



**London
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**What are the factors underlying the high
educational performance – ‘over-
achievement’ – of Bangladeshi-heritage
primary-school pupils?**

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Needless to say, any errors, mistakes, inaccuracies and weaknesses are entirely my responsibility.

Abstract

This thesis examines the ‘over-achievement’¹ of UK Bangladeshi-heritage pupils in the National Curriculum Standard Assessment Tests (SATS) at Key Stage (KS) 2 (year 6; ages 10-11) in schools in an inner-city borough.

The research involved four schools in one of the poorest urban areas of the country.² The initial attraction for choosing these schools was due to my experience working as a teacher in one and noticing that it consistently attained results above the national average in KS2 SATS while nationally pupils of Bangladeshi-heritage attained below the average. This over-achievement had been noted by Ofsted and generated media attention.³

The aims of this research were to identify and investigate the factors underlying this relative over-achievement of primary-school pupils from a Bangladeshi ethnic background and heritage. My experience as a teacher provided me with insight into the value that education held within Bangladeshi-heritage communities. It was unsurprising, therefore, to find this over-achievement. I approached the phenomenon from a different perspective: why weren’t Bangladeshi-heritage communities in other areas doing as well, given their sub-cultural emphasis on education – an asset of their ethnic capital.

Using qualitative methodology – thematic analysis – I interviewed pupils, parents and many other significant actors involved in the education of primary pupils in the four over-achieving schools. I had no preconceived thesis. My theoretical conclusions emerged from the data.

While gender, ethnicity and social class all influence educational outcomes, it was the schools’ inclusive ethos that seemed to exert the greatest positive influence.

¹ ‘Overachievement’ refers to the above the national average results in Key Stage 2 Standard Assessment Tests received by Bangladeshi-heritage pupils in the four schools studied (see Appendix 1 for the Key Stage 2 SAT results).

² Yet the borough values education. In 2010-11, the guaranteed funding per pupil was £6,792 compared to the national average which was at least £2,500 lower (see Appendix 2 for the Index of Multiple of Deprivation 2010).

³ See BBC Race UK survey 2005, Mike Baker ‘Educational Achievement’.

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Chapter One – Background

Introduction

This chapter considers the background to this research, presents a rationale for it and provides a synopsis of the schools examined, as well as an overview of the research covering the educational status of children of Bangladeshi heritage in the UK. It also discusses the relationship between poverty and disadvantage – a common characteristic of most Bangladeshi-heritage communities in the UK - and how this impacts upon pupils' education. Traditionally, largely as a consequence of their deprived socio-economic status, pupils from Bangladeshi-heritage backgrounds have been high in free school meals (FSM)⁴ take up and low achievers in the primary sector of state education. In order to contextualise this, comparative detail is provided regarding other BAME pupils' educational attainment in the UK. This attainment of BAME pupils historically is fluid and uneven, some ethnic groups, pupils of Chinese and Indian origin for instance, now outperform their sub-groups of their White peers, such as working class and gypsy/traveller. Finally, an outline of the thesis structure is offered.

Background of the research

This research arose from my role as a primary school teacher in London's most deprived borough.⁵ The school is based in an area predominately populated by first and second-generation Bangladeshi families, mainly from the region of Sylhet in Bangladesh, and has often outperformed schools with a similar demographic at Key Stage 2 Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) in recent years. The vast majority of the pupils are of Bangladeshi origin and Bengali is the principle language spoken, although all lessons are conducted in English. In line with many migrant populations and common to many areas within inner-London, high levels of poverty and deprivation are experienced by the population, and this is particularly true for many of the children attending the school. For example, approximately 75-80% of the pupils qualify for free school meals.⁶

⁴ Ofsted Report 2005 for one of the schools in my study: "The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals is much higher than in most schools." This was true of all the schools in the study as is referred to below in this chapter in the descriptions of the four schools taken from their prospectuses and Ofsted Reports.

⁵ This borough has multiple factors of social and economic deprivation and is considered one of the poorest areas in the UK. It has also one of the highest proportions of speakers of English as a second language.

⁶ See statistics in Appendix 2b for local and national indicators of deprivation.

I was curious as to whether the pupils' achievement was related to the high expectations and aspirations within their families, as evidenced from meeting with their parents and relatives. Despite the local Bangladeshi-heritage community having high indicators of social deprivation and high levels of non-English-speaking parents, these parents attached immense value to education. It was a positive resource of their cultural and ethnic capital (Bourdieu, 1991; Modood, 2004). For example, parents regularly requested additional homework for their children, wanting to be involved in their education. Yet, many parents had limited experience of education, either in Britain or Bangladesh, and sometimes spoke little English, to the extent that interpreters were sometimes required.

My experience as a teacher in daily contact with parents from different ethnic backgrounds led to the conclusion that there was a difference in attitudes to education between different ethnic groups, in particular those from South Asia – India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka – and White British. In this respect, class origin could not explain the differentials in achievement that appeared to be a consequence of these sub-cultural values.

Rationale for this research study

The rationale for this study is to explore and understand the key factors underlying Bangladeshi-heritage primary school pupils' relative over-achievement at KS2 SATs and to investigate the contributory elements with a view to identifying and highlighting best practice.⁷

Synopsis of information about schools

A) School One

This is a one-form entry school.⁸ The majority are of Bangladeshi heritage. Many pupils join the school with very rudimentary spoken English. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a full-time nursery and a reception class. According to the prospectus, the majority of pupils tend to be eligible for free school meals (FSM). The school, as part of its ethos, covers all aspects of the National Curriculum through its focus and commitment to pupils learning through 'enquiry', 'first-hand experience' and 'investigation'. An Ofsted Report (2008) commented:⁹

⁷ Relative to the standards achieved nationally at Key Stage 2 by Bangladeshi-heritage pupils in England and Wales.

⁸ One-form entry means that the school has one class for each year group.

⁹ A detailed reference has not been provided for any of the schools featured in the Ofsted reports in order to protect their anonymity.

[This] is a good school. Pupils demonstrate enthusiasm for all that the staff offer them. Pupils of all backgrounds and abilities achieve well so that standards are above those expected by the time they leave at the end of Year 6. The school is a thriving community that is securely based on respect for different beliefs and cultures, and this underpins its strong sense of community cohesion and excellent racial harmony. The staff are very committed to the pupils' all-round development and have established outstanding partnerships with parents and the local and wider community.

The report inspectors found that in most lessons teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to share their ideas with their classmates. Additionally, the report commented that the school's governors made a good contribution to the school and its community, with effective leadership and good communication with parents, seeking their views and keeping them informed of all developments.

B) School 2

This is a two-form entry school. It serves an inner city area with a considerable housing shortage and above-average occupancy. Two-thirds of its pupils are of Bangladeshi heritage; the remaining third is White. The prospectus states that the majority are in receipt of FSM. Ofsted (2007) found that the school was *Outstanding* in 26 out of the 27 features assessed (the other was *Good*). It reported that:

This excellent school provides an outstanding education for its pupils. The key to its success is the dynamic and incisive leadership of the head teacher, who is supported by an extremely effective leadership team. Together, they have created a culture in which children believe in themselves and have the motivation to do their very best. Standards are consistently and exceptionally high year after year. The achievement of pupils is outstanding. A combination of extremely effective teaching and a rich and diverse curriculum ensures that pupils make very rapid progress. As the head teacher put it: 'The more excitement and interest you bring into the school, the better the day-to-day learning'.

The school's SAT results for 2013, six years after the above comment was issued by Ofsted, show that the school is continuing to perform above-average in all nationally assessed areas of

the curriculum at KS2: Reading: Level 4 - 100%, Level 5 - 60%; Writing (based on teacher assessment): Level 4 - 97%, Level 5 - 46%; Spelling and Grammar: Level 4 - 98%, Level 5 - 87%, Level 6 - 2%; Maths: Level 4 - 98%, Level 5 - 60%, Level 6 - 8%.

The inspectors found that pupils enjoyed attending school, with excellent attitudes to learning and behaviour. One pupil said that *“If someone’s stuck, we can always help them”*. Consequently, the pupils felt safe and well cared for. Teachers had very high expectations of their pupils, who were encouraged to think for themselves. Teachers were full of praise for the leadership and management qualities employed within the school. One said: *“It’s a lovely place to work – you feel very respected here”*.

The inspectors found the personal development and well-being of pupils, along with their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, outstanding. (Interestingly, around the same time – 2008 – the well-being and quality of children’s lives in the UK was of increasing concern to policymakers after a UNICEF ‘report card’ (United Nations Children’s Fund, 2007) ranked the United Kingdom in the bottom third of economically advanced nations for child well-being). Pupils in the school were eager to learn and were excited about what the future held. Additionally, parents were extremely supportive and appreciative of the school. One said, *“We have always been struck by the caring ethos which seems to run through all aspects of the school”* (Ofsted, 2007). Of the four schools in this study, this had the best and most consistently above-average KS2 SAT results.

Ofsted (2007) said that the school is in the top 3% of schools in England and Wales for the value it adds to pupils’ learning. It suggested the reasons for the higher than average improvement rate amongst pupils was the quality of teaching offered and staff’s imaginative adaptation of the National Curriculum.

To bring the curriculum alive, the school has Enrichment Afternoons where it reorganises teaching groups from Year 2 to Year 6. Years 2 and 3 work together; Years 4, 5 and 6 work together. Teachers identify a subject/topic that they would like to teach and construct a six-week course. Pupils enrol not knowing who will be teaching it and who will be alongside them in class. Activities are many and varied: tasting Spanish food, French conversation, using computers to make willow patterns, making model mountains out of polystyrene, making jungle

collages, learning contemporary dance and producing 3D mathematical models. Many pupils see this as the most exciting time of the week.

The school is also involved in the London Challenge ‘Good to Great’ programme, supporting good schools locally to improve.

C) School 3

The majority of pupils are of Bangladeshi heritage. The school’s 2012 prospectus¹⁰ described a vibrant, outward-looking institution offering an environment in which pupils can thrive. It has a roll of around 200 boys and girls aged between seven and eleven. The school serves an area characterised by pockets of deprivation, high unemployment and overcrowding. The majority of pupils are eligible for FSM, thereby reflecting the depressed economic status of the area. The school prospectus also states that:

Staff and governors are committed to opening exciting “doors of opportunity” for every child at the school. Pupils are expected to do well.

Each individual is supported and encouraged to make the most of their special gifts and to aim high in their work. This ethos advocates a love of learning; an independence of mind; self-esteem and self-confidence; good relations between staff, pupils and parents; consideration and tolerance for others; a strong sense of personal responsibility; and a commitment to serving and helping others.

An Ofsted report (2007) described the school as:

... serving an area of significant social and economic deprivation. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is much higher than average. Almost all of the pupils are of Bangladeshi origin and have English as an additional language. Only a few of these are at the early stages of English language acquisition. Attainment on entry is below average. Over a half of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and those who have a statement of special educational need is above average.

¹⁰ In order to retain the schools’ anonymity the prospectuses have not been identified or page numbers provided. However, these can be supplied.

In summary, the school wants its pupils to leave as confident, questioning young people.

D) School 4

This is a one-form entry school; the majority of pupils are of Bangladeshi heritage. The proportion eligible for FSM is more than twice that found nationally. Almost all pupils speak English as an additional language – more than five times the national average. An Ofsted Inspectors' report (2011) stated that:

[It is a] good school. It has a number of outstanding features. All staff are committed to meeting both the personal and academic needs of all pupils. This enables pupils to develop well. Consequently, pupils are happy, enthusiastic, interested in the experiences offered by the school and confident. This is demonstrated in their higher than average attendance rates. In questionnaire responses, many pupils and parents agreed with the sentiment expressed by one pupil who said, 'I really enjoy learning because it is so much fun here'.

The inspectors felt that pupils learned how to develop constructive relationships through the models presented by all staff, and that they behaved well. They also commented that the school contributed to the life of its local community and was committed to helping all pupils and their families. They observed that the school drew extensively on the local area to extend pupils' learning. They found that the expertise of visitors from other schools and colleagues enhanced their enjoyment of sport and music through a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils had a strong sense of community and a good understanding of rights and responsibilities. They were polite and healthily inquisitive. They also stated that the head-teacher and governors had high aspirations for pupils, shared by staff. The inspectors stated that, "*Governors supported the school well*".

Overview of research

To understand the cultural and ethnic status of many of the participants in this study, it is necessary to briefly describe the background to migration to the UK of the Bangladeshi communities. Migration in significant numbers first took place in the 1960s. Most Bangladeshis in the UK are from the agricultural Sylheti region of Bangladesh and are Muslim.

There are different practising religions, including Hinduism and Christianity, but Islam is the main religion in the country. Over 98% of the people speak Bengali, but English is also widely used and taught in the schools. Education has been and continues to be a low-expenditure item in the national budget. From 1981 to 1987 about 9.3% of the total national budget was spent on education, well below the average 15% for developing countries (UNICEF, 1989). As a result levels of literacy are low. The gross literacy rate in Bangladesh in 1991 was only 24.8% for all ages. (Zaman, S and Munir, S, 1992: 24)

People of Bangladeshi heritage make up around 0.5% of England's population (Ofsted, May, 2004, p.4). The first language of most is Sylheti, a dialect of Bengali – the main written language in Bangladesh. Many Bangladeshi parents in the UK encourage their children to learn Bengali and families use a combination of Sylheti, Bengali and English.

The early migration of Bangladeshis into London goes back to the end of the 18th century when lodging houses were set up for Indian seamen crewing the ships owned by the East India Company. The main factor encouraging migration from Sylhet was the lure of economic advancement rather than insufferable oppression on the sub-continent. However, it was the geopolitical 'push factor' of the partition of India in 1947 and its subsequent schisms which ensured an increased migration flow from Sylhet.

By far the largest settlement of Bangladeshis in the UK is in east London, where in one inner-city borough they comprise over 25% of the population and over 50% of school pupils. Historically, social class, as much as ethnicity, has had a distinctive role in shaping the demographic profile of east London, which has been multicultural for many decades. In contemporary Britain, few places can match its ethnic diversity. No ethnic group forms a majority; its population of young people under 15 years of age is overwhelmingly non-white (Ofsted, May, 2004).

According to an Ofsted (May, 2004) report, Bangladeshi men began arriving in post-war UK in substantial numbers as individual workers and were later joined by their sons and then the remainder of their families. While many Pakistani men brought over their families in the 1960s/70s, many Bangladeshi men did not do so until the 1980s. Consequently, in contrast to the UK's other South Asian communities, the Bangladeshis are the most recent settlers. This may explain their comparative poverty compared to Indians, Sri Lankans and Pakistanis.

The original migrants worked mainly in the textile and catering trades and this situation has continued, with many Bangladeshi families running small clothing firms or restaurants or working in these establishments as employees.

The UK's Bangladeshi communities are one of the most deprived groups, experiencing problems accessing housing, employment, health and education. This has been a characteristic of the Bangladeshi community since its arrival in Britain:

Some 68% of Bangladeshis live in low-income, often overcrowded, households that rely more on state welfare benefits than other ethnic groups. Just over 40% of Bangladeshi men under 25 years of age are unemployed, compared with 12% of young white men. People of Bangladeshi heritage are at higher risk of being victims of racially motivated incidents than most other BAME groups. They are four times more likely than others to describe their health as 'bad' or 'very bad'. Free school meals (FSM) data offer an indicator of deprivation. Bangladeshi children have the highest eligibility (for FSM) at each key stage compared with other groups. Between key stage 1 and key stage 2, 52% of Bangladeshi pupils are eligible for FSM. (Ofsted, May, 2004:5)

Bangladeshi-heritage children in UK

The Office of National Statistics (ONS, 2012) puts Polish as the UK's second most spoken language. Previously, as a direct result of immigration in the 1960s and 1970s, the largest proportion of speakers of *The Other Languages of England* (Stubbs, 1985) originated from countries in South Asia and East and West Africa (Kenya, Uganda, Ghana and Nigeria). Their languages, such as Bengali, Urdu, and Gujarati, are generally referred to as "community languages" in the United Kingdom. People of Bangladeshi origin constitute perhaps the largest bilingual minority group in London.

Students of Bangladeshi origin constitute 4.5% of the overall school population in England and Wales (Baker and Mohieldeen, 2000). However, in some areas this proportion is considerably higher, such as in London's Westminster district where it is 12%, and in the borough under study where it is over 50% (Ofsted, May, 2004). The 2011 Census reveals that the main sources of work for the Bangladeshi community remain the restaurant trade and clothing industry, with few engaged in 'professional' careers. It also revealed that most Bangladeshis live in social

housing, where overcrowding is a major issue with sometimes up to ten or eleven family members inhabiting a small flat. It is not uncommon to have an extended family living together. However, despite high levels of poverty and deprivation, there are close family bonds, a strong community spirit and good community networks (Mac an Ghaill and Haywood, 2005; Butler and Hamnett, 2011).

Link between poverty and pupils' education

As has been outlined above, research suggests that Bangladeshi-heritage communities are significantly disadvantaged. Children exposed to poverty and deprivation typically have fewer educational opportunities than children ascribed higher socioeconomic status whose parents can often afford to pay for private education and opt out of the state system. The negative social outcome of this form of selective education has long been recognised by successive UK governments. Prior to the educational reforms of the 1960s, selection by ability – rather than money – was a feature of the state sector. Comprehensive schools were first introduced in the 1950s to combat the explicit correlation between social class and grammar school entry that had become quickly apparent. Pupils from deprived communities were 50% less likely to go to a grammar school than those from more privileged backgrounds (Atkinson and Gregg, 2004). This study also illustrates that the poorest children were concentrated in non-grammar schools. Poor children consistently fail to secure places in grammar schools even when they are high achievers academically. The small minority at grammar schools, however, achieved highly but very few gained entrance to university. In those local authority areas with grammar schools, just 5.8% of pupils eligible for FSM are successful in obtaining a place compared with 26.4% of all other pupils. Of the pupils who scored highest in the tests for 11-year-olds, 32% who were eligible for free school meals obtained a place at a grammar school compared with 60% of less-disadvantaged children.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE, 2005) revealed a definitive inequality of access to higher education by young people from affluent and poorer areas throughout the country. The study investigated the attendance in higher education of students in every region, constituency and ward from 1994 to 2000. The results revealed that the most advantaged 20% of young people are up to six times more likely to enter higher education than the most disadvantaged 20%. However, Modood (2010) found that BAME students are now over-represented in higher education compared to their representation in society. Yet, a closer

look at these figures reveals that they are compressed into the newer universities, graduation from which carries lesser social and cultural capital.

As well as being disadvantaged in relation to access to education, current research indicates that children from high areas of deprivation often attend schools that achieve below-average performances based on National Curriculum league tables for KS1 SAT scores. At the commencement of this study, the level of poverty in such areas was acknowledged at a national level by the provision of additional intervention resources such as Education Action Zones.¹¹

In recent years, at the secondary level, governments have been championing the cause of academies and free schools as institutions capable of raising educational standards and achievement. However, David Gillborn (2013) suggests that Black British pupils and those of African and African-Caribbean origin do worse in national exams and tests at academies than local authority-administered comprehensives. Free schools have also been criticised by their opponents for being overwhelmingly White and middle-class in their management, location and intake.

Information about Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) pupils

The DfES research paper *Ethnicity and Education: The Evidence on Minority Ethnic Pupils* (2006) explored the experience of BAME pupils within the education system. (The paper defines a minority ethnic group as any ethnic group except White British.) It revealed that in 2004, 17% of the state school population (primary and secondary) in England was classified as belonging to a minority ethnic group, i.e. of non-White British origin. There was a greater proportion of BAME pupils in primary (18%) rather than in secondary schools (15%). The BAME school population had grown by an estimated 20% since 1997 but, in comparison, there has been a much smaller increase of 2.3% in the total number of pupils from all backgrounds during that same period. BAME children are more likely to live in low-income households (38% compared to 18% of White British households). This figure, from the *Ethnicity and Education* report, is even higher for Bangladeshi households, with 65% living in low-income households. Eligibility for free school meals (FSM) is used here to indicate deprivation. For the majority of ethnic groups, the proportion of pupils eligible for FSM is greater in primary than in secondary

¹¹ The Education Action Zone was a government policy, introduced in 1998, to raise educational standards in schools in deprived areas.

schools. However, the pattern is reversed for Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils. The data shows that 44% of Bangladeshi primary pupils and 55% of Bangladeshi secondary pupils are eligible for FSM. Within all ethnic groups, pupils eligible for FSM perform worse than those not entitled (non-FSM). The extent of the attainment gap between FSM and non-FSM pupils varies between different ethnic groups.

Ethnicity and Education also suggested that patterns of achievement for BAME groups in Early Learning Goals¹² appear to broadly mirror attainment gaps at older ages. The national average for pupils meeting the expected standard of an Early Learning Goal of 8 or above is 50%. The results show that UK Bangladeshi-heritage pupils are well below the national average with only 30% of pupils reaching a score of 8 or higher. This is 20% below the national average. At primary school level, Bangladeshi pupils' achievement is lower than the national average. However, the difference between Bangladeshi and all pupils is narrower at KS4 than at KS1. Bangladeshi pupils typically do better at KS4.

Thesis structure

Following the introductory chapter, chapters two and three present a review of the literature relating to the educational achievement of Bangladeshi-heritage, state-educated primary level pupils in England. BAME heritage pupils are also included for comparative purposes. Consideration is given to what the literature reveals about the key variables of ethnicity, social class, gender and ethos. Chapter four outlines the methodological approaches employed in this study, including the research methodology and the reasons for its selection. It provides a detailed description of the approaches used in analysing the research findings data. Important aspects of the research process such as ethical issues, informed consent¹³, confidentiality and privacy as well as the research settings and 'method' are discussed. Chapters five, six and seven present, analyse and discuss the findings of the data with reference to the key texts visited in the literature review chapters. Seven themes emerged, which are discussed in relation to the key variables. Chapter eight discusses issues arising from the research: limitations, the potential for future research and the implications of the findings.

¹² The statutory Early Learning Goals are expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

¹³ See Appendix 3a and 3b for consent literature used in this study.

Included in the appendices are the following: SATs results tables, graphs illustrating factors of deprivation, interviewee responses, diagrams of the data analysis process, and the interview consent letter.

Conclusion

Hitherto, numerous studies have concentrated on the under-performance and under-achievement of Bangladeshi pupils. It is hoped that this research will provide a counterbalance to the abundant material on under-performance and under-achievement by focusing on the factors underpinning the success of primary schools with majority Bangladeshi-heritage populations.

The research methodology used in the present thesis is thematic analysis of in-depth interviews with pupils, parents, teachers, head-teachers, governors, local authority staff and the imam of the local mosque. It was considered the most suitable for the qualitative analysis of the many interviews conducted and allowed theory to arise out of the research findings.

The thesis also attempts to examine the culturally determined concepts of ‘achievement’ and ‘success’ by comparing the UK approach to educating its young with that in Finland, which is not as centrally controlled or regulated but enjoys an internationally renowned reputation.

The following two chapters review the existing research literature relating to and associated with the academic achievement and attainment of UK state-educated primary pupils of Bangladeshi heritage.

Chapter Two - Literature Review (Achievement)

Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the literature regarding the impact of ethnicity, social class and gender upon achievement. The concept of achievement - the subject of long and continuous discussion by Dweck (2006), Algarabel and Dasi (2001), amongst others - and how it is used in academic debate relating to pupils' educational attainment progress at school will be examined. It also visits the literature relating to the educational achievement of Bangladeshi-heritage pupils at primary school level where the work of Modood, Adams et al (2000), Archer and Francis (2005) and Gilborn (1990) to name a few are discussed. BAME pupils – particularly but not exclusively those of colour - are also included for comparative purposes and an examination of the effects of racism and racial stereotyping upon achievement is included. The discussion of the effects of social class upon achievement includes the work of Webber and Butler (2006), Harrison (1985), Keddie (1975), Strand (2007), Leitch (2004), Mac an Ghail and Haywood (2005) and Lauder et al (2008) amongst others. Finally the review of gender and its impact upon educational attainment includes Archer and Francis (2005), Connolly (2004), West and Pennell (2003), Hartley and Sutton (2010), Shah, Dwyer and Modood (2010), Shelton (2008) and Faludi (2000) as well as others.

Educational achievement

Concepts of educational achievement

While there is no universally agreed definition of educational achievement in its widest sense, it is hoped that the quote below is adequate for the purposes and context of this study:

Educationally, achievement may be defined (Niemi, 1999) as the mastering of major concepts and principles, important facts and propositions, skills, strategic knowledge and integration of knowledge. (Algarabel and Dasi, 2001: 46)

Schools in the UK have traditionally evaluated pupils' achievement through examination results. Dweck (2006) argues that this is a narrow view that fails to acknowledge other forms of intelligence and qualities of character such as self-esteem, confidence, motivation and aspirations. If we accept Dweck's assertion and relate it to the current structure of compulsory education in the UK as outlined above, it could be argued that abilities and aptitudes that are

not considered academic will not be encouraged and developed within schools and will therefore not be utilised for the good of the individual, the community and society.

Using standard tests to evaluate knowledge and intelligence can, argue Algarabel and Dasí (2001), create as many problems as it attempts to solve.

Although performance assessment has had a big impact on educational researchers, the consequences for achievement testing are not always as positive as it might be thought. The use of complex assessment tasks, although trying to solve the traditional problems implied in the use of multiple choice items, introduces some additional ones (2001: 51).

A broader, more inclusive measure of achievement, argues Dweck (2006), will need to be supported in a variety of ways, with an emphasis on the development of the person holistically and on providing a supportive learning environment. Algarabel and Dasí (2001) state that traditional definitions of achievement:

can lead us more towards selection than to assessment of educational results, predictive validity than content validity, norm or criterion referenced, closed versus open response. (2001: 61).

Given these reservations about exam-based notions of achievement, the contribution of support practitioners such as early years' services, the Community Education Service, educational psychology professionals, network learning support services, education resource services and other outside agencies should be seen as important rather than peripheral in raising standards of educational achievement in the form envisaged by Dweck (2006) and Algarabel and Dasí (2001).

Influence of ethnicity on educational achievement

'Ethnicity' is a complex and dynamic concept and primarily self-defined. It usually profiles a group of people with a shared cultural, biological and geographical heritage, which provides identity and cohesiveness. The cultural traditions of this heritage help to shape families' values, belief systems and practices (Adams *et al.*, 2000). Modood (2005) argues that ethnicity as a concept is a *creation within political and ideological processes* (2005: 21). It has no universally fixed, consensual meaning. *Ethnicity has objective and subjective features* (2005: 22). In

Britain, it has a number of defining characteristics: cultural distinctiveness, disproportionality of some feature of the groups' lives (such as religious belief), strategy (in response to common experiences), creativity (i.e. politicised sports clubs) and identity (i.e. Black Lives Matter protests) (2005: 22). By having these characteristics, ethnicity is a fluid phenomenon that shares a symbiotic relationship with its social and political context.

Modood (2007) also discusses the concept of multiple identities in which many – especially BAME – people operate: realities of 'hyphenated identities' (British Muslim; British Bangladeshi, etc.). This can produce tensions and uncertainties but is an environment that, in the world of a constant 'war on terror', many British Muslims have to negotiate on a daily basis by utilising their hyphenated repertoire. The sense of 'belonging' in Britain – in the sense of feeling a valued member of wider society – or being alienated from it can vary according to events in wider society that relate to or are connected in some (often symbolic) way to their particular identity as a Muslim, such as the murder of soldier Lee Rigby in May 2013 by someone professing to be a Muslim. This default connection between Muslim identity and negative social events, manifested as Islamophobia, has no parallel in other religions in the UK, especially Christianity. For example, the numerous cases of child abuse carried on by Catholic priests in a position of trust have not created an anti-Catholic wave of hostility similar to that felt by many Muslims after events like London 7/7 or 9/11.

Migration

Migration into the UK has been relatively stable during the twenty-first century with estimated long-term net migration fluctuating between 140,000 and 180,000 a year (Wohland *et al.*, 2010). The trend, according to the Home Office (BBC Radio 4, 'World at One', 28 July 2013) is downward in respect of inward migration. However, we should also note that exact figures for emigration and immigration are not kept by the Home Office or indeed the Office for National Statistics. The numbers used by government departments are based on small-scale surveys. Migration to the UK has been characterised by increasing diversity in terms of countries of origin, cultures, languages and socio-economic profiles (Modood, 2007). This has contributed to Britain's so-called *Super-Diversity* (Vertovec, 2007), a state where everybody is everywhere (Sneddon, 2011) and where some metropolitan areas no longer have one ethnic majority (Warren, 2007). According to government figures (Annual Population Survey, January to December 2010) over 10% of those living in the UK were born abroad, with most being born in India, Poland, Pakistan, the Republic of Ireland and Germany.

The proportion of ‘ethnic minority’ residents (including both foreign born and second and third generations) in the 2001 Census was approximately 8%. This figure is now 10%+ and has been projected to reach 20% by 2051 (Wohland *et al.*, 2010). London, the most ethnically diverse city in the UK, if not Europe, has a ‘non-White’ population of around 33% of its total. Its main nationalities and their proportions are as follows: 10.5% Black or Black British; 6.5% Indian and 4.3% Pakistani or Bangladeshi (Annual Population Survey, October to September 2009).

Ethnic diversity

The UK’s ‘Super-Diversity’ is reflected in the school population where, at the turn of the new millennium, ‘minority ethnic’ pupils constituted a fifth. Just over a decade later, over 1.5 million of the 6.5 million pupils in maintained primary and secondary schools were ‘BAME’ – 24% of the total population. In London, the percentage is significantly larger at around 66%, with great differences between boroughs. The local authority with the highest proportion of minority ethnic pupils in its primary schools in 2010 was Newham (91.0%), followed by Brent (88.3%), Tower Hamlets (87.6%) and Hackney (85.4%). The largest ethnic groups in London schools include Black (21%, of which almost two-thirds are Black African) and Asian (19%, including Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi), but there is also a large number of ‘White, other than British’ (10.5%), including Irish, Irish Travellers, Roma and other European groups. In 2011, there were 946,580 pupils in English primary and secondary schools whose first language was known or believed to be other than English – almost 15% of the total. In London alone, pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) total almost 400,000 or 42% of the total. The main language groups in English schools include Urdu (96,610), Panjabi (86,030), Bengali (60,980) and Polish (40,700) (D’Angelo, Paniagua and Ozdemir 2011). This ethnic diversity is reflected, to a lesser extent, amongst the teaching staff. In 2004, 9% of teachers in England were from a minority ethnic backgrounds; in the capital it is 31% (DES 2005). In 2011-12, the government decided to lift the ring-fencing of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG); this impact of this move on minority ethnic pupils’ learning/achievement has yet to be adequately researched. However, it should be noted that there are urban areas in the UK are not as ethnically diverse as others, such as Newcastle (Mac an Ghail and Haywood, 2005).

Educational performance

Increasingly, over the past five decades, academic studies have recognised differences in the educational performance of the many and various ethnic groups that are resident in Britain. In particular, the successes of some such as the British Chinese have been highlighted, while the failure and success of others, such as the British Bangladeshis, has been less visible or acknowledged. Dustmann *et al.* (2010) found that at the start of school, between the ages of three and five, BAME pupils significantly underperformed in early cognitive tests compared to their White British-born peers. At the beginning of primary school (KS1), BAME pupils (with the exception of British-Chinese) lag behind White, British-born pupils. Remarkably, all BAME pupils – with the exception of Black Caribbean – improve substantially in comparison to White British pupils throughout compulsory schooling.

In recent years, second and third generation immigrant pupils, in particular those from Chinese and Indian ethnic backgrounds, have made significant progress in educational achievement (Modood, 2005). Over the past decade, success in national examinations has improved in all BAME groups, with a subsequent increase in numbers entering Higher Education (Tomlinson, 2007). However, there is a persistent gap between Asian, Black African and Indian pupils, who perform well or above average, and Black Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils, who are consistently identified as under-achievers (Modood, 2005; Archer and Francis, 2007; Gillborn, 2008). Indeed, the Department of Children, Schools and Families set up a specific initiative – the Black Children’s Achievement Programme - that sought to address low and under-achievement amongst Black pupils by identifying schools and local education authorities and targeting them with extra resources to narrow the attainment gap. Part of its approach was to openly discuss issues of ‘race’, identity and disadvantage with pupils in order to use this dimension of its programme as an instrument to encourage greater effort in the academic and behavioural sphere. A Department for Education and Skills report (2005) indicated that Black Caribbean and other Black boys are also twice as likely to have been categorised as having behavioural, emotional or social difficulties than White British boys. BAME children are also more likely to live in low-income households; 38% of minority ethnic households have a low income compared to 18% of White households. The highest deprivation rates are amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations (65%) (Department of Work and Pensions, 2004).

In 1967, the National Union of Teachers published the ground-breaking report, *The Education of Immigrants*. An area previously ignored by policymakers and others, it

recognised the need for all children, irrespective of ethnicity, to secure the full benefits of education and that this was a matter which concerns all teachers (NUT 1967:1). As far back as the late 1980s and early 1990s, Mortimore *et al.* (1988) and Reynolds (1992) highlighted the influence that individual schools have upon pupil achievement. Other more recent work suggests that this has also been recognised by parents. Butler and Hamnett (2011), for example, found that immigrant parents in East London had an overwhelming concern for their children's education.

Many BAME respondents (particularly Asian) had either moved, or were thinking of moving, to the suburbs in order to get their children into better schools (Butler and Hamnett, 2011: 118).

The effect of racism on achievement

Discrimination based upon 'race' – racism – in public places has been illegal in the UK since the Race Relations Act (1965). However, this legislation did not address institutional racism or many of the other nuanced manifestations of this prejudice. Much of the discussion in this research should be seen within the context of a racialised society where access to socio-economic resources is often through the prism of 'race'.

Mac an Ghail and Heywood (2005) illustrate that not only can such institutional discrimination be oppressively debilitating but that it can also restrict physical movement.

When I was younger I have experienced racism in general. Quite a bit. Now, I can allocate places where I'm likely to get racism so I try and stay out of it. The first time I became aware of racism was when I was about eight, this kid in school called me a black 'b' [astard], then I reported it to the teacher. I didn't understand it at first; why he went 'black' and 'b'. The teacher took serious actions about it then, spoke about it to my family and they said 'oh well, one day we'll tell you, they talk about your colour', and it's just, my mam said it's only narrow-minded people who would do it and you won't find many of them. She is right, I haven't found many of them, but I have found a significant number of them ... I avoid certain places or even town [central Newcastle] (Mac an Ghail and Heywood, 2005: 26).

The question then arises, as outlined by Modood (2004, 1997), of how do we assess reactions to racism by those experiencing it in our evaluation of its effect upon educational achievement? Without this dimension in the discussion, there may be little explanatory value. To address this question, therefore, we first have to recognise the manifestation of racism.

BAME experiences of racism can go unrecognised, or be underplayed or remain unknown by many White teachers.

Such unawareness and lack of reflection on the issues that may face (high achieving) BAME children in the British education system is facilitated by the current policy obsession with 'standards and achievement' (Archer and Francis 2007: 171).

Inman, McCormack and Walker (2012) also found in their discussion of Farzana Shain's (2011) research on Muslim pupils in schools in the West Midlands a tendency to overlook or be ignorant of certain manifestations of racism. Shain found that wider geopolitical events, such as the implosion of the twin towers in New York and the associated events of 11 September 2001 exacerbated existing friction with and between dominant and minority ethnic groups. The political and ideological aftermath of 9/11 led to Muslim boys, in particular, being labelled as sympathisers of 'Islamic terrorism' – a form of racism that has become known as Islamophobia.

Shain also found racism to be a central feature of the boys' experiences of school, from both overt, low-level name-calling to more covert institutional racism. However, she noted that contemporary racism is complex and contradictory: whilst the boys were addressed as 'terrorists' and 'Bin Laden' following 11 September - which illustrates how the politicisation and racialisation of religion are shaping contemporary racist discourse - biological notions of race were also a feature of their experiences of racism ... Unfortunately, as Islamophobia is not always recognised as racism and is often not referred to in guidance and policy documents by local authorities, Islamophobia in schools can sometimes go unaddressed (Inman, McCormack and Walker 2012: 5).

Modood (2010) provides a further nuance on the perceived role of Islam in UK society. It is used by some young British Muslims as a tool to bypass the more damaging and negative aspects of urban youth culture. Some young Muslims opt to study at a madrasa, for instance, after school rather than hanging out on the streets with others of the same age.

It is particularly used by girls to justify and negotiate educational and career opportunities with conservative parents, often of rural backgrounds with little knowledge of the scriptures (Modood 2010: 73).

This cultural separation from their British peers could be interpreted as a form of cultural rejection and, ironically, increase the incidence of Islamophobia.

While no conclusive studies have researched the direct effect of racism upon educational achievement, the differences between the relative levels of attainment of different groups are significant. For instance, how much did the reaction to racial stereotyping affect the 2003 statistics that showed 82% of Chinese and 79% of Indian origin pupils gaining level 4 or above at the end of KS2? For pupils of Pakistani heritage, the equivalent figure was 61%. The least achieving ethnic group were (White) travellers of Irish descent. Were these BAME students drawing upon their ethnic capital as a response? (Ethnic capital being the social and cultural resources held by the BAME communities as members of those communities) (Modood, 2004).

The position is similar at KS3, argue Archer and Francis (2007). The highest achieving groups continue to be Chinese, Indian and White British pupils. However, the gap widens in relation to pupils of African-Caribbean and Black African origin with only 56% achieving the expected level 5 or above. These pupils now achieve less well at KS3 than all the other groups, including pupils of Bangladeshi and Pakistani origin.

Racial stereotyping and achievement

Racial stereotyping by teachers of pupils has been a longstanding problem. Gillborn and Gipps (1997) argued that to understand exclusions and under-achievement, there is a need to consider how racist stereotypes operate. The Macpherson Report (1999) suggested that the National Curriculum should value cultural diversity. Majors *et al.* (1999) and Meer, Modood and Zapata-Barrero (2016) argue that these efforts should not emphasise a superficial

multiculturalism that focuses on dress, food, religion, holidays, festivals and events. Rather, it should seek a deeper and more profound understanding of contemporary aspects of the different cultures in contemporary Britain and the structural inequalities that exist between them, with a commitment to lessening and ultimately eradicating these differences in wealth and power.

Racial stereotyping by teachers can take the form of lower expectations of their BAME pupils, particularly Black males (Blair and Bourne, 1998). Alderson (1999), sampling 2,272 pupils aged 7-17, discovered that BAME pupils were upset by the way teachers dismissed and mistrusted their views. Ofsted in 1999 acknowledged that there were still attainment and behavioural problems amongst African-Caribbean boys but it also suggested that there had been improvements in both areas since earlier in the 1990s.

Exclusion and achievement

Modood (2004; 2005; 2010) argues that using terms like ‘behavioural problems’ with reference to particular ethnicities such as African-Caribbean boys is itself a problem of conceptualisation of a phenomenon and we should bear this in mind when debating control – in all its forms – and discipline within schools.

Schools make a difference to the educational experience of a child. If a pupil is excluded then by definition that child is not receiving an education. Research has noted that there are different rates of exclusion between individual schools (Benson, 1996; Imich, 1994; McManus, 1987). These authors argue that the views of head-teachers and the policies they implement in their schools account for much of the difference. They found that many head teachers and senior management staff had a high use of exclusion as a disciplinary sanction and part of their school ethos.

Kenway and Palmer (1998) stated that in 1997, approximately 13,000 pupils had been excluded permanently, and over 100,000 had been excluded temporarily over the year. A disproportionate number of these exclusions have been from BAME backgrounds, particularly Black male pupils. However, some eight years later, exclusions of Black pupils had decreased to 1,000 permanent and 30,000 fixed-period instances according to the DfES briefing paper, *Exclusion of Black Pupils: “Getting it. Getting it right”* (2006). However, this paper noted that Black pupils were still three times more likely to be excluded than their

White peers. There is also evidence to suggest that whilst some are excluded for behavioural reasons, Sewell (1997) argues that far too many are excluded for trivial reasons such as ‘rule-breaking’. However, many are also excluded for behaviour which is seen as culturally specific such as hairstyles – dreadlocks, braids, hair too short, shaved tramlines – and affected walking styles and/or eye behaviour. Sewell (1997) also suggests that teachers sometimes stereotype a Black pupil with cultural-specific behaviours such as ‘having an attitude problem’ or being ‘arrogant’ rather than seeing pride, confidence and a positive self-esteem arising out of a strong sense of cultural identity. As Irvine (1991) reported, because the culture of Black working-class pupils is so different from that of their White middle-class teachers, the latter easily misunderstand Black pupils.

Historically, high levels of exclusion amongst Black pupils have inevitably affected their academic performance. The DfEE *Youth Cohort Study* (1994) revealed that Black pupils were academically less successful than White and other minority ethnic groups. Only 21% of Black pupils achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A to C. In contrast, 45% of Indian and White pupils achieved this level, with 51% of other Asians gaining these grades. Furthermore, Ofsted (1999) noted that 25 local authorities revealed serious under-achievement amongst ethnic minorities. Their report noted that African-Caribbean and Traveller children were significantly behind other groups by the end of secondary school.

The pressure group, *Communities Empowerment Network*, believes that the problem of exclusion is still at crisis level. Speaking in 2010, spokesperson Gerry German said that “there are 8,000 permanent exclusions and 380,000 fixed-term exclusions a year in England” (Guardian, 22 January 2010) but it should be noted that German fails to give the provenance of his figures. Given that his fixed-term total is higher by a factor of ten over government figures, it suggests that either that he or the government is misrepresenting the situation.

Ofsted (2009) noted that there were 13,460 fixed-term exclusions and 260 permanent exclusions in 2006-07. This represented a rise of 10% of suspensions since 2004. Interestingly, the report emphasised that exclusions between Foundation and KS1 remained rare. However, the ones made tended to be concentrated in schools where factors of deprivation were high: “39 of the 69 [schools] visited were in the highest 20% of schools in terms of pupils’ eligibility for free school meals” (Ofsted, 2009: 4). However, it also stated that “what determined a school’s rate of exclusion was not its social context” (ibid).

While there has been a concerted effort in recent years by many schools to lessen exclusions, reflecting broader education policy concerns at the government level, it could also be argued that the ethos of many schools has helped to develop alternative strategies in managing ‘difficult’ pupils. Teach First (2012), in its report on how to break the link between poverty and under-achievement, argued that poor behaviour in schools is still having a considerable impact on the learning experiences of many children, a large proportion of whom live in deprived communities. They warned that, despite the general perception that behaviour within schools was improving, we must consider how to support those pupils for whom it is still a significant issue. However, we must be cautious in uncritically accepting the intellectual premise of the government-sponsored Teach First initiative. In attempting to deal with the link between poverty and under-achievement in schools, they do not discuss the reasons and solutions for poverty in society; this is akin to trying to solve the problem of an electronics factory that is consistently producing faulty televisions by placing a television repair shop outside its gates rather than by dealing with a flawed production process. Despite this concern about the political context of the work of Teach First, the utilisation of their reports in this research will help us gain an insight into government thinking on education policy relevant to this study.

Gillborn and Mirza (2000) are critical of the concept of under-achievement (a concept discussed in detail below). A more accurate term, argues Plewis (1991), is that of ‘relatively low-attaining groups’. This definition was also used by Gillborn and Gipps (1997). They argue, in relation to Black pupils, that ‘under-achievement’ was discussed in the debates about ethnic diversity in British education as a result of the Rampton (1981) and Swann (1985) Committee Reports. The term was used to refer to the different levels of achievement among ethnic minority groups.

The DfCSF (2009) report illustrated a clear link between deprivation and exclusion. Children entitled to FSM are three times more likely to be excluded. This relationship between economic circumstances, as gauged by eligibility for FSM, and pupil behaviour and teacher/school reaction is also closely linked to educational achievement. DfCSF reports (2008; 2009) show that at sixteen years of age, those pupils eligible for FSM are three times more likely to have GCSE grades lower than levels A-C than those non-eligible. Interestingly, while there was a significant difference between the attainment and non-

attainment of five or more GCSEs at A-C levels for White pupils, the difference between FSM-eligible and non-eligible Bangladeshi pupils was no more than 2%, which I consider to be too small to be relevant. My research analyses the reasons for this positive finding.

Achievement of Bangladeshi-heritage and BAME pupils

Modood (2004) argued that educational aspiration is a positive asset of cultural/ethnic capital in Bangladeshi-heritage communities. It was expected of both parents and children that sacrifices would be made in familial and community resources to facilitate educational achievement. Shah, Dwyer and Modood (2010) examined the aspirations of Pakistani-heritage parents and pupils in the UK (Slough) and found that the community placed educational aspiration high in its cultural values. Parents were aware that the acquisition of qualifications was important for social mobility to get away from the labour-intensive/poorly paid work many Pakistani immigrants endured. This entailed guidance and supervision by parents to counter the potential of peer pressure that may pull their young in an unwanted direction.

If they are playing a football match in a park opposite then I can see him ... I don't like him just wandering around which I think is wrong, because if you are wandering around you're getting up to mischief aren't you? (Shah, Dwyer and Modood 2010: 1117).

Zhou (2005) and Zhou and Bankston (1994), as reported in Shah, Dwyer and Modood (2010), look to explain the above average academic achievements of migrant communities, irrespective of socio-economic backgrounds. They all suggest that the existence of communal networks, cultural traditions and duties, communal knowledge-sharing and the pressure of adhering to common forms of beliefs and behaviour contribute to a resource bank categorised as social and ethnic capital. While Modood (2004) found that South Asian parents may not be as knowledgeable of, and participate less in, the school system, they still encouraged – even pressured – their children to be disciplined and to work hard to achieve the best results possible in their school careers. Shah, Dwyer and Modood (2010) argue:

Two dimensions of social capital are particularly relevant to immigrant families: 'intergenerational closure' and 'norms enforcement'. The presence of dense co-ethnic networks in immigrant communities forms a closed structure and creates a

protective barrier for second generation youth in inner-city neighbourhoods. Tightly knit co-ethnic networks prevent the young from assimilating into the underclass, provide resources that facilitate access to good schools and promote academic achievement through the enforcement of familial and community norms (2010: 1112).

Dustmann, Machin and Schönberg (2010) found that, as adult learners, generally BAME students out-perform White British adult learners in terms of educational achievement. This contrasts with nursery, infant and primary school where, at the ages of 3 and 5, BAME pupils significantly under-perform in cognitive tests compared to their White British-born counterparts.

Interestingly, Strand (2010) found that at the average age of 11, Indian-, Pakistani-, Bangladeshi- and Black African-heritage pupils made relatively more progress in English and/or mathematics than they did in science. He felt that this was significant because results and scores at this age are fairly reliable predictors of subsequent achievement at ages 14 and 16 across all core subjects of the curriculum.

DfCSF (2010a) found a relationship between attendance at after-school classes at a mosque and achievement amongst Bangladeshi-heritage pupils. Their survey highlighted that Bangladeshi-heritage boys were far more likely to attend religious classes at the local mosque than girls: 30% of boys compared to 15% of girls attended religious classes more than once per week. In general, the report found that those who did not go to these classes tended to achieve better results than those who attended twice a week or more.

Influence of social class on achievement

Socio-economic status refers to a person's social relationship to the means of production. This defines one's social class, a primary determinant in shaping educational outcomes. Historically, it is only in the last fifty years that sizeable numbers of working class children have proceeded to tertiary education. Indeed, until the 1960s there was a tripartite educational structure of Grammar, Secondary and Technical schools that were, to a large extent, characterised by the social class of their intake. The Labour governments of 1964-70

sought to make compulsory education more socially mixed, with the erosion of selective education and the national provision of comprehensive schools.¹⁴

Webber and Butler (2006) noted that the relative difference between the social classes in academic attainment and qualifications had hardly changed since the 1950s. Indeed, he found the gap between upper and lower class pupils had actually widened since 1958. This suggests that the trend in the relationship between social class and educational achievement is becoming increasingly rigid and inflexible. Strand (2014b) supports this view:

Equity gaps are not the result of a small number of 'failing' schools which, if they can somehow be fixed, will remove the overall SES or ethnic achievement gaps (2014b: 25).

Webber and Butler (2006) argue, in summary, that the gap in academic achievement and qualifications between social classes remains the same whatever the Ofsted-ascribed status of the school and level of achievement.

Additionally, Seldon (2008) argues that in studying class and attainment, for it to be meaningful and valid, we should not ignore private education, used by a privileged elite of families. He suggests it is that unfair that fee-paying schools have more resources, better facilities and offer their pupils easier access to the elite universities. Most studies, he complains, compare the differences in attainment within a sector of education rather than profound inequalities between sectors such as that between public (state) and private institutions.

In 2014, one of Britain's most acclaimed playwrights, Alan Bennett – state-educated and an Oxford graduate – entered the debate as to the merits of having dual private/state-funded education systems while giving a lecture at Cambridge University:

To educate not according to ability, but according to the social status of the parents, is both wrong and a waste... Private education is not fair. Those who provide it, know

¹⁴ Gillard, D (2011) *Education in England: a brief history*, www.educationengland.org.uk/history (accessed 13 March 2012).

it. Those who have to sacrifice in order to purchase it know it. And those who receive it know it, or should. And if their education ends without it dawning on them, then that education has been wasted ... [Private Education is] not Christian either. Souls, after all, are equal in the sight of God and thus deserving of what these days is called a level playing field (London Review of Books, June 19, 2014).

