

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Education

By

Joy Gordon

Department of Education Brunel University

June 2003

THE LINK BETWEEN THE THESIS AND IFS

The IFS looks at the theoretical approach to change and compares this to what happens in practice in organisations. It then looks at what is required for effective change to take place in schools.

The thesis shows what happened when action was taken in order to facilitate change.

Acknowledgements

This project was made possible because of the support and guidance of many friends. My special thanks goes to Derrick Lowe who from the outset believed I had a worthwhile idea. I am also deeply indebted to the group of boys and their parents for allowing me access to their world. It was a privilege working with you all.

Lastly, I would like to express special thanks to CfBT for their financial support of this project.

Brunel University

Doctorate in Education

Module: Institutional Focus Study

Title: How can change be effected in a London educational institutions in order to reduce Black boys underachievement?

Name: Joy Gordon

Tutor: Keith Wood

Registration Number: 196515814

Submission Date: 28 February 1999

Abstract

This paper describes the process of planning change in a London comprehensive school in order to raise the level of achievement of a group of ¹African –Caribbean boys in February 1997. It looks at the level of awareness of staff and management of the need for change and their attitudes to the introduction of a mentoring program for Black boys. Firstly, I looked at how schools implement change with regards to matters not considered central to the curriculum. Secondly, I looked specifically at my current school and the priority it had given to the fact of Black boys underachievement and the changes that have evolved from this. This involved a review of literature relating to the role of the school, teachers, parents, Black boys and the teacher as researcher.

¹ [African-Caribbean is any child who has one or both parents of African or Caribbean descent and who by the colour of his skin would be regarded as Black. This therefore included students of mixed parentage i.e. where one parent is white and the other Black. Throughout, the term Black is used not just to describe colour, but as Eleanor Thomas explained, as a statement of a shared past, a present reality and a future intent (Chambers, Funge, Harris, Williams:1996 pg 26). It is a socially constructed category, not a race group, and includes a wide variation of racial traits. It is used because it has status in our society which is a self-conscious social group with ethnic identity.]

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Significance of study

At the time of this study it was envisioned that it would be an important contribution to implementing change that would promote greater equality of opportunity in the school. In 1996 the Chief Inspector of Schools wrote in his annual report that “African-Caribbean pupils fail to achieve their full potential and are excluded from schools four to six times more often than their white counterparts, and that teachers are still often profoundly influenced by racial stereotypes in their relationship with these pupils.” The CRE chairman, Sir Herman Ouseley believes this is occurring due to a lack of equality of opportunity in our education system which is leading to a waste of potential in our economy (Teaching Today, 1997; pp.11).

Underachievement remains an issue and there is still much confusion in our society as to how much it is due to the actions of individual students and how much to the influence of the school or the attitudes of the wider society. At the commencement of this study Mortimore & Whitty (1997) wrote that schools can help to transform a culture of inertia and despair. Although they do not consider any single factor which could reverse the longstanding patterns of disadvantaged, neither do they regard them as unchangeable. They believed that our society must, through government actions as well as grass roots initiatives, begin to adjust the balance between individuals’ opportunities and their social responsibilities so as to develop a more equal society. The project I proposed undertaking could be described as ‘grass roots’ and the result will therefore be of interest to all staff in my school.

In 1994 I completed an MA in Education in which I looked at whether it is possible to be Black, British and Christian. The focus of the research was on identity and I used my current school for the investigation.

The findings were that Black parents and children found it easier to label themselves Black and Christian than they did labeling themselves British. However it was obvious that young Blacks were now challenging the notion that they are “foreigners” and now are starting to see themselves as valuable members of British society and are prepared to fight for the right to be British.

In the study I concluded that “it is only as we collectively change the way we look at ourselves and the world that we can change how we are seen. In this process, we seek to create a world where everyone can look at Blackness, and Black people with new eyes. We cannot make another change their step to an old dance, but if we change our steps, the dance can no longer continue in the same predictable pattern.”

This study is another way in which I have changed my step to the old dance. I have spent most of my life in an environment where the majority of Blacks are in a subservient role. I became a teacher, with a passion to change things, and to promote Black pride and encourage all students to succeed.

Since 1960s/1970s there have been a number of research projects which looked at the performance of Black students in school. There is now a well publicised concern over their low levels of achievement (Rampton 1981, Swann 1985, Troyna 1980s – 1990s). Yet, to date not much has been done to redress this “problem”. Mortimore & Whitty (1997) proposed immediate action in the form of

1. Early interventions which provide additional educational opportunities for the disadvantaged, funded from an increased education budget,
2. Reconsideration of the approaches to teaching and learning used with disadvantaged pupils,
3. Extra support for pupils with disadvantaged backgrounds in school improvement programmes.

The issue of Black boys underachieving is not unique to the UK. It has also been identified as an issue in the USA. Mentoring schemes are a new strategy that have

proved successful especially in the USA to deal with this issue. It is a sustained relationship developed between an adult and a student, where the adult offers through continued involvement, support and guidance especially where parents are unavailable to do this. This was something that was manageable but could I get the school to endorse and support such a project? The fact that Black boys were failing badly nationally and certainly in my school did not place this issue as a priority in the school's development plan. How could I stimulate change in such an institution?

To address the issue of underachievement in my school I wanted to offer support to a group of boys in Year 8 identified as underachieving. It was important that the intervention started early. I also felt it was important that during this process I tried to identify the factors affecting these boys learning. The most obvious way for me to do this was to set up a mentoring scheme and carry out research on this project. The ongoing complaint from many teachers is that their workload is too much, especially the administrative aspects of it. This has led to little interest in research much less getting them to do research themselves.

Much has been written about school improvement and school effectiveness in recent years (Mortimore & Whitty, 1997). Most schools have a desire to improve no matter how good the level of attainment of its students is. In the UK there has been many changes to the education system since the 1960s, most occurring during the 1980s and 1990s. In order to deal with these changes many schools have had to change. This has often involved a radical rethink of roles, rules and relationships between parents, teachers, governors and school management. In proposing the mentoring scheme I needed these various groups to rethink the role of the school. My conviction was that others would see that "all things being equal, the best prediction of the future is the past". Therefore dissatisfaction with the current situation would stimulate them to pursue change.

Setting the Scene

Organisations are not static, they are involved in a continual process of change and this can often unsettle people. Schools are organisations and so they face ongoing changes. Some take longer than others to adjust, others never adjust. Strong management will be aware of this and will try to manage this change. In doing so it needs to be sensitive to both the internal and external environment.

In commercial businesses competitive edge is vital to survival. For schools, the sustaining of confidence and credibility is essential, creating the need for effective public relations and high quality accountability. Schools need to be alert to subtle changes in the climate of local opinion and be ready to respond using a 'prospector' approach to fluctuations in expectations and concern.

This requires a strategic plan with the primary focus being to look at its purpose. One of the keys to organisational success is the ability of all participants to define and articulate clearly both the purposes for the specific role they occupy and the goals and objectives for the organisation as a whole.

In recent years there has been an increased emphasis on development planning in schools, in an effort to become more effective with the annual school brochure becoming a vital article of school information and publicity. This has been promoted by the school effectiveness movement. The school development plan is regarded as a vital policy link between the governors, the professional staff of the school and the local education authority. The 1997 Action Plan of my school was an impetus for change. In it were plans in response to the OFSTED inspection in October 1996. A weakness highlighted in the report was that the school was not adequately providing for the cultural, spiritual and moral well-being of all its students. Additional to this was the regular media reports about the low levels of achievement by Black boys. These students were found to be achieving GCSE results far below the national average. Much was said about effecting

positive change and it was obvious that change was needed. The school's mission statement clearly stated that it wanted achievement for all.

If visions are to be achieved and intentions fulfilled, then enabling structures have to be created and developed. While a clearly defined mission gives purpose, procedures and systems enable the necessary work to be organised and carried out. Textbooks tell us that the productive school is one that succeeds in bringing about purposeful and planned change in its participants. This requires good quality management and leadership. The quality of what they do is judged on results rather than intentions. Each curriculum area was involved in pursuing this mission and was given a prepared Action Plan in response to the report received after an OFSTED visit and were asked to discuss this and comment on strategies given in curriculum area meetings. One strategy was to implement equal opportunity in each area.

Each department was directed to develop an equal opportunity policy. No training was given at the time and since then no monitoring has been done either to see if the policy is being implemented. No attempt has been made to work out levels of achievement for Blacks students in the school. This is difficult due to the "many ethnic" groups – has been management's response when I tried to find out why from the deputy head in charge of producing school statistics. The matter has now been delegated to Heads of Curriculum Area as of March 1999. Each was requested to produce figures showing the breakdown of students ethnicity in their area.

The focus here is to identify what is easily measured purely to 'look good without being good' – to having measurable performance indicators that are acceptable yet not providing quality service. Factors which are not easily measured need to be considered as well (or even more so). One such factor being the reason for Black boys low academic attainment in GCSE exams. Any effort to find this and to correct it requires an intentional shift in culture and climate. Yet it is easy to become complacent and keep doing what you have always done if no-one complains. This approach had been adopted

in the school for many years and published data about overall school improvement had been celebrated without any reference to the fact of Black boys underachievement.

Attention also needs to be paid to culture and climate in any effort to effect change – there needs to be a focus on relationships, behaviours and values. It is through the quality of working relationships that organisational success is achieved and change accomplished.

The school ethos is an important influence and it needs to be considered when seeking or trying to create change. For example:

1. A behaviour policy needs to reflect the general ethos of each individual school. Initially, therefore, rather than look at ‘what should be included in our school behaviour policy’ we find it more appropriate to take a step back and ask ‘What is the ethos of our school?’ ‘Do we promote a positive environment?’
2. High expectations are important. A school may be situated, for example, in a catchment area with many social and economic problems. This cannot be regarded as an excuse for lowering either expectations or standards. Children deserve the very best we can offer them. Equally, teachers deserve orderly classrooms where they can teach and not be side-tracked into containing inappropriate behaviour.

The writer Funk (1997) reflected that “All my life I assumed that somebody somewhere knew the answer to this problem. I thought politicians knew what had to be done, but refused to do it out of politics and greed. But now I realise that nobody knows the answer. Not us, not them, not anybody.”

It is easy to accept this sentiment and do nothing. I believe there is an answer but that it is rather complex and is not found in the short term.

It is difficult to assess what will happen in the long-term because the links between specific actions and specific outcomes often become lost in detail of what happens and so this is often used as an excuse not to do anything. We can still claim to have achieved something intentionally when we show that there was a connection between the specific

action we took and the specific state we achieved; in other words, what we achieved is not materially affected by chance.

What all this means is that productive change is the constant 'search for understanding, knowing there is no ultimate answer'. The real leverage for change, says Senge, (1997) involves:

- Seeing interrelationships rather than linear cause – effect chains, and
- Seeing processes of change rather than snapshots.

In developing important educational goals – you cannot mandate what matters, because what really matters for complex goals of change are skills, motivation, beliefs, insights, creative thinking, and committed action (McLaughlin 1990). Mandates are not sufficient and the more you try to specify them the more narrow the goals and means become. Teachers are not just technicians when dealing with multiculturalism and racism.

Unless deeper change in thinking and skills occur change will have limited impact. It is probably closer to the truth to say that the main problem in public education is not resistance to change, but the presence of too many innovations mandated or adopted uncritically and superficially on an ad hoc fragmented basis. SCC has now become such, forever implementing new schemes but undertaking no evaluation. The school often wanted to be seen doing something and so makes a superficial attempt to deal with many things without assessing the deep seated issues that were really affecting it. This has frustrated staff, especially because of the top down decisions without consultation.

The result, as Pascale (1990) observes: 'Not surprisingly, ideas acquired with ease are discarded with ease'. New ideas of any worth to be effective require an in-depth understanding, and the development of skill and commitment to make them work.

When complex change is involved, people do not and cannot change by being told to do so. Effective change agents neither embrace nor ignore mandates. They use them as catalysts to re-examine what they are doing. 'Route and destination', says Stacey (1992) 'must be discovered through the journey itself if you wish to travel to new lands'. In the

face of unpredictable change, 'the key to success lies in the creative activity of making new maps'.

One can see why a risk-taking mentality and climate are so critical. People will not venture into uncertainty unless they or others appreciate that difficulties are a natural part of change scenario. And if people do not venture into uncertainty, no significant change will occur. Productive educational change, like productive life itself, really is a journey that does not end until we do. If I had my way I would mandate that all teachers be involved in mini research projects appropriate to their role, in an effort to make them more reflexive.

This has to be reconciled with the fact that generative learning occurs only when people are striving to accomplish something that matters deeply to them. In fact, the whole idea of generative learning – 'expanding your ability to create' – will seem abstract and meaningless until people become excited about some vision they truly want to accomplish. How could I create a desire in teachers to pursue equality of opportunity? This was/is the role of the school management. I needed this to become a shared vision.

People are more likely to remain committed to a shared vision because it reflects their own personal vision. A vision will die prematurely when it is a mere paper product churned out by leadership teams, when it is static or even wrong, and when it attempts to impose a false consensus suppressing rather than enabling personal visions to flourish.

Storr (1988) writes that 'The freshest ideas often come from diversity and those marginal to the group. It is for this reason that I see the individual as an undervalued source of reform. Lessing puts it this way: 'it is my belief that it is always the individual, in the long run, who will set the tone, provide the real development in society'.

While traditional organisations require management systems that control people's behaviour, learning organisations invest in improving the quality of thinking, the capacity for reflection and team learning, and the ability to develop shared visions and shared

understandings of complex business issues. It is these capabilities that will allow learning organisations to be both more locally controlled and better co-coordinated than their hierarchical predecessors.

Dynamic complexity means that there is constant action in the environment. Often management are far too removed from the day-to-day matters to be aware of what is changing or what needs to be changed. For teachers and schools to be effective two things have to happen. First, individual moral purpose must be linked to a larger social good. Teachers still need to focus on making a difference with individual students, but they must also work on school-wide change to create the working conditions that will be most effective in helping all students learn. Teachers must look for opportunities to join forces with others, and must realise that they are part of a larger movement to develop a learning society through their work with students and parents. Change is too important to leave to the experts.

Saul (1992) claims that the 'age of reason' has become bastardised, while burying common sense and moral purpose. It is only by individuals taking action to alter their own environments that there is any chance for deeper change. The 'system' will not, indeed cannot, do us any favours. If anything, the educational system is killing itself because it is more designed for the status quo while facing societal expectations of major reform. If teachers and other educators want to make a difference, and this is what drives the best of them, moral purpose by itself is not good enough. Moral purpose needs an engine, and that engine is individual, skilled change agents pushing for changes around them, intersecting with other like minded individuals and groups to form the critical mass necessary to bring about continuous improvements. There was much talk about what was happening but no other staff was prepared to undertake the work needed because it was to be on a voluntary basis.

At the heart of the process by which innovation is implemented in schools is the use, whether by an individual or a coalition of individuals, of influence and interpersonal

negotiations (Ball, 1987 p.75). After five years in the school I had shown myself to be competent and trustworthy.

Ball examined the dynamic political processes of organisations and using two case studies he illustrated various themes in the political life in schools which affect change. Proposed innovation or change needs to:

1. support the organisational culture or collection of shared meanings – i.e. ‘will probably be good for your public exam results’. As an instigator of change I needed to appeal to common beliefs. Many teachers in the school had a fear of Black boys and experienced discipline problems and so the programme was presented as one which would help to address this.
2. Have access to ‘powerful people’ in the organisation - This refers not just to formal authority, but also to informal influence. The senior deputy head quickly accepted my proposal because it dealt directly with issues identified in the OFSTED Report 1996. I also sought and got support from the deputy in charge of finance.
3. Promotion not only of the instigators purpose, but also the purpose of colleagues - Here my purpose was to raise achievement and this appealed to many because someone else was doing the work.
4. Gain access to resource – The school agreed for me to undertake the project on condition that it be carried out voluntarily. Therefore, from the start no commitment was made to use school finance, but the Finance Director supported me when I applied for SRB funding.

Five years earlier I had carried out research in the same school for my MA. This acted as a catalyst to the proposed mentoring scheme together with an article in the Voice Newspaper in February 1997. It reported on the positive impact of Mentoring Schemes on the achievement of Black boys in the USA and recognised the value of giving such additional support to young people.

I recognised that change could only be achieved by working closely with the boys and their parents. Marsland (1993) focuses on the youth service but the issues are

relevant to education. He states that any change in school needs to be based on an understanding of young people. He argues that the adequacy with which these problems are handled in the next fifteen years will be an important measure of the success and failure, in the broadest and deepest sense, of British society.

He listed two popular solutions that are commonly given:

- Political action
- Positive discrimination

He alluded to the notion that Blacks need freedom as advanced by Black Social Scientists Sowell and Williams and so prefers practical action (Marsland 1993).

- Freedom to develop and benefit from individual capacities unhindered by institutional blockages of any sort.

Marsland believes these will prevent the consolidation of disadvantage into oppression, or the transformation of temporarily disadvantaged groups into permanent cases. By contrast, he believes state intervention limits competition and social dynamism, and – whether in the form of feudal authoritarianism, national or communist socialism, or bureaucratic welfarism – keeps minority groups in the chains of one version or another of slavery.

The school can play a role by positively selling the highest achieving Afro-Caribbean youngsters as hard and positively as other minority ethnic groups have done in the past. One high flier cancels out ten stereotyped negative cases. Selecting twenty boys identified as underachieving with a view to raising their achievement through mentoring is a way was one way of putting this strategy into practice.

Marsland (1993) found evidence that our secondary schools are seriously failing Afro-Caribbean children incontestable. At that time he wrote that the dominant permissive, progressive ideology in education is increasingly counter-productive. Fashionable multi-cultural schemes are prone to dilute schooling, and serve disadvantaged groups even less

well than standard approaches. What is needed is sound, reliable schooling, which equips black youngsters thoroughly for, real life and the competitive world of work. Who determines what sound schooling is?

He believes that free schools, supplementary education, community based group work, and individual counseling and tuition are all likely to be needed to enable Afro-Caribbean youngsters to develop their talents fully. These are growing in numbers as well as an increase in Mentoring Schemes. Some established by local boroughs. In our inner cities youth workers should be playing a key role in such developments, as they did for other recently immigrant groups in the 1880's and 1920's. We simply cannot afford to let the capacities of young men and women go to waste.

He adds that young people need social education which in practical terms means providing young people with facilities, relationships, and experiences through which each of them can develop a satisfying, identity, strengthen their self-esteem and confidence, and grow in social competence to the point varying from individual to individual where they can make the maximum contribution to social life – giving to the community, and gaining from the community, all that they are capable of.

I felt the mentoring scheme could do this, but recognised that it required the involvement and commitment from the: school, teacher, parents, boys and myself.

School- “Discontent is the catalyst for change”

School improvement’s ultimate aim, is to enhance pupil progress, achievement and development. Ultimately, school improvement comes from within (Barth 1990) and cannot be externally mandated.

