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BRIDGING THE GAP

OF UNDERSTANDING

2019 The Peter Mitchell Churchill Fellowship to investigate *ways in which Africans have been integrated in other Western multicultural societies.*

Report by Adongwot Manyoul, Churchill Fellow Awarded by Winston Churchill Memorial Trust

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Signed:

Adongwot Manyoul

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Winston Churchill Trust for granting me the invaluable opportunity to travel the world and seek answers and knowledge-sharing opportunities that will help me better serve and support the African-Australian community within Australia.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to educator Katie Habgood for recognising my potential early on during my arrival in Melbourne and for her unwavering encouragement and support throughout the application process.

I am also deeply grateful to Keith Waters, CEO of Youth Development Australia, for presenting me with the opportunity to connect with the Australian Education Union, which facilitated my interactions with various Teachers Union members across the globe. Special thanks to Education International in Belgium, NASUWT around the UK, and the National Education Association (NEA) in the US for their willingness to engage and share insights. I am also indebted to Pasi Sahlberg, a world-renowned Finnish educator, author, and scholar, who provided invaluable support in establishing connections with Finnish educators during my travels.

I would like to express my appreciation to my mentors, Liss Gabb - Vichealth Social Connection and Mental Wellbeing Manager, and Laura Jennings- Director of The Sage Collective, for providing me with safe spaces to exchange ideas and for continuously holding me accountable in my endeavours.

I am deeply grateful to my family for instilling in me the confidence to speak up for the voiceless, even when my own voice trembles. A special mention goes to my father, who nurtured my curiosity and taught me the importance of continuously seeking knowledge and advocating for the community.

To my friends who pushed me beyond my imposter syndrome and offered words of encouragement when I needed them the most, I am truly thankful. A special thank you, particularly to my brilliant friend and sister, Nyibeny Naam for the unwavering support and belief not only in me but in this project, for volunteering hours editing, reading, and challenging me to achieve my best work.

Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to everyone I had the privilege of meeting, both formally and informally, whether virtually or in person. This research would not have been possible without your openness and honesty in discussing the shortcomings within the education system and the ongoing initiatives aimed at addressing them.

In 2019, at the age of 25, I was honoured to receive the Peter Mitchell Fellowship, a prestigious accolade awarded to individuals of exceptional promise and talent. As a young African-Australian woman, I understood deeply the significance this moment had - not just for me but for my community. My journey, shaped by the fusion of my South Sudanese roots and Australian upbringing, has not been without its difficulties. Navigating the balance between upholding my traditional culture and embracing the Western world has been a perpetual juggling act, where successes and setbacks intertwine. This, undoubtedly, was and is a moment of triumph and great responsibility. One that I do not take lightly or for granted.

Motivated by this purpose, I embarked on this Fellowship to investigate how other Western societies have successfully integrated the African Diaspora and addressed issues around racism and discrimination. My focus was the education system, a crucial foundation for every child's future. Having experienced the Australian education system firsthand, from primary school to university; and dealt with racism and discrimination - in various forms - at each of these stages. I intimately understand the challenges faced by black and minority students. These struggles are not unique to me; it is shared by countless others who have felt the sting of marginalization, discrimination and ultimately, disengagement.

Through my research, I seek to affect change in policy, and more importantly, to influence hearts and minds of the ever-growing multicultural Australian society. My ultimate vision is to create harmony, empathy and understanding within Australian society, where every person feels valued, respected, and welcomed. By analysing the education system and drawing on examples of best practice, I aim to break the cycle of disengagement and increase active citizenship and positive contribution of African- Australian youth in the wider community.

I share my story with the hope to inspire and empower others. It is a testament to the belief that passion and purpose can guide our paths and open doors we never imagined possible. To all those who may gain insight and inspiration from my journey, I extend an invitation to join hands as we strive for a future where diversity is celebrated and embraced.

INTRODUCTION

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KEY WORDS

Policy Transfer: The process by which policies, strategies, or practices from one context, region, or institution are adopted, adapted, or transferred to another, often to address similar issues or challenges [i].

Racism: A belief system or ideology that promotes the notion of one race's superiority over others, leading to discriminatory behaviours, prejudices, or biases based on racial differences. Racism can manifest on individual, systemic, and institutional levels [v].

Colour-Blind: A term often used to describe the practice or ideology that disregards racial or ethnic differences, aiming to treat everyone equally without acknowledging or considering their racial backgrounds or identities. However, it can also be criticised for overlooking systemic racial disparities or inequalities [ii].

Decolonising Curriculum: The process of reevaluating and restructuring educational materials, content, and perspectives to challenge or remove the colonial biases, perspectives, and influences, ensuring a more inclusive and accurate representation of diverse cultures, histories, and experiences [iii].

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: An educational approach that recognises and incorporates diverse cultural backgrounds, experiences, and contexts into teaching methodologies. It aims to make the learning process more engaging, relatable, and effective by integrating students' cultural identities and experiences into the curriculum [iv].

Racial Bias: Preconceived or unjust attitudes, stereotypes, or preferences held towards individuals or groups based on their race. Racial bias can influence perceptions, decisions, and actions, often leading to unfair treatment or discrimination [vi].

Anti-Racism: The active and intentional effort to challenge and combat racism in all its forms. Anti-racism involves advocating for racial equality, dismantling systemic racism, and actively opposing discriminatory practices or beliefs [vii].

Black/African: Terms used to identify people of African descent, acknowledging diverse cultural, ethnic, and national backgrounds within the African diaspora. It refers to individuals whose heritage or ancestry traces back to African countries or regions [viii].

Minority: A term denoting a group or community that holds less political, social, or economic power within a particular society. It typically refers to a group that is numerically smaller or has less influence compared to the dominant or majority group. However, "minority" status can vary across different contexts and regions [ix].

ABBREVIATION GLOSSARY

|	
NEA	National Education Association
NASUWT	National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers
UoB	University of Birmingham
OFsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
EAL/D	English as an Additional Language or Dialec

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Reported by Adongwot Manyoul, Churchill Fellow

2019 The Peter Mitchell Churchill Fellowship to investigate ways in which Africans have been integrated in other Western multicultural societies.

Awarded by Winston Churchill Memorial Trust

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9.1 Cultural Diversity Statistics in Australia

Australia is deemed one of the most multicultural nations in the world. According to the 2021 Australian Census:

Over 7 million

people recorded were born overseas and first and generation immigrants

making up **over** **50%** of the **population**.
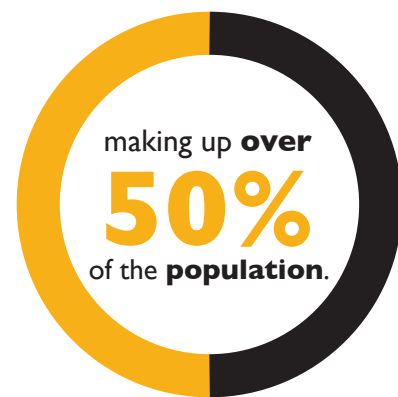
Over 444,000

identify as being of African descent.

9.2 Project Aim

In my research project, I focused on the education system as a crucial means of fostering social cohesion and active citizenship. I firmly believe that children and young people play a significant role in transforming society, which led me to investigate how other western nations with longer histories of diversity support black and minority communities. By doing so, I aimed to provide insights and recommendations for improving the Australian education system. The approach of policy transfer, whereby lessons are drawn from similar institutional contexts, allows us to draw lessons that can help us analyse our current situation and implement evidenced based best practice. This is particularly useful when discussing topics as complex as racism and discrimination, which have real-world consequences in relation to health, wellbeing, and societal cohesion.

My research on cultural diversity in Australia revealed the challenges faced by the African diaspora in a country known for its multiculturalism. Despite being considered one of the most multicultural nations globally, Australia still struggles with racism and discrimination, which negatively impact the sense of belonging and well-being of individuals from African backgrounds.

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights has raised alarming concerns about the multiple forms of racial discrimination, xenophobia, and systemic racism experienced by people of African descent in Australia. These issues include racial profiling, racial slurs, abuse of authority, over-policing, under-protection, targeting, and violence. The consequences of such racism extend beyond individuals, affecting broader society through economic disparities, reduced community cohesion, and decreased cultural exchange .

Addressing these issues is essential for Australia's continued development as a cohesive and harmonious nation. Racism has profound impacts on minority communities, leading to a loss of belonging,

mental health burdens, direct health impacts, and economic disadvantages. Moreover, racism incurs a monetary cost to the country's GDP and impedes cultural exchange among diverse communities .

Outline

My research outlines several recommendations to combat racism in the education system, including creating culturally safe practitioners, investing in representation, developing culturally relevant curricula, promoting alternative modes of expression, and fostering pathways to maintain and strengthen identity with self and land. Additionally, fostering community solidarity through unions, accountability measures, and government buy-in is crucial.

Audience

The audience for this research project includes educators at all levels, universities, teacher training organisations, government agencies, and community organisations invested in anti-racism, education, and multiculturalism. Implementing these recommendations can enable the education system to lead in shaping the minds of future generations, fostering inclusivity, and contributing to a more equitable and successful Australia for all. While the report does not cover all issues and recommendations due to time constraints and the vastness of the topic, it serves as a starting point for meaningful discussions and actions.

"In a world where we crave to belong - To cherish and be cherished"

Policy Transfer as Principle Methodology

Throughout my research, I specifically applied policy transfer as a methodological lens. Policy transfer is a practice involving the adoption of policies and practices from one institutional or political structure into another. This dynamic process can occur both horizontally, across different institutions, and vertically, such as transferring policies from a federal level to a state level. At its essence, policy transfer involves learning from best practices in one setting and applying these principles elsewhere . This knowledge exchange approach aligns with the ethos of the Churchill Fellowship, where "applicants are encouraged to design their own projects to explore international best practices and innovations that can be applied in Australia."

African migrants form a significant diaspora in Western nations due to various historical factors, including colonial ties, slavery legacies, war, poverty, and the pursuit of opportunities. Unfortunately, this has led to a long-lasting history of discrimination and racism. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement, starting in the US and creating a global ripple, has been a catalyst in addressing these issues in different jurisdictions, institutions, and countries . This is a powerful example of how civil society can influence policies on a global scale and how policy transfer can be a transformative vehicle of change. Therefore, it is essential not only to learn from one another but also to use policy transfer as an efficient way to combat the deep-seated impacts of racism. The recommendations in this report are rooted in the principles of policy transfer, which are crucial for making meaningful changes for African and minority students and, ultimately, for the broader Australian society.

Key Issues

During a child's primary school years, crucial aspects of cognitive development take place, shaping their understanding of the world and their place in it. Surprisingly, racial bias and racism in adults have roots in childhood, intensifying and becoming deeply ingrained over time. Concurrently, children's negative views about race and ethnicity form during this period, alongside the development of prosocial attitudes and moral values .

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Unfortunately, Australian schools serve as the initial settings where children experience racism, impacting those of colour and from culturally diverse backgrounds. Extensive research confirms the prevalence of racism in schools, both structurally and institutionally, with unintended exclusionary practices exacerbating the issue. Teachers' passive response to racial incidents also contributes to the problem, particularly for students with South Sudanese heritage who face othering due to racism .

Primary school years are pivotal for social-cognitive development concerning race and racial experiences, offering schools a unique opportunity to address racism and promote social cohesion. However, research shows that many schools neglect or even perpetuate negative racial views and stereotypes. Students report facing racism from staff, peers, and teachers, indicating a significant problem within the education system .

Implicit racial bias among teachers creates unequal learning environments, disadvantaging racially marginalised students compared to their white peers. This bias leads to harsher disciplinary measures, lower perceived capabilities, and fewer opportunities for gifted education for marginalised students . The concerning fact that the teaching profession predominantly comprises white women further exacerbates the issue, as white teachers consistently show reduced empathy toward racialised students. These biased expectations not only negatively impact students' academic achievements but also limit future opportunities for higher education.

In summary, the primary school years play a crucial role in shaping a child's understanding of race and ethnicity, and racism remains a prevalent issue in Australian schools. The education system must take active measures to address racism, promote cultural understanding, and ensure that racially marginalised students receive equal opportunities and support for their academic and personal development.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Creating Culturally Safe Teachers through Tertiary Teaching programs

Amending tertiary teacher education programs to encourage cultural competence:
Programs should include comprehensive cultural competence training modules covering topics like cultural awareness, sensitivity, responsiveness, and the impact of culture on teaching and learning.

Prioritising experiential learning
Increasing field placements and community partnerships with African and minority communities to enhance cultural competence, encourage dialogue, and establish community linkages.

Establish peer-support Groups
Encourage the establishment of networks within teacher training programs to encourage effective dialogue and collaboration among educators and to provide opportunities for cultural exchange among the university cohort.

Encourage reflective practices
Practices such as journaling and peer observations can promote self-awareness and growth in cultural competence among educators.

Embed cultural safe practices in Tertiary standards
Institutionalise culturally safe teaching practices in teacher training standards, program guidelines, policies, and frameworks.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Investing in Attracting More Black and Minority Teachers

Scholarships and Financial Incentives:
Create targeted financial support, like scholarships and incentives, for Black and minority individuals pursuing teaching careers.

Mentorship and Support Programs/Study Circles and Professional Learning Communities:
Establish mentorship programs connecting aspiring Black and minority teachers with experienced educators from similar backgrounds.

Form study circles and learning communities for educators to discuss topics, share best practices, and collaborate on challenges.

Culturally Responsive Recruitment Strategies:
Develop recruitment strategies that are culturally responsive, including community partnerships and diverse representation in promotional materials.

Addressing Cultural Barriers in Certification:
Identify and address cultural barriers in certification processes, offering support and revisions as needed.

Long-Term Commitment to Retention and Support:
Provide ongoing professional development, mentorship, and support for Black and minority teachers.

Invest in initiatives to create supportive work environments, including addressing systemic issues contributing to attrition rates

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Decolonised Pedagogy and Curricula

Evaluate Materials:
Assess textbooks, lesson plans, and assessments for biases, omissions, and Eurocentric perspectives.

