Even in our small school we found that the children had relatives who had come from 30 different countries. We put up the flags from all of the different countries in the hall and referred back to this through different activities during the year.”

43% of questionnaire respondents ‘strongly agreed’ and a further 43% ‘slightly agreed’ that they were teaching an inclusive and diverse curriculum, most of the interviewees also believed this to be true. However, when questioned in depth this was not necessarily the case. Kirsty told me that the curriculum that she taught was accessible and diverse; she is the history coordinator so I questioned her about the history curriculum:

“Through school we have (pause) British History, WWII, Victorians (pause) basically through the school we cover: Tudors, Anglo Saxons, Vikings, Romans, Egyptians, Greeks; lower down the school: Remembrance Day, Guy Fawkes... (pause) our history is very much British based.”

In many cases Religious Education (RE) seemed to be the area that the interviewees felt that these issues were dealt with. Four interviewees spoke about the issue that they were addressing through RE and there was evidence of some positive work, with a range of different religions and cultures being introduced:

Mary: “...[We’ve] started a project called a “World of Many Faiths” we’re looking at the cultural and religious differences that our children would not usually encounter because their families are White British...[we learn about difference] but also how they’re similar as well, such as we all pray, we all do this.
We’ve also been to visit the Hindu temple and Muslim mosque... as they go through the school they’ll experience all the different faiths that make up the surrounding area.”

However, there is a danger that by just addressing issues through RE religion, ethnicity and geography become confused. There are limits to the work which can be done in this subject area alone. It ignores, for example the contributions of different peoples to British and Global Societies; it also excludes groups who are not differentiated by religion.

Michelle: “I can talk to a school and say here are some resources, you should have these resources on Travellers in your school, and they’ll say “but we don’t have any” and I’ll say, well yes, but you don’t have any Hindus and you do Hinduism.”

Some teachers were able to cite other work that was going on with regards to multicultural education, such as a unit in English looking at stories from different cultures and visitors who worked with the young people through art and music:

Kirsty: “We’ve have had a variety of people come into the school to work with us. People from the Sage (a community based music centre) who have come in to do worldwide music, we’ve had Capoeira, we had Rumba palace...We’ve worked through projects and things like that...”

Again, this work looks valuable, however if multicultural education is addressed only through music and dance, there is a danger of compounding stereotypical ideas and portraying black, Asian and other minority ethnic cultures as trivial and exotic (Miles and Richardson, 2008:61). It is now recognised by many that the curriculum is made more accessible to black, Asian and children from other minority ethnic backgrounds and groups when the contributions of black, Asian and other people to World history and development are highlighted, for example the roots of modern Mathematics in Asia and the contributions of black scientists such as Lewis Latimer and Garrett Morgan (Ofsted, 1999:20). But this learning is also essential for white children so that they have the opportunity to view the history of black and Asian people through positive images and powerful figures rather than as victims and realise that all cultures and communities have contributed significantly to modern society.

Most interviewees and those who completed questionnaires stated that they had taught anti-racism education through engagement with external organisations. This is not ideal, as it needs to be something that all teachers are able to impart throughout a child’s education, but as Cath states below can be the first step on the journey:

“...The most effective has been the work that we have done with national partners... I know it’s kind of spoon feeding them, but that’s what they need and it can be the catalyst to make someone think a little bit more about what they do and take steps to address their race equality action plans...I engaged with a head teacher who said “the light’s come on” because his view of race equality was multicultural education he hadn’t even thought about the anti-racism issue and he said “now I know what I need to do” and that engaged him and then he was able to engage his staff.”

However, Chris gave an example where bringing in an external agency appears to have prevented the college from engaging with any further anti-racism education.

“A few years ago...we did have some people in to do a workshop about asylum seekers and refugees, but I’d always be careful about what I did with regards to this in the future as it just opened a can of worms.... Because it wasn’t managed properly, the students were coming out with all sorts of really kind of (pause) it just opened a can of worms (pause) they were talking about asylum seekers at a time when there were a lot of asylum seekers coming to the North East (pause). But as I say now we have huge numbers of EAL students, some of whom will be Asylum Seekers and Refugees and it’s just not an issue. Within college, we never have to deal with issues to do with it.”

It would appear that the Chris and other members of staff in the college had not been comfortable hearing the young people express prejudicial views and felt that the facilitators had somehow caused the young people to acquire these views by not managing the situation properly; maintaining that as there was not huge numbers or racist incidents there was not a problem. This highlights that there is a fear amongst some educators that by addressing issues of racism it is somehow possible to raise problems that were not there in the first place (Jones, 1999:43).

