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Exploring the impact of supplementary schools on Black and Minority Ethnic pupils mainstream attainment

Abstract

This paper reports findings from a study commissioned by the (then) Department for Children, Schools and Families. The research mapped the provision, and explored the impact, of supplementary schools, and aimed specifically to develop further understanding as to how supplementary schools might raise the attainment of Black and Minority Ethnic pupils. Drawing on a national survey and case study data from 12 supplementary schools, we highlight a range of perceived impacts identified by teachers, pupils and parents, and problematise the concept of impact. We identify the unique contribution and impact that supplementary schools make to the mainstream school attainment of pupils from diverse (linguistic, cultural, ethnic) backgrounds. We suggest that there is much to be learnt by the mainstream school sector about the difference supplementary school education makes to minority ethnic children, while questioning whether mainstream indicators of impact should be applied to supplementary schools.

Key words:

Supplementary schools, Black and Minority Ethnic pupils, notions of impact, parental involvement, National Curriculum

Introduction

Supplementary schools in England were first associated with Irish migrants in the late 19th century. Since the 1940s migrants from across the world have been instrumental in setting up community-led supplementary schools. These schools operate outside of normal school hours (in the evenings and/or at weekends), provide mother-tongue language/culture/faith based teaching and some cover National Curriculum subjects (e.g. mathematics, English or science). Many supplementary schools are staffed by volunteers; reflecting their grassroots nature and the limited amount of funds available to some schools.

Originally supplementary schools aimed to maintain the language, cultural values/customs/heritage and/or faith traditions of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities' countries of origin (Martin, Creese & Bhatt, 2003). Outside of linguistic/faith/cultural preservation, supplementary schools created by Black parents sought to address the high (parental) expectations and attainment targets which Black parents considered absent from their children's mainstream education (Tomlinson, 1984). With Black teachers, these schools challenged the 'inherent racism' (Troyna, 1984, p.157) and 'taken-for-granted assumptions embodied within mainstream rationale' (Reay & Mirza, 1997, p. 479) about the inevitable underachievement of Black children (Dove, 1993).

The rationale for setting up supplementary schools by immigrant communities in England echoes similarities with the emergence of supplementary schools, for example, in America (e.g. Sanders, 1979; Kifano, 1996; Resnick, 1997; Zhou & Kim, 2006), Australia (www.communitylanguagesaustralia.org.au/AboutUs.php) and Norway (Hall et al., 2002). Like supplementary schools in England, these schools were not only concerned with linguistic/faith/cultural preservation, but sought to 'bring out the best' in children (Zhou & Kim, 2006:17).

Some supplementary schools in England prefer to be known as 'complementary schools' as it is argued that this more accurately reflects the type of provision offered; i.e. they complement mainstream education (Francis, Archer & Mau, 2009; Issa & Williams, 2009). Different reference terms, varying definitions of supplementary schools and the fact that they are not formerly monitored make it difficult to know exactly how many supplementary schools exist (discussed in Author et al., 2010). Whatever the number, the prevalence today of supplementary schools in England has been supported by new arrivals (e.g. refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants - see Rutter, 1998; DCSF, 2007) and their continuance supported by the absence of BME communities from the mainstream school curriculum, feelings of un-belonging (Author, 2010) and parental fears of their culture/language/faith identities being eroded (Issa & Williams, 2009). The prolonged underachievement of Black, particularly African-Caribbean children, in mainstream schools (e.g. Coard, 1971; Richardson, 2005) has additionally served to ensure the longevity of Black supplementary schools in England (Mirza, 2009; a similar situation exists for supplementary schools serving African-American children - Kifano, 1996).

Benefits/impact of supplementary schools

This paper is concerned to better understand the impact of supplementary schools on BME children's experience of mainstream schooling. An understanding of what constitutes 'impact' is thus essential. Dictionary definitions of 'impact' imply that 'impact' means 'to affect or influence'; to 'influence strongly'; to have a 'marked effect or influence' and/or to 'have an effect upon' (Oxford dictionary on-line). These definitions suggest that 'impact' can be interpreted in several ways.

Studies of Black supplementary schools in England (e.g. Parents of Black Children Association, 2009) and America suggest they motivate and 'renew [Black children's] interest in and enthusiasm for learning' (Kifano, 1996, p. 216). As well as arousing/embedding interest in learning, supplementary schools are able to:

access and unlock the hidden potential of students whose individual intellectual potential has been reduced by a culturally uniform approach to learning ... Supplementary schools can engage pupils effectively and help to translate elements of the mainstream curriculum into a culturally embedded context. (Ryan, 2008: Hansard columns 1066-7)

With potential unlocked, the ability to enhance BME achievement is increased.

