

Jim Lusted and Ola Fadoju

Co-researching the experiences of black Sport and Fitness Students: A staff-student investigation

Transcript

Jim: I'm Jim Lusted, I'm a Lecturer in Sport and Fitness.

Ola: I'm Ola Fadoju, I am a Staff Tutor at the Open University and also an Associate Lecturer in Sport and Fitness.

Jim: So, I'll tell you a little bit about our project. We are interested in finding out much more about the experiences, particularly the learning experiences, of our black students in Sport and Fitness. So, we know that our black students who are studying sport and fitness modules don't have the same outcomes as other students, so we've got a 10% gap for example in progression between black students and students of other ethnic groups on our Sport and Fitness modules. So, we're going to try and do some focus groups with a range of black students and our project we think is slightly innovative because we are going to try and use students themselves to help undertake the research for us.

So we're going to use student researchers and so this is a staff-student collaborative project and we will use students to undertake and facilitate the focus groups and try to find out more about three key areas of student learning experiences. The first is about students' experiences of the support that they get from the tutor, the feedback they get from their tutor. We're interested in how black students' experience the module materials and engage with module materials on our sport modules and also we'd like to know a little bit more about our black students' experiences in working with and engaging with discussing with other students on their modules too.

Ola: So, who else is involved in the project? We have two central academic staff at the OU, Dr Caroline Heaney and Dr Nicola Spencer. We are also going to have two, I think, well not as it stands, we have one Sport and Fitness student researcher, but it might be that as we go through the project, it might be that that will go up to two and we also have been in contact with Patrice Belton who is the Open University Student Association Vice President for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and she is also going to be working like a bridge between the learners and the academic staff on the project as well.

Jim: We want to learn much more and get much more detailed data on the on the learning experiences of black students. At the moment we don't really have that data. We've got some very generic feedback and we've got the statistical data of progress, but what we haven't got is the real rich detailed data that tells us about the experiences of black students and we know this is going to be a range of experiences too, not just kind of one, everyone's going to have the same experience. So, we that's really what we want to find out - that range of experiences amongst our black students.

Ola: We think the project is important because essentially, we want to actually get to the roots of what learners are experiencing and not the assumption of staff. It has to be what the students are experiencing in, as Jim mentioned earlier, real rich qualitative and quantitative data straight from the students themselves and it's important in that aspect that we can find the data and use it to create interventions that are real and relevant and will help bridge that BAME awarding gap in the sports and fitness area.

Jim: It's great to work collaboratively with other staff and research is a fantastic way of doing that. I also think um it's going to get me personally as a lecturer closer to the student experience and to begin to understand a bit better and what it's like to study our sport modules and particularly at the OU. So, you know, I'm hoping my own involvement in this particular project will really help me understand you know the distance learning, the OU student experience a bit better.

Ola: For me, similar to Jim, it is about working collaboratively but again as Jim has also mentioned, it is also that insight that as I've been in AL for 10 years, so it would be nice to actually really look at it from a student point of view and not from my eyes only.