London School Economics (LSE) Race Equality Charter Staff Focus Groups' Report

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July 2021

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Introduction

Three focus groups were held with black and minoritised and white academic and professional staff in May and June of 2021. Overall there were 13 staff who attended and participated. Some follow up email communication was received in addition to the focus groups. The staff who participated in the focus groups all had experiences of racism, or shared experiences of black and minoritised staff and students facing racism.

This report is grouped under salient themes that emerged from the focus groups that form elements of the nature of institutional.

Within the report participants begin to identify their own reflections and thoughts on solutions and actions needed to the identified issues and problems they and their colleagues face.
racism at LSE and its impact on all staff and students.

The participants unanimously shared at the end of the three focus groups how much they had valued being able to have the space to discuss their experiences of racism, participants described it as cathartic, empowering and liberating. The value of space to discuss race and racism emerges within the report.

1. Recruitment, retention, progression and promotion, position and status

1.1 Recruitment

There was strong feeling that central to making changes on race equality for staff and students was the need for significant changes in the recruitment of staff from Black and minoritised backgrounds.

There was concern over a lack of African academics at LSE with not one single black professor and specifically poor representation in departments that study and have related subject matter to Africa namely; International Development and African Development programmes.

'I have consistently raised this concern [No African academics] centred around recruitment, it seems extremely difficult to implement any kind of change to get a black African academic recruited'.

Despite real desire and efforts to identify plan and engage with improvements to recruitment this academic found incredible resistance to their efforts.

'I experienced a lot of resistance and had to go to different parts of the University of London, LSE tends to make policies that a very high, especially academic positions, demanding certain amounts of research and all of that. But if you are hiring, Let's say from the African continent, they don't consider that there's a context for those academics there where they do not have the same opportunity to put out the same amount of research that the UK might as the universities are underfunded. The bar is set too high to allow for those academics to enter and they get

automatically penalised there is no recognition with the bar set so high, and when challenged they say these are the rules, and my response is yes but you guys are setting the rules'.
This contribution highlights one of the institutional barriers in equal access to academics coming from the African continent.

In the library it was reported that there are very few black and minoritised staff, '*there is probably 5 or 6 out of about a 100 staff and they are all on low grades, no managers'*

The overall consensus and concern from participants were the urgent need for LSE to address the recruitment and retainment of black and minortised staff '*I think the main problem is that we really need to be hiring more non-white staff, I have never worked in such a white place in my life'.*[1]

There was palpable frustration that very little had changed on recruitment from someone who had been at LSE for some time.

'I have been involved in almost every hiring process in our department for the last seven years, and I think there is real blockage in hiring procedures and how the real issue of diversity is addressed, not just lip service but how this issue is taken seriously. I think the LSE is profoundly under-represented in terms of black academic staff at all levels. It's really frustrating to be here for this time and see that nothing has shifted at all over the last decade.'

Participants expressed a gap between the intentions of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, (EDI) policy statement and the EDI strategy 2017-2022, about the process of recruitment, exploring the possibility of explicit protocols that can be implemented at the start of the recruitment process. Such as advertisement, Heads of Department briefings and criteria for short listing and final selection. The 2017-2022 EDI strategy has as one of its key performance targets "To promote diversity amongst the School's staff communities, and an inclusive staff experience." Participants

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[1]

Mirrored in the internal labour market of the UK racial discrimination Black Asian and minority ethnic people are underrepresented at every management level in the workplace. Currently, 12% of the working-age population is from a BAME background, however only 10% are in the workplace and only 6% of top management positions are held by an ethnic minority person (Race at Work, 2015). Following the Race review 2021, this percentage has not significantly changed. The Government has stated that organisations must do more to support BAME people access the labour market and their own plan 'The Government's BME 2020 Plan' aims to increase BAME employment by 20% by 2020.

stated that little change had been achieved in respect to these performance targets and wanted race and gender to be taken more seriously in the recruitment process.

'I'm working on the premise that everybody who comes through the system is academically excellent. That aside, how do we take issues of race and gender much more seriously in the hiring procedures?'.

1.2 Retention

It was noted that coupled with poor recruitment of black and minoritised staff was the high turnover of these staff, retaining black and minoritised staff was a grave concern for the participants as they felt the environment was not conducive to a sense of belonging working in exclusive contexts that were both white and elitist.