A small number of British studies have examined the influence of supplementary schools on children's attainment in mainstream schools. Evans' (2008) analysis of the 2006/07 achievement data of 62 Afghan and 35 Black African pupils attending supplementary schools in one London local authority (LA) showed Afghan pupils attending supplementary schools achieving 'on average 3% higher in English and 17% higher in maths' than pupils from the same ethnic groups in mainstream schools at Key Stage 2 national assessment, and at Key Stage 3, their results were '25% higher in English and 12% higher in maths' (Evans, 2008, p. 5). Within the Black African group, at Key Stage 3 in English, the pupils achieved '11% higher than the borough, 11% higher than the average Nigerian and 32% above the average Somali student' (Evans, 2008, p. 7). But given the small numbers involved in this study, Evans cautioned interpretation of the findings. Research of five Somali supplementary schools led Ives and Wyvill (2008, p.9) to argue that 'evidence of ... supplementary schools raising [the] academic standards of students is rather limited'. Similar conclusions were drawn by Strand (2007). Having surveyed the learning and achievement attitudes of 772 pupils aged 5-16 attending 63 supplementary schools, he found that eight out of ten pupils regarded their attendance at supplementary school as assisting them with their mainstream schoolwork, and sometimes led to more positive attitudes towards mathematics. Nevertheless, Strand recommended further research to identify causal links between attendance at supplementary schools and education related outcomes. The Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG, 2009, p.29) also recommended that supplementary schools 'monitor and evaluate the results of the pupils attending the supplementary school ... and match them to SATs (standard assessment tests), GCSE (general

certificate in secondary education) and post 16 qualifications obtained by the pupils' in order to establish actual evidence of supplementary school impact.

Examining the effects of supplementary schools on mainstream outcomes in England has largely concentrated on supplementary schools that provide support in National Curriculum subjects. Yet research data also suggests that language supplementary schools make a measurable difference to the higher GCSE grades attained by pupils studying languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Hebrew and Turkish, when compared to those achieved by pupils in mainstream schools (Evans, 2008). The ability of language supplementary schools to engender higher marks underscores Creese et al's (2007, p.5) contention that they contradict 'mainstream narratives of academic failure', especially among Bangladeshi and Turkish children. Research conducted with 60 British-Chinese pupils attending Chinese school however, led Francis, Archer & Mau (2009) to question the impact of language supplementary schools on mainstream school results. Thirty of the pupils interviewed believed that their attendance at Chinese school did not impact on their mainstream attainment as the content covered Chinese language/identity/cultural development and as such, was 'distinct' and 'different' to what was taught in the pupils' mainstream schools. Conversely, Zhou & Kim (2006, p.14) found that Chinese and Korean language schools in America 'provide a wide range of tangible supplementary ... services to help children do well in regular schools and ultimately gain admission into prestigious colleges'. They also noted that 'because of the higher standards imposed on Asian American children as a model minority, parents increasingly turn[ed] to these institutions in the hope of giving their children an extra boost in the race for admission into these prestigious schools' (Zhou & Kim 2006, p.15; Pettersen, 1993 also discovered after school 'cram' schools being used in Japan for a similar purpose).

As the above suggests there is a tension between supplementary schools offering National Curriculum support being viewed on the one hand as positively influencing core examination results, whilst on another, because language supplementary schools often cover languages not taught in

mainstream schools, they are construed as not affecting mainstream school outcomes; though learning languages provides access to transferable techniques/skills in mainstream schools.

The dichotomy between impact or not thus begs the question as to whether supplementary school impact should only be defined by mainstream examination results, especially as not all supplementary schools set out to impact on mainstream attainment. Moreover, emphasis on national examination results ignores the wider benefits BME pupils derive from attending supplementary school (Creese et al., 2007; Strand, 2007; Issa & Williams 2009). Francis, Archer & Mau (2010) for example, found that Chinese schools actively seek to improve the employment prospects of British-Chinese children through providing them with access to a range of social networks in and outside of BME communities (see also Zhou & Kim, 2006 who reported similar findings amid Chinese and Korean supplementary schools in America).

The research linking attendance at supplementary school with mainstream school attainment in England is limited. Yet claims are made of supplementary schools contributing 'substantially' to pupil 'learning success' and making a 'significant difference to [Black] pupil achievement' (BTEG 2009, p.28). But what does 'significant difference' or 'significant impact' mean? An English parliamentary reference to supplementary schools suggests that at a governmental level such terms are defined by national examination results whereby the results achieved show 'markedly improved examination results across the core mainstream subjects of English, mathematics and science' (Ryan, 2008: Hansard columns 1066-7). This suggests that politicians/policy makers emphasise hard/quantifiable/statistical measurement of large datasets in assessing educational impact. Yet as argued by Bastiani (2000, p.11):

It is notoriously difficult to evaluate the relationships between educational provision and its outcomes. For learning is such a messy and complicated business. The same experiences can affect different children in different ways; many important influences are hidden or beyond reasonable control.

