MINORITY ETHNIC PUPILS IN THE LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN ENGLAND (LSYPE)

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Introduction

There has been concern for some time about the educational attainment and progress of children from minority ethnic groups in the UK. Recent analyses of national test data by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES)[1] reveal continuing low attainment by several minority ethnic groups (DfES, 2006). However the national datasets do not contain wide and rich contextual data to help interpret these results, such as information on pupil attitudes or family circumstances. In 2004 the DfES Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE) interviewed a nationally representative sample of over 15,000 young people in Year 9 of school (i.e. those aged 13 or 14 years). The study also interviewed their parents/guardians about their involvement in their children's education. The study collected information on a wide range of topics and presents a unique insight into the experiences, attitudes and opinions of young people with regards to their school, their education and their choices and aspirations for the future. The primary aim of this analysis of the LSYPE data was to focus on the relationships between various pupil, family, school and neighbourhood factors in order to better understand the reasons for differences in the educational attainment of different ethnic groups.

Key Findings

Gaps in educational attainment

The 'gaps' associated with ethnicity in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 (KS3) (age 14) are large. Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean and Black African groups achieve a KS3 average points score around 3.0 points less than White British pupils. This is equivalent to around a whole year of progress in terms of National Curriculum levels.

This ethnic gap should be interpreted in terms of the size of other 'gaps'. The social class gap was largest with a 10 point gap between pupils from higher managerial and professional families and those where the main parent was long term unemployed. The maternal education gap was also large with a nine point gap between pupils with mothers qualified to degree level or higher and those with mothers with no educational qualifications. These compare to an ethnic gap of three points. The gender gap was just 0.8 points, with boys scoring lower than girls.

Contextualising attainment gaps for minority ethnic groups

Statistical control for social class, maternal education, family poverty as indicated by entitlement to a Free School Meal (FSM), home ownership and family composition (single parent households), substantially reduced

[1] On the 28th June 2007, the Department for Education and Skills became the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

the attainment gaps for minority ethnic pupils, relative to White British pupils. Indian and Bangladeshi groups achieved higher results than would be expected given the extent of their disadvantage, the gap for Pakistani pupils relative to White British pupils was reduced by four-fifths and the Black African pupils gap by two-thirds. However the low attainment of the Black Caribbean group was not accounted for by such controls, remaining 2.5 points below the White British pupils' average.

A wide range of further variables including parental involvement in school, parents' educational aspirations for their children, pupils' academic self concept, homework completion, attitudes to school, educational aspirations, educational risk (special educational needs, absence, truancy, exclusion, involvement with police or social services) and school and neighbourhood characteristics were added to create a 'full context' model. While this model could account for the low attainment of Bangladeshi pupils, and around half of the low attainment of Pakistani pupils, it could not account for the low attainment of Black Caribbean and Black African groups whose scores were 2.5 points below what would be expected given their personal, family, school and neighbourhood characteristics.

Ethnicity and pupil progress

Much of the difference between ethnic groups at age 14 can be accounted for by prior attainment at the end of KS2 (age 11). After controlling for prior attainment and all pupil, family and school factors, Pakistani and Black African gaps at KS3 reflect earlier gaps at KS2, indicating a need to focus on processes occurring during primary school for a full understanding of the gaps. However Indian pupils and Bangladeshi girls made more progress than White British pupils over the course of KS3, pulling even further ahead than they were at KS2. Conversely, Black Caribbean pupils and Bangladeshi boys made less progress than their White British peers, and they were the only groups where underachievement relative to White British pupils increased significantly over the course of KS3.

In-school factors and teacher expectations

Black Caribbean pupils were found to be under-represented in entry to the higher tiers of the KS3 tests, even after adjusting for prior attainment and all other pupil, family, school and neighbourhood factors. All other things being equal, for every three White British pupils entered to the higher tiers only two Black Caribbean pupils were entered both for mathematics and science. Black Caribbean pupils were the only ethnic group to be under-represented in this way.

Methodology

The findings reported here are based on analysis of a wide range of quantitative data about pupils, their families and their school and neighbourhood contexts. These analyses identify the unique (net) contribution of particular factors to variations in pupil outcomes, while other background factors are controlled. This is important because research shows that much of the difference in attainment associated with ethnicity may be attributable to the impact of other socio-economic and demographic factors (for example family social class, maternal education, pupil attitudes, homework completion). The report adopts a hierarchal approach to building multiple regression models by sequentially entering blocks of variables. The four main blocks were composed of:

• Structural features of family background (social class, maternal education, entitlement to FSM, home ownership and family composition);

• More dynamic aspects of the family context (for example parental involvement in school, parents' educational aspirations for the pupil, provision of material resources such as a home computer and private tuition, the quality of family relationships);

• Pupil characteristics, both in terms of positive motivational factors (pupils' educational aspirations, frequency of completing homework, academic self concept, attitude to school) and risk factors (Special Educational Needs,

truancy, exclusion, involvement with police, social service and EWS);

- School context (school type, mixed/co-educational status, admissions policy and percentage of pupils entitled to FSM) and neighbourhood deprivation (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index).

