

Working to improve recruitment and retention of teachers from minority ethnic groups in Nottingham.

A discussion of a TTA funded project

Introduction

At a joint TTA/CRE conference in 1998 Anthea Millett described the situation in recruiting and retaining high quality teachers from the minority ethnic communities as 'critical'. Her main fear was the lack of positive role models within schools which could lead to feelings of disillusionment and exclusion in many of Britain's young people. The importance of this issue was highlighted in the report 'Teaching in Multi-Ethnic Britain', a joint report by the Teacher Training Agency and The Commission For Racial Equality. This report particularly encouraged joint agency approaches by ITT providers, schools and Local Education Authorities.

The Education Authority in Nottingham City, The University of Nottingham, Nottingham Trent University and Positive Action Training and Recruitment Agency (PATRA) have been working together to support recruitment initiatives in particular through the running of taster courses for ethnic minority communities in Nottingham. The partnership brings a range of areas of expertise together which can support the recruitment and retention of teachers from minority ethnic groups. The LEA offers an overview of current provision and a critical vision of future possibilities. The two universities offer skills and experience in initial teacher training. In addition Nottingham Trent University brings the experience of its Progression Partnerships scheme which with the support of three Training and Enterprise Councils and local businesses such as Boots and Nottingham Forest football Club works in over 50 local schools to raise aspirations and achievement and to broaden career horizons. Finally PATRA has experience of working with the local Nottingham communities, the organisation has built up considerable expertise in supporting minority ethnic people in the work place as well as in the training of mentors to work with potential employees. PATRA also has a large database of skilled applicants which could be drawn on to encourage applications into teaching and runs a large careers fair annually.

The strategy outlined below was designed to provide a key worker in Nottingham who would support the TTA strategy for teacher supply and recruitment.

Current Barriers for Minority Ethnic Applicants to Teacher Training

Research reported at the joint 1998 CRE/TTA conference supported by research carried out by Community Liaison officers at the University of Nottingham during 1997 and 1998 reported the following as factors which mitigate against applicants to teaching from minority ethnic groups;

- *It is more difficult for applicants from minority ethnic groups to secure places on ITT courses than white students with equivalent qualifications,*

- *Non-traditional routes are necessary, as many applicants from minority ethnic groups have not followed 'traditional' routes in further and higher education,*
- *Some students from minority ethnic groups have had negative experiences of schooling and may not see education as an attractive or supportive career,*
- *The career progression for teachers from minority ethnic groups is difficult. These groups are over represented in unemployment statistics and under represented in management positions,*
- *There is a danger of feelings of isolation in a predominantly white work force,*
- *Family and personal aspirations see teaching as a low status career,*
- *The invisibility of minority ethnic culture within school curricula can make teaching appear unattractive.*

Action to overcome the barriers

The key worker in Nottingham works to overcome these barriers in three ways. Through *Raising Issues*, securing a range of *Pathways to Teaching*, and working to *Embed Change*. The range of responsibilities the key worker include:

Raising Issues

Liaison and development work: working with the ITT providers, the LEA and Government agencies the worker would ensure that all communities in Nottingham were aware of the advantages of teaching as a career, the different entry routes into teaching and would support applicants in the application and interview process. This would include co-ordination of taster events and careers events.

Outcomes

Creation of pack outlining possible routes into teaching with clear reference to the pathways on offer in the Nottingham area. This information shared at a range of community events. Bids to relevant bodies for a range of taster events during 2,000/2,001.

Pathways to Teaching

Identifying target groups: working with specific groups already identified within the city to find the most appropriate ways of securing qualified teacher status for these groups. Such groups would include bilingual assistants, classroom support workers, teachers holding qualifications from abroad.

Access and Support: working with ITT providers to develop access routes for applicants from non-traditional backgrounds and to set up systems of support for these students within ITT institutions.

Innovative projects: working to develop routes such as the Graduate teacher programme or SCITT schemes to allow marginalised groups to secure QTS.

Outcomes

Co-ordination of meetings between target groups and ITT providers to move forward on the development of appropriate ITT course

Embedding Change

Co-ordinating initiatives: setting up mentoring groups, teacher support groups and student support groups to constantly evaluate the position of teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds. To co-ordinate the use of existing teachers from ethnic minorities to act as mentors, promoters of teaching and for one to one counseling.

Evaluation and monitoring: setting up systems to track successful applicants through and beyond ITT to constantly evaluate the effect of the project.

Outcomes

The creation of a data base of teachers willing to take part in mentoring initiatives and those successful trainees from previous years.

Management of Project

The project is located at The University of Nottingham and managed by a steering group comprising the partners named on the bid with two co-opted representatives from the minority ethnic communities in Nottingham.

The hope in placing this information on the web is that other LEAs and ITE providers can use it as a model to inform their own initiatives. It is envisaged that an annual report from the key worker can be placed on the web to keep you updated on developments and progress

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