It was also acknowledged that what was needed was a culture change to truly enable black and minoritised staff to want to stay and contribute.

'If you get people in but the culture is not ready, then people will just come and go and not spend time trying to change anything, they feel they have no connections with this. You treat me badly, I'm going and we keep trying to recruit'.

Participants emphasised the link and significance of relationships staff had with their managers on the issue of retention, discussing the importance of nurturing and supporting staff specifically in dealing with the re-igniting of racial trauma from their experiences working at LSE. There were universal concerns from participants of the ability of white managers to provide this support as well as often being the cause of such experiences.

One participant shared how completely dispirited they were feeling. They had enrolled onto a Management Training programme that allowed them one day off a week. This allowance only came to light at the end of the 2-year course, with the course tutor shocked that the manger had not shared this important information. This staff member had been taking annual leave in order to complete the course.

A number of professional staff shared how criticism in their environments was the norm, never any acknowledgement or praise for their work. They described often feeling disregarded in relation to work with no support or discussion on progression or promotion. One black woman shared how she experienced '*barriers as a black woman'* and reflected how these had become normalised to her experience. This was reinforced with raising specific issues with HR and the

Trade Union with no support or action. A few participants shared similar stories with no response from HR at all.

One example of this was a participant had applied for a role within their department and experienced racial and gender discrimination where the other candidate was already identified for the role despite being 'off work' for considerable period of time, this was the last straw and with no response from HR, they want to leave.

1.3 Progression and Promotion

The concern on representation and visibility of black and minoritsed staff across certain grades, specifically above grade six featured as a central point of discussion from a number of participants. The point was made that given LSE has a global base in recruitment of students this was not reflected in its staff. This then had a direct impact on a poorer service for students.

The participants raised concerns over data from 2013-2019 produced by the '*appointment committee'*, stating that 8% of all BME staff eligible for promotion succeed in the promotion compared to 12% for non BAME staff.

'I was really struck by a statistic that it takes longer on average, not just for women, but also minorities to be promoted within the school. I can see how this works for women, the barriers they face including a number of issues such as child care, maternity leave etc. But it really struck me for minorities that this is also the fact. It makes me wonder about institutional bias, I guess, of an institutional structural nature of bias within the school. And I for one would be curious and welcome the School to explore this'.

Concerns were shared specifically on the structure, process, accountability and those whom are tasked to make the decisions on progression.

'There are some. I guess institutional design issues here at the School, one of them being the basis in which promotions are made. It is helpful that you get a recommendation from the department's professoriate. And even though that is not easy to do and obviously it is very helpful to have that recommendation than if you don't. This raises a red flag when it is up to the school level for that person to be considered. The professor's meetings are confidential, as they should be, because you want to consider and deliberate. However, there is no real accountability, and that is the flip side as you do not know what is being discussed about candidates and whether there are conscious, unconscious biases taking place in these meetings, because it is a space

that is privileged. Many of these crucial decisions around promotion and indirectly about pay are made in professors' meetings'.

These specific professors' meetings were further described by this contribution below who identified professors as having 'favourites' in terms of people they may have worked with or that they have some 'kinship with' enhancing their chances for promotion -something this participant had seen within their department.

'I think a lot of people are ignorant as to what is going on at the LSE in relation to these issues, and I guess it relates to the discussion around promotion being held at the senior level being confidential. This in my experience I suspect that there is a degree to which professorial senior staff have their favourites in term of people that they have worked with or people that they feel some kinship with. Therefore, they are more likely to encourage those people for promotion and into the higher salaried jobs. I do not have any actual proof, but I suspect that is the case, I have seen it in my department'

The issue of accountability and transparency was the key issue on these professors' meetings for the participants in the focus groups. Solutions included sharing of minutes of these meetings as well as a more structural rethink on the status of these meetings. The central theme was this must be re-examined and addressed as the process for promotion and progression for academic posts, as these two contributions highlight.

'I think the issue needs to be framed in terms of how to make the professors meetings more transparent, how the professors' groups can discharge their role in a more transparent way. I think the suggestion to the school, should be a rethink the role of the professor's meetings in making decisions, because, it seems like it is something from the 'Middle Ages''. Basically, there is a group of elders within the department that make these really important decisions behind closed doors, in terms of transparency this is very problematic'.