Paul Harrison (1985) studied the relationship between class and education attainment in the London Borough of Hackney. He found a close correlation between poverty, deprivation and the borough having the lowest examination results in London. Wikeley *et al.* (2007) argued that poor pupils are aware that their experiences of school will not be of the same quality as their more affluent peers. Put simply, middle-class pupils and parents expect more from formal education.

However, education policy makers, relying on the research of academics such as MacBeath *et al.* (2001) and Mortimore and Whitty (2000), have often linked working-class under-achievement with poor teaching and schools rather than low income and feel the default connection between poverty and lack of educational achievement is sometimes oversimplified.

Deprivation and achievement

Four decades ago, Keddie (1973) rejected the assertion that poverty, deprivation and educational achievement are not umbilically linked. Gutman and Feinstein (2008) found that by the age of three, children from poor families were already lagging behind by up to a year in certain areas of learning development, such as reading, compared to children from wealthier backgrounds.

Upward social mobility was a key theme of the (New) Labour Government, 1997-2010. Prime Minister Tony Blair stated at the outset of his first term that his priorities were ‘education, education, education’. Educational aspiration offered real hope for ‘getting on’ to communities who historically had not been successful in reaching tertiary education. Gordon Brown consolidated this theme in his first speech as prime minister to the 2007 Labour Conference:

I want a Britain where there is no longer any ceiling on where your talents and hard work can take you ... where what counts is not where you come from and who you know, but what you aspire to and have it in yourself to become ... a Britain of aspiration and also a Britain of mutual obligation where we all play our part and recognise the duties we owe to each other (Butler and Hamnett, 2011: 91).

However, Webber *et al.* (2006) provide quantitative evidence supporting the theory that the crucial variable in educational achievement at the primary level is not *what* type of school pupils attended but their social class. This variable also greatly affects the ability of a pupil to achieve any educational aspirations they hold. In support, Gutman and Akerman (2008) argue:

There are some groups for whom high aspirations do not lead to higher achievement. In particular, there is a gap between educational aspirations and academic achievement for young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds and from some minority ethnic groups and a gap between occupational aspirations and career achievement for females (Gutman and Akerman, 2008: ii).

Webber *et al.* (2006) argue that current SAT league tables measure not the best but the most middle-class schools, and that ‘value-added’ tables do not acknowledge the most important determinant in educational achievement: a child’s postcode. They incorporated data from the DfES and matched almost one million pupils to their addresses and SATS scores at eleven and fifteen. The findings suggested that a child’s social background is a crucial variable in determining their exam results. Consequently, it implies a school’s success is not the outcome of the quality of its teachers, or its ethos, or what status it has but the class origins of its intake. Professor Richard Webber, one of the authors of the report, commented:

These are very important findings, which should change the way parents, pupils and politicians think about schools. This is the first time we have been able to measure the precise impact of a child’s social background on their educational performance, as well as the importance of a school’s intake on its standing in the league tables... The results show that the position of a school in published league tables, the criterion typically used by parents to select successful schools, depends more on the social profile of its pupils than the quality of the teachers (Guardian, 28 February 2006).

Webber and Butler (2006) revealed that more than 50% of a school's performance is accounted for by the social make-up of its pupils. In affluent areas, historically 67% of 11-year-olds achieve level 5 in the national English tests. In contrast, only 13% of 11-year-old children from areas of social deprivation are likely to achieve level 5 in the same tests.

Significantly, Platt's (2007) research into longitudinal social migration found that Bangladeshi-heritage communities experienced less social mobility than most other migrant communities. Heavily concentrated within the working classes, this underlying class position weakened their ability to overcome barriers to upward mobility in comparison to other minority groups.

For all minority groups bar the Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, education provides the means to higher rates of upward mobility than those from the white majority from the same cohort and with the same background achieve. (Platt, 2007: 504)

Brown and Lauder (2009) argue that by the time pupils enter primary school, there are already marked class differences evident in the intake. This view is supported by Lauder *et al.* (2008), which included social class variables in looking at student progress in primary schools. It showed wide variations on baseline scores in reading and maths according to social class. The overall conclusion of the research was that social class has a significant determining effect on pupils' progress. Under-achievement, furthermore, is seen by some educational sociologists as a characteristic of groups rather than individuals. For example, those from disadvantaged backgrounds or certain ethnic groups may be said to under-achieve (Willis 1977) – and over-achieve (Modood, 2007) – regardless of their IQ.

Free school meals and achievement

Bangladeshi-heritage pupils have higher FSM rates relative to virtually all other ethnic groups and also live in more deprived communities (see Appendix 2:2c). Taking into account this greater socio-economic deprivation, their performance advantage over many ethnic groups of similar economic status, including those of a White British background, becomes even more visible. Modood (2004) and Shah and Dwyer and Modood (2010) assert that this over-achievement could be seen, in some part, as result of their deployment of a resource of ethnic capital. Cassen and Kingdon (2007) also found that the FSM/non-FSM difference in

the incidence of low achievement is only 1.8 points for those of Bangladeshi-heritage; 8 points for those of African Caribbean-heritage; 7.1 points for those of Black African-heritage but non-existent for those of Chinese-heritage. Also, FSM is, in fact a smaller 'risk factor' for pupils from all main ethnic groups compared to those of a White British background (a low points score reflects the least difference in educational attainment between FSM pupils and non-FSM pupils.) Therefore, disadvantaged BAME pupils figure less in low achievement statistics than equally disadvantaged White British students.

Alarmingly, according to Reay (2012), the outlook for these students is not encouraging because:

Economic inequality in Britain has risen relentlessly over the past twenty-five years fuelled by a redistribution from wages to profits in GDP (Jansson, 2008). By 2007 Britain had higher income inequality than all bar 5 of the EU 25 countries. John Hills' (2010) LSE report states that the richest 10% in Britain are now more than 100 times better off than the bottom 10%. And all the historical evidence indicates that recessions and economic downturns impact more negatively on the working than the middle classes. So a concern is that the next decade will see a deterioration in working class opportunities in education as economic inequalities increase (2012: 7).

Reay believes that educational outcomes are largely determined by a pupil's social class. She argues that this is the most influential variable. With the exception of Indian- and Chinese-heritage pupils, BAME minority pupils are substantially more likely to be in poverty and FSM-eligible, argue Dustmann, Machin and Schönberg (2008). However, they suggest that, despite their poverty, ethnic minority pupils make greater progress during their school careers than White British pupils. The authors also noticed that the negative impact of FSM status increases as children become older. Yet, they also found that being poor fails to explain why most ethnic minority children caught up with or overtook White British pupils during their school careers. This makes the progress of Bangladeshi-heritage pupils, relative to their White British peers, all the more remarkable. Dustmann, Machin and Schönberg's analysis also revealed that the impact of FSM status and achievement is stronger for White British pupils than for ethnic minority groups, with Bangladeshi-heritage pupils, who have the highest poverty rates, having the smallest association.

The House of Commons Education Select Committee (Strand, 2014b) found that White working-class pupils of British ethnic origin who receive FSM under-achieve at school more than any other ethnic group from similar socio-economic circumstances. It reported that just 32% of White working-class pupils obtain 5 GCSEs at grade 'C' and above, compared with 42% of Black Caribbean and 61% of Indian-heritage pupils. Poor Chinese-heritage pupils achieved the highest grades compared to other ethnicities of a similar socio-economic background. Poor White pupils of British origin also had a higher rate..... of absence and spend fewer hours doing their homework.

Explanations for achievement gaps focused primarily on class also need to be able to account for why middle and high SES Black pupils do not make similar progress to their White British peers. Equally the underachievement of middle and high SES Black pupils may reflect factors within the school system such as teachers' low educational expectations or pervasive racism within the educational process (e.g., Gillborn, 2008), but such accounts also need to be able to explain why there is no significant Black Caribbean-White British gap in achievement among low SES pupils. It is well to remember Mencken (1917): 'there is always an easy solution to every human problem—neat, plausible, and wrong'. Complex social issues such as differential educational achievement are rarely amenable to simple (single) explanations (Strand, 2014b: 242).

Morris *et al.* (1999), in their review of disadvantaged youth in the UK, stated that poor educational performance at school was often an indicator of disadvantage. They highlighted a number of associations between poor educational and economic outcomes including: bullying; truancy; exclusion from school; residential care; early motherhood and living in a poor and/or non-working household.

Deprivation, exams and testing

Students from lower socio-economic groups achieve less well in a range of tests, examinations and assessments than those who are from higher socio-economic groups. The DfES (2005) suggested that teachers' expectations of their pupils' cognitive, educational and academic attainment appear to be lower for children from working-class backgrounds, and teachers may be more likely to label children from certain social and cultural backgrounds

as disruptive in terms of their individual acceptance of, and compliance with, institutional behavioural norms.

Interestingly, the research findings by Webber *et al.* (2006) on the relationship between class and GCSE results argue that a child's socioeconomic class is more likely to influence their academic performance at school if they are White than if they come from a BAME background. They found that the difference between the proportion of working-class pupils and middle-class pupils who achieve five A* to C grades at GCSE is largest among White pupils. They examined official data showing thousands of teenagers' grades between 2003 and 2007; only 31% of FSM White pupils achieved five A* to Cs compared with 63% of non-FSM White pupils. This difference of 32 percentage points between social classes is much larger for White pupils than for other ethnic groups. For Bangladeshi-heritage pupils, the gap is seven percentage points. Modood (2005) reminds us that Bangladeshi-heritage pupils – alongside those of Pakistani-heritage – represent the largest proportion without qualifications (2005: 86). Yet, he also argues that, despite enormous relative deprivation, Pakistani-heritage (and Bangladeshi-heritage) pupils do reach tertiary education roughly in proportion to their social demographic; this is not true of their White British peers who are under-represented. The use of ethnic capital can help to explain this phenomenon. Shah, Dwyer and Modood (2010) suggest that:

not only gender (hierarchies, ideologies and identities) and religion (identities and practices) but also structural disadvantages (such as experiences and perceptions of racialized gendered labour markets) influence the level of ethnic capital that is actualized, and contributes to our understanding of variations in achievement and aspirations within families (2010: 1123).

In Leitch's (2014) qualitative research of the links between educational achievement and socioeconomic deprivation in Northern Ireland, she looked at the difference between GCSE results in a number of wards each characterised by their ethnic, religious and socio-economic homogeneity. The wards were either predominantly Catholic or Protestant, with the former tending to be poorer and more deprived than the latter. Although the full and final results of the research have not yet been published, interim findings suggest that there is no straightforward and direct correlation between deprivation and GCSE results. For example, the most deprived ward in the study, Catholic Whiterock in Belfast, consistently achieved a

greater number of pupils achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades C-A* over a 15-year period (1996-2012) than the least deprived, Protestant Tullycarnet in Castlereagh. These preliminary findings seem to support the thesis that we cannot draw absolute causal links between deprivation and educational achievement even when we are discussing White British pupils. Leitch found that a constellation of factors and dynamics were influential: structural, family, school, individual and social/community. Within each of these headings were grouped a series of sub-factors, all playing a role in determining educational outcomes.

Leitch suggests that social capital and how this 'wealth' is utilised can positively influence outcomes and sometimes compensate for the lack of economic capital available to pupils. However, conclusive results have yet to be published.

Expectation, aspiration and achievement

Cuthbert and Hatch (2008) suggest that the majority of research into expectation and aspirations in reality are calibrating:

intentions and expectations [and that] disadvantaged children do not have fundamentally different aspirations from their more advantaged peers (Cuthbert and Hatch, 2008: 2).

Strand and Winston (2008) go further and suggest that young people from ethnic minorities tend to have higher educational aspirations than their White peers, arguing that low aspirations are not the cause of low participation or under-achievement, especially among young Bangladeshi-heritage women. However, Appadurai (2004) argues that aspiration is a social and cultural production engineered by a person's socio-economic status and the dynamic between them and society's wider norms and values. Raising aspirations, the author argues, is not just about encouraging students to have visions and dreams; they also have to be furnished with a route map and the necessary equipment to overcome the barriers that will inevitably appear on the journey.

Strand and Winston's (2008) report, *Educational aspirations in inner city schools*, argued that ethnicity was a more influential factor than gender in students' visions of their educational careers. Pakistani and South Asian girls and boys were far more likely to demonstrate educational aspirations that were both greater and more widely informed than their White

British or Black Caribbean counterparts. In one Year 7 all-girls group, a Black Caribbean girl's aspiration to become a famous singer led to her self-exclusion from participation in a school performance on the premise that it was 'irrelevant'. This contrasts with both a Bangladeshi girl's ambition to go to college and study biology in order to become a nurse and the clearly planned aspiration of a Pakistani girl who wanted work that would allow her to travel, where she was working towards gaining the necessary qualifications in business studies, maths and English. Both were from a practising Muslim background. Shelton (2008), along with Martin (2003) and West and Pennell (2003), found that for all pupils and particularly boys:

active and practical learning is very important for all learners, [highlighting the] relevance and application of knowledge. "What can I use this for?" is a key question for boys. Teach through real objects, excursions, artefacts, etc. Good teachers are teaching principles and generalisations from things relevant to boys' interests (Shelton, 2008: 9).

Willis (1977) and Strand and Winston (2008) all suggest that a primary reason leading to White working-class pupils' under-performance is the lower expectations of their parents compared to parents of other ethnic groups. Other research – see the quote below – has revealed that Bangladeshi girls have vastly improved their GCSE grades during the last decade:

Cultural aspirations and expectations, as well as parental support for education [are higher] for most minority ethnic groups. Those from low socio-economic backgrounds seem to be much more resilient to the impact of disadvantage than their white British peers. More recent immigrant groups, such as the...Bangladeshi communities often see education as the way out of the poverty they have come from. By contrast, if you've been in a white working-class family for three generations, with high unemployment, you don't necessarily believe that education is going to change that (Kapadia and Strand in Cassen and Kingdon, 2007: 47).

Modood (2004) has suggested that a trinity of relational dynamics needs to be considered when searching for the engine of South Asian academic success in the UK. These three elements are: the adult-child relationship; the communication and transmission of parental and cultural attitudes and norms; and the directed application of these values in a practical

way. However, he warns against a narrow pre-occupation with the (extended) family unit as the main instrument through which ‘success’ is achieved. A more instructive term would (perhaps) be *ethnic capital* (Modood, 2004, p.101) allowing a fuller, more inclusive evaluation of ethnicity and its effect upon achievement and aspiration to be realised.

Modood (2004) argues that economic disadvantage can be offset by social capital, characterised by family values, norms and networks, along with wider community values and relationships which emphasise education. He suggests that BAME communities can draw upon this resource – now transformed into what he labels ethnic capital – which can act as a positive instrument for achieving academic goals. Mac an Ghail and Haywood (2005) also highlight the value that education has in the Bangladeshi culture – positive ethnic capital – amongst Bangladeshi-heritage young people in Newcastle.

I’ve talked with my cousins in other places and we agree that their schools push you more on the academic side. Here you have to do a lot of it yourself. This is not the school to get the best results, the top marks. Like most of our parents have very high expectations of our education and are fully supportive ... They try and put pressure on their kids to do really well at school. But you couldn’t say that about the teachers (Mac an Ghail and Haywood, 2005: 16).

Indeed, we can see the intersection of class disadvantage with ethnic capital in Cassen and Kingdon (2007) and the DfCSF (March, 2010), which suggests a relationship between a pupil’s aspirations and the amount of progress they make between KS2 and KS4. It revealed that Bangladeshi-heritage pupils, while reflecting their underprivileged status in KS2 tests, had one of the greatest margins of improvement when tested at KS4.

However, the report also found that those pupils from socially deprived communities often had lower aspirations compared to their more affluent peers, especially if they were from White British backgrounds. Some authors question what is meant by lower aspiration. Could it be translated in some circumstances as a different aspiration? Willis (1977) and Strand and Winston (2008) argue that perceptions of the value of education differ depending on social class background.

Strand and Winston (2008) revealed the social and cultural issues that underpinned anti-school attitudes amongst sections of the White British working-class. They found that some White British pupils voiced little enthusiasm for their education and inferred that their parents and elders felt the same. The lessons they enjoyed were often the ones they could subvert. Ironically, most said that they would go on to tertiary education after compulsory schooling; however, this was more a reflection of a lack of perceived vocational options because many also said they wanted to marry and start a family quite soon after leaving school. The authors said that they also spoke emphatically about peer loyalty but that this support did not entail helping with homework or other forms of school work. This attitude was affirmed by their parents (and other responsible adults), none of whom showed any interest in this dimension of their children's lives. Indeed, only one White British girl in their focus groups spoke of a parent displaying genuine interest in her school work. Despite this, the student wanted to leave school at 16 and go into hairdressing rather than continue into tertiary education.

The authors argue that when White British pupils said that they felt supported or valued in the home, it was often about issues and concerns unrelated to school. Two pupils said that their fathers praised them because they assisted with jobs around the house. This contrasts with a South Asian-heritage girl whose mother had already created a bank account for her to support her in the future when it was hoped that she would be in higher education. While a few White British boys made general comments about school that could be construed as positive, all wanted a trade – building, decorating or plumbing – similar to their fathers. They made it known that this was what their families wanted. None saw the acquisition of a degree – or similar – as part of their plans. This, say Strand and Winston, was in contradistinction to two recent immigrants, a Black African pupil and Hong Kong Chinese pupil, both wanting to go to university.

Francis (2014) argues that we should be careful not to confuse this seemingly negative attitude to formal education with a lack of aspiration to achieve in life. She feels that a lack of “social capital” was more significant than a lack of aspiration.

There is a lot of evidence that working-class families have high aspirations. What they do not have is the information and the understanding as to how you might mobilise that aspiration effectively for outcomes for your children. Money makes a

big difference here ... but also understanding the rules of the game. (Francis, 2014: 29)

Aspiration, and what it consists of, seems to be a cultural product. While becoming a carpenter was a positive life goal for the White British working-class pupils, a Black African boy said that such a job was low paid and socially inferior.

Strand and Winston (2008) suggest that historic working-class communities may be more hesitant in embracing (educational) values and aspirations that promise an escape. Perhaps this provides clues as to why the White British working-class pupils wanted only working class jobs, in contrast to children of recent immigrants who professed 'higher' career aspirations.

Appadurai (2004) argues that aspiration is culturally determined: it manifests itself in ideas and practices regarding some of the key elements of life, such as marriage, work and leisure. The act of aspiration is conditioned by the social values and experiences of communities. The more cohesive a community, the better they are able to be consensual about the content of aspiration and what it means in practice. Appadurai argues that we should not judge communities by the values and standards that they themselves hold in dispute, such as upward social mobility. Perhaps for some long-established White British working-class communities with historical experience of the education system, their lack of belief in and support for this system is a consequence of practical experience and a wish to preserve their local presence and cohesiveness. This argument echoes the findings by Willis (1977) of working class boys, their educational experience and aspirations. His research findings coined the descriptive term 'learning to labour'.

The probability that class is extremely important in shaping and determining educational outcomes should not be downplayed. The literature reveals not only a dual system of private and public education that is proportionately unbalanced but one where a pupil's social class plays a very influential role in shaping their educational experience. The literature outlined the complex relationship that class has on educational attainment. For example, while many White working-class British pupils did not have aspirations for an academic career – or, in many cases, a profession – many pupils from working-class BAME backgrounds want their

education to provide a degree of social mobility. However, it was also revealed above that the realisation of those aspirations is itself greatly influenced by one's class.

Gender and achievement

Research during the past two decades – such as Voyer and Voyer (2014) and Lehre, Hansen and Laake (2009) – suggests that the gender achievement gap has been reversed and now favours female pupils in most subjects. As far back as 1998, a review of research on educational performance (Arnot *et al.*, 1998) showed a narrowing of the gender gap in patterns of entry to General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations. The review argued that the National Curriculum, by restricting pupils' choice of subjects, initially helped reduce gender differentiation in educational attainment. Now, girls outperform boys in most GCSE subjects. Looking at KS1 SATs results, Shelton (2008) found that:

the percentage of pupils reaching Level 2 (the level expected of seven-year-olds) has remained constant at about 80 percent in reading and writing. In spelling, in 1995 and 1998, the proportion of pupils reaching Level 2 was 66 percent, significantly lower than the proportions for reading and writing. In reading, writing and spelling at Key Stage 1, girls do substantially better. The difference in the number of girls and boys reaching Level 2 is about 10 percentage points, and this gap shows no signs of narrowing. It indicates that the underachievement of boys in literacy begins in the first few years of their education (Shelton, 2008: 3).

Gender, in this research, is characterised by Modood's (2010) suggestion that, as a socio-biological concept, it alludes to hierarchies, ideologies and identities. Historically, three genres of theory have been used by academics to explain the relative educational under-achievement of female pupils: biological, sociological and organisational.

- 1) Biologically-based theories argued that women had smaller brains than men. Additionally, women were more likely than men to be governed by their emotions. While this may sound absurdly chauvinistic and irrational, it is true in absolute terms that men's brains are larger. However, this is only because most women tend to be physically smaller than most men in general. Relative to average body weight, however, female brains are larger than male brains (Sharpe, 1976). Data from IQ tests does not infer that females are less intelligent than men. Indeed, some studies suggest that female

babies have inherently superior linguistic abilities relative to their male counterparts.¹⁵ More importantly, recent female educational achievement has surpassed males in virtually all schools in England and Wales, thereby fatally undermining the female inferiority argument.

- 2) There have also been sociologically based arguments suggesting that females' relative educational under-achievement could have been explained by gender differences in the socialisation process. It is argued that agencies such as the family, the education system, the Church, the mass media and the workplace all help to ensure that individuals accept values, attitudes and norms passed down inter-generationally (Rothson, 2007). For example, Sharpe (1976) found that working class girls in the 1970s stated that their preoccupations were love, marriage, children, jobs and careers – in that order of preference.
- 3) The third major group of theories clusters around the central premise that gender differences in educational achievement can be explained by the organisation of schools themselves as institutions, which historically have been seen to operate to the relative disadvantage of female students. These explanations emphasised a wide range of processes and influences such as: a) reading schemes encouraging acceptance of traditional gender roles; b) teachers showing less attention to female pupils; c) a lack of discipline, with girls suffering disproportionately; d) male pupils commandeering and thereby restricting opportunities for girls; e) female pupils' anxieties over appearing "too intelligent" and thereby dulling their attractiveness to boys and threatening the perception of their femininity; f) teachers with stereotypical expectations about their female pupils' potential careers; g) girls lacking in confidence relative to boys because of the ways in which they were treated in school; and finally, g) school curricula and career advice that often conditioned girls to see their futures in domestic roles rather than in full-time careers or higher education.

Gender: under, low and comparative achievement

Because of concern by policy-makers, academics and successive governments over perceived White working-class under and low achievement in NC SATs results, gender has also been

¹⁵ IQ tests are highly controversial for a wide range of reasons with possibly the most profound being the difficulty in defining the concept to a universally agreed standard. Herrnstein and Murray's (1994) *The Bell Curve* argued that poor Blacks have low IQs (inferring that this was why they were poor, thereby individualising a social phenomenon – poverty). It is argued here that 'intelligence' is a culturally specific term.

foregrounded in connection with this issue. Archer and Francis (2007) suggest that such concerns have pushed other issues – such as social inequality – to the margins and have led to a revival of policy suggestions and theories which promote (‘natural’) gender divisions as solutions to failures of the wider social system. Connolly (2004) argues that moral panic and rhetoric characterise the debate about boys’ relative ‘under-achievement’ in comparison to girls, leading to clichéd, worn and stereotypical debates.

West and Pennell (2003) found the term ‘under-achievement’ contentious. It refers to low levels of performance, not to children whose performance was lower than they might have expected. Many of those selected by teachers as under-achievers were in fact, say the authors, low-achievers, including some pupils with Special Educational Needs. They suggest that researchers need to define clearly what is meant by under-achievement because it is a comparative term, often confused with low achievement.

The authors argue that often teachers’ perceptions of under-achievement differ according to gender, with under-achieving girls seen as lacking understanding and confidence. Under-achieving boys, by comparison, are often characterised by their disruptive behaviour. Consequently, girls are far more likely to be described as high achievers than boys, and boys are twice as likely to be described as under-achievers than girls. This relates again to the recognition – or rather the lack of recognition – of under-achievement, and the performance of some girls at school.

Gender, therefore, is still a very important variable in determining educational outcomes. Hartley and Sutton (2010) found that girls from the age of four think that they are cleverer, more successful and harder working than boys. By Years 3 and 4 at primary school, boys seem to have accepted this view and accept that girls will outperform them academically and behave better in lessons. The paper further argues that teachers have lower expectations of their male pupils; this belief filters through to their pupils and becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The gender gap has been the focus of public and academic concern for at least twenty years. The study’s findings are based on detailed questioning of 238 children aged between four and ten. They presented the pupils with statements such as "this child is really clever" and "the teacher is taking the register and this child sits very quietly". They asked the children which the statement best fitted – a picture of a girl or one of a

boy. The academics, Bonny Hartley and Robbie Sutton, also asked the children to point to one of the pictures in answer to the question: "who do you think is cleverer" and "who is better behaved" (Guardian, 1 September 2010).

Francis (2008a), Younger *et al.* (2005) and Skelton *et al.* (2009) contend that teachers are sometimes perceived (mostly by boys) as responding differently and often more positively to girls than boys. Gilborn and Gipps (1997) concur that girls are often seen by teachers as somewhat more mature and more sophisticated in their approach to learning.

Hartley and Sutton (2010) argued that girls at all ages believe that they are cleverer and achieved more at school. In their study, boys aged between four and seven years were evenly divided as to which gender they believed was cleverer and more hardworking. However, by the time boys reach seven or eight years of age, they consent with their female classmates that girls are more likely to achieve better academic results at school than boys.

In an experiment cited by *The Guardian* (1 September 2010), pupils were divided into two groups. The first group was told that boys do not perform as well as girls. The second group was not given this 'information'. Pupils were tested in the three Rs. The academics found that the boys in the first group performed "significantly worse" than the boys in the second group, whilst girls' performances were similar in both groups. The authors argue that teachers should be discouraged from using pejorative and dismissive phrases such as "silly boys" and "schoolboy pranks" or asking boys why they can't "sit nicely like the girls" because such terms reinforce negative stereotypes and low expectations.

By seven or eight years old, children of both genders believe that boys are less focused, able and successful than girls – and think that adults endorse this stereotype ... There are signs that these expectations have the potential to become self-fulfilling in influencing children's actual conduct and achievement ... (Guardian, 1 September 2010).

This appears to confirm the evidence from West and Pennell's (2003) study, where information relating to over 2,000 children entering over 100 different pre-school centres in the UK was collected. Their analysis revealed that girls performed better in cognitive tests when the impact of other factors such as class and ethnicity had been taken into account. This suggests that

differences between the cognitive attainment of girls and boys reveal themselves very early in children's lives.

Gutman, Schoon and Sabates (2011) suggest that gender differences in educational performance indicate that boys are more susceptible than girls to external influencing factors such as parental expectations, perceptions of their own ability, school ethos and peer group pressure. Their findings indicated that adolescent females were more committed to staying in education beyond the age of sixteen and that many young females viewed further education as the norm, regardless of their family background, parental expectations or personal academic beliefs. A study of Pakistani-heritage girls' attitudes to education led one participant to comment:

I think girls take education more seriously than boys, because boys know that when they're finished, they can just go and do this, they don't care, and girls know we don't want to work in retail, we want to go and do something (Shah, Dwyer and Modood, 2010: 1120).

On the other hand, boys took a more utilitarian approach, argued Shah, Dwyer and Modood (2010) weighing up the pros and cons of staying in education beyond the compulsory age as an alternative to the type of employment opportunities available.

Gender and Bangladeshi-heritage girls

The conclusions of Sammons *et al.* (1999) and Arnot *et al.* (1998) are that Bangladeshi girls attain a higher level of cognitive ability at an earlier age and achieve parity with Bangladeshi boys of their year group in their SAT results, although boys tend to score higher in science and maths (Bhattacharyya, Ison, Blair, 2003). The critical factors in respect of gender and achievement seem to be concentrated on the axis between expectation and outcome, as discussed in particular by Jones and Myhill (2004a).

Cassen and Kingdon (2007) found the gender gap to be larger for some ethnic groups, in particular those of Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black African heritage. Among Free School Meal (FSM) pupils, 16% of Bangladeshi-heritage girls who start in the lowest 10% at KS2 make it into the top 50% at KS4 while the figure for Bangladeshi-heritage boys is almost 8%. Thus,

while it reaffirms that girls do better than boys at key stage evaluations, it also illustrates the rate of progress for all Bangladeshi-heritage pupils.

Smithers (2005) reports that provisional figures for England from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) suggest that by Year 6, girls perform better than boys in primary schools, particularly in English. This difference in achievement continues and widens in secondary schools.

Gender and boys

Researchers studying participation and interaction in primary schools have identified a number of contributory factors which lead to gender differences in achievement, such as boys being less likely to take part in class discussion and activities; they do not apply themselves to academic work as diligently as girls. This can be a consequence of a sense of masculine identity shaped by family and peer role models (Myhill, 2000). Warrington and Younger (2005) argue that teachers frequently do not recognise non-focussed girls in classrooms or perhaps concentrate on girls' changing attitudes to learning as they progress through school. Furthermore, Archer, Jackson and Salisbury (1996) argue that although girls are sometimes challenging in their behaviour in the classroom – not very different in this respect to the stereotype of under-achieving boys – their under-achievement may not be recognised because their actual achievement levels are often higher than those of same-age boys and because any lack of focus upon their academic work is likely to be more hidden and less visible. Perhaps, they continue, some of the concerns about teacher perceptions of the differences in achievement between male and female pupils have fuelled the moral panics in the popular press about the lack of positive male role models for some young people both at home and at primary school. A dimension of this moral panic suggests that boys' under-achievement is, in some way, the consequence of a lack of male teachers in primary schools. Though male teachers are undoubtedly under-represented, studies have shown that the vast majority of pupils focus upon a teacher's individual ability as a teacher and their degree of care for their students rather than their gender per se.

Many studies have investigated potential correlations between teacher gender and pupil achievement, and most of these have found no relationship between matched pupil-teacher gender and pupil achievement. Furthermore, the evidence does not suggest that teaching approaches or attitudes differ according to teacher gender (Ehrenberg *et al.* (1995); Skelton

et al. (2009); Francis *et al.* (2008a; 2008b); Carrington *et al.* (2007, 2008)). In spite of the widely held belief that boys and girls exhibit different learning styles, there is little evidence to support this stance (Coffield *et al.* 2004; Younger *et al.* (2005)). Studies have cast doubt on the concept of discrete learning styles and have also failed to find conclusive links between gender and learning style. Where learning practices, behaviour and preferences may be gendered (for example, girls enjoying group work, etc.), these inclinations may be due to social norms, suggesting a role for teachers in broadening (rather than narrowing) learning approaches.

Gender difference and educational achievement were also a concern of the DfCSF (December 2008), whose long-term brief was to:

identify and disseminate to LAs and schools, good practice in schools and classrooms which improves the achievement and progression specific groups of boys and girls (DfCSF, December 2008: 2).

A year later, the same department (DfCSF, 2009a), when evaluating the influence of gender in attainment, argued that no single factor could be identified that could ‘explain’ inequalities in achievement. Instead, it suggested that the relative impact of ethnicity and social class should be analysed and that this data, evaluated alongside that of gender, would give a more rounded interpretation and acknowledgement of the variables determining attainment.

The under-achievement of boys in the context of teaching and learning is apparent and most visible in literacy skills. National Curriculum SATs have consistently shown that, even by the age of seven years, girls outperform boys in reading, writing and spelling tasks. A review of English SAT performances for 2009, according to figures released by the DfCSF (2009a), showed a decline in the proportion of 11-year-old boys in England reaching the standard expected of them in English.

The under-achievement of boys is also characterised by geography, class and ethnicity in that differences in attainment vary according to local authority, ethnic background and FSM eligibility. (Obviously, in this context, gender is a primary characteristic). However other causal factors, mentioned above, may also be relevant and are discussed below.

Shelton (2008) discussed the issue of masculinity and gender identity in relation to boys' learning:

Socio-cultural approaches are those which attempt to challenge within school the dominant images of laddish masculinity held by the peer group, or perhaps the family and community, and to develop an ethos which helps to eradicate the "it's not cool to learn" attitude amongst boys. In many ways, sociocultural approaches underpin other approaches, so rather than being something different and separate, they are an integral and foundational aspect of other successful strategies. Thus schools which are successfully challenging the gender gap are those that do get boys on board; they are schools that are particularly sensitive to the sociocultural contexts of which they are a part, and their whole school ethos embodies that understanding (2008: 7).

Faludi (2000) argues that the under-achievement of male pupils could be a consequence of a "crisis of masculinity". Males, before even leaving school, feel marginalised by their female peers and "not needed". This sense of alienation can be very deflating and sometimes engenders a crude response of brutal "laddism". Ironically, research by Archer, Jackson and Salisbury (1995) suggests that girls now exhibit similar behavioural traits, which they call "ladette" – an answer not to the boys' response to them but to the exams-and-results hothouse atmosphere of contemporary British schools.

Over 26 years ago, Aggleton (1987) studied young pupils from middle-class backgrounds. A number rejected laddish, working-class notions of masculinity. However, they also distanced themselves from adopting personas associated with hard work and seriousness. Instead, they preferred a male identity of effortless achievement. Yet, this kind of low input, high output form of success is very hard to attain and, unsurprisingly, many of these middle-class pupils underperformed.

Archer, Jackson and Salisbury (1996) argue that there is more than one possible form of masculinity for boys to identify with and not all are aggressive. Notions of maleness are in constant flux, with the consequence that boys often behave differently according to the demands of the situation. Yet, a consistent theme in nearly all male identities is a concern with power and dominance. Given this context, some male identities are perceived as existing within a hierarchy. Willis (1979) argued that academic achievement through work

was seen by numerous working-class boys and even some teachers as being of low status and singularly undesirable. Simply, to be seen to strive for academic success can have the emasculating and isolating effect of being branded a “boffin”. The boys Willis studied had anti-school values and preferred “laddish” attitudes and behaviour.

West and Pennell (2003) argue that gender comparison is often misrepresented. The local education authorities in England, for example, had a gender gap at KS2 (in English in 2004) above the national average because more girls achieved level 4 (the national average) or above while boys performed at around the national average. This hardly indicates under-achievement per se. The authors also argued that the phrase “under-achievement” is often used without the originators providing any clear definition. Consequently, it is a term about which there is no precise agreement. This, they suggest, can affect the comparative potential of results of research in this field.

Conclusion

The literature relating to Bangladeshi-heritage pupils, the majority of whom are from deprived backgrounds, reveals a group who achieve below the national average in NC SATs exams at KS1 and 2 but whose rate of progress beyond these stages is above the average level of improvement of most other BAME pupils. Generally, a pupil’s ethnicity should be seen as a highly relevant characteristic in their educational experience. While influential in moulding life-chances and attainment, it has to be evaluated in relation to the other notable variables that shape educational experience: class, gender and school ethos.

This literature review reveals that social class is also extremely important in shaping and determining educational outcomes. This survey highlights the complex relationship that class has with educational achievement: some White working-class British pupils – mostly boys – do not aspire to a white-collar career or profession; in contrast many pupils from working-class BAME backgrounds value a professional career. However, the literature also revealed that the realisation of those aspirations is itself greatly influenced by one’s class. It found that BAME parents usually had a more positive approach to school in that most wanted social mobility for their children and wanted them to do well in exams.

Gender, as a variable in educational achievement, has numerous influences: some boys feel that teachers sometimes respond more favourably towards girls than boys; girls achieve

better KS2 results than their male peers; Bangladeshi-heritage girls progress beyond KS2 more rapidly than for boys. While these findings suggest that gender has a determining role in a pupil's education, the evidence suggests that it is not, on its own, a defining variable.

Numerous studies within this literature review highlight the underperformance and underachievement of Bangladeshi-heritage pupils. Few studies, if any, have examined the above-average performance of Bangladeshi-heritage pupils in the primary sector.

The next literature review chapter will focus on the relationship between school ethos and the attainment of Bangladeshi-heritage pupils.

Chapter Three - Literature Review (Attainment)

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the influences upon the attainment of Bangladeshi-heritage pupils in primary education in the UK and for comparative purposes, the review also encompasses literature relating to BAME and White working class pupils. Literature relating to the performance of Bangladeshi-heritage students and others from BAME communities will be examined to provide a contextual overview of the attainment relationship with and between pupils of other ethnicities in the UK. In addition, some possible causes of the attainment gap are examined, these include factors such as economic disadvantage, cultural values, home environment, institutional and individual racism, and language and communication. The remainder of the chapter examines the concept of ethos and its relationship with other features of schooling, including formal and informal versions of ethos, discussions of its educational importance, its relationship to attainment, its influence upon the curriculum, and differing approaches to acceptance and implementation.

Bangladeshi-heritage pupils' attainment

Modood (2004) presents an imaginative and powerful discussion that attempts to assess the impact of ethnicity on educational attainment. He looks at the cultural and social capital resources that ethnicity provides or denies access to. He labels these resources ethnic capital. Modood feels that ethnicity can, by being perceived in this way, constitute a form of class because it brings together people of similar resources. It is a useful development in helping us understand the nuances of achievement by BAME groups who experience limited access to cultural and social capital in some fields – notably prestigious UK universities – yet accumulate disproportionate resources in adjacent domains, such as academic qualifications. Here, ethnicity and class intersect to produce the phenomenon of over-achievement.

In 2004, Ofsted published a small-scale survey of the educational experience of Bangladeshi pupils in English schools (Ofsted, 2004). This initiative arose from the statistical evidence that suggested that Bangladeshi pupils achieve below the national average at all Key Stages of the National Curriculum. They rank below all other BAME groups except Irish Travellers. Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) visited nine secondary schools, chosen because of their comparative difference in the numbers of pupils of Bangladeshi heritage, which ranged from

11% to 59%. In their visits, HMI sought the views of pupils, parents, teachers and members of Bangladeshi-heritage communities.

Ofsted found that although Bangladeshi-heritage pupils have below-average attainment at the end of each Key Stage, their achievement levels are improving, especially amongst Bangladeshi-heritage girls. For instance, in the DfES (2002) report *Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant: Analysis of LEA Action Plans*, at KS2 Bangladeshi-heritage pupils' achievement was 10.9% below the national average for KS2 English of Level 4 and above. Yet, as noted above, Cassen and Kingdon (2007) found that the rate of improvement amongst all Bangladeshi-heritage pupils between KS2 and KS4 is above the national average and outperforms many other ethnic groups, where the parents generally have higher socio-economic status. They found that Bangladeshi-heritage pupils, in comparison to four other ethnic groups – White British, Indian-heritage, African-Caribbean-heritage and Pakistani-heritage – had the highest rate of improvement. However, statistically, Bangladeshi-heritage (and Pakistani-heritage) pupils have the lowest proportions of parents working in professional occupations.

The DfES 2002 report found that the schools they visited used a number of tailored approaches to meet the needs of their pupils – including those of Bangladeshi heritage – and these were having increasing success. Careful analysis of data to assess and track pupils' progress, close observation of learning in class and full discussion with pupils were practices instrumental in this success. Support to improve spoken and written English is critical in raising the achievement of Bangladeshi-heritage pupils at all stages.

Schools' knowledge of Bangladeshi culture and religion, reflected in modifications of the curriculum and in other ways, was much appreciated by pupils and parents and was found to help them to feel involved in the life of the school. Having South Asian-heritage and Bangladeshi-heritage teachers was valued. The research of Tahir Abbas (2002) into the educational achievement of South Asian-heritage pupils in schools in Birmingham noted that many felt, as a result of co-ethnicity, that they were able to form more constructive relationships with South Asian-heritage teachers:

Mr Khan, although he is Asian, it doesn't really show. Mr Singh is like purebred Asian. He's got all the Asian traits ... the Asian accent. They're both okay I mean. I reckon I

do get on better with them ... because when we do meet it is more personal—between five or six of us ... you just tend to be more relaxed (Abbas, 2002: 300).

Modood (2007) also argues that we must understand changes in BAME peoples' culture over time. Culture is fluid, especially when people of varied ethnicities live side by side, work and are schooled together and intermingle. It is the recognition of this that is also important in intercultural relations (of power) that exist within the school between teacher and pupil.

The great majority of pupils interviewed in the Ofsted (May 2004) survey valued school, and were keen to do well. They appreciated their teachers' efforts on their behalf, against a background in which racist behaviour and criminality outside school often threatened their security and well-being. Additionally, Bangladeshi-heritage teachers and other bilingual staff provided good support for pupils and helped to make valuable links with families and the wider community.

Out-of-school classes and other activities funded by *Excellence in Cities* or other such schemes such as those provided by the charitable sector to help subsidise the cost of school trips and visits were an important element in schools' efforts to boost attainment. Many of the Bangladeshi-heritage parents interviewed in the Ofsted (May 2004) survey were very ambitious for their children. Despite many having no formal education beyond the elementary level, they appreciated the advantages that education can bring and the opportunity it gives their children to play a full part in a diverse society. They gave strong support to, and had aspirations for, their children, although the support was sometimes inhibited by a lack of knowledge of education services and having English as a second language.

This perception of high aspiration but low vocalisation of that aspiration by Bangladeshi-heritage parents is discussed by Crozier and Davies (2004; 2007) and Crozier (2009). The latter found that most teachers in two towns with schools comprising Bangladeshi- and Pakistani-heritage pupils were not aware of the detail of their pupils' parents' aspirations. They were generally reluctant to talk, out of respect for the teacher or because they were inhibited by their self-consciousness with respect to their use of English. Consequently, this was interpreted as disinterest. Crozier and Davies and Crozier felt – in all three studies – that these cultural characteristics of behaviour were sometimes made worse by the teacher's lack

of empathy and understanding of their pupils' ethnic and cultural differences with the majority (White) ethnic group. Haynes, Emmons and Ben-Avie (1997) argue that it is important that there are staff with whom pupils are able to share their perceptions and feelings. The authors found that students felt that some teachers did not treat them with respect and were not open to listening to their personal problems. They also found that this climate drifts downwards so that students consequently saw some of their classmates as non-trusting and disinterested in the welfare of their peers.

Walters' (2007) research into Year 3 Bangladeshi-heritage pupils in a 'cathedral city in England' – implying that the pupils were an ethnic minority in the classroom as well as in the community – explored the unconscious ways of thinking that can lead to negative stereotyping and subsequent under-achievement. It has been argued that the pressure of being a BAME pupil is more intense in this kind of predominantly monocultural environment than that faced by pupils where they are the majority cultural group in a multicultural or even inter-cultural environment (Mac an Ghaill and Haywood, 2005). Bilingualism can also contribute to BAME pupils feeling like outsiders.

As well as being categorised as minority ethnic pupils, Bangladeshi pupils attending school in England are nearly always EAL pupils as well. EAL pupils are those who are learning the curriculum and English at the same time. As such, EAL pupils have particular and diverse language and learning needs that usually differentiate them from monolingual English pupils. Research shows how these needs are often not identified by formal assessment tests and how struggles that pupils have with classroom work can be interpreted as 'deficient cognitive abilities or a lack of motivation' (Cummins, 1989: 26 in Walters, 2007: 89).

Walters illustrated how these Bangladeshi-heritage pupils were assigned to low sets or placed in remedial/SEN provision. She portrayed how teachers would assess the needs of the pupil through the prism of their need to teach as teachers, thus placing their personal, career-oriented goals over the needs of the minority ethnic pupils. Her study showed how the practice of pupil assessment reinforced and reproduced social inequalities through presenting the pupils' few opportunities for developing their strengths. It reiterated the need to widen out the concepts of learning so that issues such as EAL become integrated within mainstream language-learning provision and is not seen as an indicator of 'other' status. Her research also illustrated how,

from the very beginnings of their lives as pupils, children are categorised and how this positioning guides them toward “becoming bright, achieving learners or defiant, unmotivated, unsuccessful ones” (Walters, 2007: 100).

In a report, Ofsted (1999) concluded that the:

... overall pattern that emerges for Bangladeshi pupils is of a group making steady but slow progress from Key Stage 1 and achieving average points scores at GCSE that compares favourably with those attained by other pupils in socio-economically disadvantaged schools. Performance, however, remains below the national averages and especially in relation to higher grades at GCSE (Ofsted, 1999: 10).

The material relating to the experience of Bangladeshi-heritage pupils paints a picture of pupils, the majority of whom are from very deprived backgrounds, who achieve below the national average in NC SATs exams at KS1 and 2 but whose rate of progress is above and beyond that of their peers.

Home environment and attainment

The DfES (2005) revealed that BAME pupils’ attainment slows and diminishes as they progress through the education system. It has been argued above that the notion of under-achievement undermines ethnic minority efforts to succeed and the desire to do well. What began life as a useful concept to identify an inequality of opportunity is now negatively associated with the status of “ethnic minority” (Gillborn and Mirza 2000). To fully understand the history of achievement and under-achievement amongst BAME pupils, it would be helpful to discuss the issue of parental involvement. Mattingly *et al.* (2002) suggest that parental involvement is linked to attainment and attendance and show the link between parental involvement and success in English, maths and reading and writing skills. Additionally, these researchers suggest that active parents can also have a say in shaping the very policies of the schools that, in turn, can feed back positively into their children as pupils.

During the mid-1990s, West *et al.* (1998) examined parents’ involvement in their children’s education and found that differences in terms of educational level emerged even when social class differences did not. Sammons and Robinson (1997a) found that there was a significant impact on attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 in relation to parents’ interests in their child’s

education as reported by head-teachers. Edwards (1999) concluded that schools were still a long way from fully integrating parents in the learning process. Eric (in Sewell, 1997) also discusses the problems faced by Black pupils and their disengagement and alienation from school and the school curriculum.

Sammons *et al.* (1999) found that a number of factors relating to the home environment had an independent association with learning. The frequency with which parents reported reading to their child was significant. Those who read twice a day showed the most impact. Reading daily or several times a week, compared with reading once a week, also helped develop a child's ability to learn and understand. The frequency with which children were taken to a library, especially weekly visits, also prompted a significant positive input into attainment.

Attainment gap between BAME pupils

Archer and Francis (2007) argue that the focus on the success and attainment of BAME pupils is politically, socially and academically important. For example, they suggest that the recognition and 'celebration' of BAME success provides an important challenge to the constant production of negative images and associations of BAME young people as 'problems' and 'failing' pupils. The authors are concerned that this latter approach of concentrating on negatives is unacceptable from a social justice perspective.

Archer and Francis (2007) acknowledge that 'common sense', racist ideas around minority, ethnic pupils remain a powerful concern and continue to influence education policy. They also argue that policy approaches to under-achievement often see the 'causes' of BAME 'failure' as a consequence of personal attitudes, beliefs and cultural/family practices and values rather than having structural origins. *The Annual Report for English* (Ofsted, 2004/05) indicates that there are significant differences in the attainment of pupils in primary schools from different minority ethnic groups, which suggests that simply citing institutional racism does not do justice to the complexity of the issue.

The difference in attainment and aspiration between BAME pupils continues beyond primary school and into secondary schools, where some African-Caribbean-heritage and Black African-heritage pupils in particular make less progress than the majority of their peers. Also, those who are fluent in two or more languages with English as their second language achieve less well in writing than pupils of similar ability, who have English as their first language.

There are significant differences between the attainment of different BAME groups. The highest achieving groups at KS2 and 3 are of Chinese-heritage and Indian-heritage. Educational statistics put Chinese-heritage pupils as the highest achieving group within the compulsory education sector (Pang, 1999; DfEE, 2001). Archer and Francis (2007) found that these families support and motivate their children by providing them with the resources but this is at the cost of high expectation and hard work. Chinese-heritage young people have the highest proportional rates of entry of BAME pupils into further and higher education. (Gillborn and Gipps, 1997) Approximately 90% of this particular ethnicity entering tertiary institutions (Owen, 1994). This denoted a remarkable and swift increase within a decade (Taylor, 1987). Yet Chinese-heritage groups remain relatively invisible in academic debate and educational theory. Where they do appear, Chinese-heritage pupils and communities are often narrowly stereotyped as high achievers. Their absence is not new. As Watson (1977) suggested in his pioneering research of the Chinese in Britain over thirty years ago: *'The Chinese are undoubtedly the least understood of all Britain's immigrant minorities'* (Watson, 1977: 181).

Strand (1999) has shown that early education has a positive effect on attainment, with the earlier the intervention, the greater the impact later on. In particular, Year 6 pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds showed higher attainment if they had benefited from early years education (Sammons *et al.*, 2008) compared to those children who did not enjoy a satisfactory home-learning environment (Sylva *et al.*, 2007). Additionally, attending a high-quality pre-school has the consequence of a more lasting effect on outcomes for attainment in mathematics and English (Sammons *et al.*, 2008).

