Access of ethnic minorities to higher education in Britain:

report of a seminar at King's College Cambridge

editors

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Introduction

The papers in this publication are based on presentations to a seminar on Access to Higher Education for African-Caribbean and Asian Students which was held at King's College, Cambridge, on 7 July, 1992. The seminar was organized by the Group to Encourage Ethnic Minority Applications to Cambridge University (GEEMA) and the Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations (CRER), Warwick University. The Commission for Racial Equality, some of the GEEMA colleges, and CRER provided the necessary financial support.

The idea to hold the seminar came about as a result of the work GEEMA has been doing in attempting to attract black students to Cambridge. The seminar followed a workshop that was held on the previous day between teachers from a number of comprehensive schools (in Birmingham, London, Bradford and Cardiff), and Cambridge admissions tutors. These are some of the many schools in the country which have not traditionally sent their students to Cambridge or Oxford. GEEMA brought together teachers with whom it has been working closely over the past two years in an effort to examine Cambridge's admissions procedures and the extent to which these might be barriers to potential applicants, and to prepare them more specifically for the following day's seminar.

The seminar was opened by the Master of Trinity College and President of the Royal Society, Sir Michael Atiyah, who spoke positively about the responsibility of universities to widen access. This was followed by five presentations, which are reproduced here. Researchers from CRER, who have been conducting research into a number of relevant issues and questions, spoke on various aspects of the problem. Paul Taylor, who is conducting research into ethnic minorities and higher education, focused on the point of entry to higher education and the role of universities in promoting access. John Wrench, who has conducted research into various aspects of young people's career choice, stressed the role of careers officers, and argued that they wielded tremendous influence in determining whether young people did or did not pursue higher education. He urged a more sympathetic and open approach in fulfilling their duties. Kamala Hyder, who has been working on the problem of underachievement amongst Afro-Caribbean children, discussed the importance of the teacher and the school in helping to prepare the pupil for successful application to higher education.

Two teachers from different, but not dissimilar, parts of the country concentrated on some specific issues and problems faced in schools. Headteacher Richard Thompson illuminated the difficulties confronting his pupils who are predominantly from Asian backgrounds, at the Grange School in Bradford. He described their tremendous efforts in overcoming these as well as the school's own attempts at making multi-cultural education a reality. Merle Campbell, a Birmingham teacher, presented a picture of the difficulties which African-Caribbean boys and girls faced in the education system. She left us with the haunting image of the `corridor boys': the ones whom teachers found intimidating because they were big enough to `thump' and who spent more time in the school corridors than in the classroom; and the girls whom the teachers described as `over-developed' for their age.

The afternoon workshops, which followed the presentations and general discussion, were organised around specific themes. These included interviewing as a method of selection,

stereotyping of students, access to university, and the role of universities in encouraging applications from ethnic minorities. The reports from these workshops are reproduced here, thanks to the diligence of each rapporteur. One of the points which came out strongly is the fact that African-Caribbean students tend to follow a non-traditional route to higher education. They are more likely to pursue BTEC courses, and to resit `A' levels, both of which are less attractive to universities than the straight `A' level route. Consequently, these applicants are likely to be older than the average university applicant. It was strongly felt that universities interested in increasing their intake of students from these backgrounds need to be sensitive to this situation. In addition, it was felt that a number of factors - ranging from parental influence, reluctance to leave home (particularly in the case of Asian girls) to negative perceptions of universities, particularly Oxbridge - worked as deterrents to potential applicants.

There was general agreement that more effort is needed to increase the direct and active participation of parents from ethnic minority communities to encourage young people to apply to universities. A number of suggestions for how this could be done were made: schools and universities could form closer links with the broad communities (Mosques, large inner-city colleges, Caribbean parents' organizations); encourage communities with the supplementary schools they have established; involve parents in their children's education by encouraging their participation on governing boards; encourage frequent visits to schools and in disciplinary matters.

It was also felt that it is important to make use of role models. The discussion groups emphasized the need for there to be more ethnic minority teachers in the schools. At least one workshop noted the relative absence of university academics from African-Caribbean and Asian backgrounds. In other words, despite the now almost obligatory statement by universities that they are `equal opportunity employers', it is a grave cause for concern that our universities have not tackled this problem with the seriousness it deserves.

One workshop discussed the question of the low achievement of African-Caribbean males, concluded that not nearly enough is known about this, and urged that more research should be conducted into this aspect of the overall problem of under-achievement.

Some questions were specific to Cambridge University's admissions policy. The interviewing procedure as a major tool in the selection process elicited widespread discussion. Participants noted that the interview was a double-edged sword as an instrument for diagnosis and discrimination, which could be used in all kinds of positive and negative ways. Anxiety was expressed about the power which interviewers wielded especially in the absence of monitoring, as well as the `elements of mystification' which surrounded the process. Many speakers felt that ethnic minority candidates were at a disadvantage since they received little training or exposure to the experiences which would prepare them for the interviews. They tend, therefore, to view the procedure with some discomfort and suspicion which combine to compound their distance from Cambridge. The Cambridge admissions tutors present agreed that there is room for sensitising interviewers to the varied expectations with which candidates approach the interview, but stressed that some of the interviewers are aware of the general problem.

Participants also sought clarification about Cambridge's position on BTEC qualifications and its treatment of `minority' languages at `A' levels', such as Urdu. Some time was spend discussing the Special Entry Scheme, which was established by six of the seven GEEMA colleges (excluding Corpus Christi), modelled on an existing scheme at St. John's College, and which represented an attempt to reflect the likely social and economic disadvantage which many students from comprehensive schools faced. The scheme is open to students regardless of their ethnic origins. The debate focused upon the nature and degree of `disadvantage' which might make applicants eligible for the scheme. Finally, it was felt that there is a need to know what steps are being taken by other universities (students, staff and administration) to encourage young people from ethnic minorities to enter higher education. It was also suggested that GEEMA, CRER and other bodies might collaborate sometime in the future to organize a larger seminar on the problem.

The importance for the country as a whole to have young people from ethnic minorities at universities is obvious. As the papers in this volume show, in general these communities reveal a younger profile than the population as a whole (Owen, 1993), and it should be expected that these communities will be an important source for the skilled labour market. It would be a major failure if our universities were not significantly to contribute to the education and training of these young people. Fortunately, things appear to be improving. For example, the first annual report of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) reveal that the proportion of students from ethnic minorities aged 18-29 years increased from 8% in 1991 to 13% in 1992 (Tysome, 1993, p. 8). Middlesex University, which claims to have the highest proportion of students from ethnic minorities, recorded in 1992 that over 23% of the student body came from the African-Caribbean and Asian communities (Middlesex University, 1992, p. 23). These are, however, only examples and not the definite trends many would like to see.

We do not hesitate, therefore, in supporting the call by participants at the seminar for universities to initiate, or, where they already do so, continue to take specific measures to increase their intake from ethnic minority communities.

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1. In order better to understand the general problem of access by young black people to higher education in Britain, it was felt that a meeting between teachers, academics and researchers would be useful. This would provide both a practical as well as a more general evaluation of the situation. GEEMA then approached CRER, as the leading centre in Britain conducting research in ethnic relations, to collaborate with them in organizing the one-day seminar.

2. It should be noted that the Oxford Access Scheme, which like GEEMA is concerned about access and ethnic minorities, was represented by Jitinder Kohli, who also organized a one day seminar on the issue later in 1992, and again in early 1993.

Access to higher education: an uneven path?

Paul Taylor

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to show that the path, or route, taken to higher education (HE) varies considerably. The chapter emphasises differences in access according to ethnic origin. The major problem to overcome when considering equality in HE is the prevalent view that a liberal statement of commitment to the pursuit of academic goals regardless of race, creed or sex makes consideration of equal opportunities action unnecessary. Such a view hinders discussion of how to achieve equality within HE. Previous research has shown that equal opportunity policies are not very advanced in HE and within this the universities lag behind the former polytechnics (Williams, et al, 1989, Heward and Taylor, 1992). This chapter adds to the increasing evidence that HE does not necessarily provide equality, and that the use of certain criteria in the pursuit of academic goals may reduce the potential for achieving equality. Whilst the focus is on national data, the findings might be applied to many individual HE institutions.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first presents summary data which show the extent of the differences between ethnic groups in access to HE. Second, some of the possible explanations for the apparent differences are considered. Third, suggestions are made for the implications these findings have for schools and their policy towards HE. Finally, a brief description is given of some developments in HE which may impact on the number of students from ethnic minority groups entering this sector of education.

The general picture

There are two main sets of data to be considered when looking at access to HE. Since 1989 the Polytechnics Central Admissions System (PCAS) have collected data on the ethnic origin of applicants and the Universities Central Council on Admissions (UCCA) started in 1990. For the purposes of comparison the data used in this chapter are all for students applying for entry in 1990. The data for those entering HE in 1991 are just beginning to appear, PCAS releasing their Statistical Supplement on 17th June 1992. The ethnic groupings employed are those advised by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS). Although not adequate, the use of these groupings allows comparison with other data sources for example census data. The small proportion of ethnic minority applicants to HE means that any more detailed groupings would result in very small numbers from which few conclusions could be drawn. Although both organisations used the same categories on the application form the three Black groups were collapsed into one by UCCA in their published report. Comparison between the two applications systems therefore necessitates the use of the narrower categorisation used by UCCA.

Two clear differences exist between the former two sectors of HE: a greater proportion of all applicants came from students of ethnic minority origin for polytechnics and colleges (13%) than for universities (8.7%). A higher proportion were also accepted by the polytechnics and colleges (14.5%) relative to universities (6.4%). This led to allegations of positive discrimination in the polytechnics (Utley, 1991). These differences are shown in Table 1. The figures in brackets are the proportions of total applications or acceptances in each category as appropriate. These data are fairly comprehensive because non-completion rates for the monitoring forms were low compared to other monitoring exercises, (2.4% PCAS and 6.9% UCCA non-completion)

PCAS and 6.9% UCCA non-completion)

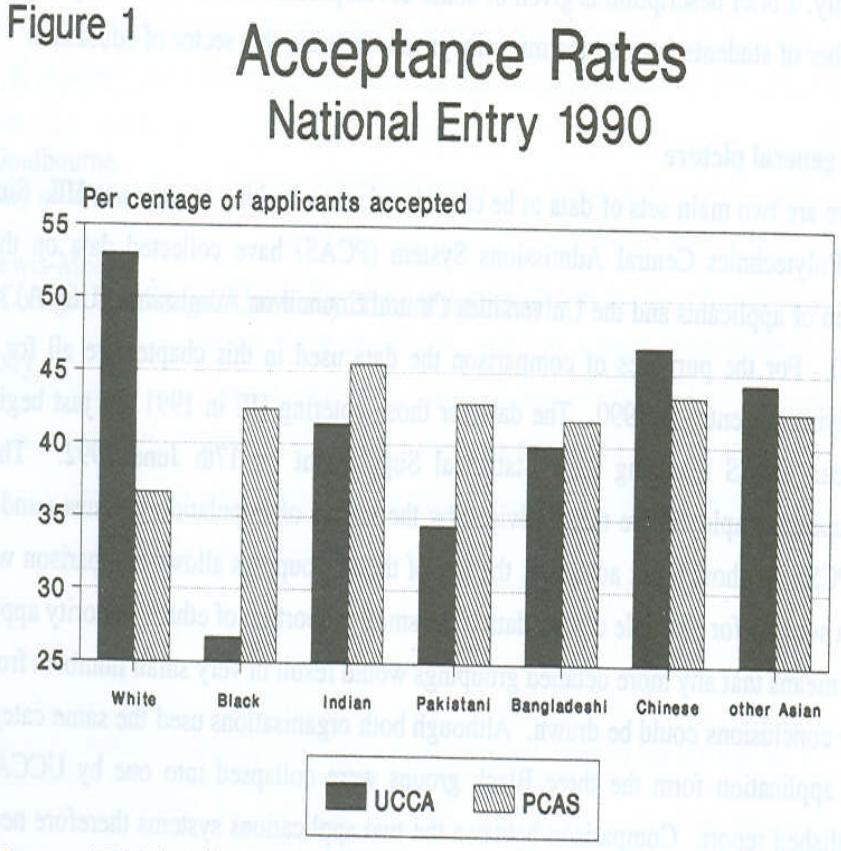
Table 1 Ethnic minority students entering HE in 1990

