Black and Minority Ethnic issues in teaching and learning

Briefing paper

'What's wrong with you miss? Why are you always smiling?' the students at my black-majority school ask me. 'I smile because I see you,' is my habitual reply. But what I want to say is something like this:

'I smile to salute you, to salute all of the learners here, who continue to hold tight to their dignity and self-belief in the endless and ugly face of racism, rejection and poverty. I smile to salute our teachers who work more hours that there are, before and after school, in holidays and weekends, to struggle beside our students to try, through mentoring, after school classes, residential courses, to restore the balance and open the doors in a closed and unbalanced world' That's what I hope they hear in my smile.

But even that ignores the poignancy of their question, their subtext that says a smile – respect, recognition, affirmation – is so unexpected as to be a symptom of illness, of deviance, their message that announces that there is nothing to smile about

A respondent to the *Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* (2000)

We had a black head who was tough but fair. You felt he really cared what happened to you. I went through a bad time. I was separated from my family, I was picked on and there was a lot of bullying. I wasn't able to express how I felt so I took matters into my own hands. I was suspended on a number of occasions . . . You need a range of role models in a school that show the complexity and diversity of people's lives. My headteacher was a positive role model for me.

Refugee pupil reflects in a *Save the Children* focus group (2000)

Founded in 1968, Runnymede is a leading independent think tank on ethnicity and cultural diversity. Our mandate since inc eption has been to challenge racial discrimination, to influence related legislation and to promote a successful multi-ethnic Britain.

Among Runnymede's key activities are projects to explore the education of minority ethnic youth. Over 2002 Runnymede has been fully revising *Equality Assurance* to take into consideration Curriculum 2000 and citizenship education, and the new handbook, *Complementing Teachers: a practical guide to promoting race equality in schools*, will be published in early 2003.

Runnymede was one of the first organisations to actively highlight the disproportionate exclusion of black children from schools in *Black and Ethnic Minority Young People and Educational Disadvantage* (1997). We followed this up with practical guidance on ways to counter disaffection and alienation at an early stage through action research, the findings of which were reported in *Improving Practice: A Whole School Approach to Raising the Achievement of African Caribbean Youth* (1998).

This short briefing paper is to support the discussions at the GTC teacher meeting focused on Black and minority ethnic issues in teaching and learning. It is designed to present what we know about teachers and pupils from minority ethnic communities and act as a resource for further discussion.

# Black and Minority Ethnic pupils

Academic attainment

Ethnic Origin	Attainment of 5 or more GCSE A*-C		
	1996	1998	2000
Bangladeshi	25	33	29
Black	23	29	39
Indian	48	54	60
Pakistani	23	29	29
White	45	47	50

(adapted from *DfES Youth Cohort Study, 2000*).

Bangladeshi pupils (30%) and Black pupils (28%) are more likely to sit Intermediate/Foundation level GVNQ than their white counterparts (10%). (*DfES Youth Cohort Study, 2000*).

