**I: = Interviewer (Interviewer in bold)**

R: = Respondent [name]

**I: So obviously I don’t know anything about your background, where you teach, what kind of subjects, which level, so if you could just tell me a little bit about that.**

R: So originally I was a teacher of music and I came to teaching quite late. I came to teaching when I was 30. I’m 43 now. When I was 31 actually. I’m a classically trained musician which is rare in itself [laughter]. So I went to a conservatoire. I went to what is now the [university] and I have a degree in music. Then I had various jobs. One of those was a peripatetic music teacher. Do you know what that is? Where you go and you visit schools and you teach practical music in schools. I then joined the army for a little bit [laughter]. I met my husband, we had a family and I then went back into teaching but in the classroom. So I started off teaching in a school in [area in England], [area in England] which is [area in England]. That school was pretty roughly split between white British and Asian Pakistani. There were a few what you would call black or Caribbean or African minority children there but it was mostly Asian Pakistani and mostly white British.

That created quite a difficult environment because there’d been some riots in the area before I started. There was a real schism in the community. So our focus there was on community cohesion, which was quite contrived but over a few years it did work. I had to commute there so it was too much with a young family. So after a couple of years, I think I was there maybe three years, I moved to what I would call a leafy suburb school in [area in England]. It was mostly white British there. There were hardly any black children or minority children there at all. It was a bit of a promotion. I got promoted to head of faculty there but I wasn’t comfortable in that school. It was really, really… there was not much challenge. The children were so well behaved [laughter]. It was kind of boring if that makes sense. So I took another promotion to an extended senior leadership role, which was a pastoral role. So it was, what was the title, director of house was the title. So I had a pastoral… it was vertical tutoring so I had some Year 7, 8, up to Year 11 in my care and then I had some teaching responsibility.

But at this point I had to stop teaching my subject and start teaching English because when you move into leadership roles you’re teaching less but also there’s already a teacher base there. So there was no room for me to teach music there so I taught a little bit of drama, I taught English and I was there for nearly five years. I’ve recently just been appointed as an [assistant] principal at my new school which is in [area in England] which is in a similar category to my previous school which was [NAME SCHOOL], which was in [NAME] Village which both of those schools are very disadvantaged but in what we call category six areas. I don’t know if you know about category six. So it’s like the most deprived. We measure that on pupil premium. So at my current school it’s 62% pupil premium and the average is 24.

**I: So you are a school principal which is…**

R: Assistant principal.

**I: But nevertheless what I know, looking at data, that this is very rare to have minority ethnic groups in the principal role so it’s much rare that…**

R: It’s very rare. It has been a difficult journey. I’ve been quite a fighter and I’ve put myself forward. I do feel that I’ve had to work twice as hard as other people have had to work who don’t have black skin. That has sometimes been a challenge. Certainly as I’ve climbed, I’ve found the climb harder and harder. There have been examples where blatant racism has been the reason for me not receiving a promotion and not being given opportunity. I can talk about a few of those examples later if you want but there’s definitely been times where I’ve been limited and for no other reason than it could only be one thing. That’s been difficult.

**I: Can I ask you what kind of feedback you received when that happened?**

R: Often feedback will be about me being aggressive or being not ready. I need to be patient, wait for my time, those sorts of platitudes.

**I: It’s interesting because some teachers told me their feedback but that’s because… I don’t know. That’s interesting what you think about it because many of the teachers I interviewed in London, they are themselves from migrant backgrounds, plus they are from black African backgrounds. What they told me that every time they applied, they were told that they’re not confident enough or they don’t sound confident enough.**

R: Right. Okay, that’s interesting.

**I: It’s interesting because I feel I’m told that all the time as well.**

R: That’s very interesting. That is interesting. I mean my father was from the Windrush generation, he was a lot older than my mum, from Jamaica. My mum is Scottish. So maybe because I’m born here that, you know, I am confident with the way I speak. But certainly one of the things, the feedback I’ve had before has been, “You shouldn’t have said that in the interview. You’re too assertive, too aggressive,” and those sorts of things. Whereas other people would be viewed as being assertive and confident and aspirant and that’s definitely been a problem. One particular example was for a secondment. I’d applied for the secondment three times and on the third time, it was just so obvious that the only reason was the colour of my skin and that was because the application process was to say what project you were going to do, what you were going to focus on, an area of development for the school, and I’d done that. I’d given quite a detailed outline of how I would tackle key stage three underachievement and how I would do that. I didn’t get the secondment.