	PCAS		UCCA		PCAS and UCCA	
Applications	21607	(13.0%)	16903	(8.7%)	38510	(10.7%)
Acceptances	9378	(14.5%)	6372	(6.4%)	15750	(9.6%)

Source: UCCA, 1991; PCAS, 1991

These overall rates show the large differences between the former two sectors in the proportion of applicants and acceptances coming from ethnic minority groups. There is also variation according to particular ethnic group as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1



Source: UCCA (1991) and PCAS (1991)

The rates shown are for the percentage of all applicants from each ethnic group that were accepted. The differences for each ethnic group in addition to those between the two sectors of higher education are clearly shown. The highest acceptance rate for universities is for White applicants (53.5%), the rate for Black applicants is much lower (26.7%) and those for the Asian sub-groups somewhere between these two (34.4-46.8%). It is the reverse picture for polytechnics; Whites have the lowest acceptance rate (36.6%) and there is less variation among ethnic minority groups, all between 41.8 % and 45.5%.

Another facet of these data are the acceptance rates for each ethnic group by gender. These are shown in Figures 2 and 3. In all cases (except Chinese PCAS applicants) women are less likely to obtain places in HE. The differences for women from ethnic minorities applying to polytechnics were far greater than those for universities. From the UCCA data the greatest difference was for Chinese applicants (8%) and for Indian and White applicants (5%). Acceptance rates for women applying through PCAS were between 5 and 7 per cent less than men within the same ethnic group. The only exception was Chinese women whose acceptance rate was only 1% higher than that for Chinese men.

Figure 2 Acceptances by Gender
UCCA

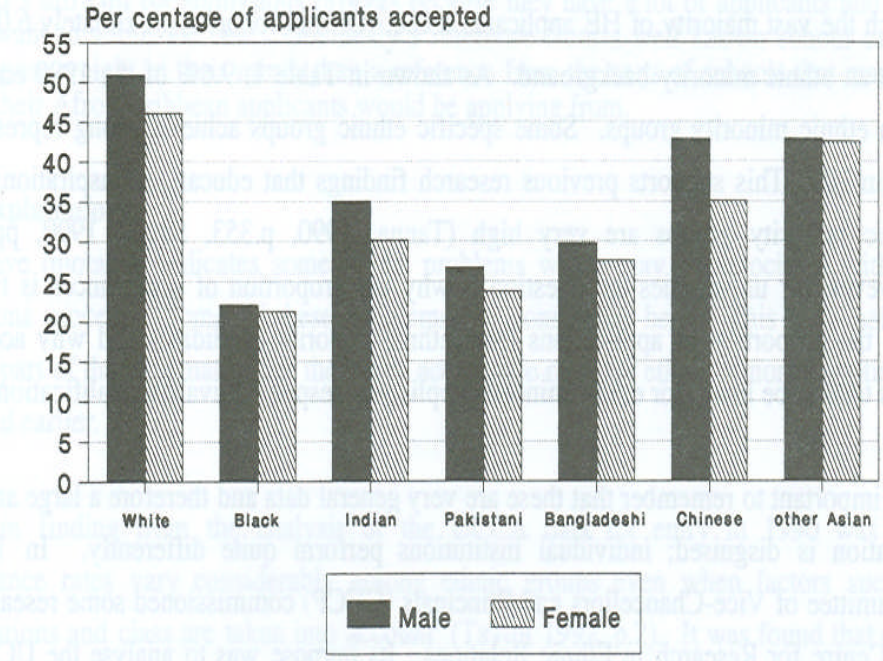
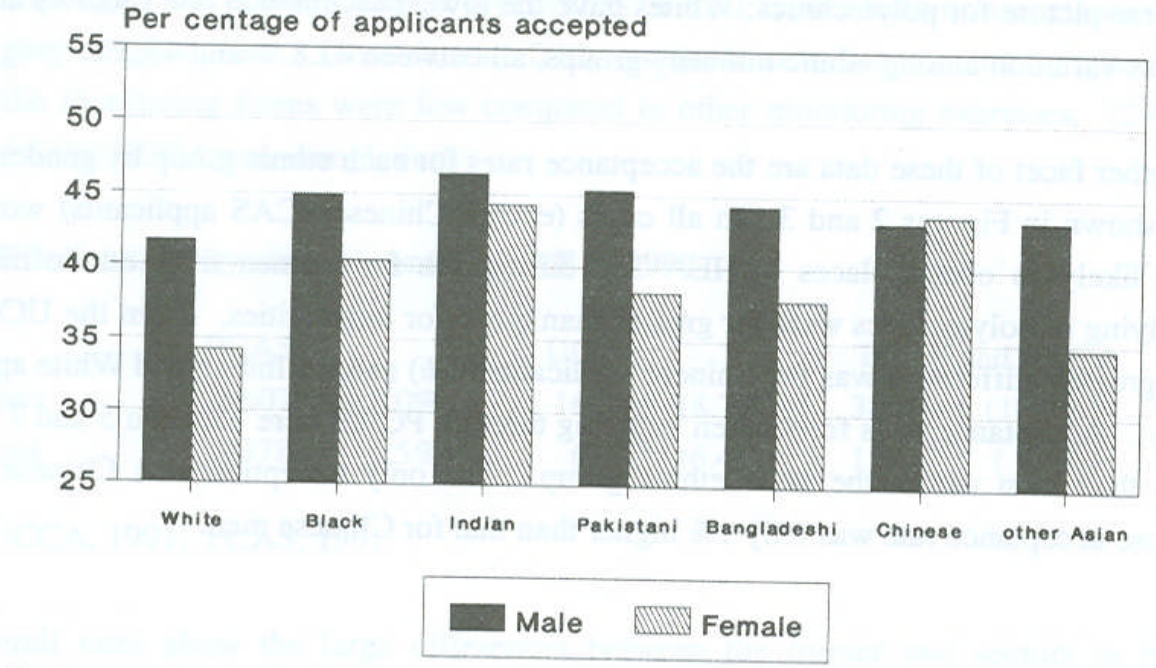


Figure 3 Acceptances by Gender
PCAS



Source: PCAS (1991)

Overall it might appear that ethnic minorities are well represented in HE relative to the general population. The most relevant age cohort to consider is the 18-24 year olds from which the vast majority of HE applicants come. Of this cohort approximately 6.0% come from an ethnic minority background. As shown in Table 1, 9.6% of the 1990 entry were from ethnic minority groups. Some specific ethnic groups achieve strong representation within HE. This supports previous research findings that educational aspirations among ethnic minority groups are very high (Tanna, 1990, p.353, Singh, 1990, pp.346-7). However, for universities the question is why the proportion of acceptances is far lower than the proportion of applications from ethnic minority candidates and why acceptance rates tend to be lower for ethnic minority applicants despite equivalent qualifications?

It is important to remember that these are very general data and therefore a large amount of variation is disguised; individual institutions perform quite differently. In 1991 the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP) commissioned some research from the Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations. Its purpose was to analyse the UCCA data nationally to test for evidence of bias. In addition it analysed the data for eight unidentified universities. The proportion of ethnic minority candidates applying to these universities ranged from 6.5% to 35.2%; the highest rates were found in those institutions near to London (Taylor, 1992). In all cases the acceptance rates for applicants from ethnic minority groups were far lower than those for white applicants. In the most extreme cases the acceptance rate for whites was about six times that for certain ethnic groups. It is therefore vital that each university study its

own monitoring data taking into account local circumstances when evaluating differences in acceptance rates.

Medical schools

One area of considerable interest in HE is that of the medical schools and applications to medical and related courses. This is particularly relevant because students from ethnic minorities apply disproportionately to medical and related courses. These courses due to their popularity and difficulty require high qualifications from applicants. In 1986 St George's Hospital Medical School in London was formally investigated by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE, 1988). They were found guilty of practising sexual and racial discrimination in their admissions policy. A computer programme has been designed to replicate the decisions of admissions tutors. Part of the programme gave reduced marks to applications from women and those with non-European sounding names. Compared to other medical schools, the representation of students with non-European sounding names at St George's was actually far higher. For example, 12% of St George's students and 5% of Westminster Medical School's were from ethnic minority groups (Kingman, 1992). Despite this investigation Black students are still underrepresented at medical schools. Only 16% of Black applicants were given places compared to 38% of Asians and 58% of White applicants. The article quoted Dr McKenzie, a junior doctor in psychiatry in London, thus

It's difficult for admissions officers because they have a lot of applicants and they want to admit the best. Obviously a reference from a well known school carries more weight in their minds than a reference from the sorts of schools that many of their Afro-Caribbean applicants would be applying from.

Some explanations

The above quotation indicates some of the problems which may be associated with the admissions process. Some of these problems are considered here. This may help to provide part of the explanation for the lower acceptance rates for ethnic minority applicants discussed earlier.

The main finding from the analysis of the UCCA data for entry in 1990 was that `Acceptance rates vary considerably among ethnic groups even when factors such as qualifications and class are taken into account' (Taylor 1992, p.2). It was found that even with the same level of qualifications applicants from ethnic minority groups were less likely to be accepted. Therefore one of the main areas of concern in access to HE for ethnic minorities is the admissions policies of universities. One of the main recommendations to the CVCP was that acceptance criteria need to be examined to ensure universities are not indirectly discriminating on racial grounds. The CVCP has started this process by carrying out a survey of universities enquiring about their admissions process. Another recommendation was that training should be given to admissions tutors, or a code of good practice be issued, to ensure that they are aware of the implications of using certain selection criteria or procedures.

A variety of factors obviously help to explain some of the discrepancies that were found. These include qualifications, A-level resits, social class, institution attended, subject choice and region of domicile. Qualifications and resits are perhaps the two factors over which schools have the greatest influence and involvement. They therefore warrant closer attention.

i) Qualifications

Only some of the general differences in acceptance rates discussed earlier may be explained by the possession of different levels of qualification. The data published by UCCA in their Statistical Supplement gave acceptance rates broken down by type of qualification and A level points score for each ethnic group. Even at this more disaggregated level differences showed clearly (UCCA 1991, p.34). In particular Black applicants had consistently lower acceptance rates.

The most important qualifications are A-levels. Other qualifications do not conform to the standard method of entry and therefore make it more difficult to complete the uneven path to HE. In 1990, 80% of university applicants applied with A-levels, 72% with at least two passes. Ethnic minority applicants are less likely to apply from this A-level path. As shown in Table 2 Asian applicants are almost twice as likely as Whites to apply with other qualifications and Black applicants nearly five times. Whilst A-levels continue to be the main rationing device used for places in HE, applicants from ethnic minorities are immediately placed at a disadvantage.