Research has shown that Black pupils start school with high achievement levels but perform the worst, compared to other ethnic groups, by GCSE (see Graph 1).
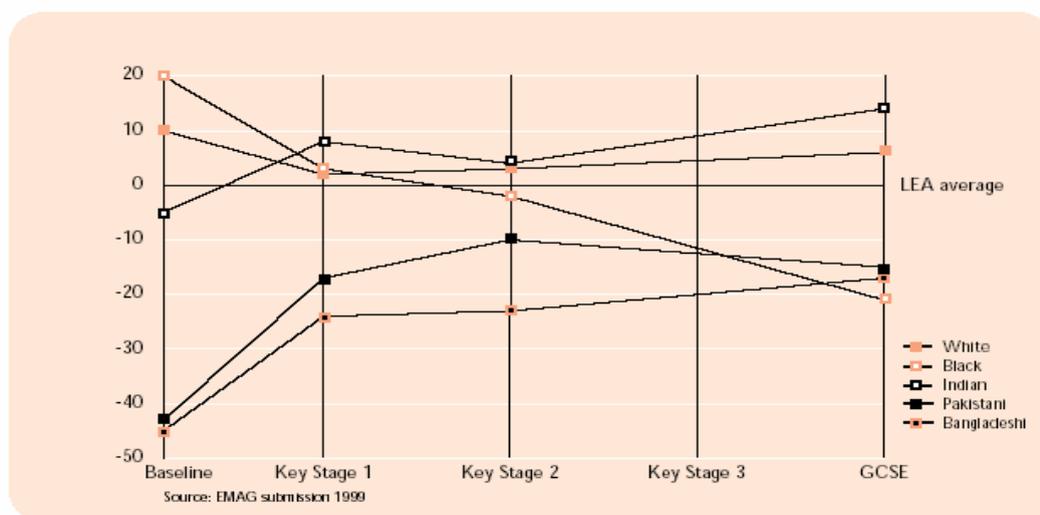
GRAPH 1 From Gillborn, D. & Mirza, H.S. (2000) *Educational Inequality: Mapping race, class and gender. A synthesis of research evidence*. London: Ofsted

Additional differences in attainment can be seen when the data is cross-referenced with class and sex (see Graph 2). If pupils are from families with a lower socio-economic status, they have less chance of achieving above the national average for GCSEs. Most pupils from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds are of lower socio-economic status.

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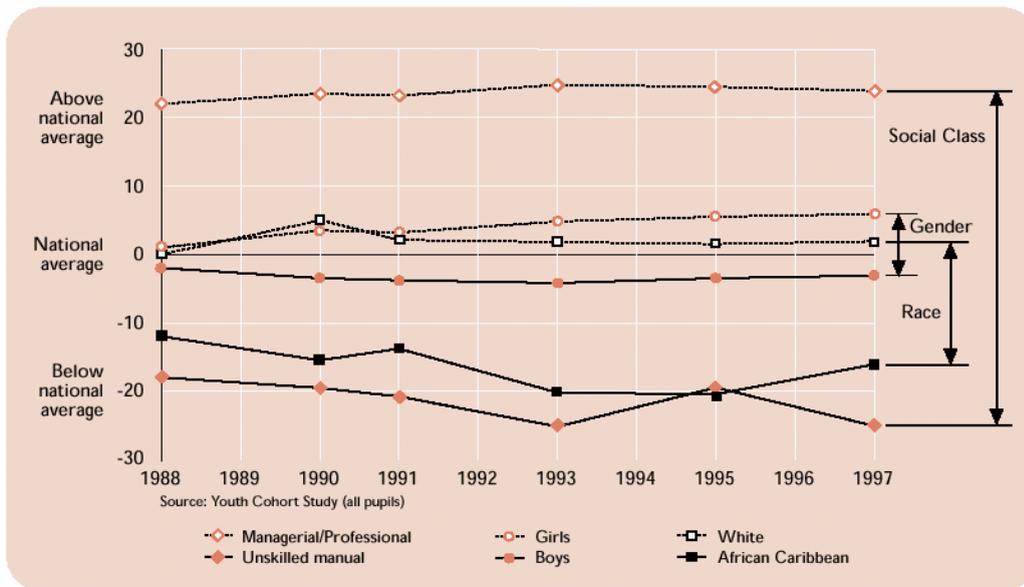
GRAPH 2 Attainment (5 or more GCSE A*-C) inequalities by race, class and gender, England & Wales 1988-1997

The statistics for 2000/2001 indicate that Black Caribbean boys and "Black Other" boys are 3 times more likely to be permanently excluded from school compared to their white counterparts. (Figures for fixed term exclusions are not yet reported nationally)

More recent data, collected at LEA level, indicates that pupils from other minority ethnic groups, for example Gypsy/Roma, Traveller and asylum-seeking children, are not sharing equally in academic success.