Lack of teacher commitment to government-initiated ‘top-down’ reforms led to a new improvement paradigm in the 1980’s that celebrated a ‘bottom-up’ approach through use of practitioner rather than exclusively external knowledge. Its focus was shifted from the school to the teacher, although the improvement attempt was whole-school orientated.

Although not all change is improvement, all improvement involves change. Fullan (1992) emphasises the intricate relationship between school improvement and change: ‘successful school improvement depends on an understanding of the problem of change at the level of practice and the development of corresponding strategies for bringing about beneficial reforms’.

A further suggestion is that the factors to consider when implementing change are:

- Relevance of the improvement innovation in terms of need, quality, practicality, clarity and complexity. In reality assessing the school’s need is often done on an adhoc basis without taking account of the whole or considering its readiness for change.**
- Readiness of the staff to become involved. This implies informing and consulting with the staff.**
- Resource and support availability, including time. Questions need to be asked as to the appropriate resources available and the priority of the proposed change compared to others.**

The school was aware of change needed, had discussed it, written new policies yet very little action – no consistency.

It has often been the case in my school that change is attempted as a response to a trend or the possibility of receiving government funding. A clique of people get together and design a plan which is presented with no consultation and often the personnel put in charge have very little competence. Of course such change is likely to fail, and often does. Only it is usually abandoned halfway (usually when some other trend is en vogue) and so is never evaluated.

Other factors are noted, which Fullan(1992) suggests will impinge on the desire to change. These include the existence and quality of existing innovations, access to innovations, advocacy from teachers or external sources, new policies and funds, and a problem solving orientation. At SCC the tendency has been to implement too many changes at the same time which leads to ineffectiveness. Key personnel are stretched to the limit with very little or no time at all to reflect on what has and is going on. Also, the constant chop and change leads to lack of proper evaluation and so there is very little learning from past mistakes or successes.

Successful implementation is influenced by many factors, including characteristics of the change, school and external factors.

Institutionalisation, describes whether or not innovations are built into ongoing practice.

This Fullan (1992) summarises, is achieved through:

- Mobilisation of broad support
- Principal commitment
- Embedding into the classroom practice through structural changes and incorporation into policy
- Skill and commitment of a critical mass of staff
- Procedures for ongoing assistance, especially for newcomers
- Removal of competing priorities
- Inbuilt evaluation
- Assistance, networking and peer support.

The above points are taken into consideration only to the extent that they are natural ideas of any of the individuals involved in change. This very academic approach is unlikely in an institution where research is frowned upon and the few who attempt study subsequent to initial teacher training do so as a way of getting out. Also staff turnover is very high which affects continuity. An additional, and important phase is outcome. This refers to a variety of results, whether pupil, teacher or organisational, but generally focuses on the extent of improvement according to specified criteria.

There needs to be an awareness of the need and impact for change. Starting with a select few will hopefully create a rippling effect: 'what you seek to change is so embedded in a system of interacting parts that if it is changed, then changes elsewhere are likely to occur'. Because of this awareness, consciously or subconsciously people may resist change as they prefer to operate in their control zone. This results in a dilemma for an institution with regards to the extent to which consensus is desirable. Effective change takes time, therefore persistence is essential. Even moderate change can take three to five years, while complex organisational restructuring may take much longer. It is not realistic to expect all people to change. As an ex-colleague of theirs (Stoll & Fink 1996) used to say, 'don't water the rocks!' If you spend an inordinate amount of time on a few people relative to time spent on everyone else is it fair and always worth the effort? Yes!

It was with this view in mind that I decided to start the mentoring scheme with the help of my then Head of Year and the Senior Deputy Head. I knew both were sympathetic to the 'cause' so to speak. The idea was to get started and constantly make amendments. This required people to 'trust the process'. Bearing this in mind it was essential to start small and over a period of time work to implement change.

The real agenda required a changing school culture, ensuring whole-school development rather than implementation of single innovations. To do this I first had to meet with Deputy Head in charge of Pastoral Care. He was open to the idea of a mentoring scheme and pledged his support for when I made the proposal to the Head Teacher. She was very open to the idea. For both, it was a way of addressing weaknesses highlighted by

OFSTED without any financial outlay. I wrote a report setting out the proposal – clearly identifying objectives and outcomes etc. I was then asked to be involved in:

- Leading assembly
- Parents workshop
- Teacher INSET
- Researching

The OFSTED inspection in October 1996 gave impetus to change that may not otherwise had been considered. As is often the case an external inspection visit highlights improvement areas to be addressed, sometimes through a published action plan. Difficulties arise when the school does not know how to address identified improvement areas. Opening any doors, however, whether internal or external, without attention to the deeper culture and organisational conditions of the school is unlikely to lead to improvement. The school had earlier pushed for Technology College status, which failed. It was a very ‘political’ decision and much resentment had been created due to a perception of lack of consultation. Although the management indicated they regarded education theory as important and useful they did not seem to be practicing it.

Troyna (1996) found certain continuing conditions that could enhance school improvement efforts. In his experience, certain conditions exist in more successful schools in terms of development planning, meaningful focus on teaching and learning, and ultimate enhancement often build up over a long period. These are:

1. Commitment to change is more likely when those involved in implementation of school improvement are also consulted and involved in making decisions. Decentralisation of decision making in schools is not always straightforward, especially when principals have traditionally been used to making all the decisions; many teachers still expect this. In the past this has been an issue for the school and still is to some extent. The majority of teachers prefer to do the job they are paid to

do (re: job description) without getting involved, especially those who have been in employment for many years. Yet they still desire to have the opportunity to get involved i.e. they want to be asked. The previous head teacher's management style could be described as autocratic. This created conflict in many cases because staff resented the lack of involvement in the decision making process. My proposal to set up a mentoring scheme was at the time both 'political' and 'topical'.

2. Teachers must be motivated and interested to make change. In short, they must possess the will to make school improvements succeed. I felt passionately about the issue and tried to get other staff to help me make what I believed would be a positive change.
3. Pupil engagement and involvement in school life is critical. Improving schools involve pupils in the decisions that affect them. The ramifications of non-involvement of pupils in classroom and school experiences are worrying. Although only some boys were selected to be part of the scheme, it was important to get pupil involvement in changing the school ethos. Hence the topics for assembly had to be chosen carefully – promoting citizenship, inclusiveness, raising awareness of racism and how to deal with it.

Stoll & Fink (1996) p. 44 found that improving schools needed a variety of resources and that change could not be managed with the regular resource level. These resources included money, time, space, equipment, personnel, 'big ideas' and materials. They also concluded that some schools were better than others at resource location, acquisition and use. Troyna (1996) research highlighted the need for instructional follow-up support, facilitation of aspects of the growth planning process and analysis and interpretation of assessment data. The trouble is that school management is often very unaware of such findings (for a variety of reasons). I had an idea for the project, but on reflection I believe I was given the go ahead in an attitude of 'let's humour her'. Issues relating to 'race'/ethnicity' were regarded as temporary and fashionable and only to be discussed but not acted on. I feel that there is much to say for action research, where specific findings to the school is more likely to be accepted, rather trying to generalise from other research.

A high level of turnover causes obvious problems of continuity, commitment to goals and school vision, and can disrupt momentum of the improvement process. In some instances, once a principal has left a school it was unclear whether the growth plan had been the entire staff's or only the principal's. Given that the leadership role of the principal is key to the change process, it can have profound effect on school improvement when a new leader arrives with different perspective and none of the school's joint history. Sometimes this is a benefit, but in other cases problems can ensue. This has been a continued issue for the school. New mentors have had to be found because teacher mentors have regularly moved to other schools. The appointment of a new head has however been a bonus in many respects. The program/scheme profile was raised due to her active involvement. Whole staff INSET on equal opportunities was arranged and financial support through SRB was increased.

Teachers - "You cannot correct what you are unwilling to confront".

A school's readiness for change depends to a large extent on individual teachers. Their psychological state may have an impact. Reynolds and Parker (1992) maintain that neglect of interpersonal and psychological processes may lead teachers to behave defensively to protect themselves from innovations that might expose their inadequacies. The valuing of individuals as people and their contributions to others enhances teachers' self-esteem and builds trust. This has been evident in the relationship between staff and management in a time of many changes in the school.

Block (1987) emphasises that 'creating a vision forces us to take a stand for a preferred future'. Today, the teacher who works for or allows the status quo is the traitor, yet so many do. Purposeful change is the new norm in teaching. It has been bouncing around within teaching for the past thirty years. It is time we realised that teachers above all are moral change agents in society – a role that must be pursued explicitly and aggressively. I firmly believe this to be true. Our aim in school should be to change society, not to reflect it.

In their major study of teacher education, Goodlad (1996) and his colleagues found themselves being pushed deeper into reflecting on the moral purposes of education in order to understand the basic rationale for teaching in post-modern society: 'We came to see with increasing clarity the degree to which teaching in schools, public and private, carries with it moral imperatives – more in public schools, however, because they are not schools of choice in a system requiring compulsory schooling'.

Since attaining grant maintained status in April 1993, my school has implemented many changes which has unsettled many and created a environment in which many feel insecure. This has led to a continuous high level of staff turnover. Any change therefore

is viewed with suspicion. A staff that was perceived as friendly and cooperative have become competitive and act in cliques.

The school is the main institution in our nation specifically charged with enculturating the young into a political democracy. Schools are major players in developing educated persons who acquire an understanding of truth, beauty, and justice against which to judge their own and society's virtues and imperfections. This is moral responsibility. This is part of citizenship education and should be reflected in the school's curriculum.

Teachers must be diligent in ensuring that no attitudes, beliefs, or practices bar students from access to the necessary knowledge. There is an expectation that teachers will be reflexive. How do you get teachers to be reflexive in an environment in which many feel insecure.

If schools are to become the responsive, renewing institutions that they must, the teachers in them must be purposefully engaged in the renewal process.

At a policy level, growing concerns about educational equity and economic performance mirror the more particular issues just described. The restructuring movement, in intent at least, places a renewed focus on the education of all students, 'especially those who have been ineffectively served in the past' and attempts to reorganise schools for that purpose. Poverty, especially among children and women, racism, drug abuse, and horrendous social and personal problems all make the equity and excellence agenda more serious and poignant day by day.

The point, according to Stoll and Funk (1996) is not to consider these matters at the institutional level --at least not at this time. The building block is the moral purpose.

If concerns for making a difference remain at the one-to-one and classroom level, it cannot be done. An additional component is required. Making a difference must be explicitly recast in broader social and moral terms. I did not feel my role as a classroom teacher was having the desired effect, at least at a pace that was acceptable to me. I felt a

more overt approach was required. It must be seen that one cannot make a difference at the interpersonal level unless the problem and solution are enlarged to encompass the conditions that surround teaching, and the skills and actions that would be needed to make a difference. Without this additional and broader dimension the best of teachers will end up as moral martyrs. This is where I experienced the greatest frustration. I had started something I felt I had to continue but had very little help.

I had to find a way to bring to the attention of management what was obvious but not seen as a major concern. I believe teachers are agents of educational change and societal improvement but they need the help of others. The individual educator is a critical starting point because the leverage for change can be greater through the efforts of individuals, and each educator has some control over what he or she does, because it is one's own motives and skills that are at question. Each and every educator must strive to be an effective change agent. Yet none saw it as imperative that we look at what was being done in the school . When I proposed the start of a mentoring scheme this was resented by many.

Cultures get changed in a thousand small ways, not by dramatic announcements from the boardroom. If we wait until top management gives leadership to the change we want to see, we miss the point. For us to have any hope that our own preferred future will come to pass, we provide the leadership. In my school you have to be motivated to pursue your own professional dream and then management will encourage you by it's' approval.

One of the issues that needed to be explored was "institutional racism". Analysis of the impact of institutional racism revealed a subtle, often subconscious cycle of self-doubt and, in some instances, an avoidance of intellectual competition among Black youth (Howard 1987). This was very evident from the pilot study carried out before the scheme began. Howard concluded that black youth respond negatively even to rumour of inferiority. These rumours, myths and innuendoes have strong subliminal effect on the aspirations and academic achievement of Black youth.

The challenge for educators is to seek ways to eradicate institutional racism and its harmful effects. In the Dallas case of *Hawkins v. Independent Scholl District* (1978), Judge Hughes called for extensive training of teachers and counselor's along with "institutional and structural changes" in the Dallas public schools. Specifically, the judge concluded that institutional racism can certainly be reduced through efforts to increase teacher expectations and by providing tests and textbooks that accurately represent all ethnic and minority groups. According to the CRE chairman in his 1999 report, no such change has occurred in the British Education System.

Most of what we do in my school is done from a euro-centric point of view even though approximately fifty per cent of students are from other ethnic minority groups (35% African-Caribbean). Before teachers can understand and appreciate the learning styles preferred by students, it is important to understand the role culture plays in shaping learning styles. It shapes cognitive development, children's approach to academic tasks and their behaviour in traditional academic settings. (Hale-Benson, 1982). Many teachers believe that the mere presence of Black students mean that we are a multicultural school. Students who took part in the pilot study noted that their history was only 'slavery' and teaching resources were extremely euro-centric depicting Black people only in derogatory ways.

Cultural conflict can and does occur when children have not had experiences that provide them with the kind of information that is used and valued in school. To reach all children, education must expand its repertoire of instructional strategies to encompass the various approaches children use to learn. In writing about Black children's learning styles, Hale-Benson (1982) suggests that many Black youth employ people-orientated, relational and field dependant/sensitive approaches to learning rather than the analytical style favoured in most structures. The obvious must be stressed, however: all Black children do not use the same learning style. Teachers therefore need to pay more attention to the learning style of students in each class.

Hale and Benson (1982) found that many teachers were genuinely committed to the ideals of equal opportunity, yet in practice they tended to generalise, seeing conflict with an African-Caribbean student as indicative of a more deep-seated rejection of authority, typical of African Caribbean's as a group.

I purposed to bring about change through using teachers as mentors. I needed teachers who were committed to the ideals of equality of opportunity.

Parents - "You will never possess what you are unwilling to pursue"

Parents and the school are often the two most significant influences in a child's life. On average students spend six hours per week day in school. For the remaining time they are under the guidance/influence of their parents/peers/the community. Given this fact it is important that the school has a relationship with parents/the community with a view to these two agents sharing the school's vision.

Brown (1990), argues that in the UK we have entered a 'third wave in the development of British education with a move from the 'ideology of meritocracy' to the 'ideology of parentocracy', which is characterised by parents being afforded a more central role in education. However, research (Golby& Brigley, 1989; Keys & Fernandes, 1990) has found that ethnic minorities have not taken up these increased opportunities for involvement.

A project designed to raise the achievement of this group will naturally seek to impact their self-esteem. The most important factor in the development of a child's self-esteem up to the age of starting school is what the parent thinks of the child. As soon as the child begins school, other significant adults come into the child's life and the picture changes. The way in which the school reacts and responds to the child and his behaviour sends a message to the child about what society thinks of him (O'Donnchadha, 2000; p.84).

Therefore, it is not sufficient for there to be expectation and opportunities – involvement is required for an effective home-school partnership. For example, the emergence of assertive discipline as a tool for turning around student behaviour raises some important questions. What relationship does discipline at school bear to discipline at home? What role do parents play in influencing a pupil's self-expectations and attitudes toward school?

Crozier (1996) writes that one could argue that "there is a particular urgency in getting Black parents more involved in schools in the light of research demonstrating the

disadvantage and discrimination experienced by Black children, particularly in terms of academic achievement and school exclusions. She concluded that it is significant and particularly disconcerting that over a period of 20 years and in spite of the policy changes in parental 'rights' very little seems to have changed for Black parents in relation to their children's schools. She notes that like Wright (1992), her research highlights that for several respondents in her case study 'race' is an issue underpinning either their perceptions of their children's education or their experience as a parent, or both (pp.263)

It is a pre-requisite that schools make a point of including parenting ideas, parenting tips, home learning ideas, suggested book lists and, of course, expressions of appreciation to involved parents. It must honour parents' contributions to pupil learning. Parents may initially be required to check aspects of work as part of school homework procedures, but this hinges on interest in all aspects of work. Therefore partnership between the two should be based on a relationship where power and control are shared. However, Cozier found parental involvement and relationships informed more by relations of struggle and distrust rather than partnership and consonance.

At the planning stage I was aware that I needed to establish a close working relationship with the parents of the boys. An audit needed to be undertaken which included:

Firstly establishing the relationship between the boys and their parents and identifying the problems in parent-child relationships. This involved a look at how those problems are presently managed by the parents. Then an assessment needed to be made by looking at whether any minor alterations to the situation might resolve the problem. Parent workshops were designed to create partnership with the parents, to encourage parents to become more involved in their sons' schooling and to develop greater parenting skills.

Boys “You will never change what you believe until your belief system cannot produce something you want”

There is no value judgement more significant to a person and more decisive in one's psychological development and motivation than the estimates that one poses on him or herself (Branden 1969). The nature of an individual's self-evaluation has profound effects on the individual's thinking processes, emotions, desires, values, and goals. To understand a person psychologically, one must understand the nature and degree of his or her self-esteem and the standards by which one judges him or herself.

Even the best educated people in our country have little knowledge about the way past social conditions have adversely affected the community and family life and developmental experiences of minority group children. My ultimate aim is to help educators/teachers develop a clear understanding of the factors that impact Black boys achievement and also to help these boys understand these for themselves. As a Black professional woman I am constantly reminded of 'white Europeans' poor understanding of my culture, and my identity. Often they are completely oblivious of my sense of displacement in a society where institutional racism is rife. Black boys through ignorance and a sense of powerlessness continue to behave in ways which perpetuate racial stereotypes of themselves. Many believe as they were taught in British History that Black History started with 'slavery' and that Africans needed to be colonised and made civilised.

Existing education research probably serves to confuse the issues more than to clarify them. The paradigm that earns the academic social and behavioural scientist the greatest rewards is the experimental research design with quantifiable outcomes. But much of what it takes to create a social climate or ethos that promotes adequate development, teaching, and learning in schools cannot be measured in a quantifiable way – attitudes,

values, caring, co-operation, and their degree of application and impact are difficult to measure.

Afro-American children are more likely to encounter values in the larger culture that are not synchronic with the socialisation patterns of their families and communities. Consequently, the entrance into school may threaten their identity because their way of acting, being in the world, and perceiving the world seem incompatible with what is expected of them at school. The combination of teacher expectations, peer pressure, and the ensuing identity crisis leads to poor performance (Ingraham, 1998)

Schools must establish a new agenda and teachers must obtain new skills to meet the challenge of education for the inner-city Afro-American child. Society must expand its commitment to educational equity, and to the health and welfare of children above the level of mere survival.

Self-concept and self-esteem have been bounced around in the literature often without any specific definitions of each or any focus on the relationship between the two. Roseburg's (1979) book concerning the self is noteworthy in that it presents the many dimensions of the self-concept. Most important, the self-concept involves identification with others, interpersonal relationships. Self-esteem encompasses a sense of personal efficacy and a sense of personal worth.