Table 2 Qualifications path to HE

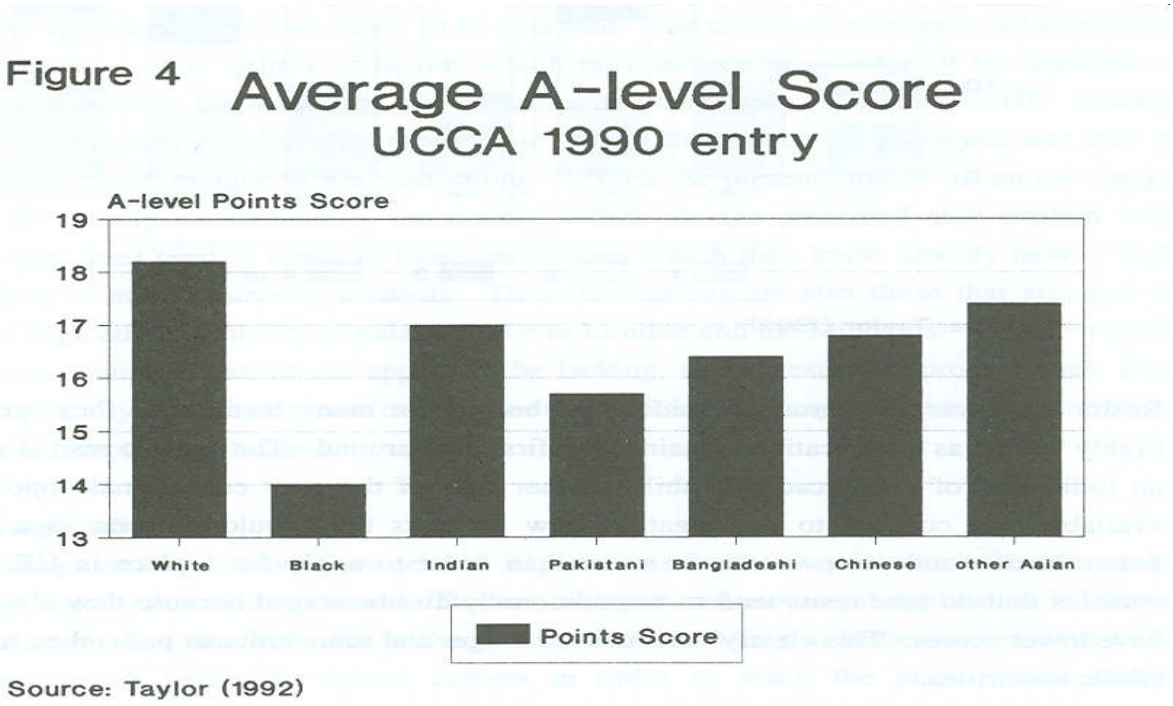
	Main qualifications	
Ethnic group	A-levels	Other *
White	81.8	7.1
Black	55.6	34.0
Indian	81.9	11.5
Pakistani	72.5	15.7
Bangladeshi	74.9	16.0
Chinese	78.3	10.2

* does not include Scottish/BTEC

Source: UCCA, 1991

This situation is worsened when A-level scores are considered. Most selection by universities is based on a minimum A-level score requirement. As demand for places has risen over the years so has the score required for acceptance. The score requirement varies tremendously among subjects and universities, thus reflecting the position of the course or university in the hierarchical structure of HE. The higher the status, the greater demand is likely to be and hence minimum requirements can be set higher. The score of those with at least two A-levels shows that ethnic minority applicants tend to have lower scores than White applicants (see Figure 4). The average score of White applicants was 18.2, that for Blacks 14.0, Asians scored between 16 and 17 points.

Figure 4

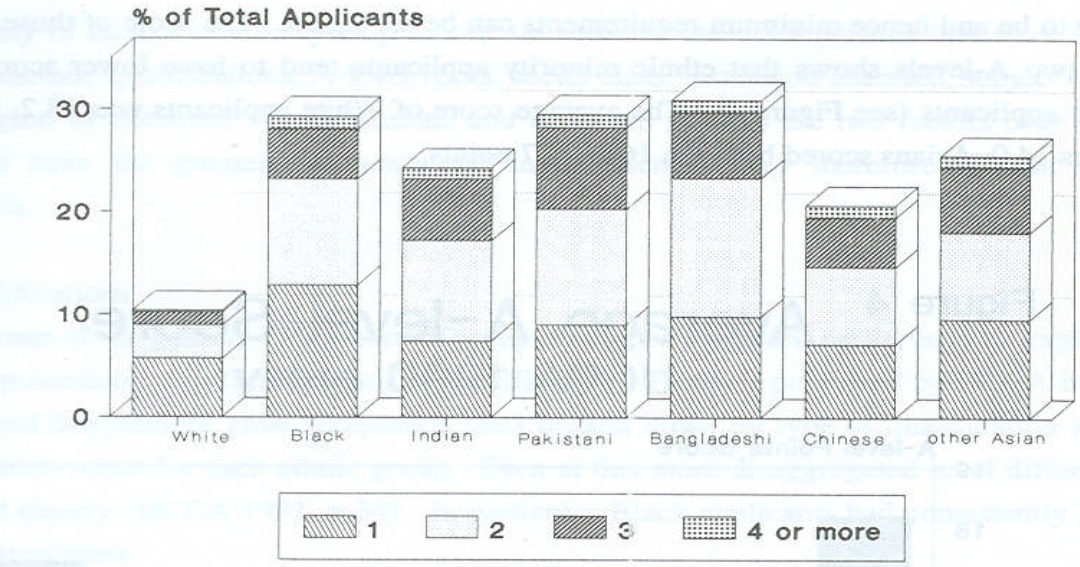


Source: Taylor (1992)

ii) Resits

Another indication of the unevenness of the path to HE is the manner in which A-levels were achieved. A far greater proportion of ethnic minority applicants are likely to have taken resits in order to obtain the minimum requirement for entry to HE. For all ethnic groups, over 70 per cent of all applicants took no resits. Therefore the vast majority of applicants are unaffected by this. However, only 4.7 per cent of white applicants took more than two resits compared to over 15 per cent of Black, Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi applicants (see Figure 5).

Figure 5 Number of A-Level Resits UCCA 1990 entry



Source: Taylor (1992)

Resits are a very important consideration because in many institutions they are not as highly valued as qualifications obtained the first time around. The need to resit is taken as an indication of poor academic ability rather than of the poor educational opportunities available. In contrast to the negative view of resits they could be seen as a sign of determination and perseverance to succeed in order to apply for a place in HE. Those students that do take resits tend to be additionally disadvantaged because they also tend to have lower scores. This clearly indicates the longer and more arduous path taken to HE by ethnic minorities.

Tanna (1990) in her study of South Asian achievement levels found three sets of reasons for the higher incidence of resits among this group. Firstly, many were taking other qualifications in addition to A levels, making a very demanding work load. Secondly, the unconventional route already taken in education at this point created greater difficulties. Teachers commented that students were not suitable `university material' and the expectations they held were unrealistic. Limited faith in pupils can easily become self fulfilling by affecting students' performance. The third set of reasons she noted referred to `poor teaching' and `bad schooling', negative attributes given to individuals such as `laziness' and `apathy'. Also some pupils chose subjects that they felt offered favourable career prospects rather than those most suitable to their areas of greatest ability.

iii) Other factors

The UCCA data also suggested other causes for this lower academic achievement, for example, the type of institution attended and parental social class. The analysis revealed that particular subjects are favoured by ethnic minority applicants which are often high demand courses such as social sciences, medicine and dentistry. Combined with their lower A-level scores, the chances of success are therefore limited. However, these factors will not be investigated here.

By focusing on the qualifications of entrants it has been possible to show the unevenness of the path to HE and that ethnic minorities tend to apply from a disadvantaged position for a number of reasons.

The geographic pattern of applications which emerged from the UCCA analysis is worthy of mention. Candidates from ethnic minorities are more likely to apply to a local institution but these applications are less likely to be accepted. The choice of university is likely to be influenced by a wide variety of factors which may include knowledge of the institution, image portrayed by the institution and contact with others with experience in HE. Jewson et al's (1991) study of university prospectuses found that the image portrayed was that of universities being mainly White institutions. Whilst the presentation of an untrue image would be equally unsatisfactory, the mainly `White' image presented may explain why ethnic minorities tend to apply to those institutions which they know already have a high proportion of ethnic minority students. These institutions are also those that are near to areas of high ethnic minority population such as London and the Midlands. Also, if support mechanisms within institutions appear to be lacking, as suggested by prospectuses, then applying locally and staying near existing methods of support may be an important strategy for ethnic minority applicants.

Some implications

The findings outlined above have several implications for the way in which the process of entering higher education is viewed. The very complicated process of application is littered with many hurdles that make the pathway very uneven. Many of these hurdles have to be overcome much earlier in school careers in order to reach the point which makes application to HE possible. There is therefore much that could be done in earlier school careers to increase the chances of those ethnic minorities that wish to apply to HE. However, the implications given below concentrate upon the process of application and positive ways to encourage and support applications.

Giving the correct advice is vital to success. Such advice could be extremely practical, such as how to complete an application form, which will create the best opportunities and portray the candidate in the best possible way. Schools should ensure that ethnic minority applicants do not unnecessarily restrict themselves to one or two institutions, particularly if these are local places. Applicants should also be made aware, without discouragement, of the difficulties of obtaining places on very high demand courses. This is particularly relevant to ethnic minority applicants who tend to apply in far greater proportions to the `professional courses' like medicine and law. Career opportunities resulting from alternative courses, with higher acceptance rates, should be stressed. This should involve a realistic match between the abilities and preferences of students, the demands of courses and career opportunities.

Also, whilst institutions tend to undervalue qualifications obtained through resits, schools should provide sound advice to candidates based on their results. Schools may actively be able to reduce the incidence of disproportionately more resits for ethnic minorities by examining their own educational processes. However, those applying to HE with resits could be helped by using the application form to stress individuals' determination to succeed and apply to HE rather than their previous attempt(s) at qualifications. This would help to break down the misconception that resits are an indicator of low academic ability.

Schools liaison is an area which could be used to great advantage for ethnic minority students. Many institutions of HE are very active in this area already and compete with each other so as to attract the `best' applicants. Schools liaison schemes seek to establish links between schools and HE which are expected to result in applications to the particular institution involved. This does not result in favourable treatment. Involvement in such schemes encourages

students to apply to HE generally or specific institutions by demystifying the institution. Students may feel that HE is quite alien and not somewhere people like themselves belong. Visiting institutions and talking to those already there may break down some of these misconceptions. Some schemes are designed specifically for ethnic minority applicants such as that run by GEEMA at Cambridge.

Future prospects

When considering the future prospects for widening access to HE, one note of caution must be given. Many attempts to widen access involve increasing the numbers applying to HE. This may result in increased access due to government pressure on HE to expand, but may not widen access to groups that have traditionally been underrepresented. Given the hierarchical structure of HE, access might not be widened if A levels continue to be used as an easily administered rationing device. This is because those elitist institutions towards the top of the hierarchy will be able to demand even higher A level scores and thus cream off a finer top layer of the increased pool of applicants.

Despite this note of caution there are several very positive factors which are likely to affect the future of ethnic minorities in HE. Firstly there has been a rapid growth in the number of institutions adopting equal opportunity policies. Although many of these policies are limited in scope and contain more rhetoric than action (Heward and Taylor, 1992), they are the start of a commitment to genuinely providing equality.