The person who had a similar role to me, the exact same role to me, [name], he got it. I said to him, “Oh, well congratulations on getting your secondment. What is your project going to be about?” and his response to me was, “I didn’t have one. I just said that I would do whatever they wanted me to do.” So in that case he hasn’t even met the most basic of standards in terms of the criteria for success. He hadn’t even said that he would do a project, much less have it evaluated against mine. When there’s only two of you that go for a position and the person who gets it happens to be a white male and didn’t meet the success criteria, then you have to ask what was the problem.

**I: Can I ask you, what was your experience, growing up, with ethnic diversity and disadvantage in your own school for example?**

R: I think when I was growing up we didn’t call it disadvantage. You were either working class or you weren’t. So my mum was definitely working class. She was a single mother. My father had died. Things were difficult. We lived in a council flat. We lived in council houses but it was very different then because you didn’t have things like universal credit. I don’t feel like we wanted for anything. I certainly didn’t feel like I was disadvantaged. She was quite good at supporting with my interests in terms of my classical music training. She would apply for things like the Prince’s Trust and get grants to help me with the tuition and buying instruments and those sorts of things. She was really good at that so I didn’t really feel like I was disadvantaged. I felt that I stuck out at school because she’d moved us from a predominantly black area to a predominantly white area and her motivations for that were around wanting me to have better opportunities that perhaps other black children wouldn’t have had.

There’s questions that me and my mum have about that all the time, about whether or not that was the right decision to make because certainly when I was at school, it didn’t matter what I did, the teachers would very rarely ask me my opinion or get a question from me. They were always very surprised that I did well at school. There was always this tone of surprise at parents’ evenings with my mum. It was very kind of, “Oh, and she’s good at English,” and my mum would say, “Well why are you surprised that she’s good at English?” and that would then lead to kind of a mini confrontation at parents evenings because she would then challenge them about, “Well what is it about her that makes you feel like she’s not going to be successful?” and then they would be, “Oh,” and hesitant in their response. So it wasn’t an easy education. Certainly it was a very different environment. It was the 1980s.

**I: Was it in** [area in England]**?**

R: No. I was in [area in England]. So I’m from [area in England] originally which is a very diverse city. I think she was probably right in terms of perhaps receiving a better education where we moved to, which was kind of a suburb away from the city centre, very much diluted in terms of ethnic minorities there. I did have black friends and there were some Vietnamese children there who’d come over the war so they were refugees. There was definitely a mix but it wasn’t a rich mix. It certainly wasn’t an even split in terms of the ethnicities.

**I: How did your mum view your desire to be a teacher or did you even want to be a teacher?**

R: I didn’t, no. Originally I wanted to be a musician. I wanted to play, you know, principle flute in the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra but I didn’t have the financial backing and I lacked the culture capital that my peers had. So even though I’d excelled at music college and I’d done really, really well, I’d auditioned and come first lots and lots of times. I didn’t have that innate knowledge of what to do when I finished and how I would go about getting any of the roles. I just lacked that. I didn’t have that so I ended up kind of not fulfilling that dream, not because I didn’t have my mum’s backing but what she didn’t have was the know-how. I didn’t have the know-how so I ended up teaching. I love it now but it wasn’t what my dream was.

**I: So you went on a teacher training course (unclear 00:11:35).**

R: Well I did it through the [university] because I had twins [laughter]. They’re 12 now but at the time they were one. So I did my PGCE through the [university] because it was flexible and it allowed me to do my placements as and when. That worked really well for me with a young family. So that’s how I did it.

**I: Did you have good experiences with PGCE placements?**

R: I did have a good experience. I was lucky that I had two good mentors but then I think because I was older as well, I had a bit more perspective on things, on workload. I think I knew a bit more about myself and what I could put up with. I think I had a bit more of an understanding of who I was as a person. I wasn’t flustered by a high amount of workload or children being rude because I was a bit older. I think actually being older meant that the children didn’t really take the mick because I was older, I didn’t look particularly young.