Academic self-concept is enhanced by pro-social strategies for coping with racism and overcoming the blocked opportunities that youngsters may encounter because of racism. Consequently, the inner-city minority child perceives an environment of powerless adults at school and at home, and thus lacks the models of self efficiency needed to overcome the vicissitudes of growing up poor and Black.

It is estimated that only 20% of all children enjoy and thrive in the traditional school environment. I suspect that this is case because traditional education gives primary attention to curriculum content and teaching methods; secondary attention, and often only

“lip service,” is given to child development, relationship, and systems management issues. Because little attention is given to the latter issues, a social context that is not conducive to learning among many is generated in most schools.

When social and behavioural science and child development knowledge are used in schools, they are generally applied to individual or small groups of students rather than to the school as a social system.

Children whose families function in the mainstream of society and who receive the average expected development experience before school have the best chance of succeeding in such schools. But even among those who complete high school, many survive but do not thrive in the school setting. A disproportionate number of such children are from minority groups with a traumatic social background. School reform efforts pay almost no attention to the social history of groups and the consequences for learning (Mackenzie, 1983).

It is easier to hold minorities responsible for their situation and for improving their conditions without considering the structural, political, economic and social policies and practices that have existed over time that the entire society must address.

Because of children’s dependency, it is necessary for parents or caretakers to provide for them. In the process, an emotional attachment and bond takes place between caretaker and child. Almost from the beginning, the child learns by imitating, identifying with, and internalising the attitudes, values, and ways of the caretaker. This interaction allows the caretaker to aid the child’s growth along many developmental pathways, at least five of which are critical to academic learning: social interactional, psychoemotional, moral, speech and language, and intellectual – cognitive. Academic learning is actually a by-product of overall good presentation and development along these critical developmental pathways.

The Black, Hispanic, and Native American experiences were quite different. This discussion will be limited to the Black Experience. The Black experience was

characterised by extreme cultural discontinuity with a loss of the protective and adaptive political, economic, and social institutions of West Africa (Gibbs, 1965). Slavery was a system of forced dependency in a society that highly valued independence. A slave could achieve adequacy only by pleasing the master, an inherently inferior position. Regardless of how hard they worked, there was no better future for slaves. Our present knowledge of human functioning tells us that these conditions lead to negative psychosocial consequences.

Psychosocial trauma was experienced by many, and then transmitted from generation to generation among a significant segment of the population (Comer, 1972). Religion, or the Black church, and better conditions during slavery protected many blacks from the most severe trauma.

Because the discipline of education is not driven by child development principles, most teachers and administrators are not adequately prepared to respond to such children. They generally view expressions of underdevelopment – fighting rather than negotiating, inability to share – as bad behaviour and the inability to succeed at academic tasks as lack of ability.

The school is a social system and addressing any subsystem of the school in isolation does not provide sufficient power to bring about overall school improvement. In any process of change, a co-ordinated effort, of all the adults involved need to recognise /identify problems and opportunities.

An important function of the project was to reduce the incidence of exclusions. Using incidents and problems that occur during the three years with individual children, I hoped to spot procedures, attitudes, and ways of thinking within the school that contribute to the problems of children.

Because of the organisation and management of schools and the training of staffs, the schools are often not able to respond in a way that makes it possible for this group of children to succeed. School underachievement on the part of students, staff and parents is the result.

Me - “You will only have a significant success with something that is an obsession – weaknesses can obstruct an obsession.”

Traxson (1993) writes “I started to see that we have a role in helping the puppet to become also the puppeteer and ‘pull its own strings’, encouraging it to take more responsibility for the choice that it has made and for opening up a new range of choices for the future.”

He believes that the work done on self-management during the last twenty years offers to us as educationalists many useful strategies that have not been used in the classroom situation. One of the most obvious and useful strategies is that of giving young people the responsibility for recording and monitoring the behaviours that they have concerns about and which they openly accept are important for them to change.

He further suggests that the pivotal issue in order to increase the chance of a young person making a more acceptable choice is their self-esteem. If the disparity between how they view themselves (self-image) and how they would like to be (ideal-self) is too great then their self-esteem is lowered along with their motivation to change.

All disciplinary methods need to be matched to their stage of social development, and we should be aiming to move them in the direction of more personal responsibility when they are ready. This was a key issue for me and motivated me to run the weekly after school Personal and Social Education workshops for the boys and a monthly workshop for the parents. A review of the boys reports indicated problems/issues with organisation, effort, behaviour. Some of the reasons for this seemed obvious, and some are still evolving as the research goes on. The workshops were designed to look at topics such as:

1. Self-discipline
2. Assertiveness vs aggression

3.Motivation

4.Identity

The dual purposes were to assess where the boys were in their maturity and to move them on, recognising always that they were at different stages.

If a young person has a realistic view of their own strengths and difficulties and possesses the ability to comment honestly on their own performance they are in a better position to change if change is necessary and also will be better able to interpret others views/opinions about them.

The qualitative nature of the project means that progress would be recognised when difficult behaviours are happening less often, less intensely and with more improvement being gradually achieved. This allows us all to celebrate significant, even if small, steps forward.

As a teacher researcher, it was obvious that I would operate the scheme as an action research project. I therefore had no intention of adopting a 'objective stance'. I would not be seeking to claim neutrality in my interpretations and analyses. This is because our histories and memories are shot through with gendered, classed, racialised and other 'excluding' understandings which give us our particular perspectives on the world.

Researchers might be concerned about critical reflexivity, but what exactly does this mean? What is the content of such critical reflection? Does it include reflection on one's own 'whiteness/ Blackness' (or heterosexuality, or maleness, or class position or absence of impairment)?

If we assume that most researchers have integrity, and are concerned primarily with trying to uncover and to understand 'the problem', they will therefore conduct their study with the rigour that a self-respecting research community expects. Then the question of neutrality must impinge most strongly at the point of analysis of the data. The assumption here is that the same data would reach the same conclusions because 'the facts' are there to be seen and judged by a set of rules which apply to all players at all times.

Indeed, social justice demands absolute integrity and a rigorous attitude and approach to one's research. How, otherwise, could one hope to understand 'the problem' and contribute to change? This does not, of course, mean that the dangers of bias are absent.

It is important to ask whether 'what is already known' is accepted within the research and academic community as a valid position from which to start. Can one, for example, begin on the assumption that 'race' is a social construction and not a scientific or biological fact, or does one have to go back and establish this in every project, and how and where does one do this?

Controlling therefore for these various factors of class, ethnicity, gender, location, numbers etc. Troyna (1997) concluded that the over-representation of black males as a group in exclusions from schools must relate to factors outside this group and not inherited. This does not mean that there would be a random distribution of black pupils among those excluded, proportionate to their numbers in a particular school, as there were for pupils from white and Asian ethnic groups. In other words, it was unlikely that black pupils as a group would exhibit behaviour patterns and responses which were different from their white (working class) counterparts when responding to the ordinary everyday phenomena of schooling common to all pupils regardless of background. Other research has found that it is teachers who interpret this behaviour differently.

I wanted, as mentors, the kind of people who, knowing that Black boys have been conditioned to expect their achievement to be lower rather than higher, knowing that these boys are not used to being urged to go that little bit further, would consciously and actively challenge them to go beyond their comfort zone, and help them always to strive towards new goals, so that they have an opportunity of achieving more than they originally thought possible. Finding such people was difficult and in the end a half-day INSET was required to help raise awareness of people akin to my ideas yet not quite there.

Each was requested to do two things: that they consciously and actively scrutinise the young Black boys around them to assess their potential for development with the mentor's help; and that at the same time the mentor open her mind to signs of talent that may be different from or less evident than those exhibited in young men.

The process of choosing mentors was a difficult one. I choose teachers with whom I have a good working relationship and whom from observation I felt was prepared to openly work for 'racial justice'. There are certainly people who have no capacity to mentor other. Those for example who are too busy working on their own tasks, or sorting out their own future, to be interested in giving time for encouraging the development of younger people. And also those who claim that they have made it on their own and feel everyone else should too. This does not, of course, prevent younger people from admiring certain characteristics of both these categories of people, and deriving benefit from their existence by using them as non-mentoring role models. Some of the teachers asked said they did not want to participate. Some later became mentors of Year 11 students.

The role of the mentor had to be established and this was discussed and agreed during a half day INSET with the teachers chosen to be mentors. It was to be that of helping the boys to see:

- Where they are
- What options for the future are open to them
- Which options they want to pursue
- What routes they have to travel to get there
- What milestones they must pass on the way
- What knowledge, facilities, equipment, and experiences they need to get there.

My intention was to work with their parents to establish their needs and help them set their goals. Then throughout the project help them to achieve those goals. In order to do this mentors needed to be competent at two levels of mentoring activity. Firstly, they must know, at least in the abstract, what developmental routes people can follow to achieve success. Secondly, they needed to have adequate powers of perception to see where people are at, and where they might be able to go; adequate powers of persuasion to show them where they can get to and how, if they want to.

We only see what we look at. To look is an act of choice

J Berger (1972)

Conclusion

There is scope for change (even that which is initially viewed as marginal) to occur in school. As management theory suggest, it often requires an individual with commitment and good interpersonal skills sufficient to tap into the political processes of school organisations (Ball 1987). Although many regarded the project as ambitious, I was confident it was feasible. I was conscious from the very beginning that the concept of “equality of opportunity” would be a factor in my investigation given what I already know and what has already been highlighted in this document.

As a teacher researcher I felt I was in a position to undertake this investigation.

Stenhouse (1975) wrote “it is difficult to see how teaching can be improved or how curricular proposals can be evaluated without self monitoring on the part of the teacher.

A research tradition which is accessible to teachers and feeds teaching must be created if education is to be significantly improved”.

Following a small scale study of race relations in five LEAs in 1984, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate (HMI, 1984, p.1) came to the provocative conclusion that ‘little is actually known about race relations in schools’.

Smith and Tomlinson (1989) provides a useful starting point for looking at studies carried out in this area. Their study presented a complex statistical analysis of the internal processes of 20 urban, multicultural comprehensive schools in Britain.

They noted elsewhere in their book that there is a tenuous relationship between what pupil's experience at school and parental perceptions of those experiences. The researchers found a weak correlation between the 'child's enthusiasm (for school) ... and the parents' assessment of how happy the child is at school'. This suggest that even if children discuss their schooling experiences with their parents they present them with a limited picture of their everyday reality of school. It is reasonable to assume that either pupils bracket out their daily experiences of racism from their conversations with parents or, alternatively, their parents reinterpret those experiences. I needed to identify strategies that would give me access to hearing about these experiences.

The positivistic approach which informs and distorts the picture of children's racialised attitudes has helped to generate and legitimate impoverished understandings of this complex issue. It has also encouraged the development of policies which, at best, only scratch the surface of the salience and role of 'race' in the social worlds of children.

In contrast to the extensive literature on the attitudes of children and young people concerning 'race', there is little evidence about their behaviour and the significance of

'race' and ethnicity in their social interactions within and outside school. As has been shown, one strand of knowledge derives from recent studies of racist harassment.

The CRE in 1999 was of the belief that the situation of many of our disadvantaged pupils could be significantly changed if a number of measures were systematically applied at all levels of the education system and with leadership from the Dfee. These included:

- Review of teacher education**
- Head teacher development of equality management skills**
- Review of the national curriculum**
- Revision of OFSTED framework**

The mentoring scheme started two years ago and since then I have encouraged the school to create a more culturally balanced curriculum and ethos. It has given me the opportunity to take a more active role in the education of the group of boys on the project, look at the national curriculum more closely and be involved in teacher INSET. It is too soon to comment on the impact this has had and is having on all students and especially on Black boys. There are some positive signs and this is encouraging.

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Brunel University

Doctorate in Education

Module: Thesis

Title: Can mentoring be used in a secondary school to reduce Black boys underachievement?

Name: Joy Gordon

Tutor: Keith Wood

Registration Number: 196515814

Submission Date: 28 February 2003

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to set up a mentoring scheme for African-Caribbean boys and over a period of three years monitor and record its impact on these boys achievement with a view to identifying factors that prevent this group realizing their full educational potential.

The study was carried out in an English comprehensive school with a group of 21 boys from the start of year 8 to the end of year 10. It was carried out as an action research project using participant observation as a research method.

It confirmed that schools can make a difference through the use of a mentoring scheme and highlighted a failing on the part of both parents and schools which has lead to this group of students underachieving.

It confirms that the individual attention of the program has merit in schools and that the benefits can be maximised by embedding it into the structure of the school.

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CHAPTER 1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Even the best institutions can give a man no active help. Perhaps the most they can do is, to leave him free to develop himself and improve his individual condition. But in all times men have been prone to believe that their happiness and well being were to be secured by means of institutions rather than by their own conduct.

Samuel Smiles 1866

BACKGROUND

Black boys underachieve in UK secondary schools (Klein 1993, Troyna 1995, Gillborn & Gipps 1996, Sewell 1997, Runnymede Trust 2000, Gillborn 2002).

In 1977 a Parliamentary Select Committee recommended to the then Labour government that an inquiry be set up to investigate the question of ethnic minority educational achievement and that the particular case of West Indian background be considered as a matter of urgency. This issue of Black underachievement was later reported in the Rampton Report 1981 and Swann Report 1985. Both highlighted that “many West Indian children are underachieving in relation to their peers and in terms of their potential (Burtonwood, 1986). This issue has dominated debates relating to the education of ethnic minority students until the beginning of the 1990s (Runnymede Trust 2002). Klein

(1993) wrote that historically, the education experienced by pupils differ markedly according to their class, gender and above all ethnic group, even within the same school.

In a review of achievement for OFSTED by Gillborn and Gipps (1996) it was found that students from ²African Caribbean origin have been consistently underachieving in schools in relation to their peers. Four years later a further review for OFSTED by Gillborn and Mirza (2000) found that African Caribbean and Pakistani students have drawn the least benefit from the rising levels of attainment: the gap between them and their white peers is larger now than a decade ago. The Runnymede Trust also found a picture of extreme disadvantage on the one hand and incomplete support structure on the other.

In January 2002, Dr Richard Majors, a US academic appointed by the current Labour government to tackle underachievement in the North of England, declared that this country faces a national emergency if it failed to tackle the problem of the marginalisation of Black boys in schools (Observer, January 2002).

The situation has become so unacceptable now that in March 2002 it was labeled as a crisis at a conference in London led by Diane Abbott MP and attended by two thousand Black parents. Later that same month at his inaugural public professorial lecture Gillborn

² [FOOTNOTE: African Caribbean is any child who has one or both parents of African or Caribbean descent and who by the colour of his skin would be regarded as Black. This therefore included students of mixed parentage i.e. where one parent is white and the other Black. Throughout, the term Black is used not just to describe colour but as Eleanor Thomas explained as a statement of a shared past, a present reality and a future intent (Chambers, Funge, Harris, Williams:1996 pg26). It is a socially constructed category, not a race group, and includes a wide variation of racial traits. It is used because it has status in our society which is a self-conscious social group with an ethnic identity.]

claimed education has not listened to the lessons of the Lawrence inquiry, and that institutional racism is rife in schools and is responsible for the poor achievement of most African-Caribbean children.

AIM OF THE STUDY

This study was undertaken to explore the reasons why Black boys underachieve and to investigate the use of mentoring as an intervention that could improve achievement of Black boys in a London secondary school.

The aim was to examine in detail the process involved in setting up and running a mentoring scheme for Black boys in a multi-ethnic but not a multicultural school. The study records the impact of a mentoring scheme as a form of intervention. Mentoring here refers to a sustained relationship in which one person (usually the adult/expert/professional) who is regarded as a role model actively assists another (child/young person/trainee). The mentor is someone who is committed to the development of the mentee. The essence of mentoring is giving quality time to another. In this case it was both group and individual time given with a purpose to help the boys discover their potential. Through continued involvement the mentor offers support, guidance, and assistance as the young person goes through a difficult situation, faces new challenges, or works to correct earlier problems. In particular where parents are unavailable or unable to provide responsible guidance for their children, mentors can play a critical role.

Inspiration for this work came from reports of intervention in the USA based on principles of child development and psychology (Bernard, 1996). The approach is predicated on the assertion that children need to know who they are and to accept themselves and to develop certain habits of mind. My vision was to see an

improved/changed situation in my school where Black boys have been identified as underachievers for the past 10 years. This is rooted in my faith in Jesus Christ which influences all my actions especially as a teacher and leads me to adopt a biblical approach to life which asserts the importance of vision, history and forgetting the past. My experience also told me that society (national and local) had continued to force the past on Blacks and had failed to use education to correct this. The credibility of biological determinism was judged to be so powerful in the 1980s that the Swann Committee of Inquiry thought it necessary to disabuse the public of its validity. It published a study by Professor McIntosh and Dr Mascie Taylor that demonstrated that there is no evidence of intelligence being determined by "race" (Klein, 1993 p.18). In its 2000 report, The Runnymede Trust asserts that "the failure is in the under-achievement of the system in providing for Black students".

Delisle and Berger (1990) write that underachievement, first and foremost, is a behaviour and as such, it can be changed over time. The issue is to try and pinpoint those aspects of children's lives which they are most able to alter. They believe underachievement is content and situation specific and is to be tied intimately to self-concept development. Children who learn to see themselves in terms of failure eventually begin to place self-imposed limits of what is possible. Any academic successes are written off as flukes, while low grades serve to reinforce negative self-perceptions.

Behaviour is determined by belief and so changing belief is needed if action is to be changed. We learn our beliefs about ourselves and the world when we were young. We

came to understand ourselves and our world through whatever versions were presented to us by the most influential adult figures in our lives: parents, teachers. Our core beliefs are the foundation of our expectations and they define our thoughts, affect our feeling and influence our beliefs (Mahari 2001). From this we develop an identity which is significant on an individual and group level, as it determines how we see ourselves in relation to others. It shapes our behaviour and also the behaviour of others towards us. It cannot be reduced just to 'nationality' and 'place of birth'. It has an extremely powerful dimension which is hard to quantify and subsequently influence. It is not given, but instead, is a complex social construct (Groothues 2002).

I believe that in the present we have the opportunity to break the continuity of the past. Past, present and future are not continuous unless we force continuity on them. When we lack a sense of self-belief we become underachievers, believing nothing we can do will be successful.

It was clear from work I had done previously in school, that these boys' beliefs was a factor that was leading to what many teachers had labeled as destructive/negative actions. If this was the case then would a system of reprogramming help to change their mindset? The only way you can break old habits is to form new ones, and this takes time. I did not imagine that I would tell them something once and they would just do it. Any adjustment would require persistence and patience and partnership.

THE APPROACH TO MENTORING

The approach adopted, in line with work in the USA, was a whole school approach where the school culture needed to acknowledge and respects achievement. Parental involvement was to go hand-in-hand with the school development, requiring parents to absorb the tenets of the teaching habits of school and reflect and reinforce them in their dealings with their children.