That there are difficulties in isolating singular impact or unique effects is a view shared by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). Their review of the impact of National Strategies initiatives in 54 schools found that because of the number of initiatives being implemented at any one time, 'schools often found it difficult to disaggregate the effect of any one initiative or element from the many other actions taken to improve outcomes, or from other contextual factors' (Ofsted 2010, p. 9).

Assessing the causes of impact is additionally complicated by the different definitions and measures of impact used by schools and researchers, alongside formal measures (e.g. examinations and tests) of impact used by governments (Sahlberg, 2007). Furthermore, assessment of educational impact may be affected by 'the relatively long periods that may be needed before it becomes observable or measurable' (Gardner, Holmes and Leitch 2008, p. 90). Where (quantifiable) impact assessment is constrained by time, Gardner, Holmes & Leitch (2008, p. 97-8) maintain that 'subjective, anecdotal and impressionistic' data (also known as 'soft indicators') can be 'a powerful source of evidence' as they 'allow potential impact to be identified through reasonable interpretation of their strengths and variety'. This is further supported by Schumer (1999) who observed that classroom observations of the teaching and learning processes in Japanese supplementary schools were pivotal in comprehending the high (mathematical) achievement of Japanese children. Despite findings such as these, it would seem that existing tensions between 'soft' and 'hard' indicators of evidence have been exacerbated by moves towards 'evidence' (i.e. quantifiable) informed educational practice in the UK (see critiques by Hammersley, 2005; Biesta, 2007) and America (e.g. Kennedy, 1997; Feuer, Towne & Shavelson, 2002).

Drawing on survey findings this paper provides an overview of supplementary school reach and provision. Case study data is then utilised to explore notions of impact amongst supplementary school headteachers, teachers, pupils and parents; a group not often included in research. In exploring supplementary school impact amongst schools offering support in National Curriculum subjects, we examine the disjuncture between perceived impact and actual impact, whilst also

questioning the extent to which supplementary schools should impact on mainstream subject outcomes. The case study findings allow us to challenge perceptions of impact not being enhanced by 'soft' data indicators. At the same time we argue for educational policies to be informed by richer and deeper understandings of educational practice/experience.

The study

Between 2009-2010, the then Labour Government's Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in England commissioned researchers from a London university and a London research centre to conduct research into the impact of supplementary school attendance on the mainstream school attainment and experience of low attaining African (particularly Somali), African-Caribbean, Pakistani and Turkish pupils (Strand, 2008). It was anticipated this would provide further insights into strategies at a community level (DfEE 2001) with the potential to raise the attainment of these communities and narrow the attainment gap with the White majority group (see also DCSF, 2008).

The research comprised four strands:

1) a national postal survey of 1136 supplementary schools. The survey (compiled from the National Resource Centre (NRC) for Supplementary Schools' database) was conducted by a London research centre, and built upon a previous survey undertaken with supplementary school community language teachers (Minty et al. 2008). A response rate of 26% (301 schools) was achieved.

2) in-depth qualitative (interview and/or focus group) data collected from staff, pupils and parents from 12 case study supplementary schools, and 17 LA staff with responsibility for supplementary schools. In total, 264 respondents (55 school staff, 112 pupils and 74 parents) representing Black African, African-Caribbean, Dual Caribbean heritage, Polish, Turkish, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian and Islamic communities took part.

Case studies were selected by survey response, school size, location, community served and willingness to participate in the qualitative phase. As the majority of schools that initially expressed a

preference for follow-up research were attended by high achieving pupils (namely Chinese and Indian), suggestions were also sought from the NRC, LAs and community groups that had connections with supplementary schools.

Classroom observations of the teaching and learning approaches adopted in eight of the case study schools helped to contextualise the interview and focus group responses.

3) telephone interviews conducted with six mainstream headteachers and community groups with links to/experience of supplementary schools; and

4) a scoping study exploring the feasibility of conducting a follow-up quantitative study examining impact by linking pupils' attendance at supplementary school with mainstream attainment.

The qualitative data was digitally recorded, transcribed and analysed using the NVivo qualitative data software package which helped to identify recurrent themes and patterns, as well as differences within and across different groups/schools. Survey data was entered and analysed in SPSS by supplementary school type, size, location, pupils and participation, organisational issues, costs, funding, teaching staff and curriculum.