Seek Diverse Perspectives:
Relate content to students' experiences and cultural contexts. Use relatable examples and scenarios.

Center Marginalized Voices:
Highlight marginalized communities' narratives, experiences, and contributions, exploring diverse histories and achievements.

Acknowledge Colonial Histories:
Teach the impact of colonialism, encouraging critical thinking about its contemporary implications.

Support Community Engagement:
Collaborate with various stakeholders and encourage student involvement in local social justice projects.

Continuous Professional Development:
Engage in ongoing decolonization-focused professional development to stay updated and reflect on personal biases for improved curriculum implementation.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Utilising Community Networks to Strengthening Culture and Identity

Explore Cultural Heritage:
Encourage youth to learn about their ancestry, traditions, languages, and histories using diverse resources like books, documentaries, and online platforms that celebrate diverse cultural backgrounds.

Positive Role Models and Support:
Create mentorship programs tailored to African and minority youths, providing guidance and support through mentor connections and community-based support networks.

Promote Cultural Pride:
Celebrate diverse cultures through events, festivals, and dedicated heritage months, actively promoting participation and showcasing talent.

Encourage Community Involvement:
Engage young individuals in community service and educational opportunities to foster personal growth, leadership skills, and a positive societal impact

Emphasise Intersectionality:
Recognise and celebrate the various facets of individual identities, promoting understanding, empathy, and the creation of inclusive environments that value every aspect of a person's identity.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Alternative Modes of Expression

Arts and Performance Programs:
Offer students the opportunity to express themselves, showcase their talents, and explore their cultural traditions through various artistic forms.

Self-Expression through Creative Storytelling Mediums:
Provide opportunities for students to engage in creative writing, storytelling, and poetry that reflect their unique backgrounds and identities.

Digital Media and Multimedia Projects:
Encourage students to utilise digital media tools like photography, videography, and graphic design to create multimedia projects that represent their cultural heritage, express their ideas, and tell their stories.

Community Engagement Projects:
Facilitate community engagement projects, enabling students to collaborate with local organisations, artists, or community leaders to create art installations, murals, or performances addressing social issues or celebrating cultural diversity.

Oral Traditions and Storytelling:
Incorporate oral traditions and storytelling as a means of cultural expression, providing platforms for students to share personal narratives, family stories, and oral histories in small groups or larger community events.

Digital Storytelling and Media Production:
Teach students how to create digital stories or produce media projects reflecting their cultural identities and experiences.

Mentorship and Artist-in-Residence Programs:
Connect students with mentors and invite artists from diverse backgrounds to serve as role models and provide guidance.

CONCLUSION

As previously stated, the lack of racially diverse teachers and leaders in the Australian context may also contribute to maintaining inequitable systems. According to the latest census from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021)[1], over 7 million people recorded were born overseas or are first generation immigrants. This, of course, means that a large proportion of students are from CALD backgrounds and or are racialised minorities. However, the lack of diversity in the Australian education system fails to reflect this reality.

Given that significant research supports the correlation between diversity and representation in educators and positive student outcomes, the lack of diversity in the teaching profession presents a lacuna in education policies and practices. To ensure educational equity for all students, particularly in increasingly diverse classrooms, concerted efforts should be made to reflect this diversity among teaching staff and school leaders[xx].

Addressing racism and discrimination in the Australian education system is vital to creating a society where all individuals, regardless of their background, can truly belong and thrive. Embracing diversity, implementing inclusive policies, and investing in cultural competency are essential steps toward building a more harmonious and equitable future. Together, we can create a nation that values and celebrates its cultural diversity, fostering a sense of belonging for every member of our society.

> **This report, by its very length, defends itself against the risk of being read.**
>
> **Winston Churchill**

> "The surveys of trainee teachers and early career teachers come back saying that where they feel least confident, in terms of preparation, is around what they term Multilingual, multi- cultural classrooms and around S E N [Special Education Needs].... And that's repeated year on year."

- Sonja Hall- Principle Official (Education) NASUWT The Teachers Union

FINDING 1:
CREATING CULTURALLY SAFE PRACTITIONERS

> "I generally think teachers could really benefit from having training that has to do with how to deal with Children who are of different backgrounds... because there's been experiences where teachers say some really off putting stuff and really downright racist stuff."

- South Sudanese Students, Finland.

Promoting the development of culturally safe and self-assured practitioners is essential in addressing racism and discrimination against students of African descent. It plays a vital role in the educational journey of African students, contributing to their success, social integration, and future prospects. This objective necessitates a comprehensive strategy that amalgamates knowledge, competencies, attitudes, and continuous professional development. Speaking with a range of professionals, organisations, and students, a number of prominent themes emerged:

Engaging in Continuous Learning:
Culturally safe teachers should remain open to learning and evolving their practices. This includes staying informed about current research and best practices in culturally responsive education, seeking feedback from students and families, and reflecting on their own teaching approaches.

Differentiated Instruction:
Teachers should employ instructional strategies that accommodate diverse learning styles, backgrounds, and abilities. By using a variety of teaching methods and resources, teachers can ensure that all students have equal opportunities to succeed and engage in the learning process.

Addressing Bias and Discrimination:
Teachers should be vigilant in recognising and challenging bias and discrimination within the classroom and school community. They should actively promote inclusivity, challenge stereotypes, and address instances of discrimination or marginalization promptly and effectively.

Cultural Awareness and Understanding:
Teachers should develop understanding of diverse cultures, including their histories, values, beliefs, and practices. This involves engaging in self-reflection, examining personal biases, and actively seeking to challenge stereotypes and assumptions.

> **My hope had been that the building racial literacy course would have a positive impact. So when people had undergone that professional learning and then they were in the classroom and then something happened, that it would have a natural improvement.**
>
> **- Tara, NASUWT, Scotland**

Ongoing Professional Development:
Teachers should actively seek professional development opportunities to enhance their cultural competence. This can include attending workshops, conferences, and seminars on cultural diversity, equity, and inclusion. Additionally, collaborating with colleagues, engaging in reflective practice, and seeking feedback from students and families can help teachers continually improve their cultural safety skills.

Relationship Building:
Building strong relationships with students, families, and communities is essential. Teachers should strive to create a welcoming and inclusive classroom environment where all students feel respected, valued, and understood. This can be achieved through regular communication, involving families in the learning process, and incorporating culturally relevant materials and activities.

A Case Study: Urban Teachers

Creating Dream Parks - Inspiring Community through Geometric Design

Urban Teachers, is an organization focused on dismantling racial and socioeconomic barriers in urban education, has developed a curriculum that aims to prompt future teachers to tackle issues of race and equity both inside and outside of their classrooms.

I had the rare chance to attend a teacher training session at a highly advantageous moment – during student teacher assessment presentations. Below is an instance of one of the assessments delivered by a pair of students, showcasing both culturally relevant pedagogy and a teaching approach that emphasises decolonization, in this case, through mathematics. As part of this curriculum, aspiring teachers at Urban Teachers were tasked with creating a Dream Park that promotes physical, emotional health, joy, and purpose in their community using geometric concepts.

Task Description:
 Students are inspired by the Kobe and Gianna Dream Park, a basketball court in West Philadelphia that serves the community and honours Kobe Bryant's legacy. The students' task is to create their own Dream Park, keeping in mind the theme and features that would inspire joy and motivation in their community.

Step 1: Establishing the Theme and Meaning
 Students are asked to select a theme for their Dream Park that holds personal significance and can inspire others. The theme could be based on a person, place, thing, or a significant event. Students reflect on how this theme would bring joy and purpose to the community and represent it in their park.

Step 2: Selecting the Location
 The city provides three options for park locations, each with varying available space. Students must consider the community's needs, accessibility, and their personal preferences when selecting the location for their Dream Park.

Step 3: Scaling the Park Features
 Students need to decide on a reasonable scale factor to adapt the dimensions of the park features to fit the available space. They are provided with the measurements of the features in the Kobe and Gianna Dream Park and must scale them up or down accordingly.

Step 4: Designing the Dream Park
 With the scaled dimensions in hand, students get to the exciting part of designing their Dream Park. They draw, design, and colour the park features, adding elements that align with their chosen theme.

5: Classroom Reflection
 After completing the design, students reflect on their decision-making process. They consider the factors that influenced their theme and location choices, as well as any trade-offs they encountered during the design process. They also reflect on the most challenging aspects of the building process and whether additional information would have made it easier.

Educational Objectives:
 1. Understanding and applying congruent similarity and geometric transformations using various tools.
2. Developing spatial awareness and critical thinking skills through the design process.
3. Promoting creativity, community engagement, and personal expression in urban education.

Benefits:
This Dream Park design task allows students to explore geometric concepts while applying them to a real-world problem. They develop their decision-making skills, creativity, and understanding of how spatial elements impact urban communities. Additionally, students gain a deeper appreciation for the significance of public spaces in promoting community well-being and joy.

To conclude, Urban Teachers' Dream Park design task empowers aspiring teachers to become change agents in their communities. By integrating geometric concepts with social relevance, this curriculum fosters a deep understanding of how education can play a pivotal role in promoting equity, joy, and purpose in urban environments. Through innovative and culturally relevant educational practices, Urban Teachers paves the way for creating a brighter future for all students and educators

FINDING 2: INVESTING IN REPRESENTATION

When black and minority students have the opportunity to see people who share their racial background holding influential roles like teachers, school leaders, or professionals, it has the potential to inspire and motivate. Positive role models give racialised students a glimpse of what is possible and allows them to aspire to positions previously seen as unattainable. Therefore, prioritising the recruitment and retention of black and minority teachers, in positions of authority, is crucial. However, based on my initial observations across Finland, the UK, US, and France, there are several obstacles that hinder the successful recruitment and retention of black and minority teachers. Some of these barriers include:

> " For me, I would love to see non-Finnish teachers or teachers of different backgrounds because even whenever I would go to school, the only non-Finnish people I would see there are... teacher's assistant and cleaners and stuff like that...that was really off putting because then that's what you can aspire to be ...[that's] as high as you can get.
>
> - South Sudanese Students, Finland.

> **"**...So, the question is how are training courses and schools supporting those trainees to gain that confidence and gain those skills?**"**

- Sonja Hall- Principle Official (Education)
NASUWT The Teachers Union

Lack of Representation in Teacher Education Programs:

Black and minority individuals may be less likely to pursue careers in teaching due to a lack of representation in teacher education programs. Limited diversity among faculty and staff in these programs can also create a less inclusive environment, discouraging aspiring educators from underrepresented backgrounds.

Bias in Hiring Practices:

Unconscious bias and systemic barriers can affect the hiring process for black and minority teachers. Biases may manifest at different stages, including recruitment and selection. Discrimination can occur due to race, ethnicity, or other factors, leading to fewer opportunities and limited career advancement for black and minority teachers.

Limited Access to Resources and Support:

Aspiring black and minority teachers may face financial constraints and limited access to resources and support systems that are necessary for entering the teaching profession. This can include challenges in accessing quality teacher preparation programs, scholarships, mentoring opportunities, and professional development.

Stereotypes and Cultural Biases:

Stereotypes and cultural biases can create additional hurdles for black and minority individuals within the teaching profession. These biases may lead to misconceptions about the abilities and qualifications of black and minority educators, resulting in limited job opportunities and general unequal treatment.

Lack of Professional Development and Advancement Opportunities:

Black and minority teachers may encounter fewer professional development and advancement opportunities compared to their white counterparts. This can be attributed to factors such as limited access to mentorship, networking, leadership development programs, and opportunities for career progression within the education system.

Inadequate Support for Retention:

Retaining black and minority teachers can be challenging due to a lack of support systems and resources. These teachers may face additional pressures and microaggressions in the workplace from peers, leading to higher rates of burnout and attrition.

***Recommendation 2 of the report will outline a comprehensive analysis of approaches to investing and retaining black and multicultural teachers.

> **"**The NEA has had a long-standing program to recruit and retain teachers of colour, in particular, to encourage black males to enter the classroom - especially in elementary school. Oftentimes, we see again, some systemic things that happen. For example, black men enter classrooms, then they sort of move through the system; and somehow always manage to become the assistant principal who's in charge of the discipline**"**

- Shyrelle, NEA.

FINDING 3:
CREATING CULTURALLY SAFE AND RELEVANT CURRICULA

Investing in character development to complement curriculum-based learning is essential for several reasons, and it offers numerous benefits for students' overall growth and success. It must be noted that some Australian schools have begun to incorporate some of the principles of creating culturally safe and relevant curricula that emphasise character development. Below are some findings I gained from my observations, with examples demonstrating their implementation.

Investing in Character Development: France

During a conversation with a director of a child care centre in Paris, France, Feta spoke about the shift in the educational system from focusing solely on academic curriculum to incorporating character building and promoting good citizenship. 'The goal is to ensure that students not only excel academically but also learn to live harmoniously in society. The emphasis is on raising good citizens who understand respect and core values.'

The new framework considers the belief systems of families, and over time, it has started incorporating religious beliefs as well. This integration has brought challenges due to the diversity of beliefs, but efforts are made to accommodate cultural practices and values, such as allowing certain religious practices and dietary preferences.

-Feta, France

Well-rounded individuals:

Focusing on character development helps students become well-rounded individuals. While academic knowledge is crucial, character traits such as empathy, resilience, integrity, and emotional intelligence are equally important in shaping a person's behaviour and interactions with others.

Personal growth and self-awareness:

Character development encourages self-reflection and self-awareness. Understanding one's strengths, weaknesses, values, and beliefs helps students make better decisions and set meaningful goals.

Positive relationships and social skills:

Developing positive character traits fosters healthy relationships with peers, teachers, and the broader community. Strong social skills are crucial for effective communication, collaboration, and conflict resolution.

Emotional intelligence:

Character development enhances emotional intelligence, enabling students to recognise and manage their emotions effectively. Emotionally intelligent individuals are better equipped to navigate challenges, cope with stress, and maintain mental well-being.