The assumption was that the intervention would have to nurture kids, to inoculate them to cope with a system that is not meeting their needs. This is in line with my Christian belief based on Proverbs 23:7 'for as a man thinks within himself so he is'. Our body responds and reacts to inputs from our minds. Thoughts, positive or negative, grow stronger when fertilised with constant repetition. I also believe that we all have preferred learning styles and that students need to adopt their preferred style of learning and so it is imperative that they develop learning habits that will help them benefit more fully from mainstream education.

This belief came about after 5 years of teaching in a multi-ethnic school and realising that just being a classroom teacher wasn't enough to effect change in the area in which I had concerns. This was the reality I was working with but a situation I felt I could change.

This led me to reflect on my own upbringing and schooling and to try to assess the impact of the influences on my academic achievement. I was born in London of West

Indian parents, but undertook my primary and secondary education in the West Indies. I was loved and nurtured by both my parents and felt great acceptance from my teachers at school. Both groups encouraged me consistently and so I grew up with a great sense of acceptance and a belief that I could achieve what I desired.

I was further led to consider whether or not I could do the same with Black boys in my school. After five years of teaching I was frustrated that the pattern of underachievement had not changed and desired to explore further. However, I needed to be clear in my mind how I could become an agent of change.

THE SCHOOL CONTEXT

In September 1992 I started my teaching career in what was described as an Inner London Comprehensive secondary mixed school (ethnicity, gender, social class). There were two black male teachers, and 2 black lab technicians out of a teaching staff of more than 100 in a mixed comprehensive school of 1300 students. Black students represented approximately 35% and Black boys were underachieving. There was very much an awareness of this fact. The published results for the school for 1991 was as follows:

	%
Average for the school	41
Asians	56

An analysis by gender was not available.

An Ad Hoc Committee was formed in 1993 to develop an anti-racist policy in response to this poor level of achievement of Black students and I was asked to be a member of this group. In my view no commitment was shown to what was labeled a problem that needed solving. A policy was formulated to appease those concerned in that once it was published the urgency with which it had been developed subsided and other matters became more of a priority. Having the policy was enough as long as efforts were being made to raise the whole school level of achievement. To me it became a personal issue and continues to be.

In September 1996 in an effort to deal with what was labeled as a problem a colleague and I started working with a group of year 11 African Caribbean boys due to sit their GCSE exams in May/June 1997. Our intention then was to help them achieve their potential. There was an awareness that these Black boys were very capable yet they were failing. This really became the stimulus for this piece of work although at the time I had no intention of undertaking research. Twenty boys were identified as underachievers. The process of setting up this initial support programme will be explained later on. The outcome was a recommendation from the boys that such a form of support be started earlier, in year 8, although they recognised that even in year 11 they had gained some benefit from the individual attention the scheme offered.

ESTABLISHING THE MENTORING SCHEME

My intentions were to:

- Assess the students value of education**
- Assess level of parental involvement**
- Assign a mentor to each, to help support and show interest in schooling**
- Expose students to a peer group that values education**
- Educate them about the cultural values associated with their home and background (in the belief that emotional stability, a sense of belonging and cultural pride are important to learning)**

From a Christian viewpoint, it can be argued that mentoring is a New Testament principle used by Jesus Christ, where He selected twelve men and they shared a relationship of trust, and where He challenged them to aspire for great things beyond their expectations. Christians believe He stood alongside them, fully mature and rooted in His history and reality. As a mentor He understood humanity, having experienced all (Hebrews 4:13-16). In traditional African societies the practice was common, with young people being entrusted to elders, heads of crafts associations, societies or extended family members for personal development, job training and general guidance (Majors et al, 2000). In the USA today it is used to describe a relationship where through continued involvement, an adult offers support, guidance, and assistance as the younger person goes through a difficult period, faces new challenges, or works to correct earlier problem. In particular, where

parents are either unavailable or unable to provide responsible guidance for their children, mentors can play a critical role. It is a relatively new tool that has been developed to help raise achievement in schools (Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1993; Tierney et al 1993& 2001, Arnold 1997). I saw this as a good method of providing compensatory teaching for a peer group. This I envisaged would create a greater sense of belonging, where the boys could share activities, talents and skills with others with whom they had much in common and could learn from each others experience.

Underachievement can be evidenced by class grades or standardised test scores which are lower than would be predicted based on student's age, ability and potential. An underachiever:

performs better on a test of scholastic ability than on schoolwork,

performs well at one point and does poorly at another,

performs well in some subjects but does not do well in others

does not hand in homework

is careless about completing work

To these I would like to add:

Very good verbal skills

demonstration of leadership abilities (Bernard 1996)

In applying these criteria it was clear that no one child would fit all but it was obvious that many applied to all the boys originally selected as mentees. It is also easy to see that

this list might apply to most students but it is peculiar to Black boys. This is because their attendance is good and their above average verbal skills (clearly identified by tutors and class teachers) are obvious yet they continue to achieve poorer results than other ethnic groups.

The USA data (Majors & Wiener, 1995) show that many young people have a desperate need for positive role models and that this has come about due to changes in the American family structure: the increase in number of single parent homes and number of two parent working families. I knew this to be true for many of the Black boys in my school (and probably true for most students). The studies also show that positive effects are much more likely when one-to-one mentoring is implemented.

I wanted a scheme that incorporated the three broad purposes given below, and which also involved strong parental involvement and support.

- Educational or academic – to improve overall academic achievement
- Career – to help develop necessary skills to enter or continue on a career path
- Personal development – to provide support and guidance

THE MENTORS' ROLE

Mentors were selected from the teaching staff and were teachers I had worked with and believed had the skill and experience that would benefit a member of the scheme. The mentor's role was to help mentees to see:

Where they are at in terms of current level of achievement

What options are open to them in pursuit of their chosen career

What milestones they must pass on the way in order to achieve their goals (short-term and long-term)

What knowledge, facilities, equipment and experience they need to get there and what they actually have available to them currently

Each mentor would meet their mentee(s) once a fortnight where targets would be set and reviewed and a plan of action devised. The first meeting would involve the mentors using the mentee(s) latest school report to identify concerns and good practices and use these to set short-term targets. These would be recorded in diaries I prepared for both mentors and mentees. Each diary would record a term's meeting. I would also meet with the boys once a week after school, with mentors every fortnight and with parents once per month.

STRUCTURE OF THE MENTORING SCHEME

The scheme was structured as follows:

JG report to SMT

(Co-ordinator)

Teachers/mentors

Parents

Boys

Windsor Fellowship

(I was also a mentor)

In setting up and running a mentoring scheme for these boys' I believed that through monitoring and ongoing recording of observations I could identify some of the factors that lead to underachievement, and identify ways to reduce its/their occurrence and so create an institutional climate whereby each could develop and improve. It was obvious to me that a pattern of underachievement was recurring. Therefore something had to change or else the future would just continue to replicate the past. Mentoring was a way of doing things differently. The questions for this study were:

How would this work out in practice?

How successful would this be? What would it take to have an impact on underachievement of Black boys through a mentoring scheme?

What impact would my beliefs have?

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Most people do not believe what they see, and they have very short memories

Anonymous

*She will see most without who has the best eyes within; and she who only sees with her
bodily organs sees but the surface*

Henry Ward Beecher 1887

My intention in reviewing literature is to put the issue of Black boys underachievement in my school in an historical context. From my review I developed knowledge of the range of factors claimed to be the likely causes of underachievement. Views expressed ranged from sociological, psychological, biological, and political. With so many conflicting views no consensus has been reached in the UK. Much of the research though, has traditionally focused on describing and analysing the disadvantage (Runnymede Trust, 2000).

I wanted to find out what work if any had been done to date, and what suggestions and ideas had been put forward. I knew mentoring was the new “buzz” word but that the practicalities were not new. It was obvious from the literature that what I had observed in my school was not a unique happening and so from the outset my “lenses” were widen to these features:

a) Current identification of the issue of Black boys underachievement

- b) Past identification of the underachievement of this group and emerging theories of achievement
- c) The response to this fact by various groups using Troyna's observations

Very little literature existed about mentoring and its use in the UK and nothing of school-based mentoring. Widely used in the USA, studies by the influential Commonwealth Fund in New York show that mentoring can reverse underachievement. Claims are that mentoring can have a major impact on the lives of young people and it was based on this evidence that the TES (March 1996) featured Dr Bernard's work. In the UK Jeffrey (1994) was commissioned by the Commission for Racial Equality to audit mentoring in Britain. The study (released recently) found that mentoring was one of the most effective means of helping disadvantaged young people. However, it found that the majority of schemes did not specifically address issues of race equality. This situation is currently being addressed by the development of race and gender specific mentoring schemes. Reports of community based mentoring projects in Manchester has been very positive (Majors, Wilkinson and Gulam, 2000).

Identification of the issue in the Press

The popular press has been diligent in reporting the matter being investigated continuously.

In June 1996 The Independent reported on the presentation of the CRE's 1995 annual report by the chairman, Sir Herman Ouseley, who noted that school exclusions in particular "were forcing Black children onto the streets into conflict with the police and

engaging with the forces of law and order. It is at this point that young people start looking for alternative lifestyles and to engage in more anti-social behaviour”.

He highlighted the fact that figures show that Afro-Caribbean boys are four or five times more likely to be thrown out of school than their white counterparts and unemployment among the young in some ethnic minorities runs three times higher.

A youth worker in Brixton commented on Sir Ouseley speech as “a wake up call for the Government to do something about our kids, and for schools to start taking the problem seriously” (Independent, June 1996). In the autumn edition of “Teaching Today” 1999, Sir Ouseley reflected that since 1995 very little had changed and again called for government action. The Daily Mail (June 1996) also reported that an educational ‘underclass’ with increasing numbers of African-Caribbean youngsters was developing. They were falling drastically behind whites and Asians in both examinations and school attendance.

Gillborn’s report for OFSTED in 1997 found that black youngsters had not shared in the generally improving rates of achievement over the last ten years. In some areas, their performance worsened. The report gave an analysis of trends in the education of ethnic minorities, bringing together research for the first time since the 1985 Swann Report. They also found that the achievements of African-Caribbean youngsters, particularly boys, were ‘significantly lower than other groups’. They were between three and six times more likely to be excluded from school than whites of the same sex. Blaming teachers for some of the problems, the 83-page report highlights the ‘unusually high

degree of conflict between white teachers and African-Caribbean pupils'. Despite their best intentions, there was evidence that teachers actions could create and amplify conflict.

Mr Woodhead, Chief Inspector of Schools cited Black youngsters average GCSE exam scores in Camden as follows:

	1993	1994
Black pupils	25.5	23.8
Pupils as a whole	27.2	30.1

The statistical gap is equivalent to nearly five exam points. He called the figures 'disturbing' and said it was vital that the Government and education authorities started analysing exam results by ethnic origin. He said gender and social class were also important factors in pupil's success, but he was not reneging on his view about the 'central importance' of what happened within schools. 'Schools can and do make a difference,' he declared and in response to the Office for Standards in Education report by Gillborn and Gipps (1997), stated "There is an enormous waste of talent here" but it would be blinkered to pretend that family background and social class and ethnic origin are not also important."

Mr Duncan, a member of the Swann committee, said "An important factor is the absence of the extended family support which Afro-Caribbean's do not seem to enjoy. His claim here is that the issue is cultural/social and not necessary an educational problem. This view has remained prevalent amongst those with the power to effect change despite

research evidence which suggest that students performance is a result of factors controllable by schools.

One way of providing this support, more prevalent in some American community, was through a scheme of mentors whereby successful members of the black community could offer support to disaffected pupils. In February 1997, Cathy Keating, wife of Oklahoma Governor visited Norwood School in South London and gave her approval to a mentoring scheme. She hoped that the scheme would provide students with a supportive role model (Voice, February 1997). Reporting in the same paper, Dr Tony Sewell claimed that underachievement of Black boys had spiraled out of control because pupils and teachers do not show each other respect. He found that most of the 30 teachers at the school he studied felt these students were an “irritant” and “antagonistic” and the boys influenced by a culture which encouraged rebellion as opposed to imagination and creativity.

I was very aware of the fact that the same phenomena being described was occurring in my school and wanted to find out what was influencing this behaviour and to explore what Sewell labels as “Youth culture”.

The then Minister for Education Cheryl Gillian, gave assurance that the Government would work with the Commission for Racial Equality and a special group would be convened at the Department for Education and Employment to chart the progress of this group. She added: “We owe our children, whatever their background, the best possible start in life’ (Daily Mail, September 1996). The inference here was that yet again another

general strategy to raise achievement would be introduced purely as a quick fix response to the media.

Responding to the same report, the TES reflected that if there are vast differences between then and now, there are also similarities that should be causing concern. Swann had concluded that “there is no doubt that West Indian children, as a group and on average, are underachieving, both by comparison with their school fellows in the white majority as well as in terms of their potential”.

The TES also noted the fact that African-Caribbean pupils, particularly boys, “have not shared equally in the increasing rates of general achievement”. In some areas their performance has deteriorated. The use of selection in schools attempting to boost their GCSE results is cited as one factor in this trend.

The similarities of the conclusions of the two reports should be ringing alarm bells. How has the situation that the 1985 Swann Report exposed been allowed to persist and, in some ways grow worst? The newspaper reports are emphasised here especially, because it is easy for the public and many in the teaching profession to claim they have no awareness due to lack of access to research findings. In this case it is clear that the phenomena I am investigating has been widely reported in the media yet as will be explained later, many didn't see it.

Offering no simple answers, Gilborn and Gipps, believe part of the problem is the very concept of “underachievement”. Swann’s use of the word lead to widespread misunderstanding and, worse, unwittingly encouraged some teachers, to lower their expectations of black pupils. TES (1996)

They found evidence to show that Black students perform on par with students from other ethnic group in primary schools, yet something happens to many African-Caribbean children, particularly boys, as they progress through school. As already stated many lose their way and get into trouble: African-Caribbean’s are six times more likely than other children to be excluded. By the GCSE year, they are at the bottom of the heap, on average about five exam points lower than white pupils. Yet at Key Stage 1 things are different. The writers cited 1994 baseline assessment figures in Birmingham as follows:

Performing at levels expected of 6yr olds(%)

Black 5 year olds	4.6
White 5 year olds	3.6

The figures showed that in both 1992 and 1993 Black children outperformed their White peers. Yet in secondary schools this is reversed and they start to do very much worst. Presenting research for an OFSTED study in 2000 Gillborn and Mirza evidence shows patterns of marked and continued inequality of opportunity for certain ethnic groups irrespective of gender and class. Their research show that Black students fell away still further over the decade. Despite these clear evidence referred to by the government, the labelling has continued but no genuine effort to find a solution and one which makes sense to the boys themselves.

Theories of achievement

Teachers, head teachers, and parents make decisions about children and their difficulties, and behind every decision made in response to an instance of educational difficulty, there lies traditions of practice that more or less evidently affect outcomes. How an individual teacher, a department, a school, a local authority or service constructs both a problem and its solution is determined by their characteristic habits of interpretation. These constructs influence the details of practice and provision (Corbett & Clough, 2000).

Various theories have been put forward since the 1960's with many suggestions as to why Black boys underachieve. Nehaul (1996, chp 2) reviewed these and describes theories about pupils of Caribbean heritage that predate Rampton, and those investigated by researchers in the years that followed. He found that researchers at the time all pointed to these students homes and families as the cause of underachievement. Later, in the 1970's and 1980's, although studies demonstrated prejudice and stereotyping by teachers, the prevailing emphasis continued to be on the child and the family, rather than examining the role of the school and teachers.

He observed that three theories were used to explain the lesser achievement of these students namely: pupils and their homes; racism; and the school.

He notes that the studies carried out in the 1960's tended to problematise the child, perceiving the problem to be in three areas:

1. Intelligence – the belief that children of Caribbean heritage had an inherently lower level of intelligence because they scored below average in test

2. **Self-esteem** – arguments were put forward that the prevailing view that Black people are inferior and the racist practices based on this view, affect the self-concept of these pupils, lowering their self-esteem i.e. the value they place on themselves.
3. **Behaviour** – later research focused on pupils of Caribbean heritage in schools and examined behaviour as perceived by teachers.

These beliefs fit broadly into the category Clough & Corbett (2000) describe as the “psycho-medical legacy”, a system of medicalized ideas which essentially saw the individual as being somewhat in deficit. (Nehaul (1995) recommended a model of achievement which focuses on the individual pupils and on the ‘whole-child’. His model highlights the need for school development planning to take into account the level of ethnic minority awareness by teachers. It is very important that Black humanity is affirmed and Black young people are helped in their quest for self-respect. To do this teachers eyes need to be trained of the institutional causes for Black loss of identity and self-esteem. Education must no longer uncritically accept the degrading ideals that call into question Black intelligence, possibility and beauty.

Culture is very complex an issue to assign differences in behaviour/achievement to it but inferring that this is where the problem lies leaves school free to continue their practices. This is too simplistic a method and other sources clearly need to be looked at. Unfortunately it has always been the case that the easiest solution, that which does not require any or very little change on the part of the majority tends to prevail.

Teachers/school influence

Several studies since the 1970's have shown that black pupils are more likely to be criticised, punished and derided for their "bad attitude" than pupils of any other ethnic group. Qualitative research, with its focus on interview and observation data, yields disturbing insights into what may be taking the wind out of children's sails.

Most teachers prefer to work with children whose conduct and appearance is in line with their perception of what is appropriate. Once such behaviour is exhibited in class, teachers will typically try to reinforce it. They are most pedagogically effective when they perceive cues or messages from a student which hint that certain "essential" academic and social lessons have already been learned at home. To the extent that both the teacher and student are able to understand, trust, and build on one another's communication cues, they are likely to engage in growth-enhancing responses towards one another (Clark 1996, pg14). Poor teacher training (directed by the government) means many teachers are unaware of communication cues of other cultures and there continues to be much misunderstandings. This is further exacerbated by the racism in trainee teacher recruitment which has restricted Black peoples access into the teaching profession.

Clark further states that "Some of the most common behaviour signals that teachers expect to see are that the student can and will readily engage in quiet social interaction, ask questions and otherwise participate in class, be obedient, use standard English when

speaking, accept personal responsibility for conduct, and be accountable for its consequences, be mindful of his appearance and hygiene, perform tasks actively and harmoniously interact with others in the class, accept the teacher's right to treat him as a member of a category based on a few discrete personal characteristics (such as skin colour, attractiveness, family background, classroom social personality, and previous teacher evaluation) rather than the full range of characteristics of the whole person".

According to Gillborn and Gipps (1997), "Irrespective of the teacher's conscious desire to help all pupils equally, the level of teacher-pupil conflict in the researched schools was such that, as a group, black pupils experienced school in ways that were significantly more conflictual and less positive than their peers. Teachers and schools may play an active, though unintended, role in the creation of conflict with African-Caribbean pupils, thereby reducing black young people's opportunity to achieve." I knew this was true in my school but was unaware of the extent to which it was taking place. Students from African-Caribbean homes arrive at school having experiences that are different from their European peers, but it is their European peers experiences that are built on. The school environment and what it transmits by way of 'education' is taken for granted as right. Black boys are expected to adapt to this environment without questions. Black boys continually have to adapt to an environment which many now view as unjust.