'The school and or the director of faculty has the right and the authority to change this situation and a reconsideration of the role that the professoriate has within each department in relation to promotions so the process is more transparent, this may mean have recorded minutes/ record of the meetings, there are lots of different ways but basically it needs to be addressed.'

To achieve transparency, the participants shared that information regarding a wide range of activities including the recruitment and retention of staff should be more open. They felt greater transparency enables accountability and would improve governance and strengthen the

democratic process within the LSE. This point was developed from an earlier point about the lack of transparency and accountability from the professorial meetings.

There were contributions and discussion about data and statistics that specifically covered recruitment, retention and progression that was identified as being available in the college, yet concern that this data was not being shared relevantly or widely for adequate examination of the problems that exist.

'On the LSE EDI committee when data in relation to diversity is presented in regard to casualised employment, pay equity it's often presented in a way that suggests that it's confidential and it some cases its specifically mentioned that the data is confidential. There have been approaches to try and communicate this information to heads of department, but the feeling I get in many instances is a reservation about the data being more widely available across the school. I think part of the problem between departments is that people are just not aware of some of these issues in term of the disproportionality that exists in term of hiring and retaining staff and salaries in particular'.

'I was at a meeting last week where in relation to research and policy staff, it was quite clear from the data that was presented that they are hiring a number of people at lower levels. There is very little promotion and retention rates are also low, this high turnover of staff picture is pictured within the statistics. As we have discussed it's quite often that these people are hired at lower grades not promoted or not encouraged to have any sort of avenue of moving up in terms of their careers. So, I think that data availability is an important issue that could be addressed and would allow for greater awareness of the problem as it exists'.

It was suggested that if this data was available then greater accountability, responsibility and momentum could be developed to look at actions that would address the disparities that exist for black and minoritised staff.

In addition, there was a strong feeling that processes or procedures for progression were unclear, and certainly not indicated by managers or supervisors. This situation was compounded with poor and unsupportive relationships with white managers. (referred to later in this report.

1.4 Position and status of black and minoritised staff

An insightful perspective on the position and status of black and minoritsed staff was highlighted in this contribution by a white female participant.

'When I joined the EDI committee I was shocked, as most of the discussion was around gender, and pay equity, which I agree is a problem, and I don't want to undermine it, but I feel like its playing violins when the Titanic is sinking". The major issue we are dealing with is the huge issue of academic parity, the department hires diverse fellows who do really great work, and they get relegated to secondary academic status where they are useful for teaching, and for the universities diverse research projects and then we don't hire them. I think the message we communicate is precarious; the relationship between casualised staff who in the main are people of colour and permanent staff being white, this relationship has to be addressed as well as the inequality at the upper echelons of staff and pay equality. The dynamic we create is people of colour are hired take on the unexpected higher workloads which allows people like me who don't have to teach as much so I can get promoted. And I think this has manifested because there has not been not been an intersectional perspective and the focus upon women has ended up being a focus upon white women which I am a beneficiary of – the solution is an intersectional perspective to race and class and non-white women.'

This contribution within the focus group was widely agreed with by the participants as the reality for black and minoritised staff in their respective areas. Highlighted points were of black and minoritised casualised staff being temporary whilst white staff were permanent, the difference in the teaching workloads between the two groups linked to different treatment in respect to the opportunity for promotion.

2. Implications for students of mainly white academic staff

Participants expressed their concern for the student experience given the poor representation of black and minoritised academic staff.

'What it's like to be a student of colour not to not see any representation from your teachers or the academics that you're taught by, also the amount of Labour that those academics of colour within our Department have to undertake, female women of colour who then within their office hours make time to talk to students that are experiencing issues because they're in this space that they see is very white, very elite'.

Concern was expressed about how the black and minoritised students interact, manage and navigate the white and middle-class environment of the university.

'UK, black, Asian and minority ethnic, whether that's men or women here find it difficult to navigate this University and I also think that intersects with kind of class as well or backgrounds. I mean, within our Department at undergraduate level, we have a really high proportion of students that

come through via widening participation. And, you know, it's such a hard place for them to navigate and they're just searching for someone who looks like them or they see some form of representation'.

