

The black hole in science communication
Dr Liz Rasekoala, African Caribbean Network for Science and Technology

Parallel Workshop at the Science Communication Conference
Savoy Place
22 and 23 May 2003

Aims of workshop

- i. To establish what difficulties delegates may have encountered when trying to broaden audiences
- ii. To enable delegates to share practical ideas on how to broaden audiences
- iii. To enable delegates to network and build relationships with other science communication professionals who may be encountering similar situations in the course of their work

Workshop format

Dr Rasekoala gave a brief outline of the Lawrence enquiry which has prompted an increase in awareness of the need to widen audiences and described that audiences need to be widened to provide all young people the opportunity to become interested in science and possibly make themselves a career in the field.

Around 20 delegates attended the workshop representing science centres, university widening audience offices, university press offices, university schools liaison offices, learned institutions, research councils, government and city learning centres, museums, postgraduate students and charities.

The delegates were encouraged to discuss the successes and failures they had encountered when carrying out widening audience initiatives and any ideas they had for improving things. Dr Rasekoala noted down key discussion points as topics to consider when delegates returned to their places of work.

Key statistics

- ethnic minorities make up 10% of UK adults
- 20% of UK schoolchildren are from ethnic minorities
- 50% of the UK school age population will be from ethnic minorities backgrounds by the year 2050
- the median age of white people in the UK is 43
- the median age of people from ethnic minorities in the UK is 21
- in the census of 2001 – the number of people from ethnic minorities had grown by 11% since the previous census. This compares with a 1% increase in the number of white people.

Practical findings in the field

Delegates outlined the issues and initiatives that they had encountered:

- providing events for communities

A delegate organised an event in response to discussions with community leaders and the turnout from the community targeted was very low. Dr Rasekoala suggested event organisers ask the excluded audiences what activities they would like you to provide, target the event to this audience as opposed to community leaders.

- negative reactions from other communities
To avoid negative reactions from other communities is simply not to exclude them, inclusiveness is about inviting everyone. Dr Rasekoala suggested holding the event in the area of the target audience.
- evaluation
Effective evaluation of all activities targeted to ethnic minority communities is needed to ensure that successes can be built on and any weaknesses ironed out. It was suggested that the OST database of events should record any events aimed specifically at ethnic minorities and how successful these were.
- topics of interest
It was suggested that people would be more likely to engage with issues that affect them directly and suggested that people from African Caribbean communities might be interested in, for example, Sickle Cell anaemia. However it was raised that target communities should not feel patronised by having events set up especially for them.

Specific examples:

- e-mentoring
King's College London is planning an e-mentoring scheme as a way to create links between schoolchildren of different ethnic backgrounds and university students that will give pupils an insight into university life and information on courses with a human and personal perspective.
Useful web resources: <http://www.asme.org/ementoring.cfm>
<http://www.mentornet.net/>
<http://www.sthildas.ox.ac.uk/admissions/ementor/>
- summer schools
Leeds Metropolitan University organise a Summer School programme for boys of African Caribbean origin and is run in areas local where the target community is concentrated. The programme is now in its third year and the numbers attending have increased year on year.
- outreach
King's College London Access to Medicine Project runs in association with the Pool of London Partnership to help bright and talented young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to become doctors.
<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/depsta/medicine/access.htm>

Liz highlighted the success of this programme and attributed this to commitment by champions at senior level within the organisation.

- family days
To increase the number of people from ethnic minorities attending events the National Space Science Centre will be running family days as part of their Festival of Science and Culture. They will be advertising the family days in local places of worship and community centres. Dr Rasekoala suggested translating advertisements into the language of people living in the area. Delegates debated whether this might lead to disappointment if the displays at the event were in English.
- interactive activities
a range of interactive activities were highlighted:
 - a video on a science topic which involved children working together in mixed groups and then spotting evidence of what they had studied in the world around them.
 - a competition in the run up to the National Space Centre's upcoming Festival of Science and Culture requiring children to work in groups of up to 40 and produce a display on a black hero in order to win the chance to meet Dr Guion Bluford, the world's first black astronaut.
<http://www.festivalofscienceandculture.co.uk/>
 - projects with local schools - dancing the workings of the human heart with bright costumes to make a video for other schools in the area.
- role models
A 'girls and science' example was given as a possible event to attract students from ethnic minorities to take up science. Women scientists were invited to a girls' school and interviewed by the students who reported back to the school. Dr Rasekoala agreed that people are a very useful resource, but that there are not enough people! She suggested a central, controlled library of resources for helping ethnic minority groups to learn more about science and how to get into science.

It was suggested that the BBSRC local coordinators, who organise visits to schools, are a useful source of local scientists. A central library of resources that the scientists could use might help to maximise how they use the time they have while they are in the schools.

Key action points

- careers guidance
collectively address the challenge faced in encouraging ethnic minority young people into SET careers
- central resource base

provide a central library of resources available to all science communicators that would provide information, guidance, good practice exemplars and ethnically diverse promotional materials

- translation
translate some of the promotional materials into home languages, such as Urdu and Punjabi, to enhance the engagement of ethnic minority adults
- ethnic minority role models
increase the involvement of ethnic minority scientists¹ in science communication activities. There are no centrally targeted financial resources to build the pool of ethnic minority scientists. SETNET has not delivered in terms of providing these ethnic minority role models², and there needs to be a straight forward discussion regarding additional strategies that could be used to recruit role models.
- good practice from other sectors
the science communication community needs to learn from the good practice in other sectors, such as the Arts, on improving its outreach to ethnic minority audiences and communities.