Goleman (1995) discovered that stress stopped the working of the frontal lobe of the brain. His research suggests that stress activated hormone is release which stopped the short-term memory operation of the brain. This they believe might be the explanation as

to why some “failing” children had very short concentration spans and were in a constantly agitated state. The process of education if badly delivered can be a main cause of this emotional state in the classroom. The ongoing conflict between Black students and teachers creates stress which reduces/limits these students ability to learn, distracts the teacher from her/his purpose and sends a variety of messages to the observers.

Gillborn and Gipps (1997) suggest that “because the education reforms have not treated race as an issue, they have allowed the inequalities to persist and, in some cases, to get bigger. Their hope is that the report “will put race back on the agenda. There is a willed amnesia about everything we’ve learned from past research, about the way that judgements about the aptitude, ability and motivation of pupils are disfigured or reproduced by racism. The more we try to ignore the fact that race matters, the more we leave the door open for these trends to go on unchallenged”.

Parents/school effect

In 1966 the results of a study undertaken by Coleman, an American Sociologist was published. It concluded that the material resources provided in schools made little difference to educational performance; the decisive influence was the children’s backgrounds. In Coleman’s words, “Inequalities imposed on children by their home, neighbourhood, and peer environment are carried along to become inequalities with which they confront adult life at the end of school. In 1972 these findings were reaffirmed by Jencks, that educational and occupational attainment are governed mainly

by family background and non-school factors and that educational reforms on their own can have only minor effects on existing inequalities.

However a study by Rutter (1974) suggests that differences in school organisation and atmosphere can counteract outside influences on academic performance. Improvement in teaching quality, the social climate of the school and patterns of school work can help deprived students improve academic performance (Giddens 1999, p. 420). The suggestions were that students would most probably underachieve if they were from minority homes that were socially deprived.

Ninety percent of a student's life is spent outside of school, and yet, in many urban schools, the involvement of parents and community members is practically non-existent. One of the factors that appear to contribute to early student success in school is the acquisition of the intellectual tools and social skills needed to function effectively in a school environment prior to the students entry into school. In the eyes of many urban educators, the knowledge that so many children come from environments in which these tools and skills are not taught leads to the assumption that parents have little interest in the education of their children and that only the intellectual tools of the majority culture is of value.

Confronted with a perceived lack of parental involvement and/or support (both real and perceived) in many urban schools, it is hard for educators to accept that:

(1) the parents of poor and minority children value education,

- (2) the home environments of poor and minority families may include experiences that are conducive to student success in schools, and
- (3) the reluctance of many parents to become “involved” may result more from their insecurity about interacting with school officials than from a lack of interest in their children’s welfare.

Unfortunately, even when teachers understand these concepts, their personal frustrations and lack of commitment to see real change may blind them to the need to find ways to involve parents. Yet many parents have not remained passive and have shown a high regard for education by sending their children to supplementary schools.

Self-esteem

Cummins (1996) reported that the interactions that take place between students and teachers and among students are more central to student success than any method for teaching. When powerful relationships are established between teachers and students, these relationships frequently can transcend the economic and social disadvantages that afflict communities and schools in inner cities and rural areas. However, he also found that relationships established in schools can also be disempowering. Negative messages can be overt, covert, intentional, and unintentional. For example, in the 1970s, it was extremely common for educators to reprimand bilingual students for speaking their home language in school. The message to be internalised was that the students’ language, culture and previous experience have no place within school. To be accepted within mainstream society represented by the school required the student to become invisible and inaudible; culture and language should be left at home.

Often, the message about identity Blacks receive from home and school are contradictory. It is therefore difficult for the child to establish a consistent identity for himself if definitions of himself by others are inconsistent or mutually exclusive (Cummins 1996, p.21)

As stated earlier, emotional stability is important to learning. Education is about the “whole” person, and so attention must be given to the emotional aspects of students development. Emotions are critical to patterning; what we learn is influenced and organised by emotions and mind sets based on expectations, personal biases and prejudices, degrees of self-esteem, and the need for social interaction. Emotion and cognition cannot be separated (Halgren, Wilson, Squires, Engel, Walter, and Crandell, 1983; Ornstein and Sobel, 1987; Larkoff, 1987; McGuinness and Pribram, 1980).

This belief has many implications because it is impossible to isolate the cognitive from the affective domain. The emotional climate of the school and classroom should/needs to be one that promotes acceptance and a sense of belonging for all its’ students. It needs to be reviewed on a consistent basis, using effective communication strategies and allowing for student and teacher reflection.

A growing body of evidence suggests that in most urban schools in the USA (most are predominately minority students) complex cultural obstacles to school success go far beyond that noted by Cummins above and any problems they experience because of

language barriers, learning styles, or any of the other factors often cited as inhibiting their academic achievement. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) proposed that:

“one major reason black students do poorly in school is that they experience inordinate ambivalence and affective dissonance in regard to academic effort and social success. This problem arose partly because white Americans traditionally refused to acknowledge the contributions that Black Americans have made and so they subsequently began to doubt their own intellectual ability. Many still defined academic success as white people’s prerogative, and began to discourage their peers, perhaps subconsciously, from emulating white people in academic striving, i.e. from ‘acting white.’ Because of the ambience, affective dissonance, and social pressures, many black students who are academically able to, do not put forth the necessary effort and perseverance in their schoolwork and, consequently, do poorly in school. Even black students who do not fail generally perform well below their potential for the same reasons.”

They went on further to note the fact that some minority groups generally experience much more academic success than others. This difference is often perceived by claiming that those who are not successful do not value education. In Ogbu (1984) and Ogbu and Matute-Bianchi (1986) the authors suggest that such a perspective is overly simplistic and ignores the circumstances that brought certain minority groups to the USA, how they were treated upon arrival, and how they have responded. The authors explain that it might be more useful to consider that there are two types of minorities:

- (1) those who came more or less voluntarily with the expectation of improving their economic, political, and social status;
- (2) and subordinate minorities, who were involuntarily and permanently incorporated into American society through slavery or conquest.

These distinctions are significant because, while the author's research focuses on Black students, it provides important evidence about why certain populations of minority students (African-Americans, Mexican Americans, Native Hawaiians) experience the lack of success in schools that they do. It also suggests that educators need to understand this phenomenon and develop "programs to help students learn to divorce academic pursuit from the idea of acting white." In addition, their research suggests important ways in which the black community can respond by "developing programs to teach Black children that academic pursuit is not synonymous with one-way acculturation into acting white."

This is a message that needs to be carried to other minority communities so that they, too, can address this issue among their youth. It applies to the UK as much as it does to the USA.

In his ethnographic study of an inner city (London) boys comprehensive Sewell (1998) concluded that African-Caribbean boys are children not men, who are the responsibility of parents and the state. The journey from childhood to manhood is processed through school. The reality of teacher attitudes and peer group pressures compels children to adopt certain normative values. For African- Caribbean boys in the school this process was racialised. He found the largest category of teacher to be

entrenched in a survivalist mentality and so failed to challenge their own socialisation and so were unable to see how their own practice could lead to racist stereotyping .

He suggests questions be asked about these boys experience that deals with their coping skills in a context that was hostile to their gender and race. He found that they showed limited resistance compared to girls and seems less likely to avoid conflict. The teachers were convinced that the cultural expressions that come from the boys most deeply involved in this sub-culture adversely influence their schooling. In reading Sewell's book I realized that the boy's experience was not unique to my school. His writing had much media coverage but there has been no indication of it being embraced at a local or national level or of having influenced policy in any way.

His findings supports MacGhail (1994) view that in order to compensate for the sense of exclusion they feel due to teacher racism Black boys acted in ways which are overtly sexist to young woman and female staff and aggressive to male students who did not live up to their prescribed masculine norms. He describes this behaviour as complex and ambiguous.

Later in December 2000, Sewell contributed to a seminar in London looking at issues of low achievement. He reported on his latest research of 200 students where his evidence suggest that part of the problem faced by Black boys was "Black culture", where this group takes an anti-intellectual stance and have adopted a false thinking that all things "Black" are hyper-masculine and street". This is opposed to doing well in school and cultivating the mind, which is considered "acting White", "nerdy", "effeminate". He states that his findings show that racism exists in schools but is not the only factor of low

achievement. Sewell's evidence to support his claim that 'Black culture' is anti-intellectual and that the boys are influenced by youth culture is questionable. Much evidence exist to support the opposite including the following statistics:

	Continuing Fulltime education %	% 16 Year old
Unemployed		
Whites	67	5.8
Blacks	82	15
Asians	91	-

Could it be that the daily experience of racism forces Black boys to stick together and that underachievement has more to do with institutional racism and less to do with culture? Many would say yes to this. The complexity and ambiguity noted early still needs to be explored.

Troyna's observation of the political response to the issue

Troyna has written much on the issue of Black students and education and is highly regarded by the academic world. Through his many years of research he identified racism as an obstacle to Black students learning and sees the lack of government intervention as the reason for the continuation of the “problem”. A review by Hatcher (1997) of the late Barry Troyna's writings critiqued multicultural education in the 1980's, and focused particularly on racial equality and how race has been construed in educational discourse. My earlier review of media coverage of the issue included comments from the Education Minister acknowledging the fact of Black boys underachievement and vowing to address it. Yet, according to Troyna, the government has failed in their responsibility to Black students and it needs to recognise the impact of its policies on education.

In (1997) he wrote “in May 1997 the long period of Conservative government came to an end with the election of a Labour government led by Tony Blair. This was the Labour Party reinvented as ‘New labour’ to distinguish and distance itself from what was seen as ‘old Labour’, typified by the left-wing Labour councils of the 1980's. The question now is, to which categories of ‘race and education’ – the deracialised assimilationism of the 1970's, the multiculturalism exemplified by the Swann Report (DES, 1985), the antiracist education of certain local authorities in the 1980's, the return to assimilationism signalled by the 1988 Act – does education policy under new labour correspond most closely?”

Troyna began to answer this question in *'British Schools for British Citizens'*? (Troyna and Hatcher, 1991), which commented on three Labour Party education policy papers published in 1989. It was noted that *Multicultural Education: Labour's policy for schools* (Labour Party, 1989a) exemplified the multiculturalism associated with the Swann report. More revealing was what happened to the issue of racial equality in Labour's perspective for education as a whole, elaborated in the Policy review document *Good Education for All* (Labour Party, 1989b). They write:

The overwhelmingly dominant theme of the document is education's economic role, to which its social role is subordinate and ancillary. The consequence is that racial equality achieves only a token reference. Racial inequality is subsumed into the general argument that higher standards can be achieved if schools are 'effective'. There is no mention of antiracist teaching. It is as if the experiences of the last ten years of antiracist education had never happened. (Troyna and Hatcher, 1991).

The token and marginal status of the issue of racial equality, subsumed into the 'effective schools' theme, was confirmed by the third and much more detailed document *Children First* (Labour Party, 1989c), which made no mention of 'race', or indeed gender or class, in its 42 pages.

Troyna's initial assessment of Labour's discourse in the 1990's as deracialised and assimilationist was borne out by an examination of the most recent and authoritative of Labour Party education policy documents. This is what *Opening doors to a learning society* (Labour Party, 1994), a 31 page policy statement, says about racial equality:

“At the moment there is an unacceptable spread of attainment and underachievement in different cultures. All individuals should be respected and treated equally; different cultures must be treated with respect and given freedom of expression. Racial discrimination and religious prejudice have no place in a modern education system. Local authorities should draw up a statement of aims on multicultural education.” (p12)

This statement was followed by the claim that ‘As a nation we cannot afford the social and economic consequences of inequality’, and exhortations to listen to the voices of ethnic minority parents and tackle racial harassment. My interpretation is that they too believe that underachievement is a result of racism and a lack of relationship between the school and the parents of these students. This fact was certainly echoed in Professor Gillborn inaugural speech in March 2002. If this were a statement of intent which was followed up with specific measures to implement it, as an integral part of the rest of Labour's education policies, it would mark a return to at least the rhetoric of those Labour LEAs Troyna studied in the 1980's. But it was not. For example, in the same document, the section on ‘effective learning’ makes no mention of the implications of ‘race’ for the curriculum, and criticises Conservative cuts in Section 11 funding while

making no commitment to reverse them. *Opening doors to a learning society* was followed a year later by *Excellence for everyone* (Labour Party, 1995), subtitled *Labour's crusade to raising standards*. Since difference in attainment by different ethnic groups have been a key concern for twenty years, and the subject of two major reports (Rampton and Swann), it is all the more remarkable that in this 38 page document there is (apart from a passing reference to black mentoring) no mention of this issue at all. Even the section on exclusions makes no reference to the over-representation of black pupils, a fact now well established (see Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; Sewell, 1997). It is a totally deracialised discourse. Reading this gave me a sense of comfort reassuring me that I was not alone in seeing the issue as one warranting attention but I was weary because so much evidence existed yet the government had chosen to interpret it to suit their political agenda.

The contrast between Labour's perspective today and the earlier multicultural phase of labour policy is striking. Then, the key to problems of achievement among ethnic minority pupils was seen to lie in reforming the curriculum to bridge the cultural gap. Its weakness was its all too often superficial notion of ethnic cultures and its reluctance to explicitly address racism. Instead, as previously, ethnic differences in achievement are assimilated into a universal discourse of raising standards, in which the curriculum is seen as unproblematic and pupil cultures as irrelevant. Insofar as there is a difference with Conservative assimilationism it is in the much more central role that is played in Labour's education thinking by discourses of 'school effectiveness' and 'school improvement'. In *'British Schools for British Citizens'?* Troyna and Hatcher, (1991)

made critical comments about Labour's ability to address issues of racial inequality. Six years later, that influence is much more apparent. School effectiveness/school improvement is bidding to become the dominant discourse in education. Yet, at a local level, this intellectual rhetoric has had little if any impact on Black students experience and has failed to shape their learning, character and how teachers teach. Labours many innovations since winning office, notably, EIC, EAZ, mentoring, literacy, and numeracy are colour blind according to Majors (2000).

In *Racism and Education* (1993) Troyna refers to Roger Dale's (1986) distinction between the three approaches to the study of policy-making in education.

1. The social administration project, which was concerned with potential policy problems
2. The policy analysis project, which was concerned with the relationship between policy aims and delivery
3. The social science project, which was concerned with finding out how things are and how they came to be that way.

He identified himself with the third approach.

Racism and school effectiveness/improvement

The school effectiveness/school improvement paradigm exemplifies the 'social administration' approach mentioned earlier, and invites what Troyna has called, quoting Dale, 'the interrogation of 'the appropriateness and framing of the problems and

questions' (Troyna, 1993). Stephen Ball speaks of the emergence of 'school effectiveness researchers' and 'management theorists', around whose work:

A new relationship to policy or rather inside policy was being forged. Issues relating to system design, analysis of provision and social justice were now replaced by implementation studies focussed on issues like 'quality', 'evaluation', 'leadership' and 'accountability'. (Ball, 1994)

A recent review of school effectiveness research by some of its leading practitioners confirms the neglect of social justice issues. According to Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore (1995), recent research has actually moved away from an earlier concern with equity towards a more generalised focus on the achievements of all students. The problem is not solely one of research priorities. It also, and more fundamentally, relates to one of the theoretical bases of the school effectiveness paradigm, its reliance on correlational studies. For Brown, Duffield and Riddell, 'the statistical technique of multilevel modelling seems to have lent itself to the conceptual leap that arrives at a model for school effectiveness without any diversion imposed by the troubling task of developing theory' (1995). Lawrence Angus, in a review article on current school effectiveness literature, notes that:

Family background, social class, any notion of context, are typically regarded as 'noise' – as 'outside' background factors which must be controlled for and then

stripped away so that the researcher can concentrate on the important domain of school factors.

The school, the process of schooling, the culture of pupils, the nature of community, the society, the economy, are not seen in relation to each other.

(1993)

In consequence, school effectiveness research has little to say about the central issue for understanding the construction of educational inequality: the interaction between pupil cultures and the official culture of the school. I felt these interactions were important and these will be looked at further in this paper. The ideas of this movement are espoused by those with very little if any understanding of Black students experience of schooling. What they write seems technically correct but speaks only to some, applies only to some and this seems good enough for some.

The 'school improvement' movement is motivated by a much more explicit concern for 'educationally disadvantaged' pupils, as the title of a recent collection of case studies, *Success against the Odds* (National Commission on Education, 1996), suggests. Nevertheless, Troyna argued that the school improvement movement shares the same underdeveloped conceptualisation of educational inequality as the school effectiveness literature.

The deliberate separation of school effectiveness from issues of ethnicity and culture is exemplified by Bollen (1996). He states that no function of the school can be to foster

cultural pluralism. To do so would entail 'a complicated political debate in which the conflicting interest of ideological, political and economic groups will clash', and this would make the achievement of consensus unlikely. His solution is to define the concept of the 'effective school' as a 'school-specific organisational concept, fit to be used within the context of many other, wider, cultural concepts and in fact aiming at no more than an effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. What he is saying here is that the teaching and learning process can be divorced from cultures of pupils. He uses the notion of 'school culture', but only to refer to the 'official' culture from which pupils culture is excluded. The existence of pupil cultures is mentioned but they play no further part in their model.

Teacher culture and pupil cultures

He states that there has been a continual failure to recognise that school cultures are the product of the interaction between the 'official' culture and the cultures of pupils is a fundamental theoretical flaw in the school effectiveness/improvement approach. The school effectiveness/school improvement literature regards 'Knowledge and curriculum as generally unproblematic and assumes that students must simply learn them' (Angus, 1993). There is no mention of curriculum content in the twelve key 'effectiveness factors' identified by Mortimore *et al.* (1988) and frequently cited subsequently elsewhere. This universal and passive model of the pupil is assumed in the National Curriculum. Richard Johnson identifies the problem with this model as follows:

The great delusion is that all pupils – black and white, working class and middle-class, boys and girls – will receive the curriculum in the same way. Actually, it will be read in different ways, according to how pupils are placed in social relationships and culture. (1991)

A number of studies in the field of ‘race’ have illuminated the way in which the culture of the school is the product of their interaction. For example, David Gillborn and Tony Sewell in their research studied how the patterns of interaction between teachers and black school students both derived from and shaped the cultures of both students and teacher, and thus of the school as a whole (Gillborn, 1990; Sewell, 1997).

One of Troyna’s key concepts, that of deracialisation, was discussed and applied to recent Labour Party policy statements and the school effectiveness/improvement movement on which they draw. But of course the phenomenon to which it points is not confined to race alone. It is part of a wider process of abstraction which applies equally to social class and to gender. New Labour shares the same conception of the pupil as their Conservative counterparts, of whom Ken Jones writes:

The themes of the modernising tendency...are in an important sense acultural...and its conception of the individual is correspondingly non-concrete.