The burden of this support and contact comes from staff from black and minoritised backgrounds and this is unrecognised by departmental management and the university in terms of progression. This then has consequences for student academic progression and creates limitations the students might have for themselves in academia.

'It's those academics of colour that take on that work. And then when we talk about promotions and stuff like that, promotions are still so fixed around your research and external grants and all of that stuff. And, you know, it's very hard to see where the other stuff that they're doing, this invisible work is being recognized. And then if students don't see themselves here, why are they going to carry on to a Masters or PhD or to apply to LSE to become an academic'.

As a result of representation of black and minoritised staff being low or absent in programmes, the participants expressed concern over the work and focus of decolonising curricula with the following example where this academic was asked in their view inappropriately to come and teach on a programme that their subject knowledge was not suited, simply because their subject incorporated the global south.

'My research is in India and from my perspective, I do research on business and traders, the economy and the informal economy. But I was approached to teach on development, even when It was clear that my work was on global international traders, the response was to teach on development. So, the idea that people who work in the global south, the way that the global south is related to through development is just deeply entrenched in all of these ways of teaching and throughout the programmes. I have tons of students coming from the global south to my office basically saying 'I feel like I came here to LSE to learn something, and what I am learning is that there is something wrong with my country'. I think we need a major look at the degree programme and the structure that leans towards creating a type of global expertise that is very neo- colonial'.

Whilst these focus groups did not have as a central focus the student experience staff were concerned of the implications and messages that all students were receiving from the teaching programmes.

3. Structures and space to discuss racism

The following contribution articulated a point that emerged in all three focus groups; that of the space and opportunity to discuss race and racism. The example shared here demonstrates the difficulties of discussion that is not considered and thought through and suggests the importance of facilitated discussions.

'The one thing that we are struggling with and I think it feeds into the institutional racist outcomes of the LSE structures, this isn't necessarily articulated within the process, practices and the schemes of the institution that are created to address the issues but it is really about the culture. It is about these implicit biases and it's about in our department, the ability to talk about race in a safe way. So, we have a couple of instances over the last year where we have been really trying to decolonise and broaden the curriculum, by bringing in diverse theorists, different cases into different courses and accommodating a very international interest, some courses are very successful at this and represent the international student body. We have a very diverse department compared to others perhaps like management and finance and it is still difficult to talk about race. We have had a couple of encounters in recent meeting where somebody has said an implicit bias and has been called out, but because we don't have any existing structures and we are all new so a culture of we are all together and we all like each other exists. This is true on one level, but this masks the tension that emerge because of race and racism within the department, whether it is intentional or unintentional. This means it is difficult to talk about issues and is very challenging for us as a department, this results in these interactions and meetings becoming tense personal, and defensive, which detracts from the organisational element of race and racism. As a department we need to be able to talk about racism within our own space if we are going to overcome it. I think the LSE needs to support departments to develop structures to facilitate this'.

One of the participants arranged a survey to explore with staff in the department a series of questions around EDI issues including; what they thought about EDI issues; what the challenges they faced; what would be the departments priorities. The survey went out to consultation to the staff which provoked, *'uncomfortable but necessary conversations about race within the department and we felt the conversation had started. In particular I was receiving emails from professors regarding recruitment and the challenges to recruit the best candidate verse the recruitment of black and minoritised community candidates which they called objective hiring. This confusion has highlighted the need for anti-racist training and spaces to have conversations about race and the intersectionality with gender, inequality and probably class'.*

'I think there is a need to have basic conversations about race, so that staff can express freely, be called out on them, so that it does not create a defensive negative feedback loop. An external person who can support this process of honest, open, challenging conversations'.

The focus group conversations touched upon the notion of whiteness and the dynamics of denial, defensiveness and distancing the issues away from any sense of responsibility or ownership.

'When a discussion about racism is raised within the department, often white staff members including me push the issue away somewhere else which locates the problem with Black people / people of colour. Such as; 'people of colour are not paid enough, black minoritised communities staff not given promotion, the problem is always away over there.'