Secondly, the major changes to HE are likely to have important consequences. The altered status of polytechnics to universities will cause changes to the existing hierarchy. In the past, the polytechnics were very successful at widening access and attracting different groups of students to HE. As they now move to competing in the same area this is likely to place great pressure on the `old universities' to widen access also. Initial results from entry to HE in 1992 indicate that fewer applicants applying through PCAS have turned down places offered by former polytechnics. This suggests that applicants are showing less preference for the `old universities' than in previous years.

Thirdly, there is the growth of special schemes designed to attract a more diverse pool of applicants. Both institutions at the top of the HE hierarchy, Cambridge and Oxford, have special schemes to attract ethnic minority applicants. Other institutions have special shops in city centres which aim to familiarise the local population with the opportunities available. Schemes of this kind break down some of the misconceptions that may be held which may have prevented ethnic minorities applying to HE. Another example of special schemes are the two projects sponsored by the Employment Department carried out at Bristol Polytechnic, `Widening access to HE for Black people' and `Ethnic monitoring and admissions to HE' (Bird, et al, 1992). These were very much locally based and one of the aims was to increase awareness of HE availability and opportunities in the area.

Fourthly, as mentioned earlier, there is the increased competition in the area of schools liaison. Many institutions have developed special links with schools to try to attract applicants. This competition is at such a level that institutions do not share information and do not wish others to know how many attend open days. Schools should develop links with HE, particularly local institutions, which will make HE less mystical and alien to their students.

Finally there is significant media interest in equality in HE. The media coverage following the press release of the report on Ethnic Group Data for University Entry (Taylor, 1992) is evidence of this. Articles were published in The Higher and The Independent, the report was also covered by Kingman (1992) in the British Medical Journal. Recent press articles have included the following: `Cambridge in racism probe' (Bhatti, 1992), a story about a formal investigation

by the Commission for Racial Equality into Emmanuel College following the complaints of a student; `Oxford drops exams entry requirement' (Crequer, 1992), which suggested that access might be widened because candidates no longer were required to have minimum passes in GCSEs and A levels; `University's lesson in life' (The Guardian, 1992), an article discussing religious discrimination at Queens University Belfast.

Conclusion

It would be easy to draw negative conclusions from a paper of this kind, but this needs to be avoided. Whilst there is evidence to show that ethnic minority applicants face great unevenness along the pathway to HE many do succeed. Indeed as has been mentioned a disproportionate number of ethnic minorities apply and gain entry to HE. However, as long as unevenness exists, methods of smoothing out the pathway must be sought. This paper has suggested ways in which schools may be able to increase the success rate of those ethnic minorities applying to HE. At the same time HE itself, in particular the universities, appears to be showing far greater interest in widening access. It is hoped that the analysis of the UCCA data together with the increased publicity being given to equality in access to HE will result in important policy changes. It is of vital importance that national, detailed, monitoring of admissions data be carried out annually. It is equally important that each institution carefully considers its admissions process and monitoring data to investigate and prevent any apparent discrepancies. Access to HE for Black and Asian students should, in this way, become more even in the future.

The careers service and stereotyping of ethnic minority school leavers

John Wrench

Introduction

One area of concern regarding the problem of access to higher education by ethnic minority young people is the attitudes and practices of those professionals who make judgements about young people at the time that they leave school and put themselves forward to institutions of higher education. These professionals include teachers who have experience of the young people at school, careers advisers who counsel them on suitable avenues for the future, and lecturers who are the gatekeepers to higher education. If such professionals, wittingly or unwittingly, operate according to negative stereotypes of ethnic minority young people then the effects of their judgements and actions will constitute one more hurdle for these young people to surmount.

Background to the problem

The problem for researchers is that gatekeepers and others at this intersection of schools and higher education are not observable or measurable in their actions. It may be possible to show from statistics an apparent under-representation in access to higher education by certain ethnic minority groups. It is not possible to deduce from these statistics whether part of the discrepancy is due to subconscious misjudgements or even blatant racism on the part of those who make decisions affecting young peoples' entry. Only in some rare and untypical cases may this be proven. For example, a 1988 inquiry by the Commission for Racial Equality into St George's Hospital Medical School, part of London University, discovered that a computerised selection procedure was programmed to down-grade applications from non-white applicants and women. This resulted in an estimated sixty candidates a year being refused interviews simply because they were black and/or female.

Although the biases within human thought processes are less easily identifiable than those of a computer programme, it has been possible to show by research that professionals who would describe themselves as "unbiased" are nevertheless capable of making misjudgements which can seriously blight the careers of young people. The research described in this paper does not relate directly to those professionals and gatekeepers who control access to higher education. It is a study of local authority careers advisers who counsel young people age 15-16, particularly those who are thinking of leaving school and going into employment or vocational training. Nevertheless, I want to argue that the findings of this study could also be relevant to those professionals who have some influence upon the lives of 18 year olds seeking higher education. This research into the actions and judgements of careers officers suggests that we cannot afford to be complacent about the actions and judgements of other similar professionals, such as school teachers and those who control university entrance.

The Careers Service, formerly called the Youth Employment Service, is organised locally, and at the time of the research was part of the responsibility of the local government education departments. (At the time of writing there is debate on the national re-organisation of the Service, with the possibility of

privatisation.) The particular research project described in this paper was carried out for the Department of Employment by the Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations (Cross, Wrench and Barnett, 1990; Cross and Wrench 1991; Wrench, 1991).

The specific context of this research was provided by earlier work by Sillitoe and Meltzer, (1985). This was a survey, also originated by the Department of Employment, of the employment experiences of British born young people of West Indian origin. One part of this earlier research showed that careers officers tended to assess West Indians of similar educational attainment to whites as less intelligent and, further, to regard the occupational aspirations of whites as more realistic and reasonable. If this process still occurred, it could help explain some of the continued labour market inequalities experienced by Britain's ethnic minority populations. For this reason one of the aims of the present study was to examine the extent to which bias still existed in the assessment by careers officers of their clients.

The research project
Two of the objectives of the project were as follows:

1. To investigate whether careers officers rate the intelligence and communication skills of people from West Indian and Asian ethnic minorities less favourably than those of young whites with similar qualifications.

2. To examine careers officers' assessments of the suitability of the jobs in which the young people expressed interest, in order to determine whether ethnic minority and white young people of similar qualifications were assessed differently.
(Cross, Wrench and Barnett, 1990, p. 2)

The study was carried out with the cooperation of nine different local authority careers services, three in the North, three in the Midlands and three in the South. All were multi-ethnic areas. Initial data on young people were selected from careers service records in the nine locations, the individuals coming from schools which contained between 15 and 75 per cent of ethnic minority young people. Individuals were chosen initially to give a representative sample of each ethnic group divided into `white', `Asian' and `Afro-Caribbean'. This produced a sample of 2,923 young people divided by ethnicity and gender.

From this sample, a second stage sample was drawn, which matched ethnic minority young people with equivalent whites in terms of educational attainment and educational experience. It produced a final matched sample of just under 900, composed of four sub-samples of Asians and their white comparison sample and Afro-Caribbeans and their white comparison sample for each sex.

These young people had received counselling by 70 careers officers, each of whom received a questionnaire to complete on each young person in the matched sample. The form on each individual contained questions on occupational aspirations, aptitudes and personal characteristics. Thus, the questionnaires on the matched sample could reveal whether careers officers' judgements were different for similar young people from different ethnic groups, and help to indicate whether race or ethnicity was a factor in the assessments that careers officers made of their clients' abilities and suitabilities.

The third component of the study comprised individual taped interviews with these 70 careers officers as well as with a further 18 employment officers. These interviews sought to explore their overall perspectives on ethnic minority young people, their understanding of equal opportunity policy and their response to racial inequality in the labour market and, where appropriate, to racism by employers or trainers.

The research findings

The larger sample of almost 3,000 young people shows that with the exception of one group, ethnic minority young people are much more likely to stay on in full-time education. For example, 71 per cent and 64 per cent of Asian boys and girls respectively stay at school after the fifth form compared with 27 per cent and 40 per cent of the whites. The exception is Afro-Caribbean boys, who match whites in wanting to leave education.

Assessments by careers officers of ability

The various social forces which lie behind differences in attainment between ethnic groups have been considered in previous research (see Tomlinson, 1980, 1983; Troyna, 1984; DES, 1985; Eggleston et al, 1986; Drew and Gray, 1991). However, this paper is not concerned with any differential educational attainment between ethnic groups; rather, it is concerned with the differential treatment of equally qualified members of different ethnic groups. Of particular interest is the evidence from the questionnaires on the matched sample, where careers officers were asked to rate each young person on numerical and verbal ability. The indications were that even when Afro-Caribbean and Asian young people are matched by attainment they are still assessed by careers officers as less able than their white comparison sample. The greatest disparity is between the Afro-Caribbean boys and their white peers on assessments of numerical ability but considerable differences also exist for Asian girls on this dimension.

What stands out most from this analysis of the matched sample is that in particular Asian girls and Afro-Caribbean boys are perceived as `underfunctioning' when compared with their white peers at the same actual level of attainment. Such judgements carry over when they are assessed for future occupation - although it is true that Afro-Caribbean boys are less numerous in our category of `high' performers, those who do achieve highly are nevertheless still likely to be ranked lower by careers officers on a scale of assessment of `skill' level. If the Service was compensating for the perceived deficiencies of the educational system in giving Afro-Caribbean boys the credentials they deserve, then they should ask less of them when classifying them in broad career terms. In fact, they ask more of them.

The high aspirations of ethnic minority young people

The samples of Afro-Caribbean and Asian young people matched with white equivalents enabled an examination of whether the aspirations of ethnic minority young people were higher than their peers. The statistics show that Asian boys and the Afro-Caribbean girls are the ones with aspirations which are the most noticeably above their white peers, in that they are more likely to aspire to skilled non-manual occupations. Asian girls and Afro-Caribbean boys are more likely to aspire to skilled manual employment than their peers. Sixty-one per cent of Asian boys aspire to `skilled' work compared with 54 per cent of their peers; the figures for Afro-Caribbean boys and their white peers are 7l per cent and 48 per cent respectively. Twenty-eight per cent of Asian girls wish to reach above unskilled or semi-skilled work, compared with 17 per cent of white girls at the same educational level. For Afro-Caribbean girls the differences are still greater; 23 per cent aiming this high, compared with only 10 per cent of their peers. If skilled manual and non-manual work is taken together then in all cases the ethnic minority young people appear to aim more highly than their white peers.

The question of over-aspiration

Previous research (Sillitoe and Meltzer 1985) showed that careers officers were more likely to judge the aspirations of ethnic minority young people more critically than those of whites. We were able to explore the issue of `unrealism' within our sample of ethnic minority young people by investigating whether many of those with `high' aspirations had `low' educational scores. (For

the purposes of analysis the young people were grouped into categories according to a `score' of measured educational attainment - 3 points for an O level or grade 1 CSE; 2 points for a CSE 2/3, and so on.) Almost one third - 32% - of `high aspiring' Asian males have `low' educational scores. However, 29% of the whites are similarly categorised. In statistical terms such a difference is marginal, and gives little support for the stereotype of specifically Asian over aspiration. For Asian and Afro-Caribbean girls, a smaller proportion of the minorities aiming `high' have `low' achievement than is true for whites. Only for Afro-Caribbean boys is there anything resembling evidence that a higher proportion wanting to aim `high' come from lower level performers. However, the jobs that are aspired to by ethnic minority young people are not unusually high or unrealistic. That is, the jobs chosen did not cluster at the very highest levels but more towards the lower end of the skilled or non-manual occupational ranges.