**I: Vulnerable.**

R: Yes, and vulnerable. So it gave me a bit of an advantage. But my teacher training, I did that in [area in England] because my husband was still in the army and that’s where we were based. My first school was kind of a mixed comprehensive, very white. There weren’t that many black children there but there were a lot of travellers, a lot of travelling Roma communities. I would say that would be the biggest ethnic minority there. The staff did not know how to engage with that community whatsoever, neither did I but certainly I couldn’t take any kind of examples from them. Then my second school, again, it was in [area in England] but that was a boy’s school and again, it was very, very white.

**I: How did your placements affect your teacher training experience?**

R: I don’t think so. I don’t think I received any racism from the children. I genuinely don’t think so. I don’t think staff were rude to me either. I don’t think so, not during my training. I think my training was quite positive. But again, I think I was quite grounded. I think I would have picked up on it if it was there because you just do. You do pick up when there’s a problem and I don’t think that was my experience.

**I: Then after that you said at the beginning you took a full time job. Where was that?**

R: That was in [SCHOOL NAME], [area in England].

**I: How long did you stay there?**

R: I stayed there I think three years. I’m pretty sure it was three years. I loved it there. It was a good learning experience because there was that many Asian Pakistani children there. I learnt a lot about cohesion and trying to integrate communities but then I had a very good head teacher. The application process was quite difficult and I think I’d gone for quite a few jobs and not been successful. I was never sure if it was a colour thing or if it was an age thing because I was applying, at age 31, for teacher roles. Music departments tend to be quite small, one or two teachers. Sometimes the head of department would have been much younger than me, or than I was then. Sometimes the feedback I’d get would be, “We just feel like our head of department would struggle to manage you because you’re more experienced.” Then sometimes where it was a one person department, they’d say, “Because you’re an NQT, we don’t feel like we can give you this role because you haven’t got enough experience.”

So these were legitimate pieces of feedback but it was very difficult to get that first appointment. I was lucky that my head teacher at [SCHOOL NAME] was ready to take a risk on me [laughter] really, that I would be on my own and I would be an NQT. I felt like I had to really, really go for it in that interview and make sure that I came out with that job but he was very, very supportive.

**I: So you’ve chosen that school because it was just somewhere (unclear 00:16:02), it’s not like you lived there?**

R: No, yes. So I lived in [area in England] so it was like a half an hour, maybe 40 minute commute but I had to have a job because with young children and my husband was coming out of the army at that time, there was no question, I had to have a job and I had to have one quickly. This one came up and I was lucky basically. [Laughter] I was lucky to get my foot in the door.

**I: You said you had a very good time there.**

R: I did. I had a lovely time. Again, I don’t think I experienced racism there at all but I think that’s partly because the head teacher was so devoted to the diversity of the community. So as a school we would celebrate Eid. We would take those days off as well as the community. There would be various Diwali celebrations as well. So it was a very, I don’t know what the word might be, open-minded school. I was the only black teacher there. I’m pretty sure. Yes, I was. I was the only black teacher but I never felt anything other than supported and welcomed.

**I: Well it’s interesting because in literature mainly in the US, they do talk about minority teachers valuing this multi ethnic capital within schools. It seems like you’re saying that that was a positive thing as well.**

R: Yes, it was really, really positive, yes.

**I: How about resources in that school? There is a lot in the schools which can also affect the way teachers… you know, the retention and workloads.**

R: It was difficult there because the department had been shut down for quite a long time and so the person I was taking over from had had to build that department up from scratch. I think she’d only been there for maybe a year, eighteen months and then she moved to China, as it goes. The department really wasn’t suitable at all but again, very supportive head teacher who was very much on my side. I was able to kind of grow that department. Then we moved to like a purpose built, was it purpose built actually? Probably not. But another space in the school that was more suitable for teaching music. He was very good at giving me opportunities and grew the department beautifully. I mean it was a dilapidated school. I mean the building really wasn’t for the purpose. It was kind of a prefab school, post war and it should have been knocked down I think in the ‘70s and hadn’t been so it was very much kind of concrete blocks and, you know, temporary buildings had pumped up along the way. It was very, it needed work. It still needs work. Nothing has been done now because I’m still in touch with friends.