A white participant shared the notion of white fragility and *the 'nervousness of white people to reflect upon their positions, to acknowledge and recognise, that historical racism, the privileges that has been offered to white people has shaped the opportunities both in terms of positions held, material gains and the opportunities to pursue academic careers. I think all of those things need to be looked at as part of the conversation about race. I get frustrated with white people who are sensitive and defensive about looking at racism. Racism is centuries old we white people are benefitting from the centuries of privilege, and we need to connect to this'.*

The dynamic of marginalisation was raised in relation to the participant organising the departmental survey to look at EDI issues as a lone voice and why the department had not positioned EDI in the centre of its priorities and operational agenda. Another participant drew a comparison with their department and shared that it was a requirement for all departments to have a formally constituted EDI committee and a requisite of who sits on it, such as; the chair of the departmental teaching committee and the department head. They went further to draw light that*, 'EDI can't be seen as a minor cultural concern that attends to a couple of conversations here and there, because it is about curriculum review and about recruitment procedures. The school has a responsibility to ensure that departments have a fully constituted EDI committee and what the remit is'.*

It appears there is a lack of consistency across the different schools, in terms of a constitution of EDI as a core operational responsibility and requirement under the formal policies of the LSE. This ambivalence is reflected within some departments and manifest itself in lack of clarity, priority and urgency, so the disparities in recruitment and within the curriculum are left unchallenged.

'In our department we agreed that the chair of EDI would sit in on the hiring procedures and would have the task of holding the department to account. The formalisation of this duty and responsibility across the department ensures it becomes part of the operational practice and not just left to a lone person with good will'.

Participants did not feel able to discuss the concerns they had raised in these focus group with their managers, this mainly centred around their managers being white, though one participant had not to date felt able to discuss their anxieties of racism with their black manager.

'To be honest, I haven't really been able to be open and talk to any of my managers about these concerns because I feel I don't know how to put it in any way they would understand'.

'I haven't really talked openly to my line manager, I don't think they would react very well and so I'm reluctant to discuss this with them'.

One participant speaking on behalf of security staff reported that they do not receive any supervision and were unsupported and could not think about raising concerns as their managers were so distant and remote from the security staff.

4. Exclusion and Isolation

Participants described how they were the only black and minoritised member of their teams, and described these working environments as being exhausting, isolating and that they often felt excluded.

'Being the only black person in my team to be honest, sometimes that's quite exhausting. I don't know how other people feel when you're in the room on your own because you cannot, you just don't have the same experiences {as white people}. People are not offensive or anything, but you just have no relation to those jokes because you don't have the same upbringing or you don't have the same context, that kind of thing. So, it does become very, very exhausting. Being the only person of colour and being the only person in Band six, there's no one else no-one in band 7 or above in my section they're all white.

'So, I feel like I'm like one of the very few Asian Chinese people within the whole division, … I think the culture of the jokes or what people talk about, perhaps I don't get the joke. You don't really feel like somehow, your part of the team and it's really difficult to sort of mix in with people…. Now I'm in the Department of …. I feel better in a way, because now within our Department, we actually have lots of training professors, although they are not professional service staff and they are more academic or do research. So, in a way, I feel like there is a bit of Chinese kind of community there, but I'm not quite part of it. So Yeah, I think it's kind of having a community at work and to feel part of it'.

Staff from black and minoritised communities felt like that they had to compromise who they are in terms of their identity and find ways to fit in which they realised was not possible.

'I think I have to switch off at work because you have to fit into the majority culture within that infrastructure. You kind of can't live as part of your own cultural identity or your identification as an individual. You have to try and fit in and we don't.

5. Raising concerns and complaints

The participants had little confidence in the intention and purpose of the formal complaint's procedure within the LSE, they remarked and shared experiences of the lack of consistency and satisfactions with the resolutions.

'I think there is a difficulty when people of colour raise concerns about race and racism as we become seen as the problem, the culture at the LSE creates a normalisation of the reality we are in an institutionally racist professional institution and department'.

'This point about feeling safe, feeling free to express a concern that you have been unfairly treated in your department particularly as a junior member of staff comes with considerable risk. It is very sensitive and nobody wants to be thought of or accused or believed to be in some way consciously or unconsciously biased and it's a strong allegation to make or imply. So, raising issues can be fearful, the risk of raising your head above the parapet can prejudice the professorship against you and you become in a structural vulnerable position as a junior member of staff who seeks the professoriate recommendation for promotion and other career related things'.

This lack of confidence in the formal complaint system, coupled with the level of risk black and minoritised staff felt they had to take to raise a concern and complaint and managing the consequential tensions and divisions this creates within departments was very stressful for them.