In the questionnaire the 70 careers officers were asked to assess the `realism' of each youngster's aspirations in relation to further education, vocational training and employment. In all cases, both in relation to YTS and employment, Asians and Afro-Caribbeans are regarded as possessing more unrealistic aspirations than their equivalently qualified white comparison sample. This view is most powerful in relation to Asian boys who are perceived as being under the greatest pressure from their parents to be upwardly mobile.

The taped interviews confirmed this view: around three quarters of the careers staff talked about unrealistic aspirations amongst ethnic minority young people as a problem that they encountered to some degree. One quarter subscribed to the simplest and strongest form of this view - that the Asian young people in particular had ambitions which were quite unattainable because of their inappropriate level of ability - `their expectations are greater than their academic abilities'. Others subscribed to a more `qualified' view of over aspiration, less ready to make a sweeping generalisations but nevertheless seeing it more of an Asian problem than with other groups.

It is true that many careers staff were able to quote to the researchers individual examples of ethnic minority young people expressing ambitions which are undeniably out of line with probable achievement. To dismiss every such case as the product of an ethnocentric or racially biased imagination on the part of careers staff would be unreasonable; there clearly do exist individual cases of unrestrained optimism on the part of ethnic minority young people. Such cases will often cause extra problems for the careers officer who deals with them. From our research evidence, however, we are not convinced that these are as much a real `problem' as many of our respondents claim.

Some officers were aware of the fact that a stereotype may take on a dynamic of its own and might distort perception so that the very existence of a stereotype overly sensitised a careers officer to notice the phenomenon. Some careers officers are also aware that what seems `unrealistic' at one point in time is not necessarily so, given the extra staying power and motivation of ethnic minority young people and changing labour markets. They recognise that any judgement of `over aspiration' must allow for readiness of ethnic minority young people to stay on at school or further education to get better qualifications, in the light of the extra difficulties they know they will face in the labour market. They are also aware of the danger of stereotypes which encourage selective perception and thus risk further reinforcing a negative image. We have noted a range of views by careers staff on this. The relatively sophisticated awareness of the complexities of this phenomenon by some officers only serves to highlight the ethnocentric judgements and readiness to deal in simple stereotypes of others.

Assessment of employment levels

The judgements on relative `realism' in occupational choices are also expressed in assessments of the young person's potential for entering skilled occupations. When controlling for measured performance in the large sample, it becomes clear that differences in assessments by careers officers are greatest at the average level of measured achievement. Assessments in this middling group tend to place Asian boys more highly and Afro-Caribbean boys more lowly than their peers. Once again, Afro-Caribbean girls are more like Asians in general in being more likely to receive a positive assessment. In comparing the mean or average expected education score for the skilled job category, it is clear that Afro-Caribbean boys in particular are classified as having the potential for entering skilled occupations only when they achieve a higher score than whites or Asians. The fact that Afro-Caribbean boys are more likely to be in the ranks of the low educational performers (in terms of examination successes) appears to influence the judgements of careers officers on those who are not (unless they are very evidently `high-fliers').

The colour-blind professional

Finally, the research shows that a significant minority of careers officers subscribed to the `professional/colour blind' ideology of `We don't notice what colour they are - We treat them all the same'. When problems of racial inequality were recognised there was sometimes evidence of the `blaming the victim' syndrome - for example, seeing the `problem' as lying within the educational performance, attitudes, or culture of the young people. In other

words, if there was a "problem", it did not have any implications for the work

Conclusion

One objective of the project was to investigate whether careers officers assess the occupational aspirations and relevant personal characteristics of ethnic minority young people less favourably than young whites with similar qualifications. There is indeed evidence from this research of negative evaluation of ethnic minority young people, and suggestions that popular stereotypes are reflected in careers officers' assessments of abilities and personality.

From the quantitative analysis there is no evidence that the higher aspirations of ethnic minorities are unrealistic. The data suggest that many ethnic minority young people are indeed ambitious, but not ridiculously and unreasonably so considering their achievements and commitment to education. There is evidence, however, of an over-readiness to evaluate ambitions negatively by careers officers, many of whom feel that there is a very real `over aspiration' problem.

Finally, I would suggest that the research evidence described here - which reveals that ethnic minority school leavers were treated differently from equivalently qualified white peers - may have implications for other professionals. For example, like many of the careers officers who were interviewed, teachers who counsel young people about their future, and university admissions tutors, will see themselves as well-educated and articulate people, often of a liberal disposition, aware of issues of racial inequality, who would deny that they stereotyped ethnic minority young people, or treated them differently from whites in any way. Like the careers officers, many will argue that they themselves are "colour blind", that they do not notice what ethnic group anyone comes from, and that their professional training means that young people are all treated the same. Like the careers officers, such people will deny, with genuine conviction, that there is a problem until the evidence of research is pointed out to them. Often, it is only by carrying out such tests that professionals will become convinced that there does exist a potential problem which requires consideration, investigation and action.

The role of teachers and schools in increasing access to higher education

Kamala Hyder

Introduction

As the last chapter demonstrated, universities have an important role to play in reducing the waste of ethnic minority talent in our society. But it is the schools which have the primary role to play. Their guidance and support of students who might wish to go to university is important. It would be difficult to increase access to universities if ethnic minority students consistently underachieve when compared with their white peers.

This chapter describes some of the research on achievement. It does not purport to cover all the literature in this field, but highlights key issues especially those on which there are differing views. The chapter seeks, in its first section, to clarify whether schools need to be concerned about ethnic minority underachievement or whether, as sometimes argued, such concern is no longer valid. Research on the causes of underachievement is examined in the second section, particularly racism and its effects. The guidance provided by research to schools in their efforts to promote ethnic minority achievement - and hence in increasing access to universities - is also considered.

Concern about underachievement

There has been a relatively long history of research in Britain on ethnic minority achievement. The Rampton report, published in 198I was, however, the first official recognition of the need to monitor achievement for specific ethnic minority groups (Rampton, 1981). The report highlighted the poorer performance of pupils of Caribbean backgrounds in CSE, 0 level and A level examinations. One illustration of this is that, of all school leavers in five LEAs in 1978, proportionately fewer pupils of Caribbean backgrounds received five or more high grades in 0 level and CSE examinations (Rampton, 1981).

The Rampton report confirmed findings from an overwhelming number and range of studies done since the late sixties. These used a variety of types of evidence and tended to demonstrate that, as a group, pupils of Caribbean backgrounds underachieved (Taylor, 1981). Studies published since 1981 have also indicated underachievement. Many researchers have used examinations statistics as evidence and a collation of results from such analyses can be found in a review by Drew and Gray (Drew and Gray, 1991). Another form of evidence, frequently drawn on in the earlier years of research, was data on the distribution of pupils in different ability groups due to banding, streaming, and setting. Analyses published since 1981 have indicated that pupils of Caribbean background were disproportionately represented in lower groups as compared with white pupils in the same schools and were less well represented in higher groups (Scarr, et al, 1983; Figueroa, 1991).

Researchers have devoted less time and attention to the achievement of pupils of Asian backgrounds. The Rampton report is partly responsible for this since its widely publicised statistics suggested that the achievement of Asian pupils is comparable with that of white pupils. However, there are studies that indicate that there should also be concern about Asian pupils. As early as 1978 it was suggested that, in spite of their apparent success in examinations and in catching up in English, they were far from reaching their full potential. It was argued that this would become clear if their examination results were compared with results of white pupils in Britain rather than with white pupils in the same locality (Driver and Ballard, 1981). In the eighties, attention was drawn to the inadequacy of aggregating very different sub-groups of pupils of Asian backgrounds. With the move to using disaggregated data in response to such criticisms, research highlighted underachieving groups. It was shown that the performance of pupils of Bangladeshi origin was considerably lower than that of other Asian pupils (ILEA, 1987). Some researchers suggested that there should be concern also about pupils of Pakistani background (Mackintosh, et al, 1988).

The major problematic areas currently, and the main sources of disagreement, are the effect of class and gender, and the possibility that ethnic minority underachievement arises because of the concentration of ethnic minority pupils in `bad inner city schools'. The debate over whether ethnic minority underachievement is primarily a class phenomenon predates the Rampton report. Research on this in the seventies tended to demonstrate underachievement even after class had been taken into account. More recently, the view that underachievement is due to class rather than to ethnicity has become more

prevalent with a report in the media of an analysis of ILEA data. The Independent newspaper (9.3.90) selected one of the results of the analysis, and presented this in dramatic headlines: `Indian children best performers in school exams'. The article dismissed the underachievement of Bangladeshis and to a lesser extent that of Caribbean pupils, reporting that although the performance of these pupils were below the average for the ILEA, white pupils and Caribbean pupils did worst of all when class was taken into account. The paragraph was misleading and unjustified since, according to the researcher who was quoted later in the article, race and class could not be separated as the two factors acted together.

Class, the effect of the school attended, and gender have been the subject of other recent quantitative analyses. In their review of some key research on underachievement, and of the strengths and weaknesses of these, Drew and Gray examined the effect of both class and of going to a good school, but came to no firm conclusion. They argued that

... to date we lack a study with a sufficient number of pupils and schools, covering a sufficient range of variables, with a nationally-representative sample, combining both qualitative and quantitative forms of data gathering (Drew and Gray 1991, p. 171).

Gillborn also reviewed the work on underachievement, focussing on the effect of class and of going to a good school (Gillborn, 1990). He included an analysis of variance of national youth cohort data, and Smith and Tomlinson's study of the school effect. The analysis of variance study, by Drew and Gray, had tried to separate the effects of race, class and gender and in doing this had found that race, class and gender explained only ten per cent of the variation in achievement (Drew and Gray, 1990). This suggested that, either race, class and gender were not adequately accounted for in this analysis, or that the study omitted key variables. Smith and Tomlinson's study was a longitudinal one with a multi-level analysis of a range of statistics collected from secondary schools, including data on examination results and on ethnicity, class and gender (Smith and Tomlinson, 1989). Because of the unsatisfactory outcome of Drew and Gray's study, Gillborn looked critically and at length at the research on the school effect with a view to clarifying the effect of including the school attended in an analysis of data on pupil achievement. Gillborn concluded that this study seemed to be `only a first step in a field which has few certainties and many confusions' (Gillborn, 1990).

In short, quantitative studies which have tried to separate class, race, and gender effects are fraught with difficulties and these remain problematic areas for which there are no firm answers.

It would seem then, that there is an overwhelming body of evidence of underachievement which cannot be dismissed. There has been a reluctance by some researchers to accept that there may be underachievement, and an argument that issues relating to class/gender/ineffective schools are more important. The discussion so far suggests that a review of research indicates that such arguments are misplaced. Criticisms of research should be directed at the design and implementation of quantitative studies and the difficulties involved in this rather than being used to undermine the evidence to-date of underachievement. Concern about underachievement is justified, and is as much of an issue for some groups of Asian backgrounds as for pupils of Caribbean backgrounds.