Ethical decision-making:

Emphasising integrity and ethical behaviour helps students develop a strong moral compass. This, in turn, guides them in making ethical decisions and taking responsible actions throughout their lives.

Resilience and adaptability:

Character development cultivates resilience, allowing students to bounce back from setbacks and learn from failures. It also promotes adaptability, empowering students to embrace change and navigate uncertain situations with confidence.

Improved academic performance:

When students develop essential character traits like discipline, focus, and time management, their academic performance often improves. These skills enable them to stay organised, meet deadlines, and concentrate on their studies effectively.

Leadership and teamwork:

Character development contributes to the growth of leadership skills and the ability to work collaboratively in a team. Both attributes are valuable in academic settings and prepare students for leadership roles in various aspects of life.

Lifelong learning:

Character development fosters a growth mindset, encouraging students to see challenges as opportunities for learning and improvement. This mindset promotes a lifelong love for learning and the pursuit of personal and professional development.

Social and civic responsibility:

Character development promotes a sense of social responsibility and civic engagement. Students who value empathy and compassion are more likely to contribute positively to their communities and advocate for positive change.

Enhanced employability:

Employers often seek candidates with strong character traits, in addition to academic qualifications. Traits like integrity, teamwork, and adaptability are highly valued in the workplace, making students more employable and successful in their careers.

Long-term success and fulfilment:

While academic knowledge is undoubtedly essential, character development provides a foundation for lifelong success and fulfilment. Students who possess strong character traits are better equipped to navigate life's challenges, build meaningful relationships, and find purpose and happiness in their endeavours.

By investing in character development alongside traditional curriculum-based learning, educators and institutions can help students become not only knowledgeable individuals but also empathetic, responsible, and ethical contributors to society. This holistic approach to education prepares students to face the challenges of the real world with confidence and integrity.

A Case Study - Nurturing Character: The University of Birmingham School's Journey

Visiting the University of Birmingham School was both an enlightening and inspiring experience. Driven by virtue, character and a civic mission, this school unlike any other I have experiences experienced both in Australia and globally.

The University of Birmingham School, established as a civic institution, is dedicated to developing character virtues in its diverse and inclusive student community. Led by Professor James, the school focuses on providing a holistic education that promotes character development alongside academic excellence. Emphasising the belief that there is no innate ability, the school rejects the notion of labelling students and instead fosters mixed prior attainment classes. With a unique enrichment program, the school offers a wide range of opportunities for students to explore and develop their character virtues.

The Shift Towards Character Education:
Professor James, the head of the School of Education, shifted his thinking from teaching citizenship to emphasising character education. With a life-changing grant from the Templeton Foundation, he founded the Jubilee Centre for Character Virtues. Influenced by Aristotelian neo-ethics, the school aims to instil virtues such as empathy, curiosity, kindness, and self-

discipline in its students. Rejecting the traditional notion of ability, the school champions the idea that privilege, background, and circumstances influence academic performance.

Character Development and the Myth of Innate Ability:
The school firmly believes in the potential of all students and challenges the notion of innate ability. They assert that academic achievements are often influenced by various privileges, backgrounds, and circumstances. This belief drives the school's commitment to mixed prior attainment classes, which foster diversity and prevent perpetuating inequality. By avoiding labelling students based on their prior attainment, the school promotes an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

The Jubilee Model: Taught, Caught and Sort Curriculum:
The school employs the Jubilee Model of Character Education and follow a 'Taught, Caught, and Sort' curriculum approach. In the taught program, virtues, ethics, and character traits are explicitly taught to the children at a basic level. They learn about empathy, curiosity, kindness, self-discipline, future-mindedness, and more. In the caught program, teachers serve as

role models, demonstrating these virtues in their daily actions, behaviours, and interactions. Children subconsciously observe and absorb these behaviours, shaping their understanding of character. The sort curriculum focuses on creating a positive and supportive school culture, where educators lead by example and hold high standards.

Enrichment Program: A Core Part of Education:
The University of Birmingham School's enrichment program is not an extracurricular activity but an integral part of the school day. Emphasising the importance of character development, all students participate in enrichment activities. The program offers a diverse range of choices, allowing students to explore new passions and interests. From knitting to Egyptology, from cooking to sports, students have the opportunity to develop character virtues and build meaningful relationships with peers and staff.

Extended Enrichment and Sixth Form Involvement:
Extended enrichment allows for deeper exploration of themes and activities. Trips to local communities, historical sites, and cultural institutions provide students with broader

perspectives and real-world experiences. In the Sixth Form, students take on leadership roles, organising enrichment activities and engaging in social action projects. This prepares them for future challenges, enhancing their character development further.

The University of Birmingham School's commitment to character education is commendable. By rejecting the concept of innate ability and focusing on character virtues, the school creates an inclusive and supportive environment for all students to flourish. Through its unique enrichment program and mixed prior attainment classes, the school provides a holistic education that nurtures tomorrow's citisens to be well-rounded, compassionate, and responsible individuals.

Decolonising Curriculum

Decolonising the curriculum lies in recognising and addressing the historical biases, power imbalances, and Eurocentric perspectives that have shaped educational systems and knowledge production. This involves critically examining and challenging the dominance of colonial narratives, perspectives, and ways of knowing within the curriculum. Two out of the four countries I visited shared their efforts towards decolonising their curriculum. Below, we discuss the reasonings behind these efforts.

Equity and inclusivity:
Decolonisation aims to ensure that the curriculum reflects the diverse experiences, histories, cultures, and knowledge systems of all individuals and communities. By including marginalised voices, it promotes equity, inclusivity, and social justice within education.

Counteracting Eurocentrism:
Eurocentrism, which centres European culture and knowledge, has historically dominated the curriculum. Decolonising the curriculum challenges this bias by incorporating perspectives from non-Western cultures, indigenous knowledge, and post-colonial scholarship, thus broadening students' understanding of the world.

Empowering marginalised groups:
Decolonisation gives voice and agency to historically marginalised groups by acknowledging and valuing their contributions, perspectives, and ways of knowing. This can lead to increased self-esteem, pride, and empowerment for students who see themselves reflected in the curriculum.

Observation: During a music class at the University of Birmingham (UoB), the music teacher discussed their efforts to decolonise the curriculum by incorporating the arts. The focus of the class was on the evolution of African American music, beginning with the blues and its connection to slave trading. The discussion then progressed to the development of reggae music after emancipation, as African Americans migrated and embraced new influences. The class also touched on other music styles, including upcoming lessons on the close relationship between hip hop and African and African American music, emphasising the seamless flow between different genres.
-UoB Year 8 Music Class

We had seen educators doing things like decolonising their school libraries, and their classroom libraries. Being more inclusive in curricu[la], providing more perspectives in history classes and really being more authentic and intentional in their ST instruction. So those are the sort of practice that we hear about.

- Shyrelle-NEA, USA

Critical thinking and multiple perspectives:
A decolonised curriculum encourages critical thinking skills by presenting multiple perspectives and challenging dominant narratives. It enables students to question, analyse, and engage with knowledge critically, fostering a more well-rounded and nuanced understanding of complex issues.

Addressing historical injustices:
Decolonisation acknowledges and confronts historical injustices, violence, and exploitation associated with colonialism. It helps students understand the long-lasting impacts of colonial legacies and encourages them to work towards social transformation, reconciliation, and healing. Global interconnectedness:
In an increasingly interconnected world, decolonising the curriculum promotes global awareness and intercultural understanding. It encourages students to engage with different cultures, histories, and worldviews, fostering empathy, tolerance, and cooperation.

Overall, decolonising the curriculum is crucial for creating a more inclusive, diverse, and socially just education system. It challenges the dominance of colonial perspectives, promotes equity, and prepares students to navigate an interconnected world with a critical and culturally sensitive mindset.

> **... We want to humanise everything. So for me, I tell my students, I start with love because everything else will come. If I am starting with love, I can protest, I can restore, I can invest, I can inspire and I can create.**
>
> - Marla, Urban Teachers, US: On Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Through firsthand observations of schools and teacher training organisations across four countries (UK, US, France, Finland), creating culturally relevant pedagogy is net-positive to students in these countries.

Enhances student engagement:
Culturally relevant pedagogy recognises and values the cultural backgrounds and experiences of students. By incorporating their cultural references, stories, and perspectives into the curriculum, it makes learning more relatable and engaging for students. This increased relevance can foster greater interest, motivation, and active participation in the learning process.

'…I think it's more about the goals, what the Children should learn when they are taking a subject.
So that's why the teachers can decide quite a lot of what they want to emphasise [i.e.] what they see, what they feel the group needs. For example, if they see that this is something that this group needs, they can focus on that. They can pretty much decide when they teach which topic… For example, they can see that there's something going on in the news about [a topic and go] Oh, ok, "Yeah, there are chapters in my book about this"…They can decide how to teach them [and] what kind of methodology…they're free to try it.
-Sanna, Finland

Promotes inclusive learning environments:
Culturally relevant pedagogy acknowledges and validates the diverse cultural identities and experiences of students. It creates inclusive learning environments where students feel seen, heard, and valued. This promotes a sense of belonging, reduces marginalisation, and fosters positive relationships among students from different cultural backgrounds.

Increases academic achievement:
When students see themselves reflected in the curriculum and instructional materials, it can have a positive impact on their academic achievement. Culturally relevant pedagogy helps to bridge the gap between students' cultural knowledge and the content being taught, allowing for better understanding and deeper learning. It also helps to address any cultural biases that may exist in traditional curricula, ensuring equitable access to education.

Develops critical thinking and problem-solving skills:
Culturally relevant pedagogy encourages all students to analyse and question the world around them from multiple perspectives. It promotes critical thinking, inquiry-based learning, and problem-solving skills. By examining issues through a cultural lens, students develop a broader understanding of complex problems and are better equipped to address real-world challenges.

Supports social-emotional development:
Culturally relevant pedagogy emphasises the social and emotional well-being of students. By integrating students' cultural backgrounds and experiences into the learning process, it validates their identities, builds self-esteem, and fosters a positive self-concept. This approach helps to create a safe and supportive learning environment that nurtures students' social and emotional development.

Encourages cultural competency:
Culturally relevant pedagogy helps students develop cultural competency, which is the ability to understand, appreciate, and interact effectively with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. By exposing students to different cultural perspectives, experiences, and worldviews, it promotes empathy, respect, and appreciation for diversity. These skills are crucial in today's globalised world and prepare students to be active and responsible global citizens .

In summary, culturally relevant pedagogy offers numerous benefits, including increased student engagement, academic achievement, critical thinking skills, social-emotional development, and cultural competency. It creates inclusive and equitable learning environments that recognise and value the cultural identities and experiences of students, leading to more meaningful and impactful education experiences.

A Case Study: University of Birmingham School

At their school, educators acknowledged the crucial significance of extensive research that revealed the presence of learning gaps and their subsequent impact. Understanding that students facing reading challenges and limited vocabulary were likely to lag behind their peers was particularly concerning, especially given that success in GCSEs in their country demanded a reading age of 16.

In response to this concern, the school made a deliberate decision during year two to prioritise literacy and reading. They opted to replace form time with a dedicated half-hour period each day for the children to engage in reading. This move bore fruit when one student became an avid reader around five years ago. This student started writing heartfelt letters to the authors of the books they read, expressing appreciation and enjoyment of the stories. These interactions forged a meaningful connection between the students and the world of literature.

The school took it a step further by curating a highly diverse collection of books, unlike any other, which caught the attention of someone who eventually sent a small envelope addressed to Mr. Caba. The class eagerly opened the envelope and were amazed by its contents.

As part of their routine, every time the students finished reading a book, they penned letters to the authors, and some students went even further by sharing these letters on Twitter. This initiative garnered attention, leading more people to send books to the class. Moreover, individuals began visiting the school to interact with the students and discuss their writing experiences.

The decision to emphasise literacy and reading yielded remarkable outcomes. It not only nurtured a love for reading among the students but also fostered a thriving community centred around literature. The connections with authors, the vast and diverse book collection, and the engagement from external individuals profoundly enriched the learning environment.

FINDING 4:
NON-NATIVE SPEAKER SUPPORT

The global phenomenon of immigration has led to increased diversity in almost every country, including Finland, resulting in a growing number of non-native Finnish speaking students. These students, along with their families, often encounter various obstacles that hinder educational advancement and social integration.

When non-native language speakers lack support in school, it can hinder their academic progress and well-being. Language barriers impede understanding and participation, while academic challenges arise from difficulties in grasping concepts and completing tasks. Social isolation can result from communication barriers, and limited access to resources exacerbates the challenges. Educational disparities and cultural/identity struggles further impact their confidence and integration. Addressing these issues necessitates appropriate language support, inclusive environments, and resources to ensure non-native language speakers can thrive academically and socially. Therefore, the presence of language support programs becomes imperative in facilitating the academic success and overall linguistic fluency of students.

My Personal experience with English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) in Australia closely mimics that of students I observed undertaking Finish Second Language classes (FSL). While teachers play a crucial role in supporting the educational success and integration of FSL (Finnish as a Second Language) students, certain practices or attitudes can either support students in their new environment or inadvertently hinder their progress.