'It is very difficult and comes with considerable risk if you bring a complaint formally within LSE complaint system. The process is adversarial by nature so if you bring a complaint of this nature it forces members of your department to take positions and sides. The Director of HR sits on formal complaint panel and acts as advisor to the panel members and they are also present to represent the school. So, there a kind of institutional conflict of interest to which these panels operate in. These division further isolate black and minoritised staff, and compound the feelings of isolation'.

One participant shared that during lockdown it was only really black and minoritised staff who came in, (cleaners, security and porters) and this was voluntary, it was agreed they would work 3 days on and 3 days off. However, the line manager said they needed to work the whole week, though this was not what was agreed and further they were encouraged to take annual leave if they wanted time off. They felt they were treated very badly and requested to be treated equally.

The worrying aspect of this example was that these staff were afraid to speak up and some did not even see the value of attending this focus group meeting. It was pointed out that the cleaners were not at work now. One participant commented; '*staff don't understand the system and have given up trying to change things'*.

One case shared by a participant demonstrated a situation where a culture of complaints towards black and minoritised staff consistently took place.

The findings from an investigation by a security manager into heightened level of complaints made against two black women security reception staff, found no evidence of 'inappropriate dialogue or behaviour that acted beyond their remit of their role'. However, the investigation did draw light to students, members of the public and school communities refusing to abide by instructions from these staff and yet accede to instructions from white male staff. The investigation also found that complainants underlying message was that they felt their status had been challenged, by a security member of staff interacting with them which they considered insufficiently deferential.

The findings also showed that race and gender were factors in the increased level of confrontation and complaint that black and minoritised communities are subjected to within the roles of providing direction and instruction. The manager also referred to the robust training and support in customer services approaches that security staff had been given. In conclusion to the investigation the manager said they did not believe the problem lies with the security staff and was concerned about them feeling vulnerable to further confrontation and illegitimate grievances. Since this intervention there had not been any complaints in 1.5 years.

6. The importance of engaging white colleagues' contribution and responsibility

Contributions from white participants were illuminating in their struggle to move race equality forward, whilst being confused and unclear about how to begin or what to do. This participant was acutely aware of their own responsibility and that of their white colleagues to be proactive on how to address racism, yet aware that there had been a 'lots of talk' and wanting to avoid 'burdening the same people who had been burdened. This participant also recognised colleagues who were not proactively engaging with this discussion. This powerful contribution articulates these points.

I just think, you know, us as white colleagues, we need to be doing more. I think the Labour can't just be on our colleagues of colour. But to be honest with you, I don't know how I go about it listening to both of your experiences. [Two black and minoritised participants had just expressed their experiences of racism]. I'm a manager, you know, and I want myself to feel open to be able to discuss, you know, issues with me and stuff like that. But also, I need to be proactive about that. And I guess it's just how you start having those conversations, you know, what is it that you can actually do to make, you know, even fix things locally with your own area, your own team? How do you make that more inclusive? And I'm just conscious that given BLM movement and everything, there's already been lots of conversations, lots of talk. There's already quite a lot of trauma or Labour that's gone into this.

And again, I don't want to be another one going, Okay, Let's sit down. Tell me what you know, but at the same time, I want to do this stuff. So, I think consciously unconsciously, I feel a bit like, you know, I want to address this stuff, but I don't want to burden the same people that already been burdened. But also, I haven't got the answers unless I can't put things into place unless I can do that. And I also think that as white colleagues, we need to get those ones that aren't in these groups, aren't filling out the surveys, aren't proactively trying to do this stuff.

How do we reach those people that, you know, it's one thing to be having to want to try and be an ally and try and help be part of the solution? But also, there's a lot of people that aren't in these rooms, and I feel like they're the ones as well that we really need to be getting. If we want to make a proper culture organizational change, how do we do that?

The activities and work of the Black, Asian and minority staff network, Embrace, was shared at a focus group connected to the discussion on the onus for people of colour to be burdened with driving race equality work forward. The work of this group was felt to be valuable, making a difference and impact for Black, Asian and minority staff. Specifically, participants involved identified the mentoring project as being '*a breath of fresh air'*. At the same time participants identified this group as having to do the burden of the positive work around race equality responding to the effects of racism within the organisation for black and minoritised staff.