Despite the positive impact of early years education, fewer children from ethnic minority groups participate in formal pre-school childcare (Fitzgerald, 2002). Not surprisingly, given this finding, ethnic minority mothers are more likely to stay at home to look after their children (Johnson and Kossykh, 2008). They also depend on extended family members, friends and neighbours for help. Yet, some BAME pupils tend to have better outcomes at primary school and beyond, in particular those of Chinese-heritage and Indian-heritage. This raises the question as to how much BAME children benefit from a positive home learning environment, which may lessen the possible disadvantage of not attending formal pre-school.

Strand (1999) showed that Black pupils with high attainment levels at age 4 and White pupils from disadvantaged families all made less than expected progress during KS1. In contrast, Chinese-heritage pupils advanced more than their White classmates. Additionally, Indian-heritage pupils from poor families had the highest level of progress at primary school. Strand showed that although Indian-, Bangladeshi- and Chinese-heritage pupils began their primary school education with lower attainment levels than White pupils, by the end of KS1 they had caught up (Strand, 1999). Generally, however, the attainment gap between children from the poorest and richest backgrounds appears to increase rapidly during their primary school years (Goodman and Gregg, 2010).

Chinese- and Indian-heritage students are the most successful at avoiding low attainment. Cassen and Kingdon (2007) show that Indian-heritage pupils who were in the bottom 10% of attainment at KS2 had climbed out of it by KS4, with 13% in the highest achievement category. They estimate that 76.4% of Bangladeshi-heritage pupils who are in the top half of performance at KS2 remain there at KS4.

Cassen and Kingdon (2007) suggest that a school's quality has a fundamental effect on outcomes, often helping to overcome their deprived pupils' disadvantages. However, they do contend that poorer and minority ethnic pupils are more likely to be enrolled at under-performing schools with detrimental consequences to achievement levels. In respect of adult career paths, de Coulon *et al.* (2007) argue that the best (crude) predictor of how skilled an adult will be is their achievement at primary school: cognitive test results achieved at this level are significant indicators of adult life chances.

Language and communication

Written and spoken language is the primary communicative channel through which a school's ethos is created and applied. Bourdieu (1990) argues that complex ideas need a complex language code to fully explain them.

I think that, literary and stylistic qualities apart, what Spitzer says about Proust's style is something I could say about my own writing. He says, firstly, that what is complex can only be said in a complex way; secondly, that reality is not only complex, but also structured ... if you want to hold the world in all its complexity and at the

same time order and articulate it, you have to use heavily articulated sentences that can be practically reconstructed like Latin sentences (Bourdieu, 1990: 51–52).

Ethos, I would argue, is a complex idea. However, it is important that what it represents both in terms of ideas and how these should be implemented needs to be articulated as clearly as possible. In *Edges of Language*, Van Buren (1972) suggests that there is a limit to the way in which a word or phrase can be meaningfully communicated. Language is elastic and words are continually used in novel ways and varied contexts. Ethos is one such word. Van Buren argues that as language moves away from its common usage – what he calls the middle of the platform of linguistic use – it becomes more ambiguous. If we examine ‘ethos’ using Van Buren’s theory, the suggestion is that ‘ethos’ is a word that is varied in its characteristic components which are often defined by its context.

Adherence to collective and institutional symbols, such as the school badge, uniform and behavioural rules helps create shared values and beliefs. These ‘signs’ are a tangible feature that represent elements of the common experience. Lambkin (2010) suggests that a commitment to the school badge, for example, provides a platform from which concrete discussions about ethos with parents, pupils and staff can take place. He argues that a route to assessing students’, parents’ and teachers’ understanding of the school’s ethos can be found by requesting that they explain what the badge means to them. However, perceptions and interpretations of the common experience can differ. Working hard in a lesson makes sense to pupils who value diligence and believe that academic success is important. Therefore, ensuring that hard work in lessons becomes part of the common experience requires the engendering of values and beliefs that will motivate the desired actions amongst others who may not, initially, share these values. Some pupils believe that working hard is for ‘swots’ and ‘nerds’.

Yet, once shared values and beliefs have been established, they ensure that meaningful responses can be given to questions about signs and symbols, such as visibly working hard in class. Thus, although symbols may be the physical manifestation of ethos, values and beliefs are always there in the background providing their foundation.

Bernstein (1975) argues that schools transmit behaviour to pupils through their cultural practices. There are two dimensions of this: the instrumental order which attempts to train

pupils in particular skills; and the expressive order which seeks to inculcate certain behaviour and attitudes. The relationship between the two can produce strains and tensions. For instance, the instrumental dimension may involve streaming and bands according to ‘ability’, while the expressive may, for example, emphasise the equal worth of each pupil in order to generate a collective identity. Achieving a harmonious relationship between the two dimensions is necessary if the school ethos is to be received with equal enthusiasm by all pupils from whatever ethnic, social, religious and gender background.

Language and attainment

For many BAME pupils, English is not their first language. For example, Dustmann, Machin and Schönberg (2008) argue that among pupils of Indian-heritage, the share of native English speakers is only 19.5%. Strand (2010) found that 98% of the more than 5,000 Bangladeshi pupils spoke English as an additional language. Additionally, as corroboration, the two ethnic groups with the lowest share of children for whom English is the mother tongue – Bangladeshi and Pakistani – experience the lowest scores in the cognitive tests. However, they also found that the impact of language declines as children become older. Consequently, whilst language does contribute to explaining the achievement gaps between White British and BAME early years’ pupils, it should also be noted that the latter improve more quickly relative to White British pupils. These findings, then, seem to suggest that achievement may only be partly due to pupils’ English language abilities.

However, in this discussion of the role of language in cognitive development, we should also note that it has a role in the acquisition of cultural capital and that this also influences educational outcomes. The work of Bourdieu (1994) and Bernstein (1971; 1973; 1975) is important here.

Bourdieu’s analysis of cultural capital (Swartz, 1997) posits that it exists in three forms: those cultural goods acquired through socialisation, such as the extended language code, knowledge and appreciation of different artistic genres, historical paradigms, architectural styles, etc. – he labelled this form of cultural capital, embodied; secondly, there exists objectified forms such as books, musical instruments, works of art that demand specialist knowledge and skills to use, deploy and understand; thirdly, cultural capital has an institutionalised form which is essentially the market in educational qualifications. Bourdieu feels that there has been tremendous growth in the markets of these last two forms of cultural

capital. He also suggests that the acquisition of cultural capital begins at an early age. Shah, Dwyer and Modood (2010) relate the work of the Pakistani Welfare Association in Slough that initiated events that brought parents together in order so they had access to cultural capital within the Pakistani community that would help their children's education.

Community initiatives serve to reinforce shared norms and values related to education. They provide working-class Pakistani parents with opportunities to access the cultural capital that Bourdieu highlights through cross-class networks with more middle-class Pakistani parents. Such parents provide information on and strategies to negotiate primary and secondary school levels and entry into higher education, as well as information on the range of career options that are available (Shah, Dwyer and Modood, 2010: 1121).

This allowed working class parents access to resources hitherto unavailable or inaccessible in wider society, from advice to tutors, expertise to practical assistance. It is an example of what Modood (2004) has also termed ethnic capital.

Both Bourdieu (1994) and Bernstein (1971) argue that language is in and of itself a tool, a cultural resource: the rules and codes one uses as well as the form and style have real and symbolic roles in enhancing or stunting social and career advancement. Placed well behind the linguistic starting line compared to their monolingual but indigenous White British peers, bilingual pupils of Bangladeshi heritage, arguably, start with an in-built language disadvantage. However, as we will see below, the early bilingual 'disadvantage' can, in later years, become a distinct advantage.

Bernstein (1971) argues that pupils utilise primary language codes in their communication that reflect their social origins, communities and circumstances. Those we would loosely term middle-class deploy an 'elaborated' code, while working class pupils relied on a 'restricted' code. While Bernstein found that pupils in his research did occasionally switch registers, for the most part they stayed within register. He – and his research colleagues – felt that this had an impact both on their cultural self-conception and identity and on their cognitive development. Crudely and simply, those using an elaborative code had their cultural and social identities reaffirmed by the (pedagogic) language code, while restricted code pupils were distanced from their subculture by language, signs and symbols used within

the school environment that did not always reaffirm the values and norms of their communities. In this context, school becomes an environment of reassurance or one of potential alienation. However, we should note that Bernstein (1973) also argued:

There is no convincing evidence that children who fail in school have a smaller available vocabulary, or a less rich grammatical system, than those who succeed (Bernstein, 1973: x).

Yet, despite the work of Bernstein, it is still the case that ‘intelligence’ – IQ – testing is still being done, comparing pupils from different ethnic backgrounds without any allowance made for language (both with reference to EAL or code differences). Lynn and Cheng (2013) used a cohort of 19,000 children born between September 2000 and August 2001 and tested their abilities in the Naming Vocabulary test, which assesses verbal ability/expressive language by asking children to name items pictured in a booklet (as well as the Picture Similarities test, a non-verbal/problem-solving ability and the Pattern Construction test, which assesses spatial ability). The authors did not assess the pre-test linguistic status of their cohort – such as whether English was spoken as a first or second language – assuming all came to the test as equals. It was only as a passing note in their conclusion, in a discussion about the relative earnings of the different ethnic groups, that language was mentioned as a potential influential factor.

Part of the explanation for the poor earnings of the Pakistanis and Bangladeshis may be that many of them have achieved relatively lower educational qualifications because they have a poorer command of English compared to those from other ethnic minority groups (Lynn and Cheng, 2013: 455).

Ludhra and Jones (2008), regarding how to deal with the learning and language needs of advanced bilingual learners in the primary classroom, found that facilitating and encouraging pupils to communicate in their first language was a key objective. To achieve this, it was necessary to find out what and how many languages were spoken in the schools and to create a whole-school language register. By doing so, teachers became aware of the language groups they taught and the skills of those teaching them. This led to attempts to meet related cultural and language needs. This development encouraged communication among teachers, pupils and support staff, where interest was nurtured in the first languages and cultures of all

members of the school community. As an acknowledgement of this, it was decided that school reports would note first language development. This initiative symbolised a positive message to pupils and parents about the importance of the first language and culture within the schools studied.

Dustmann, Machin and Schonberg (2008) found that the language spoken in the home had a consequence for academic achievement at school. If English was a second language, progress in the early years of primary education would be slower than pupils who spoke English as a first language. However, the impact of English as a second language on achievement declines as pupils grow older. Conversely, those that are bilingual in the Bangladeshi communities have a faster rate of academic improvement between Key Stages 2 to 4 (see below). Consequently, language helps to explain why ethnic minority pupils make greater progress than white British pupils, and why Black Caribbean pupils make less progress than any other ethnic group. Moreover, with the exception of Indian and Chinese pupils, ethnic minority pupils are substantially more likely to be living in poverty, as proxied by eligibility for free school lunches. The inclusion of this variable likewise reduces ethnic minority attainment gaps substantially. However, this cannot explain why ethnic minority pupils make greater progress than White British pupils.

The influence of ethos upon educational attainment

Definition

Every school has an ethos – a guiding set of principles by which it operates on a day-to-day level. Stock (2006) argues that the word “ethos” evolved from the Greek word for habit or custom. Ethos refers to:

The characteristic conduct of an individual human life or group of people, the distinctive spirit of a culture or an era that can be objectively described and/or personally experienced (David Dawson: n.d.).

Bragg and Manchester (2011) believe that ethos is formal and informal, official and unofficial; that it can be written down as a guiding set of values and behavioural principles and that it is also something organic that arises out of individual and social dynamics; and non-physical in the way the ‘feel’ of an environment, culture and community can be perceived.

Ethos emerges from everyday processes of relationships and interactions and it concerns norms rather than exceptions ... Ethos is in some respects intangible, to do with the 'feel' of a school, with that which is experienced but, since it is also taken for granted, may not easily be articulated ... Ethos also, however, emerges from material and social aspects of the environment. [It] is continually negotiated by those within the school rather than simply imposed once and for all; members of school communities are active agents in defining and redefining ethos (Bragg, 2011: 2).

McLaughlin (2005), in his article *The Educative Importance of Ethos*, also explores the notion of ethos and the importance of ethos in education but from a philosophical perspective. Philosophers are interested in ethos because of its close relationship with Aristotelian emphases on educational influence involving the shaping of behaviour, morals, character and judgment. McLaughlin argues that the importance of the Aristotelian concept of ethos is neglected by many in education today. Issues and questions related to ethos are often dealt with in terms of related notions such as culture and climate. This research attempts to address these concepts by examining the values that shape the learning environments in the four schools used in the study.

Ethos and attainment

There is no universal acceptance as to the effect (inclusive, eclectic) that ethos has upon learning and pedagogy. However, it appears that discussion and debate about its merits or otherwise has increased over the past decade or so. Teach First (2010) emphasised the importance of a consistent, consensual, universally applied ethos in determining educational outcomes for pupils.

The qualitative research that has been done on this topic suggests that there is a link between ethos and culture and pupil attainment. Using statistical methods to measure school ethos, a range of surveys in the UK and the US have seen school ethos and culture as a determining factor in pupil attainment (Teach First, 2010: 21).

This thinking dovetails, not surprisingly given Teach First's origins as a centrally funded initiative, with that of the former Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove who, in 2013, asserted that "*for a school what matters is not its intake, but its ethos*".¹⁶

It needs to be made clear at this point that most governments would have political reasons for stressing the pre-eminent importance of a 'positive' school ethos in educational achievement. Put crudely, it is a much cheaper premise in terms of policy to attempt to deal with than accepting economic inequality as the primary determinant. Teach First believes that the 'branding' of a school – its signs and symbols, such as badge, uniform, motto, etc. – are important in the creation of a positive image. This reasoning is compliant with, and is borrowed from, the prevailing, dominant ideas in business and marketing. They feel that schools are also part of the market system and should openly compete for 'customers'.

Bragg and Manchester (2011) disagree with Teach First's idea that schools should adopt a market approach to education and that this should be reflected in the values and practices of its ethos.

Students are not employees and in many cases they have little choice as to the institution they attend. They cannot be compelled to agree with mission statements ... "motivational sayings", flags, crests and slogans attempting to convey values to which all can or must subscribe ... [These] are notoriously irrelevant or meaningless when viewed "from below". Rather than trying harder to refine and enforce them, there may be more pedagogic value in encouraging critical analysis ... The slogan "No Excuses" by one Teach First ambassador shows a reprehensible lack of interest in young people's lives outside school and might justifiably be parodied as "Never Explain: Do Not Attempt to Understand" (2011: 13).

Eisner (1994) supports the notion that the day-to-day activities of the school influence the experience of ethos in many ways. He proposes that the current emphasis on the production of measurable competencies in the 'three Rs' – reading, writing and arithmetic (numeracy) – is creating an unbalanced curriculum that will, in the long run, weaken rather than strengthen the quality of children's education because there is too much focus on reaching

¹⁶ Interview with Benedict Brogan, *Daily Telegraph*, 3 August 2009.

numerical targets in these core subjects rather than encouraging and cultivating enquiring minds. (The majority vote at the May 2009 teachers' unions' conferences to boycott SATs seems to support this position.) He states that students learn in school when they are given an opportunity to learn which, in turn, affects the overall ethos of the school.

Rutter *et al.* (1979) concluded that ethos was responsible for many of the attainment differences between schools in similar circumstances. Later studies (Mortimore *et al.*, 1988; Thacker and McInerney, 1992; Glover and Coleman, 2005) confirm the link between attainment and ethos. In a school with an inconsistent ethos and culture, boundaries and systems are in constant motion throughout the school day. This does not create an environment conducive to learning, where pupils are confident, explorative, questioning and feel free to make mistakes. Common experiences shaped by shared values and beliefs help community cohesion. For values and beliefs to be meaningful, they must be evidenced through consistent practice. In schools, for example, pupils who consistently experience staff dealing with bullying, thus demonstrably valuing all pupils' well-being, will absorb the value of recognising all students' safety and well-being.

The importance of common values and collective experience, Rutter argues, should be security through consistency and have the flexibility to change when and where necessary (Rutter *et al.*, 1979). He concluded that the ethos of the school was a major factor in determining student achievement and future success recognised by all in the school community. However, it is staff, heads of departments and head-teachers who are ultimately accountable for ensuring that pupils' day-to-day experiences match the intended values and beliefs. A school with a strong ethos and culture encourages a pupil to learn, knowing that certain actions will be met with comparable responses regardless of classroom, subject or teacher. Pupils will know what is not permitted, as well as what is allowed and encouraged, and feel safe, confident and secure within these rigid boundaries. The dilemma is the degree of compromise between providing a safe, secure environment and allowing freedom of thought and expression.

Those characteristics of ethos seen to be influential in attainment (McLaughlin, 2005; Bragg and Manchester, 2011) are discussed below.

Ethos and creativity

In the education of young people, Bragg and Manchester (2011) felt that creativity should be an important feature of any prevailing ethos. The authors emphasised what a ‘creative ethos’ can do for a school’s qualitative environment and for its emotional climate. They engaged with those elements and characteristics that were perceived as constituting a school ethos which facilitated creativity. This would, they argue, encourage conversation, discussion, debate, reflection and dissent.

The non-cognitive, emotional and social learning and other important aspects of schools’ work that may not be reflected in test scores. Asked about schools they attended, many people would acknowledge that their memories of what the building, their teachers and their fellow students looked like are somewhat hazy or unreliable; many would struggle to recall in any detail the content of their lessons. What endures, however, and often retains its intensity across decades in somatically re-experienced pain, pleasure, embarrassment and humiliation, is how it made them feel (Brag and Manchester, 2011: 7).

Haynes, Emmons and Ben-Avie (1997) suggest that ethos moulds what they refer to as the “school climate”, which itself shapes the consistency and quality of interactions at all levels within the school community – relationships that influence children’s academic, emotional and psychological development. The authors observed that students developed well in schools in which consensus and collaboration – co-operation – ensured the successful implementation of policies and programs that embodied the school ethos.

Macneil, Prater and Busch (2009) assert that the first major purpose of a school is to create and provide a culture and climate that is hospitable to learning. Haynes, Emmons and Ben-Avie (1997) believe that the study of school climate was important because it examined factors that influence students’ success. They focussed not only on student background and what motivated them but also on the quality of interactions between students and teachers as insights into student academic achievement.

Jeffrey and Woods (2003) researched and observed the ethos of a primary school which they found very creative, using the terms dynamism, appreciation, captivation and care. The authors highlighted the importance of schools’ students as valued members of the institution in every

way: physically, intellectually and emotionally. John-Steiner (2000) also suggested that creative individuals combine discipline with playfulness, with motivation generated by mutual support.

Sbuttoni (2010) believes that learning is best achieved and encouraged when the practice is enjoyable.

We need to change the way we teach, we need to make it more attractive, more fun, take the pressure away so we are not just worrying about the amount of information we can stuff into children's brains (Guardian, 9 October 2010).¹⁷

She cites, as an example, watching pupils collect spiders and worms, which were then used in the classroom to learn about nature, geography and maths. She argues that boys really prosper in such an environment.

Downing, Johnson and Kaur (2003) suggest that the arts can help increase motivation, improve behaviour, attendance and self-esteem, and are fundamental to progress at all levels in school. These findings support those of Sbuttoni (2010), Younger and Warrington (2005), Jeffrey and Woods (2003) and John-Steiner (2000) and they contend that arts-based strategies improve attainment. The latter found that some of the low-attaining boys were frequently volatile and experienced difficulty concentrating; however, in arts activities, many became engaged and committed. Dance was very popular:

I didn't think I really wanted to do it, because I haven't ever considered dancing as something which I do. But the street dancing was fun, and the man who did it was really calm, so I enjoyed it much more than I thought I would ... I didn't really want to do it, and I was nervous in case I couldn't do it right, but it was kind of good when you got into it, because there were people from outside, and I kind of want to do it again ... I thought, oh no, not dancing, but when I came in and saw people playing the Brazilian instruments and they were in work-out suits, I thought, this is going to be really great, and it was (Younger and Warrington, 2005: 109).

¹⁷ In Anushka Asthana, Britain's Divided Schools: a disturbing portrait of inequality, Guardian, 9 October 2010.

Younger and Warrington argue that children's commitment to, and concentration in, arts-based lessons helped them also to acquire organisational skills and taught them to work cooperatively with other people. This had a positive effect on their academic work. The authors emphasise that those schools in their research that prioritised the arts saw benefits to the pupils' learning. Arts were central rather than a peripheral part of the curriculum. Many disaffected pupils, who had previously or usually thought of lessons as 'boring' or 'pointless' found their dance, poetry, drama, music lessons 'fun' and stimulating.

Ethos and sub-culture

The tension between social class and ethos was highlighted back in the 1970s by Willis (1977), discussed above, who researched the often-tense relationship between working-class boys and school culture and ethos. As noted, he argued that this resulted in a sub-culture containing its own definition of valuable knowledge providing a meaningful alternative to the school's offering. Their valued body of knowledge was intrinsically related to their lives outside school and the expectation of what they would do – their work – after school.

Here, Willis is referencing Bourdieu's thesis of legitimate knowledge that qualifies as cultural capital. Bourdieu and Passeron (1994) argue that compulsory schooling – however democratically organised – legitimises the knowledge culture of the dominant class at the expense of the knowledge culture of the dominated class. Prescribed textual knowledge, therefore, is elevated above the learning provided by folk, traditional, familial and customary knowledge. Bourdieu (1977a) further criticises state compulsory education in that it demands of pupils those facets of cultural capital that are necessary for 'success' but which the very system itself does not provide.

By doing away with giving explicitly to everyone what it implicitly demands of everyone, the education system demands of everyone alike that they have what it does not give. This consists mainly of linguistic and cultural competence and that relationship of familiarity with culture which can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture (Bourdieu, 1977a in Sullivan, 2002: 145).

This argument suggests that Bourdieu feels that working class pupils are at a systemic disadvantage because of what they do not bring to school within them. This is in accordance with Willis' argument that working class pupils are not mere passive participants in a system of education that is designed to make them fail. He feels that they recognise this and act accordingly.

Stevens (2007) argues that Willis' findings provide an example of differentiation-polarisation theory, which suggests that intra-school values and practices amplify family background effects, ultimately disadvantaging working-class pupils who are disproportionately represented in groups with supposedly less ability as a result of the middle-class nature of school expectations (Ball, 1981; Lacey, 1970). Consequently, polarisation occurs: the development of an anti-school subculture in response to the dominant school culture and ethos. In effect, this means that working-class pupils meet the negative stereotypes many middle-class teachers hold of them. There is a growing belief held by many researchers and academics – who do not necessarily have a political agenda to fulfil – that a positive ethos and culture does indeed help schools to improve educational disadvantage (DfES 2005, 2006; Blandon and Gregg, 2004). A positive, creative school ethos is an effect that can be transmitted down through generations (Blandon and Gibbons 2006). Ofsted (2009) felt that this was the case in many outstanding schools:

High-quality public services require school environment that leaves the community's problems and tensions outside. The culture and norms inside the school can often be very different to those outside; as one head teacher put it: "The street stops at the gate." (Ofsted, 2009: 12)

A strong ethos and culture can be especially important in new schools – which have greater scope in establishing an ethos and culture – and turnaround schools. Additionally, during these times of reduced public expenditure, a focus on ethos and culture offers benefits without incurring burdensome costs. However, it is important to recognise that ethos and culture are not just beneficial for the pupils; they are important for teachers as well. Many good teachers are motivated by more than salary and exam results. Besley and Ghatak (2003) argue:

High-quality public services require a high intensity of effort ... rewards to putting in effort are not purely pecuniary — agents could be motivated to provide high-quality services because they care about the output being produced. For example, teachers may care about teaching to a curriculum that they think is most conducive to learning. Thus, the mission of the organization can affect the degree to which agents are willing to commit costly effort (2003: 241).

Reynolds and Reid (1985:191) suggest that the (informal, unstructured) school ethos is as important, if not more so, than other factors such as class size, pupil-teacher ratio and the organisational structure on the efficacy of the school. In other words, the ‘ethos’ of a school is more important than other factors on how effective a school is in achieving its educational goals. The DfES (1977, p.36) concludes, “what they all have is something in common and that is effective leadership and a ‘climate’ conducive to growth”. Complementing this observation, Rutter *et al.* (1979), concerned in this instance with delinquency rates among adolescents in different schools, note that his “finding suggests the importance of the school ethos or atmosphere” (1979: 18).

The Elton report finds that “schools with a negative atmosphere will suffer more from bad behaviour than those with a positive one” (DES, 1989:89), while Rutter *et al.* (1979) link a good school ethos with the recruiting and development of good teachers. Reynolds and Packer (1985) write that legislation making schools independent of local authorities will increase differences between schools. Consequently, in such a competitive environment, a school ethos that works to lessen educational differences between pupils from different social backgrounds will be even more important.

Hogan (1984) discusses what might constitute the educational ethos of a school. He suggests three versions of ethos: the first is ‘custodial’, where the school administrators view themselves as guardians of a set of standards and principles which are maintained, protected and communicated through schools and colleges (this, he believes, has been the most prevalent understanding of ethos in educational circles). The second is ‘accommodation’, which is much more widespread. In this version, uneasiness, ambiguity and confusion sometimes characterises the deliberations and decisions of educational administrators who regard schoolwork as a community activity but who operate in an environment which is very often inflexible, authoritarian, or both. In this context, ethos is interpreted as implementing

the standards of traditional authorities, or accommodating the demands of various powerful interest groups. Consequently, the author argues that the ethos generated by ‘accommodation’ is unhealthy because it promotes a widespread misunderstanding of what the enterprise of education is about and, accordingly, uses ideas and practices from the worlds of politics and business which are often inappropriate. The third version is ‘organic’ – a concept of ethos as, primarily, the ‘natural outcome’ of what actually goes on in school or college from day to day, irrespective of what kind of standard the school is formally thought to represent.

Hogan suggests that there could be more than one ethos in a school or college. It may even be the case that the official ethos might sometimes command the respect of only a minority of the staff and students.

Ethos, leadership and attainment

In *The Head Teacher and School Ethos*, David Dawson (n.d.) reflected on his experiences of teaching for over 34 years, twelve of which were as head-teacher of a Catholic secondary school in Banbury, Oxfordshire. His research examined the impact of the head-teacher on school ethos. He found a tension between managerialist styles of leadership and values-driven leadership. In the context of this dichotomy, Dawson feels a key piece of relevant literature is *Principled Principals?* – Gold *et al.*’s (2003) study of ten prominent head-teachers, judged outstanding leaders by Ofsted, in English schools. It emphasised that at the core of their model of excellence is a body of strongly held and implemented values.

Macneil, Prater and Busch (2009), looking at leadership in schools in the USA, argue that strong leadership with a clear vision and thorough implementation is the key to raising achievement and attainment levels amongst pupils. In support of this, structures must be in place that can absorb and tolerate the stresses and strains that will inevitably arise from such a top-down system. The authors call this dual approach, *Goal Focus* and *Adaptation*. If the principals/head-teachers interact with the climate of the school to build goal focus and facilitate adaptation, the learning climate in the school will improve.

Dawson, drawing from his experience as a head-teacher in Britain, emphasises a more consensual approach, where creation and implementation of ethos is not so authoritarian; an aspect Donnelly discusses. Dawson argues that a good head-teacher, by their interactions

with pupils and staff, inspires others to act accordingly. Summarising his interview findings, he suggests that pupils felt that their head's visibility and behaviour were crucial to the school's smooth running.

Fullan (2001) argues that the fundamental drive behind school leadership should be moral purpose (p.30). He posits that the majority of teachers in schools in deprived communities have a strong commitment to helping their pupils do their best and achieve their potential. A positive, visible ethos therefore makes this moral purpose explicit.

Demie (2005) argues that research suggests that schools which achieve successful outcomes for their BAME pupils invariably exhibit strong leadership (Blair and Bourne, 1998; Ofsted, 1999). Examining schools in Lambeth, she found that head-teachers had a clear vision for their schools and an effective strategy implemented throughout. This practice gained the confidence of parents and pupils. They were in no doubt that the leadership of the head-teacher was crucial to establishing and maintaining the school's ethos. Prominent characteristics were moral purpose, energy, vision and commitment. Pupils valued the high expectations of leadership and the efforts of their teachers.

However, ethos and values, usually encapsulated in the School's Mission Statement, are not always enacted. There is a need for internal consistency to generate a visibly identifiable ethos and culture; a top-down command and control method is not the most efficient way of creating a consensually implemented ethos and culture, as Vlachou (1997) and Haydon (1997) make clear. Teachers, they argue, must be enabled to discuss values openly in order to understand them correctly and how they ought to be implemented. This would clearly help consistency and aid the transmission of ethos to pupils. Thus, collaboration and open discussion between teachers, senior leaders and head-teachers should be encouraged (Demie 2005: 487).

Ethos and inclusivity

Research by Humphreya *et al.* (2006) found that, across the countries studied, participants felt that there was a need for caring and inclusive attitudes to be incorporated into every school's ethos. All interviewees said that they promoted positive messages amongst their pupils about sharing and caring for each other's learning, progress, happiness and

participation. They also tried to foster inclusivity and solidarity in their pupils as they attempted to create a convivial and harmonious classroom. Interviewees spoke of the need for co-operation and collaboration at all levels of their school. Teachers adopted a range of methods and approaches to this end, including group work, customising the curriculum to make it more diversified, and involving the whole class in collaborative activities. It was noted by many that a great deal of flexibility and creativity was needed to achieve these objectives, loosely grouped under the heading of responsive teaching. It was not an easy option. They also remarked upon the challenges they faced of responding to diversity when the rest of the school did not share the same values. They felt that a teacher must be personally committed to inclusive values and a conception of diversity as an enriching factor to classroom life.

Ethos and identity

The DfEE (2001) claims that schools with a strong sense of identity or ethos perform best. In addition to the National Curriculum, schools are encouraged to offer *education with character* (DfEE, 2001: 4.11). The Green Paper also emphasises schools' discussions with Ofsted about the importance of ethos. Yet, the relationship between ethos and achievement is still being refined. Educational policies during the last two decades have emphasised league tables and exam results. This concentration on league tables and exam results has focused attention on pupil attainment. However, there are indications that this narrow vision is nearing its optimal effectiveness in progressing exam results (Fullan, 2004). There are also signs that it may have increased and exacerbated the unhappiness of UK pupils (Ofsted, 2008; Unicef, 2007). For example, Finland has one of the highest performing school systems in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); however, their children begin school at seven years of age and have fewer hours in school than pupils in many other countries.

Rutter *et al.*'s (1979) attempt to analyse school ethos in terms of values, aims, attitudes and procedures has led him to suggest that in a school everything is interconnected. A factory exists for work, a family for community and personal growth, a school for all three together. Good behaviour is a result of public praising of good work in the school assembly and so on. Public praise encourages a commitment to the school. And, if there is group agreement on important issues, this will allow a greater freedom of individual expression in other less crucial areas. He claims that these connecting factors all contribute to the creation of a school's 'ethos' and subsequent identity.

However, Donnelly (1999) argues that:

to write of schools exhibiting a unique ethos is overly simplistic mainly because the process of ethos is not static and operates on a number of levels. Each level or dimension does not of necessity work in tandem with the other leading to contradictions and inconsistencies. A review of the data demonstrates the different guiding principles in the two school types. In adhering to these principles each institution is clearly moving in a different direction, at a different pace, legitimating different expectations, priorities and behaviours. The value of understanding a school's ethos lies in the fact that it isolates the factors which are likely to foster school effectiveness. It can also be used to explain why schools react in different ways to policy initiatives (Donnelly, 1999:132).

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the literature relating to the influences affecting the attainment of Bangladeshi-heritage pupils in primary education in the UK. Two outcomes arising from the review that profoundly chime with the focus of this research are Abbas (2002) and Walters' (2007) suggestion that Bangladeshi-heritage pupils feel more culturally and emotionally secure and confident in an environment which affirms their ethnic identity and values. Cassen and Kingdon's (2007) argue that relationships of power are important in determining educational attainment, and that 'failures' by BAME pupils to reach predetermined targets are due to how education and teaching are structured in the UK rather than ethnic and cultural inadequacies. Shah, Dwyer and Modood (2010) also examine relationships of power and suggest Bangladeshi-heritage communities, while lacking economic capital and therefore subject to the sometimes negative effects of the relations of power they encounter on their education careers, are compensated by the positive cultural and social capital harvested by their commitment to education as a BAME community. Their cultural norms and values and the willingness of members of the community to cooperate – across generations and social class – in attempting to fulfil their individual, familial and communal attainment aspirations is an invaluable resource and forms part of their ethnic capital. This in turn can offset some of the harmful effects of social disadvantage through lack of economic power.

Much of the literature relating to ethos suggests that a positive, pupil-centred, creative and flexible school ethos, constructively implemented by the head-teacher and staff and

supported by pupils is an influential factor in shaping educational outcomes. While some studies stressed the importance of proactive leadership in a school, others emphasise that, for the head and/or school leadership team to be effective, they need to be sensitive to the communal and cultural needs of the school and its community.

In the following chapter, the methodology used in this study and the rationale behind it is discussed.

Chapter Four - Methodology

Introduction

A qualitative approach methodology was chosen for this research in order to address the question raised at the beginning of this thesis: what are the factors underlying the high educational performance – over-achievement – of Bangladeshi-heritage primary pupils in the selected schools?

This chapter begins by describing the qualitative methodology and outlining the rationale for choosing this approach. It will then offer a general description of qualitative research data collection and analysis before discussing, in detail, the preferred methods of data collection and analysis. Additionally it outlines both the process of the data collection and the various stages of the adopted option of thematic analysis and also provides an interview timetable and examples of material collected such as pupils' drawings. Finally, it explores the research protocols involved such as ethical issues, informed consent, confidentiality, privacy and research settings.

Qualitative methodology

Qualitative research can mean many different things involving a wide range of methods and can be informed by contrasting models. It typically focusses on textual rather than numerical data and tends to avoid or downplay statistical techniques. There is no universally agreed definition of qualitative research and theory. However, most qualitative researchers accept that the model is socially aware and facilitates that investigation of phenomena in their contextual settings. Conceptually, epistemological and ontological differences are often seen as being at the crux of the separation between qualitative and quantitative research. The former is concerned with one's understanding of the nature of knowledge; the latter, an understanding of the nature of being and/or reality (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Therefore, the two methodological traditions are based on opposing epistemologies with the quantitative approach allied with deductive reasoning while qualitative researchers invest in inductive reasoning. This latter approach relies on generating data analysis from the bottom up. Analysis is not guided and informed by theory; rather, theory emerges from the data. Deductive reasoning, in contrast, seeks to confirm or deny an overarching theory.

Qualitative researchers believe that qualitative methods can provide a 'deeper' understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative data.

Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 10).

The authors found that both qualitative and quantitative researchers are concerned with the individual's point of view; qualitative investigators believe that they can get closer to an actor's perspective through detailed interviewing and observation. They argue that quantitative researchers are seldom able to capture their subjects' perspectives because they have to rely on more remote, inferential empirical methods and materials. Qualitative researchers' emphasis, in contrast, is on gaining insight into individuals' perspectives. This is a strong tradition in qualitative research – one which prioritises the study of perceptions, meanings and emotions (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997). Silverman (2000) describes qualitative research as "the analysis of words and images rather than numbers", often involving in-depth or extended interviews with a small number of participants encouraged to speak fully and freely.

The long-standing 'insider-outsider' debate (Merton, 1972) within the interpretive methodology has alerted us to such questions as the validity, and propriety, of dominant-group researchers representing the views of 'minority'/less powerful groups: Whites researching Blacks, males researching females, middle classes researching the working class (Troyna and Carrington, 1989; Siraj-Blatchford, 1994a.). Such dichotomies raise questions of empathy and ethics: for instance, is it possible for a White, middle-class, middle-aged male researcher from a comfortable suburban background to adequately empathise and understand the thoughts and feelings of an inner-city, young, female Black Briton?

It could be argued that, given the density of habitation and closeness of familial and community organisation, the Bangladeshi-heritage communities of this study border on exhibiting a monocultural identity. Monocultural societies usually exhibit a shared religion, a shared language, a shared history, a shared ethnicity and a shared set of values (Modood, 2007).

Indeed, as will be discussed below, some interviewees even described the subculture of their school as monocultural. However, while the institutions themselves may have had the outward appearance of being monocultural, they existed within a wider community that was not as homogenous and has often been described as “multicultural” (Meer, Modood and Zapata-Barrero (2016). Uberoi and Modood (2015) discuss the nuances of labelling communities, cultures and societies monocultural, multicultural and even intercultural. Each description suggests particular forms and structures of power and communal/inter-communal relations. Multiculturalism, argue Uberoi and Modood, tends to conform to the notion of a dominant-minorities continuum where egalitarianism is the desired goal (occasionally at the expense of certain key facets of majority culture). In recent decades, with the seemingly indefinite ‘war on terror’, the discourse of multiculturalism has come under critical attack because of its default positions of compromise and tolerance (Gamble, 2015).

Interculturalism attempts to address some of the potential tensions that arise from multiculturalism – majority culture fears of dilution and minority fears about cultural stereotyping and racism, for example – and seeks to analyse the potential for:

An equitable interaction between continuity and diversity[;] interculturalism allows for the recognition of certain elements of ad hoc (or contextual) precedence for majority culture ... the ‘inter’ story starts from the reigning historical identity but sees it evolving in a process in which all citizens, of whatever identity, have a voice, and no one’s input has a privileged status (Uberoi and Modood 2015: 353).

Bouchard (2012) feels there are two overriding concerns in the intercultural discourse: the maintenance of an agreed form of national identity and a tolerance of, and respect for, the rights of BAME citizens (Meer, Modood and Zapata-Barero, 2016).

There are no easy answers and no attempt is made to provide them to these particular questions concerning (inter-) cultural relations of power and understanding.

Rationale for choosing this approach

The qualitative methodological approach resonated with my wider, political assumptions that there are communities and voices that struggle to be heard because of their relative powerlessness in society. By studying individuals, schools and communities who ‘over-

achieve' in an environment of 'under-achievement', it was felt that their voices would be allowed the space – at a macro as well as micro level – to be heard and to be valued (Dweck, 2006). The objective was to find out what was going on in these schools that resulted in their relative over-achievement in order that other schools could benefit.

This was informed by my three-decade experience as a teacher, during which time it was felt the Bangladeshi-heritage communities were not heard sufficiently in places that shaped education policy. Given their relative over-achievement, this seemed to lack common sense. This silence, it was felt, was something that could be addressed through allowing them to voice their interior thoughts and feelings. It was important that they were allowed space to do this. I was eager to hear about and learn from the inner thoughts and feelings of the interviewees, and to prise out the unspoken and unsaid elements of their experiences within the primary school system. It was this inner 'reality' that this research was seeking to discover and, by discovering it, learn something about why their children were outperforming other Bangladeshi-heritage primary school pupils in the UK SATs.

General description of qualitative methods

Data collection

There are a number of different methods that can be used within the qualitative framework: interviews, participant observation and case studies are some of the most frequently adopted. After careful consideration, it was decided to collect the data using semi-structured, open-ended, face-to-face interviews. Below is a brief description of each of the methods mentioned above, some of which played a part in the acquisition of knowledge brought to this study prior to its commencement.

Participant observation

Data collected through participant observation is considered by many social scientists to be more reliable than controlled experiments and surveys. This is because, it is argued, investigators are able to identify behaviour as it occurs in a natural form and setting, allowing them to make observational notes about its significant features. Additionally, because observations take place over an extended period of time, researchers can develop more intimate and informal relationships with those they are observing, generally in more natural environments than those in which structured experiments and surveys are conducted. Finally,

observations are more organic than other types of data-gathering methods (Robson, 2002; Cooper and Schindler, 2001).

Though this method was not formally used in this research – the disadvantages outweighed the advantages – my work as a primary school teacher entailed being with and observing pupils: their achievement, their progress, their academic abilities, their social skills. This “unconscious” observation did help in the acquisition of the knowledge – ‘pre-understanding’, discussed below – brought to this study.

Case studies

Case studies are frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle. They are the study of an instance in action (Nisbet and Watt, 1984). Case studies help in forensically analysing situations and phenomena that are not always predisposed to analysis. Case studies can also establish cause and effect. Sturman (1999) argues that a distinguishing characteristic of case studies is that human systems have a wholeness or integrity to them rather than being a loose connection of features, necessitating in-depth investigation. Furthermore, contexts are unique and dynamic; hence, case studies investigate and report the complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in an extended moment.

This approach was not formally adopted because it would have been impractical: there was not the time available – or access – to collect data from the range of sources that is necessitated by a formal case study: documents, archive records, direct observation, participant observation and physical artefacts (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2007).

Interviews were used as the main method of data collection. This method is discussed next.

Interviews

The most common form of qualitative data collection is the semi-structured interview. This form of face-to-face questioning of interviewees – either individually or in focus groups – allows one to choose the topic of discussion while the interviewee(s) is allowed to roam freely along the route, deciding where and when to pause or quicken. Focus groups are used to aggregate interviewees. Focus groups represent “a way of collecting qualitative data, which - essentially - involves engaging a small number of people in an informal group discussion (or discussions), ‘focused’ around a particular topic or set of issues” (Wilkinson, 2004, p.177). It allows data collection from more than one individual simultaneously. It has been argued that

interviewees have found this format relatively uninhibiting and relaxing as discussion can flow more freely (Krueger and Casey, 2000).

There are other practical advantages for the researcher on limited funds. Focus groups save time and money, which means a greater number of interviewees can participate (Krueger, 2000). Additionally, the socialised environment can engender a feeling of solidarity amongst the interviewees as uninhibited sharing is encouraged. Such an environment will often reveal valuable data that may not have been foreseen or expected. Consequently, a virtuous spiral can be created whereby interviewees discuss matters personal to them and may find solutions from other members of the group (Morgan, 1997).

In their research of the concerns and expectations of Bangladeshi parents as their children start school, Sanagavarapu and Perry (2005) became aware of the need to involve parents in the research process in order to make them feel as though they had a stake in seeing a successful conclusion to the research. To this end, parents were asked to identify other participants and to refer them to me (2005: 46). This ‘snowballing’ of potential and actual participants, the authors felt, had a positive influence.

These research interviews with parents and their children were conducted using a semi-structured interview schedule with open-ended questions. Whilst their findings may not be relevant to this study because of their research goals and the key cultural, geographical and age differences in the sampling group, their willingness to use qualitative methods and concern for the comfortableness of their interviewees does have direct relevance to the approach used in this research, although this research diverted from theirs in detail. By ‘comfortableness’, it is meant that this method resonated with the cultural norms and values of the Bangladeshi community in its reliance upon recommendation, networking and validation.

Chosen method of data collection

Interviews¹⁸

Open-ended, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were used as the primary method of data collection. This was partly because, in the context of this study of children of Bangladeshi-origin parents – many of whom may not have English as a first language – it was important to

¹⁸ See examples of interview transcripts and interview questions in appendix.

be confident that I understood them and the nuances of their answers. It was equally important for them to understand the questions asked of them.

Rationale for choice of interviewees

The interviewees in this study – pupils, parents, teachers, head-teachers, governors, local authority education department representatives and religious leader – were selected in the following ways: I chose the school-based participants – pupils, parents, teachers, head-teachers, governors – from the school in which I worked, attempting to get as broad a sample as possible; of these (same-category) participants in the other schools, the head-teachers were asked to target potential contributors according to the criteria chosen by myself. For instance, for parent participants, those who had more than one child at the school were chosen because they would know the school particularly well. The objective was to understand the reasons why they chose to continue placing their children in the same school. I tried to find, also, new parents to the school, to establish why they had chosen to send their children to that particular institution. It was important that the study also looked for parents who were active in the life of the school and would know and understand its ethos. All but one of the parent interviewees were female. It would have been preferable to have had a better gender balance but these were the participants that volunteered. The criterion for choosing teachers was: teachers with over three years' experience and those teachers that demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the way the school functioned and operated. They would also have in-depth knowledge of their pupils' environment and background. However, the views of those teachers with less than three years' experience were also sought to establish how their views on the school differed from the more experienced teachers. Though male teachers are under-represented at primary school level across the UK, it was important that there was at least one male teacher in the sample.¹⁹ In the course of the fieldwork, three male teachers were interviewed, with only one school not providing a male participant.

There were no specific criteria for school governors. I chose the governor from the school in which I was employed. This governor was formerly a chair of the body and had been involved in the school for a number of years. It was believed that he would be a plentiful source of data material. At the other schools, head-teachers selected the governors. I had no control over their

¹⁹ On 26 November 2013, the Daily Telegraph reported that men make up just 21% of primary school teachers in the UK.

selection and there was a possibility that they might choose governors favourable to the ethos of their school.

The local education authority was contacted for participants. Two were provided: one was interviewed face-to-face, the other in written form.

My rationale for selecting the interviewee categories was that, in some way or another, they were intrinsically involved in the education of the Year 6 pupils (including the pupils themselves).

In the school in which I taught, five Year 6 pupil interviewees were chosen who were articulate and demonstrated good verbal skills. This was done because it was felt that they would provide a plentiful supply of valuable data. Head-teachers selected Year 6 pupils in the other schools (subject to parental/carer/guardian consent). It was requested of the head-teachers that they select their pupil interviewees according to similar criteria.

The imam of the local mosque was also approached. He was also a parent and governor at one of the participant schools but was not interviewed in this capacity.

The rationale for this approach was seen as the most appropriate and practical approach given the nature of the knowledge the research was attempting to reveal and the time and resources available to both myself and interviewees (Kitchin and Tate, 2000).

I would have liked to have had a definitive, representative demographic that reflected the social contours of the communities in which the schools were situated but this was not possible for a number of reasons: I was relying on the schools to ask for volunteers as I could not write to potential interviewees directly; as they were volunteers, I could not determine who was interviewed; and as they were face-to-face interviews and not questionnaires, the participation involved a time commitment that not all could meet, thus filtering out some who may have been able to participate had a less time-consuming method of participation been chosen.

Personal positionality

It can be argued that researchers often have multiple positionalities and, consequently as social scientists, are not always constant or logical in thought and action. Additionally, ideas can

develop and adapt during the research process. Perhaps the greatest influence on my positionality was teaching in one of the schools being studied (Weller, 2004a). I believed that this was helpful as I was known by both the significant people within the school and the local authority. Also, with many interviewees, a relationship was easier to create as I was known by them and had local knowledge of their community and neighbourhood. However, in the other (local) schools, although I was not known by the interviewees directly, my local knowledge, I sensed, assisted in creating an unthreatening, empathetic ambience where a comfortable dialogue could be established.

However, a disadvantage of being known to some of the interviewees is that they may have found it difficult initially to see me as a researcher rather than a teacher. This may have influenced the way they responded and the information provided. Additionally, the complex social interactions of interviewer-interviewee conversations tend to be infused with unequal power relations, with the interviewer usually dominant (Kitchin and Tate, 2000).

Interview method

The semi-structured question and conversational interview method would, it was hoped, allow interviewees to share their thoughts and feelings without too much restriction and interruption. It was felt that this approach may help diminish the potential for interviewer bias by not intervening when they were talking. This open-ended interview technique still allows some structure through the use of themed questions though it can often be challenging as areas of interest may be overlooked.

Seven categories of interviewee were chosen because of their key agency in the research. All groups and interviewees were relevant to the research question. At each school, pupils, parents, teachers, head-teachers and governors, sometimes individually but mostly in groups, were interviewed. In addition, two local authority representatives and a religious leader were also interviewed for their political and cultural roles within the community. Table 1 below shows the interview categories.

Table 1 Interviewee Categories

Interviewees	Pupils	Teachers	Parents	Head teachers	Governors	Local Authority Representatives	Religious Leaders
Focus Group	*	*	*				
Individual				*	*	*	*

A relaxed approach and style of questioning and the preferred ambience of semi-informality remained consistent in all interviews. The extensive use of open-ended interviews in this study implied a view of the participants as individual actors with their own agency because they were allowed to discuss themes, topics and issues relatively freely which, it was felt, was of prime importance.

As such, the interviews were not exclusively subjective or objective, but inter-subjective in that the interviews enabled participants, be they interviewer or interviewees, to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they lived and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view.

While experience is always the product of interpretation and, therefore, constructed (and flexible) ... it is nevertheless 'real' to the person who is having the experience (Fielden, Sillence and Little, 2011: 23).

Table 2 shows the dates on which interviews took place at the four schools included in this research.

Table 2 Interviewees, date and location

Pupil Interviewees	Date	Location
School 1	October 2010	School 1
School 2	November 2010	School 2
School 3	September 2010	School 3
School 4	December 2010	School 4

Teachers	Date	Location
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Interviewees		
School 1	December 2010	School 1
School 2	November 2010	School 2
School 3	November 2010	School 3
school 4	December 2010	School 4

Interviewees head-teachers	Date	Location
School 1	December 2010	School 1
School 2	November 2010	School 2
School 3	April 2010	School 3
School 4	October 2010	School 4
Interviewees parents	Date	Location
School 1	December 2010	School 1
School 2	November 2010	School 2
School 3	June 2010	School 3
School 4	December 2010	School 4

Interviewees governors	Date	Location
School 1	December 2010	School 1
School 2	November 2010	School 2
School 3	September 2010	School 3
School 4	December 2010	School 4

Interviewees local authority	Date	Location
Staff 1	November 2010	School 3
Staff 2	Open-ended questions December 2010	Written response received by post

Interviewee	Date	Location
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religious leader		
Imam	December 2010	Mosque

All interviews, except one, were carried out face-to-face. Face-to-face interviews allowed me to note respondents' body language and facial expressions, as well as establish personable contact. Weller (2004a) argues that being in close proximity to your interviewee allows one to interpret the unspoken (albeit culturally specific) forms of communication that would not be visible and/or understandable if the interviews are conducted in another way. Noting all forms of communication, physical and oral, would be helpful, it was felt, in giving a fully rounded context to interviewees' answers (Becker, 1998). It was another dimension that aided understanding. There was no formal evaluation of non-verbal communication.