That students differ in what their society has made of them; that the sexual, class or racial prisms through which they view the world affect their attitudes to learning and their conceptions of relevance are not important matters. (1989)

This colour blind approach has been adopted at local levels.

Labour Party policy and the school effectiveness/improvement encouraged by Labour literature are as 'de-classed' and 'de-gendered' as they are deracialised. Troyna suggested that in the area of 'race', the publication of the recent Ofsted report *Recent Research on the Achievements of Ethnic Minority Pupils* referred to earlier (Gillborn and Gipps, 1996) could mark a turning point. He felt that if arguments are taken seriously, it will compel those concerned with low achievement by some ethnic minority groups to engage with causal factors which arise from the interaction of theoretical understanding of both pupil cultures and the role of the school in reproducing inequalities which has up till now been absent from the school effectiveness/improvement paradigm. As the CRE chairman's comments indicated earlier in this paper, as at 1999 he did not believe this information has been acted upon.

The starting point in order to address the issue of racial equality is their critique of the Swann Report (DES, 1985), which centred on its failure to acknowledge 'institutional racism' in the school. In Troyna's view, it was guilty of:

A continued avoidance of the question of how the educational system might respond effectively to racist impulses in society at large. The Swann committee circumvented this problem by identifying racism primarily in terms of individual prejudice and by recommending Racism Awareness Training (RAT) as a way of correcting cultural misunderstandings. The notion of institutionalised racism, in

contrast, was considered 'confused and confusing' by the committee.... (Troyna and Carrington, 1990)

He saw 'institutional racism' as a 'bridging concept' between negativity racialised within school processes and structural racism in the wider society. One element in institutional racism which he discussed was teachers' expectations. The school effectiveness/improvement literature also regards low teacher expectations as one of the main mechanisms, which account for low pupil achievement. But the school effectiveness/improvement conceptualisation of 'teacher expectations' is not theoretically informed. It is little more than a circular description: pupils underachieve because teachers have low expectations of them, teachers have low expectations because pupils have low achievement. Its function in the literature becomes exhortatory rather than explanatory; its consequences pupil target-setting, which can be a useful strategy but is not a substitute for a comprehensive theory-rich response to low achievement. Yet there is empirical work in the field of 'race' and education, by Green (1982), Carrington (1983), Tomlinson (1987), Wright (1987), Gillborn(1990) and others, which, as Troyna says, reveals that teachers' professional judgements of pupils are often viewed through the lens of a discriminatory 'racial frame of reference', which provides 'the basis for decision-making: the criteria for differentiation and classification of pupils' in day-to-day interaction (Troyna and Carrington, 1990). The racial frame of reference does not necessarily or even mainly entail consciously racist beliefs: on the contrary, its effectivity is more likely to be the result of:

Teachers' tenacious commitment to the principles of universalism and individualism. Assertions such as 'we treat them all the same' (colour-blind) and 'we respond to the individual needs of our children' (child-centred) constitute professional tenets which are incompatible with policies that are designed to address the needs and interests of an entire group of pupils, defined in terms of their 'race', gender or class. (Troyna and Carrington, 1990).

Much of what I read pertaining to school processes was by researchers who had only a "researcher" knowledge of school experiences. They have identified the issues without any understanding of the suffering and pain being experienced in the system. Their insight into the bigger picture is based on very little knowledge of what is actually happening in schools and so this leads to a continual building on poor foundations. A clear mandate is needed by the government to tackle institutional racism in schools. However this needs to be based on practical evidence of what is happening in schools day-to-day not just a snap shot view of an environment prepared with tinsel which is far removed from the reality of students experience. In the text the definition of racism is taken to mean a set of attitudes and behaviour towards people of another race, which is based on the belief that races are distinct and can be regarded as 'superior' or 'inferior'. A racist is, therefore, someone who believes that people of a particular race, colour or national origin are inherently inferior, so that their identity, culture, self-esteem, views and feelings are of less value than his/her own and can be disregarded or treated as less important. (Race is a socially constructed term not a biological term. There is only one race, the human race).

Bombarded with these various writings describing what was happening but without clear answers I felt compelled to do something. It became clearer that an issue this complex needed in-depth study not just quick answers. This is needed in order to identify causes as well as effects of underachievement. The ongoing debate between those who promote anti-racism and multiculturalism has led to continuous rhetoric and the excuse for little if any action. Suggesting that the cause is cultural denies the fact that education has both an economic as well as a social role. To my mind a teacher's role has a higher purpose than just to pass on subject knowledge. It is to create a multi-cultural society which promotes and maintains the cultural diversity of students. A knowledge of student's culture is required plus a pursuit of multicultural education to combat institutional racism. Decisive action is also required to correct racism of the wider society- a willingness not just an intention to pursue action to bring about change. The extent to which a person can fulfil their economic role depends on their social environment.

Theoretical solutions must include practical answers, with evidence of seeing it work. Troyna suggests government involvement and this is essential but Blacks cannot wait for this. The CRE suggests legislation but legislation without education is unlikely to have much positive impact. It is obvious that Blacks look to the political system to make changes in the law and education to reduce the disadvantage they face, yet the political system continue to basically ignore them due to their lack of power. It is easier for the powers that be to label the problem as biological/social. Black researchers/writers highlighted the psychological damage experienced by these students from continuous racism. Whatever the cause I felt that in the meantime strategies needed to be developed

to increase self-esteem and change attitudes and behaviours. The suggestion that action research could provide answers made sense to me.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

And you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.

Jesus Christ – John 8:32

How then do I do the research?

The search for knowledge, just the collection of data without the desire or ability to use it properly because this is either not the intention or the gatherer of such data has no power to use it renders such knowledge meaningless. Wisdom and understanding is required for data to be applied meaningfully. Increased knowledge about current research is important in making decisions about new strategies or innovations. However, as important as this knowledge is, teachers also need a clear understanding about why change is needed. The reason why I desired change was obvious to me and I expected it to be obvious to the other teachers in my school. The investigations published in the press about this issue tended to problematise the child (as stated earlier) without looking at teachers. Also, as the literature review highlighted, there is no consensus as to the causes of underachievement.

Clarke (1996) suggests that there is scope for researchers to engage in studies of the educational circumstances that surround the process of schooling of Black students. However, we have relatively few studies that go beyond conventional schooling by focusing on patterns of interaction between teachers and pupils. This group needed to find a voice within the school system. How do they go about finding a voice in presenting themselves?

Clarke further states that the problem in many educational studies is that research is overt to teachers and other adults, but covert to pupils. In this respect, it is incumbent upon the researcher to explore ways in which the research enterprise can be made more overt, and to detail ways in which the researcher can begin to understand the world of pupils and to make that world publicly accessible to others. This was certainly an important issue for me i.e. devising ways to access and understand the world of the students I was investigating.

If we wish to gain access to students' world, what are the observations that they would wish us to make? What are the perspectives that they would wish to use? How might these perspectives be incorporated into the research that is conducted by the researcher? As researchers we also need to make sure that all those who are engaged in research activities are fully informed as to what the research will involve and do so with their consent. Yet again this presupposes that the researcher is in a position to explain in a clear and coherent way the styles and strategies that are to be adopted in the research. It also presupposes that the explanation is shared between equals. I wanted to adopt a collaborative approach by working closely with the boys, parents and mentors.

Clarke directs the researcher to deal with practical issues such as:

- How much should be revealed of the subject areas that will be covered, and the way evidence will be used?

- Detailed accounts to be given of the students world, in order to ensure good rapport, and trust is established between the researcher and the researched
- Commissioned documents, such as diaries and essays hold the potential of giving access to pupil world. These documents that are solicited from students needs to be contextualised and students should be told about the kinds of evidence that need to be given.

How might researchers work with children and young people? Here, the emphasis has been placed upon a qualitative approach to research. This stance has been taken as it is the best method to promote the students point of view. From the outset the nature of the PSE programmes and the parents workshops were explained to the boys and their parents and the method of data collection.

A summary of the literature at this stage clearly indicated that inequalities exist in British schools in terms of differences in levels of achievement of the various ethnic groups. One such manifestation of the inequalities is the fact that Black boys are underachieving. Also highlighted was the fact that there is no definite agreement as to the factors that causes underachievement. Although this underachievement has been identified previously in many reports including the Swann Report and governments to date have expressed concerns about this issue I do not believe the matter has been given appropriate attention. I too, like Troyna believe the issue has been marginalised and neglected by schools in a 'so called' effort to raise the achievement of all. Efforts to raise the

achievement of Black boys and raise the achievement of all are not mutually exclusive but require different approaches from what has been undertaken previously.

Nehaul (1996) wrote that “a key reason for the lack of meaningful answers after years of research is that this is an area in which it is not easy to be objective. Personal perspectives, and experiences may influence the choice of what is researched, the design of the studies, and the resulting analysis and conclusions”.

It follows therefore that change is most effective when it stems from a shared vision. In a school environment this would be where teachers, management and students can all see the benefit. This requires openness and consultation. This is the ideal. The reality is often very different. The change I wanted to see was not from a sense of shared vision at all. In fact it was viewed more with suspicion and a suppressed cry not to “rock the boat”. Permission was given for me to run a mentoring scheme by the management as long as it did not involve much effort on their part. My perception is that I was allowed to pursue a “pet dream” which also covered one of the action points on the recent Inspection Action Plan.

I was not deterred by this because I truly believed that I could become a change agent. If we are to take the study of change seriously, by considering whether it has a positive impact on teachers and the progress of students, then we must realise in a deep way that educational change is ultimately an individual achievement. It requires determination and commitment in a profession where teachers on average stay two years in a job. This

is of course, a radical and threatening position to take. The reluctance to accept change may stem from the fact that meaningful change involves:

- ◆ Teachers adopting new *behaviours* in terms of teaching style
- ◆ Changes in *beliefs or values* on the part of some teachers

This can unsettle people. The latter point was the area I felt needed most attention certainly from my earlier support programme with year 11 and sixth form Black boys in my school in 1996. These issues are explored next.....

(1) Developing an epistemology

To find out more about something that you find puzzling/interesting you first need to:

Determine the social reality of the “thing”; decide on the best way of getting to know that reality and assess the nature of the objects/subjects involved/to be studied.

This according to western philosophical thought will help you choose the appropriate research method. With this in mind I had to sort out my own understanding of reality and how I come to know it. All that I am and do is informed by my Christian faith. My faith doesn't lead to easy, quick solutions but instead often forces me to find such solutions.

My knowing is experiential. It goes beyond knowing in an intellectual sense and in fact informs my intellect. Yet I recognise that the individual is not the sole arbiter of “truth”. Everyone's experience is valid, the reality of it, but not all experience is truth.

There is much debate about what truth is. The religious mode of truth-seeking views revelation and faith as the path to reliable knowledge. Revelation can be received in either direct experience (mysticism) or in a received tradition (scripture and culture.) In either case, ultimate authority of truth-claims rests upon some divine reality, which makes itself know to humans through some act of revelation. As a Christian this is what I firmly believe, yet I need to reconcile this to the interpretive approach which together inform my approach to action research..

The historical and epistemological conflict between science and religion is the dominant paradigm in the modern educational system. Religion and faith has held court over the questions of meaning, purpose, spirit, and morality. Yet many shifts in paradigms have occurred down the centuries in philosophy and culture which has affected people inside and outside the church via the media, politics, economics, and education (Horseman, 1996).

Plato, following his teacher Socrates, believed that there existed a world of unchanging and invisible ideas about which it is possible to have exact and certain knowledge.

Aristotle believed that all knowledge is gained from experience, in accordance with the rule of logic. Aquinas agreed with Aristotle, but considered belief in scripture as the main basis of religious belief. In his view the will of man was fallen but the intellect was not. This I regard as an incomplete view of the biblical fall but to him the intellect had become autonomous and this view opened the way to autonomous humanism.

From the 17th to the late 19th century, the main issue in epistemology was logic versus experience in obtaining knowledge. Through empiricism, tradition was replaced by sense-experience gained through observation and experimentation as the source of knowledge. However, no matter what humans think, they have to deal with the fact that there is something there. Christianity gives an explanation of why this is objectively there – to think about, to deal with and to investigate, which has objective reality. This reality being that “humans were created in God’s image – finite but personal and God has given to fallen man “contentful” knowledge. Although fallen, man still bears God’s image. The rationalist who has put herself at the centre of the universe insists on

beginning autonomously, with only the knowledge she can gather and so ends up misguided. The beginning is the existence of the infinite-personal God as creator of all.

My research is undertaken from a Christian epistemological perspective. As a Christian I believe in one God Who created us spiritual and moral beings and I accept the Bible as His revelation to humans. I believe in an objective external truth, a truth which is not the product of human creation but which is in the form of a person who is Jesus. My faith leads me to have a particular view of human behaviour and an external morality by which conduct and character is to be measured. This means that for me ethics and values are transcendental and are not human creation. Therefore, we are not free to choose our values.

I believe God created the world including humans worthwhile and for a purpose. Jesus, The Truth modeled unconditional love by complete acceptance of all with no gender or ethnic barriers, and through active listening, fighting for social justice and a particular concern for the poor and weak. His followers are called to do the same. Carrying out this work is one way of responding to this call. I recognise that there are many other areas of need and a choice had to be made. Using reason and rationality I considered this an opportunity to make a difference given my locatedness.

The Christian faith does not require us to throw away logic and reason. However, belief in a miracle working God forces us to recognise that there is a greater reality than our senses can comprehend – the ultimate reality of God and His Kingdom – beyond our

physical senses and beyond expression in words. God has endowed humans with the creative ability to improve His creation – in history and nature humans are able to work out their destiny and so they have an obligation ‘to know’ history and nature to the best of their ability. Science can only measure a portion of what we can know. We have the ability to know and embrace the sacred – an ability to transcend. My Christian faith leads me to believe that objective reality exists against which our social constructions can be checked off. Our world is not just constructed by us. The reality we experience is a spiritual and social construction.

Recognising the truth is quite different from understanding it. A familiarity with the truth which does not develop into understanding creates an awareness which may affect behaviour but not character and so has no lasting effect. The knowledge of the truth that brings liberation is not familiarity, or superficial recognition, but understanding. We can begin to understand the truth only in relationships and firstly with the One who is Truth. In the Gospel, Jesus tells us in the book of John that “we shall know the truth and the truth shall set us free”. The word He uses means “to perceive”, “to understand”, “to realise”, “to recognise”, “to gain knowledge”. He is not talking about some secret head knowledge. It is a recognition of truth by personal experience. A knowing in the heart that transforms and changes. We can only know truth through practice.

Our culture constantly markets misinformation and half-truths. This has led many to believe that “this is it”, “I am born this way and cannot change”, “survival of the fittest”. Our parents also grew up in such a culture, so they handed down to us the same old grid

through which to interpret life which has led us to many wrong conclusions. Therefore, many of us fail to take responsibility for our actions and behaviour but the Bible tells us that 'when you know the truth, your old belief systems will be exposed and you'll be free'. Our perception of God, self, others and the world has been damaged. Jesus offers a hope which is found in relationships - a place of affirmation, development and learning. This requires reaching out to others – the risk of involvement.

I wanted to find out factors that were leading Black boys to underachieve. I believed a mentoring scheme as described earlier in the paper would give me the opportunity to work closely with the boys - get to know them, gain their trust and so learn from them. For me, this was the best way of gaining the truth – through observation, collaboration and negotiation in relationships.

My reading at the start of my research clearly indicated that Black boys were a disadvantaged group. My experience as a teacher confirmed this. As a Christian I am compelled to be involved in social action and be concerned for justice and social change explicitly. This is a call to commitment and reflection. I am impelled to use my mind and my integrity demands that I do not give glib answers nor become engaged in superficial charity. Instead I must develop an understanding if I want to make a difference. As a teacher and someone who had previously carried out research I believed I had a mind train to do this work and a heart that desired to see change.

My epistemology combines aspects of the two views of the positivists and interpretative paradigms but gives importance to experience. I entered this project with a view developed from my own experience and from my reading and also an understanding that what I did and observed would be affected by my history, culture and values. Although behaviour can be predictable and patterns can be determined I do not believe these behaviour patterns are fixed but are shaped by our social world and by us in the process. In seeking to understand these patterns I recognise that as a researcher I would influence my work. My desire is to find the truth and so my intention was/is to reduce bias.

The basic assumption therefore guiding the interpretive paradigm are that knowledge is socially constructed by people active in the research process and that researchers should attempt to understand the “complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live in it”.

As researchers, interpreters, and meaning producers, we can be objective about the meanings produced by those we are researching by recognising and accepting our situatedness . “To know, one must be aware of one’s pre-understandings even though one cannot transcend them”

In seeking to identify the factors that lead to underachievement I desired to be as open and reflexive as possible especially with regards to accessing and interpreting what I believed could be found out within the framework of my faith. I had to answer many questions including:

- **Did I allow the boys to express their viewpoints?**

- **How accurately have I interpreted the boys?**

- **Did I find out from them what meaning they were giving to things rather than guess?**

- **Were their responses consistent, or did they continually change their minds?**

- **What interference and influence did I encounter and how did I deal with them?**

- **How did the boys view me? Did they see me as help for them?**

- **To what degree have I measured or observed the phenomena I claim to be investigating?**

- **Would another researcher find the same thing?**

- **Is my data based on close observations of the issue I set out to investigate?**

I was challenged to carefully consider the fact that opinions and actions are not always regarded as inconsequential by the people we study – To what extent did I influence their behaviour? Was this not my objective from the start? It is clear that the problem I was investigating is one that had previously been identified by many and that there are many

ways to investigate. The best way for me was through an action research project given the nature of the problem and the institution and my role in it as a teacher.

What then is Action Research?

This is an action research project, a small scale intervention in the functioning of a real world situation and a close examination of the effects of the intervention (Cohen & Manion, 1985:174). I am not directly researching my own classroom practice, but instead I am trying out an idea in order to create positive change and increase knowledge of factors that prevent achievement. I chose this methodology because I felt it would enable me to understand the issue and in turn increased my effectiveness as a future school leader. I knew what I wanted the end results to be like and action research was the most sensible means. Fundamentally action research is not focused by methodological considerations but by the researcher's own professional values (McNiff, Lomax, Whitehead 1996). My professional values are based on my Christian faith and I declare a personal commitment to justice and Christ-like love. Action research is concerned with diagnosing a problem in a specific context and attempting to solve it in that context. As a strategy of enquiry, it is qualitative with a worldview that sees humans as co-creating their reality through participation, experience and action. It appreciates that to influence a relationship you need to be part of it.

My methodology was informed by my epistemology and especially my Christian faith that is based on the reality of Jesus Christ who is involved in the world and desires our well-being and uses us (His created being) as His instruments. I believe knowledge can come from a combination of study of text (historical records), experience, recognition

(seeing with new understanding) and intuition. Involvement however requires more than a temporary/short-term relationship.

I was in a position to work closely with the boys and their parents to attempt to make sense of/interpret my work with them using a variety of data collection methods. The nature of my work and my epistemology clearly indicated qualitative method to be more appropriate.

Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. It involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives.

(Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2).

