How access agreements engage with research to support BME student success: *getting out of the gap*.

Dr Alex Wardrop

Widening Participation Conference: HE: Transforming lives through life-wide learning?, 27-28 April 2016, Milton Keynes

Bournemouth University's Fair Access Research: together for widening participation

"Hopefulness empowers us to continue to work for justice even as the forces of injustice may gain power for a time … Educating is always a vocation rooted in hopefulness"

***hooks (2003: xiv)*.**

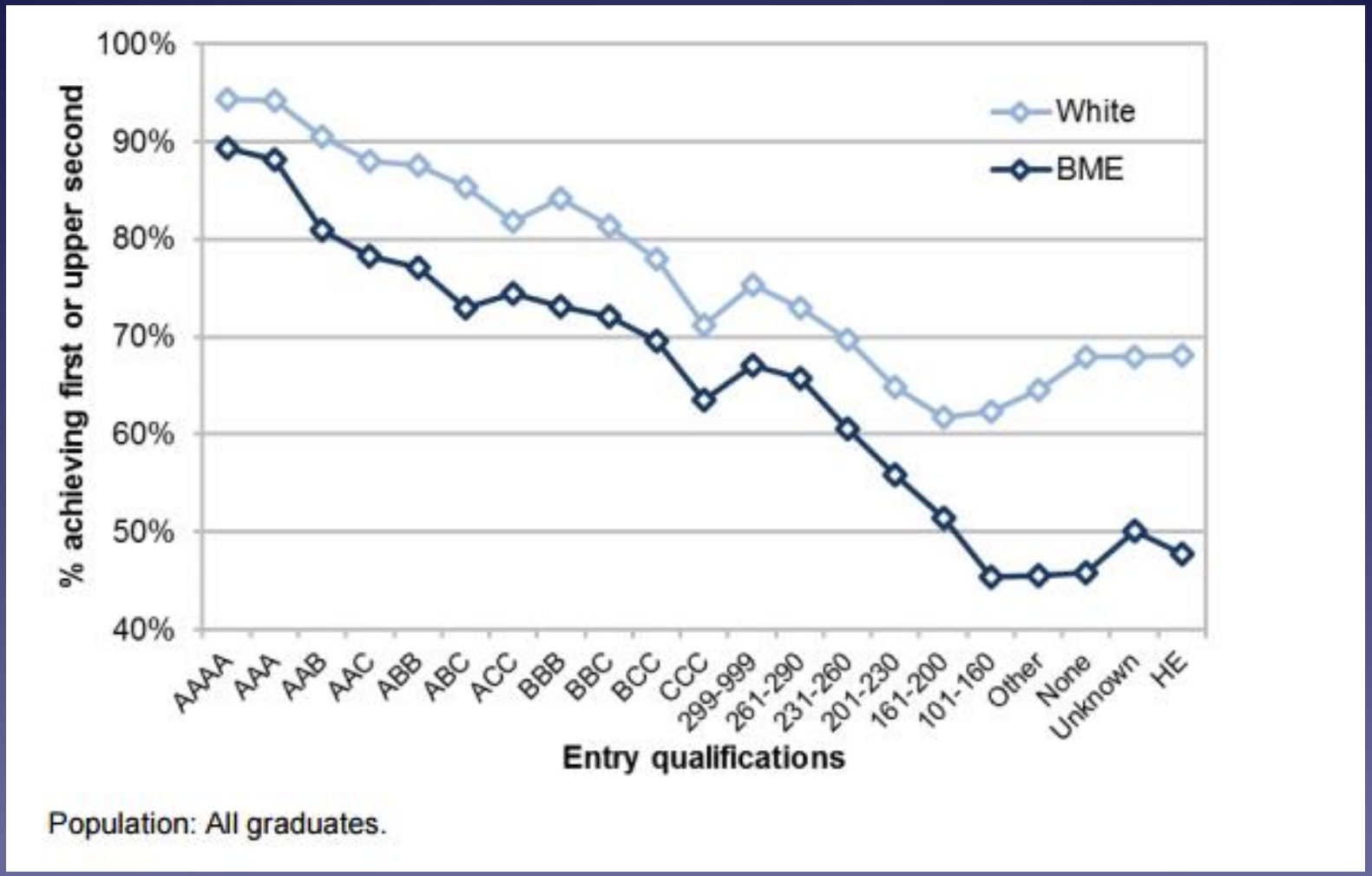
"Where possible, you should ensure you are making full use of the expertise within your institution – for example, by building a community of academics and researchers to enhance your understanding of effective practice and impact through collaborative research, monitoring and evaluation. We would also encourage you to contribute to the sector's understanding of effective practice by delivering research, and sharing your findings"

(OFFA, 2016: 5).

"Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education?...

Adopting and adapting CRT as a framework for educational equity means that we will have to expose racism in education and propose radical solutions for addressing it. We will have to take bold and sometimes unpopular positions"

(Ladson-Billings, 1998: 22)



Taken from HEFCE (2015: 21)

References to research activity: 2014-15 through to 2016-17

Access agreement academic year	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Institutions engaging in research or analysis to support BME student experiences	16	21	26
Proportion of total annual access agreements	10%	12%	14%

Access agreement academic year	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Institutions engaging in research or analysis to support BME student experiences	16	21	26
References to student success	6	6	8

"… there is no racialised gap in attainment, but rather a racialised gap in belonging" (~~Coleman, 2015: 3~~)

"In relation to the BME attainment gap, a review of the literature and a more detailed analysis of the BME data (for example, identify which BME groups are under-attaining, which courses they are on, and other variables involved)" **[2015-16 access agreement]**

"we will commission research into retention rates of under-represented groups, with a particular focus on Black and minority ethnic students" **[2015-16 access agreement]**

"Our analysis shows that our BME students are less likely to graduate with good degree (60% compared with 79%) and are slightly more likely to withdraw from their course" **[2015-16 access agreement]**

"…we have identified that we have an ethnicity attainment gap between our UK-domiciled White and BME students, which we are committed to reducing by 2017. A University-wide working group will enable us to take this work forward. By engaging closely with the sector and other HEIs we keep abreast of latest research and findings and share best practice with other HEIs in steps taken to address attainment differences" **[2015-16 access agreement]**

“Academics present themselves as guardians of a space that highlights liberal sentiments, progressive values and a commitment to meritocracy. Many regard their “seats of learning” as places that challenge inequalities and injustice. But this is clearly not always the case in reality”

(Bhopal, 2015)

“this non-performativity is what makes them useful as tools; they can be used by practitioners precisely insofar as they fail to describe or produce what is ‘on going’ …

such documents can be used as supportive devices, by exposing gaps between words and deeds. This is not to say we should not be critical in the hope invested in such documents. We must be critical. At the same time, we must also consider how such documents circulate …

Following documents around begins with an uncertainty about what these documents will do. They might, at certain points, even cause trouble”

(Ahmed, 2006; see also 2012).

“A profound cynicism is at the core of dominator culture wherever it prevails in the world. At this time in our lives, citizens around the world feel touched by death-dealing cynicism that normalizes violence, makes war and tells us peace is not possible”

(hooks, 2003: 11).

*"The research is focussing on the **experiences and views of BME students** on peer mentoring, as well as, their general experiences of **being a BME student**… there will be a website dedicated to supporting the success of BME students.. followed by a website for academics and other staff on how to better support BME students and narrowing the gap"* **[2015-16 access agreement]**

*"The BME Student Success project group, led by the Vice Principal (Education), has been meeting to review relevant quantitative data, develop a strategy for obtaining fresh qualitative data from … BME students about their experiences, (via a series of **focus groups conducted by trained BME student researchers**)…A dedicated BME student attainment officer has been recruited to lead on the project... We expect these will focus around the themes of learning, teaching and assessment; awareness raising; and improving the representation/visibility of BME staff"* **[2016-17 access agreement]**

*"Data interrogation to identify attainment differentials will continue and will include analysis of assessment type, student **survey** results … and ethnicity variables"* **[2016-17 access agreement]**

*"The University will continue to explore and to address any disproportionate impacts relating to appeals, particularly relating to Asian male students. This will be done through data analysis and **focus group work**, and the implementation will be carried out by Registry working in partnership with academic schools and with the Student Union"* **[2016-17 access agreement]**