Pupils, parents and teachers were organised into focus groups, divided by school. The arrangement of the focus groups was determined by practical reality: they were designed to fit the four schools and the convenience of the participants involved. So, pupils, teachers and parents were interviewed in their schools. The interviews lasted for one hour (Morgan, 1997) and each group consisted of five participants (as recommended by Baumgartner, Strong, and Hensley, 2002; Bernard, 1995; Johnson and Christensen, 2004; Krueger, 2000; Langford, Schoenfeld and Izzo, 2002; Morgan, 1997).

I was not a novice regarding the subject matter, having been a teacher in the primary sector of state education for over 25 years with, therefore, long-term experience of the industry. Coghlan and Brannick (2010: 114-115), argue that this provides a degree of 'pre-understanding'. The concept of pre-understanding refers to the relevant knowledge, experience and insights that researchers already have prior to embarking on research on a subject in which they have a professional/personal connection. The concept encompasses all forms of knowledge, overt and implied. The in-house researcher has intimate knowledge of the culture(s) of their industry, both formal (public) – exemplified, in my case, most obviously by the school mission statements and Ofsted reports – and informal, such as in the everyday practice of the ethos of the school. Pre-understanding, while advantageous, also has its downside: it was important that I remained wholly objective to all that was being relayed in order to assess the information dispassionately (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010; Fox *et al.*, 2007). This meant listening intently to the interviewees without allowing pre-conceptions and prior knowledge to colour both what was being said and my interpretation of it.

Myers (2006) believes that researchers constructing focus groups within educational environments should look at how participants converse with one another to see if they adapt their communication styles to suit a particular audience and their perception of what kind of responses are expected from them.

The researcher in the group interview sometimes has to assume the role of ‘chair’ in influencing the direction of the conversation (Kitchin and Tate, 2000). Group interviews usually generate dialogue, as interviewees feel more confident as part of a group, although less outgoing participants may be excluded (Kitchin and Tate, 2000).

Interview procedure²⁰

The questions were framed in as value-neutral a way as possible, allowing the interviewee the greatest amount of personal interpretation. However, the questions for the pupils were framed in a more focussed form than those for adults. In my experience as a teacher, pupils respond more positively to questions that are subject- and theme-specific, rather than abstract and generalised.

An attempt to create a friendly, unthreatening atmosphere was made by chatting informally prior to the beginning of the focus group interviews about the broad aims of the research and why it was being conducted. Additionally, all interviewees were aware that I was a non-Bangladeshi teacher with many years’ experience working in majority Bangladeshi-heritage schools.

Before the formal focus group interviews with pupils began, it was requested that each of them write or draw a representation of what school meant to them (see below). The purpose of this exercise was to induce a relaxed, convivial relationship with the interviewer.

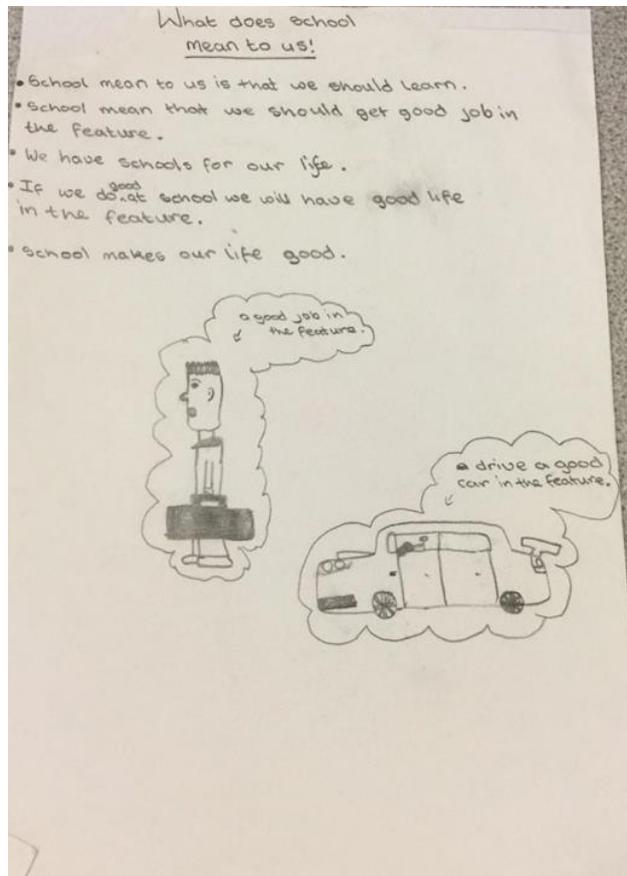
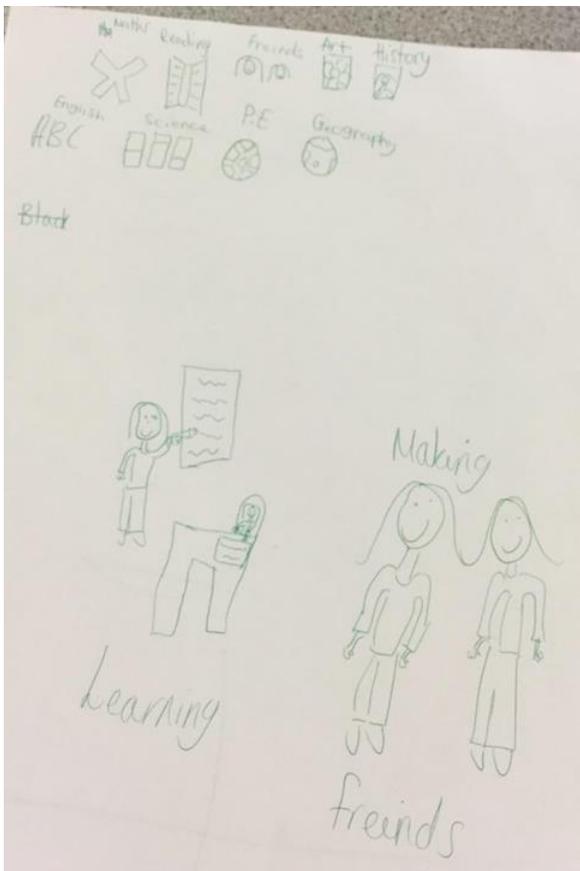
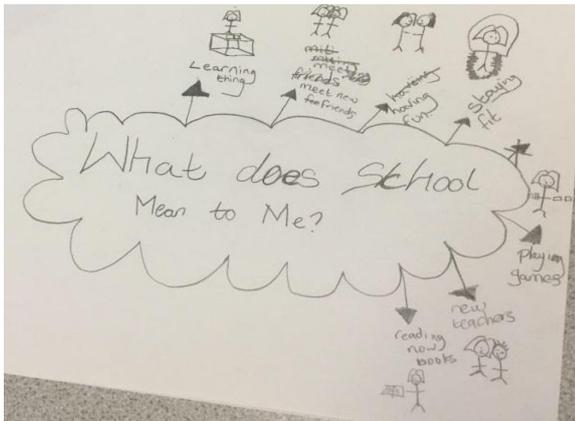
Alderson and Morrow (2011) outline how utilising symbols and images as a tool of communication with young people can help to overcome speaking and writing challenges, shyness and other obstacles that may prevent young people from being as open and forthcoming as possible. They refer to the work of Karen Winter (2009; 2010) in Northern Ireland who used

²⁰ For interview questions see appendix.

and analysed the artistic creativity of the young people she interviewed who had suffered trauma or had been close to those who have.

I asked children to decorate shoe boxes with craft materials, on the outside showing what kind of person they were, on the inside expressing their wishes and feelings. The interviews were very revealing. 'Crystal' aged 5 seemed cheerful and confident on the outside of her box. C: It says that I'm happy and kind and love visiting my friends. [Later on the inside of the box was sad]. C: My baby who died. This is the baby's eyes and teeth and that is a wee hat and hair ... KW: What would you say to your mother? C: You's stop arguing 'cos the kids is trying (sic) and the kids is missing you (Alderson and Morrow, 2011: 53).

Figure 1 Examples of pupils' drawings, from each of the four schools, explaining what school means to them.



All interviews were digitally recorded as separate files on a voice recorder with the exception of one of the local authority representatives who responded in writing. All were held in the participant schools except for interview with the imam of the local mosque, which was conducted in his office for his convenience. The interviews were predominantly open-ended but had a degree of structure in the sense that a general question was asked to elicit contextual demographic information, such as family size, number of siblings and length of residency in the area. This helped to provide background information. The open-ended questions also attempted to gain information from the participants about their beliefs, values and expectations of education. However, if the discussion strayed into other topics, the interviewer would gently intervene with a subsidiary question that redirected the discussion toward the focus of the interview. This was also important in keeping to time. The objective of this part of the research was to try to understand all participants' views and experiences of education.

All of the research interviews were conducted in the schools, except for that with the imam. Most of the participants of Bangladeshi-heritage were bilingual and spoke English and Sylheti, although some only spoke Sylheti. Nearly all parents spoke English as a second language. A member of each school's support staff was in attendance as a translator but they were rarely needed and did not intrude in the interview process.

Representing the beliefs and attitudes of research participants is fundamental to all qualitative research and was a particular concern of this study. The issue of power relations between myself and participants was concerning. The parent interviewees were aware of my occupational status. However friendly and informal the relationships might have been, I belong to what is generally perceived in Bangladeshi culture as a more powerful and privileged socio-economic group than the majority of the parents, who were working-class. This seemingly unequal social relationship raised two concerns. One was ethical, that in asking families to participate I was using my dominant position to make demands on the interviewees' privacy. The other concern was of the reliability of information offered in the context of unequal power relations. It is the duty and role of the interviewer in such situations to develop a more informal acquaintance and build a rapport. To this end, I spoke in a conversational style to the adult interviewees. They were then informed that I had been a teacher in their area for a number of years and consequently was aware of local customs, beliefs and sub-cultures. This also builds trust and establishes a rapport.

Despite the above concerns, I was confident, because of the quality of the relationship established with the research participants, that the data obtained would be willingly divulged within a mutually agreed context and environment. However, it was more difficult to discern and describe the effects of parents' culturally regulated beliefs and, in particular, those they held unconsciously. Whilst having this concern, researchers must assume that responses from interviewees are genuine reflections of their feelings and thoughts. Each interview was transcribed verbatim.

Data analysis methods

Kitchen and Tate (2000) and Silverman (2000) suggest that there are differing methodological approaches to qualitative data analysis. Kitchen and Tate note that some researchers could be unhappy about following a prescriptive approach to qualitative data analysis, suggesting that the dissection of qualitative data is an art rather than something that can be undertaken through rigorous prescription (as with quantitative analysis where data input and findings outcome are often numerically connected). All admit, however, that the qualitative methodology is not as rigidly defined as quantitative methodology, lacking the formal rigour of standardised procedures. The heart of qualitative analysis involves: the description of data; the classification of data; and seeing how concepts relate to each other (Kitchen and Tate, 2000).

The authors also suggest that the two most widely used methodological tools in the assessment of qualitative data are: thematic analysis²¹, which emphasises the role of patterns, categories and basic descriptive units; and grounded theory which emphasises different strategies of coding data.

There are other methods of qualitative data analysis, including interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), and pattern-based discourse analysis (DA). IPA concentrates on perceptions of reality and is popular in the discipline of psychology. DA is more language-focused, looking at patterns in speech and language and how these communicate an inner reality.

Thematic analysis and grounded theory are inductive approaches based on the notion that theory emerges from research findings. Ongoing assessment and interpretation of the research data is processed in order that themes which emerge are then categorised (Kitchen and Tate, 2000).

²¹ Braun and Clarke, 2013.

The grounded theory method of qualitative data analysis was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to provide a systematic approach to data analysis that would correspond with the techniques of quantitative social research. Bryman (2005) suggests that it is the most influential tool for qualitative data analysis. Grounded theory involves the ‘open coding’ of qualitative texts in contrast to the closed coding of survey answers into categories that are pre-formed. Codes are attached to text fragments in the data. As such, grounded theory involves a constant comparative technique.

Critics of grounded theory often refer to the difficulties it presents for the researcher. The researcher has to suspend concepts arising from previous research and theory. One particular criticism suggests that grounded theory takes text fragments out of their context, thereby deconstructing them of their precise meaning in the flow of the narrative. One of the difficulties of evaluating grounded theory is that it is an approach which seems to be vague about some procedures. It is characterised by a range of methodological variations in the use and presentation of it by many of its supporters. It is considered by many to be a complex and over-complicated approach and it is for this and the other reasons mentioned above that it was not used in this study. Instead, thematic analysis was chosen to evaluate the data collected.

At this point, clarification is needed as to what constitutes a ‘theme’ within thematic analysis. A theme characterises a significant quality within the data in relation to the research question, which consequently represents a degree of patterned response or meaning to the data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006). However, it should also be noted that while some themes may not appear frequently within the data set, this possibility does not also necessarily mean that this theme has less importance than others with more frequent occurrence. Perhaps this is my most difficult and potentially contentious task: to identify themes because they have a direct relationship to the research hypothesis. In this scenario, my considered choice in identifying themes has definitive consequences. A theme, therefore, should represent an essential characteristic of the findings in relation to the research question.

Chosen method of data analysis

Rationale

Thematic analysis was the method chosen for this research because, apart from being the most commonly used tool of pattern-based analysis in the social sciences, I found it to be the most

user-friendly. However, it only provides tools for data analysis – not data collection. It is a method that seeks to distinguish and analyse patterns and themes within collected data. It is comparatively easy to understand; themes can be identified, labelled and described in such a way as to make them accessible to a wider readership; this process can generate new insights and perspectives; I was also at ease using this method. It was felt, therefore, that thematic analysis was the most appropriate method to use in attempting to understand the data.

Braun and Clarke (2013) suggest that thematic analysis has no consensus amongst researchers regarding the *exact* way its methods should be applied to data. Additionally, questions have been raised about the dependability of thematic analysis given that its tool of interpretation is highly personalised.

Stages of analysis

The eight major stages that constitute thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2013) are outlined below in Table 3:

Table 3 Thematic analysis: stages of coding and analysis²²

Stages	Data Analysis
1	Data preparation/transcription
2	Reading, internalisation and noting potential items of interest
3	Completing the coding of all data
4	Searching for and identifying themes and sub-themes
5	Reviewing themes (producing a map of the provisional themes and subthemes, and relationships between them – a.k.a. the ‘thematic map’)
6	Defining and naming themes
7	Writing –finalising analysis
8	Writing –finalising analysis

Stage one involved transcription of the interview data. The interviewees were grouped into seven categories: pupils, teachers, parents, head-teachers, governors, local authority representatives, religious leader.

Table 4 shows the number of interviewees from the four schools in the categorised groups.

Table 4 Interviewee categories and numbers

Interviewees	Pupils	Teachers	Parents	Head-teachers	Governors	total
School 1	5	3	5	1	1	15
School 2	5	3	5	1	1	15
School 3	5	3	5	1	1	15
School 4	5	3	5	1	1	15
Total	20	12	20	4	4	60
Local Authority representatives	2					2
Religious leader	1					1
Grand total	23	12	20	4	4	63

Stage two has, at its core, the process of the cognitive internalisation and understanding of the interview data. This was achieved by listening to the interviews and reading and rereading the

²² Braun and Clarke, 2013: 202-3.

transcripts and taking notes of items of potential interest. For example, each category's transcripts were read and re-read, starting with those of the pupils. Those words and terms that appeared frequently, seemed important and/or were emphasised by the interviewee(s) were identified, highlighted and made note of.

Stage three involved deciding upon the definitive labelling of codes that had emerged from assessing the language and terminology of the interviewees. The coding process involved a cyclical procedure of interrogating the data. It was important to code the many potential themes and sub-themes that had been highlighted and noted as I wanted to be sure that no data of significance was overlooked, ignored or forgotten. Not all of these initial codes and potential themes made it into the final list. After reading again the transcripts of all of the participants, and the notes and highlights taken contemporaneously, potential themes and sub-themes emerged. These were then cross-tabulated with the generic groups and individuals. For example, it was also noticed that many of the interviewees emphasised, positively, the benefits of working together with others in the school and the education environment. In this way, interconnections were made between emerging themes and sub-themes from the distinct categories of interviewees. For instance, the topic of 'collaboration' emerged across all interviews. To produce a purposeful cross-tabulation, the process of continually reassessing the organisation and management of the data in order to break it down into manageable chunks was undertaken, enabling identification of key issues, elements and characteristics.

The task described above, of coding the data, was helpful in analysing through comparison. This task also helped in making decisions as to how similar or dissimilar pieces of the data were. For instance, Parental Involvement and Aspiration had similar and distinctly separate ingredients. In contrast, Pupil Background and Learning is Enjoyable were seemingly quite different codes but were umbilically connected through the elevated position education has as a cultural value amongst Bangladeshi-heritage communities in Britain. Thus, a basic understanding of data within specific categories was formulated and some common links between categories were identified.

Stage four. This phase was concerned with forensically examining the initial analysis in order to concentrate on the thematic focus. The task was to sort the various assembled codes into possible sub-themes from which themes would emerge. This was an important classificatory stage in the analysis of the findings. I needed to decide upon the relationship between core

themes, sub-themes and discardable themes. The core data was analysed by category: pupils, teachers, parents, etc. Thus, connections could be noticed between what pupils of School One had said and what had been said by the pupils of School Three, for example. In some ways, by doing the initial analysis by category, stages three, four and five were collapsed and connections between intra- and inter-categories were made. Although the transcripts across all categories were read and re-read, with connections made at the very beginning of the analysis, it was not until stage five that the forensic search for inter-category connections formally began.

Stage five of the analysis involved reviewing a further refinement of the themes and sub-themes and searching for connections. This was done in stages. Initially, the coded extracts for each theme were re-read to check for consistency and coherence. Then, the complete data set was re-assessed. The objective was to ensure the appropriateness of the themes in relation to the data as an entirety. I now felt confident enough to be able to move onto phase six, which involved defining and naming core themes.

At **stage six**, it was important that the character and identity of the core themes were settled. To achieve this, it was decided to name and/or label the primary 'core' themes that had emerged from the data: Parental Involvement, Pupil Background, Learning is Enjoyable, School Council, Working Together, Aspiration, and Language Skills.

This led onto the final writing phases, **seven and eight**, which involved discussing the findings and laying out the narrative that lay behind them. In doing so, it is hoped that there is convincing evidence for the choice of themes.

Methodological protocol

The protocol arising from using open-ended, face-to-face semi-structured interviews as the primary tool of data collection will now be discussed.

Before beginning the research interviews, adult participants were asked if they consented. This was an important part of the administrative process. All agreed to allow the recording of their discussions. This permitted dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee without the disruption of note-taking (Kitchin and Tate, 2000).

Ethical issues

Negotiations with the local education authority, head-teachers and parents were important to gain access in which to conduct the research within the four designated schools (Baker and Weller, 2003a.) It was believed that my work as a teacher in one of the schools aided the application because they were familiar with the relevant local authority staff and the procedures in place, as well as those relevant and responsible adults within the schools, such as teachers, parents, governors and head-teachers (Weller, 2004). However, security clearance was still needed in the form of a Criminal Records Bureau check.

Research with children demands great sensitivity to ethical issues (Mahon *et al.*, 1996; Greig and Taylor, 1999). While I should be aware of the imbalance in relations of power between the child and adult, in attempting to address this problem it should also be recognised that this generational fact cannot be wholly eradicated. It is a reality that I had to accommodate (Holmes, 1998). However, Holloway and Valentine (2000b) argue that this unequal power relationship between teacher and pupil is not crystallised beyond adaption and can alter over time. A pupil is not robotically subservient and can sometimes create behavioural strategies that lessen such power imbalances (Holloway and Valentine, 2000b). Other researchers have also discussed this issue. Katherine Vincent (2012) has written that she attempted to overcome unequal power relations by concentrating on the students' life histories, thereby conferring upon them the role of expert since "nobody knows better than them the intricacies and intimacies of their life" (Goodson and Sikes, 2006: 72). She also ensured that interviewees were aware of the objectives of her research, promising that the results would not be used for any other purpose without their consent. Like the present researcher, Vincent's status as an 'insider' – she taught at the school she was studying – helped to put people at ease. She felt that this lack of objectivity was not a significant drawback because she did not pretend to divorce her beliefs and values from her work or play the role of objective onlooker.

Informed consent²³

Informed consent is especially important when research includes children. Children, parents, carers, guardians, teachers and school governors had to be fully aware of the aims of the research and be in agreement with the research conditions (Lindsay, 2000). There are certain protocols that have to be followed. In this research, a letter was written to all those potentially

²³ See Appendix 3:3a and 3:3b for consent literature used in this study.

involved – parents, carers, guardians, teachers, school governors and local authorities – asking permission to conduct interviews (see Appendix 3:3b). All were given one month to consider the request and reply. All were also sent information sheets explaining the nature of the research. Participants gave written permission for their involvement (and/or their child’s involvement). Pupils were encouraged to tell their own stories and not be influenced by parental or other outside pressures.

The importance of gaining consent from all parties and following embedded protocols, from parents, schools, the local authority and my academic institution, cannot be overstated (Matthews *et al.* 1998a). Any deviation from the correct procedures and protocols could have invalidated this research. As discussed above, any research involving children and young people must be dealt with transparently and with strict adherence to legal, ethical and moral rules and protocol.

Confidentiality and privacy

Confidentiality is crucial in research but acutely so when children are involved. In their relationship with adults, children are usually dependent and vulnerable. Some researchers have raised the issue of the possibility that, post-interview, parents, carers and/or teachers could pressure a child to divulge what they had said (Barker and Weller, 2003a). Child interviewees, therefore, could be worried that such exposure could bring negative consequences, such as a reprimand from parents, teachers or significant others. Consequently, to ensure no such anxieties arose, all participants were offered the choice of an alias in order to remain anonymous if they so desired. It was also promised that the personal identities of participants would not be revealed throughout the research.

Alongside confidentiality is the importance of privacy. The latter requires achieving a balance between maintaining confidentiality and protecting both interviewees and the researcher from harm or risk (Holmes, 1998). The interview venues, important in this respect, were often chosen by the schools themselves. Holmes (1998) explained that research in schools can sometimes be interrupted. However, this happened only once during this research, with an intrusion from an adult employee, but this did not have a detrimental effect upon the interview.

In respect of child protection issues (see Matthews *et al.*, 1998a), I ensured that the child could be accompanied by an adult if a participant or their teacher/parent/carer felt that their safety could be at risk.

Research settings

Holmes (1998) suggested that gender is a significant issue in such research settings. In this research, it appeared that gender had little significance with the pupils but it may have had a mediating effect upon some adult male interviewees (who were numerically in the minority). It was also noticed that the religious leader interviewed positively responded to requests for an interview from my husband after initial requests failed to elicit a response (within the time-frame allowed for replies). Additionally, the religious leader requested that my husband be present throughout the interview. He sat at the back of the room and did not intrude in any way upon the interview. It was felt this had no impact on the data collected. He was also the only interviewee who asked for a photocopy of the signed consent form. Interestingly, Holmes (1998) argues that socialisation into gender roles leads to women interpreting the world differently to men. He believes that women are more conducive to feelings of empathy.

Each school offered a different kind of space for interviews: my classroom; other classrooms; the head-teacher's office; the deputy head's office; and the library. One interview was conducted outside the school setting, at the religious leader's office inside the mosque.

Conclusion

Using qualitative methodology allowed me to probe more deeply into the thoughts, feelings, experiences and opinions of the participants in this research: I wanted to allow my participants a voice of their own choosing; to speak for themselves. This was, for me, an important reason in choosing qualitative methodology. My experience as a teacher in predominantly Bangladeshi-heritage schools in a predominantly Bangladeshi-heritage borough of London had highlighted the relative powerless and muted environment of members of these communities. Interviews were used – focus groups and individual – to collect data as I thought this the most practical and appropriate method. Allowing a certain degree of freedom to the interviews by way of open-ended questions facilitated this. While I wanted to explore certain themes, issues and concerns, a greater priority was to identify the preoccupations of my interviewees relevant to this research. I also felt that conducting the majority of the interviews in the familiar environment of the school helped the quality of the data produced in that it assisted me in putting

the participants at ease. This fostered greater conviviality and willingness to contribute. In an attempt to facilitate a relaxing environment and put pupil interviewees at ease with me as the adult interviewer I suggested they draw images expressing 'what school meant to them' which seemed to produce the desired effect. I made the pupils aware before they began that I would not be formally analysing their drawings as part of my research.

No issues with regard to ethical concerns or matters of protocol were raised by the participants, other than the request from the imam that another person be present at our interview. I adhered to all of the standard procedures required of my status as a researcher, as outlined above. However, I did point out to all of my interviewees (who were hitherto unaware) that I was a primary school teacher in a participatory school. I hoped that this would not detrimentally affect their attitude towards me or their willingness to contribute. Fortunately, I felt that both my hopes were realised and fears unfounded.

Thematic analysis, which emphasises the role of patterns, categories and basic descriptive units, was used to examine the data. Although this process entailed a number of prescribed stages and procedures, I found it to be flexible and adaptable. It helped me to identify the core concerns raised and discussed by the participants. This in turn allowed me to structure my findings in a logical and coherent way, facilitating a clearer and more efficient dissection.

The following two chapters will discuss the seven themes that emerged from the analysis of the data. Chapter five will explore four themes and chapter six three.

Chapter Five - Discussion of Findings (Pupil Background, Parental Involvement, Aspiration, Language Skills)

Introduction

The focus of this research has been on exploring the factors that impact on the over-achievement of Bangladeshi-heritage pupils in four inner-city primary schools. Using thematic analysis seven themes emerged from the interviews. These were:

- Pupil Background
- Parental Involvement
- Aspiration
- Language Skills
- Engaging in Learning
- School Council
- Working Together

These themes demonstrate and confirm what the Literature Review revealed about the Bangladeshi-heritage community's cultural attitude towards, and its value of, education. The emergence of these seven themes was determined by two primary characteristics: their commonality and frequency in the data set and/or the priority given to them by the interviewees. For example, many of the pupil interviewees emphasised the importance of the School Council, whilst for other interviewees this institution did not feature as much as other themes which were given greater weight, such as Working Together. The first four themes listed – Pupil Background, Parental Involvement, Aspiration and Language Skills – are discussed below in this chapter because of their inter-linking relationship. The remaining themes will be discussed for similar reasons in the following chapter.

Pupil Background

The majority of the pupils in the four schools came from Sylheti-speaking, working-class backgrounds.²⁴ Sylheti is a distinctive dialect of Bengali, the main written language in Bangladesh. Parents value their linguistic heritage and many encourage their children to learn Bengali. Given the opportunity, many parents would have liked their children to receive Bengali

²⁴ See Chapter One, *Synopsis of information about the schools I examined*, for demographic information about the populations of the four schools in this study.

lessons within the school day rather than as an extra-curricular activity because they considered it so culturally important.

In the home, families often use a combination of languages: Sylheti, Bengali and English. Demographically Bangladeshi-heritage communities are at a disadvantage in terms of housing, employment, health and education. Most live in low-income, often overcrowded households that rely on welfare benefits to lift them out of absolute poverty. FSM data offers an indicator of deprivation: Bangladeshi-heritage pupils have the highest eligibility for FSM in UK primary schools.²⁵ However, as has been discussed by Modood (2004; 2007) in the literature review, their resources held as ethnic capital can sometimes ameliorate these economic disadvantages.

Table 5 shows the ethnic backgrounds and languages spoken of interviewees.

²⁵ See Appendix for more detail about social and economic deprivation in the borough under study.

Table 5: Language and background of pupils and other participants

Participants	Demographic information		
	Ethnic background	Languages spoken	Occupation
Pupils (50% female/50% male)	Bangladeshi	English/ Sylheti	N/A
Parents (95%/5%)	Bangladeshi	English/ Sylheti	Parent/TA/Taxi Driver/Professional
Teachers (70%/30%)	British Bengali/ English/ Australian/ Pakistani	English/ Sylheti/ Urdu	Teachers
Head Teachers (50%/50%)	British	English	Head-teachers
Governors (50%/50%)	Bangladeshi/British	English/ Sylheti	professionals / TAs
Religious Leader (male)	Bangladeshi	English/ Sylheti	Imam
Local Authority Representatives (100%/0%)	British	English	local government officers

The vast majority of parent, teacher, governor and head-teacher interviewees acknowledged the importance of understanding the pupils' social, economic and cultural background. They also recognised the importance of cultural empathy and parental involvement (outlined below).

Throughout the interviews in the four schools, teachers in particular spoke about the importance of having awareness of their pupils and their parents' social and cultural backgrounds and how this can impact upon their achievements at school. It was important not to stereotype but instead believe all pupils had aptitudes and abilities. They also emphasised their strong links with parents to involve them in achieving positive results, such as encouragement for home reading.

This matches Sammons *et al.*'s (1999) view, who emphasised the importance of parents reading to their children as an activity which could assist the advancement of their child's learning. Many parents made it clear in interviews that supporting their children at home was important.

I don't always come to school but I come sometimes, mostly my wife comes and I come when my children have assembly or something like that. My wife helps the children with their homework or something like that. But sometimes they work with the children from next door to us but we make sure they do their homework and that! Yeah (Saleem, parent, School 4).

This was a common sentiment amongst parents, whatever their primary language. The majority supported reading initiatives and would utilise resources in this area within the family, neighbourhood and community – ethnic capital – in order to fulfil expectations.

Table 6 shows, in colour coded form, the gender, age, teaching experience and languages spoken of the teacher interviewees.

Table 6: Gender, career and language information about participants (teachers)²⁶

School 1	Gender		Age	Number of years teaching	Language spoken
	Male	Female			
Teacher 1	*		28	4	English
Teacher 2		*	24	1	English
Teacher 3		*	38	15	English

²⁶ The schools have been colour coded: school 1 green, 2 red, 3 blue and 4 yellow.

School 2	Gender		Age	Number of years teaching	Language spoken	
	Male	Female				
Teacher 1	*			25	2	English
Teacher 2		*		28	5	English
Teacher 3		*		30	7	English

School 3	Gender		Age	Number of years teaching	Language spoken
	Male	Female			
Teacher 1	*		44	13	English
Teacher 2		*	24	2	English /Bengali/Sylheti
Teacher 3		*	29	6	English/Urdu

School 4	Gender		Age	Number of years teaching	Language spoken
	Male	Female			
Teacher 1	*		30	7	English
Teacher 2		*	25	2	English/Urdu
Teacher 3		*	29	6	English/Urdu

In the literature review, the relationship between social class and educational achievement was discussed. Webber and Butler (2006) argue that social class is a very important and influential variable in that students from affluent backgrounds generally achieve better test and exam

results than those from poorer families. However, in this research, the catchment area for all four schools is overwhelmingly working-class, yet pupils achieved above-average scores in national English and maths tests during Year 6. It was obvious from the data that parents realised that their children started from an economic disadvantage, with the vast majority determined to make financial sacrifices in order to compensate for this. Saleem, a parent at School 4, expressed his concerns regarding hardship:

I think it's a very difficult life when the children grows up ... and they go to college and to university and this kind of thing because we are a living, working class parents and that's going to be very high things to do. In our parent's life they didn't have any savings or anything but I'm trying my best to put something away for their future, to go on but I think it's still going to be hard but we're going to struggle ... that's how ... it's working class people struggle about it ... I will do my best to give the child my support ... every parents want to give their children support but at the end of the day the money is the main concern of it but ... it's every country (Saleem, parent, School 4).

Another parent, Fulmina, echoed Saleem's sentiment.

When we were younger we wanted to go to university but we were working class, so ... they couldn't afford it ... (Fulmina, parent, School 4).

Unfortunately, successive governments' policies have not made economic access to university easier for working class students with the introduction of, and continual raising of, course fees and the abolition of maintenance grants (in England and Wales). While both parents recognised the sacrifices needed to gain a university place, they did not express any signs of defeat by the prospect of these obstacles.

Both Saleem and Fulmina support Butler and Hamnett's (2011) argument, discussed in the literature review, that immigrant parents in East London have an overwhelming concern for their children's education and were aspirational and often pro-active in facilitating their progression.

Payne (2006) also explored the link between social class and educational achievement but did not concentrate on BAME pupils. The author suggests, like Webber and Butler (2006), that low

achievers in this different ethnic context may have followed in the footsteps of their parents, who had also not ‘achieved’ at school or had little or no education themselves and may have even been illiterate, echoing Willis (1977). Payne argued that these families exhibited multiple factors of socio-economic deprivation, such as low paid work; unemployment; rented accommodation; single-parent households; free school meals, etc.

Many of the Bangladeshi-heritage pupils interviewed came from similarly deprived backgrounds that would fit Webber (2006) and Payne’s (2006) demographic of typical low achievers. In the four sample schools, according to their prospectuses and Ofsted reports, all had very high or higher than average²⁷ take-up of FSM. Yet, in English and maths at KS2, they achieved above-average results. Research suggests that whilst social class is very important in determining educational success, in the context of this study, additional cultural values were more influential, such as attitudes prioritising education (Modood, 2010).

This was reflected in BAME staff. Many of the Bangladeshi-heritage teachers and some indigenous British teachers interviewed thought that it was an advantage to have an awareness of their pupils’ cultural background in order to avoid possible misunderstandings that could have detrimental consequences. They emphasised that there are certain manners and forms of pupil behaviour which, in British culture, would be considered rude; however, because they understood Bangladeshi culture and values, they were able to understand the (non-threatening) meaning of, for example, pupils’ (visual) communication, i.e. that pupils were not being disrespectful when not looking at the teacher while talking with them when this may have been construed otherwise. This is in accordance with the findings of Abbas (2002) and Modood (2007), discussed above. Shahida, a Bengali teacher from School 3, made a specific comment about this.

Being from a Bengali background, I also know there are certain manners they speak in, which, in the British culture, would be identified as being rude but, again, because I know that I can address it, for example, they give you one word answers but that’s something cultural and to raise attainment in literacy you need to be speaking complete

²⁷ This assertion is based on the Ofsted reports for the four schools in this research. The precise reference has not been provided because of the commitment to confidentiality. However, these details can be provided privately on request.

sentences but because I know that I can address it and I know the child isn't being rude [and] it's just the 'fashion' that they speak in at the time...so, yeah, awareness helps you address conflicting issues when it comes to raising levels of literacy, possibly maths and all other areas (Shahida, teacher, School 3).

This sensitivity to cultural nuances was also seen as important by non-Bangladeshi-heritage teacher interviewees who felt that knowledge of the community's history and identity was important in understanding cultural specifics. For example, Alan, a teacher from school 4 commented:

I have worked in other schools with some Bengali children but not like in this school... I mean almost 90% of the children are Bengali. So yes I have some kind of experience and it's good because I know and I'm aware of their culture and the importance of their religion (Alan, teacher, School 4).

Stephanie, a teacher from School 1, also agreed that it was helpful for teachers to have a cultural awareness of their pupils' backgrounds:

I started at school last year and my last class taught me to count to ten and, obviously, they've all come from different areas; they've got slightly different dialects and stuff and there are two different ways of counting to ten and they agreed which one they wanted to teach me and then taught it to me and we were counting in a different ... I was teaching them a different language from a different place I'd travelled to and they were like, 'Can we teach you some Bangladeshi?' so we just sort of incorporated that into the lesson and I loved it and they loved teaching me something and it was so nice and I would actually really like it just to build that relationship it would be really nice to make them feel that their culture is really valued in our school cos it is (Stephanie, teacher, School 1).

David described his school as monocultural (Modood, 2007; Mac an Ghail and Haywood, 2005) rather than multicultural (Modood, 2005, 2007).

Most of our kids are Bengali...it's almost not a multicultural school. It's almost a monoculture...it's a little bit monocultural. When it's Eid we have about maybe from a

class of thirty you may get six children who are still coming to school ... we still open
(David, teacher, School 2).

David, in essence, was highlighting the ethnic homogeneity of his school rather than implying that Bangladeshi-heritage communities were not culturally diverse. Common agreement, therefore, was evidenced from the quotes above about the necessity for cultural sensitivity and awareness of pupils' ethnic backgrounds.

Brown and Lauder (2009), Webber and Butler (2006), Payne (2006) and Morris *et al.* (1999) argue that social class is the primary determinant of educational achievement, irrespective of ethnicity. However, as was also discussed, Kapadia (2010) argues that the social class of a pupil in determining their educational achievement is more influential if you are White British rather than BAME – a view supported by a number of studies, including Willis (1977), Modood (2010) and this research. Teacher David comments on this mediating influence of the pupils' Bangladeshi-heritage ethnicity.

I think most of our families, with some exceptions, are not particularly educated themselves; they did not necessarily go to university or whatever for example and a lot of them don't work ... most of them don't work. Most children live in a house where no one works and often they have like big families and so on but nothing stops them doing so well ... it's true also that the White, English children who are poor at the school often seem to be at a lower level than the Bangladeshi children even (David, teacher, School 2).

Teachers across the four schools spoke about how they felt that the support pupils got from their parents had a positive influence on their attainment, which may help us to understand the perception that social class was not as great an influence on working-class Bangladeshi-heritage pupils as it was on working-class White British pupils. However, Shahida pointed out that although some Bangladeshi-heritage pupils have less educated parents who sometimes cannot read or write, they do try and support them and make an impact on their children's achievements. She spoke about her experience:

My dad is completely illiterate ... totally ... illiterate both in Bengali and English but my family, all of us siblings, we've all got postgraduates [qualifications] because my dad

knew that if you worked and he gave us everything we needed we would want to get that education ... I remember him saying, 'you do whatever you think is best to support her ... She's a teacher, she knows the best' (Shahida, teacher, School 3).

Once more, we see how the social, cultural and ethnic capital (Modood, 2011) of the Bangladeshi-heritage community in its positive evaluation of education helps to provide a compensatory antidote to severe economic deprivation.

Of the four governors interviewed, there was a mix of views as to educational priorities and what formula brought success. However, all of the governors interviewed recognised that pupils from Bangladeshi-heritage backgrounds could expect support towards their education from all of those within their community. Governor Rahman suggested that mothers who are at home while the fathers are working should be encouraged to be as actively involved as possible in their children's education.

Dad is out working ... mum stays in the home and mum should be more like aware of what the children are doing. Follow up their right syllabus ... homework, activities and everything (Rahman, governor, School 1).

I found this comment surprising as it was the default position of virtually all of the mothers interviewed to be concerned about their children's education. This is further confirmed by my experience as a teacher in the Bengali community.

Rahman also suggested that their school could expand the horizons of both parents and children by providing extra-curricular activities, such as outside trips, although this was sometimes difficult because of curriculum pressure and limited resources. Yet, he stated that it was also important to "do everything we can to include Bangladeshi culture"; this supports the statements made by teachers Shahida (School 3), Alan (School 4) and Stephanie (School 1) quoted above regarding the recognition of cultural nuances.

In support of Rahman, Angela, a governor from School 2, emphasised the role of her school in changing the spatial horizons of (Bangladeshi) women with pupils at the school.

Last year they did a trip and one of the women said ... they went to Kew Gardens ... 'This is marvellous! I would never go to Kew Gardens.' This is something we take for granted ... well me personally ... One woman said that she couldn't go anywhere on a trip unless she went with her husband because he doesn't let her go anywhere on her own ... 'We all do things on our own, it's your right and you as a woman can do it on your own' (Angela, governor, School 2).

Replacing a negative spatial zone – 'outside' – with a positive mental environment can change lives for the good. In support of Angela's view, Rahman continued by suggesting that such use of education can divert young people away from criminal sub-cultures that infect marginalised working-class communities.

If they don't have any interesting thing to do in home they'll go outside unattended and they'll involve themselves in crime. I have seen a fifteen year-old who was selling drugs ... so this is the only way ... the only way to avoid this ... crisis ... I would say it's a crisis ... is educate them properly, support them properly, then there'll be no crime. (Rahman, governor, School 1)

Most parents were in agreement with the views expressed above by the governors that education could act as a tool to counteract the burdens of poverty and dispossession. They were generally appreciative of the opportunities that education in the UK today offered their children, regardless of gender. They believed it was equally important for boys and girls to have successful and worthwhile careers, as reinforced by this exchange with parents from School 2.

MUNAH: *Thank you. Do you have any differences in your expectation for either your sons or daughters?*

JOYNAB: *I believe daughter and son are equally the same. There is no difference between boys and girls, all same.*

SULTANA: *You know, whatever way they want to study it doesn't make any difference ... one male or one female, it doesn't make no difference.*

SHULIE: *Yes the same. Obviously every parents wants the same for their children, boys and girls same.*

FAHMIDA: *Same boys and girls ... yeah no difference!*

SHAHNAZ: *I've got two boys so it doesn't make any difference!*

This egalitarian approach to gender stood in contrast to their own experiences as children and their parents' attitudes. A parent, Aysha, from School 3, reflected:

Society was different ... like maybe [our] parents didn't have a choice ... they had to choose ... 'okay we can only afford to send one of our children' and they would probably think, 'We'll send our son because he will probably support us (Aysha, parent, School 3).

The head-teachers interviewed voiced their concerns regarding meeting the needs of the specific cultural preoccupations of the schools' Bangladeshi-heritage communities. School 3 head-teacher, Jack, highlighted the tension that sometimes occurred between the expectations of the educational system and the parents' cultural values.

You know the fact that quite a few of the parents would like the children to do more ... we've got the After-School Club that runs and I think there is a certain amount of discussion that's needed because within a primary school the curriculum time is quite limited for things that are outside of the normal curriculum (Jack, head-teacher, School 3).

The findings suggest that Bangladeshi-heritage pupils' background and their cultural norms and values regarding education is a positive resource that adds further value to their ethnic capital (Modood, 2004). While economic disadvantage was common to virtually all students, the wealth contained in the support for their academic careers within their families and communities outweighed the economic hardships.

Parental Involvement

Parental Involvement was one of the most recurring factors mentioned by many of the interviewees as essential in providing a firm foundation upon which the educational achievement of pupils could be built – a perspective supported by Modood (2007), Sammons

(1999), Shelton (2008) and West and Pennell (2003) in the literature review. Shelton (2008) found that:

Recent research by the DfES (2004) has emphasised the need of greater involvement for fathers in their children's education. The DfES highlights the fact that currently there is considerably lower participation by fathers than by mothers in schools (particularly during the primary years) and in family learning initiatives. Research shows that both fathers and mothers impact on their children's development sometimes in similar, and sometimes in quite different, ways. The combined influence of fathers and mothers is also important. Taking action to include both parents in the life of the school and in their children's learning can make a significant and positive difference to children's achievements, motivation and self-esteem (Shelton, 2008: 6).

High parental expectation and aspiration for their child's educational performance, a primary reason for parental involvement, is thought to be an important influence on academic achievement. The DfCSF (2008) report, discussed in the literature review, supported the view that parental involvement was important for a child's educational development.

Parental involvement in children's education from an early age has a significant effect on educational achievement, and continues to do so into adolescence and adulthood (DfCSF, 2008: 2).

The report argued that learning as a family helps to improve children's reading, writing and numeracy. This was evidenced during the interviews. Farhana, a parent from School 1, commented:

Even though, seeing him from the beginning to now, he's improved a lot but to me I still think, 'no, no, he still needs to improve more!' I think ... by doing that, that gives me more of a push to help him ... you know, even if it's something that you do at home with them or a thing like that, so yes it's important ... (Farhana, Parent, School 1).

The report also suggested that parental attitudes and aspirations were reliable indicators of their child's future attainment and achievement. It found that approximately 50% of parents said that they were very involved in the school life of their child, especially mothers, parents of young

children, Black/Black British parents and parents of children with a statement of Special Educational Needs. My findings suggest that the level of parental involvement in this study was much greater. Also, my experience as a teacher found that Bangladeshi parents, irrespective of their own educational experience, are very willing to become involved in their child's learning.

The Lamb Inquiry (2009) also argued that parents should be more involved in their child's education as an instrument in raising standards. Their recommendations became the foundation for the Achievement for All programme, which stressed parental involvement as a key element in pupil attainment.

However, what constitutes 'involvement' can be contentious. Anderson and Minke (2007) contend that educators and parents can define involvement differently. Some parents consider their involvement to be adequate even when it is seemingly peripheral and encompasses only informal interaction, such as taking their children to school and picking them up as well as attending parents' evenings, jumble sales and sports days, as articulated by parent Farhana.

I think it's very important because I think, even if just parents coming to Assembly and seeing their children perform is ... that relationship is between the parent and the child isn't it? It's really important (Farhana, Parent, School 1).

The DfCSF (2008) report also suggested a variation in levels of parental involvement amongst different ethnic groups. It found that Black parents are more than twice as likely as White parents to say that they *felt* very involved in their child's education. Parents from BAME backgrounds, the authors argue, are also more involved in their child's school activities (including homework). Parents from non-White backgrounds are also less likely to say that a child's education is the school's responsibility rather than the parent's (17% of Black and Asian parents compared to 27% of White parents said that it was the school's responsibility).

What constitutes parental involvement and, in particular, 'good' parental involvement has been addressed by Desforges and Abouchar (2003). Previous studies, they argued, found that parental involvement had virtually no – or even negative – influence on pupil achievement or adjustment, such as if parental involvement was simply taking their child/children to and from school. 'Good' parental involvement would be taking an interest and active role in their child/children's learning. Other researchers, note Desforges and Abouchar, noticed positive effects. These

differences, they suggested, were not difficult to explain. Researchers did not share agreed definitions of what constituted parent involvement. Some thought it was ‘good parenting’ at home, some ‘talking to teachers’, while others defined it as a ‘healthy indulgence’ in school activities. To further obscure the clarification of parental involvement, researchers used differing conceptualisations in their definition. For example, domestic parental involvement has been assessed using teachers’ judgements, parents’ judgements, pupil judgements or researchers’ observations. However, Desforges and Abouchar (2003) conclude:

If the parenting involvement practices of most working class parents could be raised to the level of the best working class parents [...] very significant advances in school achievement might reasonably be expected. [...] Additionally, models of how parental involvement works suggest that every element in the process is, at least in principle, open to the influences of teaching and learning (Desforges and Abouchar, 2003: 87–88).

Anderson and Minke (2007) and Bourdieu (1997a) argued above in the literature review chapters that parental resources such as income, time, social and cultural capital should be taken into consideration when trying to understand attainment and the linkage with parental involvement. Anderson and Minke (2007) suggest that those with fewer resources react differently to families that have greater ‘capital’. Parents with higher professional occupations tend to have more power and therefore flexibility over time-management than working-class parents, allowing the former greater opportunity to participate in their child’s education. They also found female parents and guardians were more active than their male counterparts. As their children grew older, their involvement decreased.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1994) address, more fully, this role of cultural capital – time flexibility, knowledge of the curriculum, ability to assist in homework, the language of encouragement, academic aspiration – and how this can help reproduce existing structures and differentials within ethnicities, class and society generally. Bourdieu (1977a) further argues that the deployment of cultural capital in a seemingly meritocratic society adds to the entrenchment of privilege by giving the appearance that the elites have acquired their power and wealth democratically.

Apart from the fact that the increase in the proportion of holders of the most prestigious academic qualifications among the ruling classes may mean only the need to call upon academic approval in order to legitimate the transmission of power and privileges, the effect is as though the cultural and educational mechanisms had merely strengthened or taken over from the traditional mechanisms such as the hereditary transmissions of economic capital, of a name or of capital in terms of social relationships (Bourdieu, 1977a, in Sullivan, 2002: 146).

It is the case that in my research the pursuit of educational success was not seen subjectively by Bangladeshi-heritage parents and pupils in the way Bourdieu suggests it plays out objectively. Parents were interested and involved in their children's education for practical reasons (discussed below), primarily, in pursuit of social mobility. This was a consequence of the norms and values of their ethnicity – a positive resource of their ethnic capital – more than their class.

In terms of my perception of the social class status of parent interviewees and their involvement in their child's education, social class and occupation did not appear to be an accurate indicator of their level of involvement. This is also supported by my anecdotal experience as a teacher in one of the schools – and similar schools – and some of the parental quotes supplied below.

However, I did find that there was a greater level of involvement from females than males in this research. Of the 20 parent interviewees, 19 were female. I believe that this gender imbalance appears to be a consequence of male working patterns within the families where many worked evenings and nights in catering and consequently slept for a proportion of the day. This shift pattern hindered these men from becoming actively involved in their children's school or being available for interviews. This observation, however, does not suggest that they are not involved with their child's education. Indeed, one of the male parents who was active in his child's education was interviewed in his role as a school governor.

Most parents of the four schools gave strong support to their children, although sometimes the nature of that support was influenced by a limited knowledge of the education system and/or having English as a second language. However, because education was important to the majority of these parents, they were prepared to offer any support they could to their children. Some parents volunteered information that they were paying for extra tuition for their children outside of school hours. Parents like Fatema were paying for this extra provision, illustrating

how far they were willing to go to support their children's education even if it meant going into debt.