The observations below draw on specific examples of best practice, namely the Finish example, as well as provide general commentary on the benefits of effective student language support programs. This is then followed by an in depth exploration of the evolving Finnish model as a case study of best practice.
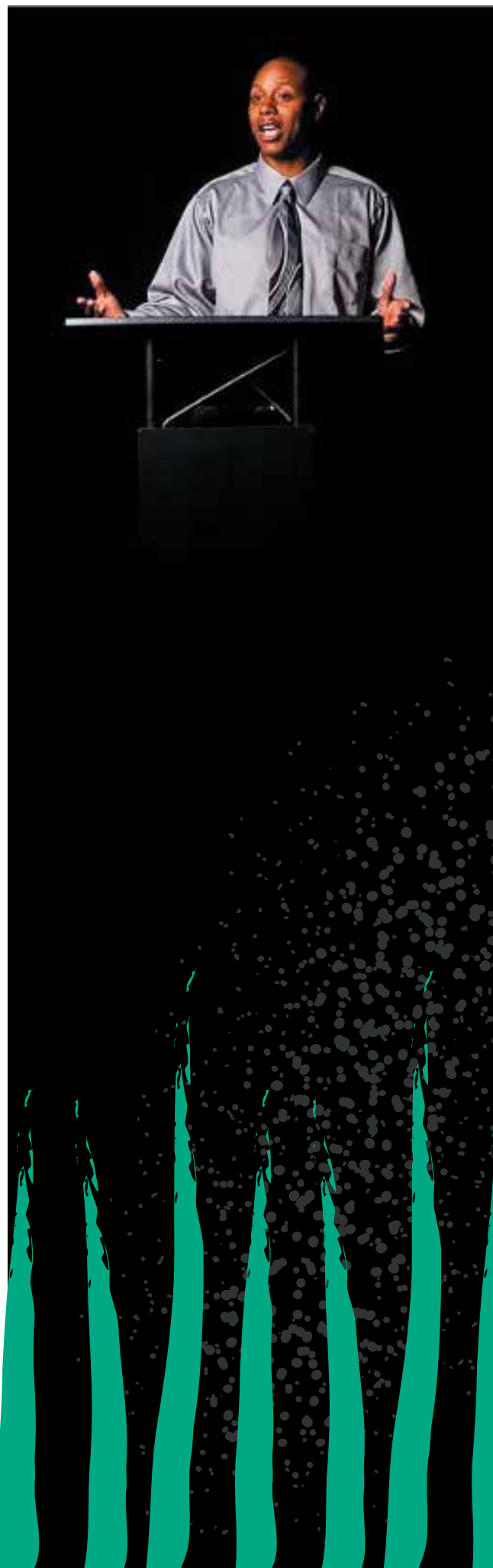
Positives of effective implementation of support systems for non-native language students

Language Acquisition:

Non-native speaking students often face challenges in acquiring proficiency in the language of instruction. Effective support helps them develop their language skills, enabling them to better understand and engage with academic content. This support can include specialised language programs, English as a Second Language (EAL/D) classes, or tailored instructional strategies that accommodate their language needs.

Inclusion and Integration:

Supporting non-native speaking students fosters inclusivity and promotes their integration into the educational community. By acknowledging and accommodating their unique linguistic needs, schools create an environment where these students feel valued, respected, and supported. This sense of belonging enhances their overall well-being and encourages their active participation in school activities.

Cultural Exchange:

Non-native speaking students bring diverse perspectives, experiences, and cultures to the classroom. By providing effective support, schools can encourage cultural exchange among students, promoting mutual understanding, empathy, and appreciation for different cultures. This enriches the educational experience for all students and helps build a more inclusive and globally aware learning environment.

Equity and Access:

Effective support for non-native speaking students aligns with the principles of equity and access in education. It helps level the playing field for students who may face language barriers, ensuring they have equal opportunities to succeed academically and pursue their goals. By addressing these disparities, schools contribute to a more equitable educational system.

Academic Success:

Language proficiency is crucial for academic success. When non-native speaking students receive effective support, they can better comprehend classroom instructions, participate actively in discussions, complete assignments, and perform well on assessments. By bridging the language gap, support services contribute to their overall educational achievements

Future Opportunities:

Proficiency in the language of instruction opens up a wide range of opportunities for non-native speaking students beyond the classroom. It enhances their prospects for higher education, employment, and social engagement. By investing in their language development, schools equip these students with valuable skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.

In conclusion, providing effective support to non-native speaking students is vital for their language acquisition, academic success, inclusion, cultural exchange, future opportunities, and overall equity in education. By recognising and meeting their linguistic needs, schools can empower these students to thrive academically and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

A Case Study: The Finland Model

The Finnish language is widely acknowledged as a highly challenging language to learn, even for first-generation individuals born in Finland to immigrant parents. As migration rates increase in Finland, several support initiatives have been implemented to facilitate the successful integration of multicultural students into mainstream schools and society. Below are examples of these initiatives and my observations of their implementation.

4.2 Support Program 1: Reception Class

The reception class, also known as "preparatory education," is an intensive one-year program designed for new migrants who arrive in Finland with limited or no proficiency in the Finnish language. Its purpose is to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of Finland, the Finnish language, and the Finnish education system before they transition into regular classrooms.

The benefits of this model, in contrast to standard EAL/D classes as observed in Australia, is that students are provided with the opportunity to focus on increasing their literacy, cultural competency, whilst simultaneously incorporating standard parts of the curriculum e.g. Mathematics, history, sciences.

These intensive reception classes allow students to keep up with their native speaking peers whilst being supported in an environment with other NNL students, removing the stigma around learning a new-language. It should be noted that this program is only one part of a series of initiatives including the EAL/D equivalent, FSL, which takes part 12 months after these classes.

4.3 Support program 2: Kyetu

Kyetu classes are the latest addition to support programs for non-native speakers in parts of Finland, implemented as a result of the influx of new migrants. Similar to Australia's EAL/D program, Kyetu offers additional support to multicultural students who have completed the preparatory classes but still require extra assistance when joining mainstream classes. During my observation, I witnessed five students, aged 9–10, from African and Middle Eastern backgrounds, with all but one being born in Finland.

The Keytu teacher explained that they support students to strengthen their language skills through pictures and google Google translate in the student's mother tongue, facilitating easier translation to Finnish equivalents. The teacher also explained that the class is not strictly for language learning but the time is used to support students with other subjects.

During this class, the session was to encourage the students to read in Finnish through practical games. I was invited to join the students and together we learnt the phonics of different Finnish words.

4.4 Support Program 3: Finnish as a Second Language (FSL)

Finnish as a Second Language serves as an alternative to the standard Finnish class and is comparable to Australia's usual English classes. It provides more generalised support to high school students who do not consider Finnish as their mother tongue. During my observation, I witnessed an FSL class consisting of approximately five students, primarily 13- and 14-year-olds. They were pulled out of the regular Finnish class to work in small groups with a teacher, focusing on the intricacies of the Finnish language to alleviate the students overwhelm with the mainstream curriculum. In the observed FSL class, students learned formal and informal Finnish and how to utilise each form. Furthermore, the teacher encouraged students to use their mother tongue to translate their learnings, emphasising the importance of connecting with their home language for better understanding.

Despite the language barrier, I had the opportunity to ask students questions, and they made efforts to communicate and make me feel welcome. Overall, the students expressed a positive view of the Finnish education system compared to schools in their home countries, with one student saying, "I like the education system here because it's more relaxed compared to India, where the system is really stressful. The FSL teacher also highlighted the benefits of smaller classroom sizes, allowing for more individualised attention and one-on-one time with students.

4.5 Support Program 4: Special Education Classes

Special Education refers to specialised or alternative classes for students who struggle in mainstream structures and may require additional attention and alternative learning methods, such as practical work or outdoor education.

Reports indicate that Special Education classes have successfully reduced dropout rates, with 90% of students improving their academic performance .

Highlights:

All teachers, including those in Special Education, Kyetu, and Reception classes, are fully qualified, holding a master's degree as a minimum qualification by thee national standards of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland .

Teaching styles are relaxed to create a comfortable and child-friendly learning environment.

Students are encouraged to use their native language as a bridge for better understanding and learning the Finnish language.

All support programs provide tailored versions of the main curriculum, covering subjects such as math, social sciences, history, geography, etc., Ensuring alignment with the mainstream curriculum instead of using alternative materials like, in my personal experience as a student, of "drawing huts and animals."

In nearly all the programs I observed, educators utilised various tools to better convey information and facilitate learning. This meant the use of visuals, audio, and art as means to provide a tailored learning experience that took into account student capabilities.

Another highlight is the student-wellbeing centred approach that underpinned all the support programs. Students felt relaxed and supported, when academic prowess or speed of learning was de-emphasised and their cultural identities validated and encouraged.

Barriers:

Although Finland was an impressive country to research, like any nation, there are still challenges. Multiculturalism poses a relatively new challenge for the Finnish education system, particularly in regions experiencing higher rates of migration. While innovative approaches are being implemented to address these concerns, several setbacks hinder the efficacy and success of the programs. These include:

Insufficient classes and teachers to meet student needs: There are only four preparatory education classes in Tampere, leading to overcrowding and varying proficiency levels among students. For example, some students had been in the class for nearly a year, while others joined only two months prior. Thus, making it difficult for educators to provide students with the level of attention required for their capabilities.

Kyetu program limitations: Kyetu is still in its early stages and currently has only seven qualified teachers in the entire state of Tampere. Additional funding is needed to hire more teachers for this program.

Challenges in the preparatory class: The future of the preparatory class is complicated by the need to help students catch up not only on the Finnish language but also on the broader curriculum while battling growing classroom sizes.

The absence of appropriate assessment tools poses a challenge in accurately identifying specific learning difficulties among students, particularly those with language barriers. As a result, there is a tendency to group these students together or fail to differentiate them from those with special needs or learning disabilities. This situation presents a dilemma where students may require both language assistance and specialised learning support, or they may be wrongly diagnosed with learning disabilities.

FINDING 5:
EMBRACING AND STRENGTHENING CULTURAL IDENTITY

Strengthening the identity of African youth in migrant countries offers numerous benefits that can contribute to their academic and societal key advantages include::

Self-Confidence and Empowerment:
When African youth have a strong sense of identity, they develop higher levels of self-confidence and empowerment. This self-assuredness enables them to navigate academic challenges, social interactions, and various aspects of their lives with resilience and determination.

Cultural Pride and Motivation:
Strengthening identity fosters cultural pride and a sense of belonging. African youth who embrace their cultural heritage are more likely to feel motivated to succeed academically and contribute positively to society. Cultural pride provides a strong foundation for pursuing their goals and aspirations.

Academic Achievement:
When African youth have a strong sense of identity, it positively impacts their academic achievement. Embracing their cultural heritage enhances their self-esteem, self-motivation, and resilience in the face of academic challenges. It also encourages a deeper understanding of their history, traditions, and contributions, which can be incorporated into their academic pursuits.

Cultural Capital and Multicultural Competence:
Strengthening identity equips African youth with cultural capital and multicultural competence. They gain knowledge, skills, and perspectives that bridge their African heritage with the cultural context of their migrant country. This cultural dexterity enhances their ability to adapt, communicate effectively, and thrive in diverse environments.

Community Engagement and Leadership:
A strong identity empowers African youth to engage actively in their communities and assume leadership roles. By embracing their cultural heritage, they become agents of change and contribute to the development and well-being of their communities. Their cultural background can inspire and guide initiatives aimed at promoting social cohesion and addressing community specific challenges.

Network Building and Mentoring Opportunities:
Strengthening identity facilitates network building and mentoring opportunities. African youth who actively engage with their cultural heritage can connect with individuals who share similar backgrounds, experiences, and aspirations. These networks provide support, mentorship, and access to resources that can facilitate academic and societal success.

Resilience and Overcoming Stereotypes:
A strong identity helps African youth develop resilience and overcome stereotypes and discrimination they may encounter. By embracing their cultural heritage, they can challenge negative perceptions and showcase the richness, diversity, and accomplishments of African cultures. This resilience allows them to navigate societal barriers and succeed despite adversity.

In summary, strengthening the identity of African youth in migrant countries offers a range of benefits that contribute to academic and societal success. It fosters self-confidence, cultural pride, and motivation, leading to improved academic achievement. It also enhances multicultural competence, community engagement, leadership abilities, and the ability to overcome stereotypes. By valuing their identity, African youth can thrive academically, contribute meaningfully to their communities, and inspire positive change in the broader society. Below are case studies from the UK and Finland outlining their approach to strengthening cultural identity through the curriculum.

5.1 Supplementary Schools UK

Supplementary schools in the UK are educational institutions that offer additional learning opportunities beyond mainstream schooling. They are established and operated by community groups, religious organisations, or cultural associations to support the educational and developmental needs of children and young people from specific ethnic, cultural, or linguistic backgrounds.

I had the opportunity to participate in a training called "Positive Classroom Behavioural Management for Supplementary School Staff" provided by the Safeguard Education Team in Manchester, UK. This training session focused on equipping educators and community leaders working in supplementary schools with effective strategies to promote positive behaviour in the classroom.

Supplementary schools play a crucial role in addressing the educational requirements of minority communities, fostering cultural identity and heritage, and bridging the gap between home and mainstream education. They create opportunities for children and young people to learn about their heritage language, traditions, and history, promoting a sense of belonging and cultural pride.

These schools provide a wide range of subjects and activities that complement the mainstream curriculum, such as language and cultural studies, arts and crafts, music, dance, sports, and religious education. They typically operate on weekends, after school, or during school holidays, aiming to enhance students' knowledge, skills, and understanding of their heritage, language, and culture. The teaching staff may include volunteers, parents, or community members with expertise in the respective subjects.

It is important to note that supplementary schools in the UK do not adhere to the same regulations and national curriculum guidelines as mainstream schools. However, they are increasingly acknowledged and supported by local authorities and educational institutions, recognising their valuable contributions to community cohesion and educational enrichment.

The training I attended demonstrated a positive step towards recognising the significance of supplementary schools and the UK's commitment to their success. It highlighted the importance of collaboration between formal education systems and community-led initiatives. The course focused on child safety laws, techniques for supporting and guiding young people, and behavioural management strategies aligned with the child protection processes in the UK.

Overall, this training served as a reminder of what can be achieved when communities are supported and encouraged to conserve their cultural identities. It emphasised the need to give equal recognition to the work of supplementary schools in supporting multicultural students, strengthening their sense of self, community, and fostering a stronger sense of belonging.

5.2 Finland teaching in student mother tongue

In Finland, students whose first language is not Finnish or Swedish have the opportunity to attend multilingual native language lessons, also referred to as "mother tongue" or "heritage language" lessons. These lessons are provided alongside the regular Finnish or Swedish language instruction in schools, aiming to support language development and the preservation of students' native languages and cultural heritage.