7. Leadership

The quality of leadership within the Schools was a concern for the participants in particular in relation to equality and inclusion with the avoidance from many professors, who in some cases it appears to actively '*shoot down'* the concerns and/or feel uncomfortable dealing with them. This type of leadership with a neglect for any robust response has a direct impact on decision making

with regard to recruitment, decolonising the curriculum and expertise and sensitivity in being able to engage people in discussion on race and racism.

'A young Black woman was making a presentation on decolonising the curriculum in a department meeting when a professor yelled - saying decolonising the curriculum was stupid. Professor's hold considerable power and influence and I think they have a vested interest in pushing this under the rug. In our department we have no permanent black faculty members'.

'I think it's incumbent on the schools' to establish a set of annual protocols that the departments are obliged to act upon; such as policies and procedures around hiring in relation to race equality, the curriculum for example we are reviewing the masters programme, which is going to take two to three years. Departments have to make a commitment; however, it is evident that for some it is clearly going to be impossible to make this commitment unless the instruction comes down the line from the Schools. The expectation must be a review of the curriculum at undergraduate, postgrad and PhD levels and there is a direction to this from the highest echelons of the LSE'.

It appears operationally within the departments there is mis-match with the strategic directives of the LSE and the delivery within departments as it appears, they are left to interpret and implement them at their own discretion. The departments power relations; operational cultural norms and the histories acts as barriers to change.

'It is difficult to expect the impetus for change to come from within the departments themselves, especially given the power structure and the concentration of that power in the hands of the professors; there is an intrinsic conflict of interest and the raising of sensitive issues around race will require external channels to manage these power dynamics.'

'I think there is really good initiative's from the level below management, however I think the management tend to homogenise conservative ideas as the composition tends to be mainly white men'.

The confidence in the current existing structures in manging, enforcing, responding to race and EDI issues was low among the participants, in particular the tribunal system with its reliance upon an adversarial and formal adjudication process. Participants tended towards a mediation process with an external expertise body / person to navigate the complexities and the legal requirements of the Equality Legislation and the nuances and power dynamics of institutional racism.

'I would like to suggest we look at developing an informal process with members outside of the department and examine the concerns/ grievances, before moving to a formal mediation process as an alternative to the tribunal process.'

The groups were unified in wanting to see more direction from central senior management of the school and a commitment to the implementation of operational standards around EDI. This level of transparency and accountability they felt may challenge the institutional power of the professoriate and external bodies could offer fresh, reflective views and experience. There was a strong support in adopting an experiential facilitative challenge and style of external support which would enable departments to change and develop.

'I recognise it is difficult to bring change about within a department, but I also recognise the over reliance upon existing support and guidance can contribute to the department becoming dependant and resistance to change. I am convinced that the only thing to do is to learn how to talk about racism and to put your head in the space of someone else who is on the receiving end of racism. Also, to be in the space, have the conversation with the person you have done something too and maybe you didn't realise was insulting or offensive and until you have the conversation you can't learn, this needs independent people to help us begin to have these conversations'.

'It's all about what to do differently; somebody gives you a process, you do the process, and think about why; so, this kind of deliberative, self-reflection, that supports mutual respectful conversations. If this happened on a regular basis in a structured way this would be useful. This approach and style could be cascaded across and down into departments, I think this would be helpful and fascinating, I don't think any of us are on our own on this. Having long conversations and reflecting creates a culture of mutual respect'.

Conclusion

The contributions, shared experiences and embodied insights the staff have shared within this focus group process have deep significance, relevance and importance for the LSE and the development of Equality Diversity and Inclusion across the Schools and Departments.

Moving forward and using this report as a springboard, the recommendations that staff have contributed that are integrated throughout each section are valuable and need full consideration. In particular the suggestions that each department open up space to have structured conversations that are facilitated by an external body so that the cultural bias, organisational

norms and power dynamics are able to be challenged and reconstructed aligning with the LSE, EDI strategic plan.

The notion of '*being in the shoes of the other'*, is a powerful, sustainable and reformatory process in bringing about change at the personal, professional and organisational level. The quote from a staff member embodies this, *'I am convinced that the only thing to do is to learn how to talk about racism and to put your head in the space of someone else who is on the receiving end of racism*'.