**I: Then you moved on to another school.**

R: I did.

**I: So can you tell me why?**

R: Well the commute was the main reason. Yes, commuting was the main reason. I needed to be a little bit more closer to home with my little ones. By then they were kind of four/five and I really needed to be closer to home. So I went to a school in [NAME OF TOWN] which is [area in England] border. I just wasn’t happy there [laughter] really, no.

**I: Is it the leadership or just other stuff?**

R: It was leadership. It was kind of a culture of… it was coasting. It was a coasting school. It wasn’t very diverse ethnically. That wasn’t really a problem although I did feel like some of the black children were treated a lot more harshly than their white counterparts. I think the behaviour policy was spurious to say the least and not really effective. I just didn’t feel empowered there.

**I: Were you the only person in the department (unclear 00:20:28)?**

R: It was a bigger department and I was in charge of music and drama and dance there. I’m trying to think if there were any other black teachers there. I don’t think so. I don’t think there was. I’m racking my brains now thinking back. But it was a bigger department. I had a bit more responsibility. But the leadership was weak and not very developmental so they weren’t really interested in growing good staff.

**I: How was your workload there? I mean it’s interesting because I haven’t talked to somebody who is a teacher of music so I wonder if it’s subject specific as well because obviously workload is a huge thing everyone is talking about.**

R: Yes, workload is huge. Well I mean workload was massive. It was massive at [area in England] because I was the only person in the department for quite a long time. Then when I got promotion to head of faculty, I had two members of staff that went off on long term sick so I was having to do all of their work. The thing about teaching music, and I can say this because I teach English as well now, is that it’s not so much the marking, you have to commit all of your free time to it. So all your lunchtimes have to be handed over to the children so they can be creative. After school clubs need to be creative. There’s all the concerts and all the planning for the concerts. It’s hard. Then when you do have marking for key stage four, it’s huge. It’s a much bigger chunk of work compared to English which is kind of drip, drip, drip. Do you know what I mean?

**I: Yes. Except for I would think that English is a high stakes subject which Ofsted would probably look at first.**

R: Yes, they look much more nowadays at core subjects than they do at option subjects, that’s for sure. Having taught both, I’d say there’s not that much difference in the workload apart from English is spread out over a longer period of time. Music and drama marking tends to come in patches. So you’ll have kind of a patch of incredible workload and then okay and then another patch of incredible workload and then it’s okay, whereas English it tends to be spread out more evenly. I’m not sure what’s best really [laughter]. I’m not sure which is…

**I: What’s your view on respect for subjects and teachers?**

R: I think now, because of the E Baccalaureate, there’s far, far too much emphasis put on English, maths, science, languages, there’s far too much emphasis put on that and it doesn’t help our children because if you’re not interested in triple science or if you’re not interested in languages then your creativity is curtailed. I do wonder, I would love someone to do a piece of work on the increase in mental health issues for young people and the restriction of the arts and the fact that they can’t express themselves anymore because there’s often not a music teacher or there’s limited artistic outlets at school and limited sports. I really would like someone to do a piece of work on that and to see if there’s any correlation because it feels like there’s a big correlation in the unhappiness of the children we teach and the restriction in their curriculum.

**I: So you left that school after how many years?**

R: Just two.

**I: Two years?**

R: Yes. I was keen to be promoted and I had asked for a promotion at that school because my line manager was incompetent and had a lack of integrity with managing some of the legalities of teaching. I had taken that to the head teacher and he was supportive but then I didn’t feel I could, with my own integrity, continue to work there. So I had asked for some promotion to be able to help the department out and help the school and that wasn’t forthcoming, which was absolutely fine. There was no reason for it to be. But I wanted to grow. I knew that because my subject specialism was the arts, it was very difficult for me to get a promotion to, for example, a teaching and learning role or a curriculum role because I hadn’t managed a large department. Music departments tend to be quite small. So I took some advice from my first head teacher who said, “You should think about going into pastoral.” So I took a promotion to a school in [name of village] in [area in England] City for extended SLT role which was pastoral. It had some whole school responsibilities as well.

**I: Is that where you are now?**

R: That’s not where I am now, no. I was there for five years.