I see he's achieving, even if I have to pay and be out of pocket I will do because I know I will get something at the end of it (Fatema, Parent, School 1).

Mattingly *et al.* (2002) in the literature review also stressed the importance of parental involvement and how certain influences can have a negative impact, such as single parenthood, disability and illness. I did not find single parenthood to be a common characteristic of the Bangladeshi-heritage families I interviewed, although disability and illness were more prevalent. Supporting Mattingly *et al.* and Crozier and Davies (2004) on the achievement of pupils of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin in Northeast England – Sunderland – I also found that there were issues that had the potential to hinder parental involvement in their child's education. To address this issue, they identified the need:

- *For the development of greater knowledge, understanding, awareness, and sensitivity on the part of the schools with respect to the diversity of their parent and student body;*
- *For schools to address more directly implicit institutional racism;*
- *To develop strategies to deal with racial harassment and strategies to support young people who are experiencing this;*
- *To develop their school ethos in order to demonstrate the value for and recognition of cultural diversity but in doing so avoid tokenistic gestures;*
- *To develop explicit and realistic expectations of parents' educational participation and provide support to enable parents to participate as fully as is possible;*
- *For schools to address how they convey information to parents and to develop creative means of ensuring the information is received and understood; schools could use their community liaison assistants in conjunction with classroom teachers to develop such practice.*
- *To ensure that the relationship between home and school should involve the student as well as the parents; with respect to South Asian families, at least, this may well mean another family member rather than the mother or father.*

The findings of Davies and Crozier (2004; 2007), Archer and Francis (2007), Anderson and Minke (2007) and Mattingly *et al.* (2002) appear to affirm earlier research by both West *et al.* (1998a) and Sammons *et al.* (1997a) – as outlined in the literature review – emphasising the

importance and value of parental involvement in raising pupil attainment and achievement. Archer and Francis (2007) argued that Chinese-heritage families support and motivate their children by providing them with additional resources such as tutors, extra-curricular activities and additional academic materials to assist their studies and they also have a strong work ethic and high expectations for their children.

Many of the teachers interviewed demonstrated admiration for the commitment of their pupils and parents, similar to the findings of Archer and Francis (2007). Steps were taken to encourage Bangladeshi-heritage parents to become even more involved in school life through helping on school trips, asking for extra homework and attending school assemblies, workshops and parents' evenings, so they could better support their children's education and help them exploit the full range of opportunities provided. For example, Nikki, a teacher from School 1, observed:

The will is there to support from our parents because they have high aspiration. They have high expectations but they don't necessarily always have or feel that they have the skills to be able to give the children the support that they need. So as a school we provide a ... Parent Support Partner [she] does an amazing job engaging parents, getting them into school and running all sorts of projects (Nikki, teacher, School 1).

Sarah, a teacher from School 2, also commented about willingness of parents to be involved in their child's education.

I'm just thinking of the class I have now and the parents ... They both want their kids to succeed ...they come and tell us: 'Oh I can't help with homework and I want to help with homework but I can't but I want them to do well!' and things like that. And you have parents who are then asking us about the after-school clubs that we have, like Maths Club, Homework Club, to get their children involved like that, so if they can't directly do it they are looking for other means like if they can afford it, pay for a tutor or the after-school clubs that we have to try and help them succeed (Sara, teacher, School 2).

Interestingly Rina, another teacher from School 4, noticed parents' efforts to acquire skills that would empower them to assist in their children's education.

There are parents... who go to ... college to learn English, to learn to read and write... that does help...children...I can see an impact...showing they're interested makes the child more keen to learn (Rina, teacher, School 4).

These quotes above suggest that parents wanted their children to have the best educational opportunities and were willing to improve their own skills in order to achieve this. Sam, a governor (and teaching assistant) at School 4, also emphasised that the integration of parents into the learning process was a key goal in achieving this outcome.

We are doing a bridge building [project] and the parents have come along and worked together... with each other and each other's children... In the school, we do lots of workshops with parents (Sam, governor, School 4).

(The bridge project, involving interaction between parents and children was, literally, building models of bridges and other connecting structures using wooden materials.)

Additionally, teachers at the four schools spoke about their use of a range of differentiated resources such as frames, scaffolding and vocabularies which, coupled with the targeted use of their mother tongue, they felt helped Bangladeshi-heritage pupils progress. Teacher interviewees from all four schools had faith in the high expectations of their pupils being realised.

In a social and cultural environment where financial resources are limited, parents recognised that there were often practical limits to the tools that could be utilised for educational achievement. Therefore, taking an active part in their child's learning was important in this context. Sultana, a parent at School 2 commented "I go and sit down with them [when they] do their homework". Also, Rashida, a parent interviewee, stressed the continual nature of learning and that it did not just happen in school: "learning in general is fundamental in our [Islamic] religion" (Rashida, parent, School 4).

Teachers felt parents were generally supportive of what they were trying to do in school in regard to the learning environment, with one stating that "[they] always come to Parents Meetings...talk to you after school" (Stephanie, teacher, School 1). Parental involvement was highly valued by teachers across the schools as a positive force and influence upon the

emotional well-being of the pupils. One said, *We... work closely with our parent's and involve them ... that is why our school is... happy* (Rina, teacher, School 4).

Head-teachers demonstrated an enthusiasm for involving parents in school life and discussed a number of strategies ensuring that the parents understand the work and aims of the school. The statement by Mark, head-teacher of School 2, reflected the general position of all of the heads I interviewed:

We've got very clear ... principles about engaging parents, so with the things that I've just described, where how we actively go and bring ... go and find the parents and talk to them and bring them in just to show them what we're doing and to talk about what we're trying to do ... we identify the first child in the family that may have the capacity to go onto further education, onto university and provide them and their families with a range of experiences that might just help them to raise their aspirations ... So, three or four times a week you'll see groups of parents ... either having some personal learning or getting experience of how we teach the children. So, this week, we've done two or three 'how we teach early reading sessions' with parents...mostly Bangladeshi parents. We've done a creative workshop around Black History Month and a textiles project which develops...it just gives them a bit more confidence. So in the last term each Wednesday we've taken groups of about thirty or forty parents out to a place that we would like them to feel comfortable taking their children to (Mark, head-teacher, School 2).

All interviewees, bar none, agreed that parental involvement in pupils' education was a positive influence and could only improve the standard of achievement. The level of involvement often differed depending upon the circumstances of the parents but what was apparent was the willingness and desire of all parents I interviewed to be active. The schools reciprocated by encouraging as much parental involvement as possible.

The next section deals with the theme of aspiration.

Aspiration

Modood, (2004) and Shah, Dwyer and Modood (2010) observed how many Bangladeshi-heritage parents and carers were passionately committed to providing opportunities and

resources for their children that they themselves had lacked. This is, they argue, indicative of the high value education has among the community. I found this to be a characteristic of my interviewees. Many confessed that they – and/or their parents – had been prepared to endure the hardships of moving country and worked hard to build a more affluent life for themselves and their families. Indeed, some of the parent interviewees who worked in manual occupations, such as in restaurants or driving taxis, for instance, articulated a desire to protect their children from this arduous lifestyle.

Below are statements from parents, pupils and teachers offering their views on how educational aspiration is a key element of their cultural values.

Of the five parents interviewed at School 1, four wanted their children - all daughters - to study medicine and become doctors. In contrast, parents at School Two, while they wanted their children to enjoy school and have ‘successful’ lives, were less specific about the choice of career. They preferred instead that their children do well educationally, socially and culturally. For example, Sultana said:

We want them to do well, so in future they can support themselves and get independent and build up their career and be someone ... Okay I see myself because I couldn't achieve anything in my life ... I did go to college and stuff but I didn't do well so ... as a parent I want my child to do well, so in future he can get a good job and earn a living and have a better life (Sultana, parent, School 2).

However, Khadeja, a parent from School 3, felt the emphasis on careers that conferred high status and brought disproportionate economic reward was implicitly acquiescing with a questionable value system:

Personally I don't actually have any specific thing that I really want my daughter to be like ... I know their dad does; he wants one of them to be a journalist for some reason but I think at the end of the day I just want them to lead a happy life and I want them to do something to serve others (Khadeja, parent, School 3).

A third viewpoint was expressed by Rashida, a parent at School 4, who was clear about the roles or careers that she felt her daughter should try and stay away from, rather than those she definitely wanted her to have.

I have expectations of what I don't want her to be but as to what she can be ... as long as she does her best and tries her best and goes for it then that's fine. But I have certain things that I don't want her to be ...that I know that she could do better...I don't know ...working in a supermarket I would hope that after university that wouldn't be her final job, to work in a supermarket ...at the checkout, so in that respect I do have high expectations ...that's...that she doesn't go down that route but ... as long as they try their best and that's it really (Rashida, parent, School 4).

Binya, another parent at the same school, recognised the cultural differentiation in gender opportunities that her community accepted, emphasising the importance of religion in their lives:

Both my boys go to an Islamic school, so I want them to preach in the mosque and that's what they're targeting. They want to be like them... Yeah, leaders in the sense ... lead prayer in the mosque, teach Arabic...that's it. My daughter, I would like her to be a doctor maybe. No, because...daughters can't...Obviously the position my son would hold in the mosque, my daughter can't have that position. It doesn't work like that in our religion (Binya, parent, School 4).

The opinions expressed by the parents above testify to the varied and nuanced conceptualisation of 'aspiration'. However, what all interviewees implicitly agreed upon was that education is a moral force in the shaping of their children's character. Aysha was a parent who supported the view that education was about creating virtuous citizens.

My child's education is very important to me ... A good education means a good person ... good values (Aysha, parent, School 3).

Khadeja added:

I want my child to achieve not just academically... not in ... every aspect ... in education ... manners ... you know, manners ... everything ... I just want them to lead a happy life and I want them to do something to serve others ... that's important because it's not just about, 'Me, me, me, me, me' ... or ... 'Let me get an education ... let me earn money' I don't want them to have that sort of thought ... That's it and I will feel that I've achieved something in my life as well. If my child achieves that means I have achieved as well (Khadeja, parent, School 3).

Parents agreed on the moral good that education can do while differing on career objectives for their children. This was supported by the pupils. Some spoke, for example, about their aspiration for social change. Sameer commented:

Because I'd like to do things that could change people ... not ... change what's happening around the world ... like lots of people are dying from hunger and things, I'd like to change that ... and change the environment some children are growing up in (Sameer, pupil, School 1).

Such aspirational comments, like Sameer's, from pupils about subjects, lessons, activities and careers they enjoyed and aspired to, were not divided according to gender stereotypes. Nadia, from School 2, stated that she:

Enjoy[ed] Art because you get to paint lots of different things and I want to turn into an artist when I get older (Nadia, pupil, School 2).

In their interviews, the extended vocabulary of some of the pupils was noticeable with, again, no differentiation between genders. This acquisition of cultural capital is an important development in laying the foundation for achieving the educational success that the majority of Bangladeshi-heritage pupils and families aspire to, according to Bernstein (1971) and Bourdieu (1997a), discussed above in the literature review. Nazia, a female pupil from School 4, commented:

In the future, I would like to be a paediatrician like a children's doctor. I want to be a paediatrician because I like communicating with younger children. When I was four once my sister said to me, 'what do you want to be when you grow up?' and I had one

minute to think ... I was thinking, I was thinking, I was thinking and then I had an idea I wanted to be a doctor and then when I became six I was like, 'I want to be a kid's doctor' and then when I became nine I found out what the name was ... 'paediatrician' (Nazia, pupil, School 4).

Zehra, another pupil at the same school, in expressing her desire for a particular career, showed how gender stereotypes are broken down even in the most traditional of communities:

Because I'm really good at football and I go to football on Friday and Saturday and on Sunday. I do extra football for a league...I play for a team ... and I really want to become a footballer because I want to become famous (Zehra, pupil, School 4).

Zehra's comments also show the fusion of values that often inevitably occurs for migrant communities. It is a fluid process that can bring both tension and creativity.

Teachers, also, were enthusiastic about developing their pupils' aspiration. One of the ways in which they did this was by taking them to workplaces they felt would inspire them. Nikki described an example of this:

So I said, 'well one day, instead of coming in, why don't we come and visit you?' So we went in a black cab and we went through central London and we arrived at his office and the kids were just like, 'Whoa!' they'd never been inside a building like that and we went in there and we spent three or four hours and the reading buddies were amazing and they got to sit at the desk and they were like, 'oh!' you know and they came out and they went, 'I quite fancy an office like that, I think I might quite like to be a lawyer.' And I think it's about showing children; it's not just giving them the skills to achieve but it's showing them what's out there that is possible to achieve (Nikki, teacher, School 1).

David felt that one particular Bangladeshi-heritage parent was very emphatic in his willingness to do all that he could to support his child's academic aspiration.

There was one particular dad who came in ... he came in with his wife but he did most of the talking ... he came in ... quite a young guy but he was in a suit ... he was quite smart ... you could tell straight away and he wanted to know how he could do more to

help his child and could he pay for private lessons and all that kind of thing (David, teacher, School 2).

Unusually, one pupil wanted to have an adult career - window cleaning - that did not follow the inspirational pattern of upwards social mobility common amongst his peers.

World of Work Week and we talked about what they'd like to be when they grow up and we had some saying, 'I want to be a cardiologist' and we had some people saying, 'I want to be a lawyer' ... all of these things and then we had one little boy who put his hand up and said, 'I want to be a window cleaner' and I thought, 'Good for you!' ... he's six and he's got a sense of what he wants to do with his life you know ... so it's not just about being something that's seen as like high-achieving, I think it's just about having that sense you enjoy and how you can take that through into adult life and be successful with it (Nikki, teacher, School 1).

David also spoke about the passivity of some Bangladeshi-heritage female pupils but that felt it did not necessarily affect their aspirations.

In every class I've taught here, and I've been here for six years, there's always some Bengali girls who are like totally adorable and lovely kids [but] they hardly ever talk, there's always a few really quiet ones and I think that's a cultural thing. I think it must be because why should there be so many of them? They are not all like that and you get these really sparkly girls if you know what I mean ... but there are these girls ... and your main ambition is to just get them to speak up a bit and I'm sure that is a cultural background but is not affecting their attainment in any ways. They are ambitious and confident and so on, it's amazing (David, teacher, School 2).

All the teachers interviewed, in one way or another were keen to see their pupils achieve to the maximum of their ability. They also recognised that there were differing aptitudes and like Dweck (2006) believed ability is akin to training – *the harder you work, the better you get*. They also recognised it was important that teachers themselves realised this principle that there would be a greater level of improvement and attainment in pupils if we do not see intelligence as primarily innate and fixed.

There are many myths about ability and achievement, especially about the lone, brilliant person suddenly producing amazing things ... Does this mean that anyone with the right mindset can do well? Are all children created equal? ... No, some children are different ... but prodigies or not, we all have interests that can blossom into abilities (Dweck, 2006: 56, 63).

Dweck (2006) suggests that teachers foster a positive mental approach to learning in pupils – one that lifts their confidence and generates belief in their capacity to develop. She provides an example of a problematic pupil very late for their maths class who copied the homework from the board at the bell. The pupil found the two problems very difficult, so difficult in fact that it took much longer than expected to hand the work to the teacher for marking. The pupil had solved both correctly. When giving feedback, the teacher clarified that the tasks had not, in fact, been homework but two hitherto unsolved maths puzzles that had consistently defeated academics. The pupil had, therefore, achieved way beyond their peers. This was not expected or demanded but the teacher, despite the troublesome behaviour of the pupil, had always inspired confidence in their pupils. Dweck asserts that when individuals believe that they can increase their ability through their own efforts, they are more motivated. In contrast, those who feel that their ability is fixed are less determined to achieve goals that have been set, either by themselves ('intrinsic') or others ('extrinsic').

Improvement and development, Dweck posits, cannot always be numerically assessed (for instance, how do we quantitatively measure a rise in confidence?). She feels that banding and streaming, in this context of 'measurement', has limited value.

But aren't students sorted into different ability levels for a reason? Haven't their test scores and past achievement shown what their ability is? Remember, test scores and measurements of achievement tell you where a student is, but they don't tell you where a student could end up (Dweck, 2006: 66).

Dweck argues that by focussing on self-enhancement as a learner in a social environment the student will, with sustained effort, improve, thereby helping the group to develop as a collective entity. This belief in self-enhancement, at primary level, is assisted by being supported by the parents/carers of the pupils in providing and facilitating a learning environment that encourages such a process.

The Bangladeshi-heritage pupils interviewed had high aspirations. They wanted to achieve above average results at KS2 – and at all nationally tested levels of their school career – providing what all hoped would be a solid platform for upward social mobility in their adult and working lives.

Educational aspiration is a key component of the Bangladeshi community's value system. It is a positive resource of ethnic capital (Modood, 2004) that is utilised to compensate and offset other socio-economic disadvantages that act to hinder and frustrate Bangladeshi-heritage pupils' academic careers.

The next section discusses language skills and how (or whether) this factor influences academic achievement amongst Bangladeshi-heritage pupils.

Language skills

Language skills emerged as a theme because many participants expressed views and made comments about various aspects of language. Below are the comments of the participants on this topic. This theme has to be seen in the context of many pupils – and their parents – in this research being bilingual, a characteristic also discussed in more detail below. In the literature review chapters, van Buren's (1972) work was visited. He noted how the meaning of words can sometimes be ambiguous and how important precision of meaning is as a communicative tool in language. This necessity for both the communicator and receiver/recipient to accept a common definition and meaning of shared words can sometimes be difficult when English is not the first language of either the interviewer or the interviewee, or both. It is recognised by the policy of successive governments that extra resources are needed to target pupils with English as an additional language (EAL), such as the EMAG initiative. The cognitive implications of EAL (Dustman *et al.* 2010) have been discussed in the literature review where it was argued that multilingualism, while slowing cognitive development in early learners, was highly beneficial to attainment as pupils matured.

Bourdieu (1994) and Bernstein (1971) argue that language is a resource of cultural capital and is utilised within the education system to reaffirm socio-economic inequalities. In practice, the pupils had a nuanced approach to this issue: while language was a key dimension to their learning experience, they did not feel that bi- or even multilingualism was a handicap. In fact,

quite the opposite. They recognised how their bilingualism was of practical use in the daily lives of their families, such as shopping or interacting with external agencies.

Moreover, despite the fact that a large proportion of the pupils came from backgrounds where English was not the first language spoken in the home, many pupils were keen to learn about other cultures which they felt could be accessed through studying yet another language. For instance, Sameer spoke about the benefit of learning Spanish for reasons of leisure. He did not feel that this was an impediment to his development.

We learn Spanish in school and when we go on holidays to Spain or something it comes in useful and when I go on nature trips or something ... for holiday trips, when we realise something we've already learn it, so it's more interesting and you find out more and ... well, the thing with education is ... as you get closer to it you enjoy it more (Sameer, pupil, School 1).

Yaseen, another pupil at the same school, was also keen on learning about other cultures but through religious studies: "I like RE because we learn about different countries, what they do" (Yaseen, pupil, School 1).

Rayhan was keen to use English as a tool for learning and spoke about the necessity and usefulness of literacy in order to help friends and family to also attain linguistic skills.

Literacy is useful for me because the words that I learn I can use it with my friends or at home to speak properly and if some of them are not English I can tell them they can use ambitious words and things like that ... and my reading helps me as well (Rayhan, pupil, School 3).

As a compliment to this view, Nikki suggested that teachers might need particular skills, sensitivity and an understanding of local subcultures to be effective practitioners.

I think you need additional skills in teaching children with English as an additional language. You have to be aware of the level at which they're working [and] communicate ... I was teaching them a different language from a different place I'd travelled to and they were like, 'can we teach you some Bangladeshi?' so we just sort

of incorporated that into the lesson and I loved it and they loved teaching me ... we learn other languages ... we learn Spanish ... the kids have just said today, 'can we start learning French?' I don't actually speak Sylheti ... I think from the point of view of being able to communicate with parents, I think a little bit of understanding is always helpful but I think that's more in terms of building relationships than necessarily in terms of teaching because my background is actually in international education, so I'm used to working with classes where you've got fifteen or sixteen different languages (Nikki, teacher, School 1).

Marie, at School 4, commented on the usefulness of speaking the pupil's first language. This helped, she believed, a teacher to be more sensitive to the needs of their pupils.

I think it's important ... it would be really useful to have those language skills but in reality you don't always ... know the other language. I mean, I taught a child once who I could communicate with; he couldn't speak English and we communicated with each other in Urdu but then you've got to be careful that you don't rely too much on the first language, you still link it up with English as well, so you've got to be careful (Marie, teacher, School 4).

However, Tina, a teacher from School 2, added that learning the language of the pupils' ethnic background was not essential. She argued that if there were problems arising from language and communication, there was support within the classroom and school to overcome and solve any difficulties that may arise.

If there are any language problems, there are a large number of Bengali speaking teachers and teaching assistants in the school and the children have an adequate knowledge of English to talk to me about anything that they need to talk to me about and the school policy is that they should learn to do their work in English, so I can't see that knowing any Bangladeshi words would help (Tina, teacher, School 2).

Tina's view of the usefulness of additional language skills was unusual. Most teachers interviewed felt that having skills that allowed them to teach with cultural sensitivity and knowledgeable was preferable. Thus, the issue and relevance of language skills was applicable to staff as well as pupils.

The theme of language skills emerged because, in the context of this research, it was found to have a noticeable impact upon academic achievement as perceived and relayed by the interviewees. Many of the interviewees were bilingual, with some having English as a second language, though this characteristic applied more to parents than pupils. Pupils spoke about how their greater proficiency in English allowed them to help their parents in activities outside the school and in the community, as explained by Sania from School 3.

English helps me to help my dad because he sometimes needs my help, sometimes he needs help to write the words ... because he goes to college, so I need to help him and we help each other with work at home (Sania, pupil, School 3).

In contradistinction, parents and teachers commented how it was difficult for some parents to help their children with their homework because of language limitations. Shahida explained:

Mum was a 'housewife' ... there were six of us you know, she didn't sit with me one-to-one all the time ... she couldn't, she had to divide herself between all six children ... my mum ... had reading and writing of Bengali and basic English because she married very young. I think the parents that don't have an education are more likely to want them to succeed (Shahida, teacher, School 3).

Brian, from the same school added:

I think home life has a great effect on children's attainment but the parents in this school are very supportive despite the fact that many of them can't even read or write but then they tend to work with us to help their children achieve highly and they always talk to us about homework and ask for ideas to help them support their children (Brian, teacher, School 3).

Despite the language difficulties outlined by Shahida and Brian, we have discussed above how Dustmann and Schonberg (2008) illustrated how bilingual pupils were at a disadvantage in the early years of their school and academic lives but that their level of progress tended to be faster and more prolonged than monolinguals. This feature of development was also recognised by Brian.

The children are quite good at catching up and progressing rapidly... They soon speak English and hardly speak Sylheti (Brian, teacher, School 3).

Bourdieu's (1990) argument that complex theories can only be expressed in their most adequate form in equally complex language is questioned by the findings of this section on language skills. If his assertion was universally applicable, it would suggest that bilingual BAME pupils are at a constant and consistent disadvantage; this is not the scenario that I experienced as a teacher or as a researcher in this project. Language skills, particularly bi- and multilingualism, were recognised as an important theme because it had usefulness across a number of areas: intergenerational communication; understanding cultures and long-term cognitive development, to name the most cited.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed four of the primary themes influencing the above average educational performance of Bangladeshi-heritage pupils at primary level in four inner-city London schools. These were identified as Pupil Background, Parental Involvement, Aspiration and Language Skills. Analysis of the data suggested that virtually all pupil interviewees embraced the ideas and practices of their school as reflected in these influential themes.

The findings suggest that the ethnic and socio-economic background of the Bangladeshi-heritage pupils, rather than hinder their potential for achievement, actually added value to their academic attainment through positive deployment of the cultural and ethnic capital embedded in the characteristics of ethnicity and class; that Bangladeshi-heritage pupils' background and their cultural norms and values regarding education is a positive resource that adds further value to their ethnic capital (Modood, 2004). While economic disadvantage was common to virtually all students, the wealth contained in the support for their academic careers within their families and communities outweighed the hindrances upon their academic attainment brought about by economic hardship. Most parents confirmed that their belief in, and value for, education stemmed from their family. Parents were seen as having a significant impact on their children's attitudes towards their learning performance in school despite their own often-limited educational experience and qualifications. Most parents said that they were involved, positively according to their perceptions, in their children's education in one way or another.

Teachers in the four schools appeared to have high expectations of the pupils they taught and their aspirations for their pupils is a reinforcing element in a virtuous cycle that involves aspirational pupils and parents. What seemed to be a constant in all the schools studied was the belief of most teachers that each pupil had aptitudes and abilities that needed to be nurtured. The majority of parents interviewed were also very ambitious and had high aspirations for their children and saw educational achievement as a route to better job opportunities and greater social status. Given this support and encouragement by teachers and parents pupil aspiration was also high. These external factors, including as well a positive learning environment facilitated by - in all four schools - an ethos that was primarily pupil centred and ostensibly, at least, seen as fairly and democratically arrived at and implemented, were influential .

While the majority of parents interviewed had English as a second language and often used their mother tongue as the first language domestically with their children, there seemed to be widespread determination to ensure that their children's bilingualism would not act as a brake on their learning. Indeed, most parents felt that speaking two or more languages would be ultimately beneficial to their children's learning, progress and attainment. Also the majority of pupils interviewed did not feel that communicating in their parents' primary language at home and learning in English at school was an obstacle to their progress. Some spoke of how they could utilise their knowledge in situations in which their parents encountered difficulties in public through having English as a second language.

The next chapter discusses the remaining three themes that emerged: Engaging in Learning, Working Together and School Council.

Chapter Six - Discussion of Findings (Engaging in Learning, Working Together, School Council)

Introduction

This chapter discusses the remaining three themes that emerged from the findings: Engaging in Learning, Working Together and School Council. They are inter-linked and, I would argue, reflect component characteristics of Bangladeshi-heritage culture: a commitment to education and the value of collective activity. The schools in this study were overwhelmingly comprised of pupils of Bangladeshi heritage which facilitated the absorption and practice of the values reflected by these themes. Put simply, because there was a value-consensus brought about by a virtual mono-cultural environment the positive attitude to learning that is core in working class Bangladeshi-heritage culture was a dominant influence. The conclusion of this chapter will be a summary of the three themes.

Engaging in Learning

A critical theme that frequently emerged from the interview analysis was labelled Engaging in Learning. Many pupils spoke about their wish that learning should be “fun”. Such lessons would help to create and sustain a positive learning environment which, for the majority of pupils, meant being committed to class activities structured and facilitated by the teacher. They particularly enjoyed ‘fun’ lessons, which encompassed creativity, experimentation, practical exercises and stimulating actions involving co-operation and clearly defined objectives for success (Sbuttoni, 2010). They wanted to feel that at the closure of the lesson they had achieved something tangible. Rayhan commented that learning music would have a practical value with a palpable end objective.

I would like the school to introduce ... hmm ... I would like them to introduce ... more ... more ... we can have like musical instruments and we can do performances like
(Rayhan, male pupil, School 3).

Rayhan’s comments resonate with Younger and Warrington (2005) and John-Steiner (2000), who argued that an arts-based curriculum can improve behaviour as well as motivation. Creativity and fun are viewed by many practitioners in the four schools as an important ingredient of their school’s ethos in that it helped to create a positive environment that was conducive to learning. To contextualise, the majority of pupils interviewed enjoyed most

lessons but particularly those that involved creative exploration, practical activities and working in pairs and groups where they helped each other.

Girls, in particular, valued working collectively because it also allowed them to socialise. The girls enjoyed seeing friends at school, where they had the freedom to get together away from their domestic environment where the environment would often be structured according to their parents' demands and aspirations.

Pupils' interest and determination to do well in their learning, irrespective of gender, was apparent. They also spoke about the practical use of certain subjects outside school, for example using their maths skills when shopping and cooking at home. Hafiz commented:

Umm there's like cooking sometimes. Extra cooking helps ... because I sometimes do cooking at home and there's like maths ... kilograms and grams and all those stuff (Hafiz, pupil, School 1).

Hafiz also stated that he enjoyed the creative, active, 'fun' activities at his school. He wanted to "keep having creative subjects and ... break and Golden Time". The theme of fun consistently came up as a tool for encouraging learning (Downing, Johnson and Kaur, 2003).

I like it's not always just hard work, you get more fun time, you get time to spend time with your friends, time to 'chill-out' ... and there's art, which is really nice to ... to express your views ... and at the end of each week on Friday afternoons you get half-an-hour of special time, you can be free and do anything you want, which is called 'Golden Time'. (Hafiz, pupil, School 1)

Khaled, similarly to Hafiz, also commented about his preference for positive engagement in lessons, which they referred to as having enjoyable and 'fun' lessons. When asked the question, "What would they like to keep the same and what they would like to change?", he responded:

...I'm happy with my learning but I want even more fun science lessons because they are great something like that because I want to learn chemistry and I also would like more cooking clubs (Khaled, male pupil, School 4).

Additionally, many pupils, despite their deprived circumstances, had a clear vision and high aspirations for their futures – a consequence both of their school culture and parental exhortation. However, for these expectations to be realised, they needed to be reaffirmed by the staff at their schools with this affirmation acting as a virtuous circle. If pupils are believed in, respected and encouraged, then they will respond by attempting to meet these expectations. The pupils therefore wanted a symbiosis between parents and teachers over values towards education and learning.

The great majority of pupils interviewed seemed to be motivated, enthusiastic and stimulated by their learning. They appeared to like and trust the majority of their teachers with whom they seemed to have a positive relationship. Nazia spoke enthusiastically about her class teacher.

I wouldn't want any teachers to leave or like any lunch teachers to leave because they are really nice and they let us help out ... I really like them so I wouldn't wanna change anybody in the school. I really like my teacher, she's the best teacher I've ever had; she's so fun, she's so creative, she's so ... enthusiastic (Nazia, pupil, School 4).

It became apparent during the interviews with pupils that an engagement with their learning was (possibly) their most important classroom wish. I interpreted this, on the basis of the interviews, as meaning the facilitation of an environment which, as far as was practically possible, took the stress out of the pedagogic process and allowed them to actively participate in and influence that learning process.

The School Council was an institution in which pupils felt that they could both participate and have an influence. Aminor felt that the School Council was an attractive feature of school life, which helped him to engage in his learning: “It’s fun; all sorts of things [are] discussed like games, school dinners and other things” (Aminor, pupil, School 1).

Unsurprisingly, teachers across the four schools also wanted learning to be an engaging and enjoyable experience for themselves, as well as the pupils. They also acknowledged that pupils learned more enthusiastically when they were stimulated by lessons. Nikki said:

In the first two weeks of the year this year, we came off timetable, off curriculum and we had World of Work for two weeks, so the children were involved in projects where,

for example, they walked in on the Monday and there was crime scene in their classroom and they spent ... a week being forensic scientists looking for finger prints ... analysing hair samples and doing all that kind of thing (Nikki, teacher, School 1).

David also wanted his lessons to be stimulating:

I ensure my lessons are well differentiated, stimulating and the children enjoy them. I care for the individuals and have [a] very pleasant relationship with their parents, which has real impact on the children. I run homework clubs and cricket clubs, etc. ... (David, teacher, School 2).

Similarly, Rina wanted enjoyable lessons for her pupils in order to encourage an engagement with learning.

Your personal experience is from teaching certain topics and doing that lesson again and reflecting upon it and benefiting the children and inspiring them with lessons that you know they are going to enjoy because you have done it again ... (Rina, teacher, School 4).

In agreement with these teachers, Adrian described his arts-based emphasis:

Make absolutely sure that activities are stimulating and interesting and not dull and boring ... drama ... music-based singing and performance ... playing musical instruments ... art activities ... things they enjoy (Adrian, teacher, School 1).

Head-teachers, too, were enthusiastic about keeping the children motivated. Some spoke about their desire to create a positive learning environment by, for example, giving certificates and having 'Golden Time', free time in which pupils choose from a range of activities and giving Achievement Award certificates at the end of each week as a reward for their hard work. Janet commented:

We want them to have a sense of achievement; that they're motivated and inspired and proud at what they can do and they have academic success, so they're literate, numerate

and articulate and that they make progress and they enjoy their learning (Janet, head-teacher, School 1).

Janet also discussed the Accelerated Reader Programme (ARP), which links learning at home and school.

We're looking at improving Accelerated Reader, which means that they can read at home, they can take online quizzes, it motivates them. This is ... this is creative learning ... it's not all about art and painting and drawing ... the creative learning environment is sometimes misunderstood and misinterpreted. To me, a creative environment comes from the teachers planning ... how they plan to expose the children to the breadth of the curriculum and the depth of the curriculum; make it relevant, make it meaningful to them, pitch it at the right level (Janet, head-teacher, School 1).

These were all seen as practical measures for creating a positive learning environment in which, the head-teacher suggested, pupils learn in an engaging way. In this way, the ARP helped to blur the boundaries between home and school.

Another head-teacher, Mark, agreed with Janet about the importance of lessons being enjoyable so that pupils are happy to learn.

Happy children are successful children ... so that ... If you achieve personal success then it brings happiness! We would do that across the whole school and articulate that together (Mark, head-teacher, School 1)

The creation of learning activities that pupils enjoyed was found to be conducive to not only to a positive classroom environment but one in which, as a consequence, pupils felt safe and at ease. In all schools, it was apparent that the emotional welfare of the class, and school in general, was considered important. This in turn would act as a virtuous cycle in reaffirming and galvanising this positive learning environment. Head-teacher Mark suggested that this was a key factor in assisting pupils to achieve (a notion emphasised by Rutter *et al.* 1979). He also explained his school's emphasis on the progress of each individual:

We celebrate every person's achievement regardless of where they end up; it's where they start from and where they get to and they compare themselves to themselves and not to each other. So whilst some are competitive, they are competing against their own previous personal best, so we articulate that ... 'doing your best is what we want from everybody.' ... and ... 'happy children are successful children' ... so that ... 'if you achieve personal success then it brings happiness! (Mark, head-teacher, School 2).

However, the pressures of conforming to the KS target demands of the National Curriculum made it difficult for staff to freely address pupils' desires for more practical lessons. While "coming off curriculum" – a practice reported by teacher Nikki, from School 1 (quoted above) – may have met pupils' (and teachers') need for interesting variation and enjoyable stimulus, it could not be done frequently without affecting the NC timetable. Yet, it was apparent that in all schools, head-teachers and teachers were aware of their pupils' wishes in this area and had attempted to meet them in whatever way was practical in view of NC timetabling constraints. Head-teacher Jack commented:

Within a primary school, the curriculum time is quite limited for things that are outside of the normal curriculum (Jack, head-teacher, School 3).

These comments by pupils, teachers and heads speak of a tension between the demands of the NC and its obsession with numerically measured competencies and their wishes to create an all-year-round stimulating learning environment. Eisner (1994) argued that a preoccupation with measurable competencies can distort the curriculum which, over the long-term, could dilute pupil learning through a preoccupation with target levels. The vast majority of interviewees suggested that learning was better facilitated through lessons and activities that pupils intrinsically enjoyed.

Many features, qualities and characteristics of the approaches to learning outlined above were most noticeable in School 2, which produced the most successful SAT results at KS2. This may appear as a contradiction in that those pupils, who appeared to be the least pressured and able to work imaginatively and creatively by teachers and support staff and also appeared relaxed in their classrooms, were achieving above the national average in National Curriculum tests that demanded concentrated attention to detail over a sustained period of time. However, my research findings suggest that by not internalising and implementing the pedagogic ideas and

dictates of a managerialist philosophy behind a top-down, centralised approach to learning, the outcome was beneficial in an unintended way: it was because the pupils were not made to feel overly pressured to reach externally set targets that they achieved. As sports psychologists will testify, those who feel relaxed on the 'big occasion' are those most likely to do well.

I agree with Dweck (2006) in suggesting a growth mind-set approach to teaching and learning. If we are to fully nurture the abilities and aptitudes of all pupils, we need to develop a virtuous circle of encouragement, confidence, growth, commitment and achievement. By facilitating a 'feel-good' factor in pupils, we instil the belief that learning is primarily engendered by self-motivation.

Gregory (1994, in Walters, 2007) demonstrates this in his discussion of a Bangladeshi pupil, Tajul, learning to read. He illustrates how Tajul negotiated with his class teacher in order that she give him the guidance and information he needed so that he could understand the concept of 'reading' compared to his Bengali school. Gregory argues that Tajul's example represents pupils changing from passive to active learners. (This conforms with the paradigm shift found in the relatively new discipline of Childhood Studies with its move to seeing children as proactive architects of meaning.) However, without the right conditions, even the most vibrant, dedicated pupil will be stunted and slowed.

Seeing children as active agents in their own learning [can] ignore the structural constraints that children encounter as learners and present an over-positive account of children's ability to be successful independent readers and achievers in their mainstream schools. Representations that do not include in their accounts the limits to learners' agency in classroom settings exclude important dynamics and experiences of classroom life and the ways in which children can come to be positioned as underachieving learners and readers (Walters, 2010: 398).

All of this, of course, has resource implications. In order to develop each pupil's individual ability in each subject area, teachers will have to produce investigative, explorative and research tasks and exercises commensurate with the ability of each learner and with the goal of stretching them. This will inevitably demand more human, material and physical resources: smaller class sizes, more staff, more classroom resources, more outside visits and trips, and more internal visits by 'creative experts'.

The learning environment should be convivial for freedom of expression and thought, welcoming, tolerant, encourage diversity and facilitate co-operation. It should be a space in which pupils feel free and safe to make mistakes, take chances, put forward ideas, receive constructive criticism and not be judged in comparison to their peers. Unfortunately, the current Prevent initiative to monitor, through teacher reporting, ‘extremist’ and ‘radical’ thought amongst pupils is criticised for inducing a climate of fear amongst those older pupils of colour conscious of its existence.²⁸ The school and classroom should allow pupils to leave in the cloakroom and at the school gates whatever impediments to learning are brought from outside, but also make them able to discuss and raise these impediments with adults in a confidential, non-judgemental forum. Such a school environment would not conform to national standards but individual needs. Growth and development would be assessed qualitatively: is the pupil happy to come to school? Do they feel respected, challenged and valued?

The pupils interviewed in this research enjoyed lessons that they felt were ‘fun’ and had a practical value in that the knowledge gained inside school could often be applied outside. A common feature in all schools, conducive to a positive learning environment, was ‘Golden Time’ – a specific period at the end of each week in which pupils selected activities from a range of choices as a reward for hard work. Another similar initiative was the award of Achievement Certificates by head-teachers on a weekly basis in the space of whole school assembly. These practices echo Rutter *et al.*’s (1979) statement regarding the public praising of good work by pupils as important in generating a positive learning environment at school.

This view seems to go against prevailing trends which seem to prescribe, through the National Curriculum, that set bodies of knowledge should be inculcated by all pupils. This approach has ‘education’ as a fixed entity, both in terms of what is learned and what has to be achieved through tests. If we are to encourage life-long learning, education must be seen as being concerned with individual growth and development, first and foremost. It also has to be engendered by self-motivation in the spirit of wanting to learn rather than needing to overcome certain obstacles – tests/exams – in order to reach a particular goal or objective (though this should not devalue such processes but rather recognise their limitations). Primary schools

²⁸ Damien Gayle, *Guardian*, 21 April 2016, www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/government-prevent-strategy-promoting-extremism-maina-kiai, accessed 22 April 2016.

should produce pupils who have enjoyed their experience, and who have felt that they have played an integral part in the education process, both as creators and learners. If they feel confident, secure, safe and content, their development and growth could be limitless.

Working Together

Collective working and co-operation was a recurring characteristic among interviewees in all schools. This became one of the seven core themes in the research findings' categorisation. Working Together was part of the prevailing ethos in the four schools and was supported, in practice, by the majority of those involved in them. This theme highlights very crucial aspects of collaborative activity, such as the emphasis on teamwork amongst all stakeholders. The feeling amongst interviewees, including pupils, was unanimous: to ensure the ultimate official goal for all – 'high achievement' as measured by KS 2 SATs results – co-operation and teamwork were vital. (It should be noted here that some parents – with equally high aspirations – felt their children's happiness/emotional welfare was the most important aspect of their schooling.)

Head-teachers, teachers, parents and governors all articulated on how working together was a vital dimension to the life of their schools in achieving the ultimate goal of doing their best for their child/pupil's education. One of the ways in which this was attempted was the involvement of parents in numerous workshops and activities in the schools. By working hard on this goal over a long period of time in a well-organised process, it was hoped to also raise the parents' awareness of what goes on in schools.

Head-teacher Mark of School 2 explained how they worked collaboratively with the parents:

So, three or four times a week you'll see groups of parents being ... either having some personal learning or getting experience of how we teach the children. So, this week, we've done two or three 'how we teach early reading sessions' with parents ... mostly Bangladeshi parents. We've done a creative workshop around Black History Month and a textiles project which develops ... it just gives them a bit more confidence. So in the last Term each Wednesday we've taken groups of about thirty or forty parents out to a place that we would like them to feel comfortable taking their children to. (Mark head-teacher, School 2)

Similarly, head-teacher Janet of School 1 also emphasised how they involved and supported parents:

We do a lot of work with parents ... with our parent's support partner ... and other class teachers running parent's sessions to advise them of the curriculum and to come and find out ... what the expectations of the year are' ... since having our Parent-Support Partner we've been able to enhance the work of the learning mentor so that that goes more into the community. We've done all sorts of things. We've done spelling workshops, we've done number workshops, we've done creative art drop-in sessions. We've done Learn How To Learn My Amazing Brain. We've done problem-solving with them ... all sorts and we try to respond to them and we also look at what their needs are in terms of addressing their language and communication needs. So we run Adult Literacy classes for them ... we've run ICT support for them and, again, this helps them to feel more empowered to ask questions about their children's learning (Janet, head-teacher, School 1).

Andrea of School 4 was in agreement with her fellow head-teachers:

My biggest priority was parental involvement. So, basically, it was the first or second week when I started a series of parental workshops because I think that unless you involve the parents you are not going to achieve as well. So those parental workshops are based on a lot of things. They are not just ... umm ... they're not just curriculum workshops ... they're things to help develop the parents as well (Andrea, head-teacher, School 4).

Across all four schools, there was agreement that collaboration and collective working was a positive characteristic that needed to be nurtured and encouraged as witnessed by these comments from the head-teachers above. Indeed, the work and practice of all head-teachers and their schools seems to support Rutter *et al.* (1979) in his argument that the ethos of schools should combine work, community and personal growth. Dawson (n.d.) argues that central to the implementation of an ethos that encourages and emphasises collaboration is leadership (Gold *et al.*, 2003).

While all head-teachers recognised the importance of their roles as leaders in their institutions, there was no clear, universally agreed-upon definition of the concept of leadership and how it would manifest itself practically. For Janet, head-teacher of School 1, an important feature of leadership was teamwork – an essential feature of her school ethos. Building a successful, positive school ethos, she argued, is a process that takes time and has many different contributory elements, agencies and individuals, including parental involvement in their child's learning, a key aspect of school policy and practice. (For instance, she argued, they were looking at improving literacy through the ARP.) Such practical measures help motivate pupils by creating a positive learning environment where the boundaries between home and school are less defined. She explained how this worked in the ICT dimension of the NC:

We want them to be ... able to present in an oral, written way but also to use ICT and ICT is hugely motivating for the children and this starts to create this very kind of positive environment where they're linking their knowledge, their communication, their language through ICT. We have a range of resources, which they can access at home, so for example, the mathematics, e.g. Mathematics... (Janet, head-teacher, School 1).

Brian, a teacher from School 3, made a separate but similar point, where he commented upon home-school collaboration with parents/carers. Parents were:

... always talking to us [teachers] about homework and asking for ideas to help them support their children. Many parents [also] provided the resources and the environments that these kids need in order to get work done at home (Brian, teacher, School 3).

Interestingly, Brian added that their school had a very co-operative learning ethos, *our head-teacher trusts the staff ... we make decisions together*. Nikki, from School 1, described how her school also involved and supported parents:

[Our]Parent Support Partner [helps] a lot of our parents [who] don't have a great range of English in order to support their child ... for example, she's running silk painting classes and mosaics but they're not just for the parents, what we've said is it's for parents to work with their children, so they are understanding and getting experience

of what it is about when you come to school ... and I just think it's good because you then get those parents in, you build their confidence (Nikki, teacher, School 1).

Complimenting Nikki's approach, head-teacher Andrea stated that:

Engaging parents ... that's also a key aspect of our practice and school policy ... basically everybody is learning something. So that is another kinda ethos (Andrea, head-teacher, School 4).

Marie, a teacher from School 4, agreed with the other participants' views about parental involvement:

Parental involvement and all that kind of factors influence children's attainment I think and our parents are very involved with their children's work (Marie, teacher, School 4).

Shahida confirmed that, in her school, working together helps pupils to achieve.

We do as much as we can ... not just by the book but we do what we can beyond the book as well, differentiating and speaking to parents, so we all work together to ensure the high achievement of our children, personally I think we become very involved (Shahida, teacher, School 3).

The majority of governors also spoke about how their schools worked with parents in the education of their children. This involved regular workshops and taking parents with the pupils on outside visits, excursions and trips.

Sam described the practice of her school:

We do lots of workshops with parents. Just the other day we had a Winter Wonderland Breakfast and all the parents was invited and they came along with their children, so that was very nice (Sam, governor, School 4).

The wish to bring more parents into school was widely shared. The majority of governors felt that effective work by schools, pursued with persistence and ingenuity, often over a long period,

created a growing sense of partnership based on better understanding between school, families and local communities.

Governor Rahman suggested that parents should be practically involved in their children's learning:

Well the thing is the school involves the children's parents in the school and involves them in the children's activity and makes good link with home and what they need to learn ... what they need to achieve ... parents need to support them systematically; not by saying, 'Oh you read ... that's it!' ... they have to create an environment in the home ... and by doing that it will encourage them to study and that what we have been doing encouraging the parents to be more involved (Rahman, governor, School 1).

Another governor, Angela at School 2, argued that being able to work as a team with other colleagues in the school contributed to pupils attaining high results:

My job as a governor is to support the school ... teamwork ... from the cleaner to the cook ... to the children ... all rally round and help (Angela, governor, School 2).

She argued that the school should be a focal point of the community with continual involvement by the parents on a day-to-day level. The need for the school to be culturally sensitive in order to achieve positive educational outcomes was emphasised by another governor, Asif:

[If the] community's contribution is there all the time ... that would enhance their prospect of getting better results (Asif, governor, School 3).

Governors from the four schools seemed to be in agreement that working together – at as many levels and with as many combinations as was practically possible – could only enhance their pupils' learning.

Parents were also supportive of this ethos and willing to participate as much as their lives would allow. Though the majority of parents were from disadvantaged communities, many were willing to make sacrifices for their child's education. Sultana stressed the need to work with teachers on identifying aspects of her child's learning, which could be improved with assistance

from parents, ‘... my daughter or my child, if she’s got any weaknesses... to improve...[we] work together with the teachers’ (Sultana, parent, School 2).

Another combination in the collaboration matrix was the involvement of the imam of the local mosque. The majority of pupils and their families were Muslims. Parent Aysha supported the teaching of religion in education and how her religion emphasised the value of continuous learning:

Education is very important and I mean it’s part of my religion actually because my religion says everybody must be educated and they must never stop learning in whatever way; even if it’s higher education or even just life’s experience (Aysha, parent, School 3).

In agreement with Aysha, another parent from the same school said:

It’s very important for me that my children have a good education, not only for myself and for them but also because I’m a Muslim and as a Muslim I believe that, because mine are daughters as well, and we believe that they are the ‘Mothers of the Nation’ and if the mothers are educated then your future is bright (Noorjhan, parent, School 3).

An interview was conducted with the imam in order to provide his perspective on this theme. In the evening, many pupils attended the mosque for Islamic education. The ethos of the religious representative, head of the madrasa, was co-operative and collaborative. He was also a parent governor and local authority governor at one of the schools, although he was not interviewed in these specific roles. He was interviewed as a religious leader because large numbers of pupils of the four schools attend his mosque and his lessons at the madrasa for religious studies. The objective was to explore how the education pupils received at the madrasa impacted upon their educational attainment. The imam argued that there was an existing relationship between what he did at the madrasa and the National Curriculum. He liaised with parents, head-teachers, governors and local authority representatives about co-ordinating the curricula where possible, addressing behavioural problems and other items of mutual interest. He believed that attendance at the madrasa gave the pupils a more rounded, broader education. The imam recognised the need for communication with the primary schools in his parish:

In summer term, with our own curriculum we include [the] National Curriculum I visit... normally every year twelve to sixteen... primary schools...and liaise with...parents, head- teachers and other staff.

Crozier (2009) and Shah, Dwyer and Modood (2010), regarding the aspirations of South Asian parents in UK schools, as discussed above, found that the majority of parents irrespective of their class or ethnicity agreed with the proposition that Islam and education were inseparably connected. As parent Rashida from School 3 explained, “We are Muslims. Without education, there is no progress.”