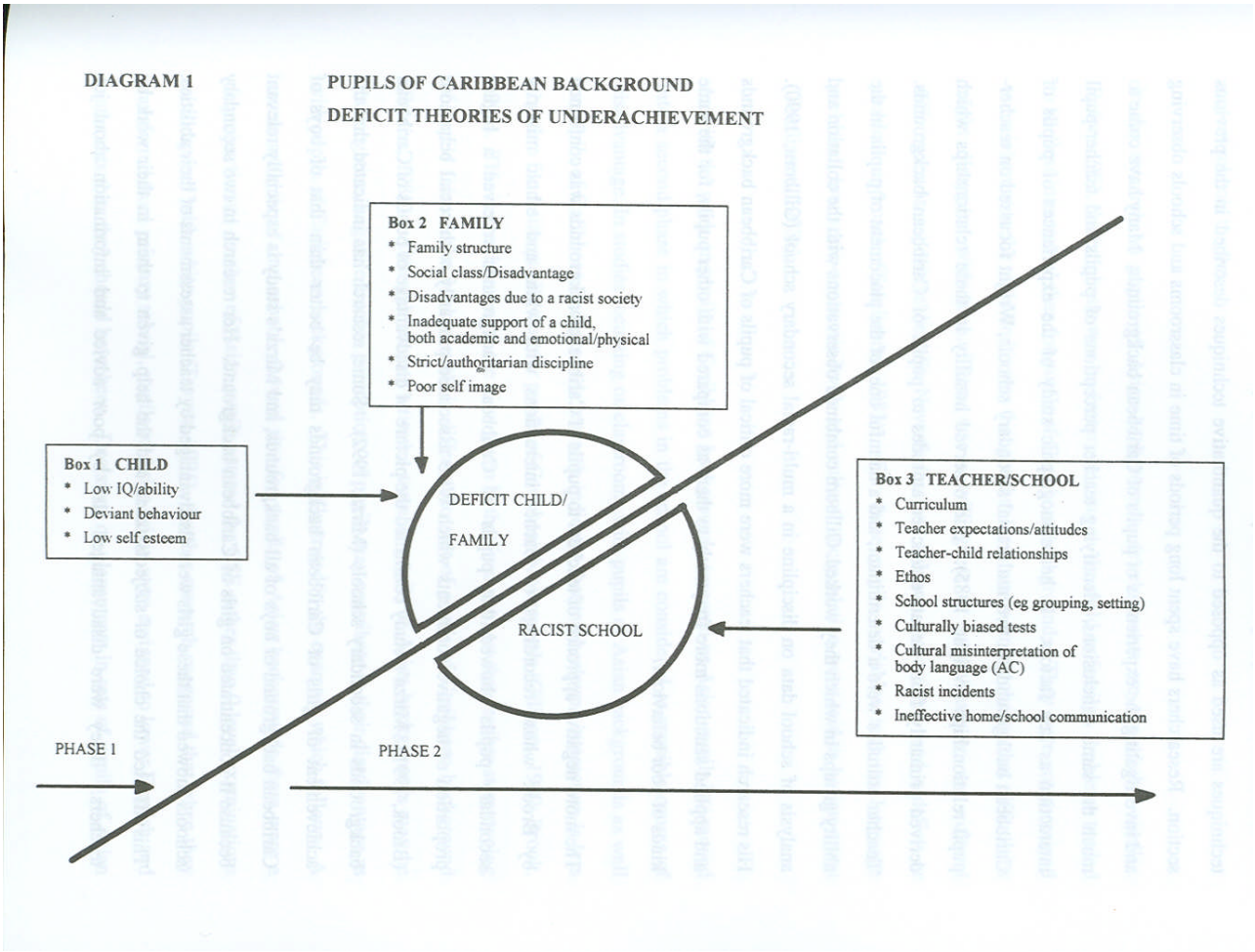
Theories of underachievement

In view of the continuing need for concern about ethnic minority underachievement, this section looks at research on the causes of this, starting with research on pupils of Caribbean backgrounds. The debate on the factors

contributing to the underachievement of pupils of Caribbean backgrounds has been a stormy one. This may be because of the different experiences and perspectives of those involved, whether at the grass roots level or in the academic community. The discussion cannot always be said to have been objective. There has been a tendency for those involved to polarize into a group focussing on factors consistent with a `deficit/problem child or family' and a group drawing attention to problems in the school.

Diagram 1 indicates the main groups of factors suggested and investigated over the last two decades of research on pupils of Caribbean backgrounds. Many of the earlier researchers placed the emphasis on the child or family, concentrating on factors such as those shown in boxes 1 and 2. There was some research on teacher racism and discussion about the effect of a Eurocentric curriculum, but to a large extent research in this phase focussed on child or family variables. Variables problematising the child included a low average IQ, deviant behaviour and low self esteem, while those problematising the family included family structure, social class, racial discrimination, inadequate support of children, poor self image and strict or authoritarian discipline. With the Rampton report, it became more acceptable to look at the role of the school and racism in particular, defined in the Report to include unintentional as well as overt racism. The emphasis in research moved to the variables in box 3. In this phase, it was the school that was perceived as the problem. Researchers concentrated on variables such as the taught curriculum, teacher attitudes and expectations, and `the hidden' curriculum of the school conveyed through its ethos, structures and practices, and reflected on the negative effects of these variables on the education and progress of ethnic minority pupils.

There has been and continues to be a debate about multi-cultural education and about the relevance of this for white pupils and for ethnic minority pupils. There have been many theoretical discussions about the effects on ethnic minority pupils and some work on the underlying rationale for multi-cultural education. For example, Figueroa in his formulation of the social construction of race, argued cogently that schools and society have a racist frame of reference, that prejudices based on `race' and on culture are endemic in Britain, and that therefore a multi-cultural and an anti-racist approach to education is essential (Figueroa, 1991). However, in spite of the interest in multi-cultural education, there is an absence of research on the direct effects of multi-cultural education on ethnic minority achievement.



While some researchers have focussed on the curriculum, others have concentrated on teacher attitudes and the way that the experiences of pupils are shaped by these. Qualitative techniques are used as opposed to the quantitative techniques described in the previous section. Researchers have spent long periods of time in classrooms and schools observing and investigating the experiences of pupils of Caribbean backgrounds. Many have come to much the same conclusions, identifying teacher perceptions of pupils and teacher-pupil interaction as key factors. In her ethnographic study of the experiences of pupils of Caribbean backgrounds in two multiracial secondary schools, Wright focussed on teacher-pupil relationships (Wright, 1985). She observed hostility in these relationships which derived primarily from negative teacher attitudes to pupils of Caribbean backgrounds. Teacher attitudes were a determinant, and a harmful one, of the placement of pupils in the ability groups in which they worked. Gillborn combined observations with the collation and analysis of school data on discipline in a multi-racial secondary school (Gillborn, 1990). His research indicated that teachers were more critical of pupils of Caribbean backgrounds and applied sanctions more frequently to them as compared with other pupils, for the same kinds of poor behaviour.

The more negative approach of teachers to pupils of Caribbean backgrounds was confirmed by Brook whose recordings of teacher interactions with white and ethnic minority secondary pupils showed that pupils of Caribbean backgrounds received a higher proportion of negative comments which Wise associated primarily with social behaviour (Brook, 1991). Mirza's study confirmed the picture of disadvantage of pupils of Caribbean backgrounds in secondary schools

(Mirza, 1992). Some research has indicated that the achievement of girls of Caribbean backgrounds may be better than that of boys of Caribbean background or boys of all backgrounds, and Mirza's study is especially relevant because it concentrated on girls of Caribbean background. Her research in two secondary schools showed that these girls were disadvantaged by teacher assessments of their abilities. This affected the choice of subjects taken and the help given to them in their work by teachers. They were disadvantaged also by poor advice and information about job opportunities. Thus, where there is success, however small, this occurs `in spite of' the disadvantages suffered in school, rather than arising from the support and help one would expect schools to give.

In the research on pupils of Asian backgrounds, developments are remarkably similar. Before 1981, the emphasis was on factors relating to the child or family. Problems tended to be `less intractable' than for pupils of Caribbean backgrounds. They were not perceived to be inherent to the child and it was thought that there was a strong chance that difficulties might disappear with time. There was a willingness in some cases to see cultural differences as a positive benefit. Nevertheless, on balance, researchers used a deficit or problem approach (Tomlinson, 1983). For these pupils, variables such as language problems, low socio-economic levels and cultural encapsulation were said to be important (Tomlinson, 1983a).

As with the work on pupils of Caribbean backgrounds, research on Asian pupils has moved into a second phase in which problems in the school are considered as possible causes of disadvantage. In studies focussing on classrooms with pupils of Asian backgrounds as well as pupils of Caribbean backgrounds research indicates that teacher/pupil interaction is less negative for Asian pupils than for pupils of Caribbean backgrounds (Gillborn, 1990; Brook, 1991). This is consistent with the view given in the Swann report that teacher stereotyping of pupils from Asian backgrounds is different to that of pupils of Caribbean background (Swann, 1985). Although teacher attitudes towards pupils of Asian backgrounds may be less negative, negative teacher perceptions of pupils may contribute to their disadvantage as with pupils of Caribbean backgrounds. This is illustrated in the example which follows. A recent analysis of one school, showed that for pupils of Asian backgrounds there were a disproportionate number of Asian pupils entered for CSE rather than 0 level examinations as compared with white pupils (Troyna, 1991). Further research suggested that when they transferred from primary school, pupils of Asian origin were assigned to lower English and maths sets than they should have been. Decisions on placements in sets of pupils of Asian backgrounds in the school studied appeared to be made on teacher perceptions and not on the primary school assessment of the performance of these pupils. Opportunities to be entered for O level examinations were restricted as the placements at transfer from primary school tended to endure. In effect, Troyna argued that where pupils achieved higher grades in English and maths, and success comparable with white pupils, this was due to pupils' determination to succeed rather than due to equal opportunities in school (Troyna, 1991).

There are several points that arise from this section. First, research shows that teacher racism is a major cause of ethnic minority disadvantage and has an effect which is complex and dependant on the form of racism and the ethnic group involved. The nature of racism and the quality of teacher - pupil relationships may differ for pupils of Caribbean backgrounds compared with pupils of Asian backgrounds. Relationships may be more hostile and teacher racism more overt for pupils of Caribbean backgrounds, and more `unintentional' for pupils of Asian backgrounds. As well as being complex in its effects, racism may have different consequences for pupil outcomes. In some cases, the disadvantage suffered may lead to ethnic minority underachievement. In other cases, the negative influence of teacher attitudes may be counteracted by ethnic minority pupils' struggles to succeed.

The other points which arise from this review relate to omissions and deficiencies in the research. Research on teacher racism has focussed, to a large extent, on secondary pupils and has to-date given us little information about the effect of teacher racism on younger pupils. And the concentration on teacher racism has meant that, even for secondary pupils, we do not know enough about the consequences of other forms of racism in school. To give one potentially important example, research has not as yet focussed specifically on the unintentional racism inherent in a Eurocentric curriculum, on its prevalence in schools and on the clarification of its effect on ethnic minority pupil experience and achievement.

Moreover, a major deficiency of the research done has been the dichotomy into a theory problematising the child/family and a theory problematising the school. The current focus on schools as a problem, and teacher racism in particular, arose from the reluctance to examine factors associated with the school in the first phase of research. This second deficit theory, useful as it has been for elucidating the effects of racism, gives no guidance to teachers on other factors which may reduce achievement. It predicates against the consideration of variables associated with the child, excluding for example low self esteem and lack of confidence arising from racism, which could reduce the academic achievement of some ethnic minority pupils. Moreover, its exclusive focus on racism in schools, in effect castigating all teachers and schools as racist, is misleading and could be counterproductive.

Finally, the problem approach used is also a barrier to increasing understanding of pupils' progress. Variables within a problem-approach theory may act negatively, and so the deficit school theory omits, for example, a consideration of the beneficial effect of anti-racist teachers in reducing underachievement. Equally, the problem approach, combined with the rejection of the theory focussing on child and family, has led to a neglect of positive effects of variables in the deficit child and family theory. And, with the focus on problems, high achievement and factors promoting this have been neglected.