This paper is concerned with strands 2 and 3 (outlined above); however, a summary of key survey findings are also presented below to provide contextual information about the supplementary schools.

Findings:**Supplementary schools**

Both the survey and case study schools were geographically spread across England, and were concentrated in urban areas with traditionally higher populations of BME groups. The greatest percentage of survey schools came from London (50%), followed by West Midlands (12%); Yorkshire and Humber (11%); North West (7%); East of England (7%) and East Midlands (6%). Whilst survey data was not collected in relation to economic deprivation, the case study schools were all located in areas experiencing relatively high levels of economic deprivation. However, parents often travelled with their children from outside the immediate location of the school, attracted by the school's reputation, and a desire to maximise their child's educational chances, and opportunities to learn about their culture; many travelled between three and 20 miles. Some of the case study parents were in professional occupations, and some pupils received additional private home tutoring.

The majority of survey schools catered for pupils aged 5-16. All but one were mixed sexed, and the numbers attending weekly ranged from 2000 to six pupils; however three-quarters had 100 pupils or less. Teacher numbers varied with schools utilising both paid and voluntary teachers. Seventy percent of schools had some UK qualified teachers. While survey data was not collected as to how many teachers also taught in mainstream schools, all but one of the case study schools had teaching staff who either currently worked in a mainstream school or had done so in the past. In the case study schools teachers taught English, mathematics or science and in some instances information communication and technology.

Survey schools operated from a variety of premises, the most common of which were local mainstream schools (43%); community centres (29%); the school's own premises (22%) or 'other' (9%), such as libraries, youth centres, places of worship or private residences.

Seventy-three percent of schools received funding from more than one source; most commonly LA grants (56%); pupil fees (52%); parental donations (39%); and donations from other sources such as local businesses (28%). Some schools did not charge any fees and/or did not have any additional funding. Where schools received government funding they were accountable to the LA for how the monies were spent and the provision offered.

There was a great overlap between types of provision, both in the case study schools and amongst those responding to the survey. This corresponds to Strand's (2007) finding that supplementary schools increasingly have multiple functions. While most of the case study schools focused primarily on one area (National Curriculum, language (e.g. Turkish, Polish, Arabic, Punjabi) or faith), they also integrated other aspects of provision (e.g. language with culture).

Most schools responding to the survey (85%) provided teaching in culture and heritage, including cultural history, values and customs of the community, contemporary culture (such as dance, music and drama) and teaching about particular faiths. More than three quarters of survey schools (78%) taught mother-tongue or community languages; representing 53 different languages in total. The majority taught South Asian languages, including Bengali, Urdu, Punjabi and Gujarati (44%), or Middle Eastern languages (37%). Almost half (49%) provided teaching relating to faith. Of these, half taught Islam (52%), and a quarter Christianity (25%), while one in ten schools taught more than one faith. Almost two-thirds (65%) of survey schools taught National Curriculum subjects, particularly mathematics, English and science. These were often taught alongside community languages or culture and heritage. Seventy percent of survey schools provided coaching for exams and tests, including Key Stage 1, 2, and 3; GCSEs, A levels and school entrance tests. This range of provision was also evident in the case study schools.

Nearly all (94%) survey schools said that they served particular ethnic communities, although many (34%) served more than one. The largest proportion of schools (48%) served Asian, and Black African (38%) communities. But even in those schools which served a single community, children from a

wide range of communities were often welcomed; this supports earlier findings by Reay & Mirza (1997), of supplementary schools being inclusive environments.

Notions of impact in supplementary schools

Across the case study schools perceptions of 'impact' were divided between academic and social aspects. We begin by discussing constructions of academic impact.

Academic impact

Enhancing learning/increasing attainment

Some of the schools offering National Curriculum assistance reported impacting on the mainstream school learning/attainment of BME children. Supplementary headteachers, for example, said pupils reported learning spelling at a higher level in supplementary school to that which they learnt at their primary school, and which consequently helped them to do well in mainstream spelling tests.

'Impact' was also noticeable in mathematics whereby pupils were enabled to better comprehend key mathematical concepts:

One of our pupils was very impressed to learn a simultaneous equation with me ... he did say that he did not understand it, but a one-to-one session on a Friday and he understood it. He understood it and that's the difference. (Headteacher)

There were also examples of improvements in English. A teacher pointed to 'definite progression' and witnessed children's writing in English becoming 'a lot more sophisticated' over a short space of time. The potential for improvement in English was exemplified by an African-Caribbean pupil:

At primary school my English ... wasn't very good and then I came here and my English picked up, and then from Year 7 and 8, I'm like top of the English class. If I hadn't come here I would be out on the street causing trouble or not doing the right stuff that I should be doing. And I wouldn't be good at English; I would probably be in the bottom set. (Pupil)

In general, supplementary school impact on children's learning/attainment was for many parents facilitated by the classroom environment which they saw as playing a 'significant' part in terms of influencing their children's ability to learn:

...when a child goes to normal secondary [school] they are in a class of more than 30 children and there are some naughty children, some normal and the whole class is kind of chaos, but when they come here it's just a classroom with six children and they have more time.

