**Paper Proposal**

*6th Equality Diversity and Inclusion Conference 2013*

‘Management, Leadership and Diversity’

Stream 10: Creating leaders through the eyes of ‘Whiteness’

Athens University of Economics and Business, Greece

1 - 3 July 2013

**The lived experiences of male educational leaders of African-Caribbean heritage: A critique of the epistemological basis of educational leadership preparation and development programmes**

**Phillip A Smith**

**University of Warwick, UK**

**Email:** [**Phillip.smith@btinternet.com**](mailto:Phillip.smith@btinternet.com)

**ABSTRACT**

In 1982, Carlton Duncan became Britain’s first secondary school headteacher of African-Caribbean heritage[[1]](#footnote-1) when he was appointed to headship of a secondary upper school in Bradford, England. More than thirty years later, of a total of 3,600 headteachers in publicly funded secondary schools and academies in England, only 10 (0.28%) are Black-Caribbean men. Similar under-representation exists within other senior leadership positions. 62 (0.70%) of a total of 17,600 deputies and assistant heads in a secondary phased maintained school or academy are men who self define as Black-Caribbean. Under-representation of male educational leaders of African-Caribbean heritage is also evident in the paucity of research or any substantial discourse on their lived experience and contributions to educational leadership praxis.

This paper explores the nature of a paradigm of critical educational research and race-based epistemology, specifically through the use of the concept of critical race theory (CRT) and its place and applicability in education policy formulation and enactment.

The paper explores the core tenets of CRT as implied throughout the discourse and narrative on under-representation of male educational leaders of African-Caribbean heritage within the English education system, based on research with male African-Caribbean heritage secondary school leaders in London. Particular consideration is given to the use of the CRT phenomena to challenge the essentialism that homogenises individuals from the African Diaspora into an all-encompassing category of ‘Black’.

Underpinning the paper is the utility of culturally congruent diagnostic tools and approaches to inquiry, and the issue of researcher identity and in particular cultural and ethnic background in relation to those being researched. Through the use of a two-phase research design consisting of a background information questionnaire and narrative / life history inquiry using a semi-structured interview approach, the author examines the experiences and perceptions of eight male leaders of African-Caribbean heritage in headship or senior leadership positions in London secondary schools.

The findings in the paper illustrate ways in which the everyday lives and career experiences of male educational leaders of African-Caribbean heritage present a counter narrative of the normative ‘mono-cultural, Eurocentric’ discourse and paradigms of educational leadership preparation and development. The findings make several contributions to the current literature, and provide additional evidence to suggest that the knowledge claims presented in educational leadership and management epistemology are essentially a study of ‘Whiteness’ with inherent assumptions of the characteristics of the senior educational leader, as being white, middle class and male that results in an alienating ethos where research study, praxis, analysis and interpretation favours the dominant White culture.

The paper concludes that educational research and policy attempting to address the under-representation of male African-Caribbean leaders would benefit from the use of race-based epistemology and more culturally specific research, the use of cultural knowledge’s and colour conscious paradigms of educational leadership and leadership development approaches as they relate to supporting the leadership preparation and development of male African-Caribbean leaders.

*Word count: 513 words*

**BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT**

Phillip Smith is an experienced senior educational management professional and leader with a 30 year career and significant experience in both leading and facilitating service improvements, and strategic and transformational change within the public state-maintained education sector. This has been across a number of local authorities, schools and academies, and not-for-profit sector organisations in both urban and rural areas across the UK. Phillip is currently Project Development Director for a secondary maintained Academy in Dorset, England.

He has a thorough understanding of and direct experience of the modernisation of public services agenda, increased marketisation of education, school turnaround leadership, and national and local public policy formulation and enactment (strategic and operational) in respect of the current and future provision of education, academia, and life-long learning. This has enabled him to develop the knowledge and expertise to effectively contribute to the delivery of improved educational outcomes, increased levels of student attainment, and narrowing of achievement gaps across different and diverse cohorts of student groups.

Phillip completed an MBA (Public Services) at Warwick Business School, University of Warwick, UK in 2012 where he completed substantive research as part of his dissertation on *‘succession* *planning in London secondary schools: implications for male African-Caribbean leaders'.* In order to widen his knowledge base in education, Phillip has decided to pursue an MA in Policy Studies in Education at the Institute of Education, University of London.

He will be embarking on a Ph.D. programme in Educational Leadership in 2013 focussing on educational leadership preparation, leadership development and praxis; critical theories within education; urban education; and social policy as it relates to male leaders and educators from the African Diaspora.

Further to his professional and academic track record and achievements, Phillip has significant volunteering experiences of working as a mentor with African or Caribbean heritage boys and young men between the ages of 11 and 18.

Phillip is a member of a number of national and international professional organisations and associations including the Critical Race Studies in Education Association (CRSEASSOC), the British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society (BELMAS), Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain (PESGB), the British Educational Research Association (BERA), and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated.

1. The term ‘African-Caribbean heritage’ refers to African Diasporan populations with Caribbean heritage, currently residing in the UK. For the purposes of this paper, the term may be used interchangeably with ‘Black-Caribbean’, ‘Black-British’, ‘Black’, or other similar derivations. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)