In summary, it could be argued that while the current deficit school theory has redressed some of the shortcomings of the previous theory, it is unbalanced and incomplete. It is time to develop a new approach incorporating racism, but with this as one of several factors in a complex theory of achievement/underachievement.

The role of the schools

As there is no firm evidence dismissing ethnic minority underachievement as a legitimate concern, and there continues to be evidence justifying this concern, equal opportunities should have a high priority in schools. Headteachers should raise the awareness of their teachers and increase knowledge of outcomes in their school by monitoring the academic achievement of their pupils by ethnic origin. Research suggests that there may be pupils of Asian backgrounds who are underachieving in much the same way as pupils of Caribbean backgrounds.

Research identifies racism as a major cause of this. Schools would be well advised to focus on developing an antiracist ethos with structures and practices reflecting this, and on organising training to promote teachers' understanding of racism and its effects. Research confirms the need to pay particular attention to any bias in the outcome of disciplinary procedures or grouping arrangements, and to think about the different responses to and perceptions of different ethnic minority groups. The effects of the latter on teacher relationships with different groups, and the quality and quantity of help, advice and information given, may be important considerations.

It is also important for schools to take direct steps to increase achievement, focussing on the many factors which may help or hinder a pupil's achievement.

Here, and as discussed at the end of the last section, research has as yet few answers, perhaps because of its use of a problem approach, and moreover, a problem approach focussing either on the child/family or on the school.

Conclusion

This is a research field which has been politically charged, and one in which the perspectives and experiences of those involved may influence their arguments and their analyses, and the presentation of these. This should be borne in mind when reading reports in the media of research in this large and very complex field.

Some general problems faced by pupils of African-Caribbean backgrounds

Merle Campbell

Introduction

During the period 1987-92 only fourteen students of African-Caribbean background entered the sixth form at Handsworth Wood Girls School. Of these only five

actually followed A level courses. Only two of the current African-Caribbean intake of sixth formers at the school are thinking about going on to university. This conforms with the general trend for the large majority of African-Caribbean students who stay on in sixth forms, or who go on to a further education college, either to resit GCSE examinations or embark upon BTEC courses.

By and large, these students have been failed by the present school system. They therefore attempt to try again or follow an alternative course in the hope that it may secure them employment or access into higher education. The African-Caribbean presence is small in many school sixth form centres. There are several reasons for this, but one might be that colleges of further education offer wider choices.

Some specific problems affecting performance

With respect to performance, I would like to mention a number of factors which affect results. These include the following:

1. racism in schools, mainly centring around low teacher expectations;

2. organisation of the curriculum/inappropriate curriculum;

3. pupil groupings and the option system at the end of year nine;

4. stereotyping of students and negative teacher attitudes;

5. pupil motivation;

6. inappropriate career guidance/advice;

7. school ethos; and

8. parents are not always informed about the progress of their childrens' education, and do not know what questions to ask about the curriculum and examination courses.

I will briefly comment on some of these. In the first instance, African-Caribbean pupils are often seen in social behavioural terms: low ability and potential discipline problems. For example, there is the perception of the `big' African-Caribbean lads. Another example is that the girls are seen as more well developed physically than their peers and are perceived to be big and dumb. Then there is the social deprivation syndrome: `they all come from problem backgrounds (i.e. one-parent families) so we cannot really expect them to get their GCSEs'. Many parents are not aware of how badly their children are doing until a crisis develops in school, usually to do with behaviour. Racist stereotypes operate in some schools, and they tend to be generally negative expectations of academic performance, which are used to assess pupil aptitude and ability.

An example of this is where schools use the streaming method to group children in terms of ability, but such streaming often depends on teachers' subjective views of pupils. Sometimes there is an over-representation of African-Caribbean pupils in the lower and non-examination streams. In order to counter this imbalance there was a move towards mixed ability groupings. In many schools the top streams had the more experienced and better qualified teachers, better equipment and books.

Subject options

This has never been a fair system. Top groups were offered first choice of subjects and encouraged to take science subjects, thus relegating everyone else to non-academic courses and general science. Top streams were given access to the high status GCEs or told not to enter public examinations, but concentrate

on practically orientated subjects. With the National Curriculum and the existence of league tables many African-Caribbean pupils will not be entered for public examinations, largely because of the low expectations held of them.

This organisation of the curriculum and the resulting differential response of the teachers to the academic and non-academic students disproportionately affected African-Caribbean children who were under-represented in the top streams. Pupils are being placed in lower status subjects thus preparing them for lower status jobs, not for higher education.

Pupil motivation

Poor employment prospects, combined with low teacher expectations are said to have a de-motivating effect on African-Caribbean pupils, discouraging them from achieving their full potential. We find that when these pupils come to us in year 7 they tend to be well motivated, and many are in the upper band of their groups. As they move up the school they become over-represented in the lower streams or in the bottom band of their groups. The pupils themselves are well aware of institutional racism in their schools. Some feel that they are not likely to achieve much, so they do not bother to work. It is clear to them that conventional education does not bring rewards, but rejection. Only fools strive hard when there is little chance of reward. The racist stereotypes with which teachers work tends to be reinforced rather than negated by the students. These attitudes are internalised by pupils.

Many teachers find academically successful black students threatening because they seem to have broken out of the stereotypical behavioural pattern these teachers expect. In such situations the teachers find that they cannot cope with black lads who can stand up for themselves without being cheeky. If a black lad talks back to a teacher as an equal, the teacher will have a special vocabulary to describe him: he is described as being arrogant, truculent and so on. Teachers will sometimes go out of their way to humiliate such a lad, and if he walks away to avoid confrontation some teachers will `get' him for being cheeky.

Career advice

Many students are sometimes pushed into so-called `black' jobs, or training schemes, rather than academic study. Many students think this is all they are capable of. More often than not, they are unable to challenge these negative stereotypes of their potential. There is an obvious lack of confidence in their own abilities. We now have time-tabled careers lessons. Careers conventions are very popular, but how helpful are they? We have to consider the backgrounds and motives of those who are giving advice to our young.

Conclusion

Many African-Caribbean students spend much of their school days outside the classroom; in many schools they become `the corridor people'. Many are suspended and excluded altogether. In such cases the school is failing them and their parents, because they are being denied their academic entitlement. The school structure and management are unable to deal with the social problems they often create.

It is sometimes very difficult to explain to able black students that they have failed their public examinations, particularly when the expectation was that they would pass. When teachers predict grades for external examiners, what criteria do they use? The question has to be asked whether the factors for success are social or academic. One way of assessing how schools are failing black youngsters is to attend a graduation ceremony at a university. You are not likely to see many British black faces among the hundreds of graduands.

Chill at the end of the tunnel?
Richard Thompson

Introduction
Grange School is a 13-18 mixed Comprehensive School in South Bradford. It serves an area which has a high proportion of ethnic minorities. Roughly 75%

originate from Pakistan, 5% from Gujarat, and 3% from Bengal. The whole area suffers from high unemployment. University ward has the highest ethnic minority ratio in Bradford (approximately 40%) with high representation also in Little Horton. The positive side of the coin is that the community embraces the whole range of religious faiths and cultures. The school considers this an asset and has developed a multi-religious and multi-linguistic character which has received widespread recognition thanks to TV broadcasts.

Background

The Asian community in Bradford arrived in the 1960s and 1970s in search of a better life through employment which was readily available in the form of textile labour, foundry work and public transport. The changes in employment patterns of the late 1970s and 1980s meant that these were the first people to lose their jobs. Additional problems, such as lack of proficiency in English, meant that many were unable to access any other type of employment. Over time, it became increasingly difficult to find work.

Despite these difficulties family life is strong. Parents are concerned about the future of their children but they confront a number of problems. They have very little understanding of the educational process: the examination system, vocational and further education opportunities as their children reach key decision stages (between 13 and 18). Some parents speak little English which limits their communication and involvement with the school. In many instances, because of the distance between the school and home culture, their children are reluctant to speak to them of their school experiences and careers opportunities. The result is, in my view, a huge wastage of talent. The children and parents are not the only losers; the society loses as well.

The school

Yet these youngsters possess considerable strength. I will illustrate this by taking you on a visit to the corridor outside my room at Grange. It is 7.50 am on Tuesday morning in March. We are in the middle of Ramadan. Two girls, Rehana and Sajida are already at school, chatting together and looking at some school photos on non-traditional work experience for girls. They greet me cheerfully. When I ask why they are so early, they tell me they awoke before sunrise for a snack and the first prayers of the day at 5.00 am. They then continued with devotional reading and, at 7.30 am, made their way to school. I pictured them through the rest of the day, working well in lessons, not relaxing round the lunch-table at midday, not taking advantage of the Coke machine at break, developing a bit of a headache, but remaining cheerful and well balanced. They leave school and continue working both at school work and house chores through until about 7.50 pm, when the whole family sits down to eat.

These strengths, namely determination, the desire for self-improvement, and earnestness, are the very things which we need to nurture. There is so much that we, both in education institutions and in industry, should be doing to take advantage of these tremendous qualities.

I am going to mention one project at my school which attempts to address the situation. But, first, I need to give a description of two conditions which at present constitute barriers to high achievement and which the project attempts to address. These two conditions can be summarised by the metaphors of the `chill factor' and the prevalence of `tunnel vision'.

The `chill factor' describes the widespread perception that there are limited opportunities in both higher education and employment for black and Asian youngsters. People prefer the comfortable to the uncomfortable, so our pupils stay in the traditional but marginal network of restaurant work, taxi companies and corner shops. The school with its good intention of seeking to value every individual can actually exacerbate the situation. We can develop what I call

the cradle philosophy. That is, where students are far more comfortable to stay on at school rather than face the real, but unsympathetic, world of work. I remember Majid, last September, pleading with me, after mediocre G.C.S.E. results, then one year C.P.V.E., and one year BTEC First Award, to begin A level Urdu. Clearly, the school culture had been too protective.

The `tunnel vision' metaphor is allied to this. Many Grange parents, through no fault of their own, are prevented from helping their children by not being members of the `UK Education Club'. The case of Laura is such an example; (Laura does not attend Grange, but her father does, as a physics teacher). Her parents both did well in the system, went to University in the early sixties, and now support their daughter through the stresses of upper school and the approach of external examinations. They know about assignments, course deadlines, progression routes, and have done their bit in spotting questions which are likely to come up. She achieves a grade A in English with a collection of Bs in her other GCSEs, and everyone is delighted.

Rukhsana, a pupil at Grange, is just as bright as Laura. Rukhsana's family is not a failure. In many ways, it provides a much richer social environment than many in mainstream society. The sense of kinship, the family identity and community spirit are to be envied. Rukhsana's parents, however, are unlikely to be adventurous in their expectation. They are unlikely to advise her, `Why not try systems analysis?' or, `Why not try theatre design?' There is also a vestige of the `return to the homeland' and the clinging onto the transferability of skills, the safety of developing those tried and tested skills which have in the past in their village of origin elicited high esteem. This attitude is exemplified by the case of one of my friends - Waseem.

Waseem's wife gave birth to their daughter, Nazmin in Pakistan. One hour after the birth, grandfather looked at her little hands and clever fingers and pronounced that Nazmin would indeed be a surgeon. Hardly a career interview, but a nice story. The family returns to Bradford. Nazmin grows up with her future clear. She works hard at Grange in an atmosphere of support and vigour. The school motto is `Achieving Together'. The three catch phrases in our brochure - Hard working, Happy and Confident - describe Nazmin. But she is unlikely to be a surgeon. She obtained one B and four C grades at GCSE examinations in 1990, and has received no offers for medical school.