(Parent)

Pupils also spoke of understanding topics better when they returned to their mainstream classes because in smaller classes teachers were able to 'break them down' and explain them in greater detail. Pakistani parents referred to their children 'struggling' in some subjects and, as a result of attending supplementary schools with smaller classes and opportunities for more targeted support, they were 'getting good reports at school'. These findings accord with those of Schumer (1999, p. 414) who found that smaller-group lessons in Japanese supplementary schools 'compensated' for 'deficits in normal schools'.

Somali parents argued that when their children started at supplementary school their achievement in primary school was 'very low', but it gradually increased until they were getting 'five plus [in] every subject'. African-Caribbean parents also spoke of their children, for example, 'having problems with maths' in their mainstream school and as a result of attending supplementary schools where teachers tried different teaching methods 'until [the] child understands', their children excelled. Progression was, however, dependent on time as illustrated by two African-Caribbean parents:

[When] my daughter started Year 7 she was in the bottom set of maths and now she's in the top set maths in Year 10, so she's worked her way up. (Parent)

My son he's done all higher GCSEs whereas if he wasn't coming here on a Saturday from the age of 5-16 I don't think he would have got to that level. Cos he left school with 13 GCSEs

between A-C which is very good ... and he went on and he's done his A levels, and he's just finished his degree. (Parent)*

The importance of time was further evident in children's reflections on their own improvements/achievement. For example:

When I came to the school three years ago I wasn't getting good levels and then for my maths, I'm in Year 8, I got good marks and now I'm doing my GCSE's early and I've done my first exam and I got A. (Pupil)*

Pupils also highlighted improvements in their learning (including subject knowledge, liking of a subject and concentration levels) and grades achieved in tests and examinations. The following focus group discussion with a group of Somali children gives a flavour of the type of 'impact' some pupils experienced:

- I think it has helped because before I came here I was at level 5 and now I've improved and sometimes I get level 7 or 8.

- ... his brother got 8 Bs [GCSE], and I got 6 As which is good for me.

- When I came here first I was level 2, now I'm on level 4.

- I used to hate science and now I quite enjoy it. (Pupils)

Other examples of academic 'impact' included an undergraduate student who was tutoring at one of the case study schools. She was one of several former pupils who had reportedly gone on to become heads/teachers, doctors or to work in other professions, and was convinced that the school had played a major role in her success. Teachers and parents in other schools also spoke of children excelling such that some were able to take GCSE examinations early and do incredibly well; noticeably in mathematics.

While raising attainment is not the main concern of language supplementary schools, two language (Turkish and Panjabi) schools in the study regarded themselves as having an ‘academic impact’ particularly where children successfully attained GCSE’s in the language of study. Qualifications in a second language, such as Panjabi, Polish or Turkish, entitles a young person to extra UCAS points on applying to university which in turn can open up new opportunities and possibilities for future employment in well-paid highly skilled jobs, such as working as an interpreter; an example given by one case study school. Thus, improved job prospects were perceived as a tangible benefit of attending language supplementary schools; a finding which coincides with those of Francis, Archer & Mau (2010) and Zhou & Kim (2006).

Motivation to learn/engagement/positive attitudes

Allegedly ‘impact’ was visible in a range of perceived outcomes. Not only did supplementary school pupils seemingly develop positive attitudes towards education that did not exist prior to their engagement (a finding also supported by Strand, 2007); pupils were also said to be more focused and attentive, with the ability to speak out loud, both in the classroom and outside supplementary school in the wider community. Staff at Black supplementary schools believed their schools were effective in helping pupils to become engaged and competent individuals, particularly in the case of pupils either excluded or on the verge of being excluded from mainstream education:

You know, they kick them out and that’s our job now as a supplementary school to get them, to grab them and put them back into the education system. (Headteacher)

‘Impact’ for the Black supplementary school heads/teachers was ‘evidenced’ in the ‘nurturing’ and ‘lifeline’ they provided to Black pupils which they argued allowed them to excel. Black parents concurred suggesting that supplementary school staff instilled in their children ‘the importance of having ambition [and] elevating their minds’, and concentrating on their education. These schools were also thought to impact on pupils’ motivation to learn by teachers’ having ‘high expectations’,

‘recognising and push[ing]’ children to achieve their ‘full potential’, and identifying children’s ‘strengths’ and ‘focusing on [those] strengths’ (Teacher).

