



Recruiting, Training and  
Retaining African, Caribbean  
and Asian Teachers –  
An Initial Response.



## TO GET YOU THINKING: AN INITIAL RESPONSE TO GABRIELLA’S REPORT

Gabriella’s academic research gives us evidence of the barriers that African, Caribbean and Asian people face before, when and as they apply for Initial Teacher Training. It’s not a report that tells us what to do; it’s a report that tells us what the problems are and it offers us a challenge.

Now that we have the evidence it supplies, those of us who run schools and other education organisations need to consider what we are going to do with it, and what kind of changes we need to make to bring the barriers it articulates down. Clearly, doing nothing is not an option. The status quo is far from acceptable. But, more than that, the changes required will need time and thought as well as action.

Seeking change at the heart of Initial Teacher Training (ITT) is about organisations understanding how racial and other injustices intersect, it’s about removing organisational obstacles that block opportunity and about how our organisations can learn to be truly inclusive of all. Seeking change, the report indicates, starts with the empathy to listen to others long enough to hear their voices, imagining the world from their perspectives and then adjusting our organisational behaviours to take account of what we have learned. This means that it is about a culture change; not so much about adding things in as seeing things differently. And, all that takes time!

With all those caveats, this document is an initial ‘outline’ response and thought provoker, built around the evidence presented in Gabriella’s report.

Part one looks at the bigger picture within which ITT currently takes place and identifies thinking that would help any organisation or school improve their approach to diversity and inclusion.

Part two starts to consider some of the features we believe will need to be actively addressed as we work to develop an Oasis ITT apprenticeship programme.

## PART ONE - THE BIGGER PICTURE

- 1. First, try to get underneath the terminology:** The report takes place in a context in which structural racism and intersectional injustice exist. What is really meant by these words and phrases?
  - Structural racism is what it says it is: a structure (in our case a school or organisational structure) that is organised in such a way that it excludes substantial numbers of people from minority backgrounds from taking part in it.
  - Intersectional injustices are injustices which combine to create layers of disadvantage. This means that real solutions must take into account all aspects of oppression (e.g., history, race, gender, economic, education) as well as the systems that produce and perpetuate that oppression. Only in doing this can we understand how those forces intersect to create insidious, deep-rooted barriers to justice. This is a big task which will take time but it’s important to acknowledge that the issues of exclusion and under representation are multi layered.
- 2. Then, let’s get over ourselves!:** The problem with such a statement about structural racism is that white people often experience a sense of guilt when it is pointed out that many of the structures they populate are mostly made up of white people and, intentionally or unintentionally, have excluded people from other backgrounds. Our personal feelings of guilt or even offense then conspire to hinder our active involvement in the solution. ‘No one person is to blame but everyone is responsible’ may be a better response. We need to recognise that wholly white structures, especially in teaching and at a leadership level, are a block on the road to equality and we are all called to do something about it.
- 3. Therefore, we need to recognise the inherited structures in which we work** which can be seen to, or may support, the uncomfortable notions of white supremacy and privilege. We should seek to look again at the structures we work in and explore our own cultural assumptions, without being defensive. Clearly, many good people work in those structures, but it doesn’t stop you from reviewing them.
- 4. And so, we need to recognise our own place in the story.** The Education Sector in this country has not successfully included African, Caribbean and Asian Heritage staff, especially in leadership, and has repeated past mistakes in not addressing this issue. We have been part/continue to be part of that Education Sector and have not yet successfully challenged the systems that lead to exclusion. Therefore, we need to ‘own our own stories’ and explore our previous assumptions in the knowledge that education holds the key to dismantling oppression and bringing liberation.

- 5. Then, work on being anti-racist.** Consider the difference between being non-racist, anti-racist and anti-oppressive. According to Webster’s dictionary, “non” means “not doing; not involved with”, while “anti” is defined as “one that is opposed”.
- The definition of non-racist simply means you are NOT a racist.
  - The definition of anti-racist includes beliefs, actions, movements and policies adopted or developed to oppose **racism**. In general, **anti-racism** is intended to promote an egalitarian society in which people do not face discrimination on the basis of their race, however defined.