**I: So I want to hear a little bit more about that school.**

R: My current school?

**I: No, that one where you were for five years as a first SLT.**

R: So being extended SLT meant that I had some senior leadership roles, some whole school responsibilities. I was teaching English and it was a challenge. It was more diverse there and it was there that I learnt, “Okay, so this is important. It’s important that you as a black person are in this school. It’s important that you as a black person are in schools like this,” because I could feel the change as soon as I walked into the school of, “Oh, so you’re black and you’re a leader.” The kids were suddenly very interested in me. I was able to have conversations with the young people that white people can’t have. So I’m able to use my blackness as an advantage sometimes to talk to the children about sensitive things around boys, black boys being stereotypically late for everything, “Why are you wearing a hoodie? Do you want to give off the impression that you’re part of a gang? If you don’t then why are you wearing that garment?” I know it shouldn’t matter but it does.

So I can have those conversations that perhaps if you were to have that conversation with them, you might be being accused of being racist but I can have those conversations and they matter. It meant that the children felt that a) I was understanding, b) I was on side and they could have conversations with me sometimes and say, “Miss, I think so and so is racist towards me,” and I would say, “Tell me what happened.” Then I’d be able to say either, “Yes,” or, “No, that’s not racism. You were in the wrong.” So I’m able to have those conversations a lot more. I was able to tackle the systemic kind of institutional racism of a white leadership on our black children. So some examples would be a very small, simple thing, it was in the summer term and there was a group of boys, mostly black but with some white children, in Year 10 who always played basketball. They were always playing basketball outside. Anyway the weather was awful for about two weeks. It was pouring down with rain and they couldn’t play outside. So they came inside and they were noisy. You might hear in your research black people are loud [laughter] and that is a stereotype but it’s a fact.

**I: Well I mean I hear it from teachers [laughter] well I mean not any more. I think now it’s a little (unclear 00:28:50) that might be viewed as racism.**

R: You’re racist, right. So we were in the corridor and it was wet and so normally my duty would be outside. Because it was wet, I was inside and the corridor was very full. We were sitting at a table that’s maybe 70x70 and I’d say the table that they were sat at was about the same size as this table. There was a lot of them, maybe ten boys all crowded around this table and they were being very, very loud. So I walked over to see, actually just say, “Can you turn the noise down, boys, because you’re just being too loud in here. It’s a very echo-y building, very hard surfaces, very high ceiling, you’re just too loud. The noise is reverberating round.” When I got over there they were loud but they were actually doing maths homework. So they were helping each other doing maths homework. The head teacher came in and said, “We’ve got to split them up. We’ve got to do something about this.” I said to him, “Do something about what?” He said, “Well look at them.” I said, “Look at who?” I was being argumentative I suppose because I wanted him to think about what he was actually saying.

He said, “Look at them.” I said, “Look at who?” He said, “That group over there.” Now there must have been four groups in that corridor, it was pouring with rain. There must have been at least four, maybe five groups. So I purposely said, “Do you mean that group of girls at the back?” “No, no, no. This group, that group there.” I said, “What is it they’re doing that bothers you?” He said, “Well what are they doing? Are they betting? Are they gambling over there?” I said, “Why don’t you go and have a look and see what they’re doing.” He went over and his face dropped. He came back and he said, “They’re doing maths.” I said, “I know they’re doing maths. The problem here is that you’ve presumed that they’re doing something wrong without actually going over. The noise bothers me but it’s just noise. They’re not doing anything that’s wrong. They’re not gambling. It’s interesting that your first assumption actually is that they’re gambling. I went over to tell them to be quiet. I was interested in what they were doing. I just wanted them to turn the noise down. Your assumption is that they’re gambling but you haven’t got a problem with the group of girls at the back who aren’t wearing their uniform correctly. One of them I think has their phone out right now. You’re not bothered about those other groups. You’re only fixated on this one. Why is that?”

He gave me some platitude about, “Well they’re naughty. They’re always in trouble.” My response is, “Okay, so if you look at that group, the only boys that are regularly in trouble are maybe three of them. At the moment one of them is doing their homework.” It’s those sorts of conversations that I found I was having more and more, more and more regularly and felt that because I was in a more senior role, I could have that conversation. But when you have that conversation, you need to know how you’re coming across. That’s really difficult.