Social impact

Despite the potential to impact on academic outcomes, most of the headteachers providing National Curriculum support viewed impact not in terms of academic achievement, but rather in what they brought to the pupils’ learning experience and the overall social development opportunities that pupils were frequently struggling to acquire from mainstream schooling such as the opportunity to build relationships with teachers, which was considered vital for pupils to gain the maximum benefit/impact from attending school. Parents also saw the social ‘impact’ of attending supplementary school as greater than the number of qualifications their child might gain. As one said:

It’s not just about the academics; it’s everything else that is here for them. (Parent)

Improving behaviour

The largest social ‘impact’ observed by supplementary school staff and parents was improvements in pupil behaviour (especially boys), which as a consequence, led to improvements in learning/attainment. Headteachers saw this as a key role for supplementary schools:

Part of education is being able to actually pay attention and get through a lesson without being sent out ... with some of the children with the worst behaviour there has been a major difference ... they are not as disruptive, they are learning more. (Headteacher)

This was supported by an African-Caribbean mother who outlined how positive behavioural expectations applied in her son’s supplementary school had changed her son’s behaviour beyond recognition:

My son is absolutely wonderful. I mean, he wouldn't have been because, you know, like every boy, [he had] very bad behaviour. But they have instilled in him to control his behaviour and behave when speaking to adults, speak when he's spoken to [and] speak up ... It's done very well for him. (Parent)

Similarly, Pakistani and Somali parents argued that attendance at Islamic and/or supplementary schools with an Islamic focus had a positive impact with their children becoming more 'disciplined and respectful through their religion'.

Building confidence

For supplementary school educators it was important that attendance at supplementary school had a positive, if indirect, impact on a pupil's ability to better function and achieve in mainstream education through building confidence:

We have children who cannot read when they come to supplementary school; they cannot write sentences; they cannot add [...] So one way we can improve the academic potential of the kids in mainstream school is, when we get a child who is struggling, we can empower the child by enabling the child to learn [so] that child can go to school with confidence to be able to do better. (Headteacher)

Teachers believed that employing innovative teaching methods suited to the ability and interests of their pupils led to an increase in pupil confidence. For example, in one case study school mathematics was taught by a qualified structural engineer in what was described as a new, 'inspiring' and unconventional way that was not possible in mainstream schools under the National Curriculum requirements. Another teacher spoke of a child with 'incredibly low confidence' who had 'become equal' because she could do 'basic maths'. Teachers argued that not being constrained by the National Curriculum positively 'impacted' on pupil learning as the children felt 'more free to ask questions' and as such they grew in confidence. This building of confidence was crucial, as an

African-Caribbean parent argued, to her son's increasing self-esteem and being able to 'proudly walk into [mainstream] school'.

Several pupils reported feeling confident to ask their supplementary teachers questions, which they maintained contrasted sharply with their experiences with mainstream school teachers, where rather than empowering pupils to question their teachers they were said to make them fearful to speak.

The capacity to influence pupil confidence by saying 'actually you can do this' and encouraging children to realise that 'there is nothing they can't achieve if they really put their minds to it' (Teacher) was considered critical for a young person to succeed. With increased confidence parents argued that their children learnt 'other skills like being able to speak [and] voice their opinion' (Parent), which was in turn reinforced by teachers providing opportunities to develop skills also valued in mainstream education such as debating/public speaking.

Confidence building was also a key 'impact' for the language case study schools. Increased confidence facilitated by learning their mother-tongue provided children with a means to communicate when visiting family members abroad as one parent explained:

My son he's in Year 7 ... when he started [mainstream school] he didn't have any knowledge of Panjabi and he was saying 'mum these kids say these words, that word'.... When he came he lost self-esteem because other pupils were speaking a couple of Panjabi words which he couldn't understand. There was a lack of confidence. When he started Panjabi classes ... suddenly his confidence boosted up. He said 'mum I know this word' ... and now he's interested in going back to ... meet my relatives so that he can speak Panjabi with them.

(Parent)

Identity reinforcement/sense of belonging

All of the case study headteachers felt that their teaching/school philosophies gave pupils a better understanding of their ethnic/cultural background, and with such understandings came a stronger sense of identity and greater assurance to be themselves; thus these headteachers considered their schools to 'impact' on BME pupils self-esteem, self-awareness and identity development/reinforcement.