Grange has initiated a project which attempts to bring together industry and the school in an effort to tackle this complex of issues. It is called the Young Asian Careers Opportunities (YACO) project. I was convinced that such a project was necessary by an experience I had in April, 1991 with a presentiment of racial strife in an unlikely spot. I was watching television news with my family in France (my wife is French). Some very articulate black French-born Parisians were expressing their anger as one of their friends had been killed by a vigilante group. The members of my family bristled with indignation. Who do those `outsiders' (and clever-sounding `outsiders') think they are. I saw Bradford after three years of recession and experienced more than disquiet.

Bradford's young Asians

I realised that we must be serious and much more creative in our quest to equalise opportunities. On my return to Bradford, I invited representatives from the minority ethnic communities, from industry and from agencies, to a meeting. The minutes of our first meeting itemised elements of our concern.

We concluded that the restricted opportunities for Asian youngsters included the following factors. First, there was a lack of awareness by pupils and parents of further educational and vocational opportunities. In addition, endemic racism in our society so often means a first and second class approach leading to first and second class expectations. This meant that crucial importance must be placed on the self-esteem of Asian youngsters. Finally, we identified a lack

of political will to ensure equality of opportunity and the need for positive action.

Our targets for change included pupils and their parents and representatives of industry and Higher Education. Our Action Plan focused on 22 pupils and their families. It sought to extend the careers education and careers interviews to involve the family.

Let us return to Nazmin. Without the YACO dimension, Nazmin attends her careers interview and is sensitively exposed to second and third options, after that of medical school. She is introduced to a career in environmental health. She goes home and when she shares her newly acquired enthusiasm with her father, meets a stone wall. `No, my child, you will be a surgeon'. We have to find a way of involving the family in Nazmin's journey. This is the substance of the project.

Subsequently visits were made during the summer holidays by the Schools Community Development Officer, a careers officer and the representative of a community organisation. In September, 1991 the school's head of guidance took on the project and give new life to the initiative. The staff were welcomed into our pupils' homes. Parents expressed their appreciation and desire to learn. The Royal Mail member of YACO organised a visit to the sorting office and introduced them to the vocabulary of studentships and induction practices. But, as the project was in addition to mainstream provision, with no extra funding allocated, it began to lose impetus, with illness and normal work pressures taking priority. The second meeting of YACO remained positive but by December the initiative was losing steam.

There are other important activities taking place. The School Development Plan focuses upon the development of language proficiency in English and literacy in the home language. The latter is considered crucial. In a word, every Grange teacher is a language teacher. A whole programme of INSET (in-service training) and support is under way.

We are addressing the importance of positive role models in three ways. We have taken part in the production of a video called `Positive People', showing successful Asian people in non-traditional areas such as environmental health and teaching. We have strengthened this image by placing photos in the dinner queue. One of the most effective classrooms in Grange is the corridor with displays of Asian girls on residentials, boys and girls apparently enjoying discussion in the library and boys with hair nets on visiting a bakery. I have recently come across the HIPACT and Choice initiatives, and hope to involve year 10 students as they begin their Compact initiative - these are all specific schemes designed to help our students. We are also involved with the Cambridge University based Group to Encourage Ethnic Minority Applications (GEEMA) in an effort to increase the numbers of our students applying to higher education generally and specifically to Cambridge.

Conclusion

I conclude, however, not by offering light at the end of the tunnel but perceiving, for the time being, a continuing chill. I welcome this conference and feel that by sharing our concern and insights, we will be better equipped to make an impact. We must find ways of giving scope to the talents of all our young. The working class, Asian-named youngsters of Bradford are as good a place as any to start.

Workshop reports

On the role of universities in encouraging ethnic minority students to continue into higher education
Colin Sparrow

1. We agreed that the universities had a responsibility to educate students from all social and ethnic groups. We further agreed that the well-being of the universities depended for both academic and social reasons on being able to educate students from a wide range of backgrounds.

2. We agreed that the universities did not currently do a good job in explaining to school pupils, their families and teachers what universities were like, how academic courses led to well-paid careers, etc. We felt there was a great deal for universities, preferably acting in conjunction rather than trying separately, and preferably in collaboration with employers, to allay some of the particular concerns of ethnic minority students in this area.

3. We agreed that courses in universities (Cambridge in particular) were often slow to change in response to changes in school education, and that many of the current courses were, for obvious reasons, (particularly on the arts side) likely to be of little interest to some ethnic minority applicants because of the almost exclusive concentration on Western European (white) culture. We felt that this was part of a vicious circle, because British universities employ very few academics from ethnic minorities.

4. Concentrating on Cambridge University in particular, we discussed ways in which the admissions procedure might appear to ethnic minority applicants. We noted that many ethnic minority applicants choose the vocational route early in their school careers and thought was given to whether universities such as Cambridge should be more accepting of qualifications such as BTEC. There was agreement that the University should be more open to non-standard applicants of various kinds.

On access to universities
Richard Hunter

1. (a) Reasons for lack of interest in universities

(i) Parental influence

(ii) Need to leave home or home area (often impossible for Asian girls)

(iii) Perceptions of universities (particularly Oxbridge)

(b) Things to do

(i) Form links with communities - e.g. Mosques, large inner-city Colleges, Caribbean parents etc.

(ii) Role-models important - More ethnic minority teachers needed, to say nothing of University academics.

(iii) Consciousness and racism awareness raising among teachers, admissions tutors etc.

2. Why do Afro-Caribbean males under-achieve at all levels of the education system? Not enough is known about this.

3. Points specific to Cambridge Admissions

(a) Treatment of minority language A-levels. How many of us, for example, know that Urdu A-level is largely literature (of English literature).

(b) What is Cambridge doing - on a large scale - about B-Tec qualifications?

On the interview
Adrian Poole

We had a wide-ranging discussion which covered the following points. We noted that the interview was intrinsically a double-edged sword as an instrument for diagnosis and discrimination that could be used in all kinds of positive and negative ways. Many speakers expressed anxiety about the power wielded by interviewers, the lack of any system for monitoring the procedures for interviewing (all this refers primarily to Cambridge, of course), and the elements of mystification which surround the interview situation. Many speakers referred to the discomfort and suspicion experienced by many ethnic minority candidates confronted with a kind of situation for which they have no previous relevant experience; these feelings only served to compound the sense of their distance from everything represented by Cambridge. The Cambridge representatives offered some reassurances about the extent to which at least some interviewers at Cambridge were aware of these problems. They emphasised, for example, that the supposedly greater assurance, and even special training, enjoyed by candidates from independent schools did not always work to those candidates' advantage. It was generally recognised, however, that a good deal more could be achieved in the way of sensitising interviewers to the very varied expectations with which candidates approached the interview.

We spent a good deal of time on some quite specific, even parochial issues, such as explaining the role of STEP (Sixth Term Examination Papers) in Cambridge

admissions procedures. We also talked about school reports and their usefulness. We talked about the Special Entry Scheme, and debated the difficulties of determining the nature and degree of "disadvantage" that might make applicants eligible for the scheme.

One specific point that deserves mention was made by a student representative from Oxford about what he called the "re-take culture" in which a significant number of ethnic minority students get involved. He emphasised that it was a regular practice with a certain group of potential higher education applicants to take A Levels on several different occasions. This point was made in the course of a more general discussion about the length of time which some ethnic minority and more generally disadvantaged applicants might take before `readying' themselves for higher education. In so far as there was a general point to emerge from this discussion, it was that universities need to be alive to the possibility of attracting good applicants who are slightly older and have taken rather longer to acquire the necessary formal qualifications to ensure that they will succeed at university.

My own feeling about this workshop was that it was certainly less lively than the one on the previous day, partly because we got bogged down to a certain extent in technical details about Cambridge application procedures, and used up quite a lot of time in explaining and justifying these, rather than opening the discussion out towards the ways in which our procedures could be improved, and also considered in relation to the problems of higher education more generally in attracting more good ethnic minority applicants. Nevertheless, it was a useful session in highlighting some of the problems.

On getting rid of stereotypes
Michelle Burton

1. There was some disagreement as to how willing schools, teachers and the education system in general are to accommodate the kinds of change which would facilitate the success of ethnic minorities, especially African-Caribbean pupils. Within the group, those black people who had been through, or were still in, the British education system and had been subject to stereotyping, were sceptical about the slow changes taking place.

Studies have shown that many teachers express stereotyped and often contradictory generalizations about black pupils, with some teachers tending to regard African-Caribbean pupils as lazy and withdrawn while others thought them to be aggressive and disruptive. A common stereotype of Asian pupils among teachers is that they are passive and industrious, but they and their parents are over ambitious.

The group concluded that this particular problem should be combated with the compulsory education for all teachers to effectively eradicate existing stereotypes and to encourage respect and understanding of the various cultures they are likely to encounter. Most LEAs and schools have introduced explicit policies to combat gender and `racial' inequalities. The outline below indicates some of the initiatives taken. However, it must be remembered that only a limited number of schools have introduced significant changes.

RACE POLICIES

FOCUS CONTENT EXAMPLES OF IMPLEMENTATIONS

White racism or male sexism — Attitude change amongst white staff — Inset Racism awareness Training curriculum Development

Monitoring of suspensions from heads and teachers — Removal of some powers

Monitoring achievement levels and alteration in streaming/setting patterns — Little accomplished checking language policies

White racism or male sexism — Curriculum change to remove ethno-centrisism — Analysis of racism in books changes in selection of curriculum materials

Teacher expectations and classroom interaction — Inset

Prevention of discrimination or racism by staff — Code of professional practice from LEA or unions

2. The group felt that whilst positive reform of the education system is slow, parents and the community must support it in order to ensure the success of the black child. Parents and communities must have knowledge of the curriculum and the policies of their children's schools, so as to ascertain how they respond to the needs of black children. Parents should get onto governing boards and visit the school as frequently as necessary. They should exercise their rights in disciplinary matters and question any extraneous punishment. There is also a need for more community-focused supplementary schools. It was noted that there is evidence to show that Caribbean pupils were more likely to be placed in a lower verbal reasoning band (2 or 3), while ESCWI (English Scottish Welsh and Irish) pupils were more likely to be placed in a higher verbal reasoning band than their test scores would suggest.

3. Pupils should be set positive role models. Successful individuals should be encouraged to visit, lecture, and give advice to schools in order to provide pupils with examples of how education had directly contributed to the success of others. Such activities would educate and motivate students. Teachers would also be made aware of the existence of successful black individuals.

4. One of the points emphasized by the group was that black children taught by black teachers usually did not display disruptive and aggressive behaviour. Black teachers in schools can instil discipline and command respect. However, black teachers are subject to racism. One initiative by LEAs focuses upon racial equality for black citizens, and there are efforts to recruit black teachers. Examples of implementation are, however, primarily via Section II posts.

5. Not everyone in the group agreed with the demand for separate schools, but they were discussed as an option if the education system continues to fail such

large numbers of black pupils. The John Loughborough School in London was cited as an example of a successful black school.

6. The group expressed the view that schools may feel powerless to alter a situation largely determined by powerful economic and political forces. But for schools to ignore societal problems could be a serious abnegation of their responsibility in combating racism and giving black communities a fair opportunity to make their rightful contribution and participate on equal democratic terms as citizens. Some schools and LEAs have already begun to construct multi-cultural and anti-racist policies; it is up to the majority of institutions that appear not to have grasped the urgency of the issues to follow their lead.

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