**I: Do you think that affected your relationship with the SLT?**

R: Absolutely, all day every day that affected my relationship because all of a sudden I became a problem. I was speaking out and becoming a problem. I was raising a problem and therefore I was the problem. All of a sudden my blackness became who [name of interviewee] is. Well yes, it is who I am. But when you’re looking at an injustice like that one then we need to say something about that. It’s one of those things where when I was saying something, I had to understand that what I was actually doing was limiting my chance of progress at that school.

**I: So that’s why you had trouble getting…?**

R: Yes. That’s when I started to have trouble. To begin with, everything was fine there. For a couple of years everything was fine. There was a teacher who, he was African but I forget which part of Africa he was from now, who was a maths teacher. We had a Sheikh gentleman who was head of maths. We have a lady I think whose parents were from China who taught DT. So there was more of a mix at that school in terms of teaching staff. We had a guy who was Asian Pakistani as well who taught IT. He was the head of IT. So there was more mix there but there was still a mismatch between teacher perceptions, unconscious bias and what we want the kids to achieve. Expectations were low, very, very low. The assumption always was that the black kid was doing something wrong. That sat uncomfortably with m.

**I: Obviously not being able to get promotions, did that play into your decision to leave or was it those other assumptions within the school?**

R: Yes, it was the whole package. There were assistant head jobs that had appeared but where nobody, so it wasn’t a race thing, nobody had been made aware that there was even a head teacher position opening up, that you could even apply for. It became quite (unclear 00:36:13), if that is even a word. I felt like choices were not being made properly for the children. We had a high level of exclusion, a high level of permanent exclusion and that didn’t sit well with me in terms of where I think education should be going and where I think we should be investing our time and our skills for the communities that we serve. There comes a point where you have to look at your own morals and say, “Am I happy to continue working here in this environment where a) I’m not valued but b) we’re making poor decisions for the children. I’m never going to get promoted here.” I mean it was just so obvious, I was never going to move into assistant leadership there. There was no way I was going to move from being extended SLT to SLT. It couldn’t have been any clearer.

**I: So you felt they wouldn’t let you sit at that table?**

R: There’s no way I would have sat at that table. It wouldn’t have mattered how long. It was just so obvious that I wasn’t going to be successful there but had been successful there. I’d been promoted into that school but then while I was there we had a change of head teacher, we had a new head teacher, a new deputy head teacher, we had an executive head put in place. So the leadership team itself had changed while I’d been there and then it felt like there was a very solid glass ceiling which I was never going to break through.

**I: So it was not about workload or challenging circumstances they made you…?**

R: No, nothing to do with that. Workload is workload. I think nowadays, when you’re a teacher, if you can get past the first four or five years and you are able to look at teaching for what it is and compartmentalise the job into a way that you can make your work life balance work, then it’s not about workload anymore, it’s about your integrity and your values and whether they fit at the school that you’re choosing to work at. Mine didn’t fit in there anymore. I felt very torn when I left that school because I felt that the children are there, needed me purely because I was a black person in a position of responsibility. They would probably never see that again. There is some research in terms of if a black person has a black teacher they’re 30%, or something like that, more likely to move on.

**I: I wanted to look into this but unfortunately there is no data to track teachers and students but there is, like you say, amazing research of a black child exposed to a teacher of the same background, not just black child, any child for that matter. Then the chances of being excluded and dropping out of school later on reduce significantly.**

R: Exactly. You have to feel it to know that. It’s almost hard to explain and it’s almost intangible in a way but you almost feel like, when you walk into a school and you introduce yourself as director of house or, “I am your assistant principle,” the way the children interact with you is suddenly very, very different. They’re very interested in, “How did you do this? How have you managed to get this position?” It’s almost like they realise for a second there’s doors open to me that I thought were closed. That’s so important. That’s now, I suppose, why I choose to work in the schools that I choose to work in. It didn’t matter at [NAME], a leafy suburb in [area in England], it didn’t matter to them what colour I was. I was teaching music and the kids were very nice there. They were very pleasant children. I don’t have any issues with them whatsoever but the colour of my skin literally did not matter to them. It matters where I am. It’s palpable how much it matters.