For the National Curriculum focused supplementary schools part of optimising the conditions for learning (and academic success) included enabling pupils to feel a sense of belonging. This was salient where children felt marginalised and/or their culture and background, was ignored in mainstream schools; particular examples were given by Polish and Black pupils. Amongst the language schools a sense of belonging was also considered fundamental to pupil success:

We strongly believe that one element of aspirational achievement is a sense of belonging and that's powerful; [and whilst it] is hard to measure, hard to quantify, [it] is one of the factors which we think will ultimately, at some stage, lead to some achievement.

(Headteacher)

It was evident that African-Caribbean parents saw Black supplementary schools, as one said, having 'more of a personal impact' and 'a bigger impact' on their children because ultimately they are 'organisation[s] for Black students' staffed by Black teachers which enables the children to relate to the staff and each other. Somali parents equally saw Somali supplementary schools as providing Somali children with access to 'someone the same like them' and who would ensure that they do not 'get lost in the middle' and not achieve, and even worse than that 'end up in prison'. Teacher understandings of the greater societal inequalities likely to be faced by Black children without academic qualifications additionally meant that Black supplementary schools (as a group) sought to help them develop racial consciousness so as to challenge discrimination and 'negative representations of Blackness' (King, 2009, p. 24).

Community support/active citizenship

Supplementary school educators perceived their schools as an enormously 'rich resource' for the communities they served and as such the schools were viewed as having a 'wider impact' than on individual pupils/families. This perception was supported by a mainstream headteacher interviewed who regarded the use of his school by an Asian language supplementary school as helping to create broader community relationships between the supplementary and mainstream school communities.

Do supplementary schools impact on mainstream attainment?

In common with Bastiani (2000) and Ofsted's (2010) views on identifying school impact, staff at supplementary schools providing National curriculum support conceded that measuring the actual level of supplementary school impact on children's learning and attainment in their mainstream school was 'very difficult'. As one headteacher explained:

[It] is hard because they are not here for long enough so we can't give a true account. The most we can do is comment on what parents tell us at parents' evenings: you know, how their children have gone up a set or they are seeing a difference in the child's behaviour ... we can't actually do it for it to be factual. (Headteacher)

This headteacher's remarks suggest that like policy makers some supplementary school heads viewed 'time' and 'factual'/'true' data as essential in demonstrating educational impact, and that contrary to arguments advanced by Gardner, Holmes and Leitch (2008, p. 97-8) this head did not consider her own or teachers'/parents' perceptions/observations as 'a powerful source of evidence'. Yet it is precisely such perceptions and observations which were drawn on in interview and focus group discussions in articulations of 'definite' and 'significant' impact amongst the schools providing National Curriculum support. Examples include a teacher who asserted 'there is clear evidence that it makes a difference', and another who claimed that if the school did not make a difference, then 'it would not have been educating pupils for over 25 years'. A headteacher, whilst assessing his school's

achievement over the previous five years, said that he did 'not want to claim 100%', but felt that his school had 'played a substantial part' in the progress of the children who attend. Another headteacher reported 2007 being an exceptional year as children who attended the school then had the 'highest SATs results in the country of any other ethnic group'.

Arguments for supplementary schools providing National Curriculum support making a difference were strengthened by parents whose children had passed exams or shown marked improvements in Key Stage assessments and/or their behaviour, and pupils who considered themselves to be more 'advanced', 'ahead of the[ir] whole [mainstream] class' and 'much more prepared to do [their] GCSEs' because of the ways in which they had been taught and supported at their supplementary schools. A mainstream headteacher (drawing on his experience of working collaboratively with a supplementary school providing National curriculum support to Somali children, many of whom attended his secondary school) claimed that the supplementary school had 'an immense impact with the children' and that the children had 'made really good progress'. While such findings are reflective of other research (e.g. Millat-mustafa & Begum, 2005; Cousins, 2006) assessing the pedagogical impact of supplementary schooling is not straightforward because as Hammersley (2005, p. 90) notes vis-à-vis mainstream schools:

how children respond to the use of a specific pedagogical strategy depends to some extent on how they interpret the teacher's behaviour, both whether they understand what is being required of them and what attitude they take towards this ... a teacher's actions always carry potential messages for pupils about his or her expectations about them; and what expectations pupils ascribe to the teacher can influence their learning.

Correlations between positive changes in behaviour and effective learning is also hard to measure particularly when so many other social factors come into play as a child grows and develops.