Factors in academic attainment

Research suggests that no single factor explains the unequal educational attainment of ethnic groups. There are two major strands of thought regarding the reasons for differences in attainment between ethnic groups, crudely typified as structuralist and culturalist:

Structuralist perspective	Culturalist perspective
• methods such as setting by ability mean that the best grade a pupil can achieve is predetermined by the ability group that he or she has been allocated to. • teacher perception of some ethnic minority groups may mean they are singled out for differential treatment (e.g. exclusion).	• endorses that ethnic groups are accountable (i.e. lack focus, motivation, ambition) for their educational outcomes and hence life chances. • focuses on the negative influence of peer pressure and lifestyle which is regarded to operate in opposition to education.

Training and Professional development

The TTA carries out an annual survey of newly qualified teachers. In the years 2000-2002, the area which respondents felt least prepared in by their training was the teaching of children from minority ethnic communities.

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Monitoring by ethnicity

Monitoring by ethnicity enables us to identify inequalities in educational practice and to target support appropriately. Until recently monitoring has been piecemeal, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 however, places a specific duty on schools to monitor by ethnicity and publish the results. All schools should have explained how they will do this as a part of their race equality policy. This duty should improve the quality of the data available and enable practitioners to make better judgements about the necessary actions to remedy disadvantage.

Good practice: what we know works

Research has suggested a range of ways of combating inequalities of attainment between ethnic groups – there is some consensus that the activities noted below are part of the solution.

- Strong relationships between the headteacher, governors and staff to ensure consistency of school's approach to racial equality and achievement
- Monitoring progress, participation and achievement by ethnicity
- Common praise & clear reward systems
- Formal systems for logging and investigating racist incidents
- Inter-Year group or peer group mentoring
- Good communication with parents to identify & address concerns. This may result in the school setting up Saturday and holiday classes.

Black and Minority Ethnic teachers

Initial teacher training
In 2000/1, 6% (817) of primary school teacher trainees and 8% (1028) of secondary school teacher trainees were from minority ethnic communities. (7.8% in total – target set for 2005/6 of 9%). From the ethnic monitoring data collected by universities and the TTA, it can be estimated that graduates from Black and minority ethnic communities are around three times less likely to enrol in teacher training.

The teaching workforce
There is very little data collected at a national (or local) level that can give us a comprehensive picture of the ethnic diversity of the teaching workforce. The Institute for Policy Studies in Education (IPSE), based at London Metropolitan University, has carried out the most extensive surveys and the data reported here is based on their work.

While 12.9% of the school population in England (2001) is of children who may be described as coming from a minority ethnic community – the estimated number of teachers from similar backgrounds is only 5%. It should also be remembered that minority ethnic communities are not equally dispersed nationally, with concentrations in the major urban conurbations – 61% of England's Black Caribbean pupils are found in London schools, 22% of England's Pakistani-origin pupils are found in Yorkshire (there are only 120 Black Caribbean pupils in the whole of the North East).

The survey carried out by IPSE found that teachers from Black and minority ethnic communities differed in demographic and professional terms from their white counterparts.

Age profile
- The age profile of white teachers in the survey areas was bi modal with clusters around the 25-34 and the 45-55 age groups
- Asian teachers were concentrated in the younger age groups (28% under 30)
- Black teachers were concentrated in the 30-45 age groups (69%)

Retention
Worryingly, whilst more likely to stay in the geographical area in which they are currently teaching, teachers from Black and minority ethnic communities reported that they were less likely to stay in teaching than their white counterparts – raising questions about the effectiveness of retention strategies for these groups

Career progression
In terms of career progression, the IPSE survey found that teachers from Black and minority ethnic communities were more likely to be on main scale grades rather than having positions of greater responsibility. This was especially true when considering the careers of male teachers. While only 31.1% of white male teachers were found to be on the basic main grade, 46.3% of Asian male and 43.8% of black males were in this lowest category.