As a teacher in the school where the boys are located, I already had a relationship of trust with them and had access to school data relating to them. Action researchers offer an alternative to teachers who have tended to look to others, rather than to themselves and their students, for ways to improve their teaching. I wanted to improve the boys achievement and help others do so too with a recognition that, as individuals we do not create our own reality. There are other factors present. We share our environment with others and are interrelated in a constantly changing world.

Throughout the process the action researcher is the central person and starting where she is, will ask real questions about the issue being investigated with a view to finding a solution and improving the situation. “Distance” and “neutrality” are not the operative words. It takes place in the environment where teachers carry out their day-to-day successes, frustrations, disappointments, and occasional miracles. Additionally, it should be understood that action research is something you do with, not ‘on,’ the students you teach and teachers.

I undertook research using this method on the premise that humans are rational and their behaviour can be understood if time is taken to look at their experience from their viewpoint. It gave me an opportunity to practice what I preach and to pursue change through shared perspectives and attentive listening and by showing interest in the boys daily school experience.

Jesus came to proclaim the message ‘God is love’. Christians are motivated to return this love. The love of God makes no distinction between unitive and active love. Affection and action are two aspects of the same thing. This love requires us to act wisely and rationally – to get a good understanding of the situation and make clear judgements of the duties to self and others. Differences are to be brought out and discussed with respect, not kept hidden.

No single action research model informed the approach to my work. Trying to fit what I wanted to do into an existing model was difficult. However the model that most closely fitted what I wanted to do is that developed by Evans, a model which places a greater emphasis on the doing than on the theoretical. My intention was to interpret from an understanding developed from action/practice rather than be a passive interpreter. Jesus came into our world and mixed with us in order to reach us, using language that was understood. His work was to lift and restore by demonstrating unconditional love. A love that did not accept unconditionally things that were wrong but which confronted injustice.

Earlier action research models recommend that the teacher researcher be supervised by an outsider as if to give credibility to the work undertaken/ and its theoretical soundness. Evans (1995) questioned “Why should facilitators be better able to stand outside their biases, given the patriarchal domination of educational processes and the institutionalism and sexism within society? Is it that the Aristotelian view of knowledge in which the theoretical “pursuit of truth through contemplation” in higher education is still held as superior to the practical wisdom of school teachers”. Evans is further puzzled as to why action research is seen in terms of people thinking, doing, participating in social context and becoming critical without even a passing reference to the affective domain. Why are we being encouraged to problematise our practice from a cerebral perspective, and the part played by emotions ignored?

She further notes that despite her commitment to equal opportunity it took her years to realize that published action research was mainly men’s work and publication was

controlled by men and so only men's experience was being recognised as knowledge. Arguments used to exclude women's work from publication usually claim that their work focussed on practice and methodology to the exclusion of fundamental questions of epistemology. Their work therefore was seen as not contributing to the great debate about theoretical knowledge, regarded as the highest of Aristotelian three-fold classification of knowledge.

Lomax(1994:18) suggests that discrimination against women in academia is masked by a paternalism which is so subtle that those discriminated against have difficulty seeing it in operation.

In the same way I believe the "Black voice" has been rendered silent and invisible by White academia. As a Black female Christian I had real difficult trying to use traditional western thought to do my research yet I was aware of the fact that only this view has been used to define and validate research. Like Beckford (1997) I found the 'Black' voice has been rendered invisible by its exclusion from academic text on research methods.

Truth is validated through the history of those who have had similar experience, dialogue with others and leads to the search for ways to liberate. This dialogue involves active listening and identifying shared experiences and ideas. Patricia Hill Collins has helped my understanding in her writings on Black feminist thoughts where she writes 'Black women's work and family experiences and grounding in traditional African – American culture suggests that African – American women as a group experience a world different from that of those who are not Black and female'. Moreover, these concrete experiences can stimulate a distinct Black feminist consciousness concerning that material reality.

Being Black and female may expose them to certain common experiences, which in turn may predispose them to a distinctive group consciousness, but it in no way guarantees that such a consciousness will develop among all women or that it will be articulated as such by the group. (Back & Solomos 2000)

She notes that an oppressed group's experience may put its members in a position to see things differently, but their lack of control over the ideological apparatuses of society makes expressing a self-defined standpoint more difficult. My own experience from working with the boys and my observation of them lead me to believe this of them – they shared a common experience and I needed to access it. They could not control the school environment, and were being forced to adapt without questioning the reality and truth of it.

Feminists researchers value women's experiences and specifically aim to improve their situation within a patriarchal society (Weiner, 1989:47). In the same way I desired to build knowledge about Black boys by focusing on their experience and my ethnicity and job role was crucial to understanding them and their culture. I believe relational forms of knowing to be legitimate and accept feelings and emotions to be as important as cognitive ways of knowing. I support Dadds (1995) notion that the action researcher needs to be a passionate enquirer and Lomax's (1990, 1994) view that it is a research method based on values rather than as a method of social science. Wright (1997) write that "There is still work to be done in examining how the ethnic origin of the researcher impacts upon the research process and influences the relations developed with the 'researched', especially when the researcher is Black". She believes that her position as a Black female influenced her research as:

- African-Caribbean students identified with her as a Black woman and looked to her for support during times of conflict
- Staff saw her as an ally during times of conflict with these students

I recognised that my approach would be affected by my worldview – my language, motives, ethnicity, ambitions and religious beliefs affect its expression. The Bible is and is not set in a culture, a history – that is part of God’s nature. He is incarnate as well as transcendent (Barratt 1985). Christians hold human nature as constant, this making any description of human nature universal, without denying its uniqueness, which again, is not just a factor of social conditions. I acknowledge the historicity of the Bible’s narratives and also the divergence in its interpretations due to gender, social class, ethnic differences. God’s revelation of Himself and humans pertains to all at all times, but the concrete expressions of that revelation, the teaching and doctrines are culturally bound. Yet the principles remain unchanged, they transcend interpretations and languages. It offers me a framework through which to interpret the world, providing concepts for the descriptive tasks of understanding the most important things and imperatives for the prescriptive tasks of living them out. Jesus demonstrated this by using parables to teach. He took the concepts He wanted to teach into the culture of the time.

For many years, stereotypes of women have affected the way in which men’s and women’s behaviour is judged. Behaviour by a man which is likely to be seen as assertive would be aggressive if by a women writes McCarthy (1999). She notes that society’s

view of women is hard to change because some of the factors contributing to this stereotyping are so embedded in our culture.

If there is truth in the suggestion that a woman in an organisation on equal terms with men can change its direction then she advises that token woman to embrace her femininity and prove it is possible to be a “powerful dominant woman” without emulating men. In the same light I desire to embrace my “Blackness” and faced even greater struggles to assert my ethnic and gender identity as I sought to break the glass ceiling of the academic world. I was frustrated by the fact that I was having to struggle with philosophical and theoretical concerns instead of spending my time doing the project.

An action research project typically takes several weeks or months of practice. The length of time needed to observe or demonstrate improvement will depend upon the target of your action research. In my case the project was designed to run for three years, from the boys start in year 8 to the end of year 10 when they would sit their mock exams and GCSE target grades would be set. During this period I believed I could intervene positively in order to raise the level of achievement to five or more A-C GCSE grades. I also felt that the three years would give me time to observe and reflect and put strategies in place during this time.

The process started with the identification of an area of concern I felt I could do something about. The word ‘concern’ calls attention to personal values, indicating the

selection of an aspect of teaching that relates to what became important to me about a particular groups' learning. From a common sense point of view I decided what I wanted to do and what I could possibly accomplish. Then I decided what I could do. I had to review what I had done previously and what the school was currently doing. This involved much consultation with others to decide the strategy and plan how to best use the resources available to achieve my intentions.

The next stage was to decide what evidence to collect to help me make a valid judgement. As stated earlier, the project was set up for me to work with twenty-one boys of African-Caribbean parentage at the start of year 8. They were selected because they were regarded as underachievers. The term underachievement is commonly used today, and especially to label the achievement of Black boys. The group of boys selected to be on the project were regarded as able students whose effort in most classes was regarded as below average. The main reason for this was because of behaviour teachers often describe as not being conducive to learning. The main words used to describe their behaviour were: poor concentration, easily distracted, lack of focus and two were regarded as being rude. Therefore any intervention had to take this into consideration.

In his 1981 paper advising teacher researchers how to proceed, Elliott said that, in action research, 'theories are not validated independently and then applied to practice. They are validated through practice'. So, for instance, Elliott advised teachers to look carefully at the facts of a practical situation, and generate hypotheses or explanations which they could explore further, and which could lead to a 'general plan' being constructed to

enable intervention to take place with the intention of improving practice. I had a crude understanding of the issue from my previous work with Black students in my school. I also knew that given their ability these boys should be doing better academically. As a Black female teacher I believed that I was in a position to gain an understanding of the factors affecting these boys achievement through focused attention and motivated by my Christian faith. I had to consider my own embeddedness (cultural, professional, and socially) and the influence this has on my investigation. Initially I had to work with the boys to come to an understanding of my dual role as teacher and researcher. My role as a researcher involved being a role model, arbitrator, confidante, supervisor and observer. All these roles were included in my job as a teacher, but were to be exercised to a greater degree.

The following is a diagram of the action research model which I adopted:

Problem formulation > Analysis of theory development to date > Design intervention >
Data collection > Data analysis > New questions

Formulating the problem involved paying attention to my intuition. Intuition is often regarded as primitive and an unreliable way of knowing but for me it was important to start with experience – listening and becoming aware of what I was hearing from teachers, students and my inner state. My faith demanded that I went beyond my experience to look for answers and identify influences, always recognising that experience conditions emotional responses. In setting up the scheme I had to develop a plan with clear direction, but one with room for revision and adjustments.

This required devising a programme for parents and students which I felt would increase the boys level of motivation and positively impact behaviour and peer influence.

Throughout the three years the data collection and data analysis process was ongoing and lead to appropriate intervention because the purpose of the research was to promote improvement. It was also important that any new understanding was informed by multiple sources.

Data collection methods

Several methods were used to collect data to pursue the aims and objectives given earlier, namely:

1. Questionnaires – using both open and closed questions

The questionnaires were completed during PSE sessions usually as part of the planned activities.

2. Semi-structured interviews

This method was used with individual boys and also the whole group and was tape recorded. Open questions were used as a guide after boys were told the purpose of the discussion.

3. **Field notes/Case histories – the entire project is a case history of individual boys.**
Therefore data has been consistently collected over three years about them.
4. **Focus Groups interview – this was the form of parents workshops. Although I had a topic prepared for each workshop all the parents took part. I was not an expert except to the extent that I had eight years teaching experience with young people.**
5. **Non-participant observer – I regularly observed the boys in PSE sessions led by the Windsor Fellowship. To what extent can I claim that their behaviour was normal?**
The Hawthorne Effect : Are my observations reliable?
6. **Participant observer – I acted as an observer during the PSE sessions that I led, yet I was a participant. The boys continued to view me as a teacher but also saw me as a confidant. Because they saw me regularly, sometimes daily, in the PSE sessions they were relaxed but I am not sure they ever forgot I was a teacher. Yet I am not sure this matters. I did not want them to forget.**

The type of observation varied as follows:

Passive observation took place when I observed another adult lead the session and I did not interact verbally with the boys unless they requested my input, which they did at times.

Moderate participation occurred when I supported another group leader and took some part in the activities/discussions

Active participation occurred when I led the group activity. Although I was part of the group I directed it rather than participated fully.

Complete participation occurred where I was involved in the group activity, where the group was being led by another. This was difficult as I had to collect data and maintain a questioning and reflexive stance.

Triangulation was done to help ensure reliability. Several data collection methods were used to investigate the research problem so that the results obtained could be compared.

My desire was to help these boys pursue the goal of reaching their true potential by helping them to identify their gifts – a goal they all subscribed to at the initial meeting and frequently since then. I recognised that my initial sample was of a group that were seen as having the potential to gain 5 or more A – Cs, so the emphasis was mainly on stimulating cognitive ability by supporting emotional ability and hence create balance.

Working with these boys lead to an awareness that liberating information can disorientate. Throughout the three years they were faced with the fact that thoughts about self had been influenced by false information/mis-education, imposed by the dominant culture. They had to be trained not to fight back, but instead be better prepared and to use

the knowledge positively to enhance learning. They had to become aware of the fact that they had lived in a mainly false world, socially constructed by others that they do not have to accept or comply with any longer yet recognise that they had knowingly and unknowingly participated in it so far.

A further awakening was accepting the fact that they were no longer reduced to a product or an effect of the action of others nor are they autonomous. I believe firmly that the Bible empowers Blacks to resist dehumanisation of our culture and to exercise our God given power by continuing God's work of unfolding and developing the in-built potential of creation throughout human history. This involves living lives that blesses and enhances the lives and well-being of others. I recognised that the change that my action research might demand could lead to conflict because it might create a refusal to accept the present system but I believed collaboration would lead to alternative ways for the good of all. Yet I was prepared to face conflict and disapproval.

CHAPTER 4 DESCRIPTION OF ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT AND THE CYCLES

It is the close observation of little things in life which is the secret of success in every pursuit of life

Samuel Smiles 1866

It is not possible today, if indeed it ever was, to prejudge what a person is thinking. If we engage in conversation, we need to hear what people say, with a background knowledge which can help us to understand the significance of their thinking.

Anonymous

Triangulation is very important to an action research project. Therefore throughout the three years various methods were used to collect data for the purposes stated below and to ensure greater reliability:

- School statistics – to gain an understanding of boys prior academic performance
- Focus group interviews – to give students the opportunity to express their views as to factors affecting their academic performance.
- Semi-structured interviews with individuals – as above
- Questionnaires including open and closed questions – as above
- Personal and Social Education workshops as
 - observer
 - participant observer
 - leader – as above

The flow of the cycles over the three year period is explained below and the purpose of collecting the data including how each fits in with my objectives and limitations of the method.

My decision to undertake a research project was based on the certain premise that intervention in the form of a mentoring scheme would help African-Caribbean boys have a better experience of school , reduce exclusions and achieve better exam results. Similar reports about Black girls indicated that they were gaining better exam results compared to Black boys. This has created much speculation as to why there is this difference in gender performance at GCSE exams.

This intervention had to be voluntarily undertaken and operated outside the normal classroom as directed by senior management because they felt a more discrete approach was better. This was not my preferred approach.

I needed to understand why these students, who were on par with their peers in primary school perform so badly in exams even though their attendance to school is good.

The year 11 support programme mentioned earlier ran from September 1996 to May 1997. Twenty YR 11 boys were identified as underachievers using school based data e.g. last two subject reports and verbal reports from teachers expressing concerns at these boys effort in class and lack of coursework production. Letters were sent to parents explaining the purpose of the scheme and asking for them to reply if they did not wish for their son to be a participant. All the parents agreed for their sons to be mentored and many rang up to express thanks. All Black and Asian teachers were asked to become mentors of one or two of these students. This was a recommendation made when I

interviewed a group of Black boys in the sixth form. My colleague and I had agreed that they represented positive role models. Parents were informed of their sons mentor and encouraged to keep in regular contact especially with regards to coursework and homework. Likewise, mentors were given a copy of their mentee's latest report and timetable and parents contact number and encouraged to meet once per week.

My role during this period involved liaising with the teachers of this group, checking that homework and coursework was being completed and also having regular meetings with the boys individually and as a whole group. Many staff were aware of the scheme and started to use it instead of the school's normal discipline procedures. Most of the boys had several pieces of unfinished coursework and so the staff welcomed the additional support. This meant that members of the group would be taken to my classroom when they were perceived as misbehaving. Often they were left while I continued with my teaching. Some members of staff would change their discipline tactic when they saw me much to the boy(s) concerned relief. During this time I came to realize some of what these boys were experiencing in school. They were de-motivated and found it hard to complete work that was below their capabilities. This I found very frustrating.

In March 1997 I undertook a small survey using a questionnaire with both closed and open questions to evaluate the scheme and the findings were as follows:

- Fifty per cent wanted to go on to college after year 11, the other 50% wanted to stay on in the sixth form
- They all wanted to go on into the workplace but none had any aspiration to be a professional eg. Lawyer, doctor, teacher, Engineer, Accountant

- Only seven found it easy to study and complete homework at home
- The things they would like to see change in the school were
 - further action if work is not taken seriously
 - two teachers in one classroom
 - more time between teacher and student
 - more input of Black culture
 - Black mentors
 - help with motivation
 - teachers to listen more so they:
 1. Have a better understanding of what is happening in lessons
 2. Understand the background we are coming from
 3. Understand that the majority of Black people feel lost.

It was interesting to note that these points were similar (some identical) to the points raised by sixth form students in 1993 and very much the same as points raised by the group I am working with when they were in Year 8. A summary of the points were given to senior management and they became the basis of the first discussion with the Windsor Fellowship.

The GCSE result of the pilot group published in August 1997 was as follows:

Number of grades A-C	Number of boys achieving
5A-C	1
4A-C	1

3A-C	1
2A-C	2
1A-C	8

This result was disappointing even though I was aware of the situation I was working with. In the last few months the boys did make an effort but they also warned me that it was too late. They recommended I did the same work with Black boys from the time they arrived from primary school or in year 8.

Action Research: Cycle 1

Planning

I had been thinking seriously about starting a mentoring scheme and after discussion with my colleague, the then Head of Year 7 we decided that a scheme for Key Stage 3 starting in Year 8 seemed the most sensible as by that year the novelty of starting a new school has faded and it is also identified as the year group that receives the least attention (not much goes on in terms of them no longer being new, nor do they have options to choose etc;). The year 11 support programme was a voluntary one and it was obvious from initial enquiries of the Senior Management Team (SMT) that any further scheme would also be voluntary. Despite this I felt I needed answers and the scheme would help me find some.

Between January 1997 and June 1997 I had several meetings with the then Head teacher and other members of the SMT. The first meeting took place in January where I

expressed the desire to start a mentoring scheme. Permission was given immediately but with no commitment to extra time or resource.

In early February I had another meeting between myself, my colleague and a member of SMT. The purpose of that meeting was to discuss:

- Selection of mentors
- Confidentiality
- Financing of the scheme – where will the money come from?
- SMT's involvement

It was agreed that mentors would have to be teachers as the process of getting police clearance for outside mentors was very long winded and no time was to be given for me to carry out the administration involved in this process.

In April I had another meeting with the same SMT member to discuss and agree:

- Results of the survey of the students on the pilot project
- Objectives of the school and the scheme
- The diaries to be used to record data
- When should the workshops take place -during normal lessons, in PSE,
-during IAP time or after school??
- Support group

The suggestion that the scheme be integrated with the IAP (individual action planning) or with PSE was swiftly dismissed by the Head of PSE and the Head of RE (who was in charge of IAP). With much disappointment I then looked for alternative ways of running

it. Doing so outside of school hours seemed the most feasible option and SMT were happy with this.