Furthermore, in each of the examples referenced above, without mapping the children's mainstream

attainment with their supplementary school attendance it is difficult to discern if the high achievement reported, particularly in GCSE examination results, was entirely attributable to efforts made by the respective supplementary schools. Our data indicates that some children undertaking GCSEs received additional support from siblings, private tutors and/or relatives who were themselves teachers. This would make, as one teacher acknowledged, 'pure assessment difficult'. A related problem arises as 'teachers' and schools' abilities to judge and report on their pupils' achievements' (Sahlberg, 2007, p, 156) is not without question, especially as teachers/schools may have different perceptions of achievement. Factors such as these would limit the extent to which any firm conclusions can be drawn about the actual impact of supplementary schools on BME children's mainstream learning/attainment.

Before closing this section it is worth noting that only two of the six mainstream headteachers interviewed believed that supplementary schools make a difference to children's learning/outcomes. Indeed one questioned whether National Curriculum focused supplementary schools are more often than not working with academically gifted children who would without any additional support 'do well'. She opined that children attending supplementary schools with the ability/potential to 'do well' would still get 'better grades', and in this respect she was less inclined to refer higher attaining pupils (at the request of their parents) for additional support to a supplementary school that her mainstream school was collaborating with. We note with interest, however, this headteacher's perception of who is more deserving of supplementary school support, especially as similar beliefs do not appear to be held about middle class children who with all the advantages they have (e.g. social, cultural and economic capital) still access extra support outside their mainstream education. Indeed for many, additional support would be perceived as an entitlement (Reay et al., 2010).

The overarching experience of the case study schools offering National Curriculum support also suggests that their perceptions of tangible impact on mainstream attainment is often unacknowledged by the mainstream sector:

I think mainstream has benefited a lot from us and I noticed that even though our school has been running for 14 years secondary schools are getting credit for the Somali children getting higher grades when they've actually been attending here. [...] What I would like is some acknowledgement of the work that we do to support them and so if there is a significant change for them to say 'actually this child has significantly improved since attending [name of school]'. (Headteacher)

The head's comments above echo findings by Martin, Creese & Bhatt (2003, p.12), who observed that while the added value of supplementary schools transferred to mainstream schools, it is 'not always recognised'. A supplementary headteacher argued that if mainstream schools publicly accredited supplementary schools with 'helping [children] to do well ... they would undermine' their own contributions. A major factor in mainstream schools' lack of recognition is arguably the absence of dialogue, and to a greater extent, collaboration/positive relationships between supplementary and mainstream schools (see Issa, Allen & Ross, 2008). The data further indicates that supplementary schools are unlikely to be acknowledged as impacting on mainstream attainment where they are alleged (by mainstream headteachers – as in this study) to be 'not proper' schools and/or as 'disorganised' and as relying on non-UK qualified teachers to educate pupils. While such misconceptions are not confined to this study (see e.g. Hall et al., 2002), they negate the fact that many supplementary school teachers are UK qualified and also teach in mainstream schools (Minty et al., 2008) and as such have both the qualifications and ability to make a difference to BME children's attainment.

Conclusion

This study emerged out of a government desire to reduce the educational gap experienced by Black African, African-Caribbean, Turkish and Pakistani heritage children vis-à-vis the White majority, by improving understanding of the contributions supplementary schools make to learning in the mainstream school sector, and their impact on attainment. The findings suggest that in contrast to mainstream schools and central government, supplementary school staffs notion of educational impact encompasses tangible and intangible benefits. While intangible benefits might lead to greater pupil confidence and contribute to improved motivation, behaviour and attitudes to learning with an eventual impact on attainment, many of these aspects of 'impact' are considered by the government and Ofsted (2010) to be 'soft' rather than 'hard' (quantifiable) outcomes. But the emphasis placed on 'hard' indicators means that 'soft' impacts are often missed and along with this, more in-depth understandings of supplementary school impact, of how for example, marginalised students are nurtured, valued and supported, and as a consequence, are able to develop/flourish in supplementary schools, and ultimately in mainstream settings. We contend that while there is much to be learnt from the supplementary school sector, focusing on their impact on mainstream attainment is not only a very narrow conception of impact, it is a misplaced concern and could lead to supplementary schools being inappropriately judged by the number of higher grade GCSE's obtained by children attending their schools as opposed to being valued for the breadth of skills (academic, social, transferable) and opportunities (including community engagement and access to professional employment) that they offer.

With a new government in place, it is not clear what interest ministers have in supplementary schools or indeed how knowledge of supplementary school practice might influence educational policies and/or mainstream school practice. Nonetheless, our research findings suggest there is a need for educational policies to be informed by richer and deeper understandings of educational practice/experience/soft impacts in supplementary schools. As such, we recommend that any future

government assessment of the impact of supplementary schools would need to go beyond mainstream attainment and improved examination results, and look at value-added for the pupils concerned and communities served.

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