There were however some teachers that felt passionately about the importance of anti-racism education and took every opportunity to engage with the issue:

Tom: “I never find bringing up race issues hard....You guys, you’re here to learn about chemistry, but look what I heard on the street or look at this article about Obama.”
Lucy: “At the minute we’re doing it with year 7, which I’ve never done explicitly before. I’ve done a whole topic on discrimination, racism and prejudice. ... Racism is a big part of it. We’re doing it with year 7 and 8. ... I want the young people to have this education.”

Alex undertakes some powerful anti-racism education with her students and teachers:

“We try to unpack the concept of ‘othering’ and the ease with which white people can ‘other’...critical whiteness studies, it is quite challenging for undergraduates to get to grips with and when you have students who come out with “All Gypsies steal” you have to go back to an earlier starting point. We look at case studies with an attempt to move away from homogenising, for example that refugee children could have professional parents... and they can get quite reflective “I never thought of asylum seekers being doctors”... I wanted to explain to them that yes it could be a can of worms, which doesn’t mean you don’t open them just that you need to think very carefully about how you go about addressing the issues.”

This sounds incredibly powerful, but the students are only able to undertake this depth of work as they are on a four year course, most people now enter teaching via a one year PGCE course and there has been a move for this to be undertaken largely in school where there will be far fewer opportunities for this learning to take place (Jones, 1999:10).

In the most part, the examples of good work being undertaken appear to be driven by an individual who is passionate about these issues. Where this is the case, other teachers in the same institution are often happy for them to take on the work, without appearing to appreciate that it is a responsibility of everybody:

Lucy: “There’s not a whole school responsibility for it, it’s not embedded, everything that’s been done has been driven by myself as subject lead [RE].... I could go to another school and I would embed my passions in there... No-one has explicitly said that our school aims to do this.”

Tom: “They’re scared to deal with it... when it comes to race equality, they’re just like “let him deal with it”. They find it really hard to tackle these issues...they don’t have this training.”

Alex: “I think that we do more than most, but that is mainly because of the interests of me and a few other members of the team...I don’t know [if it would continue if I left] actually. I think that it’s an area that many of my colleagues are quite wary of they don’t feel comfortable with it, especially people who have lived and worked in the North East they don’t see it as something that they have any expertise in.”

This has long been recognised as a possible problem if race equality is seen as an extra rather than central to the curriculum:

“Policies which are grafted on can easily lead to a marginalisation whereby non-involved staff are able to see themselves as exempt from responsibility for dealing with these issues” (Macdonald et al, 1989:386)

External Barriers

Graph illustrating the responses of teachers attending training days as to the biggest barriers to educating young people against racism.
For a school to really embrace race equality it needs to be embedded throughout the mainstream curriculum and made core to the ethos of the school.

Finally, when asked what they felt were the barriers to tackling racism and promoting race equality in schools, despite the evidence cited above about curriculum restraints, teachers’ lack of training or knowledge of terminology, the complexities or racism, lack of resources, time, and support from management and other staff; the barrier that came out top amongst respondents at teacher training days, interviewees and those completing questionnaires was the influence of pupils parents.

“It is the perceptions of some of the parents out there that it’s very difficult to change, we can educate them here, then they go home and they’re hearing all the things that we’re telling them shouldn’t be said and that we don’t want them exposed to but we don’t have any control.”

Part of this strength of feeling may have been due to looking externally rather than internally to apportion blame. However, families do have the strongest influence over children’s lives and viewpoints (Lane, 2008:299) and there is clearly an issue of pupils receiving racist messages from home. As cited previously, this was used by some teachers to avoid responsibility, but some of the interviewees had developed some strategies to try to address this issue. Kirsty spoke about bringing parents into the school:

“It is the duty of the school to educate the kids and try to educate the parents as well... So we have lots of things that we do where we try to involve the parents... in order to educate the parents at the same time.”

Mary spoke about how she had prevented parents from being able to absent their children from cultural trips as part of the World Faiths teaching:

“... We’ve funded it from our budget, so we don’t ask parents to pay for the trips, so parents can’t remove their kids by refusing to pay...”

One of the schools with whom I engaged whilst writing my journal had taken their responsibilities even further:

‘We were invited to work with both parents and young people together in a very rural school. Our workshop was part of a programme devised by the school in partnership with family learning and local agencies. The group had undertaken lots of different learning activities to raise their cultural awareness, deconstruct myths and explore the roots of prejudice. At the end of the programme the parents and young people worked with the teachers to help develop the school’s race equality policy and a code of conduct, which all parents and pupils were required to sign. The project was very successful and it was clear that the parents really appreciated learning and being involved in moving the agenda forward.’