> *'It works so that there are mother-tongue teachers who go around the schools. They work in different schools and then they give the lessons in the end. They're always in the afternoon, it's two hours a week in your mother tongue. And the focus, in those lessons, is to focus on the curriculum. So, if for example, you were a child here and went to the English as a mother tongue lessons during the week, you would go there with your Finnish school books, and the subject that you are struggling with… Then you go to the mother tongue class and the teacher, who knows your mother tongue, teaches you the same thing in your own language.'*

Sanna, Finland.

The Finnish education system places importance on maintaining and promoting students' native languages and cultural backgrounds, recognising their value. As a result, students who have a different native language are entitled to receive instruction in that language. These multilingual native language lessons assist students in maintaining their language skills, fostering literacy, and strengthening their connection to their cultural roots.

The availability of these lessons may vary depending on the municipality and the number of students speaking a particular language. Commonly taught languages include Arabic, Russian, Somali, Kurdish, Chinese, Spanish, and others, depending on the student population.

Municipalities typically organise these lessons in collaboration with community organisations, cultural associations, or language teachers. Qualified native language teachers or instructors proficient in the respective languages provide the instruction. The curriculum for these lessons may align with the guidelines set by the Finnish National Agency for Education, which outlines the learning objectives and content for each language.

To minimise scheduling conflicts with regular classes, these lessons are often scheduled outside of school hours, such as after school or on weekends. The frequency and duration of the lessons may vary depending on the number of students and available resources.

Participating in multilingual native language lessons not only supports students' language skills but also contributes to their overall educational success, self-esteem, and cultural identity. These lessons help students maintain a strong connection to their roots while integrating into Finnish society.

Families interested in enrolling their children in multilingual native language lessons should contact their local municipality or school to inquire about available options, eligibility criteria, and the registration process.

FINDING 6:
COMMUNITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

'We must work in synergy not silos'

Dennis Sinyolo, Regional Director, Education International

The Benefits of Leveraging Unions

Leveraging unions can provide specific benefits for black and minority teachers, addressing some of the unique challenges they may face. Some key advantages include:

Equity and Anti-Discrimination:

Unions can play a vital role in advocating for equity and combating discrimination in the workplace. Black and minority teachers may encounter systemic biases, unequal treatment, or limited opportunities for advancement. Unions can negotiate for policies and practices that promote equal treatment, fair hiring practices, and opportunities for career growth, helping to address these disparities.

> **We deliver training. We also have our conference on racial and social justice that is held every year where we try to provide members with up to date current topics, and how people are addressing these topics and dealing with these topics.**
>
> **- Aaron, NEA**

Collective Voice:

By joining a union, black and minority teachers gain a collective voice that can amplify their concerns, experiences, and perspectives. Unions can advocate for policies and initiatives that address the specific needs and challenges faced by black and minority educators, ensuring their voices are heard and taken into account during decision-making processes.

> "So in terms of collective work, the union will have certain values that are subscribed to and equality is one is one of those. So, that takes it beyond teachers to wider practice. So we do actually work jointly with other unions globally through education International….
>
> — Sanja Hall, UK, NASUWT

Professional Development and Support:

Unions can advocate for professional development programs that address the unique needs and experiences of black and minority teachers. This can include culturally responsive teaching training, diversity and inclusion workshops, and mentorship programs specifically designed to support their professional growth. By prioritising their development, unions contribute to the success and retention of black and minority educators.

Mentorship and Networking Opportunities:

Unions often provide mentorship and networking opportunities that can be especially beneficial for black and minority teachers. These programs connect educators with experienced colleagues who can provide guidance, support, and advice on navigating the challenges and opportunities specific to their backgrounds. Such connections can foster a sense of community, provide role models, and help create pathways for career advancement.

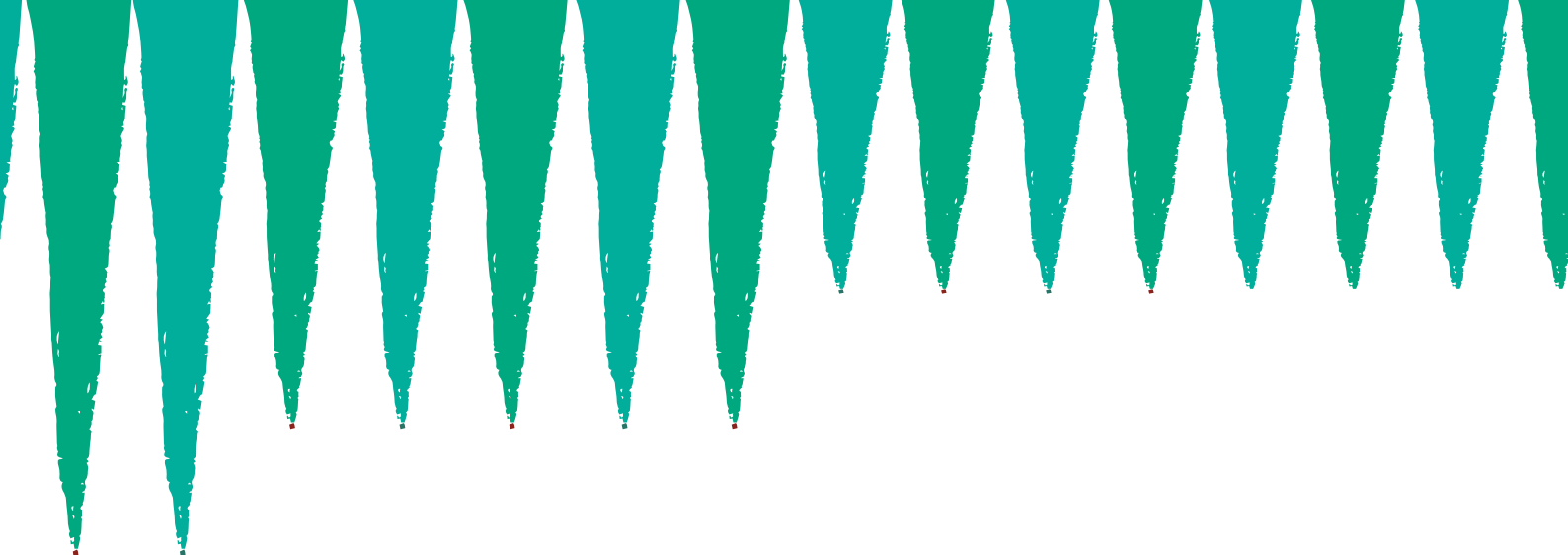**Advocacy for Inclusive Curriculum and Policies:**

Unions can advocate for inclusive curriculum and policies that promote diversity, cultural competency, and representation within the education system. This includes promoting the inclusion of diverse perspectives, histories, and contributions in educational materials, as well as advocating for policies that address bias and promote social justice within schools and classrooms.

Protection against Discrimination and Retaliation:

Unions can offer protection against discrimination and retaliation by providing channels for reporting and addressing grievances. Black and minority teachers may face discrimination or bias from colleagues, administrators, or parents. Unions can provide resources, legal support, and representation to ensure that their rights are protected and that discriminatory actions are addressed.

It's important to recognise that while unions can provide substantial benefits, the experiences and challenges faced by black and minority teachers can vary depending on the specific context and local dynamics. Additionally, unions need to be committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion within their own structures to effectively support and advocate for the needs of black and minority educators.

While joining a union offers benefits for teachers, there are challenges to consider. These include mandatory dues, limited autonomy due to collective bargaining agreements, differences in priorities between individual teachers and the union, potential perception of political bias, inflexibility in work arrangements, and potential conflicts with union leadership or among teachers themselves. It's important to note that these challenges are not universal and may vary depending on the specific union, local context, and individual perspectives. Unions often provide internal avenues to address concerns and resolve conflicts.

A Case Study:
The Study Circle (Belgium)

I was also honoured to have attended the last day of a 3 day Education International forum whereby teachers' unions globally attended from Australia, Finland, France, the DRC, South African and several other nations. During this time, I sat in on a conversation amongst prominent Union heads who discussed a current initiative launched in several countries, most interestingly, in African regions called 'Study Circles'

In the context of teacher unions, a study circle refers to a collaborative learning group or forum where educators come together to engage in discussions, study educational topics, and deepen their understanding of issues related to their profession. Study circles provide a space for teachers to reflect on their teaching practices, share experiences, and explore relevant research and literature.

These circles are typically organised by teacher unions as a form of professional development and a means of empowering teachers. The study circle format encourages participatory learning, dialogue, and critical thinking. Teachers may discuss topics such as curriculum development, classroom management strategies, instructional techniques, assessment methods, educational policies, or social justice issues.

The purpose of study circles is to promote professional growth, improve teaching practices, and strengthen the collective knowledge and expertise of educators. Through these collaborative learning experiences, teachers can develop a deeper understanding of educational issues, gain insights from their peers, and collectively work towards improving the quality of education.

Study circles in teacher unions can help foster a sense of community, build solidarity among educators, and provide a platform for teachers to collectively address challenges and advocate for their professional interests. They contribute to the ongoing professional development of teachers and promote a culture of continuous learning within the teaching profession.

6.1 Stakeholder Engagement: Government buy-in

Achieving the aforementioned findings requires authentic government involvement in all respects, including, but not limited to, providing the necessary funding for educational success. However, government support for student achievement goes beyond mere financial resources. By enacting policies, investing in professional development, advocating for inclusive curricula, prioritising school safety, and fostering collaboration, governments can establish a supportive atmosphere that optimises students' capabilities and sets the foundation for their long-term success.

Federal and state governments have differing but equally important roles to take various measures to support African and minority students within the education system. Below are some key approaches to achieve this:

Equal Access to Quality Education:

Policy makers must ensure that African and minority students enjoy equitable access to high-quality education. This imperative entails allocating sufficient resources, funding, and infrastructure to schools located in under-served communities, particularly those with substantial African and minority student populations. It is of utmost importance to confront disparities in educational resources, facilities, and opportunities.

Crucial data regarding the distribution of African populations is readily accessible through the Australian Bureau of Statistics. For instance, in New South Wales (NSW), suburbs such as Auburn, Blacktown, and Parramatta boast significant African populations. By harnessing this available data, policy interventions can be more precisely targeted to address the observed disparities in educational outcomes and opportunities.

Culturally Responsive Curriculum:

Federal and state governments can promote the development and implementation of culturally responsive curriculum that recognises and incorporates the diverse experiences, histories, and perspectives of African and minority students. This includes ensuring that textbooks, teaching materials, and instructional approaches reflect the multicultural and multilingual nature of society. Countries such as the UK, and Scottland have all begun incorporating decolonization rhetoric to heavily inform curriculum through the arts such as music, numeracy and literacy .

Multilingual Education:

Governments should support programs that provide multilingual education options for African and minority students who speak languages other than the dominant language of instruction. These programs can help maintain students' native languages, promote bilingualism, and support academic success. An example of this is the Finnish mother-tongue program who specialise in working with students from different backgrounds in their mother tongue to facilitate their understanding of mainstream school work by using their language as a vector.

Specialised Support Services:

State governments can provide tailored funding to support the establishment of specialised support services to address the specific needs of African and minority students. This may include providing English language support, culturally responsive counselling services, cultural awareness training for teachers and staff, and additional academic support for students who may face language barriers, cultural adjustment challenges, or other socio-economic obstacles.

Teacher Diversity and Professional Development:

Governments can promote teacher diversity by implementing recruitment and retention strategies that aim to increase the representation of African and minority teachers in the education system. Additionally, providing professional development opportunities that address cultural competency, anti-bias training, and equitable teaching practices can help teachers better support and engage African and minority students. On the teacher training side,

Universities can play a pivotal role in attracting Black and minority teachers by implementing a range of strategies. For instance, they can establish dedicated scholarships aimed at supporting Black teachers and conduct assessments of barriers to certification. The effectiveness of such strategies is exemplified by Victoria University's Fast-Tracked 18-month Masters of Applied Teaching program, which offers funding of up to $15,000 for underrepresented groups within the teaching profession, including Victoria's African community .

Community Engagement and Parental Involvement:

State governments have the opportunity to play a crucial role in promoting and facilitating community engagement and parental involvement in education. This role involves establishing platforms for meaningful collaboration among schools, families, and community organisations. When parents and communities actively engage and participate, it can have a positive impact on addressing educational disparities, creating a supportive learning environment, and fostering a sense of belonging among African and minority students. To achieve this, it is essential to invest in initiatives like providing easily accessible translation services, organising regular events for parents, teachers, and students, and implementing clear reporting systems tailored to the needs of multicultural parents.

Anti-Discrimination Policies and Practices:

At all levels of government—federal and state—there is a shared responsibility to enforce and enhance anti-discrimination policies and practices within the education system, aimed at preventing bias, racism, and discrimination against African and minority students. This involves ensuring fair and impartial disciplinary procedures, addressing instances of bullying and harassment, and fostering inclusive and respectful school environments. While there are existing laws, policies, agencies, in place, such as the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) and State and Territory Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination Agencies, designed to tackle discrimination, it can be argued that the consequences resulting from these complaints often seem ineffective2. To address this issue, state and federal agencies should allocate increased funding for the enforcement and monitoring of complaints. This will not only foster trust within multicultural communities but also empower individuals to continue reporting instances of discrimination confidently.

Data Collection and Monitoring:

Federal and state governments should collect and monitor disaggregated data on academic achievement, graduation rates, discipline, and other relevant metrics to identify and address disparities that affect African and minority students. This data is readily accessed through the ABS census and other agencies such as state departments of education and immigration. By cross-referencing this data, a nuanced profile can be created to inform targeted interventions, policy adjustments, and resource allocation to improve outcomes for these students.

It's important to note that these approaches should be implemented in a comprehensive and holistic manner, taking into account the specific needs and contexts of African and minority students. Collaboration among government entities, educational institutions, communities, and stakeholders is essential for effective support and improvement in the education system.