For each model the coefficients associated with each ethnic group were evaluated to determine the significance of ethnicity in explaining variation in KS3 educational attainment.

Detailed findings

Ethnic group differences in pupil, family, school and neighbourhood characteristics

Family background: The data revealed substantial social and economic disadvantage among some ethnic groups. The proportion of heads of households from managerial and professional occupations was 41% for White British and Mixed heritage households and 37% for Black Caribbean households, compared to 26% for Indian, 15% for Pakistani and only 7% for Bangladeshi households. Conversely, 43% of Bangladeshi, 27% of Black African and 26% of Pakistani heads of households have never worked or were long term unemployed (White British: 4%). Fewer than 8% of Pakistani and Bangladeshi mothers were educated to Higher Education level or above, compared to 24% of White British mothers and 33% of Black Caribbean and Black African mothers. Entitlement to FSM was 13% among White British, but rose to 26% for Black Caribbean, 38% for Pakistani, 41% for Black African and 59% for Bangladeshi pupils. The percentage of pupils living in single parent households was 23% for White British and rose to 41% for Mixed heritage, 44% for Black African and 57% for Black Caribbean households.

Parental attitudes and behaviour: Parents educational aspirations for their children to continue in FTE were significantly higher among all minority groups than for White British. Black African parents were more strongly involved with their child's school than White British parents, who

in turn were more involved than Pakistani or Bangladeshi parents. Indian parents were most likely to have paid for private classes or tuition in subjects also taught in school and White British parents the least likely. Indian parents were also the most likely to have a home computer and Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean households were least likely. Indian parents were most likely to report they always knew where their child was when out and White British and Black Caribbean parents least likely. White British parents were most likely to report quarrelling with their children more often than once a week and Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi parents were least likely.

Pupil attitudes, motivation and risk factors: On average Indian, Black African, Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils were more likely than White British pupils to have high educational aspirations, to have a positive academic self concept, to complete more homework, to plan for the future and to have a positive attitude to school. Black Caribbean and Mixed heritage pupils were more similar to White British pupils. Results in terms of 'risk factors' were more varied across ethnic groups, but generally Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black African pupils were less likely to be identified on the educational risk measures than White British, Black Caribbean and Mixed heritage pupils.

School and neighbourhood context: 66% of Bangladeshi, 41% of Pakistani and 39% of Black African pupils attended the most disadvantaged schools (more than 35% of pupils entitled to FSM) compared to only 6% of White British pupils. Over two thirds of Pakistani, Black Caribbean and Black African families lived in the most deprived areas, rising to 85% for Bangladeshi families, compared to just 25% of White British families.

Contextualising ethnic attainment gaps

As reported in the key findings, statistical control for social class, maternal education, family poverty as indicated by FSM, home ownership and family composition (single parent households) accounted for the Bangladeshi gap, and for a large part of the Pakistani and Black African gaps, relative to White British. However the low attainment of the Black

Caribbean group was not accounted for and their mean KS3 score remained 2.5 points below the White British average. Adding the full range of pupil, family, school and neighbourhood factors could account for the low attainment of Bangladeshi pupils, and around half of the low attainment of Pakistani pupils, but could not account for the low attainment of the Black Caribbean and Black African groups whose scores were significantly lower than expected. It was notable that although minority ethnic pupils were often more advantaged on many of the parental attitude and educational risk measures this did not result in the increased attainment seen for their White British peers.

Ethnicity and pupil progress

Prior attainment as indicated by end of KS2 test marks at age 11 was the most powerful predictor of later attainment, explaining 80% of the variance in KS3 average score. However there were still significant associations between contextual variables and educational progress.

- Pupils in the top social class, those with mothers with any educational qualifications and those not entitled to FSM all made greater than expected progress.

- Pupils whose parents had high educational aspirations, who provided a home computer or private tuition, who were more involved in school activities and infrequently quarrelled with their children all made greater than expected progress.

- Pupils with SEN, those excluded from school, those whose behaviour had led to the involvement of the police, social services or the EWS, those with long term absence and those who had truanted, all made less than expected progress. Conversely pupils who aspired to continue in FTE after the age of 16, completed more homework, had high academic self concept, who planned for their future and had positive attitudes to school all made greater than expected progress.

- Pupils in the most deprived schools (35% or more entitled to FSM) and those living in the most deprived neighbourhoods made less than expected progress, while pupils attending grammar schools and girls in single sex schools made more than expected progress.