Taking into account experience (given the evidence that many teachers from Black and minority ethnic communities are likely to qualify at a later age), of the teachers surveyed who qualified before 1986, 10.7% of the White teaching population are headteachers. Only 4.9% of Asian and 3.9% of Black teachers are heads.

Teachers' experiences

Small-scale qualitative research into the experiences of teachers from Black and minority ethnic communities suggests some of the difficulties that they face. They include

- Subject stereotyping
- Promotion only available through specialist routes that do not lead to headship
- Expectation that they will 'deal' with parents or children from minority ethnic backgrounds
- Expected to legitimise school decisions that they expect may have discriminatory origins
- Perception of teaching as low status among certain minority ethnic communities
- Encountering racism during training/teaching practice

Useful publications:

Blair, M. & Bourne, J. (1998) *Making the Difference: Teaching and learning Strategies in Successful Multi-ethnic schools.* Research Report No. 59.London: DfEE

Commission for Racial Equality (2000) *Learning for All: Standards for Racial Equality in Schools.* London: CRE

Commission for Racial Equality (2002) *Framework for a Race Equality policy: for schools.* London: CRE

Department for Education & Skills (2000) *Youth Cohort Study: The Activities and experiences of 16 year olds: England & Wales 2000.* London: DfES

Gillborn, D. & Mirza, H.S. (2000) *Educational Inequality: Mapping race, class and gender. A synthesis of research evidence.* London: Ofsted

OFSTED (1999) *Raising the attainment of minority ethnic pupils: School and LEA responses.* London: OFSTED

OFSTED (2002) *Achievement of Black Caribbean pupils: Three Successful Primary Schools.* London: OFSTED

OFSTED (2002) *Achievement of Black Caribbean pupils: Good practice in Secondary Schools.* London: OFSTED

Osler, A (1997) *The Education and careers of black teachers: Changing identities, changing lives* Buckingham: Open University Press

Ross, A (2001) *Ethnic Minority teachers in the teaching workforce.* London: IPSE Occasional Paper

The Runnymede Trust (2003) (forthcoming) *Complementing Teachers: A practical guide to promoting race equality in schools*

The Runnymede Trust (1998) *Improving Practice: A Whole School Approach to Raising the Achievement of African Caribbean Youth.* London: The Runnymede Trust

Questions for the Teacher Meeting

The GTC and the Runnymede Trust are interested in learning from yours and your colleagues experience. Please use these questions as a guide for the discussion on 20th January 2003.

Black and minority issues in teaching and learning

- A higher proportion of BME young people go into higher education than enter the teaching profession. What is keeping BME graduates away from teaching?

- Are the main reasons BME teachers leave the profession the same as all teachers? (Low pay, high workload, behaviour, cost of living and professional development and career opportunities)

- What can be done to support BME teachers through their career at the school, local and national level?

- How do we encourage more BME learning assistants into the teaching profession?

- Do the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Commission for Racial Equality duties to produce a race equality scheme and monitor policies and practices by ethnicity help in mainstreaming race equality? Do you think the duties are a welcome boost to ensure race equality or is it an unnecessary burden?

Black and minority ethnic issues in learning

- What practices and strategies do you have in your school to support pupils from the diverse background?

- How do schools maximise the benefits of diverse cultural input that pupils bring rather than see it as a challenge?

- What extra support do BME pupils need? Think of pupils with English as an additional language, refugee children and traveller children.

- How can the LEA support pupils from a diverse background into mainstream schooling?

- What support do all teachers need to teach pupils from a diverse ethnic background? Are they sufficiently prepared by their initial teacher training? What continuous professional development do teachers require to support pupils from a diverse background?

- Is the current schooling system able to meet the needs of all pupils? If not how can it meet the needs of all pupils?

- Schooling represents only 15% of a child's experience. What are the limits of schools in challenging the underachievement of some BME pupils?