FINDING 7:
VALUING EDUCATORS: AN OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS RACISM

Throughout my experiences in Finland, the UK, France, and the U.S I have witnessed numerous teacher strikes occurring due to the dissatisfaction of educators who feel overworked and underpaid. These issues are further amplified for black and minority educators who face additional issues regarding discrimination and lack of opportunity for advancement.

Teacher Pay:
Teacher salaries vary across different regions and countries, but in many cases, they may not be competitive compared to other professions requiring similar levels of education and qualifications, which can discourage potential candidates from pursuing a teaching career. For black and minority teachers, through my observations, this is heightened by instances of pay discrepancies between them and their white counterparts. Given that white teachers are also underpaid, the additional burden makes the cost of becoming a teacher even more prohibitive.

"

There is evidence there that black teachers are reporting that they're much less likely to progress. Look, pay progression in England isn't automatic and there isn't a pay scale.

- Sonja, NASUWT, UK

"

Lack of respect and recognition:
Teaching is a noble profession, but it doesn't always receive the respect and recognition it deserves. Negative public perception, criticism, and sometimes even lack of support from administrators and policymakers can discourage individuals from entering the field. For racialised educators, this becomes an increased burden on the emotional labour already required to navigated societies steeped in racial animus.

Workload stress:
Teaching can be a demanding and high-stress profession. Teachers often have heavy workloads, including lesson planning, grading, and managing classroom dynamics. The pressure to meet academic standards and accountability measures can also contribute to the stress levels of teachers.
Lack of support and resources:
Teachers may feel overwhelmed and unsupported due to insufficient resources, such as teaching materials, classroom supplies, and access to professional development opportunities. Limited support from administrators and a lack of recognition for their efforts can further demotivate aspiring educators. In socio-economically disadvantaged regions, where students from migrant and disadvantaged backgrounds tend to reside, the difference in resource allocation is more stark. Leaving teachers and students under resourced in an environment that requires even greater support systems.

Challenging working conditions:
Teachers often face numerous challenges in the classroom, such as large class sises, diverse student needs, and disruptive behaviours. These factors can make teaching a demanding and emotionally exhausting job, leading some individuals to choose alternative career paths. Anecdotal evidence with several black educators indicated the additional stress of being pigeonholed into disciplinarian positions.

> **The NEA has had a long standing program to recruit and retain teachers of colour, in particular, to encourage black males to enter the classroom - especially in elementary school. Oftentimes, we see again, some systemic things that happen. For example, black men enter classrooms, then they sort of move through the system; and somehow always manage to become the assistant principal who's in charge of the discipline**
>
> - Shyrelle, NEA, UK

Increased accountability and standardised testing:

The focus on standardised testing and increased accountability measures in education systems can create pressure on teachers to teach to the test. This emphasis on test scores and data-driven results deters individuals who are passionate about autonomy, creative and holistic approaches to education.

Job security and stability:

In some regions, budget cuts and policy changes in education systems have resulted in job instability for teachers. Uncertainty about long-term employment prospects can deter potential candidates from entering the teaching profession. Coupled with the perceived lack of opportunity or career progression that black educators face, the profession of teaching becomes a less lucrative and risky option.

While this situation is undoubtedly concerning, it also presents an opportunity to reassess existing structures and develop new initiatives that can attract demographics that have historically been underrepresented in the field, including males and minorities. We will explore the policies needed to achieve these measures in line with the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan.

RECOMMENDATION 1:
CREATING CULTURALLY SAFE TEACHERS THROUGH INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION/TRAINING

Teacher education programs should incorporate comprehensive training modules that focus on cultural competence. These modules should cover topics such as cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity, cultural responsiveness, and the impact of culture on teaching and learning. By integrating cultural competence throughout the curriculum, future teachers will be better prepared to meet the diverse needs of their students.

'The QITE Review found that many beginning teachers are under-prepared to teach in several key areas, such as the teaching of reading, cultural responsiveness, supporting diverse learners, classroom management, and family/carer engagement.'

-Report of the Teacher Education Expert Panel 2023[xxv]

Objectives

The development of comprehensive training modules covering cultural awareness, sensitivity, responsiveness, and the influence of culture on teaching and learning.

The prioritisation of experiential learning opportunities, including field placements and community partnerships with African and minority communities, to enhance cultural competence among teachers.

The establishment of peer-support networks as an integral component of teacher training programs, facilitating effective dialogue and collaboration among educators.

The encouragement of reflective practices, such as journaling and peer observations, to foster self-awareness and promote growth in cultural competence among educators.

The institutionalisation of culturally safe teaching practices within teacher training standards, program guidelines, policies, and teacher training frameworks.

Policy Example 1: Refining AITSL Standards

The current professional standards established by AITSL necessitate that graduate teachers, at a minimum, "*demonstrate knowledge of teaching strategies responsive to the diverse linguistic, cultural, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds of students*." However, these standards are currently loosely defined and generalised. Collaborating with university teaching faculties, AITSL can refine these criteria to require a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the specific needs of various minority groups, including Black students.

*Although not legally binding, AITSL is widely recognised as the industry standard setters.

Policy Example 2: Defining racism, discrimination, cultural safety in policy

ATSIL standards presently lack any explicit mention of racism, discrimination, or anti-racism, vital elements of ensuring cultural responsiveness and safety for black and minority students. To address this, it is imperative to introduce a dedicated Anti-Racism standard within the ATSIL accreditation criteria, applicable across all levels of the teaching profession, from graduate to lead positions. This standard should be aligned with contemporary pedagogical practices that actively confront racism, discrimination, and promote cultural safety. By institutionalising this standard, we can foster a more inclusive and equitable educational environment.

A key example is Scotland's comprehensive Anti-Racism framework for Initial teacher training (ITE). See Appendix (-) for further information[xxvii].

RECOMMENDATION 2:
INVESTING IN ATTRACTING MORE BLACK AND MINORITY TEACHERS

Attracting and retaining Black and minority teachers is paramount to fostering a diverse and inclusive educational environment. These educators bring unique perspectives and experiences that enrich the learning journey for all students, promoting cultural awareness and understanding. Furthermore, having a teaching workforce that reflects the diversity of the student body can help bridge educational disparities and empower underrepresented communities.

Scholarships and Financial Incentives:
Create targeted scholarships and financial incentives for Black and minority individuals pursuing teaching careers.

Mentorship and Support Program/ Study Circles and Professional Learning Communities:
Establish mentorship programs connecting aspiring Black and minority teachers with experienced educators from similar backgrounds.

Form study circles and learning communities for educators to discuss topics, share best practices, and collaborate on challenges.

Culturally Responsive Recruitment Strategies:
Develop culturally responsive recruitment strategies, including community partnerships and diverse representation in promotional materials.

Addressing Cultural Barriers in Certification:
Identify and address cultural barriers in certification processes, offering support and revisions as needed.

Long-Term Commitment to Retention and Support:
Provide ongoing professional development, mentorship, and support for Black and minority teachers.

Invest in initiatives to create supportive work environments, including addressing systemic issues contributing to attrition rates.

Policy Example 4: 'City Teaching Alliance' formerly known as 'Urban Teachers', Black Educators Initiative

The 'Urban Teachers' Preparatory Teachers Program has a dedicated Black Educators Initiative (BEI) with the goal of increasing Black teachers within the classroom. The Urban Teachers program specifies the increase of black teachers has numerous benefits including:

- Having high expectations for Black students and thus push them to excel

- Brings an innate understanding of life experience and culture of Black students who often don't see themselves represented in textbooks and curriculum.

- Give fewer disciplinary referrals, resulting in reduced rates of exclusionary discipline for Black students.

- Act as role models for underrepresented Black male students.

- Reduces black male students' probability of dropping out by 39%.

The recruitment of Black and minority teachers plays and imperative role in the success of African and minority students. In line with the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan which is offering bursaries worth up to $40,000 each to help attract high quality candidates to the teaching profession (Point 2). The Action Plan also outlines an intended targeted outline targeting supports for early career educators with the objective of better retention rates.

Policy example 3: NASUWT, Supporting Black teachers.

Unions can play a significant role in supporting the recruitment and retention of black and minority teachers. This can be exemplifi ed by the case of NASUWT in the UK, which has adopted a dedicated approach encompassing the development of black teacher advocacy skills, tailored personal development programs for black educators, and a consultation model that incorporates the lived experiences of black educators. By acknowledging the distinct challenges that minorities encounter within the education system, Unions can play a key role in embedding a culturally responsive approach in how they support greater teacher retention rates.

RECOMMENDATION 3:
DECOLONISED PEDAGOGY AND CURRICULA

Historically and even in contemporary curricula, there has been a reluctance to confront colonial history in Australian schools. This reluctance extends to topics related to First Nations peoples, as well as the treatment of refugees, asylum seekers, and other racialised minorities. The term "The Great Australian Silence" aptly describes the prevailing tendency within Australian society to avoid addressing these issues, resulting in a collective amnesia that barely acknowledges these historical realities. This collective amnesia is evident in the National curriculum , which heavily emphasises a sanitised version of our nation's origins, prioritising ancient history over the more recent colonial history[xxxi].

Red, White and Blue 2008
Danie Mellor, Mamu,
Ngagen, Ngajan
Mixed Media.
Australian Museum Collection.
Image: Stuart Humphreys

Decolonising the curriculum involves challenging and transforming the Eurocentric and colonial perspectives that have historically dominated education systems. Here are some recommendations for decolonising curricula:

Evaluate curriculum materials: Assess textbooks, lesson plans, and assessments for biases, omissions, and Eurocentric perspectives.

Seek diverse perspectives and knowledge: Relate the content to students' personal experiences and cultural contexts. Help them see the relevance of what they are learning in their own lives. Use examples, case studies, and real-life scenarios that resonate with their cultural backgrounds.

Centre marginalised voices: Highlight narratives, experiences, and contributions of marginalised communities. Explore diverse histories, literature, art, and achievements to foster understanding.

Acknowledge colonial histories: Teach the impact of colonialism on regions and cultures, including resistance and post-colonial struggles. Encourage critical thinking on colonialism's implications today.

Support community engagement: Collaborate with parents, communities, organizations, and experts for diverse perspectives to incorporate into your teaching practice. Encourage student involvement in local projects for social justice.

Continuous professional development: Engage in decolonization-focused professional development. Stay updated on research, best practices, and reflect on personal biases for improved implementation of a decolonised curriculum.

Example 4: University of Birmingham School
The task of addressing cultural histories and de-centering Eurocentric perspectives within curricula is both essential and attainable. The University of Birmingham (UoB) School has demonstrated this achievement notably within its music curriculum. The school has deliberately and purposefully crafted a music curriculum that confronts the legacies of slavery and explores African-American history. This is accomplished by featuring a diverse range of music genres, including blues, reggae, rock, hip-hop, and more, which have evolved across different stages of African-American progression, from the era of slavery to contemporary freedom."

Example 5: The Teaching Alliance formerly 'Urban Teachers'
"The Teaching Alliance, previously known as 'Urban Teachers,' has been dedicated to dismantling educational disparities through the cultivation of culturally responsive educators who possess a deep understanding of the unique requirements of the communities they serve. Within this approach, student teachers are actively encouraged to incorporate genuine challenges and significant issues affecting both school students and their surrounding communities into their regular instructional practices. This pedagogical strategy encompasses the integration of historical figures such as Kobe Bryant and Rosa Parks into the curriculum, addressing transportation issues affecting students, or addressing the scarcity of community spaces as a catalyst for solving complex mathematical problems."

RECOMMENDATION 4:
INVESTING IN STRENGTHENING IDENTITY AND POSITIVE CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Investing in character development is crucial for personal growth, complementing traditional education. Emphasising character development helps individuals build essential life skills and qualities, guiding students toward prioritising this aspect. An integral element is reinforcing personal identity, especially for young African and minority youths, fostering a positive self-image, resilience, and a sense of belonging.

Example: The African Youth Initiative:

The African Youth Initiative is a great example of a community based organisation led by African youth with the specific aim of strengthening identity and fostering character development. This is reflected through their vision statement which states 'Through role-modelling and a range of programs, we aim to reconnect African youth to their communities and empower them to be positive contributors to society." This initiative addresses many of the recommendations below, specifically, embedding the exploration of cultural heritage, utilising positive role modelling, and encouraging community involvement, while also promoting cultural pride as a driving ethos.

Explore cultural heritage: Encourage youth to learn about their ancestry, traditions, languages, and histories through diverse resources such as books, documentaries, and online platforms that celebrate and highlight diverse cultural backgrounds.

Positive role models and support: Establish mentorship programs for African and minority youths, fostering guidance and support through mentor connections and safe support networks, in particular from within the community.

Promote cultural pride: Celebrate diverse cultures through events, festivals, and heritage months, encouraging active participation and talent showcasing.

Encourage community involvement: Engage young individuals in community service and learning opportunities for personal growth, leadership, and positive impact.

Emphasise intersectionality: Recognise and celebrate diverse aspects of individual identities, fostering understanding, empathy, and inclusive environments that value every facet of a person's identity.

Policy Example 6: Supplementary school, UK

Citing Finding 6, "Supplementary Schools UK" exemplifies a successful initiative in the United Kingdom aimed at bolstering the cultural identity of young individuals from diverse backgrounds through cultural language and religious education. The effectiveness of these schools is underscored by their collaboration with local authorities and educational institutions, alongside community-led grassroots organisations, to guarantee their accomplishments. The implementation of a comparable program, led by African community organisations and with support from state and/or local governments, could significantly benefit African youth.

Policy Examples 7: Mother Tongue/ Heritage Initiative (Finland)

During my visit to Finland, I observed the "mother tongue" or "heritage" initiative, which offered students the opportunity to learn the curriculum material in their native language alongside regular Finnish classes (See Finding 8.6) . In essence, this initiative employed staff to conduct mother-tongue classes for students when their numbers within a cohort reached a certain percentage. This approach can be applied in Australia by placing emphasis on recruiting teachers from specific African backgrounds, especially in cases where there is a significant number of students from a particular African language group. By implementing language classes proportionally, students are provided with the chance to maintain their cultural connections, celebrate their identities, and are encouraged to embrace their heritage as a valuable aspect of their community life.