This example demonstrates that with the right leadership and commitment there are measures which schools can take to reach out to parents, and that these measures can promote good relations, which will in turn benefit the school.
CHAPTER 4: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Far from being a problem of the past, this study highlights numerous examples of intentional and unintentional racism amongst pupils and teachers in England’s schools. 83% of questionnaire respondents had witnessed racist behaviour amongst their pupils and many felt that there were strong racist attitudes amongst the pupil cohort, some examples of these were witnessed through pupil observation and evidenced in journal entries. Racist behaviour was also evidenced amongst teachers, from the use of racist terminology and telling of racist jokes to lower expectations of pupils from black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds or groups.

TRAINING

Only 61% of questionnaire respondents had received any training in tackling racism and much fewer respondents had received training with regards to supporting the needs of groups such as Travellers (34%) and asylum seekers and refugees (25%). Despite specific government pressure for teachers to deal with these issues, training and support to equip teachers with resources to promote race equality and tackle racism does not always appear to be getting through.

Young people need to be equipped with knowledge and skills to counter the racist myths and stereotypes that they encounter in their everyday lives to enable them to thrive in an increasingly diverse society. Teachers who do not have the training and skills to recognise and understand the processes of racism and discrimination, many teachers are not even equipped with the language required to discuss issues of racism and equality are unable to provide this education.

Because of their lack of training many teachers appear to have adopted a “colour-blind” position, where they try to ignore difference. This demonstrates a lack of understanding of the importance of recognising and positively valuing differences in ethnicity amongst their pupils. Colour-blind attitudes can create confusion amongst white pupils and mean that no consideration is paid to the individual needs of black, Asian and pupils from other minority ethnic backgrounds or groups who may be suffering from racism, or who may find the school environment alienating and curriculum inaccessible.

In the light of this research it is clear that education which provides trainees with a thorough understanding of racism, especially institutional racism needs to be an integral part of initial teacher training (ITT). This training needs to be of a high quality and delivered without apportioning blame, so that trainees can understand the need for change without becoming defensive (Jones, 1999). Evidence suggests that challenging the racism of student teachers can produce a decline in racist attitudes and encourage students to take up the issue during their teaching careers (Bhavnani et al, 2005:101). Therefore, all trainees should undergo a compulsory assessed unit on race equality. If training on these issues is not provided during ITT, then it is unreasonable to expect that teachers will have the resources to tackle racism and promote race equality in the classroom. There also needs to be quality ongoing in-service training on issues of race equality.

DEALING WITH RACISM

There was evidence of a lack of action against racist attitudes and behaviour and a lack of understanding of the mechanisms and reasons for reporting racist incidents. The research highlighted a reluctance to report incidents which were considered a first offence or where it was felt that the racism was unintentional. There was also evidence of wildly different measures for dealing with perpetrators of similar offences.

In the majority of cases where action is taken it is purely punitive. This does not address the underlying issues and may breed further resentment.

CURRICULUM

Though many respondents felt that they were providing a diverse and inclusive curriculum, amongst those who were interrogated further about these issues many revealed a belief that this could be achieved merely through the RE curriculum and extras such as music and arts projects. There was a lack of evidence that many schools had made a serious attempt to embed issues of race equality. There were examples of some excellent work being undertaken; however this was mainly due to one or two committed and passionate individuals driving the agenda forward, with other teachers happy to let them take full responsibility.

In order for issues to be addressed there is a need for schools to create an environment of openness (Lane, 2008: 294). They must provide safe spaces to allow pupils to express their views and discuss and reflect on issues of race and ethnicity. Through these processes educators can help young people to become open-minded and comfortable with different cultural backgrounds. In many schools in the country there will not be an everyday manifestation of racist attitudes due to the low numbers of black, Asian and pupils from other minority backgrounds or groups, so unless young people are given opportunities to express their opinions, educators will be unaware of any confusion or prejudice that their pupils may have.

INVOLVING PARENTS

There was a propensity amongst respondents to look externally to parents as the main problem, whilst this may be a way of denying their own implication in this area, the influence of parents and other family members is potentially very powerful. Some schools had taken positive steps to try to overcome these barriers by involving parents to work together with young people to learn and combat racism.
POLICY

Ultimately, the government needs to adopt policy which is underpinned by social justice and does not allow negative false media discourse to dominate public and media debate. There must be an acceptance of the issue of institutional racism in education and a national strategy and framework for race equality in education should be introduced, where personal and cultural development is seen as an essential part of a young person’s education alongside literacy and numeracy. There needs to be a move from the view of race equality as something that black, Asian and people from other minority backgrounds and groups need to deal with, to an understanding that it is an issue for everybody. Teachers need to be encouraged to value differences and similarities positively and understand the importance of recognising difference in order to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met.

Although teachers cannot alter wider issues in society they can significantly affect the lives of the young people that they work with. There is a need for a consistent and concerted effort to address issues of racism and promote race equality to ensure that schools provide a welcoming environment where all pupils feel that they belong and all pupils are provided with an education which equips them to value and understand the rich diversity of the UK.
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