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Defining the Future: an exploration of perceptions of employability of undergraduate minority ethnic students

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OBJECTIVES

• Background and theoretical context
• Methodology
• Emerging themes
• Future implications
Background and Theoretical Context

• 2011 Minority Ethnic Student Experience Project (Davies & Garrett, 2011);

• Necessity for research in this area:
  • Public sector equality duty (Equality Act 2010);
  • Call for further exploration (Connor et al, 2004; HEA & ECU, 2008);

• Building on participation, retention and progression discourse (e.g. HEA & ECU, 2008; HEA & ECU, 2011; Singh, 2011 etc.)

• Small body of work of existing work (US explorations and Peterson et al, 2005; Taylor et al, 2011)
Statistics

• Across UK, 18.8% of UK-domiciled students with known ethnicity BME (significant geographic variations) (ECU, 2013);
• Degree attainment gap in England 72.1% of white UK-domiciled students received a first/2:1 degree compared with 53.6% of BME UK domiciled qualifiers (significant variation between ethnic groups) (ECU, 2013);
• 56.5% of white UK domiciled leavers in full-time work, compared with 47.8% of BME UK-domiciled leavers (ECU, 2013);
• Lowest proportion of UK-domiciled leavers in full-time work was Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi at 42.1% (ECU, 2013).
Methodology

• Qualitative mixed method exploration;
• Research objectives:
  • To investigate undergraduate minority ethnic student attitudes towards categorisation of ethnicity;
  • To explore undergraduate minority ethnic law student perceptions of barriers and/or opportunities towards participation in the labour market.
• Stage 1: Questionnaires;
• Stage 2: Focus Groups;
• Stage 3: Semi-structured interviews.
Stage 1: Questionnaires

- Purposive sample;
- Levels 4, 5 and 6 undergraduate law students;
- Census 2011 categories used;
- 245 participants;
  - White British
  - Celtic = Welsh, Scottish, Irish;
  - Minority Ethnic = other census groups.
Institutional student breakdown

Students – Ethnicity (UOC, 2014)

- White: 88%
- Black: 2%
- Asian: 2%
- Other: 2%
- Unknown: 6%
Questionnaire Respondents

- Minority ethnic: 16%
- Celtic: 18%
- White British: 66%

Legend:
- Minority ethnic
- Celtic
- White British
Emerging themes from initial stage 1 data analysis: ethnic identity and categorisation

- Importance of ethnic identity;
- Importance of an emerging ‘Celtic’ ethnic identity:
  - ‘We are proud to be Welsh especially abroad’
  - ‘It is important to me as being Welsh is my heritage’
- Disconnect between identity and categorisation:
  - ‘categorising ethnicity is not important at all, everyone is human’
Emerging themes from initial stage 1 data analysis: perceptions of employability

- Future employability:
  - ‘sometimes employers just treat other ethnicities better….’
  - ‘some employers are racist’
  - ‘some employers discriminate on job applications’

- Personal perceptions of employability:
  - ‘Dependant on the field of work in question, ethnicity may prove a hindrance to some’
  - ‘I will break the mould the world is changing more and more’
  - ‘Depends on which part of the country I’m living in’
Emerging themes from initial stage 1 data analysis: perceptions of employability

• White British participants:
  • Range and ambiguity of responses;
  • No impact;
  • Positive impact:
    • ‘There are certain quotas that need to be met…..’
  • Negative impact:
    • ‘some people may only want to employ a certain demographic which is unfair’
    • ‘although I don’t think it should, employers like all humans will have prejudices brought on by societal projections and might be hesitant to hire those of specific races/ethnicities’.
Future Implications

• Expansion beyond law students;
• Comparator institution with distinct student demographic;
• Heterogenic analysis of data (race, religion, gender);
• Drilling down of findings.
WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

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REFERENCES


