

Education, Racism and Achievement

Education has a key role to play in eradicating racism and valuing diversity and it is a responsibility for all educational establishments, including those with few or no ethnic minority pupils. Promoting racial equality demands a whole school approach and commitment from all those who are involved in the life and work of their school.

Racism is linked to the educational achievement of minority ethnic groups, however the connections are complex. Gilborn and Mirza conclude that 'social class and gender differences are also associated with differences in attainment but neither can account for persistent underlying ethnic inequalities: comparing like with like, African Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils do not enjoy equal opportunities.' They also argue that in promoting educational inclusion as a means of raising standards, there is a need 'for clarity and guidance in translating the commitment to equality and inclusion into policy proposals and practice at the local and school level.' (2000: p.27)

Evidence for the links between EAL and achievement is available from several sources. For example, a recent research report (DfES, 2005, p.8) found that:

- Children whose first language is other than English do not perform as well as other children across the Foundation Stage scales
- Pupils for whom English was an additional language have lower attainment than pupils whose first language is English. The difference between the two groups is narrower at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 1
- In general this pattern of attainment holds across all ethnic groups with a greater proportion of pupils whose first language is English achieving expected levels than pupils who have a first language other than English

Whilst differences in achievement are often explained in terms of pupil's English language acquisition, there are also other factors to consider. For example, whilst pupils learning EAL are slightly less likely to have an identified special educational need, Cline and Shamsi (2000) found that children learning EAL in some groups were four times less likely to receive specialist support for specific difficulties than might have been expected on the basis of their numbers in the school population. Aspects of practices and provision need to be considered alongside assumptions concerning pupil's English language acquisition.

References

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Gilborn, D. and Mirza, H. (2000) *Educational Inequality: Mapping Race, Class and Gender*. London: OfSTED

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