Jeffrey and Woods (2003) argued that schools, as institutions, should operate as an integral part of their communities. They should dismantle boundaries that prevent them from making meaningful connections with similar institutions and individuals. They should see themselves as part of a learning universe rather than operating as competitive entities. Pupils, aware of this structure, will then see learning as ongoing throughout life not as a means to an end but the end in itself, one of individual and collective enhancement and development. Some commentators have described this environment as a participatory learning culture where social benefits are reaped by individuals and communities assuming responsibility for learning with resources, and within an infrastructure provided socially (Arthur and Davison, 2000; Thomson, 2007).

All participants supported the idea of collaboration. It was a positive element of their ethnic capital. While the way this should be done and what it constituted was debateable, they unanimously agreed that working together is a sensible and logical approach to learning. Whether this was a consequence of their Bangladeshi heritage, religion or under-privileged circumstances – or a combination of all three factors – it is difficult to say. However, there is no doubt that it was seen as an integral part of their child’s learning environment and school career.

School Council

Pupils in all four schools spoke enthusiastically and articulately about the importance of the School Council. They felt it was an important feature in, and institution of, of their schooling.

A School Council is an elected body of pupils to represent the views of all pupils, giving them a voice in the hierarchy of the school. They raise issues of concern, discuss, debate, vote and

sometimes see their wishes come to fruition, all within a structured framework of rules, protocols and procedures. Inman and Burke (2002) suggest that School Councils can be seen as important institutions in developing a sense of citizenship. They can empower pupils and provide practical experience of working within a democratic political process, where debate and the opportunity to make a difference in their school becomes real. School Councils can:

... provide an important arena in which [students] can express their views in matters that concern them. [The students] were clear that involvement in the council had empowered them both as a body and as individuals. In this sense, the School Council makes a significant contribution to citizenship education in that it facilitates the development of young citizens' awareness of their rights, their ability act upon them and their power to change their own lives and the lives of others (Inman and Burke, 2002: 46).

This view is supported by Younger and Warrington (2005) who believe that encouraging pupils to be involved as much as possible in school life will help lessen the chances of them becoming disaffected and alienated from learning. Boys in particular in their later primary years can be prone to peer pressure, feeling that it is “geeky” to concentrate on their studies in class. In schools that have attempted to raise academic standards through socio-cultural initiatives, a range of schemes have been put in place to create a more inclusive school environment and to raise children’s self-esteem, such as School Councils, school plays and circle time. The authors argue that all of this can positively impact on children’s engagement with school. One year 5 girl commented specifically about the School Council:

[It's] definitely a good thing. It gets us involved – gets children talking about things, and the councillors have done really, really well (Younger and Warrington, 2005: 104).

Having a functioning School Council, for instance, can, in turn, reinforce the democratic dimension of the institution’s ethos. Inman and Burke (2002) suggest that:

A democratic school will have an ethos and climate that sends positive messages to adults and young people about their worth and value and their right to be heard and consulted (Inman and Burke, 2002: 31).

Teach First (2010) argued that an ethos created and administered from above could only be of limited relevance or value. If pupils do not know what an ethos is or why it matters, by definition it has been unsuccessful. The School Council is an institution that is also a symbolic representation of democracy in action. Pupils felt part of the machinery of the school and, as such, that they had a voice. One Teach First ambassador commented:

The biggest way to determine whether a school has a strong ethos is how proud the students are of their school ... the real ethos [should come] from the students themselves. Pupils need to be a central part of influencing the culture to give them ownership and make them proud of something that they have contributed substantially to (Teach First, 2010: 19).

Teach First (2010) felt the role of pupils in developing, formulating, applying and adhering to a consensual ethos – that they themselves helped formulate – could only be positive. Perhaps the most complete example of a child-centred approach that places the pupil at the centre of its educational universe is at Summerhill School:

The function of the child is to live his own life, not the life that his anxious parents think he should live, nor a life according to the purpose of the educator who thinks he knows best (Summerhill, 2010: 4).

While the schools in Teach First's (2010) report did not allow pupils as much freedom to design their own learning as at Summerhill, the School Council is one of the institutions through which the voice of pupils can be heard formally. Hanifa supported this view:

I like art at school and also I like School Council because we talk about things that we can do for the school and children (Hanifa, pupil, School 2).

The interview data suggests that pupils felt empowered through the School Council by taking an active part in the running of their school, in terms of being able to have an input into policy decisions, and working together for the betterment of the school with their teachers and head-teacher. Pupils emphasised the importance of the School Council as an institution and instrument that enabled them to work together. Nafie enjoyed his role as a delegate to the School Council:

I would keep School Council because I enjoy being in School Council to represent my class, because I enjoy doing good things for my school like suggesting Tuck Shop and stuff like that (Nafie, pupil, School 3).

This feeling of empowerment through the existence of a functioning School Council resulted in pupils thinking about how things could be changed for the better. Another pupil, Reema, spoke passionately about her wish list and what she wanted to have in school:

If I was in charge of the school I would make sure that there were more clubs because ... personally I like art, so there could be an art club and I like ballet, so there could be ballet in classes and for boys ... mostly Muslim boys wouldn't attend to ballet classes ... you could have a football club. There is a football club but you could have it regularly for boys because, mostly, that is their hobby and I would also like ... the food to be better and more healthy ... fast food can make you grow bigger ... and like ... healthy food can also help you with energy when you're learning (Reema, pupil, School 3).

While the research data points to School Councils being popular with pupils, critics suggest that they are often more symbolic than real organs of pupil power, and that they are tokenistic compromises to calls for more democracy within schools. *The Guardian* (12 March 2012) quoted both a teacher from Newcastle and a DfES spokesman questioning the efficacy of School Councils, stating that schools should decide for themselves how they operate. Interestingly, this DfES position seems to undermine their official position:

Effective use could be made of School Councils, where areas of concern or interest to the pupils are highlighted and solutions discussed (DfES, 2006: 9).

Bourdieu and Passeron (1994) argue, from a different political position to that of the DfES, that merely having democratic institutions does not alter the underlying hierarchical structure within schools, which acts to legitimise the concept of hierarchy in wider society. This, in turn, through the acquisition and deployment of social and cultural capital, replicates and reproduces social divisions based upon class.

The apparently purely academic cult of hierarchy always contributes to the defence and legitimation of social hierarchies, whether of degrees and diplomas or establishments and disciplines (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1994: 152).

In my analysis of the findings of this research, it was apparent that the involvement of pupils in the School Council as activists, voters and elected representatives gave them confidence and a sense of self and collective worth, reflecting the positive elements of their school's ethos.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the findings that emerged from the data relating to the final three themes: Engaging in Learning, Working Together and School Council. Of all seven themes, it could be argued that Engaging in Learning is possibly the most crucial. The level of a pupil's desire to emotionally and intellectually connect with their learning environment has a fundamental effect on their attainment, however we choose to define the latter.

All pupils interviewed spoke positively about their learning environments. They did engage in their learning. They also had clear views and opinions about the kind of learning they preferred: it should be 'fun'. This was usually a metaphor for creativity. But creative, fun lessons, many pupils suggested, should have practical usage. Combining these elements would encourage not only engagement but also motivation and self-empowerment, developing a sense of personal responsibility for their learning. While pupils preferred 'fun' lessons, teachers spoke about the timetable demands of the National Curriculum concentrating upon core subjects and basic skills. These pressures, they argued, were not conducive to flexibility in the school curriculum. For instance Nikki, a teacher at School 1, spoke about coming off the NC timetable for two weeks, which allowed her to be more responsive to her pupils' desire for more creative, 'fun' subjects and topics in the classroom. Analysis of the findings suggests that collaboration – Working Together – was a prominent factor in the above-average attainment in all four schools. Teamwork formed an important part of schools' ethos. Building a successful, positive ethos is a process that takes time and involves many different contributory factors, agencies and individuals. Working collaboratively seemed to be one of the most important factors for school cohesion and for creating a positive learning environment. This view is supported by the vast majority of interviewees and by the DfES (2001) Consultative Green Paper, which stressed the importance of achieving consensual management in schools. Pupils, parents and teaching staff

emphasised the importance of this theme in helping the school achieve both its institutional goals and the personal objectives of individual stakeholders.

The final theme discussed was the School Council. Though not a topic that was raised and discussed by all interviewees, it was an institution close to the hearts of the vast majority of pupils. Essentially, it functions as a political body in that it represents the opinions, concerns and suggestions of those with least power in schools – the pupils. I was unable to determine whether the School Council institutionally, in both its practical and symbolic function, actually fulfilled pupils' hopes and expectations by delivering at least some of their desires, or whether it fulfilled the role, as indirectly suggested by writers such as Bourdieu and Passeron (1994) and Bernstein (1971), in replicating, reaffirming and reproducing structural hierarchies. Yet there is no doubting its popularity. If we use this inadequate tool to judge its efficacy, then perhaps it does its job as perceived by the pupils. I got the feeling that if it was dissolved as no longer being relevant or useful, there would have been a large degree of dissatisfaction. Both its real and symbolic value, therefore, should not be underestimated: the message its existence and activity sends is that the school as an institution values both what its pupils think and feel about the way their education is organised and implemented and their suggestions for making it more capable of meeting their needs. In this context, I would argue that the School Council helps to augment the positive and inclusive dimensions of the ethos of all four schools. This in turn appears to help other aspects of school life, such as teaching and learning because the pupils felt that their concerns for elements such as 'fun' lessons are being recognised.

The final chapter presents the conclusion to this research.

Chapter Seven – Conclusion

Introduction

This final chapter begins by outlining the key findings of the research such as the influence of ethos upon attainment, the value given to the School Council by pupils and the importance of positive teacher and parent expectations. It also notes the utilisation of resources integral to Bangladeshi-heritage culture referred to as ethnic capital. It then explores the limitations of this research study including the gender imbalance of interviewees, external time constraints that hindered the project and other restraints, conceptual and structural, upon the research. The potential for future research is discussed, such as a longitudinal follow-up of pupil participants, undertaking a smaller but deeper ethnography and the wider implications of the findings.

Outline of key findings

The findings of this research – exploring the relative over-achievement of pupils of Bangladeshi-heritage in four primary schools – indicate that a school’s positive ethos, with democratic values collectively agreed and implemented, has a pre-eminent influence upon the academic achievement of its pupils. (The reader should note the distinction here between this variation between an inclusive and mutually accepted ethos and one contrived and enforced from above.) Cassen and Kingdon (2007) emphasised the influence a school’s quality had on helping those from disadvantaged backgrounds achieve beyond expectations. It is my contention, based upon the research in this thesis, that a school’s ethos is its primary ‘quality’ and can and does have a determining role in influencing pupil achievement.

Ethos

The findings suggests that ethos was the most influential variable in shaping educational success in the school studied, and more influential than social class, ethnicity and gender. The seven themes represent the essential characteristics, influences and components of the ethos found in each of the four schools. Eisner (1985), Dawson (n.d.), Rutter *et al.* (1979) and Donnelly (2000) suggest that a positive school ethos, consensually constructed and imaginatively implemented by the head-teacher and staff, is the foundation upon which educational success is built. Reynolds and Reid (1985) argue that school ethos is as important, if not more so, than other factors such as class size, pupil-teacher ratio and the organisational structure on the general efficacy of the school.

The constituent parts of an ethos will vary from school to school depending on its intellectual, academic, pastoral and vocational objectives. For instance, an academy school with a dedicated pro-business curriculum may have different imperatives driving its vision than a local authority school that has an arts-based focus. The ingredients, therefore, that comprise a school's ethos are not fixed or universally agreed.

Eisner (1994) supported the notion that the day-to-day activities of the school influence the experience of ethos in many ways: a well-balanced curriculum seems to strengthen the quality of education and enhance pupils' success and high performance in nationally standardised assessment. The data generated in this research resonates with Eisner's findings.

Virtually all pupil interviewees gave the impression that an ethos that encourages student and parent participation and has a value system consensually agreed upon by all involved in the day-to-day functioning of the institution, rather than being imposed autocratically from above and enforced through rigid discipline and sanctions, plays a fundamental role in shaping positive educational outcomes. The importance of an ethos owned by all members of the school community in helping to raise educational standards has been emphasised by many researchers (Rutter *et al.*, 1979; Eisner, 1994; Reynolds and Reid, 1985). However, a pre-occupation with ethos by policy makers such as the DfE could be viewed as using the concept as a political tool. Teach First (2010) – supported by the DfE – argue:

The qualitative research that has been done on this topic suggests that there is a link between ethos and culture and pupil attainment ... In a school with an inconsistent ethos and culture, boundaries and systems are in constant motion throughout the school day. These 'moving walls' do not make an atmosphere conducive to learning – where a pupil feels confident to explore, to question, to open up, to make mistakes, to push boundaries without fear of judgment or recrimination from peers or teacher. Overall consistency of ethos and culture reduces the potential for conflict and behaviour problems. In a school with a strong ethos and culture, a pupil can learn in any classroom and know that certain actions will be met with comparable responses regardless of classroom, subject or teacher. Even more importantly, if the ethos and culture is well established, they will know exactly why a certain action produces a certain response (Teach First, 2010: 21).

However, some critics, including Alan Bennett (2014) and Strand (2010), could see this as a cover for ignoring funding shortfalls and resource cutting in state education generally.

This research revealed that the construction of a positive ethos, which enhances a school's quality, is a collective effort. While leadership was important, the input of all those involved in school life – teachers, pupils, parents, support staff, governors, LEA representatives – has helped to produce values, aims and objectives that all have a stake in and could work towards through adherence and implementation.

The research data suggests that a particular kind of ethos – consensual, democratic, student-centred, fairly applied and culturally relevant – is at the heart of why the schools studied herein have consistently achieved above the national average in their KS2 SATs. However, creating this kind of ethos is not easy because there are so many pressures on teachers at all levels to produce quantifiable results. Indeed, a school's funding and future – and the jobs of many of its staff – may crucially depend upon 'good' SATs results. Yet, it could also be argued that such a view could be considered short-term and ultimately self-defeating if what we are trying to achieve in the education of young people is creating rounded citizens of the future who can live harmoniously in and with their surroundings as guardians and temporary tenants of the planet on which they live. If we take this wider perspective of education, then perhaps our focus needs to be on life-time achievement rather than asking our young to jump frequent hurdles at such an early stage in their learning careers.

School Council

A consistent feature of interviews with pupils was their enthusiasm for maintaining and enhancing the positive learning environment that existed in their schools. One of the key features of this positive learning environment was the School Council – a forum where they elected representatives to present their ideas to school staff. The institution embodied formalised democracy in action. Pupils really did feel that they had an outlet for their concerns and suggestions. Further exploratory research into this under-developed topic would be useful, especially the relationship between the raising of issues, their discussion and ultimate rejection or acceptance and implementation.

Pupil interviewees' overriding concern was their desire for 'fun' lessons: class time that was pleasurable, interesting, stimulating and had both a practical and academic value.

Umbilically connected to this was having a secure emotional environment, thereby allowing the pupils to learn without anxiety. Consequentially, if this virtuous circle was achieved, it would, most interviewees felt, have a positive impact upon academic achievement. This area of the emotional and psychological impact of differing learning environments comparing the use and non-use of democratic procedures, processes and institutions could also merit further research.

Teachers' expectations

The vast majority of teaching staff in the four schools had high expectations of their pupils and, for most, this expectation was met. Here they seemed to be in practical agreement with Dweck (2006) that the inculcation of positive expectations acts to encourage self-belief in their pupils, thereby raising self-confidence and ultimately outcome and attainment levels. This, in turn, appeared to give greater job satisfaction to the practitioners. They could see the positive outcome of their efforts as teachers.

Parents' expectations

Many parent interviewees had high aspirations and expectations for their children, supporting Modood's (2004) notion that these values represented positive ethnic capital. Most emphasised working hard at school and gaining qualifications that would lead to a professional career. This was as true for parents who had little formal schooling as it was for those who were university graduates. This had the practical outcome of most parents having a co-operative and supportive relationship with their schools, especially the teaching staff, and within the communities in which they lived, where help and support in the pupils' education was freely offered and given. This level of parental involvement contrasts with the much lower activity found by Crozier and Davies (2007) in their research of Bangladeshi parental involvement at schools where this ethnic group was a distinct minority.

The positive approach found in this research by Bangladeshi-heritage parents and pupils may be part of what Meer, Modood and Zapata-Barrero (2016) suggest is the (relatively new) assertiveness of BAME groups. This increased opposition to perceived prejudice and injustice has, they suggest, increased integration because it is an expression of their hyphenated British identity, creating an evolved multiculturalism that does not stress integration but tolerance of difference and the need to address structural inequalities.

Ethnic capital

Another key finding was that educational success is highly valued in Bangladeshi-heritage communities – a positive resource of their ethnic capital. (Interestingly, the interviews betrayed a friendly rivalry between families when comparing the academic achievements of their children.) The norms, values and beliefs of their ethnic background have created a proportion of positive cultural resources that Shah, Dwyer and Modood (2010) have termed ethnic capital. The utilisation of this cultural resource has worked to help alleviate the negative influence of economic and social deprivation, common to most Bangladeshi-heritage communities.

Summary of findings

The findings of this research hopefully reveal new knowledge about the reasons behind the relative over-achievement at KS2 amongst Bangladeshi-heritage pupils in the four schools studied. It brings together, to the body of research on this topic, the views of pupils, parents, teachers and relevant others. In so doing, the concept of what constitutes academic achievement is also addressed.

Limitations

There were a number of concerns in the research that are highlighted in this section.

A) Gender imbalance

One limitation was the gender imbalance of the interviewees, with more female interviewees than male. In terms of replicating national demographics, it would have been preferable to have more males, particularly among the parent interviewees, where there were 19 females and 1 male. However, this reflected the gender balance of parental involvement. Simply, more women were active in the life of the schools than men and therefore more women volunteered to be questioned for the research. This in turn mirrored the gender division of labour within families with many of the males worked evening and night shifts, which made their involvement in the school and the research difficult.

B) Interview timespan

Another limitation was the linear time-span of the interviews: too much time elapsed between interviewing the different groups and individuals. A shorter time between interviews would have been better so that the material was fresh in the mind when analysing

and comparing the data. However, arranging interviews with schools was logistically complicated. This was a consequence of the day-to-day pressures schools face. Allowing a researcher onto the premises, providing a room/space for interviews and ensuring safety were extra responsibilities and burdens in an already overcrowded schedule.

C) Personal time constraints

A further limitation was my work as a full-time teacher. The consequence of this was time pressures, impacting upon the hours given to the research. I received no external funding for this research, which meant I had to continue working throughout.

D) Visual recording

A fourth limitation was not visually recording the interviews. If the interviewees had agreed to this, it might have enhanced the analysis of the data. If I had sought permission for, and used, a camera to film interviewees, their facial expressions and gestures could have helped in the transcription because the physical emphasis interviewees were making regarding certain points or issues would have been recorded. However, public access to this visual material would necessarily have to be restricted, according to Data Protection Act laws to protect the participants' identities.

E) Interviewee demographic

On reflection, it was felt that a wider range of abilities and aptitudes in the pupil interviewees might have provided a better demographic base for the research by including those with physical disabilities, underperforming pupils, those formally classified as having special needs and excluded pupils. The pupil interviewees were generally articulate and confident and perhaps these qualities were instrumental in them volunteering or being put forward by their class teacher or parent/carer.

F) Local authority liaison

My workplace and the borough's education department could have been informed about the research project at an earlier stage in the hope of negotiating more targeted support and, possibly, assistance, in terms of liaising with schools over interview arrangements, such as times and dates, for instance.

G) Conceptual limitations

Perhaps the greatest ‘limitation’ to this research into achievement, however, was the context and nature of the topic under scrutiny. Can achievement ever have a universally agreed, abstract definition? Can it ever be measured numerically? The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have tried to internationally compare the competencies of 15 year-old pupils with their Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). The UK, as one of the world’s most affluent countries, does not perform equivalent to its economic status. It lags far behind many smaller countries with fewer resources such as Singapore, Finland and Estonia. The UK spends less of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on education than 43 other countries, including Ethiopia, Cuba, Finland, Namibia and Lesotho.²⁹

Reay, Crozier and James (2013) have visions of an education system that does not have numeric competencies at its core but the individual development of all students for the benefit of themselves, their families, their communities and ultimately society. It uses the Finnish model of state education as a comparative reference and template.

In Finland over 40% of children from poor homes exceed expectations. Yet, Finland has ... schools that do not set or stream pupils, and a society in which teachers are seen as valued experts. It also has no inspection system, national tests or league tables. Rather, tests are used only for diagnosis and improvement. Finnish educational reform principles rely on building professional responsibility within schools and encouraging collaboration between them, rather than applying external accountability structures and testing regimes. Furthermore, schools are credited and teachers recognised for their innovative ideas, creativity and initiatives. At the same time it has far higher levels of literacy and numeracy than the UK. In four international surveys, all since 2000, Finnish comprehensive school students have scored above students in all the other participating countries in science and problem-solving skills, and came either first or second in reading and mathematics. These results were achieved despite the amount of homework assigned in Finnish schools being relatively low and an absence of private tuition. There is also virtually no private school sector in Finland (Reay, Crozier and James, 2013: 407).

²⁹ www.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_spending.html accessed 21 June 2016

Future research

A) Longitudinal research

Following up the pupil interviewees to establish whether their aspirations and goals were realised would be extremely useful. This would provide objective assessment of the relationship between aspiration at primary school and achievement at secondary school. This research could include analysis of both numeric and non-numeric competencies and characteristics, possibly encompassing a continuum stretching from exam results to emotional well-being.

B) Ethos, education and change

The research findings suggest that each school's ethos had an instrumental and primary influence on the educational achievement of Bangladeshi-heritage pupils at the primary level. Understanding how this finding is mediated over time by external social, economic, political and cultural factors would help to further refine our knowledge of the influences upon educational achievement. No state school exists independently of the community and society of which it is a part. Thus, what happens within it is affected by what happens outside of it and vice-versa. This dialectical relationship should be acknowledged in future studies of ethos.

C) Deeper ethnography

Research into a small number of families may provide more acute and sensitive data and discover areas of concern and interest such as gender and cultural dissonance between first (parent) and second (child) generations. For example, none of the Bangladeshi-heritage parent interviewees expressed an aspirational desire for their child to pursue a career in sport, yet more than one pupil talked of wanting to become a professional footballer.

D) The National Curriculum and local communities

The flexibility of the National Curriculum to meet the educational and cultural needs of local communities could be a fruitful topic for further research. In this research, teachers, head-teachers, governors, parents and even pupils stressed the notion of working collaboratively as much as possible. This concern with providing a learning environment that brought the best out of children through 'good communication' and collective participation seems at one

with the fact that many pupils were bilingual. Many second- and third-generation British Bangladeshi-heritage pupils learn bilingually at after-school community language classes. This research (and my teaching experience) suggests that pupils neglect to use Sylheti/Bengali in the classroom but do outside in the playground and at after-school activities, where they switch between languages. Pupils had a desire to use Bengali for learning in school and felt it was an important part of their identity. Second- and third-generation children with bilingual skills are in danger of losing them unless they have sufficient support. Kenner (2010) found that bilingual pupils of Bangladeshi-heritage in Tower Hamlets who were allowed to use both languages in the classroom were relatively high achievers. Bangladeshi-heritage parents in this research warmly appreciated their school's efforts to make use of Bangladeshi traditions and culture.

From my experience as a teacher, drawing on past and present achievements of Islamic scientists, writers and artists, for instance, helped pupils identify with, and better understand, their Islamic heritage and contributed to the sense that their background and experience were valued by the schools. It was a widely held belief that this approach to learning benefited their education as expressed in their exam results, which supports the arguments of Tahir Abbas (2002), Meer, Modood and Zapata-Barrero (2016) and Modood (2007), who suggest that a cultural sensitivity and inclusivity in the teaching of BAME pupils would be beneficial on many different levels: emotional, academic and political.

Additional skills for teaching BAME pupils

Some of the teachers interviewed revealed that they had experience of teaching pupils in multicultural schools. They used a range of strategies to meet the different cultural and learning needs of their pupils with identifiable, successful results – an approach which dovetails with the DfES (2002) suggestions which argued that monitoring, assessing and tracking pupils' progress and detailed observation of classroom learning, together with full and open discussions with pupils about goals and objectives, were the keys to effective action.

This awareness and understanding of pupils' cultural heritage and how this could be incorporated positively into the curriculum was stressed by all groups, whether Bangladeshi-heritage or not, supporting the findings of Crozier (2009) and Modood (2007).

Language was important, highlighting the necessity of not ignoring the first language spoken at home and how this influences learning at school. This supports the findings of Ludhra and Jones (2008). Pupils were proud of citing examples where they could use their knowledge to help their parents, some of whom did not have English as a first language or could not speak it at all.

State funding at primary level

The findings of this research suggest that the allocation of national resources to state education at primary level is an important and fundamental political issue. We have referenced above how the UK, as one of the world's largest economies, allocates a disproportionately small amount of its public expenditure to education. Studies that look at what resources can be socially provided to meet the educational needs of poor pupils, both inside and outside the home and school, could improve the knowledge upon which decisions in this area are made. Many parents expressed concern over the impending cuts in the local authority education budget and how this would affect their children's education. (Government policy – December 2016 - over changes to the way schools are funded will, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, mean spending per pupil falling by 8% in real terms by 2019-20.)³⁰ Schools in the borough in which this research study took place, due to the deprived socio-economic status of the majority of its community, have historically received additional funding aimed at specialised groups and activities, such as the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG). When such funds and programmes – for teaching assistants, after school clubs and pre-school Sure Start, for example – were cut or abolished, parents felt that the quality of their children's education suffered. A teaching professional, commenting in the report by Ofsted (2004) into the EMAG,³¹ echoed the view of parents above:

Our money is used essentially to keep high-quality, experienced staff. I want an EAL specialist who can act in an advisory capacity, support and train staff across the school. Our bilingual assistant helps settle the younger children, using Bengali where

³⁰ The Guardian, 14 December 2016.

³¹ NUT/NASDIC *National Ethnic Minority Achievement Survey* October 2011 found that EMA support in state schools had consistently declined at all levels. Respondents were asked what changes had been made recently [since the last survey in February 2011]. In summary, 81% had experienced the deletion of posts and forced or voluntary redundancies; 65% had experienced restructuring; 48% are now offering traded services.

appropriate. She also does a lot of home/school liaison work which is very valuable (Ofsted, 2004: 7).

Former Education Secretary, Michael Gove, made fundamental changes to the National Curriculum. However, his emphasis on a more facts-based, rote learning system is probably, in my view, not what many interviewees, especially parents, felt was needed. Indeed, many parents were arguing for more flexibility in the curriculum to allow for cultural and regional variations in the education of young people. They wanted a curriculum that adapted to students' needs, not one in which pupils were at the beck and call of politicians' whims and fancies.

Research into the added-value aspect of national exam results and whether this should be more acknowledged through additional resources could be a rewarding research project. For instance, should schools such as those studied herein be allocated additional resources because they have above average success in KS2 SATs or should those schools that are average or below – i.e. that do not 'add value' – be given extra funding in order for them to improve?

Democracy in schools

As briefly argued above, building on the work of Inman and Burke (2002), more research into School Councils and their impact on the educational performance and achievement of pupils would be another area worthy of more exploration on a number of levels: practical, moral and political. Quite simply, if pupils feel that their voices are being listened to, represented and acted upon, they are less likely to get frustrated, angry and behave disruptively. This concession to a democratic procedure should be integral to a positive school ethos.

Implications for practice

The following are examples of best practice in the teaching of British Bangladeshi-heritage pupils at primary level arising from observations and data gained during this research.

Parental involvement

Parents' knowledge of the day-to-day activities provided by their school assisted them in becoming more aware of the value of their role and involvement in their child's education. Throughout the interviews, the impression given by parents in particular was that their attitudes

and actions in helping in a practical way with their child's education, both inside and outside the school, fed back into the ideas and practices of the school itself. There was, it seems, a dialectical process occurring in all four schools. Many parents were active in their children's school; head-teachers and staff would embrace this and make provisions for parental involvement through workshops, homework clubs and other programmes. The pupils often prospered with this support, and parents and pupils had a venue for providing feedback; the educational ethos and regime of the school would then reflect this fluid relationship.

Pupils' learning experience

An important emphasis of pupils was sustaining an engaging learning experience. Much was made of being "happy". Pupils also valued the sense of being cared for and having a safe environment - and therefore peace of mind - in which to work. They talked enthusiastically about their favourite classroom activities, most notably those with creative, arts-based elements, but also including the core curricula subjects of science, literacy and maths, which they enjoyed because of the practical method in which they were taught. Black History Month was discussed in favourable terms by pupils of BAME communities who related to the material being presented.

Teaching strategies

It was noticeable in the four schools that teachers also provided additional educational scaffolding and classroom stimuli for different ability groups in order to further encourage learning, which was often of a practical nature and 'fun'. Teaching Assistant staff of Bangladeshi heritage offered expert help in language, cultural and religious issues. Their ethnic links with the community enabled them to bridge the cultural divide between (Bangladeshi-heritage) home and (British) school.

The issue of creating a positive learning environment for pupils is one that has a global reach. On 25-26 June 2000, individuals from over 30 education, justice and community organisations met in Ottawa, Canada to develop a consensual statement on how schools can work with communities in order to make schools work better, for all those concerned, not least pupils, parents/carers, teachers, administrators, the community, etc.

Participating in and contributing to a safe, respectful and positive learning environment is both the right and responsibility of children and youth, their parents/caregivers,

school personnel and all community members. Schools, acting in partnership with their communities, can create and maintain these environments that foster a sense of belonging, enhance the joy of learning, honour diversity and promote respectful, responsible and caring relationships (Positive Learning Environments in Schools. A Pan-Canadian Consensus Statement, 2000: 3).

Physical environment and class numbers

The data generated in this research revealed that pupils were affected by the quality of their physical learning environment. Many talked about wanting space to learn. Some made the link between the environment in which they worked and the way it impacted upon their learning and achievement. For example, some pupils said they wanted bigger classrooms – more space – and libraries with more books.

It has been argued by Blatchford (2009) that the numerical size of class does affect outcome. The work focussed on the Tennessee STAR project where a cohort of pupils and teachers from nursery through to end of KS1 (UK school categorisations) were assigned at random to three types of class within the same school: a small class (around 17 pupils), a ‘regular’ class (around 23 students) and a regular class with a teacher-aide. In brief, it was found that, in both reading and maths, pupils in small classes did better than students in regular classes. Pupils from BAME backgrounds realised most benefit from small classes. The improvements were still noticeable for up to three years after pupils had returned to ‘normal’ class sizes.³²

Teacher support

The work of teaching assistants (TAs) was commented upon positively by parents, teachers and head-teachers who argued that they offer invaluable help, especially bilingual TAs. They suggested that more money, rather than cuts in funding, should be invested in this important service.

Strand *et al.* (2010), discussed in the literature review, stated that dedicated support within the school and parental support were identified as very important factors in facilitating educational achievement for Bangladeshi-heritage pupils. They concluded that:

³² Word, E.R., Johnston, J., Bain, H.P., and Fulton, B.D. (1990). *The State of Tennessee’s Student/Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR) Project: Technical Report 1985-90*. Nashville, Tennessee State University.

Lesson format and teacher relationships appeared to be the strongest determinants of pupils' experience of school, and good teacher relationships mattered to pupils when they needed support. In circumstances where this was poor, pupils found it hard to 'get beyond' this issue to think about their subject preferences. There appeared to be identifiable areas of good practice in high CVA schools, which were noted and valued by pupils. This included good teacher-pupil relationships, greater positive encouragement for pupils, a strong ethos of celebrating diversity, and fewer barriers to pupils in asking for help and support (Strand et al., 2010: 302).

The findings of this research also suggest that decision-making in schools should include all stakeholders, encouraging collaboration and the implementation of an inclusive ethos which, in turn, is conducive to creating a thriving and successful learning environment. While schools are hierarchies of power, administration and control, the promotion of communication, care, cultural sensitivity, curricula diversity, respect, safety and emotional wellbeing can still be at the heart of what a 'good' school does and is.

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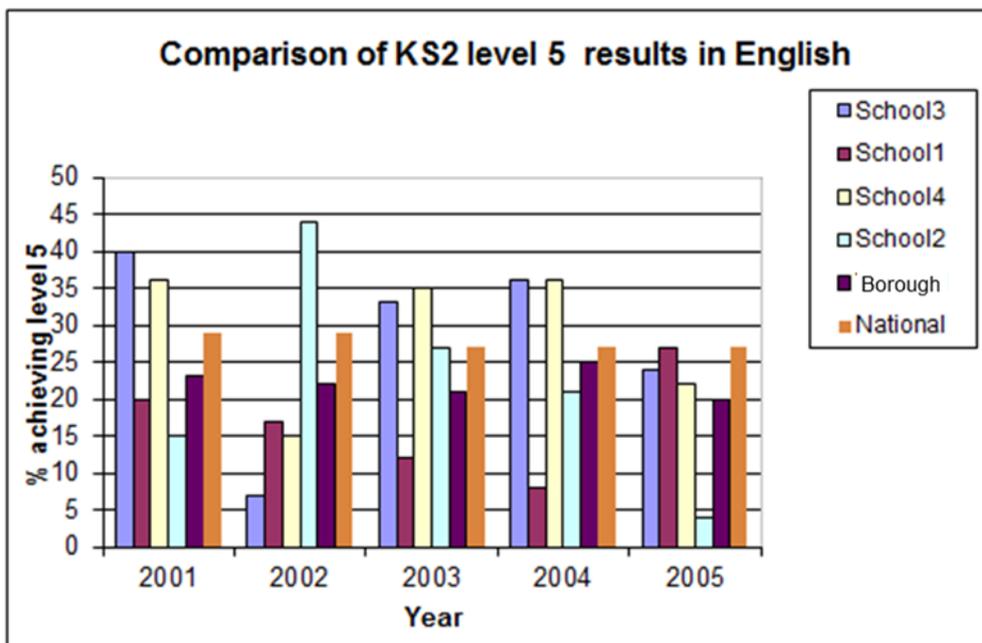
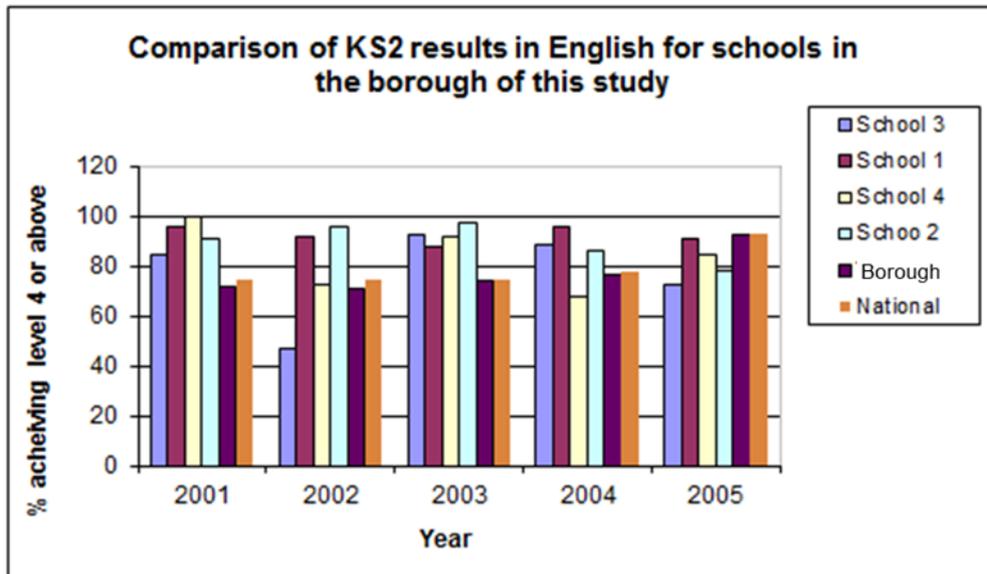
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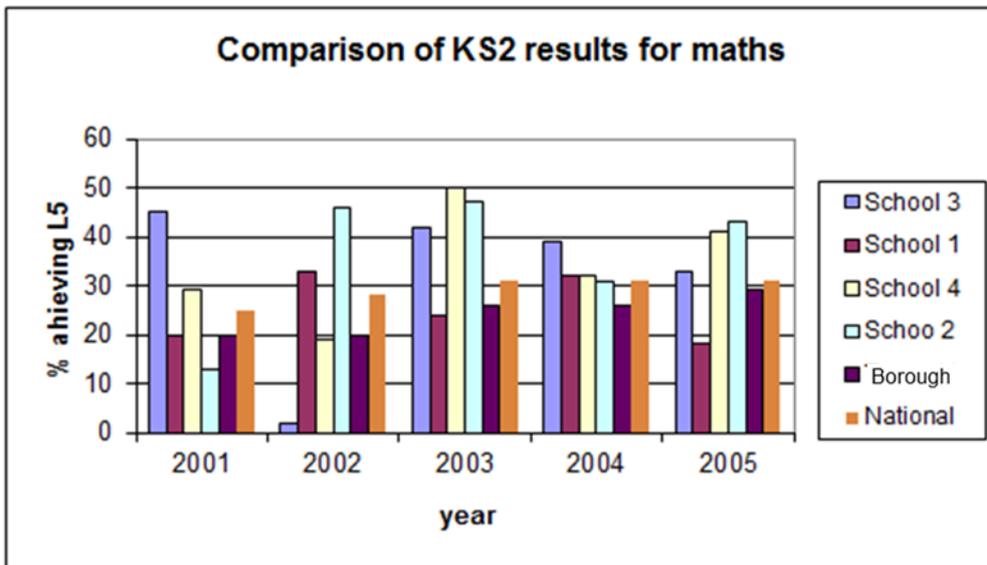
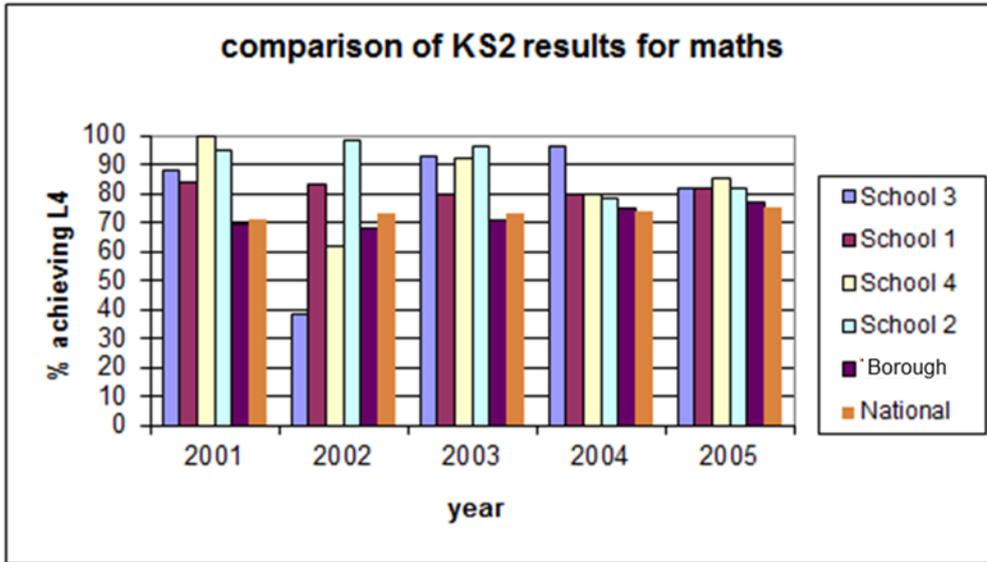
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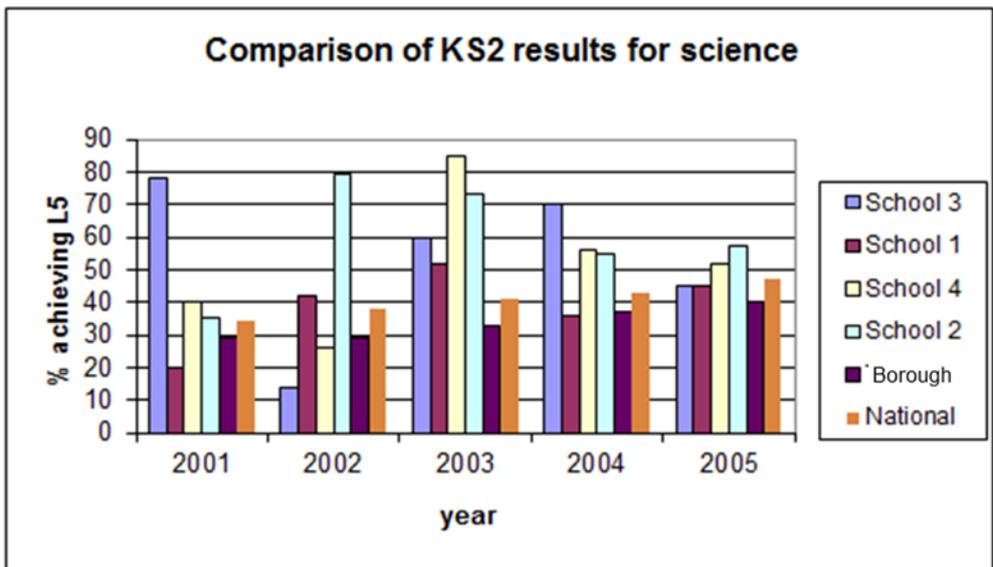
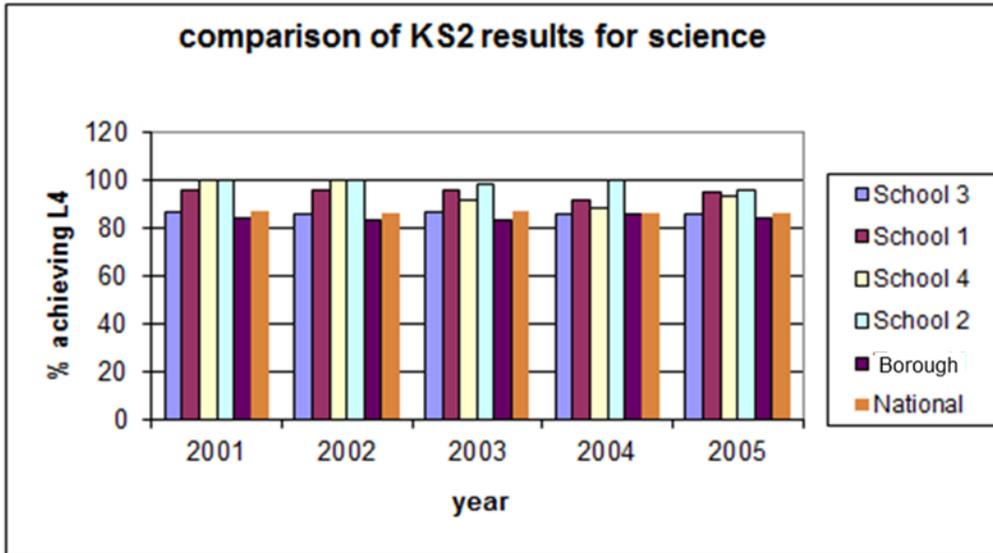
Appendices

Appendix 1: SATs Results Graphs

Figure 2 SATs Results Graphs







Appendix 2: 2a Deprivation

Figure 3 Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 (Local and National, IMD)

Table 1 Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010: National rankings on LA summary measures, London Boroughs

	Summary LA measures: borough rankings (out of 326 LAs)					
	Average IMD Score*	Average IMD Rank	Extent	Local Concentration	Income Scale	Employ- ment Scale
<i>Most deprived = 1</i>						
Hackney	2	1	1	49	15	30
Newham	3	2	2	51	8	32
Tower Hamlets	7	3	3	38	10	38
Haringey	13	11	8	53	19	41
Islington	14	6	11	68	41	46
Waltham Forest	15	7	13	62	32	54
Barking and Dagenham	22	8	20	89	46	74
Greenwich	28	19	29	71	39	51
Lambeth	29	14	41	120	21	23
Lewisham	31	16	40	128	31	35
Brent	35	24	53	60	20	42
Southwark	41	25	46	138	25	33
Hammersmith and Fulham	55	31	71	127	76	80
Enfield	64	63	68	93	13	44
Camden	74	55	81	143	49	58
Ealing	80	61	98	113	23	40
City of Westminster	87	75	95	88	60	65
Kensington and Chelsea	103	98	94	111	108	110
Croydon	107	99	114	134	26	37
Hounslow	118	92	156	165	55	76
Wandsworth	121	102	147	158	52	68
Redbridge	134	116	164	172	43	71
Hillingdon	138	130	163	171	61	82
Bexley	174	180	166	166	90	102
Barnet	176	165	180	184	38	56
Havering	177	177	172	167	87	94
Harrow	194	184	212	210	71	103
Sutton	196	193	179	182	114	130
Bromley	203	217	168	159	72	78
Merton	208	208	215	211	100	120
Kingston upon Thames	255	252	247	264	160	193
City of London	262	259	294	290	325	325
Richmond upon Thames	285	286	266	281	161	175

Source: CLG Indices of Deprivation 2010

* This measure is used to rank the boroughs in the table (from most to least deprived).

Appendix 2: 2b Social class

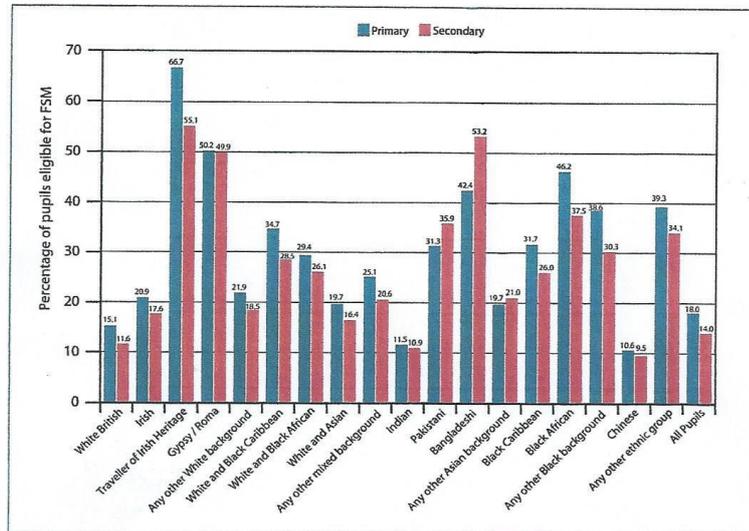
Figure 4 social class categories of the population of the borough in which the research was undertaken.

Ethnic Group	SOCIAL CLASS							Number of cases
	Professional	Managerial	Skilled Non-man.	Skilled Manual	Partly Skilled	Unskilled	Total	
White	4	27	24	21	17	7	100	586,362
Black Caribbean	2	22	23	23	22	9	100	5,414
Black African	8	27	25	12	18	10	100	1,487
Black Other	2	25	31	19	18	6	100	1,098
Indian	8	25	24	17	23	4	100	7,878
Pakistani	5	21	18	25	26	6	100	2,462
Bangladeshi	5	11	16	28	34	7	100	702
Chinese	11	25	26	23	10	4	100	1,492
Other - Asian	11	32	27	12	14	4	100	1,887
Other - Other	10	30	26	14	15	5	100	2,196
								610,978

Appendix 2: 2c Deprivation by FSM

Figure 5 Department for Education and Skills (2006) Ethnicity and Education: The Evidence of Minority Ethnic Pupils aged 5-16

Figure 9: Percentage of pupils in maintained schools eligible for FSM by ethnic group (2005)



Appendix 3: 3a Pupil's consent leaflet

Figure 6 Pupil's consent leaflet

Who am I and what am I doing?

Munah Al-Bayat.

Is my name, but you can call me Munah!
I am a teacher at a school in a London borough
and I am doing
Some research at University in London.

My Research

I'm doing my research to try and help people understand a little bit better what it's like for Bangladeshi children at school.

The way that I can do that is by having a chat with lots of different Bangladeshi children, like you, and asking some questions.

One thing that I'd like to find out about most is, what do your parents think about your school and the work that you do there?

Also, how does this make you feel at school and does it make you work harder maybe? Or does it make you feel a bit pressured? Maybe you like your parents being interested in your school, or maybe they aren't.

All of these are OK and I'm sure you will have lots of different things to say, but most of all I want to know what **you** think!



Contact me!

Murrah Al-Bayari

~ Tel: 07800 748 879

~ Email: murrah_albayari@hotmail.com

Bangladeshi
Achievement

What will happen?

- ✚ If you agree to take part then I would like to come to your school/house to chat to you and 2 other children in a group for about 1 hour.
- ✚ You will be talking to me with two other children from your school so there will be someone else there with you whilst we chat.
- ✚ There's no right or wrong answers - I'm just interested in your views!
- ✚ I will be recording the interviews onto a tape or CD so that I can listen to the interviews again later to help me get the very best from all of the interesting things that you might have to say.
- ✚ Remember though that anything that you tell me is private. I won't even use your real name in my report or any other details that you tell me like your friends' names.



Appendix 3: 3b Adults consent letter

Figure 7 Adults consent letter

CONSENT FORM

Title of Investigation:

- I have read the attached information sheet on the research in which I have been asked to participate and have been given a copy to keep. I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information.
- The Investigator has explained the nature and purpose of the research and I believe that I understand what is being proposed.
- I agree to my interview being audio – recorded.
- I understand that my personal involvement and my particular data from this study will remain strictly confidential.
- I have been informed about what the data collected in this investigation will be used for, to whom it may be disclosed, and how long it will be retained.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason for withdrawing.
- I hereby fully and freely consent to participate in the study.