Ruth Colbridge
11 June 2003

¹ The term 'scientists' includes all professionals working in science, technology and engineering.

² During the open forum of the conference this point had also been raised and a SETPoint manager stated that SETPoints were delivering ethnic minority role models through the Science and Engineering Ambassadors programme and also pointed out that SETNET were actively pursuing a project involving several ethnic minority representative organisations.

Good practice in working with ethnic minorities
handout by Dr Liz Rasekoala

T for Targeting

L for Location, Location, Location

C for Cooperation

Key dos and don'ts

Dos

- Consult widely with the communities you wish to work with
- Approach these communities with an open mind, with respect and high expectations
- Be aware that you might have prejudices and negative stereotypical ideas that you are not even aware of
- Be also prepared for your prejudices and negative stereotypical ideas to be challenged
- Make a real and genuine commitment to listen to these communities, and to take on board their perspectives, in an empowering partnership, in the conceptualisation, planning and delivery of your activities and programme.
- Accept that you will not be able to deliver your aims and objectives without working with the ethnic minority communities you wish to support.
- Remember the maxim 'Not for us if it is done without us'.
- Expect to have to work hard to gain the trust of ethnic minority communities who understandably because of their negative experiences of racism will be highly sceptical of your motives, agenda and commitment.
- Role models are very important! Choose your messengers carefully. Remember that in the battle for hearts and minds, the messenger is just as important as the message.

Don'ts

- Don't patronise
- Don't stereotype
- Avoid tokenism and tokenistic gestures
- Don't assume that you have all the answers. Be prepared to learn from the people that you claim you want to support.

Race relations amended act (RRAA) handout by Dr Liz Rasekoala

Context

- Lawrence enquiry – highlighted the issue of institutional discrimination.
- Many ethnic minority communities have lost faith 'in the system'.
- Public authorities – rebuild trust and demonstrate fairness.
- Government commitment – plan it out of the public sector.
- Opportunity to factor fairness into modernisation of public services.

General duty

- What it requires
 - Listed public authorities in carrying out their functions shall have due regard to the need to
 - Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
 - Promote equality of opportunity
 - Promote good race relations between people of different racial groups
- What it means
 - A proactive approach – mainstreaming
 - Due regard
 - Weight proportionate to relevance to a particular function
 - Consider and balance the three parts of the general duty
 - Series of specific duties
 - Specific duties are the steps that will help deliver the general duty
 - When you tackle a specific duty you must link back to the general duty

Specific Duties

Prepare and publish a Race Equality Scheme (RES)

- What it requires
 - Prepare and publish a Race Equality Scheme
 - The RES to set out how they will meet their obligations under the general and specific duties
- Good practice
 - Cover how authority will meet the general and specific duty
 - Set out values, principles and standards
 - Action points and timescales
 - Other relevant measures eg aims, targets, indicators, positive action
 - Other relevant requirements eg equalities performance indicators
 - Provision for community consultation
 - Arrangements to ensure awareness amongst staff
 - Relation of RES to other strategies
 - Timetable for review of the scheme

Assess functions and policies for relevance

- What it requires

- Assess functions and policies for relevance to the general duty, and carry out subsequent reviews
- Good practice
 - Identify assessment method and conduct assessment
 - Determine degree of relevance of functions and policies
 - Use results to prioritise issues to receive attention
 - Mainstream Race Equality in prioritised functions
 - Cover all functions in time
 - Undertake subsequent review within three years

Arrangements for monitoring the impact of its policies

- Good practice
 - Establish ethnic monitoring systems – methods
 - Monitor effect on different groups
 - Identify any differences
 - Assess whether differences constitute an adverse impact
 - Investigate causes – reasons
 - If any causes constitute unjustifiable discrimination, then policy may need to be considered for revision
- Good practice on assessment and consultation
 - Establish assessment methods
 - Establish consultation methods involving relevant stakeholders
 - Analyse data and results
 - Produce impact assessment statement – include how you intend to proceed and monitoring of policy in practice
 - Establish a procedure for revising proposed policies in light of assessment and consultation

Arrangements for publishing assessment, consultation and monitoring results

- What it requires
 - Set out arrangements for publishing results of assessments, consultations and monitoring any adverse impact on the promotion of race equality of policies.
- Good practice
 - Publication increases transparency, demonstrates commitment and should increase confidence
 - Specific report to be made on each assessment, consultation and monitoring exercise
 - Summaries of results should be widely available
 - Consider using existing publications/methods

Arrangements to ensure access to information and services (1)

- What it requires
 - Set out arrangements for ensuring public access to information and services it provides

- Good practice
 - Information
 - Identify information needs of ethnic minorities
 - Monitor patterns of use
 - Identify and remove barriers to access to information
 - Alter the way information is provided

 - Services
 - Consultation on delivery styles
 - Ensure accessible and community locations
 - Conduct community outreach
 - Provide staff training
 - Interpretation and translation service
 - Staff profile
 - Positive action

Arrangement for training staff on relevant issues

- What it requires
 - Set out arrangements for training staff on issues relevant to the general and specific duties to promote race equality

- Good practice
 - A specific focus – delegated staff to have ability to carry out specific tasks to ensure they meet the general duty
 - Identify key tasks
 - Identify knowledge and skills required
 - Assess extent to which staff have knowledge and skills
 - Identify any gaps
 - Design and deliver training
 - Monitor and evaluate training