**Doctoral Colloquium**

**9th Equality, Diversity and Inclusion International Conference (EDI)**

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**Race equality and black staff in UK higher education institutions: An exploration of barriers to progress.**

**Abstract**

A diverse workforce is crucial to innovation and creativity in organisations (Özbiligin and Tatli, 2011), yet evidence continues to show that Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) staff are under-represented in UK higher education (ECU, 2015). This is despite the year-on-year increase in the ethnic diversity of the student population in higher education. Since 2003/4 the proportion of BME students has increased from 14.9% to 20.2% in 2013/14 (ECU, 2015). In contrast, the proportion of BME staff in higher education institutions has only increased from 4.8% in 2003/4 to 6.7% in 2013/14.

The slow diversification of the higher education workforce has attracted studies and media attention highlighting the continued recruitment of BME staff at lower levels of the academy, yet the outcomes differ according to different ethnic groups (Singh and Kwahli, 2015; ECU, 2015). Latest statistics show that of UK black academic staff, 4.5% are professors, compared to 11.2% of all white academic staff (ECU, 2015). In relation to pay, 19.7% of white academic staff earned in the top academic pay spine range of £57,032 and above compared to only 8.9% of black UK academic staff in this pay spine.

In addition to under-representation, the lived experiences of BME staff do not match the strategies and policies implemented to address race equality in higher education institutions These strategies and policies are failing to address the underlying factors of workplace inequality; there are ‘powerful and opaque informal systems’ (Healy et al 2011: 2) at play that shape equality practices in the workplace.

Taking a qualitative approach, the aim of this Doctoral research is to explore the extent to which white hegemonic structures impact black academic staff in their pursuit for equality of opportunity. The study will explore the development, implementation and advancement of race equality in higher education.

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