Participant's Name:(Block Capitals)

Participant's or parent's/ Gaurdian's Signature:

Date:

As the Investigator responsible for this investigation I confirm that I have explained to the participant named above the nature and purpose of the research to be undertaken.

Investigator's Name:

Investigator's Signature:

Date:

October 2006

Appendix 4: Interview questions

Teachers

Do you think you need additional skills to deal with the specific needs of your Bangladeshi pupils?

Do you think learning the first language of the majority of your pupils is helpful?

Have you previous experience of teaching in schools without a high proportion of Bangladeshi or black, ethnic minority pupils?

Does your pupil's ethnic background affect their educational attainment?

How does the educational history of parents affect the child's level of achievement?

Do you feel you have the opportunity to personally develop your pupil's learning and attainment?

Local Authority Staff

In what ways does the borough make provision for the different educational needs of ethnic groups within its borough?

What separate and specific measures have you introduced for the education of Bangladeshi pupils?

In light of your experience providing for the needs of Bangladeshi and ethnic minority pupils, do you envisage amending future educational policy and provision?

How do the constraints of your budget affect your educational provision?

Head-teachers

How do you create a positive and creative learning environment in your school?

What ingredients do you need to achieve this?

What characteristics do you look for in your staff?

Do you feel that your approach to educating primary school children is consistent with the educational needs and expectations of the local Bangladeshi community?

What policies have you implemented in an attempt to achieve your goals?

Governors

How do you see your role within the school?

Do you think your role and activities have an impact upon the educational achievement of pupils?

Does educational policy reflect the local needs of the school and the communities it serves?

What improvements that are within your power to implement could be made to improve the educational attainment of Bangladesh pupils with your school?

Could changes be made to the National Curriculum which would reflect Bangladeshi culture and experience in the UK?

Should there be more local input into educational provision that allows communities to explore their culture and traditions?

Parents

How important is your child's/children's education to you?

What is your expectation of your child/children's educational achievement?

Do you think the school meets the educational needs of your child/children?

How much involvement do you have in your child/children's education

To what extent do you value your child/children's education?

Do you have any differences in your expectation for either your sons or daughters?

Where do your beliefs and values for education come from?

Religious Leader

Do you liaise with schools over the content of your and their educational provision?

Do you think there should be more communication between yourselves and schools over educational provision?

Does your curriculum complement the National Curriculum and vice versa or are they consciously separate?

In what ways does Faith or Religion contribute to educational achievement?

How do the different approaches to gender by scholars like you affect achievement?

Appendix 5: Examples of interview responses

Below are colour coded interviews for each school to show the journey towards the findings.

School 4 pupils' question response data

MUSTAFA: My picture is about **learning literacy in fun way, it's brilliant!.. PE is fun** too... It makes me happy because I get to play football with **my friends**. That's what I like about this school; it's quite big and things are good ... a good healthy food it's **healthy school** and **everything is healthy**.

NAZIA: I was going to draw some other of **my friends** but I drew me and some of **my friends**.. They're kind of like best of friends and this makes me happy in this school. This picture is about me and my **best friend learning together** and the **teacher will make the subjects always fun**. We also have really nice ... not nurses but if like ... we have really nice people to help us ... if we got hurt they would quickly come and they would help us put plasters or bandages or anything.

ZAHIR: My picture shows how much I like learning and think about the future. It shows if I work hard I will **have a good job** and a nice car when I grow up.

KHALID: My picture is about me learning about great subjects like science and when we do **experiments it's fun and exciting** and also when we do maths ... another thing is about my favourite game football.

ZEHRA: My drawing represent everything about what I DO at school and me in the future. It shows me learning new things in school...**making new friends**...play favourite activities with my **friends**..really it shows **how happy I am in school!**

KHALID: Umm, I enjoy learning because we learn new things, not like boring things, we learn lots of subjects like science, maths, literacy and art. We learn in **fun way**.

ZEHRA: My picture is about learning because our **school makes it fun** way of learning ... for example, when we were learning about Black History Month that's great.... We learnt so much about Black History Month, we visited places, we did drama and we had so many famous visitors and music and that kind of things.

ZAHIR: I really like learning. My **favourite subjects are Science, Maths, English** and IT and PE. They're one of my favourite subjects. I like Science because, do you know we learn about animals and all that stuff ... like the habitats and all that stuff and I like the teachers because they help us a lot in fun way. That's why I like this school.

NAZIA: I enjoy learning new things in school especially subjects like science, maths, literacy and all the other subjects like art and p.e.. But I like it here because I have **many friends** and we play different games and be **happy!**

MUSTAFA: I enjoy everything in this school. I like the lessons like science and that ... but I like the teachers because they are kind to us and they take us to trips and I like to play football with my friends.

MUSTAFA: Sometimes there can be a long queue for the water fountain ... I still like my school. I like school a lot but when I wait for a long time I don't like it.

NAZIA: I like school but I hate it when you have to wake up in the morning you feel tired and you have to dress and you have to walk all the way. But once you are in school you forget about all of that ... I feel active.

ZAHIR: I don't like school dinner, it is healthy food but I don't like it.

KHALID: I like all the subjects and all the teachers but I don't like assembly.

ZEHRA: I like everything in school because I learn all different subjects in fun way and I love playing with my friends but I don't like Homework because I work hard and go to mosque in the evening so I feel very tired and sleepy.

MUSTAFA: When I go shopping with my mum, I use my knowledge of maths and science and that to help my mum in everyday life, the teacher taught us about like ... you could see if people in the shop are charging you more money or less, so she taught us how to estimate ... so if you go to the shops with your mum you can add up how much it's supposed to be.

ZAHIR: You know when we learn about maths and everything, I have a Nintendo DS, so I have this new game and it's about like change and everything, so every time that I go to the shop, say if I go with my mum, every time if something is like seven pounds something and my mum goes like ... gives a twenty pound note ... I always say to the shopkeeper, 'it's going to be this much' and then when he gives the change I'm always correct.

KHALID: Yeah. Every Saturday I go to a football club near my house and I play for three hours. I play because then my brain gets fresh and then when I go home I do one hour learning or one hour forty minute, like Maths, English, Science ... I do learning and everything and it's like I know it all and then after that I go to my Nan's house and help her and enjoy my day.

NAZIA: When I'm with my friend outside in the shops and if I'm like getting overcharged we all know we're getting overcharged and when we have to like ... when we want to play and see what time it is we can estimate how long we can have left to play.

ZEHRA: I help my mum with cooking so I use my maths like measuring the flour and sugar and stuff like that.

NAZIA: What I would change is if you can wear a non-uniform because it then spreads out your true emotions and your colours and what I would want to keep the

same is everybody ... I wouldn't want any teachers to leave or like any lunch teachers to leave because they are really nice and they let us help out in the ... if you can give out the knives and forks and like ... I really like them so I wouldn't wanna change anybody in the school. As for the subjects? I really like Science because we do lots of experiments and I like more PE because we do street dancing for PE and I really like my teacher, she's the best teacher I've ever had; she's so fun, she's so creative, she's so ... like ...enthusiastic .

ZAHIR: I was going to say, what I would like to change in this school is make it a bit bigger 'cos say like if more children come and then you can like ... do you know my cousin's primary school? ... they have like four Year 5s and four Year 6s, it was a big school and that's how I want it to be, so like more people can come into the school and get into the classes and all that. Because if there's just one class, like one class of Year 5 and one class of Year 6 and there's loads of people who want to come to Year 6 ... so in Year 6 it's going to get squasier.

KHALID: I want to keep my present D .Head teacher because the other one left I think when we just became Year 6 ...I'm happy with my learning but I want even more fun science lessons because they are great something like that because I want to learn chemistry and I also would like more cooking clubs.

ZEHRA: I would like to keep the School Council because they help us to make decisions and like... you know Key Stage 2 ... like each day ... not each day but every week of like ... Year 6s, every Wednesday, they go swimming in the morning and it's like so tiring. You have to walk there when you wake up and so I think they could help us to add a swimming pool to our ... school, so then we don't need to walk quite like 10 - 15 minutes.

KHALID: I would like more trips and also I would like the school to have ... you know like a room just for science so we can do more experiments because it's so much fun you know.

NAZIA: I would like to keep all the teachers and other staff because they are brilliant people.

MUSTAFA: I would like to have more trips because it's fun and we learn lots about different places.

ZAHIR: I like School Council because when they have meeting they make like good decisions for example we now have tuck shop when it's play time.

NAZIA: In the future I would like to be a paediatrician like a children's doctor. I want to be a paediatrician because I like communicating with younger children .When I was four once my sister said to me, 'What do you want to be when you grow up?' and I had one minute to think ... I was thinking, I was thinking, I was thinking and then I had an idea I wanted to be a doctor and then when I became six I was like, 'I want to

be a kid's doctor' and then when I became nine I found out what the name was ...

'paediatrician' ... and every day ... I've got like this kind of doctor's kit and it's like it's real and I enjoy playing with it.

ZAHIR: I would like to be a surgeon because they earn a lot of money or I would like to be a mechanic engineer because I like fixing cars; I like fixing computers and all of that stuff. The money and my family, all those stuff. I want to so like every Saturday and Sunday I can spend time with my family, like all those stuff and take them somewhere, whatever they want.

KHALID: When I grow up I want to be a game seller because you know children, they love games and then you will earn lots of money.

ZEHRA: I want to become a footballer. Because I'm really good at football and I go football on Friday and Saturday and on Sunday I do extra football for a league ... I play for a team called Valance and I really want to become a footballer because I want to become famous.

MUSTAFA: I want to be a surgeon and also be a footballer because I want to help people but also enjoy myself and be happy because football makes me really happy. More football clubs and some famous coaches to train us to be good footballer and be healthy.

ZAHIR: We have a lot in this school but one thing I like to have a swimming pool ... so that we don't waste time travelling to learn swimming because I like to swim ... you know when I go to Bangladesh with my family ... I swim in the river with my friends.

KHALID: I would like to have cooking club and football club because I like football and I enjoy cooking.

ZEHRA: You know...I like to read some nice stories and I like books in general ...so it would be a good idea to have a reading competition club.

NAZIA: I think I like to have art and cooking club because I like to draw but also I like to learn to cook ..so that I can help my mum when my cousins come to us.

School 1 teachers' question response data

ADRIAN: I think you need **additional skills in teaching children with English** as an additional language, which the predominant majority of Bangladeshi pupils have but then I think you need to be a **more effective communicator and skilled** at communicating through different ways and giving instructions in a simpler way and all the activities you set the children is key and the opportunities and interesting challenges to motivate them to achieve high. Umm, yeah and you have to be aware of their ... the level at which they're working at that I can communicate.

STEPHANIE: I think I do ...Umm I don't think it's just because they are Bangladeshi but I think for all your different groups of children, so in this school its things like when you go to teach ... I mean, especially lessons like RE ... you can't do that without relating **it to their own** culture and backgrounds and in this school that ends up being primarily the one **religion** and **one culture** Yeah, which is Islam, ... **they have their own culture**, which is really a strong, strong influence in their life and in **their own background** and, especially, **their religion is a massive feature of their life**, so whatever you're doing, throughout all your subjects, it's making sure that they get experiences of things which are different and see how things are similar as well as different between **their cultures** and ... we do a lot of ... because we have ... our Golden Rules at our school, which are the rules we like to do and we do a lot of linking

NIKKI: Umm, I'm not sure about skills but I think it helps to have **an awareness of the background, the culture, the home environment**. You do need **a range of skills** but I think it's the awareness that's probably more important because if you have I think the skills without the awareness it's less likely that you can provide the right experiences than the other way around, if you know what I mean?

ADRIAN: Possibly it could be helpful but... I think in the **school environment** I don't think ... it would only be helpful where ... a child who had no English from Bangladesh, which I have had but with children who have been in the school for a number of years then they've been brought up bi-lingual. So I think it would be helpful maybe but I don't think it's practical or necessary ... yeah.

STEPHANIE: You know what, I think it really would be. I would be really interested ... because I started at school last year and my last class taught me to count to ten and, obviously, they've all come from different areas; they've got slightly different dialects and stuff and there are two different ways of counting to ten and they agreed which one they wanted to teach me and then taught it to me and we were counting in a different ... I was teaching them a different **language** from a different place I'd travelled to and they were like,

'can we teach you some Bangladeshi?' so we just sort of incorporated that into the lesson and I loved it and they loved teaching me something and it was so nice and I would actually really like it just to build that **relationship** it would be really nice to make them feel that **their culture** is really valued in our school cos it is but it would be one extra way of just saying that it is ... we learn other languages **... we learn Spanish ...** the kids have just said today, 'can we start learning French?' and I've just said, 'maybe we can do a lunchtime **French Club**?' but it would be really nice if they had more chance to ... because it only really happens when there's a child in the school who's new or lower down the school when they haven't learnt English; that they're sort of are allowed to ... I'm starting to pick up a few of the bad words they use every now and then but generally they are not supposed to use it in school because we're obviously supposed to be learning English but it would be nice just to do it ... I would really like it myself.

STEPHANIE: That would be lovely ... yeah ... just a few threads would be lovely.

NIKKI: Umm? I mean I can't say that ... speaking from experience, one way or the other, because I don't actually speak Sylheti ... I think from the point of view of being able to communicate with parents I think having a few words and a little bit of understanding is always helpful but I think that's more in terms of building **relationships** than necessarily in terms of teaching because my **background** is actually in international education, so I'm used to working with classes where you've got fifteen or sixteen **different languages**. I think if you are talking about whether it is necessary I would say it's not necessary. I would say, if you could, it's great and it's helpful but then we find other ways around it. We find that for example having Support Staff or somebody where they are able to speak the mother tongue of the vast majority of our pupils is really helpful, so ...yeah.

ADRIAN: In previous schools there have been kind of similar children but very different levels and low level of **achievements** with certain pupils with language problems, family issues and the school settings and environment has been very different but it was good experience...etc.

STEPHANIE: Umm last year was my first year in this school. So this is my second year but all my placements, they've all been a lot more ... like a mixture and when I first decided to do teaching was when I was at university and I did volunteer work in a school where there were like ... I think in my class ... I think they were classes of thirty-four in a class and there were twenty-three **different cultures** in the classroom some of them were Bangladeshi, so I was so fascinated by it all..

NIKKI: Yeah I've taught in West London, which is I think probably a predominantly White British demographic for the school and then my other experience has been in international education, so it's been fairly mixed.

ADRIAN: Umm, well I spent a lot of time teaching English as a second language in other countries and in this country, so I am **skilled** in how to approach children who have little or limited **English** and are trying to learn and achieve ... so for example I ensure they understand what I teach them by providing the right visual aids , making absolutely sure that activities are **stimulating** and **interesting** and not dull and boring and above all give the children the space and opportunities to find out for themselves.

STEPHANIE: Umm, I think It's important for me to share **my experiences** ... I'm lucky to have been travelling quite a bit, so I can ... yeah, I've got enough experience I can share with them different points of view, so it's not just one point of view, there's different ways of doing things and, you know, different choices to make and things like that and it is making sure that it's ... I make sure that I get that across through my lessons to stimulate the children and kind of widen their experiences. I share with them by talking to them about my travelling experience which they really enjoy hearing about and this kind of stimulation and **experience sharing** inspires them and encourages them, so they start saying things like "when I grow up I am going to travel" and so ...

NIKKI: As a teacher. Well to this point I've obviously brought an understanding of working in multicultural environments but also prior to working here I actually worked as a consultant for literacy development, so a lot of what's happened in terms of literacy and reading and things, obviously I bring the whole ... things from my former life because I used to go into schools and support other schools in **raising attainment** and those kinds of things and their School Improvement Plans. But then also because of my **background** in International Education I then also came in obviously in collaboration with the old head-teacher and now the new head-teacher have brought in an International curriculum instead of following QCA, just because my experience is that if you're ... we took it right back to looking at a pupil profile and saying, 'Well what do we want for our kids, what is our pupil profile for the 21st century?' because that is what our curriculum should be the vehicle for delivering. So if we want pupils who are articulate and are able to communicate with **confidence** and are creative, have developed **social skills** as well as the academics then we need a curriculum that provides opportunities to develop all of that.

ADRIAN: Umm ... I think it probably can, but we have so many children from **the Bangladeshi background** their parents are fully competent in English, so that you don't notice that ... there's no difference between **their attainment** than you would say other children who are not Bangladeshi and in some cases they even perform better than others because they are so keen and if you like thirsty for learning and also the parents generally are quite supportive and expect high from their childrenIn the evening they take the children to mosque to attend religion and Arabic classes and complete their home work despite all the difficulties they have they still, I find them competent, you know ...Yeah there is quite a high proportion who are quite aspiring and then ... but then there's things like ... going back to Bangladesh ... cause issues.

STEPHANIE: Last year I had 100% Bangladeshi ... this year I've got one girl who's Pakistani, everybody else is Bangladeshi... it's hard to sort of judge on their sort of **background**. I do find most of them are very involved in their children's work, you know, the ones who always come to Parents Meetings, the ones who don't have to come to, they'll still come to anyway ... those parents will want to talk to you after school and come and grab you if they're not sure what the **homework** is and things like that. Those ones often seem to make more progress and that's **whatever their background is**. It comes from I think ... I think there is a factor with how much the parents are interested in their children's education and value education ... a lot of these parents compared to other schools I've worked in, the majority, you find them ... they are supportive and they're interested in their children's education, they have **aspiration for them, which is brilliant**.

NIKKI: Oh that's a difficult one. I think there are other things that affect it more. I think parental attitudes are a massive ... have a massive impact ... They have so much **aspirations** for their children and I think that as a school we try to encourage that, so for example in the first two weeks of the year this year we came off timetable, off curriculum and we had World of Work two weeks, so the children were involved in projects where, for example, they walking in on the Monday and there was a crime scene in their classroom and they spent two ... a week being forensic scientists looking for finger prints ... analysing hair samples and doing all that kind of thing ... in Year 1 and 2 they had **the opportunity** of being fashion designers ... in Years 5 and 6 they were ...

NIKKI: They were record producers ... they had another group who were educational publishers and they made videos and published stuff on the web and things like that. So in terms **of aspiration** I think we do do a lot of things like ... for example, I did one of our educational partnerships where ... I don't know if you have them in your school? ... where you get somebody from the bank ... Or lawyers or whatever who come in.

NIKKI: Umm and I thought, 'great!', it's great that you've given up your time to come and help children read but actually I want more [laughs] out of it because I don't think that if you look at the class of children that we've got do they actually understand what you do as a job? Do they know what a lawyer does or where a lawyer works or have they actually got experience of that kind of life?' So I said, 'well one day, instead of coming in, why don't we come and visit you?'

NIKKI: So we went in a black cab and we went through central London and we arrived at his office and the kids were just like, 'Whoa!' they'd never been inside a building like that ... and we went in there and we spent three or four hours and the reading buddies were amazing and they got to sit at the desk and they were like, 'Oh!' you know and they came out and they went, 'I quite fancy an office like that, I think I might quite like to be a lawyer.' And I think it's about showing children; it's not just giving them the skills to achieve but it's showing them what's out there that is possible to achieve. It goes back to the first question of looking at understanding the **culture, the environment**, the **background** that a lot of the pupils come from and making sure that if there are things that our children are not naturally going to experience, whether it's because, you know. of language or culture or just deprivation that as a school we have got a responsibility I feel to say, 'Look at all of these possibilities that are out there' and it's a motivator because then it's kinda like they can see why they need to work hard at school because they have **aspirations and ambition** and that comes in many different forms and we had **a lovely Assembly** where we talked to some of the children as part of their World of Work Week and we talked about what they'd like to be when they grow up and we had some saying, 'I want to be a cardiologist' and we had some people saying, 'I want to be a lawyer' ... all of these things and then we had one little boy who put his hand up and said, 'I want to be a window cleaner' and I thought, 'Good for you!' ... he's six and he's got a sense of what he wants to do with his life you know ... so it's not just about being something that's seen as like high-achieving, I think it's just about having that sense you enjoy and how you can take that through into adult life and be successful with it.

NIKKI: And I think that was illustrated with [name A?] this morning when she talked about being a criminal lawyer, she was in the classroom where they did the forensic week ...

NIKKI: Yeah I think our kids work really hard.

ADRIAN: Yeah. Umm, I think it might ... it affects two kind of aspects ... aspects of the children getting support with learning at home and that, if the parents haven't got a good

educational background, they might not be able to support them, so they won't be able to reinforce their learning at home and they might not be doing things like reading at home because they wouldn't be able to but despite all that most of our parents as I said earlier they are supportive of their children's learning they come to us for more home work, the older siblings help if the parents can't and so on because even though **their background** is not very educational they still want their children to do well.

STEPHANIE: Some of my children who are sort of working at a high level, their parents are the ones who speak English. Not always but quite often they speak English and they work. It's not always true but also I notice parents who are, you know, non-English speakers, they don't have education yet their children do really well, yeah.

STEPHANIE: Yeah one of my brightest last year, her parents didn't speak English and didn't work but, you know, she was one of the brightest and making good progress and doing really well and they had a high value in her education so ... yeah.

STEPHANIE: Yes, exactly! Yeah they missed out and that's what they've brought her here for to have that **opportunity** they didn't have so ...

NIKKI: I think it's sometimes ... the will is there to support from our parents because they have high **aspiration**. They have high expectations but they don't necessarily always have or FEEL that they have the skills to be able to give the children the support that they need. So as a school we provide ... as an example you've met Louise this morning **Parent Support** Partner, does **an amazing job engaging parents**, getting them into school and running all sorts of projects where, for example, we haven't gone at it from ... 'Oh a lot of our parents don't have a great range of English in order to support their child' ... what we've done ... because our parents find things like that scary so what we've done is we've gone at it through, for example, she's running silk painting classes and mosaics but they're not just for the parents, what we've said is it's for parents to **work with their children**, so they are understanding and getting experience of what it is about when you come to school ... about learning, not about adding or reading ... and I just think it's good because you then get those parents in, you build their **confidence** and then you can say, 'Look we're running a session on something that they may have otherwise thought, 'Whoa! I'm not turning up to that, that's far too scary!' ...'

NIKKI: And just getting them involved in the life of the school because I think for some of our parents, if you look back at their experiences of school; school was a place you didn't go into to see the teacher or the head-teacher unless there was a problem ... you know, that can be their history and they haven't

necessarily had experience of engaging the school and coming in and **doing fun stuff** and things, so we work quite hard to try and engage parents and Louise runs like an Out and **About Club** and again it comes back to the fact that we know our children, we know that they are in an area which is very high on the deprivation scale. So they do have experience of **deprivation** so we have like the Out and About **Club** that Louise runs, it's about finding somewhere that is affordable, easy to get to and she will make all the arrangements, she will take the parents there on a trip in the hope that that then gives them the experience and the **confidence** to take their children along next time.

NIKKI: And kind of building ... so it's really about ... I feel that our remit is very, very wide. I think we do impress upon the parents and the children the importance of academic achievement but I think we do a lot more than that because I think there is a lot more than that and for me it's about our children need to have ... they need to leave Primary with the skills in reading and writing and maths because they are the things that they need in order to have successful experiences in secondary and beyond. And when you look at the tally between **poverty** and **academic attainment** children who leave with good levels of reading, writing and maths, they go on to have, financially, more secure futures and I think as a school that's ... that's for me I feel that we have a responsibility to make sure that the children have those life chances.

ADRIAN: Yeah, I would say so ... as a teacher I would hope so really [laughs].

ADRIAN: Umm, I mean I think a lot of ... I think some of our children don't necessarily get a chance to go out and do things that they don't normally do and I feel that in the school we do try and do that with different trips and then having different events in the school and doing subjects and activities that would excite them and ensure their every day lessons are enjoyable for example we give them **opportunities** to talk to their partners ['partner talk'] and drama. We also do a lot of music-based singing and performance and playing musical instruments and different art activities that I think is an area of learning that they haven't been exposed to, so generally things they enjoy.

ADRIAN: Yeah and I think that gives them a range of experiences that would make them want to maybe achieve higher.

STEPHANIE: Yeah. I think every teacher has the **opportunity** ... or ... everyone who works with children and young people ... you hope that's why you do it ... if you're not here ... you hope you do ... you do, you have the **opportunity** to ... obviously there's barriers in every school and everywhere and

things are going to stop them personally and ... you hope that you're going to teach them things and make their life better for them.

STEPHANIE: Otherwise [laughs] ... there's no point to our job. I hope I do through teaching them the right skills that they need as they progress at school and also do it in such a way that have a pleasant impact and make a difference in their life.

NIKKI: Yeah. Oh yeah! We deliver what's statutory but there is an awful lot of room for I think school practitioners to be creative and innovative in the ways in which we choose to deliver what's statutory and it all comes back to having a very good understanding of your school community and ...and it pleases me because I think, you know, it's very easy or has been in the past very easy to have **high attainment** through a narrow curriculum or teaching to test ... you know you can get those high results by doing that but I think you're doing a great disservice and I think it's not that it isn't a mutually exclusive deal ... **high attainment** or personal development ... I think you can have both and I just think you have to be brave and kind of go, 'well these are our **values** and this is what we believe in' and we do believe in **high attainment** but actually we believe in so much more than that and it's not just one ingredient. So ...

School 4 parents' question response data

SALEEM: I think it is **very important** those days for the children to have education because it's a very tough life ahead you know, so education is most important. By my understanding, I am not educated or anything ... I've never tried it but I can feel it, that life is hard, so education is very important.

FULMINA: **Education is important** for our life ... for my children you know ... when I was a young girl my parents said ... always they tell me **... education is priority** ... everything else ... so ... my Son is getting better education ... I want to do that ... important ... I think so.

SALMA: I believe education is **very important** and also for the parents to participate with their child's education well, it's very important, together with their self-confidence and there ... to help them as well ... yeah, to be involved. Yes, so it's a big part for the parents as well to play in.

RASHIDA: I'm a parent as well as a member of staff in the school, so as both roles, I know **education is extremely important** ... it forms a foundation for later on in life, so all children need a good, solid foundation to start off with.

BINYA: I'm also a member of staff here as well as a parent. I have three kids myself and I think **education is very important**; especially to make a **better living for the future.**

SALEEM: Well I don't give them any pressure of their expectations or anything ... what they have to do ... be on the right side, right path ... 'I have to do the right parenting.' And where ... it goes from there, so I don't want from my child ... **to achieve some goal or** something ... at least they want to do the basic educational ... yeah ... be **a good person**; that's what I want for my child.

FULMINA: Same as Saleem ... I want to do good but I can't pressure him what to do ... but I like him to do ... you know, **a good job** ... but it's up to him, you know. I have to give him push you know, but he can do ... after that it's his mind what he can want to do but I like him to do better ... I want to ... better.

SALMA: Same think, I will just **support them**, what they want to do. Cos we can push them but we have to **support them** in what they're interested in, it's not what we're interested in. It's just like help them and show them the right way.

RASHIDA: Umm, I would say that being educated myself I wouldn't then expect my child not to have an education. **My expectations** would probably be higher but I certainly wouldn't push my children in a direction that they didn't want to go down, so if they wanted to go down, say a creative path, then that would be just as well but as long as they always try their best really.

BINYA: Yeah, same ... I would say, my expectation is ... obviously as a mum I would like my children to **achieve high** in life and go **for higher things** but then it's all down to the children. So, for example, my son he is low in Maths, so I have always had this problem with him ... in Maths he has never achieved high goals whereas computer literacy and Science ... so I can't expect him to come out with A* with Maths, do you understand? But I hope ... I'd like to help him to **achieve high in literacy, science and in computer** ... yeah.

SALEEM: I think it's a very difficult life when the children grows up ... and they go to College and to University and this kind of thing because we are a living, working class parents and that's going to be very high things to do. In our parent's life they didn't have any savings or anything but I'm trying my best to put something away for their future, to go on but I think it's still going to be hard but we're going to struggle ... that's how ... it's working class people struggle about it ... I will do my best to give the child my support ... every parents want to give their children support but at the end of the day the money is the main concern of it but ... it's every country.

FULMINA: The same but I would like them to go to University ... or everything because ... when we were younger we wanted to go to University but we were working class, so ... they couldn't afford it ...but now if you can try and work hard and you can afford it .and if .. your son or your daughter you know, they want to do it ... you can support them ... I want them to go... high ... but it depend on him. I push him sometime but I'm not .going to push too much.

SALMA: Same thing really. I would expect them to go to college, university and then get a degree but it's ... on each individual child. When they get to a certain age it's like what they want to do. It's not what we will want them to do.

RASHIDA: Well, if you'd asked me a few years ago I would have said, 'Well, they have to go to university and then do their Masters and PhD.' but from experience I've changed my views a lot, if my children want to go to university I think it would be good but there are lots of different routes now to getting a good job. Like going through the traditional University route isn't always ... doesn't always result in the best job. I've found from personal experience. I did the traditional university route but my husband never actually finished his degree and he has a much better paid job than I do, so it just changes my views a bit.

FULMINA: But I would like comment about your husband because when your husband ... his job is gone ... he can't find another one ... it's harder for him ... but not for you you know.

RASHIDA: He did go to university [defensively].

FULMINA: ... Better.

SALEEM: But do you agree ... right ... there is a sort of category of lifestyle to happen. I like my child ... it's not the money that's concerned or anything concerned ... if that person is going to be a doctor he is a doctor ... it's a grade of it ... people have a certain fingers of it ... but she said right she's working ... this is what is a lower class working payments of it yes ... and it's very hard ... I do work here ... I used to do a managing on a Tesco ... can't even get £25,000 salary ... I just switched a job to cabbying ... a taxi driver ... black cab taxi driver and I earn a little bit more but those days are so difficult to live on, the amount of money because they're cutting the jobs ... everyone getting ... everyone try to be the best they can but she said ... it's such an age where you get different jobs ... some people are happy with

less money, some people are not so happy but the main option is ... everyone's child want to be the **best they can be.**

SALEEM: **Of course it's important.**

FULMINA: If one job is gone I can get another one because I have got a degree and I've got everything

...

FULMINA: But in certain ways I can ... I don't want everyone to go to university ... you can go different ... you can go ... but with good education you can get ... never, you know, if you don't have the money ... I don't understand ...University ... but ...

RASHIDA: Sorry I'm not saying a degree isn't important ... obviously ... what I'm trying to say is that there are different routes to getting to that top job; it's not just a degree...

SALEEM: ...teaching his brain or anything ... that's the main important ... the main important of the education is teaching your brain [quite belligerent].

SALEEM: Teaching your brain, getting a good person.

FULMINA: No, no, sorry ... but good education doesn't mean you're not university or degree or something like ... good education is how you are going to behave ... that ... you know ... You are saying a good education means we can earn a lot of money ... that doesn't mean everybody is going be a doctor or an engineer.

SALEEM: No I didn't say that [fighting his corner] ... I didn't say that!

FULMINA: ... You are attending school ...

SALEEM: ... so everyone should be a good person ... so if everyone wants to be a good person ... like even at the moment I'm forty ... still I'm teaching my brain 'don't do that, don't go there, don't do this!' a bonus, it's good [laughs] ... but education is something that is the basis we want to fall on it ... and that's why we all ... are here really, talking about education. And yourself? Your **expectation** for your children's **higher education**?

BINYA: Yeah of course, **my expectation is high.**

SALEEM: I don't have no dream. I like my child to be a **good person** and be a good educated person, that's it.

SALEEM: Right to get an education ...

SALEEM: Of course ... education is most important.

SALEEM: Solicitor, doctor or barrister or engineer or something or a pilot ... my child to be that. I want what he wants to be and where his life go ... and all the support is going from me.

SALEEM: Yes.

FULMINA: **My dream is a doctor** ... he can help people ... he can go that ... it's not possible ...but I want his **... goal to be a doctor** ... Yes. It's my dream so ...

SALMA: The same thing really. **Doctor, engineer, barrister** [laughs].

RASHIDA: I honestly don't have an **expectation** for her to be a certain ... to have a certain job.

RASHIDA: I have **expectations** of what I don't want her to be but as to what she can be ... as long as she does her best and tries her best and goes for it then that's fine. But I have certain things that I don't want her to be ... that I know that she could do better ... I don't know ... working in a supermarket I would hope that after university that wouldn't be her final job, to work in a supermarket ... at the checkout, so in that respect I do have **high expectations ...**

BINYA: Honestly?

BINYA: Both my boys go to an Islamic school, so I want them to preach in the Mosque and that's what they're targeting. They want to be like them ...

BINYA: Yeah, leaders in the sense ... lead prayer in the Mosque, teach Arabic ... that's it. My daughter, I would like her to be **a doctor maybe.**

BINYA: But that's my dream. What they want to be it's totally up to them.

SALEEM: Yes, all the time, the head-teacher always in the playground talking to parents and if we have concern or you know something like that she always **very good** and she is **helpful** and listens to us and my children are **doing well in** school, their level is very high when they do reading and maths and all that subjects in school...the school take them for trips and children likes that!

RASHIDA: I work in the school and I see how **hard teachers work** and everybody really do our best to help all the children. I am a parent here and I **feel very happy** with my child's **progress.**

BINYA: My **feeling is very good** about the school I'm a member of staff here as well as a parent. I have three kids myself and I think the **school is great** and cares about my children and every child in the school. **Children are happy** and have **friends** and enjoy coming to school ...you know!

FULMINA: My children are doing **very well** at school and **we all work together** to help the children to do so well... **The teachers here are very good and helpful...**

SALMA: Same, my children are **happy**, they like school and have **lots of friends!** I think the school does support our kids a lot and encourage them to do so well you know!

SALEEM: I don't always come to school but I come sometimes, **mostly my wife comes and I come when my children have assembly or something like that.** My **wife helps the children with their homework or something like that.** But sometimes they work with the children from next door to us but we make sure they do their homework and that! Yeah.

RASHIDA: Like I said I work here and **I am always involved in the work with the children in** other classes **but my children I help when we are at home ...we do reading ,spelling and times table and stuff like that**

BINYA: **I am very involved in my children's education...**I want them to do well in school, most of the time at the end of the day **I go to the class and ask the teacher** about my child and what work they doing so that I can **help them at home..**

FULMINA: I say **we are involved in my child's education and schooling**. I take them to school and always make sure they **do their homework** and **do reading** with them. Sometimes my husband helps and sometimes me.

SALMA: When my children need help we give help...sometimes **I talk to the teacher about the work and how we can help** but I do **times table** with my children and we talk about like problems with money when we go shopping and something like that...

FULMINA: I want them to do their A Levels and pass them and **get into university** and **get a degree** ... that's what I want them **to achieve** ...and I am **happy to support** my child to do well in and we work very hard to provide and save for their education.... but you know it's becoming very hard and expensive... to go to university but it's ok.

RASHIDA: I say like ... I would try hard to ...**support** ... whatever level they're working with whatever ways **I would help them... degrees ... college** ... I want them to know that **education** is **important for us and is important for their future...**

SALMA: **We value education for future life**... and as a parent we would **support** them like so much because we want them to **do well** what we could do.... to become something in life!

BINYA: **Education is very important** and we **value education because our religion value** education for everyone....and that's why we want our children to **have good education**.

SALEEM:I myself never tried it ...but I want my children to **have good education** ...and I support them all I can and at the end of day up to them ..you know..

BINYA: No, because ...daughters can't ...Obviously have the position my Son would hold in the Mosque, my daughter can't have that position. It doesn't work like that in our religion.

SALEEM: No, **everyone should learn boys, girls no difference...**

FULMINA: No, in the **same way** ... I wouldn't say, 'you're a daughter, you're a son ... you know ... to me **both would be the same exactly them and want well for the same**.

RASHIDA: In my family, **both treated the same** ... **the girl equals at home for everything**.

SALMA: ... yes, it is the same **... my family** will always want us to **do well the same way for everything we are equal** you know. I do the same with my children. Yeah.

BINYA: **Belief** first and then **family**. Islam itself ... tells us to educate ourselves and then it would be **my family** ... yeah.

SALEEM: It comes from ... she is saying it come from **parents** ... it shouldn't come from parents or anything ... think about it, we are adults now. What we are doing outside right ... very hard life ... difficult life ... the value come from **my child** right ... whenever I sit down with my children I read and write it and I say to them, 'look the valuation of the education is most needed ... look daddy is working there ... it's no valuation of it!' So the valuation has to go up so if you have **a good education** and a good life you will have a **smooth life** of running of it ... 'Don't go for a hard life!'

SALEEM: **My valuation came from myself!** The how hard I'm working then I realised how difficult life is without the education. So for my child, when I sometimes go and sit down with them and do their homework I tell them, 'What daddy is doing, what a hard life.' 'Don't go for it!' But I know they are not understanding because I done the same thing. When you do parenting and think about yourself and what you've done ... they're children as well, give them time. I don't hit my children or do anything ... but when I go ... I think about myself and what I've done in life and I think that is very important and most parenting ... they don't think about it ... they had a young life as well ... they start beating their children up, doing this kind of thing but they're not thinking about ... still they're doing the wrong thing but they're children should be doing the right thing ... and I think that shouldn't happen. You should give your child an independent life. Independent doesn't mean that you have to go out or anything but try hard ...

FULMINA: Yeah ... I saw **my mum and my dad do the same thing to me** when I was younger ... they wanted **a good education** and **a good person** and everything, so I am doing the same thing for my son ... maybe a little bit different but I'm doing the same thing. so it's come from **my parents** as well.

SALMA: The same thing really, just ... what our **parents ... teach us ...**

RASHIDA: **Learning in general is fundamental in our religion** anyway so ... that's probably the main aspect really and also from **my parents** ... my parents weren't educated but they **always supported...**

School 2 head-teachers' question response data

MARK: Okay. Umm, we've ... it's taken a while for us to feel that we've done that, create **a positive and learning** ... but we definitely feel that we are there. We talk a lot about children and their **personal success** and what **success** means for them individually and how they need to strive to do their personal best ... so we celebrate every person's **achievement** regardless of where they end up; it's where they start from and where they get to and they compare themselves to themselves and not to each other. So whilst some are competitive, they are competing against their own

previous personal best, so we articulate that ... 'doing your best is what we want from everybody.' ... and ... 'happy children are successful children' ... so that ... 'if you achieve personal success then it brings happiness!'

MARK: Yes, as a whole school, we would do that across the whole school and articulate that together: we'd do it between ourselves as teachers ... often to talk about that and then we'd make sure that we talk to the children about it explicitly as well.

MARK: Assemblies or I would do it publicly with everybody ... yes the school rules show that ... but I would do it publicly and set the trend for that and then everybody else would do it with their groups of children. Lots of celebratory assemblies. There's one happening ... no, it's just finished! Yes, lots of celebratory assemblies where, as I say, we talk about not necessarily the best people in the school but the people who have got the best attitudes ... you know, the people who have improved themselves the most in terms of where they start from. So we celebrate achievement at all levels, yeah.

MARK: Hard-working, committed people with a shared sense of purpose ... people who understand that working together, working in an agreed way, being consistent and giving what you've got to give ... and I'm talking about everybody in that ... children and teachers ... those are the key ingredients. It's challenging everybody's energy in a shared way in a positive direction and remembering to celebrate things as you go along ... remember to note what success looks like, point it out all the time.

MARK: Yep! We tell them regularly how ... what we're hoping their children might achieve and give them feedback along the way about the steps they've taken to get there.

MARK: It would be in certificates; it would be in general letters that I send home, talking about everybody in general; it would be individual things sent home by class teachers and by me; it will be in formal face-to-face meetings three times a year; it will be at the beginning of the year saying, 'these are the things that this group is working towards and what will constitute success for them' and, as I say, relating back to those things regularly in a fairly formal and sometimes informal way.

MARK: People with a passion for working with children; people with some commitment for what they're doing; people who've got a positive outlook and a sense of humour; people who are good team workers because I don't think this is a job that you can do in isolation, you need people with you and one of the things we do and we realise is that we learn best when we're either supporting somebody and reinforcing our own learning or ... be it learning from somebody else we can expect. So, yeah, passion, commitment, a capacity for hard work and a capacity to

reflect and be self-reflective.

MARK: I do. I've been doing some work on this recently and doing some presentations about this recently because people are interested in how we do what we do and obviously a large part of our community is Bangladeshi.

MARK: The community has changed in that ... I've been head-teacher for fifteen years and when I first started the Bangladeshi community was just establishing itself in a meaningful way and the expectations weren't particularly high. Some of those children had just not long arrived here and, you know, people didn't understand what aspirations there could be. Together with them we've raised their aspirations for the children by being explicit about what's possible. As we've raised standards they've come along with us and now I believe ... and generally ... I'm talking in very general terms, they are much more secure and settled and inspirational for their children and we share those aspirations. I think we've led them to have those aspirations for their children.

MARK: I think it's mixed. I think it's mixed. There is a group, like you'd expect in most communities, there are a group that are very focused and expect great things of both boys and girls and there are others who haven't got that expectation and who are grateful when their children are seen to be doing almost better than they expected and didn't know what their children ... but there is a trend ... there is an increasing number of people who want their children to do well and expect their children to do well and support their children to do well but there is still a group where it almost comes as a surprise when do they achieve highly.

MARK: We've got a very clear ... principals about engaging parents, so with the things that I've just described, where how we actively go and bring ... go and find the parents and talk to them and bring them in just to show them what we're doing and to talk about what we're trying to do. We have some projects which are aimed at certain key children such as something that we call our Raising Aspirations Project, which is only for a few children ... we identify the first child in the family that may have the capacity to go onto further education, onto university and provide them and their families with a range of experiences that might just help them to raise their aspirations. So that's ... we work very closely with the local secondary school and we've got a stated commitment that we work with the school community to increase the life chances and the aspirations of all the children from 3-16 [years] and that there's a continuous experience all the way through. So, some of these experiences we provide are shared between us and the local secondary school. So, in terms of ... we know that by doing what we do we create work for ourselves but we know the benefit that the children have. So, three or four times a week you'll see groups of parents being ... either having some personal learning or getting experience of how we teach the children. So, this week, we've done two or three 'how we teach early reading sessions' with parents ... mostly Bangladeshi parents. We've done a creative workshop around Black History Month and a textiles project which develops ... it just gives them a bit more confidence. So in the last term each Wednesday we've taken groups of about thirty or forty parents out to a place that we

would like them to feel comfortable taking their children to. So, the museums in London, Kew Gardens, all the places we want the children to experience but our families don't feel comfortable and capable of taking them to. So by taking them there ourselves we know the children ... would take them ... so all those things happen here ... as I say, extra things take extra energy but the spin-off is ...

MARK: Yes, lots of workshops and lots of projects.

MARK: ... Yes we do. Yeah absolutely, it's worth the investment, yeah.

School 3 Governors question response data:

ASIF: Well my role as a parent and as a Governor of the school I see that as being able to work with other colleagues and other Governors to try and make our children achieve the best results and the best attainments and that I do together by being in the Governing Body and contributing in the policymaking of the Governing Body and also speaking to the staff and with the head-teachers and my other colleagues ... we are there to see what the policies are and how those policies can be [unclear 00:00:56.18] in school through the head-teacher and from time to time when the results comes we discuss the achievements of our students and we sit down and discuss if there has been any problems. So my role mainly is to see that our children achieve their best.

ASIF: Well, I would say, like all of the Governors, my particular role has been useful ... this is why I've been a Governor of this school for the last sixteen, seventeen years or even more and I have been chair of the Governing Body many times. I do feel that altogether we have contributed very adequately because our students, our children, have achieved their best and our school is one of the best performing schools, so I would say, 'yes!' it has been very positive and I feel that my contribution is important or has been important.

ASIF: Umm, obviously the education policy are there to ensure that nationally all the children are achieving their targets. Locally obviously our children are bilingual and although in one hand that's an advantage because they've got two languages but, at the same time, because their mother language is not English they're sometime having to work twice as much or as hard to be able to achieve the same national standard like their counterparts. So, locally I think the policy should be adopted to suit the bilingual children. I think there has been attempts from the government by the way of having bilingual classes. Also there is the after school activities and there are other supports that the school receives and gives to those childrens. So, in a way, yes there are some but it could be done better. The policies could be adopted even more.

ASIF: Individually our contribution is obviously not as much as it is collectively. But yes, I personally have worked all throughout my life to see that the children's education and achievement is better and goes on achieving better all the time. I say it's been an experience from my side as well and it's a learning process for everybody, so it's been ... yeah, very good.

ASIF: Changes in the National Curriculum?

ASIF: Well as I said earlier the National Curriculum is there for everybody, right. The Bengali children within the National Curriculum, they have to achieve just as much but in the same time they ... because they're bilingual ... so sometimes they are slightly at a disadvantage. For example, if a child comes from Bangladesh when they're supposed to be in Year 3 or 4, so they've missed those two or three years ... four years of learning and to catch up with that and then be able to perform like a home-grown child, it's a challenge for them, so the National Curriculum, when this is locally implemented, I think this should be borne in mind, particularly when they're tests are taken, the exams are taken ... that bilingual children, their background when they started their classes and so on, that should be considered ... that should be taken into account in assessing their results. I don't think they're really done because you just look at the results, at the moment how it is, just look at the results and say, 'You have passed' ... or not ... or ... 'You've got this grade or ...' but the circumstances of those children are not taken into account, so it would be better if that could be.

Also they go on extended holidays don't they?

ASIF: And that extended holiday does affect their education but because of, you know, their extended family back home they cannot avoid it, so we should be thinking about how that period of absence from the school can be utilised for educational purpose. So if the Curriculum can be adapted slightly to suit that situation...

ASIF: That should be encouraged all the time and the more the merrier because obviously the education is for the children and they're from a community, so if that community's contribution is there all the time ... then that would enhance their prospect of getting better results.