**This might look like:**

- Challenging those in leadership about individual or organisational behaviours which may be overtly, covertly or indirectly racist.
  - Actively promoting values of equality, equity and social justice – rather than simply implementing a strategy because it is required in the organisation for an Ofsted/website etc. –seeking to change attitudes and certain behaviours at both micro and macro levels.
  - Actively being inclusive of all groups by making sure any marginalised or unheard groups have representation (recognising that is part of the process and not just the end goal) and are involved in decision-making about future policy, procedures and practices.
- 6. Think about the narratives that are playing out.** There are several identity-based models which regularly play out in education settings and which can work either positively or negatively in terms of diversity and inclusion. These include:
- **Role model** – the role model narrative draws on the idea that we cannot be what we cannot see. Role models are an invaluable vehicle for all human learning. But are these role models modelling real change through changed systems and procedures or are they tokenistic?
  - **Cultural** – the cultural narrative draws on the idea that there are fundamental cultural characteristics associated with African, Caribbean, and Asian heritage people that account for their experiences, attitudes, and outcomes in education. However, it is important to avoid anyone’s race becoming an explanation of their actions and reactions.
  - **Representation** – the representation narratives recognises African, Caribbean, and Asian heritage people are marginalised and/or excluded from ITT provision in various ways and seeks to reverse this by increasing African, Caribbean, and Asian representation within ITT provision without addressing the reasons why the under representation is there in the first place.
- 7. It may also help to explore or understand:**
- The extent to which the organisational structures we work in have been designed by white people and are therefore designed to work for white people. These may result in unintentional and unearned privileges, protection and power that may also exclude others. If you are a white person reading this, you may be shocked to think



that this could be the case. It might help to think about yourself walking into a meeting room in which all the others, who are already at the meeting and enjoying each other’s company, are of a different gender. It may feel hard to know how to engage or you may feel that their chat is private to them and it would be disrespectful attempt to join in.

- That white structures are likely, inadvertently, to replicate themselves through management’s lack of awareness of the need to change, through their inability, successfully, to include others, or even through a laziness to do anything about the problem and/or a lack of commitment to inclusion and diversity. As a result, structures continue to be generated that may be perceived as oppressive or excluding and may actually be so.
- The way in which largely white structures may keep people unaware of what having these privileges, protections and power actually means.
- That if I’m white, it doesn’t mean life isn’t hard, it means that it’s important that skin tone is not one of the things making it harder.
- That a white person may unintentionally benefit from the oppression of African, Caribbean and Asian heritage people. For example, a cleaner from an African, Caribbean or Asian background who does not get paid the minimum wage and who is denied promotion and opportunity due to race, in the end adds to white privilege.
- The extent to which white people are the dominant representation in most media, white people suffer less from harassment in public, white boys are not stopped and searched as many times as black boys, a white person’s citizenship is not questioned, people in leadership roles are often white, products are designed for white people first (e.g. sticking plasters).
- That some white people may have some inherited power and wealth.
- That a white person’s actions or reactions are not perceived as race based whereas it is more likely to be the case for a person from African, Caribbean or Asian backgrounds.

## **PART TWO - DEVELOPING INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING**

Having got to this point of considering the development of our own ITT programme, we, in Oasis think that we need to work on the following aspects as we continue our journey:

- 1. We need to listen first** to the stories of those already in our organisation of African, Caribbean and Asian heritage. What was is like for them as they considered applying for ITT, where did they get support from, where did they not get support from, what was their experience when they did apply, when they became a teacher, when they were promoted or not, and so on. We need to listen both to the stages in the journey and to their feelings. The clues to our responses lie in both.

2. **We need to recognise that our ways of recruiting into ITT may not relate to the norms experienced by people of African, Caribbean or Asian backgrounds.** What one group recognises as essentially familiar and routine may, to another group, be entirely foreign. We just don’t know what we don’t know about how others see life until we seek to understand.
3. **We need to realise that the same applies to the selection process** – for example, we should avoid stereotypes and perhaps not expect everyone to sell themselves. It is also worth thinking through what we mean by ensuring we recruit for the ‘best fit’ – best fit in whose eyes? How do we judge intelligence and ability? By the way someone expresses themselves or fills in a form?
4. **We should work harder to provide** the right support, mentoring and supervision –from the beginning of the application stage, right through into ongoing service in senior leadership. This is particularly important at the points of change, to ensure that people of African, Caribbean and Asian heritage do not get stuck because of promotion processes that are more familiar to white candidates. We should build in reflection and feedback loops to support all involved in the process of promotion – both candidates and management.
5. **We need to be authentic.** If we want to increase the number of ITT candidates in Oasis, we need an anti- racist and de-colonised curriculum under pinned by critical pedagogy.
6. **We need to challenge our own standards.** We are committed to the inclusion of SEND students but to what extent have we taken into account the exclusion caused by other injustices, such as the intersectional injustices mentioned in this report.
7. **We need to develop foundations that facilitate flourishing for all.** Any ITT programme must be guided and built on anti-racist education principles, creating a comfortable cultural environment for both African, Caribbean and Asian descended as well as for non- African, Caribbean and Asian heritage teachers.
  - **We need to build an ITT programme that prepares people to teach in a global context.** ITT must prepare future teachers to prepare their pupils for the global interconnected realities of education, trade, and employment.
  - **We need to recognise that** African, Caribbean, and Asian heritage people in the UK are likely to have global networks, expertise, context familiarity, multiple language skills, cultural resources that they can bring to ITT and educational leadership.