RECOMMENDATION 5:
CREATIVE MODES OF EXPRESSION

Offering creative modes of expression within schools is a powerful means to empower African and minority students. It enables them to authentically embrace their cultural identities while contributing to a vibrant and diverse creative community. These opportunities extend beyond artistic development; they also nurture a profound sense of pride, belonging, and self-confidence. For example, various African language groups have a rich tradition of storytelling orally passed down through generations. These oral traditions incorporate music, dance, and spoken word. By providing such outlets, we empower these students to explore their identities, share their experiences, and celebrate their rich cultural heritage.

Arts and performance programs:
Offer arts programs such as visual arts, music, dance, theatre, and spoken word poetry. These creative outlets allow students to express themselves, showcase their talents, and explore their cultural traditions through various artistic forms.

Self-expression through creative storytelling mediums:
Provide opportunities for students to engage in creative writing, storytelling, and poetry that reflect their unique backgrounds and identities.

Digital media and multimedia projects:
Encourage students to utilise digital media tools, such as photography, videography, and graphic design, to create multimedia projects that represent their cultural heritage, express their ideas, and tell their stories.

Community engagement projects:
Facilitate community engagement projects that allow students to collaborate with local organisations, artists, or community leaders to create art installations, murals, or performances that address social issues or celebrate cultural diversity.

Oral traditions and storytelling:
Incorporate oral traditions and storytelling as a means of cultural expression. Provide platforms for students to share personal narratives, family stories, and oral histories, either in small groups or in larger community events.

Digital storytelling and media production:
Teach students how to create digital stories or produce media projects that reflect their cultural identities and experiences. This can include creating short films, podcasts, or digital presentations that share their perspectives and narratives.

Mentorship and artist-in-residence programs:
Connect students with mentors or invite artists from diverse backgrounds to serve as role models and provide guidance. Offer artist-in-residence programs where professional artists work directly with students, sharing their expertise and helping them develop their creative skills.

Policy Example 8: Flo Vortex , London, UK

Inaugurated on November 4th, 2014, the FLO Vortex was created by creative artist and singer/ song-writer, Natalie 'FLO' Stewart as a catalyst for sharing performance poetry insights. Acknowledging the pivotal role of open mic stages and the ongoing need for artist development, the initiative arranges studio sessions, theatre workshops, and creative writing classes led by accomplished artists. This initiative aims to enrich cultural fabric, introducing fresh expressions and diverse voices, reflecting a multicultural society. Moreover, it offers young talents from marginalised communities through school programs and external mentorships, the opportunity to explore versatile modes of expression beyond the traditional music industry. This movement empowers young artists to authentically express themselves, explore visual literacy, and break free from mainstream music industry pressures, ensuring pure and liberated creative expressions for artists, audiences, and poets alike.

Policy Example 9: Australia's National Cultural Policy "Revive" (2023)

Under the new Federal Labor Government, a National Cultural Policy was collaboratively developed in consultation with community organizations, artists, and representative bodies. This effort aimed to establish a unified, equitable, and diverse policy framework for the arts sector. Pillar 2 of this framework, titled "A Place for Every Story," underscores the imperative to create space and opportunities for the diverse narratives of Australia to be expressed. This emphasis is particularly crucial due to the evolving demographics of Australia, which are not adequately reflected in the arts.

This commitment is manifested through the "Invest in a Local Multicultural Projects initiative," which encompasses support for local community-based artistic and cultural activities and celebrations. Embracing various funding models, including grants and local partnerships, holds the potential to yield significant benefits for African Australian communities, schools, and local governments seeking to foster artistic and creative avenues for self-expression[xxiii].

CONCLUSION:

In my research project, I focused on the education system as a key avenue for promoting social cohesion and active citizenship. I firmly believe that children and young people are instrumental in transforming the status quo. By investigating how other western societies with a longer history of diversity support black and minority communities, I aimed to provide insights and recommendations for the Australian education system.

My research on cultural diversity in Australia has shed light on the challenges faced by the African diaspora in a country known for its multiculturalism. Despite Australia being deemed one of the most multicultural nations in the world, racism and discrimination persist, affecting the sense of belonging and well-being of individuals from African backgrounds.

The alarming concerns raised by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights emphasise the multi-faceted forms of racial discrimination, xenophobia, and systemic racism experienced by people of African descent in Australia. This includes racial profiling, racial slurs, abuse of authority, over-policing, under-protection, targeting, and violence. The impact of such racism extends beyond individuals, affecting the wider society in terms of economic disparities, reduced community cohesion, and decreased cultural exchange.

It is evident that addressing these issues is crucial for the continued development of a cohesive and harmonious Australia. The impacts of racism on minority communities are profound, leading to a loss of belonging, mental health burdens, direct health impacts, and economic disadvantages. Moreover, racism has a monetary cost to the country's GDP and hampers cultural exchange among diverse communities.

The recommendations outlined in my research encompass creating culturally safe practitioners, investing in representation, developing culturally safe and relevant curricula, promoting alternative modes of expression, and fostering pathways to maintain and strengthen identity with self and land. Additionally, creating community solidarity through leveraging unions, accountability measures, and government buy-in is crucial.

The audience for this research project spans educators at all levels, universities, teacher training organisations, government agencies, and community organisations invested in anti-racism, education, and multiculturalism. By implementing the recommendations, the education system can play a leading role in shaping the minds of future generations, fostering inclusivity, and contributing to a more equitable and successful Australia for all. While this report does not cover all issues and recommendations due to time constraints and the vastness of the topic, it serves as a starting point for meaningful discussions and actions.

In conclusion, tackling racism and discrimination in the Australian education system is essential for creating a society where all individuals, regardless of their background, can truly belong and thrive. By embracing diversity, implementing inclusive policies, and investing in cultural competency, we can pave the way for a more harmonious and equitable future. Together, we can build a nation that values and celebrates its cultural diversity, fostering a sense of belonging for every member of our society.

PLANS FOR DISSEMINATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REPORT FINDINGS

The dissemination and implementation of my Churchill Fellowship report to a wide range of stakeholders hold paramount importance in driving tangible change and fostering inclusivity within the education system. As the report addresses vital issues related to anti-racism, multiculturalism, and inclusive education, reaching educators at all levels, universities, teacher training organizations, government agencies, and community organizations becomes crucial. By sharing my report's findings with these diverse stakeholders, we can inspire informed discussions, meaningful actions, and policy reforms that will shape the minds of future generations.

Furthermore, Implementing the recommendations outlined in the report can empower the education system to lead the charge in creating an equitable and successful Australia for all. Although the report may not cover all aspects due to its vast scope, it serves as a stepping stone for collaborative efforts to address pressing challenges. Dissemination and implementation are not merely tasks of information sharing but essential steps in initiating transformative initiatives, fostering a more inclusive society, and collectively building a brighter future for all, below are some ways in which I plan to achieve this goal.

Academic Conferences and Symposiums:
- Present the research findings and recommendations at academic conferences focused on education, anti-racism, and multiculturalism.
- Participate in panel discussions and Q&A sessions to engage with educators, researchers, and policymakers in the field.

Publications and Journals:
- Submit the report to relevant academic journals and publications that specialise in education and social justice.
- Write articles summarising key findings and recommendations for broader dissemination in educational magazines and newsletters.

Webinars and Online Events:
- Organise webinars or virtual events to reach a global audience of educators, policymakers, and community organizations.
- Utilise social media platforms and educational websites to promote the webinars and encourage participation.

Professional Development Workshops:
- Collaborate with teacher training organizations to conduct professional development workshops for educators on anti-racist practices and promoting inclusivity in the classroom.
- Tailor the workshop content to the specific needs of different educational levels.

Government Agencies and Policy Briefs:
- Share the report with relevant government agencies responsible for education and anti-discrimination policies.
- Prepare concise policy briefs highlighting the key recommendations and their potential impact on the education system.

Community Engagement and Public Forums:
- Host town halls and public forums to involve the broader community in discussions about anti-racism, multiculturalism, and education.
- Encourage community organizations invested in these issues to co-host or support such events.

Collaboration with Educational Institutions:
- Partner with universities and educational institutions to organise seminars, lectures, or guest speaker sessions.
- Engage with students, faculty, and administrators to foster awareness and action.

Media Outreach:
- Reach out to local, national, and international media outlets to cover the report's findings and recommendations.
- Publish op-eds and contribute to relevant podcasts or radio programs to expand the report's reach.

Online Platforms and Repositories:
- Upload the report to educational databases, repositories, and open-access platforms to make it easily accessible to researchers and practitioners.

Collaborative Networks and Associations:
- Engage with existing networks and associations focused on education, anti-racism, and multiculturalism.
- Share the report through their newsletters, mailing lists, and events.

Policy Advocacy Groups:
- Work with advocacy organizations that are dedicated to promoting equity and social justice in education.
- Collaborate to advocate for the implementation of the report's recommendations at different levels of policymaking.

APPENDIX:

A.   ABS African Population picture statistics
https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/cultural-diversity-census/2021#data-downloads

B.   Pillar 2 National Cultural Policy
https://www.arts.gov.au/publications/national-cultural-policy-revive-place-every-story-story-every-place

C.   National Teachers Workforce Action Plan
https://www.education.gov.au/national-teacher-workforce-action-plan

D.   Scotland's Anti-Racism framework
https://education.gov.scot/news/launch-of-new-national-anti-racism-framework-for-initial-teacher-education/

E.   Press release: Australia: People of African Decent Living Under Siege of Racism, UN Expert Says
https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/12/australia-people-african-descent-living-under-siege-racism-say-un-experts

APPENDIX A.

Census of Population and Housing: Cultural diversity data summary, 2021

Released at 10:00am (Canberra time) 28 June 2022

Contents
Find out more:
Country of birth of person
Australian citizenship

TABLE 2. COUNTRY OF BIRTH OF PERSON BY AUSTRALIAN CITIZENSHIP
Count of persons(a)

	Australian	Not an Australian	Not stated	Total
North Africa and the Middle East				
Algeria	1,191	319	8	1,519
Bahrain	1,465	540	3	2,005
Egypt	36,466	6,406	342	43,213
Gaza Strip and West Bank	2,541	407	14	2,959
Iran	44,418	26,030	451	70,899
Iraq	56,855	35,552	516	92,922
Israel	8,942	2,032	64	11,035
Jordan	5,723	2,183	53	7,959
Kuwait	4,839	1,952	29	6,815
Lebanon	77,963	8,816	562	87,340
Libya	2,117	478	13	2,609
Middle East, nfd	515	91	8	611
Morocco	1,707	643	24	2,381
North Africa and the Middle East, nfd	47	28	0	77
North Africa, nfd	83	7	0	90
Oman	972	609	8	1,589
Qatar	1,122	783	10	1,915
Saudi Arabia	4,921	6,721	45	11,684
South Sudan	6,578	1,587	89	8,255
Spanish North Africa	0	0	0	0
Sudan	13,367	2,816	419	16,609
Syria	13,285	15,669	150	29,096
Tunisia	480	212	0	694
Turkey	31,935	6,425	212	38,568
United Arab Emirates	8,358	4,662	44	13,063
Western Sahara	7	0	0	3
Yemen	552	379	8	939
Total	326,433	125,341	3,079	454,856

	Australian	Not an Australian	Not stated	Total
Sub-Saharan Africa				
Angola	422	78	6	511
Benin	73	6	0	84
Botswana	831	601	0	1,433
Burkina Faso	37	21	0	54
Burundi	1,580	1,101	30	2,711
Cabo Verde	31	7	0	38
Cameroon	303	219	0	520
Central African Republic	23	109	0	128
Central and West Africa, nfd	91	36	0	126
Chad	43	44	0	86
Comoros	19	0	0	23
Congo, Democratic Republic of	2,849	3,226	74	6,148
Congo, Republic of	898	1,243	47	2,193
Cote d'Ivoire	418	163	7	588
Djibouti	144	31	5	180
Equatorial Guinea	7	12	0	14
Eritrea	3,628	1,951	57	5,629

Eswatini	245	76	5	324
Ethiopia	9,611	4,348	129	14,092
Gabon	25	22	0	47
Gambia	78	36	3	114
Ghana	4,120	2,137	61	6,322
Guinea	674	256	10	941
Guinea-Bissau	12	4	0	15
Kenya	13,788	8,339	216	22,348
Lesotho	102	36	0	134
Liberia	2,467	661	60	3,187
Madagascar	192	113	0	311
Malawi	968	524	5	1,503
Mali	28	16	0	46
Mauritania	31	8	0	39
Mauritius	21,096	4,731	148	25,981
Mayotte	0	0	0	0
Mozambique	735	176	11	914
Namibia	1,093	437	4	1,535
Niger	19	13	0	31
Nigeria	5,997	6,774	111	12,883
Reunion	125	56	0	182
Rwanda	655	402	7	1,064
Sao Tome and Principe	18	3	0	21
Senegal	357	64	4	423
Seychelles	2,288	183	36	2,502
Sierra Leone	2,945	653	53	3,651
Somalia	5,560	2,414	128	8,101
South Africa	143,432	44,965	814	189,207
Southern and East Africa, nec	0	0	11	11
Southern and East Africa, nfd	284	38	0	319
St Helena	24	14	0	34
Sub-Saharan Africa, nfd	0	0	0	0
Tanzania	3,186	1,144	37	4,371
Togo	249	50	3	300
Uganda	2,930	1,180	55	4,163
Zambia	5,210	1,599	40	6,847
Zimbabwe	29,955	9,539	225	39,714
Total	*269,906*	*99,838*	*2,403*	*372,151*

APPENDIX B.

PILLAR **2**

—

A Place for
Every Story

Reflecting the breadth of our stories and
the contribution of all Australians as the
creators of culture.