Appendix 6: Coding Process

Overall Coding	Practical activities	Teaching style	Doing your best
Learning is fun (Art, RE, English, Languages, Reading, Sports, Visits, Golden Time, Singing).	Resources	Cost	Hard work
Relationships	Assembly	Monoculture	Commitment
Social Skills	Communication skills	EAL	Sharing
Playing	Cultural background/awareness	Leadership	Positivity
Extra curriculum activities	Language skills	Skill training	Passion
Practical value of education	Religion and education	Resources (including human resources)	Reflection/self reflection
Friendship	Parental support	Shared vision	Engaging parents
Breaks	Opportunity	Pupil profile	Workshops
School council	Confidence (self esteem)	Creativity	Literacy & numeracy
Repetition	Poverty and academic attainment	Pupil development	Golden rules/golden time
Creativity	Self improvement	Independent working	Discovery
Aspiration	Attainment	Pupil progress	Long term planning
Changing the curriculum	Homework club	Motivation	Trips & visits
Education for change	Teacher's subject knowledge	School improvement plan	Inspiration
Valuing school	Family background	Quality of teaching	Engagement
Helping (family, people and friends)	Religion	Structure	Interest
Languages	Cultural background	Skills	Cultural identity
Extra curricula activities (art, drawings, homework clubs).	Gender & education	Conceptual understanding	After school clubs
Practical use of learning (cooking, maths, habitat, science).	Working together	Learning mentor	Raising expectations
Social skills	Parental support	Workshops	Tensions
Expectation	Future success	Professional development	Real life experience
Achievement	Teaching style	Performance management	Pupil culture
School environment	Enjoyable lessons	Management team	Local authority
	Private tuition	Achievement	Self evaluation
	Self confidence	Success	Flexibility
Self-esteem	Culture & education	Reputations	Budget
Learning agenda	Motivation	Pupil development	Involvement
Professionalism	Educational background	Team work	Liaise
Teaching assistant	Career (professional)	Bangladeshi culture	Activities
Policy	Independence	Broad curriculum	Sharing
Intensive school programme	Family	Black History	Communications
Parental involvement	Positive value	School support	Understanding
Curriculum workshops	Religion & gender	Education policy	Islamic education
Reflective school	Future	Educational	Enthusiasm
Raising standards	High expectation	Developing quality teaching & learning	God
Accelerating progress	Progress	Projects	Training programs
Professional learning community	Strengths & weaknesses	Underperformance	School governor
Cluster group	Equality	Languages	Madrasa
Ethos	Better future	Funding	Sub-themes:
Learning together	Good values	Underachievement	Learning is fun
Journey	Pupils choice	Boys & writing	Relationship
Positive	Career choice	Planning	Changing the curriculum
Success	Education is a safety net	Provision for local ethnic group	School council
Happy	Support / local authority	Quality first teaching	Languages
Education is important	Cultural awareness	High quality support	Aspirations
Higher education	Raising aspirations	Provision	Learning is fun
Profession	Community support	Potential	Relationship
After school study	Homework	Works very closely with schools	School council
Cost of higher education	School policy	Positive relationship	Aspirations
Free school meals	Support	Extensive support for pupils and families	Learning is fun
Gender expectation	Community	Community	Relationship

School council	working together	Parental involvement	pupil's background
Aspirations	parental support	Working together	aspiration
Expectations	aspirations/expectations	Raising standars	parental involvement
Practical value of education	practical learning	Positive learning environment	working together
School environment	family background/ cultural background	expectation	learning as enjoyment
Learning is fun	working together	parental support	aspiration
Relationship	parental support	working together	working together
School council	aspirations/expectations	cultural background	background
Aspirations	leadership	motivation	parental involvement
Expectations	resources	school council	background
Practical value of education	working together	working together	working together
School environment	parental support	parental support	working together
Practical value of education	aspirations/expectations	Achievement & expectation	language skills
Parental support	leadership	family background	raising aspiration
cultural background	learning is enjoyable	high expectation	cultural background
extra curricular activities	pupil involvement	family background	support
working together	safe environment	equality of opportunity	relationships
learning is fun	working together	aspiration	expectations
Aspiration/self improvement / attainment	Improvement	value of education	working together
family background/ cultural background	Aspiration	aspiration	languages
working together	Creative learning	expectation	education is important
parental support	Raising expectations	parental support	working together
enjoyable lessons	Broad curriculum	independence	language skill
aspirations	Structure	cultural & family background	
gender and education	Pupil background	parental involvement	
family background/ cultural background	Relationship	aspiration	

Sub Themes

Learning is fun	Parental support	leadership	family background
Relationship	cultural background	learning is enjoyable	high expectation
Changing the curriculum	extra curricular activities	pupil involvement	family background
School council	working together	safe environment	equality of opportunity
Languages	learning is fun	working together	aspiration
Aspirations	Aspiration/self improvement / attainment	Improvement	value of education
Learning is fun	family background/ cultural background	Aspiration	aspiration
Relationship	working together	Creative learning	expectation
School council	parental support	Raising expectations	parental support
Aspirations	enjoyable lessons	Broad curriculum	independence
Learning is fun	aspirations	Structure	cultural & family background
Relationship	gender and education	Pupil background	parental involvement
School council	family background/ cultural background	Relationship	aspiration
Aspirations	working together	Parental involvement	pupil's background
Expectations	parental support	Working together	aspiration
Practical value of education	aspirations/expectations	Raising standars	parental involvement
School environment	practical learning	Positive learning environment	working together
Learning is fun	family background/ cultural background	expectation	learning as enjoyment
Relationship	working together	parental support	aspiration
School council	parental support	working together	working together
Aspirations	aspirations/expectations	cultural background	background
Expectations	leadership	motivation	parental involvement
Practical value of education	resources	school council	background
School environment	working together	working together	working together
Practical value of education	parental support	parental support	working together
	aspirations/expectations	Achievement & expectation	language skills

raising aspiration
cultural background
support
relationships
expectations
working together
languages
education is important
working together
language skill

Coding Examples

Figure 8 School 1 Pupils' responses

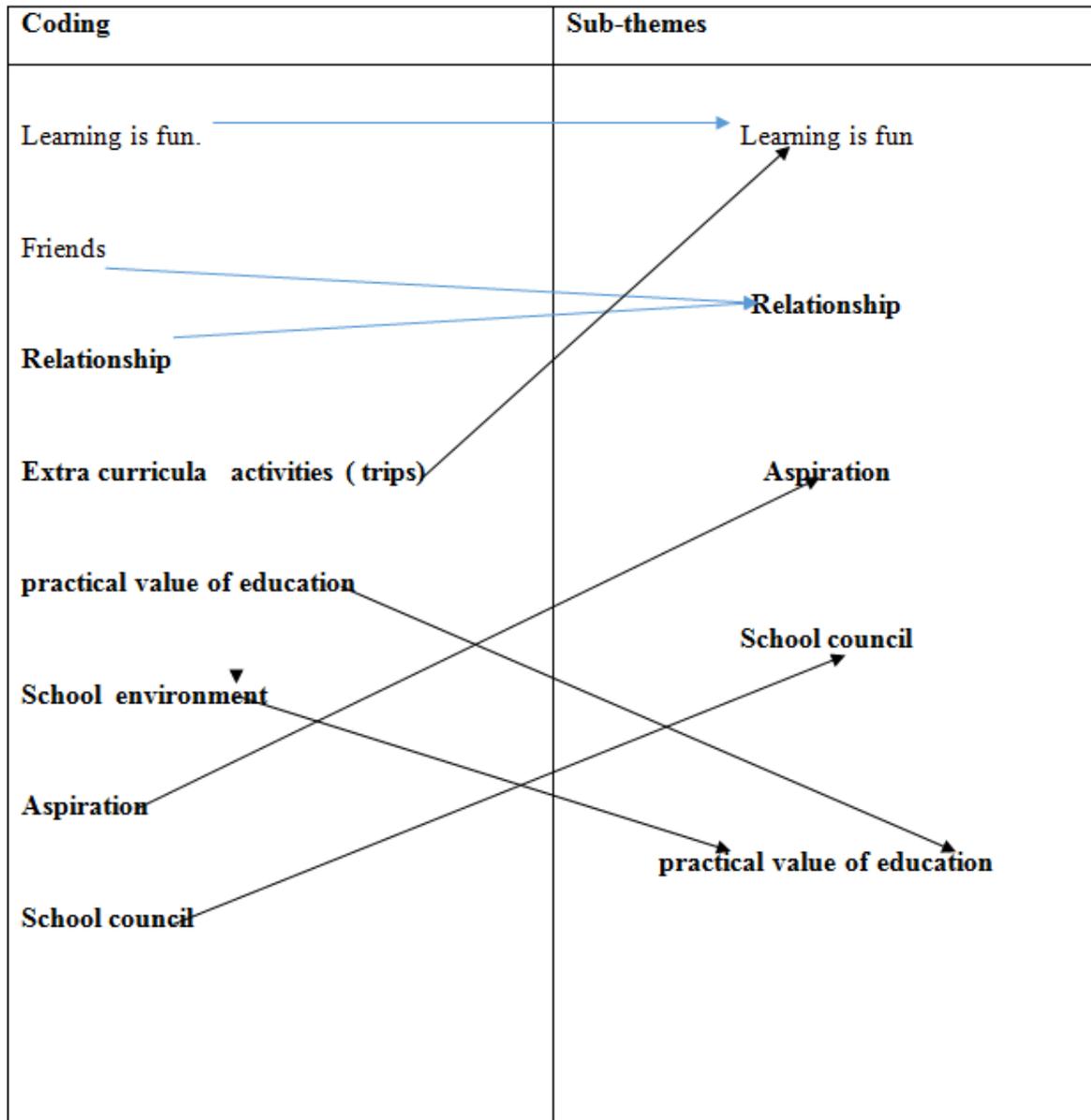


Figure 9 School 1 Teacher coding

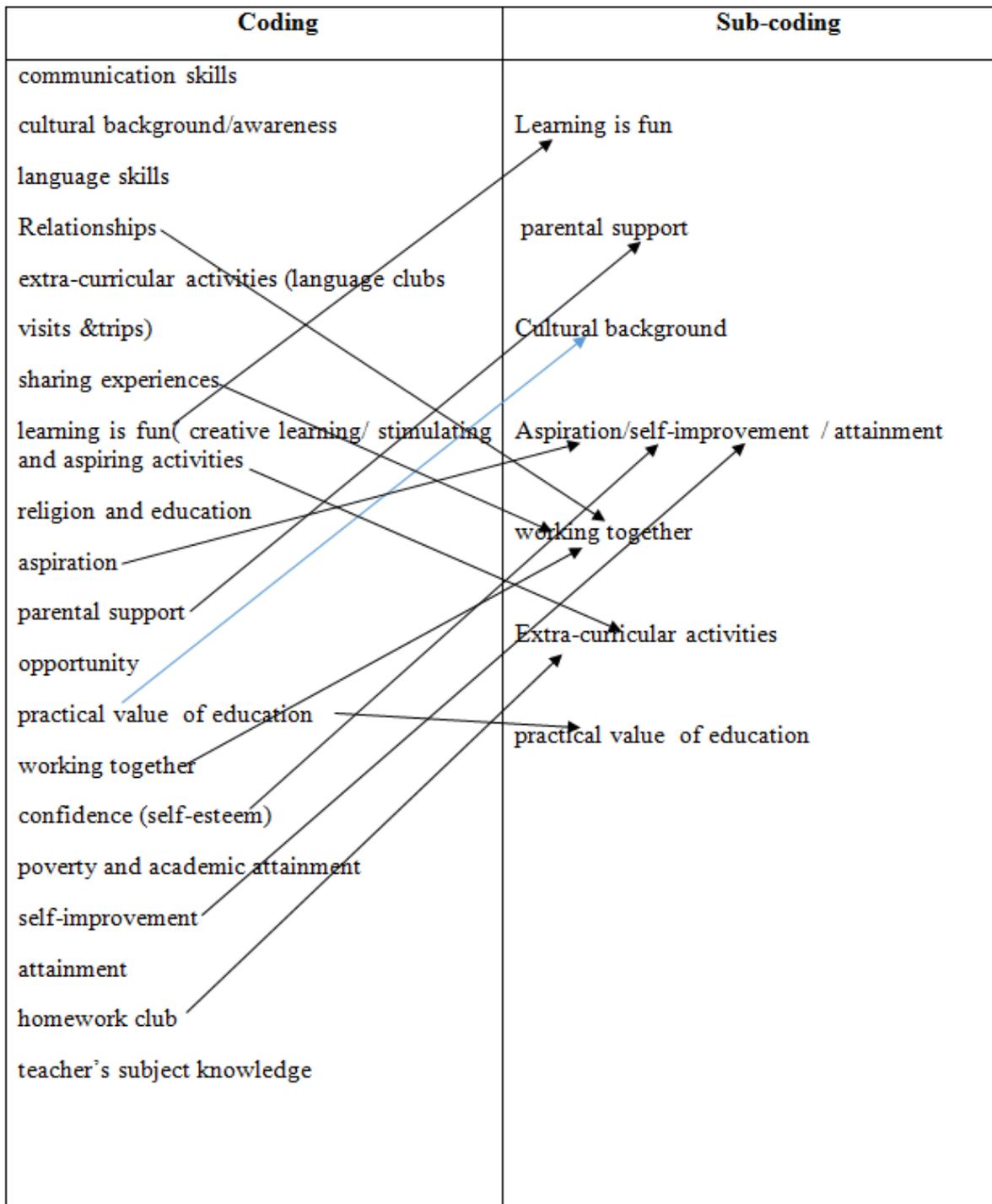


Figure 10 School 2 Head- teacher's coding

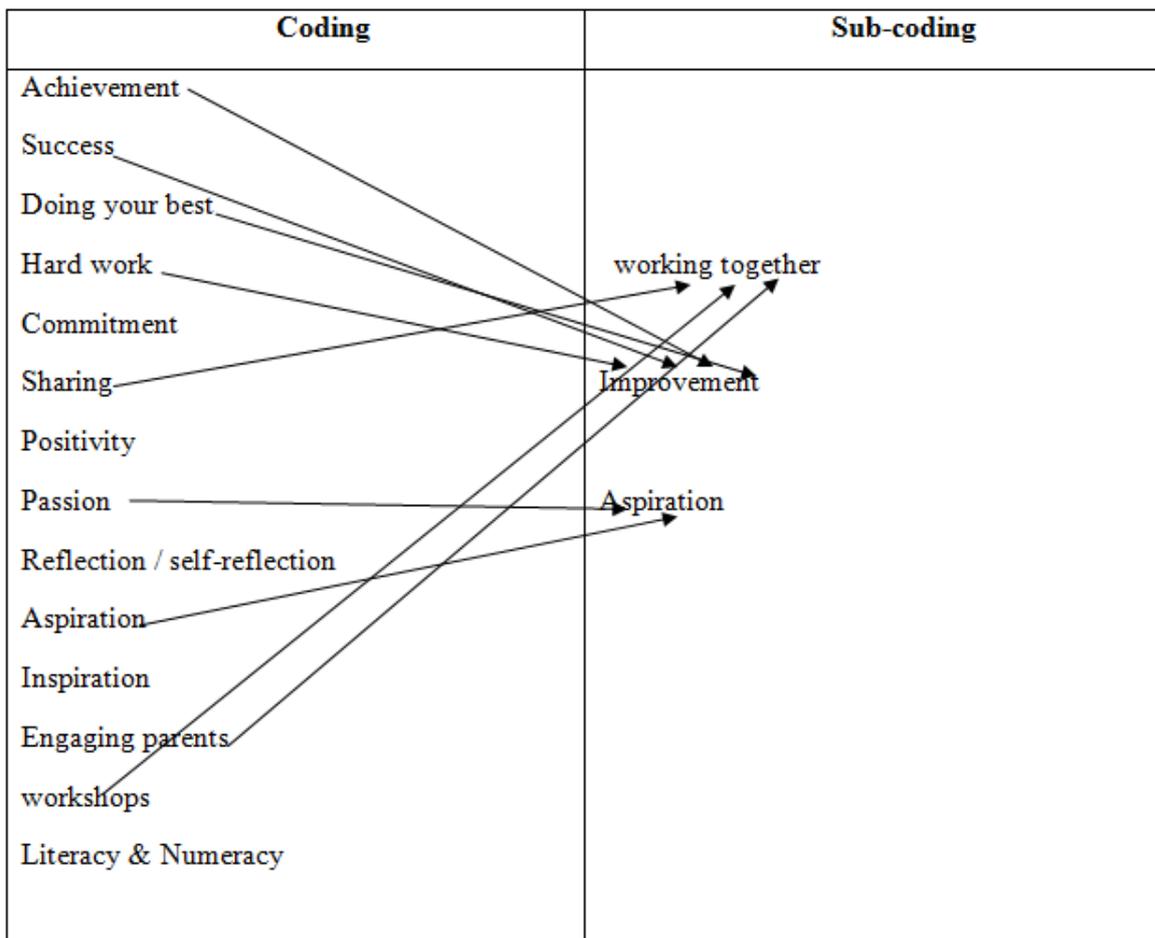


Figure 11 School 4 Parent's coding

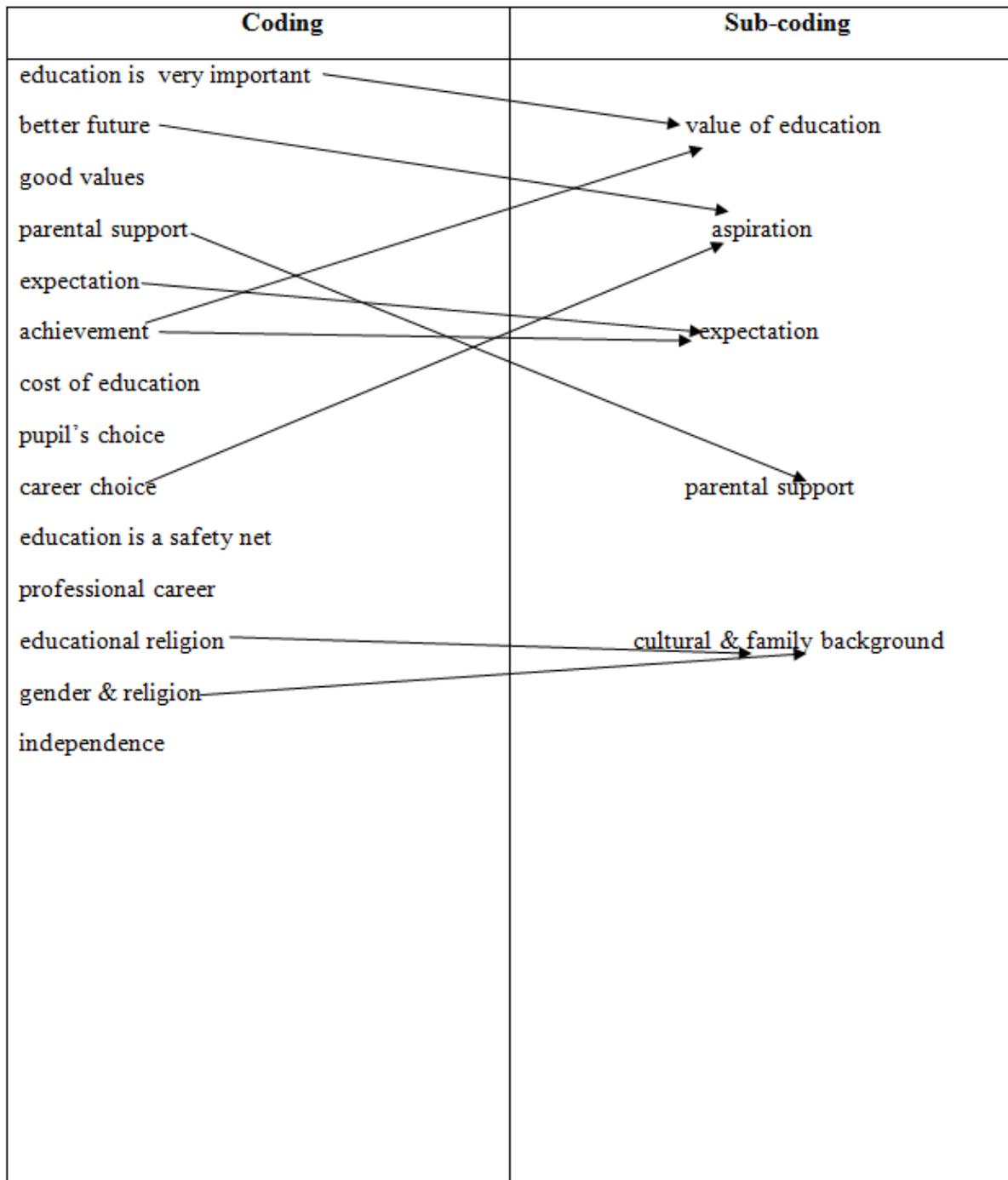


Figure 12 School 3 Governors coding

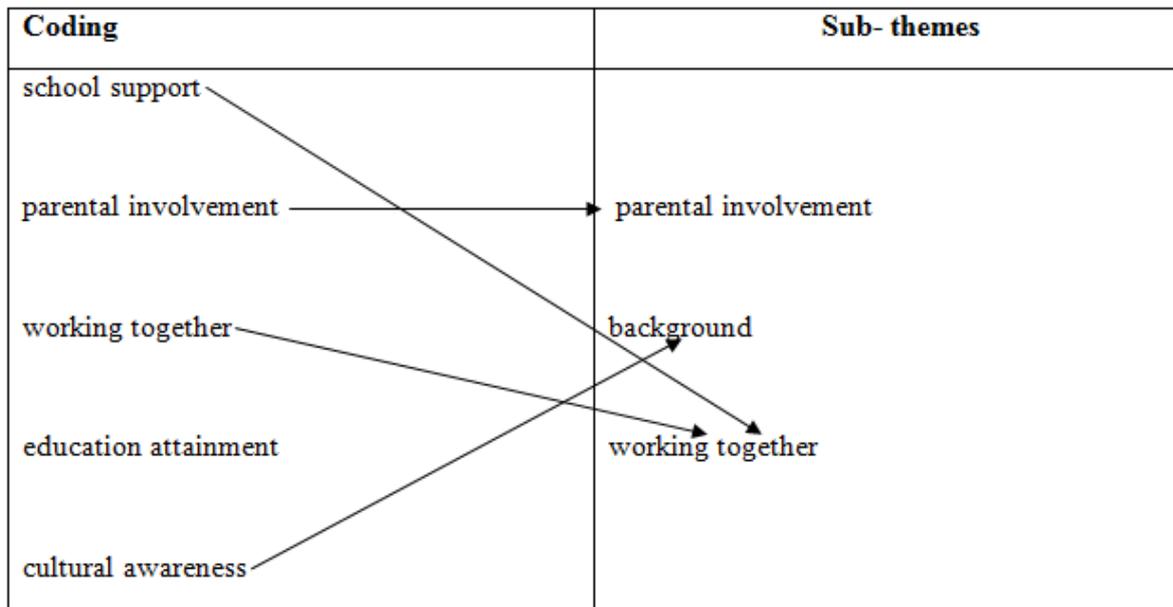


Figure 13 Coding: Pupils' Sub-themes

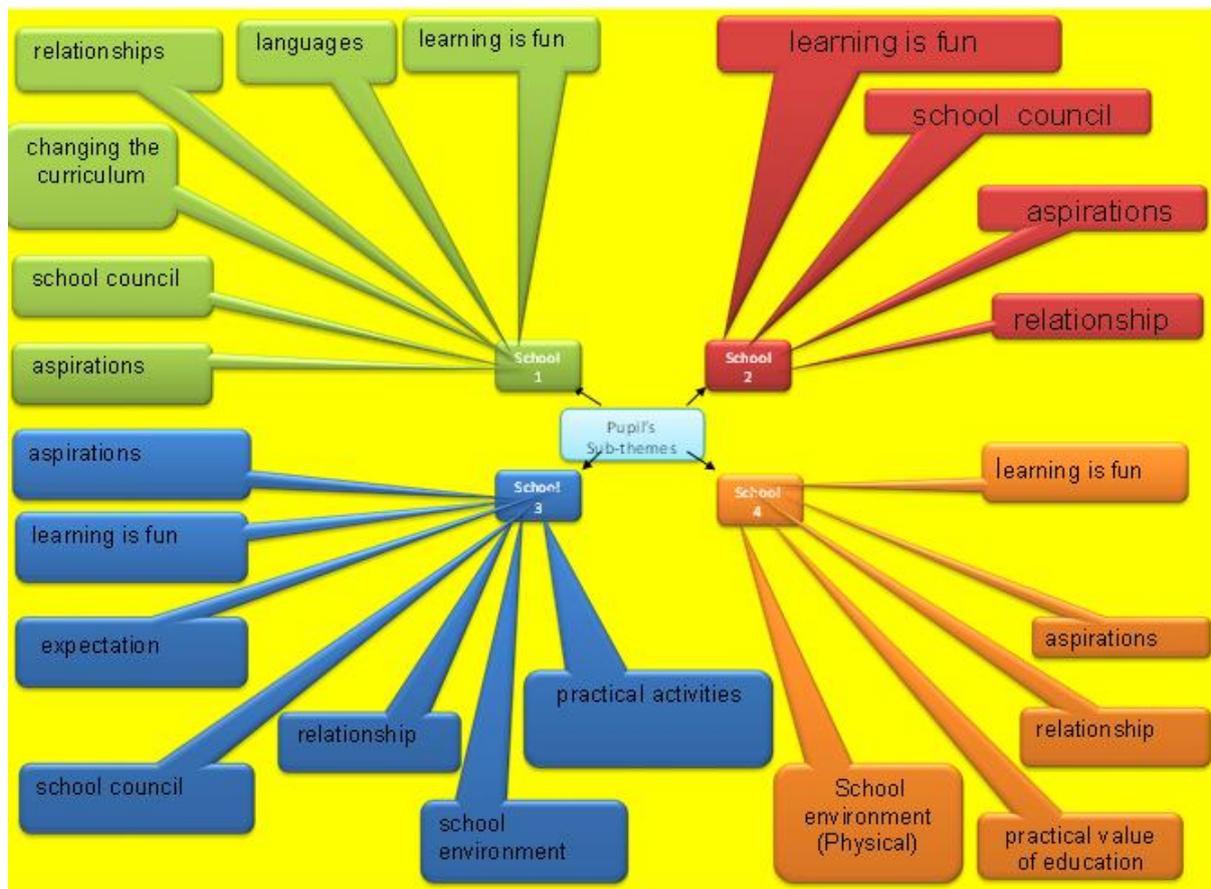


Figure 14 Most common Pupils' Sub-themes

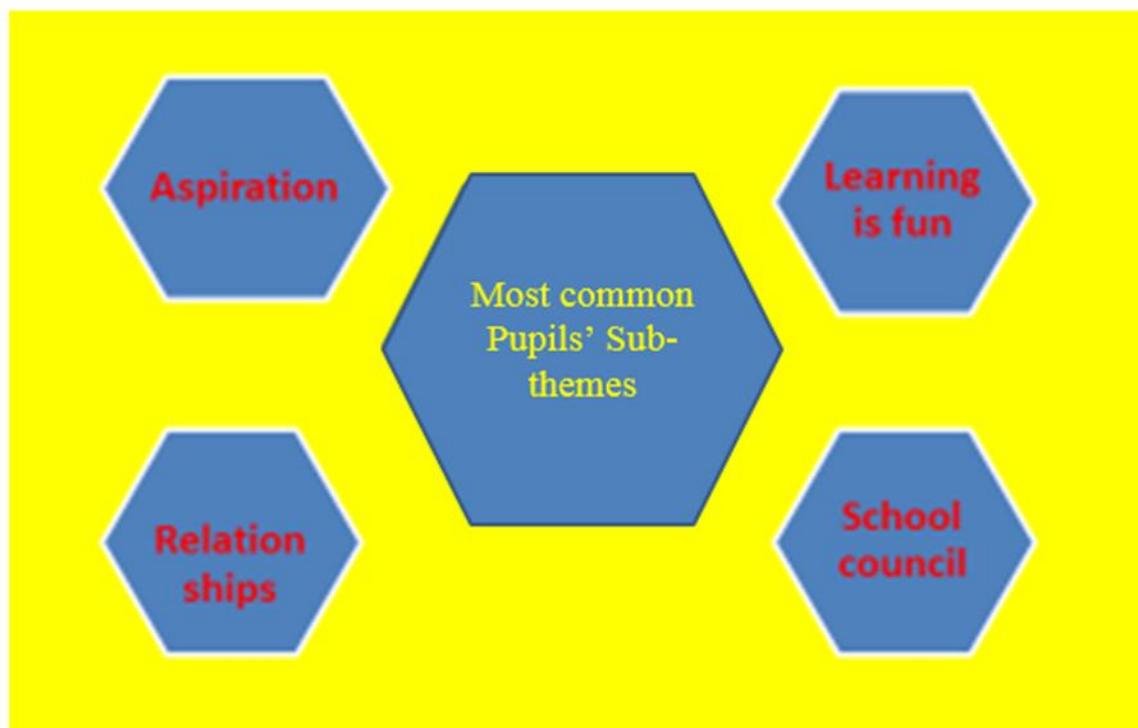


Figure 15 Coding: Teachers' Sub-themes

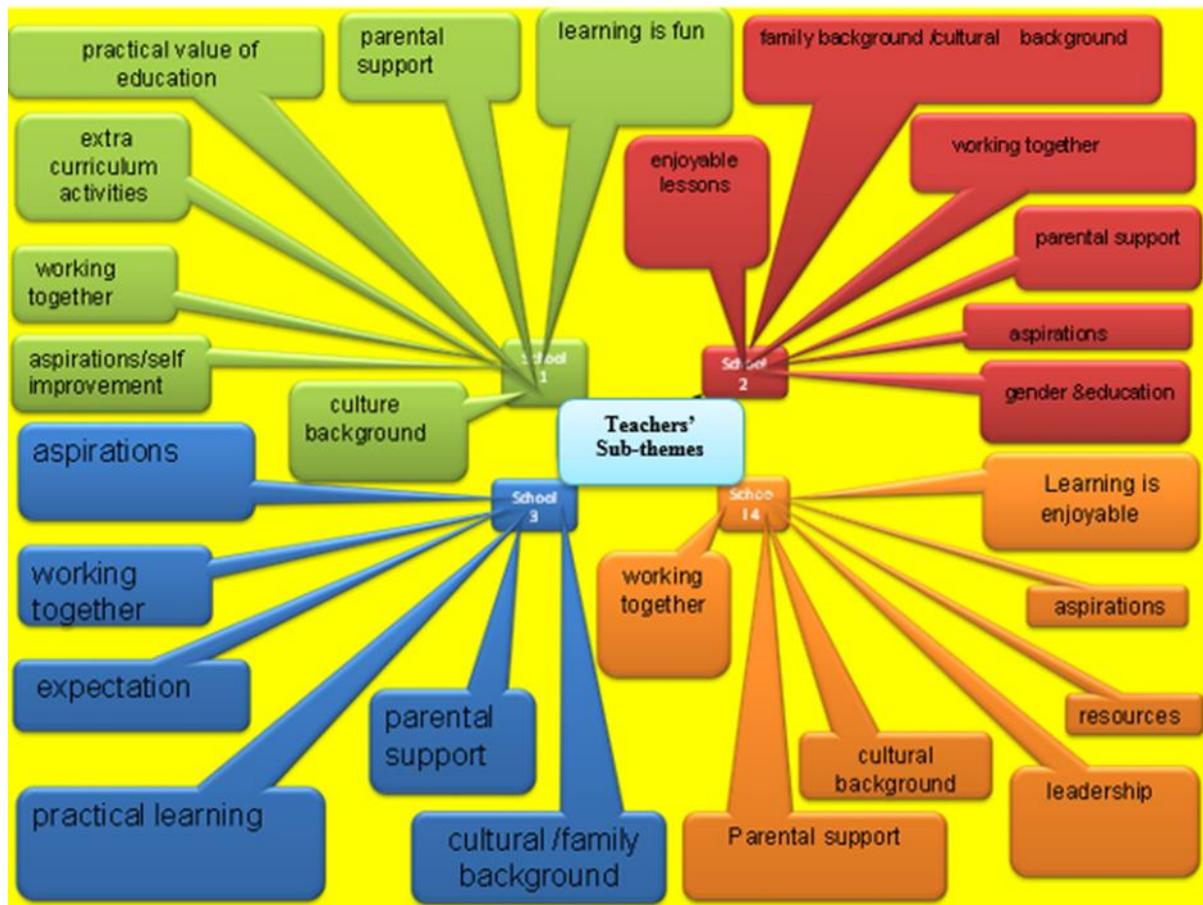


Figure 16 Most common Teachers' Sub-themes



Figure 17 Coding: Head-teachers' Sub-themes

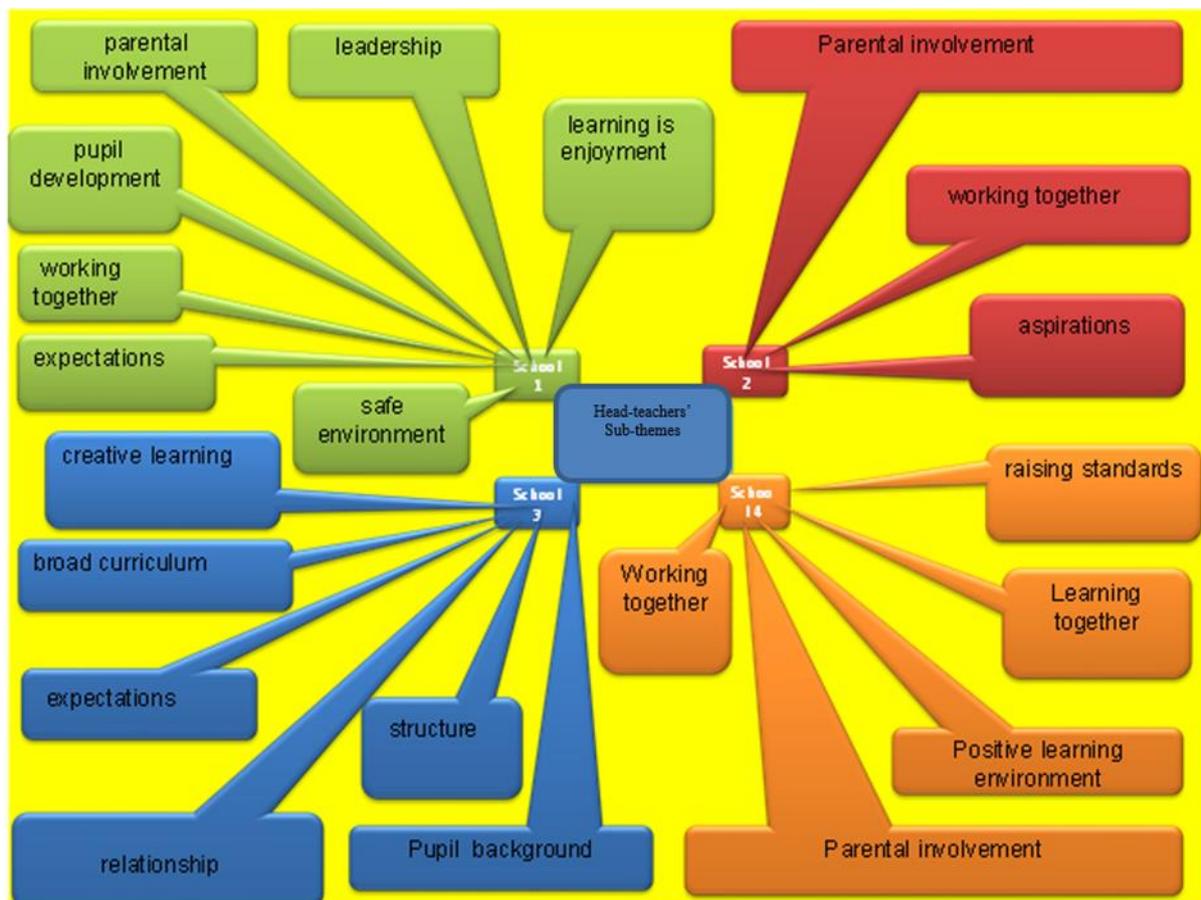


Figure 18 Most common Head-teachers' Sub-themes



Figure 19 Coding: Parents' Sub-themes

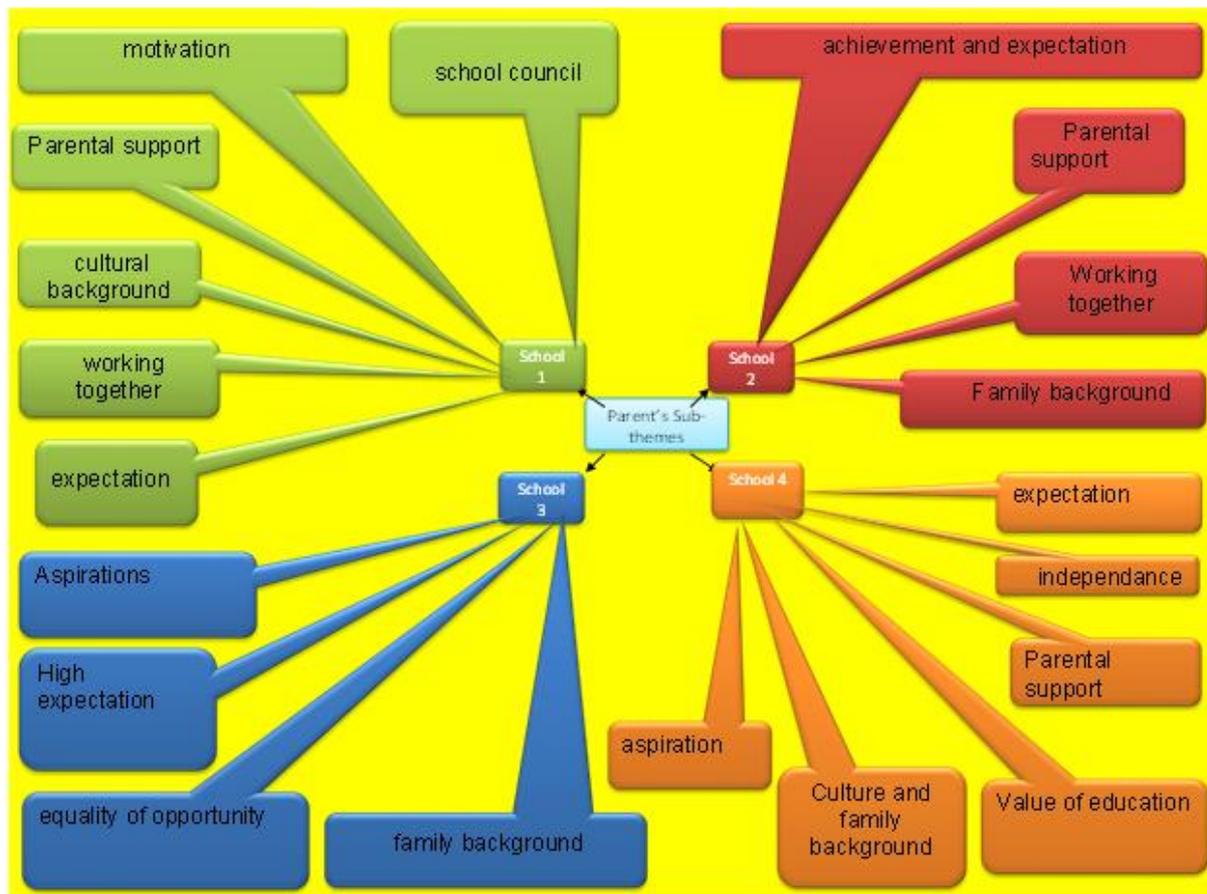


Figure 20 Most common Parents' Sub-themes

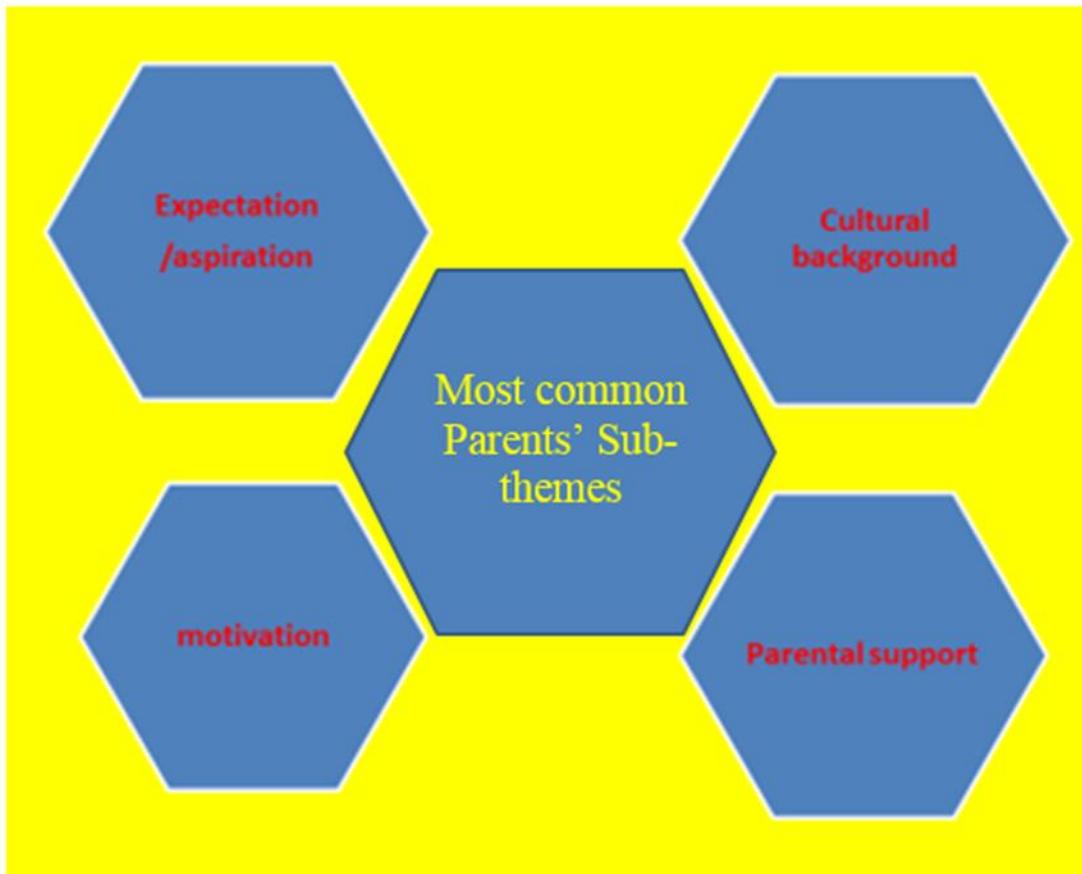


Figure 21 Coding: Governors' Sub-themes

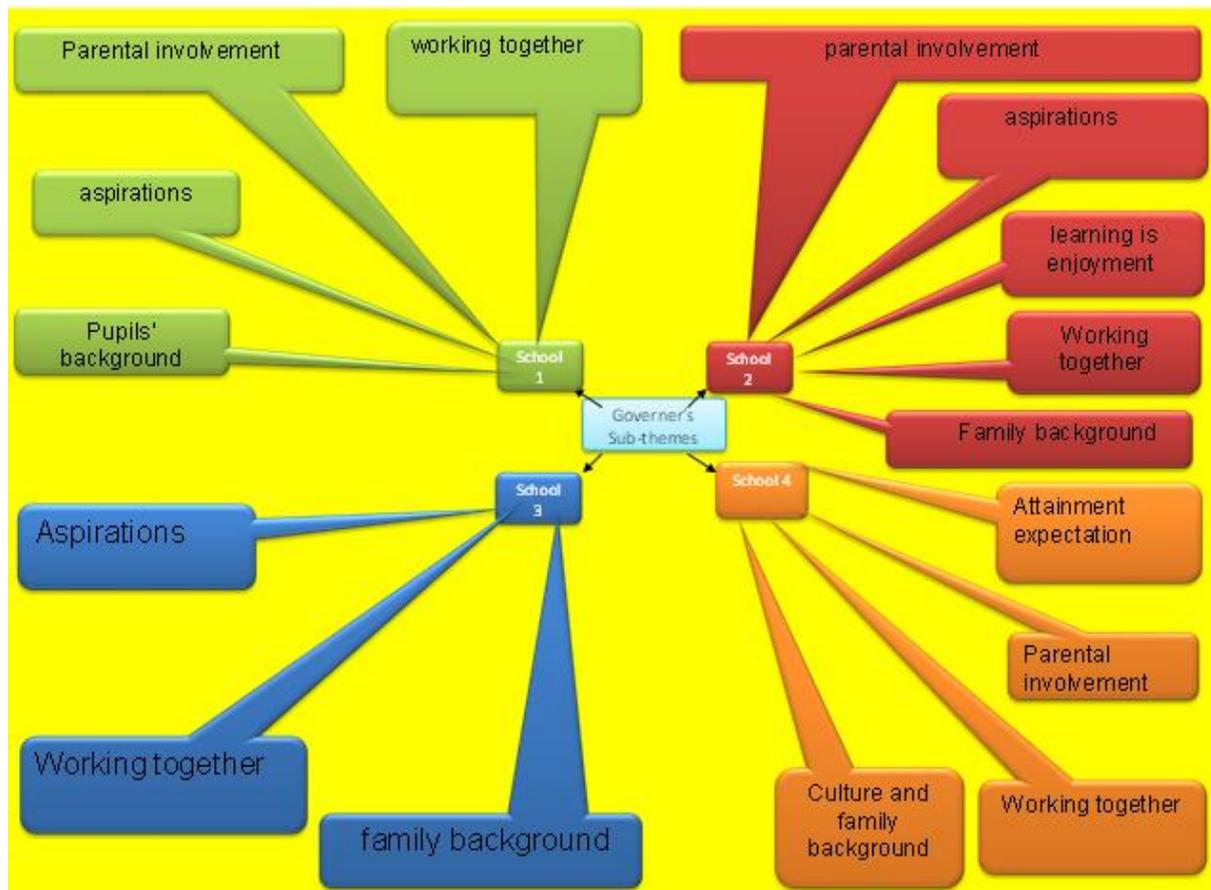


Figure 22 Most common Governors' Sub-themes

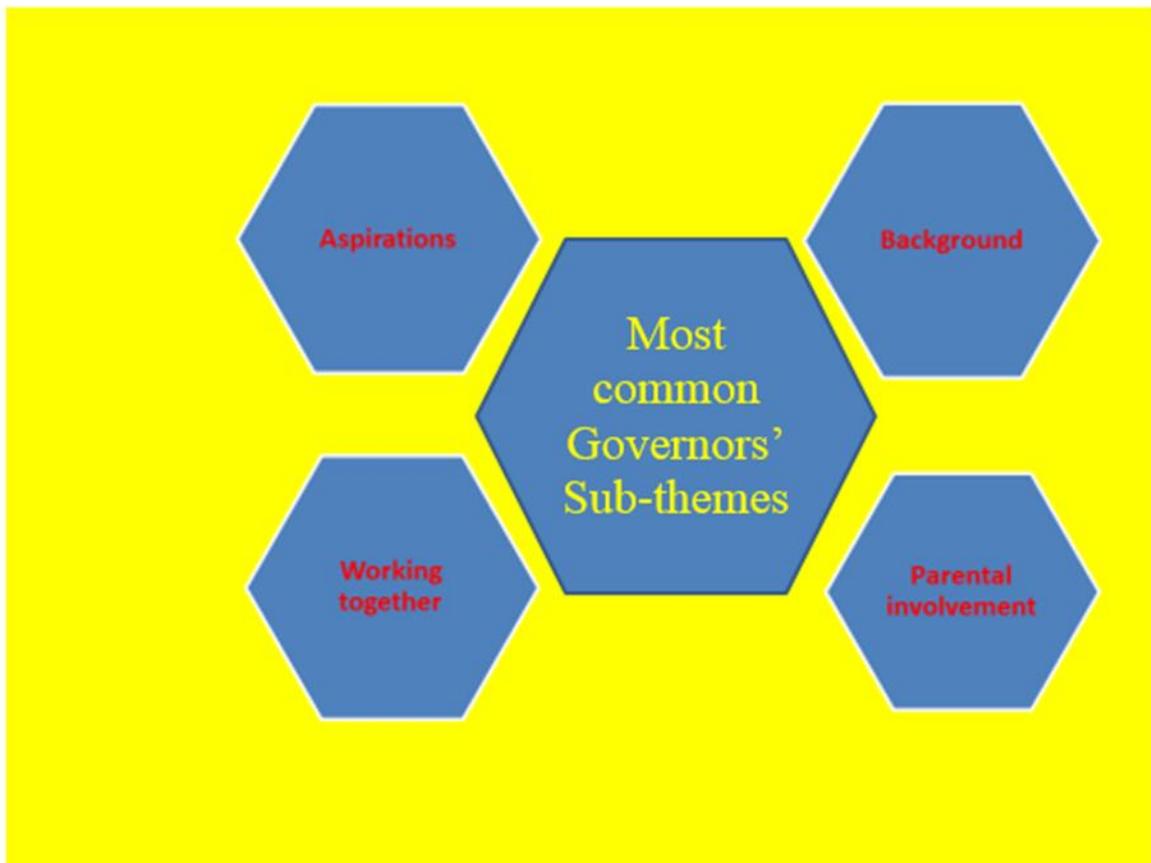
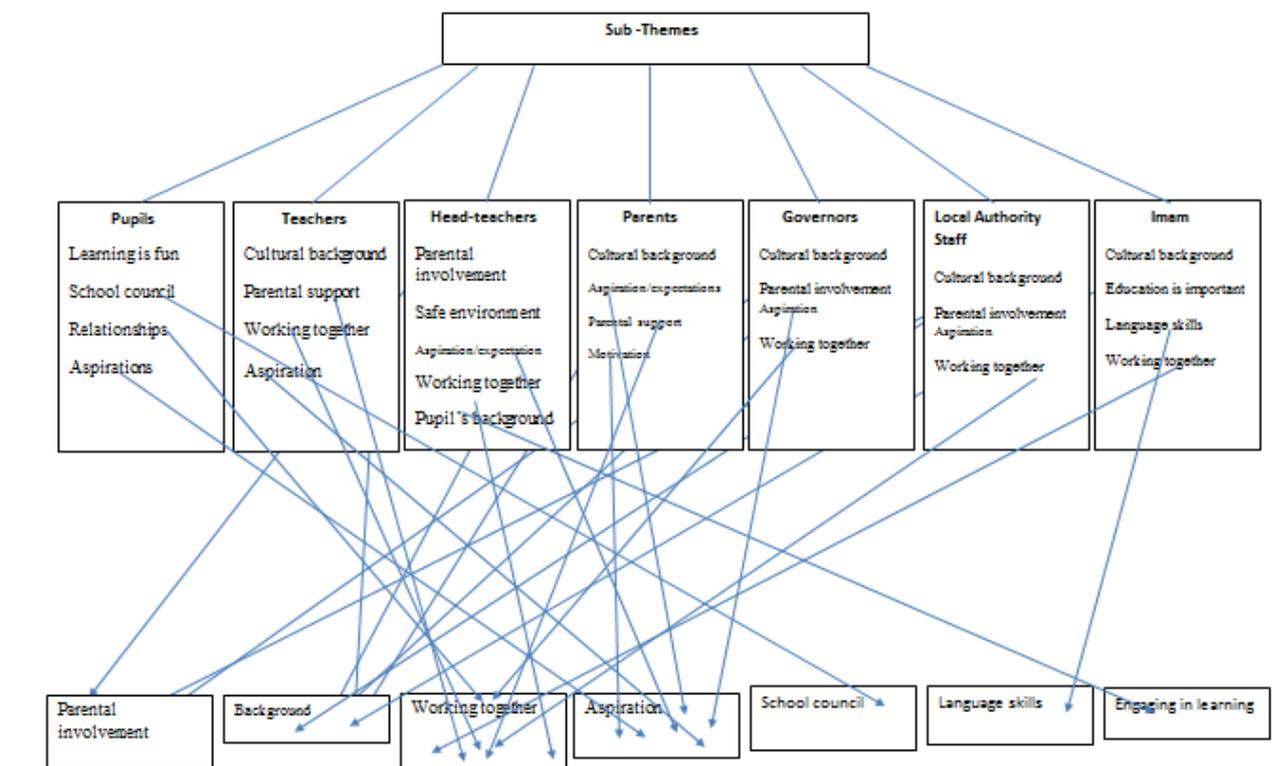


Figure 23 Coding: final themes and Sub-themes



Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my brother, Farouk, who always encouraged me to continue my education and work to achieve the highest standards.