After controlling for prior attainment and all pupil, family and school factors, Pakistani and Black African gaps at KS3 reflected earlier gaps at KS2. However Indian pupils and Bangladeshi girls made more progress than White British pupils over the course of KS3, pulling even further ahead than they were at KS2. Conversely Black Caribbean pupils and Bangladeshi boys made less progress than their White British peers, and they are the only groups where underachievement relative to White British pupils increased significantly over the course of KS3.

Mixed heritage, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian pupils attending religious classes/courses at a religious establishment more than once a week made less progress during KS3 than their peers not attending such classes or attending less frequently. While such attendance may have many positive aspects, it is also important to acknowledge this frequency of attendance might reduce time available for curriculum related activities. However this result applies to a minority of pupils, as only 24% of Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils attend religious classes more than once a week.

In school factors and teacher expectations

Teachers have to decide which tier to enter pupils, either a lower (levels 3-6) or upper (levels 5-7) tier for science, or one of four tiers in mathematics (levels 3-5, 4-6, 5-7 or 6-8). The decision is important because some levels can only be achieved if pupils are entered for the higher tier papers. Black Caribbean pupils were under-represented in entry to the higher test tiers for the science and mathematics tests, even after adjusting for prior attainment, social class, gender, entitlement to FSM, motivation, educational risk factors and school and neighbourhood deprivation. All other things being equal, for every three White British pupils entered to the higher tiers only two

Black Caribbean pupils were entered, both for mathematics and science. Black Caribbean pupils were the only ethnic group to be under-represented in this way.

Discussion

Most explanations for why ethnic groups differ in their educational attainment fall into three general categories. The first is about social class and how the structural position of ethnic groups in society affects pupils' home, peer and school environments. The second concerns how the cultural orientations of certain ethnic groups promote or discourage academic achievement. The third is about teacher expectations and institutional racism. These explanations are reviewed in detail in the main report.

The current research suggests that explanation of ethnic gaps involving social class and social disadvantage, while important, are not sufficient to account for the attainment gaps for some ethnic groups, particularly Black Caribbean pupils. Other factors need to be considered, for example, it is notable that Black Caribbean and Mixed White & Black Caribbean groups are also distinct as the only ethnic groups over-represented relative to White British pupils among those excluded from schools (Parsons et al., 2005) and among those identified with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (Lindsay, Pather & Strand, 2006). While only a relatively small proportion of pupils are directly included in these groups, the results may be symptomatic of wider behaviour issues. There is research evidence that pupil behaviour, or teachers' perceptions of pupil behaviour, can have a distorting influence on their judgements of academic ability. If the behaviour of Black Caribbean pupils is more challenging, or even if it is simply that teachers *perceive* their behaviour as more problematic, there may be a tendency to underestimate the academic ability of these pupils. Decisions on tiering are typically made well in advance of the test, at least six months and sometimes considerably more, and importantly make the teacher's expectation of the pupil explicit and public. The response of Black Caribbean pupils may be to become demotivated and to try less

hard. This may contribute to the under-achievement of Black Caribbean pupils.

Some authors point out that Black Caribbean boys experience considerable pressure by their peers to adopt the norms of an 'urban' or 'street' subculture (e.g. Sewell, 1997). More prestige is given to unruly behaviour with teachers and antagonistic behaviour with other pupils than to high achievement or effort to succeed, particularly at secondary school. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) further argue that notions of 'acting white' or 'acting black' become identified in opposition to one another. Hence because acting white includes doing well at school, acting black necessarily implies not doing well in school. In contrast Gillborn and Youdell (2000) highlight the role of teacher expectations. They argue that unintentional racism stems from long standing social conditioning involving negative images of Black people (particularly Black men) which stereotype them as threatening. Such conditioning is reinforced by the media portrayal of Black 'street culture'. It encourages school staff to expect Black pupils to be worse behaved, more disaffected and less motivated. However it is perhaps most likely that both sets of factors are involved and feed off each other in a vicious cycle of amplification.

Recommendations

Interventions to address the needs of low attaining minority ethnic groups should focus to a greater extent than at present on processes occurring during primary school. This is because ethnic group differences in attainment at age 14 are largely a replication of pre-existing ethnic group differences at the end of primary school.

However KS3 should be a particular focus in relation to Black Caribbean pupils who continue to fall further behind their White British peers. Initiatives such as the Black Pupils Achievement Programme are important in supporting a focus on this group of pupils in secondary schools.

There is evidence that many ethnic groups make stronger educational progress during KS4 than they do during KS3. The current analysis should be

extended to include KS4 outcomes for the same pupils.

Teachers' awareness of potential bias in entry decisions should be raised by requiring schools to monitor tier of entry by ethnicity. Schools should seek wider external evidence when making tiering decisions.

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