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> In order to ensure there is a place for every story, we must ensure that all people can be storytellers, and that all audiences can experience their stories ... We need to ensure that every person has access to their cultural rights and creative entitlement, not just those that we view as the majority. This will need strategic investment and authentic leadership.

– A Place for Every Story Review Panel.

Revive envisages that the entire national cultural collection and cultural experience is representative of modern Australia; in the stories it tells, in the artists that create it, and the audiences that engage with it.

Arts and culture belong to everyone.

Australia's people and their stories are our greatest cultural asset. Stories communicate shared identities and a sense of belonging to place and each other, and can be shared through an artwork, narrative, dance, screen content, music or an idea.

Stories bring people together and enable the exchange of experiences, ideas and perspectives. Stories give us a voice. All Australians benefit when they are represented by and in the nation's stories and that they can hear their own voices resounding in the national narrative.

Our stories are shaped by histories, places, identities, languages, cultures, families and communities.

It is important that a range of stories are heard, respected, reflected – and at times contested – in Australia's collective social and cultural life. Increased participation from under-represented voices, as well as representative and authentic leadership across cultural and creative organisations, will support storytelling that more accurately reflects contemporary Australian society and connects with new audiences. Our cultural policy must also encourage sharing under-represented stories in Australia's cultural institutions, by Australia's national broadcasters and in the national curriculum.

> It is vital that we demonstrate, definitively, that there is a place for stories like mine, for artists like me, for audiences like my family and friends – the young, culturally diverse, those who have been historically marginalised.

– Tasnim Hossain, resident director at Melbourne Theatre Company

The National Cultural Policy promotes principles of access, equity, participation and representation in arts and cultural activities for all Australians, consistent with Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that 'everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.'

CASE STUDY

The Push and thirty years of helping young people in music

Access to live music events is not a reality for all young people in Australia. There are fewer events in regional and outer-suburban areas, some events come with unaffordable ticket prices, and live music events are rarely staged for underage audiences or designed to be accessible and culturally safe.

Melbourne-based youth music organisation, The Push, has been supporting young people over three decades to overcome these barriers to participate and thrive in Australian music. CEO Kate Duncan says that, 'participation in music at any level can be the defining moment in a young person's life. It helps young people to shape their identity, establish lifelong relationships, build their connections to community and increase their sense of social connectedness.'

In 2022, The Push partnered with Crowded House, Live Nation and Arts Centre Melbourne to support young women and gender diverse people to be mentored in technical and sound production roles on the 2022 Crowded House Australian tour. In the same year, The Push held Music Careers Expos in Adelaide and Melbourne for high school-aged young people to provide insights and information on how to get a start in the Australian music industry. Over 300 young people attended the events to discover, learn and plan their careers in music.

Priority Area 2 – Strengthening initial teacher education

Objective: To ensure initial teacher education supports teacher supply and delivers classroom ready graduates.

8 The Teacher Education Expert Panel, led by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sydney, Professor Mark Scott AO, is reviewing initial teacher education (ITE) and will recommend ways to boost graduation rates, and broadly ensure graduating teachers are better prepared for the classroom through:

- strengthening the link between performance and funding of ITE including looking at quality measures such as teaching performance assessments and how to increase the current average completion rate of 50 per cent in bachelor's degrees

- strengthening ITE programs to deliver effective classroom ready teachers, with particular attention to teaching reading, literacy and numeracy, classroom management, cultural responsiveness, teaching students with diverse needs and working with families/carers

- improving the quality of professional experience placements in teaching with regard to best practice models used in education, medicine and other disciplines

- improving postgraduate ITE for mid-career entrants including exploring paid internships and other employment-based pathways.

The Australian Government will provide the Teacher Education Expert Panel with information gathered through the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan consultation process on strengthening ITE.

Timing and key next steps

The Panel and its Terms of Reference were announced by the Australian Government Education Minister on 22 September 2022.

It will consider the findings of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review and consult with school and higher education sector stakeholders and other experts including through the Teacher Workforce Action Plan Working Group.

The Australian Government will present the findings of the Teacher Education Expert Panel to Education Ministers by June 2023

A key theme that arose from the public consultation process was the importance of:

- paid professional experience placements

- direct university and school partnerships to help train teachers

- Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education

- internship training models and alternatives with greater proportion of training in school settings

- mandatory placements in the first year of study

- exit interviews for students who choose not to continue ITE.

This feedback will be passed on to the Teacher Education Expert Panel.

9 Recognise previous study, work experience and skills that may be transferable to teaching.

A framework will be developed by the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE) in consultation with Universities Australia, higher education providers and teacher registration authorities. This framework will include measures to ensure First Nations peoples, mid-career professionals and para-professionals can have their skills, expertise and prior learning recognised through credit towards their qualification, whilst maintaining robust teacher qualification requirements.

Increasing learning opportunities for classroom support staff should also be facilitated, to help attract these professionals into teaching. The framework will have particular regard to areas of specialist skill need, including mathematics and Technological and Applied Studies (TAS), and consider existing initiatives to recognise the expertise of mid-career professionals through the NSW Teacher Supply Strategy, including mid-career pathways, School Learning Support Officer and TAS retraining, and the Queensland Turn to Teaching and Trade to Teach initiatives.

Timing and key next steps

The Australian Government will take a proposal to Australian Education Senior Officials Committee (AESOC) in early 2023. ACDE will be asked to provide its national framework to AESOC by late 2023 for application in 2024.

10 Co-design actions to attract and retain more First Nations teachers.

The development of the strategy should be a collaboration between the Australian Government, First Nations peoples and other education stakeholders. It should also leverage key lessons from the successful 'More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative' which ran for five years from 2011, and existing state and territory initiatives such as the Pearl Duncan Teaching Scholarships and the Remote Area Teacher Education Program that operate in Queensland and look at pathways for Aboriginal Education Officers to leverage existing skills into teaching.

The Australian Government will work with First Nations education organisations to roll out its $14.1 million investment in the teaching of First Nations languages. This will give potential First Nations teachers exposure to the classroom and potentially provide a pathway for more First Nations teachers.

Timing and key next steps

The Australian Government to co-design a new national First Nations teachers' strategy to apply from 2024, in close partnership with First Nations education organisations including:

- the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Advisory Group
- the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Council
- the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care
- the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Principals Association
- the Coalition of the Peaks.

11 In recognition that the Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education (LANTITE) should not be a barrier, all teaching students will undergo initial assessment of their personal literacy and numeracy skills in their first year to ensure they can receive targeted support if they need it.

States and territories will work with the Australian Government and initial teacher education (ITE) providers around relevant supports and rules. From 2023, prospective students will be eligible to sit the LANTITE prior to commencing their studies. This will offer more certainty and fairness to prospective ITE students and require ITE providers to provide targeted assistance to those who need it, for example providing better feedback on areas where focus is needed.

This includes:

- increasing the number of permitted attempts at the LANTITE
- better feedback to LANTITE participants on areas they need to improve when they have failed to meet the standard (to help increase pass rates on a second or subsequent attempt).

This work will be trialled by Victoria and the Northern Territory working with higher education providers in their jurisdictions and report back to Education Ministers in 2023.

Timing and key next steps

Education Ministers to consider amendments to the *Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures* to specify where in a program a student should sit the LANTITE in 2023. This work will form part of the new nationally consistent guidelines for teacher training and accreditation.

APPENDIX D.

FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW:
ENSURING AN ANTI-RACIST
CONSCIOUSNESS IN ITE PROCESSES
AND PRACTICES:

- MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT
- RACIAL LITERACY OF TEACHER EDUCATORS
- TEACHER IDENTITY AND POSITIONALITY
- ANTI-RACIST PEDAGOGY AND CURRICULUM
- PLACEMENT
- PROBATIONARY PERIOD
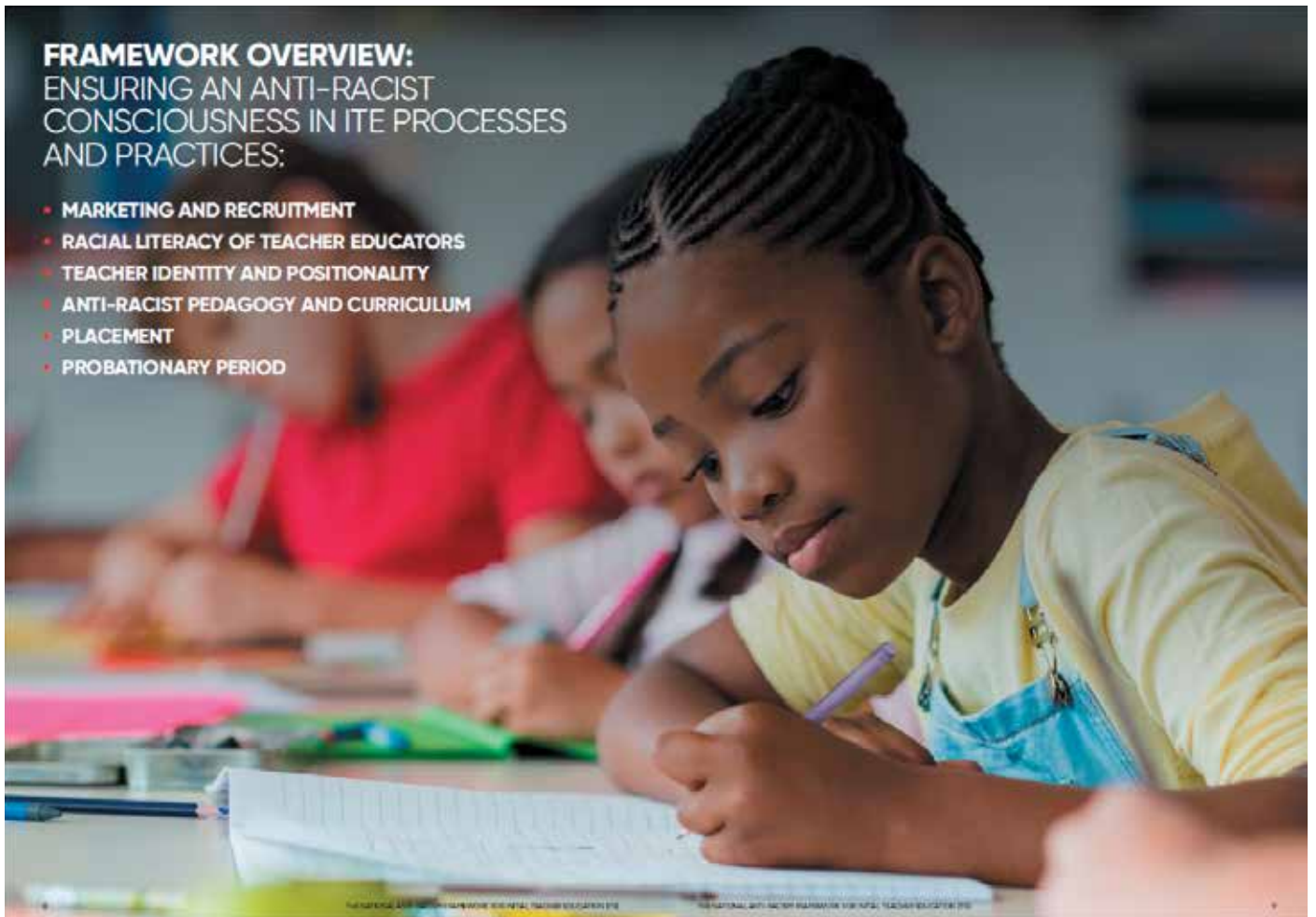
APPENDIX E.

Australia: People of African descent living under siege of racism, say UN experts

21 December 2022

CANBERRA/GENEVA (21 December 2022) – Africans and people of African descent are exposed to multi-faceted forms of racial discrimination, xenophobia and systemic racism in all spheres of predominantly 'white' Australia, says Catherine Namakula, Chair of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent.

Ending a 10-day official visit to the country, the experts expressed serious concerns that, in a multicultural country that professes an inclusive national identity, "people of African descent face racial profiling, racial slurs, abuse of authority, over policing, under protection, targeting and violence". The group heard concerns about racist hate speech and he use of negative racial stereotypes by some politicians and the media. Research documenting the experience of young people in schools shows that many African Australians are exposed to racist bullying with no redress, the experts said in a **statement**.

South Sudanese refugees reported high rates of incarceration, indefinite detention, mental health concerns, and suicide in Australia. In schools and in the community, reports of severe and pervasive racism have impacted their sense of belonging and their opportunities. "Disproportionate numbers of people of African descent have been categorised as unlawful non-citizens and banished indefinitely from Australia's population to offshore and inland detention facilities," the experts said.

The Working Group found that Australia's use of indefinite detention under section 501 of the Migration Act presents grave human rights concerns, including with respect to due process, prior notice of collateral consequences, retroactive application and the racialised arbitrary and subjective nature of its use. The experts recommend that the Government immediately end the practice of indefinite detention under Section 501, which is incompatible with international human rights law.

The Working Group heard that racialised approaches of government and Australian society to COVID-19 restrictions clarified the long-lived reality of people of African descent as always under siege.

The experts said the experiences of people of African descent continue to be impacted by the country's settler-colonial past, its White Australia immigration policy, which was dropped in 1973, and its legacy, still endured by the First Nations peoples, including Aboriginal people, Torres Strait Islanders, and South Sea Islanders. "People of African descent experience a culture of denial of this racialised reality, and the legacies of this via pervasive 'othering' in public spaces and entrenched disadvantage.

"The mental health of children, men and women of African descent is an urgent concern requiring culturally appropriate and trauma-informed care, prevention and non-carceral approaches", the experts said.

All children in 'detention' need to be decriminalised and returned to their families and communities with a view to shifting to a public health centred approach that addresses the underlying causes of juvenile offending.

The Working Group, which also included human rights experts Barbara Reynolds and Dominique Day, visited Canberra, Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney.

The experts welcome the expressed intent of the Government to address gaps and human rights concerns with a strengthened Anti-racism framework.

The Working Group will present a report with its findings and recommendations to the UN Human Rights Council in September 2023.

ENDS

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