

RUNNYMEDE



**The Runnymede Trust  
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**THE RUNNYMEDE TRUST RESPONSE TO  
Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances  
The Implications for Race Equality Consultation**

**27<sup>th</sup> October 2006**

We are grateful to be provided with the opportunity to submit our views on the Further Education White Paper Race Equality Impact Assessment.

The Runnymede Trust is an independent policy research organisation focusing on equality and justice through the promotion of a successful multi-ethnic society.

Our mandate is to promote a successful multi-ethnic Britain – a Britain where citizens and communities feel valued, enjoy equal opportunities to develop their talents, lead fulfilling lives and accept a collective responsibility, all in the spirit of civic friendship, shared identity and a common sense of belonging. Runnymede has been active in the field of education for many years. Within our current education programme we devise and promote practical strategies for use in the classroom and, at community level, we aim to address and support the specific needs of minority ethnic young people. Further we focus on identifying, sustaining and augmenting improvements in race equality and social cohesion in the changing terrain of education policy and practice

We broadly welcome the main aims of plans to reform the Further Education Sector, particularly that which relates to increasing the staying on rates of pupils post-16, and overall participation of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups. We are equally supportive of proposals to create better links between participation within further education, acquisition of skills/knowledge and overall employability as this will do much to impact upon educational and social exclusion for specific BME young people. Rather than provide a comprehensive response to these plans we would like to provide comment on the following areas:

- **More personalised learning**

Personalised learning proposals rightly note the high unemployment rates among BME groups. It is important that such proposals take into account the sorts of course choices made by young people from these groups, and provide wide ranging advice that enables them to select courses which are not only of a vocational nature. It is well documented that young people from some BME backgrounds not only underachieve at GCSE level<sup>1</sup> but are also more likely to be found in underperforming, and undersubscribed schools, many of which may not have sixth form facilities. It is therefore imperative that they are not only encouraged, as is central to the White paper, to participate in further education (and indeed to apply to the increased number of sixth form colleges as proposed within the White paper), but that they also select course choices that may move them not only into employment, but into higher education (HE), if they so wish. Further education provision should not be restricted to skill acquisition and should thus form part of proposals to improve widening HE participation.

- **Reform to initial teacher training**

Research has noted that increased attention should be paid to initial Teacher Training course content, specifically in relation to ensuring courses include sufficient examination of matters to do with race equality and that course materials prepare students well for working with ethnically diverse student groups.<sup>2</sup> We would argue that these are certainly matters for consideration within White paper proposals to reform initial training for FE staff and plans should extend beyond the regulation of teaching qualification

- **Improvement of the recruitment and retention of BME staff and promotion of equality and a more diverse workforce**

We broadly welcome plans to extend ethnic monitoring of BME staff at all levels within FE, especially that related to staff who work within adult and community learning and work based learning given how little is known about staff numbers in these areas. In order to improve both recruitment and retention of BME teachers in FE however proposals should move beyond increasing ethnic monitoring of applicants to developing ways of making the profession more attractive to more diverse groups at FE student level.

- **Eliminating underperformance**

As far as possible, and given that BME learners may be disproportionately located in FE colleges that are deemed to be unsatisfactory (which in turn may relate to the geographical areas in which these colleges are situated), any plans to close these colleges should take into consideration the impact that such closure may have on BME learning progression, ie the likelihood that closure may increase drop-out rates given that some BME students may fail to continue with studies elsewhere. Any plans to source alternative providers in areas where 'good or satisfactory' provision may be limited, either due to numbers of colleges, or standards of those available, should include the possibility that alternatives may be few, or where alternatives are found, ensure that these are local to account for the financial as well as family needs of

<sup>1</sup> *Statistics of Education: Trends in Attainment Gaps, 2006*, DfES/ONS, <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SBU/b000665/Bweb01-2006.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> *Black Teachers in London, 2006*, Greater London Authority

students. Research has shown that when choosing both higher education institutions<sup>3</sup> as well as secondary schools<sup>4</sup>, some BME individuals are more likely to choose those that are more local to their homes

We hope that these comments provide a useful contribution to the Further Education consultation process and look forward to reading the full Race Equality Impact Assessment once published.

Yours sincerely

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<sup>3</sup> *Degrees of Choice: social class, race and gender in higher education*, 2005, Reay, D

<sup>4</sup> *School Choice & Ethnic Segregation*, 2006, The Runnymede Trust (forthcoming)