**I: So can you tell me a little bit about your current school?**

R: So my current school is a city school. As I said, it’s a category six school so it’s in most deprived areas. Have 62% disadvantaged. We have about a third, maybe a little bit more than a third would be non-white. We have a lot of students who come from travelling communities. We have some Asian Pakistani children. We have a lot of black Caribbean children. We have a lot of African background children and some mixed race children. It’s quite rich in its ethnicity makeup.

**I: So can you tell me a little bit again about how you found moving over there, as far as interacting with the SLT, again, your workload and all those things which play into retention. I know now you’re already thinking about retaining other teachers but still, it’s interesting to hear.**

R: The workload isn’t that much different to the workload I had at my previous school. I teach a little bit less so I have less time in the classroom but I manage a lot of people. I have a large team that I manage. It’s the pastoral role. I have to be honest, it’s something that I was reluctant to take on because where you do have black people in senior leadership in teaching, they tend to be in the pastoral role. So I’m the kind of person who tries to go against stereotypes so I do try not to go into the pastoral leadership role. I tried teaching and learning and I tried curriculum but to be fair, I just didn’t have enough experience so I’ve accepted that this is where my skills lie so I can go with it for now. That’s what I’ve done. Retention?

**I: Your staff as well, so do you have diverse staff at your school now?**

R: It’s more diverse than experienced but they’re not in teaching roles. That, fundamentally, is the problem that we have is that we don’t have enough black and ethnic minority teachers in leadership. It’s just not there. So I have got some black people, mixed race people in the pastoral team as year leaders which I suppose is a middle leadership role but they don’t have qualified teacher status. The rest are white. I have a team of maybe fifteen so you can see the percentage there isn’t fantastic. In terms of teachers, teaching staff, there’s not many. There’s myself, we have a DTT teacher who is Muslim. I think that’s it.

**I: I’m just looking now at stats and obviously that’s an issue, isn’t it, because it would be so important to identify senior leaders in pastoral roles versus none.**

R: I have heard a piece of research before at a conference and it was something like 2% of senior leadership is black or ethnic minorities and of that there’s something like 90%, it’s huge, are in pastoral roles.

**I: So I wonder if there is a way to identify that…**

R: Yes, there probably is but it’s very disproportionate. So the number of… it’s something like 10% of the population in teaching are of an ethnic minority but only 2% make it to leadership. Then if you look at head teachers, it’s even less, even less.

**I: So I mean looking back at all of that experience and in your current role, do you think teachers need to be prepared in some way to teach in disadvantaged multi ethnic urban schools or it’s not something that…?**

R: It’s interesting because I’m leading the BAMEed Network for [area in England] and we had a meeting a couple of weeks ago. One of the people there, she’s mixed race like myself, a little bit younger than me and she’s now a trust directory for primary education which is huge, a massive role, a trust role, something to be really proud of. I mean we’re talking about our choices, why I choose to work in the schools I choose to work in. She teaches in a suburb school, a tiny mining community. There is no black kids there. Maybe there’s one. Her choice to work there is about educating the white children about there are other people in the world other than you. So she often has a conversations with them about why her skin is brown. I mean they ask her that. We’re talking about primary children and they’re not asking it from anything other than genuine curiosity. She’s been really clear with me about that, that she doesn’t feel like the children are being racist towards her, they just don’t know. So they’ll say to her, “Why is your hair like that? Why is your skin that colour?”

So she stays there from a point of view of showing these children that there are other communities and that black people are hardworking, decent people and not in gangs, which is what your perception might be. I choose to work in the school I work at so that the black kids get something from me. I’m not particularly interested in white children getting something from me as a role model because they’ve got plenty of role models. There’s loads of them. But black kids don’t have a role model. I respect her decision. I wouldn’t want to work in that environment. I wouldn’t be able to put up with someone asking me why my skin is the colour that it is. I wouldn’t be able to put up with that all the time. I respect her decision but we’re polar opposite in terms of our choices. I feel like she really ought to be working in a school like mine. That’s where I feel my duty lies, is to work in a school where the black kids can see you. But she makes different choices which are valid. I respect those.

**I: Definitely. I also was at the…**