I was informed by another deputy, that there was a possibility of getting funding via SRB. I submitted a proposal for funding of the mentoring scheme and attached the OFSTED Inspection Report and the school's Action Plan as supporting evidence. It was approved and funding was received to pay for the outside trainer who led the after school PSE programs for one term each year. I have received funding via this route each year since.

In May another meeting was held with the same SMT member and we decided on:

- Selection of students
- Informing parents and students – which first?
- Indicators to be used to identify “underachievers”
- Impact on white students
- The need to anticipate queries and have suitable answers

After this meeting I had to go away and devise strategies for responding to queries from parents, students and teachers. I was excited yet apprehensive about what parents response would be and spent sometime trying to anticipate their queries/questions/concerns. It was then time to have a meeting with the Year Manager and Deputy Year Manager of Year 7. Both were extremely helpful and gave me a variety of test results and their own observations of students they felt were underachieving. I

also requested information from tutors and classroom teachers. It was clear that many had problems identifying Black boys and I had to clear up in my own mind and for the teachers who was to be included.

Action

There was a total of 136 male students in Year 7 at the time, 48 of whom were regarded as African Caribbean. Of the 48 a total of 40 were identified as underachieving. After much discussion it was agreed that 25 was a manageable group and so initially this number of students were targeted. Permission was given by the school to take the boys off timetable for the initial meeting where the scheme was explained to them. I made the decision to inform the boys first and then the parents. Some of the boys were able to understand straight away what underachievement was and that they were underachieving. Others expressed fear and embarrassment by what they saw as a negative label. One asked why white boys were not part of the scheme. I explained that Black boys were the group identified as having the lowest achievement and so were the ones being targeted by the current project but that a later project might be set up for other students. The meeting ended with all the boys agreeing that they needed to work harder and they gave consent to be part of the scheme.

After this meeting letters were sent out to parents informing them that their son(s) were selected to be part of the scheme and asking them to attend a meeting. Later on a further nine letters were sent out. In the end 21 parents gave permission for their sons to take part in the project. Fourteen members of staff (Black and White) were asked to consider

becoming mentors. Many were delighted to be asked but some declined for various reasons. It was noticeable that two of the people who declined became mentors of white boys a few months later when I helped the then Head of Year 10 set up a mentoring scheme for year 10 students. This scheme did not last long. I did not discuss this with either of the two, nor did they ever volunteer an explanation.

In June 1997 a half day INSET was arranged for mentors led by myself and a consultant from the Windsor Fellowship (the charity appointed to lead the after school PSE sessions). All the mentors were given time off to attend this INSET and their lessons covered as was appropriate. The purpose of the meeting was to explain the aims and objectives of the scheme and the role of the mentor. The 'issue' of time to do mentoring was raised and also how to help students deal with the stigma associated with being part of such a group.

During August 1997 much of my time was spent in school organising the resource for the scheme. This involved:

- Designing the diaries (mentors and mentees)
- Deciding the topics to be covered in the after school PSE sessions and parents workshop and the resource to be used
- Preparing notes for mentors

Review/Reflections

The main purpose of the PSE program was to impact behaviour positively by helping the boys to confront the part that they contribute (highlighted in the meeting at the start) to their own underachievement and to adopt corrective strategies. The idea was to observe behaviour traits with a view to using these observations to determine where help was needed most and develop programs that would help correct negative traits. The program also included views from discussion with tutors, Head of Year and the first meeting with the boys. There was overwhelming relief from staff that this program was being implemented and great expectation of its benefit. I am still amazed to this day that so many felt the program was needed yet so few were prepared to be involved.

The after school PSE sessions took place in my tutor room which was also my main classroom. The size and structure is similar to that which the boys are used to on a daily basis. The walls are decorated with material specific to my tutor group and the subject I teach. I ensured these were all positive images for a diversity of cultures. The furniture was invariably organised in a circle to give an informal, team spirit approach. The boys accepted this and when asked if they would prefer the furniture some other way would always decline any change.

In order to gain an understanding of the boys and find out what they knew, the first meeting in September 1997 was based on finding out about: self, history, notions of good/bad behaviour, reasons for underachievement. To identify where they were in terms of understanding of the issue I encouraged lots of discussion. Throughout the three

years I encouraged times for reflection to get them to decide where they wanted to be and to build up my own knowledge and understanding of them.

I placed much emphasis on creating a sense of belonging to increase the boys acceptance to a community and also worked hard to engender a belief in self. I did this because I felt these two were needed before appropriate changes in behaviour could take place. I was pleasantly surprised at how quickly I developed a relationship with the boys, parents and mentors. There was an openness that made communicating easy and free. A true team spirit was quickly established and my role as team leader and manager became obvious. My one reservation was the loss of my own personal time and I struggled to maintain room just for myself. Throughout the school all groups – boys, parents, SMT and staff felt my time was theirs and it was difficult for me to set a boundary around my time as teacher, co-ordinator of the scheme and just a work colleague. The satisfaction from running the program outweighed the pressure of demands on my time and so I juggled myself between the roles because I had committed myself to three years.

Action Research: Cycle 2

The majority of my work during the three years was with the boys and their parents. Most of my work with the mentors took place in the first two years. Several themes emerged from my diary, discussions/interviews with the boys and their parents and observation of PSE sessions. The main ones included:

- Teacher racism
- Lack of awareness/ignorance of Black teachers and Governors
- The frustrations and challenges of being a Black boy in school
- Black parents apathy
- The frustration and excessive workload involved in being a teacher researcher
- School Management neglect of the issue being investigated

Some of the ways these themes manifested are given in the section “incidents and implications”. Below I have included details of some of the work covered in the after school PSE program.

Action

The group leader for the first term was a Black lady and the first session took place on 17 September 1997. During a brainstorm session students were asked to explain their

understanding of the term “underachieving”. A variety of answers were given which centred around “talking in lessons instead of working because lessons are boring”. A second exercise required them to say why learning was important to them. Answers given included:

- To get a job
- To go to university
- To get an education in order to get a job.

All valued education (and later showed this by their attendance to a voluntary program to help them do so). Because attendance was voluntary I assumed that boys would behave well. However there were times when I observed very inappropriate behaviour. There was much lack of concentration demonstrated by constant chatter. It was very difficult to get the boys to be quiet and to listen properly to one another. Peer conforming traits were very visible and I was reminded time and again as to why they had been selected.

Concentration and pride in their achievement was the first thing that had to be worked at.

Yet all said they wanted to learn.

Review

As an observer I was frustrated and confused as to how involved I should become, especially when they displayed a lack of concentration. There was a huge gap between the boys behaviour on an individual basis and what they were actually giving in a group situation. Together they were a happy, joyful, confident and playful group that craved attention.. It was clear that such behaviour in a traditional class would negatively impact their effort and cause friction with the teacher who preferred a quiet environment. I

therefore had to consider how to help the boys tailor their behaviour for the classroom without dampening their enthusiasm. Yet I also wanted them to obey normal class rules. Should I apply normal classroom rules in a voluntarily attended scheme? For example, should I set consequences for late arrivals?

After the third session letters were sent home to inform parents of the scheme's performance to date and to ask parents to encourage their sons to attend all the sessions and on time.

T Savage (1991) claims that the three basic forces that influence the amount of effort expended on a particular act include:

- The interest and needs of the individual
- The perceived difficulty of the task
- The expectation of success

Many Black students do not believe that the expenditure of effort in school will lead to success for them. They have a keen interest in school but are not motivated to try because of the belief that there is little chance of success. The boys knew what they needed to do to achieve but were doing the opposite. They needed to be convinced that they could succeed as the fear of failure often stops them from trying. They sabotage their success by creating distractions, often with peers who collude with them. I felt the boys needed to understand the relationship between behaviour and consequences and be helped to make value judgements of their behaviour and identify consequences. They needed to develop a sense of purpose and because it was difficult changing their

circumstances I needed to help them develop persistence and perseverance. I had no doubts at all that mentoring worked but was forced to see it as a long term solution, as a process/journey that took time. This was one of the purpose of having them keep a mentoring diary and to undertake activities to develop habits of the mind as expoused by Dr Bernard (1996).

Action

It was important to get the boys to express their experience of school and so in the second week they undertook the following activity:

What I like about school	My ideal school	What I hate about school
BIT(but not the teacher)	choice of food	detentions
Break	no racist/sexist comments	homework
Clubs eg; football	no bullying	letters home
Going on trips chairs	longer breaks	school table and
DT(but not the teacher)	able to wear trainers	Languages
Watching videos in lesson	less strict teachers	school uniform
Swimming/PE/Playing	go home early	too much greasy food

Maths/Art teachers	computer games room	some horrible
Tutor period	BMX bike track	
Lunch	homework less often	

It was obvious the boys had a preference for sports and practical lesson and that they liked some lessons despite not liking the teacher. It was also clear that they saw school more as a place for play rather than to pursue academic study. This was disturbing.

Bearing in mind the response to the activity above, I needed to find out from the boys their view of achievement and so the following activity was undertaken:

What things show that someone has achieved?	What things can people do to make sure they achieve?	What things stop people from achieving?
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Popularity	be polite to teacher	distractions
Family	no rudeness	stubbornness
Clean	do all your work	crimes

Fans	do not listen to friends	not taking it in, in class
Pride	swallow your pride	messing about in class
House/job	accept punishment when	pride
Respect	naughty	popularity

Working in peace

Money/good car

The boys had an overwhelming desire to have a family, money, flash car and a house.

These were the factors that led to being popular but working to acquire these early means forsaking higher education. No mention was made of education having an impact on achievement. When this was highlighted to them, they all felt education was very important, but still did not make any link between the level of education and a job. There was confusion as to the level of pride that one should have/demonstrate or even what it was. It was obvious the word had been used by parents/adults to them and they felt it was a positive quality to have, yet recognized that at times it had to be suppressed in order to get ahead. Being proud of self demanded that self be respected. However they recognised that some people will never give respect, especially those in authority, and so it is futile to demand it now. This they found very hard to do.

It was also interesting to note that they all saw failure to achieve as resting solely with the individual.

At the end of the first year I carried out a survey using questionnaire and looked at who had the most influence on the boys. I wanted to gain an insight into who/what the boys felt the main influences on their lives were. They responded as follows:

Parents	50%
Media	15%
Teachers	33%
Friends	33%

All stated that home was a place where they could study. The main issue that they were having to deal with was punctuality. The majority regularly arrived late because of going to bed late. When this was discussed with parents it came to light that they had little control over the time their child went to bed. The lowest average attendance for the boys over the three years is 91% and the highest is 99%. The student with the highest attendance also has the second highest average number of lates (47). Although they are keen to learn, there seems to be no urgency to get to class on time and they are often found slowing walk to class after a lesson had started. Attempts to reprimand them is like pouring water on a ducks back. This had to be explored and re-affirmed in workshop for both parents and boys.

No-one subject was preferred. The majority wanted to learn more about Black History. They did not note their peers as having the greatest influence on them and it was obvious that they all tended to be “shepherds” rather than “sheep”. They all had strong leadership ability and tended to be followed rather than be followers.

Another questionnaire survey gave the following result:

All noted that their sense of belonging comes from 1)Parents 2)friends 3) society 4) God – there was an overwhelming expression of belief in God.

Fourteen teachers were included in the category “worst teacher”, eleven of whom were young white female teachers. Their best teachers were described as ones who:

- Listens more
- Is more understanding
- Manage class better
- Gives tougher punishment/is more strict
- Responds quicker/gives help sooner
- Is more encouraging
- Is better prepared with work

Review

How did I use this? From these responses I decided to include more work in further PSE programs on self-control, exercise of patience and coping with negative speak.

The constant complaint from subject teachers was about the boys lack of concentration.

It is one of the overriding hindrances to their learning. There is a desire to be involved in chit chat while working. Students see nothing at all wrong with this but it drives teachers mad because this is not the style of learning they prefer students to adopt.

At the end of the first year I felt the programme was not doing anything for one particular boy and so had to ask him to leave. During the last session of that year the boys took part in a workshop looking at how society views them. The results were disturbing and were fed back to the Senior Management Team and the Windsor Fellowship were asked to

include more on Black History, self-esteem and racism. I came to understand what Sewell and Beckford found in their research that 'Black culture has been mobilized as a form of resistance to white oppression. It is the creative response of Black people trying to 'carve out an existence in a dehumanised white society' Beckford 1997, p135.

The second year of the scheme went ahead, with the first terms PSE session led again by the Windsor Fellowship. The program they delivered was designed in consultation with me – subject matter, dates and personnel. I had previously discussed with the organisation the need to have a Black male lead the group and this took place in September 1998 and I was pleased. I lost three of my Mentors and so had to recruit new ones. Three of the boys were excluded for a serious offence and later two were permanently excluded. I was distraught especially as the parents of one were strong supporters of the parents' workshop.

The program for the second year focused on a combination of personal and social skills and on academic work. This was decided after analysis of the end of year evaluations, school reports and, from by own observation of the group during the PSE sessions.

Action

The purpose of the racism workshop was to respond to the boys request and to increase their awareness of the fact of racism and to also raise their awareness of the structure of the job market and the impact of discrimination and to help them devise strategies to deal with and confront this issue. I knew they already had much experience of racism from the

workshop the previous year, from discussions with parents and from incidents with teachers the boys told me about.

When asked at the end of the 2nd year how the scheme had helped them the boys responded:

- Ashley- Helps me mind my own business
- Mubarick – Treat people fairly
- Jonathan – Taught me how to ignore people and don't retaliate
- Donovan – My self-control is better (Mentor and teachers had commented to me that his self-control was much improved)
- Marlon – Less arguments with teachers
- Aadam – better listening skills, better focused
- Greg – More controlled, can step back from situations
- Jason – learnt allot, but don't do it

It is interesting that at the start of the year when we had a target setting session the boys were unable or reluctant to specify the areas of their behaviour that needed changing but on reflection they are able to identify where change took place. They were often confused by teachers description of them on reports.

Much effort was put into getting the boys to set goals for their future during the third year. The expectation of all was still to have a family, car, house, job. Only one mentioned passing exam as a goal. The majority had a keen interest in sporting activities. In the end of year evaluation they again noted that the program had helped a lot but

especially it had given them the opportunity to talk about things. They really bonded together as a group and that was satisfying for me.

I wanted to get more in-depth feedback on the program and so organised a focus group meeting with the boys and this was tape recorded. In response to the question “How did you feel when you were asked to be a member of the project?” they replied:

“I was upset at the start, but once it was explained to me I thought it would help”

“I felt insulted, but once it was explained, I felt it was for the best”

“I didn’t like it, I felt quite dumb”

“We needed something to help us achieve our goal. I felt quite important. Not like some people who will stay at the bottom without help”

Researcher: “How did you feel about the scheme after the first two years?”

Boy: “I thought it was doing a lot, I was calming down more in school and in classes”

Boy: “My friends were jealous, they realized I was better focused and also the weekends away”

Researcher: “How much time do you spend with your parent(s)?”

Boy: “None, I don’t really talk to them”

Boy: “I talk with my mom sometimes but not much”

Boy: “My mom is deep into education, and she pesters me about school work”

Boy: “They try to show they are interested, but they just pretend”

Boy: “I talk to my mom a lot, but not much to my dad because he gets impatient if I don’t understand him quickly when he explains something”

In response to “How much help do you get with homework?”, they all replied that their parents learnt things differently when they were at school and so were limited in their ability to help them. When they did offer to help it sometimes led to confusion. They noted that parents did ask about homework but did not really check to see that it had been completed, they just accepted the answer “yes” and often it wasn’t complete. The sensitivity of some of the issues discussed made it a risk to explore and I had to assess the boys readiness before feeding back my observations. The analysis of the responses from these activities enabled me to develop individual plans for each.

At the end of year 10 they all took ½ GCSEs in IT and RE and the results were as follows:

August 2000 GCSE Results

Subject% A-C

IT	50
RE	33

Review/reflection

Throughout the programme three of the boys remained disruptive and at times they were asked to leave the session, yet their parents have been the most supportive of the scheme, attending most of the parents workshops. I expended much energy negotiating and

arbitrating on their behalf with parents, teachers and senior management so that they wouldn't get excluded. There were many issues affecting them that as one person I could not deal with but I worked with the parents to find additional help. Many times during meetings with parents I would observe inconsistencies in parent child interactions. This forced me to work on my own knowledge and understanding of parenting so I could more effectively help parents.

Fifteen boys remained on the scheme throughout the three years. Nine of them are African-Caribbean and six Africans. Five of the boys are from single parents home, three of these are where the relationship between mom and dad broke up recently (since starting secondary school). Two of the boys took this very badly and for a period of time were emotionally unstable and so they and their mothers needed regular support.

From the start of the project I was on call always and the boys would request that I deal with classroom issues often expecting me to act immediately. For example:

Boy: "Miss can you please talk to my English teacher. I am being distracted in class. Please ask her to move me to the front so I can sit on my own". I did and things got much better.

Boy: "Miss, can you please come and see us in Science. We are not learning anything. The class is disruptive". Over a period of weeks I monitored the class and on occasions would take some of the boys out to work with me. My negotiation skills were stretched to the limits on occasions and became far more refined as I tried to dispel tension.

The Daily Mail's article about Sewell's report to a seminar on low achievement was published in December 2000. I felt the boys needed to comment on the article which claimed that "Black culture" holds them back at school. I devised a questionnaire which they completed during a mentoring session after which we had a discussion.

They all acknowledge that they were affected by racism, culture and peer pressure. They felt the article was assuming that "Black students cause trouble because of lack of motivation." One boy expression summed up their views "I think the article is wrong and what they call "Black culture is not "Black culture" but a sub-culture for young boys not just Black boys. He felt that the term "Black culture" was being used too freely. Another boy reflected that Sewell was wrong and that he was stereotyping Black culture. Being a member of a peer group gave them a sense of value and security and protected them against the lack of affirmation from teachers. What they perceived from teachers was constantly supported by other sources, for example, the media.

I also asked two Black girls in year 11 to complete the questionnaire and tape-recorded an interview with them. One is the current head girl and both are doing well academically and are expected to gain more than 5 A-C grades in their GCSE exams. They both explained that as girls they had learnt from an early age to choose to be with "who" benefits them in school and not who hinders. They felt very much that parental support had given them the ability to exercise this will-power and having a strong Christian faith. They felt it was important that parents set boundaries and stick to them from the child is at an early age. When asked if they had encountered conflict with teachers they both said they had not recently. One explained that the only conflict she

can remember is one where the teacher had wrongly accused her and she had to get her mom to come in to resolve it. They both said they had learnt what teachers want and so gave it. When asked if they had noticed conflict between teachers and Black boys they gave what to me was an insightful response as follows:

“I have seen it – some of the teachers have left now. Teachers have behaved towards Black boys in a way as if to say ‘they are not worth it’. It is not the ultimate reason why Black boys underachieve. White teachers have a view of what Black boys are like before they go into the situation which influences the way they feel about them – stereotypical views held that Black boys are trouble makers – so they go into the classroom with their backs up, a mindset – attack mechanisms. This gets the boys back up and you get the behaviour you don’t want but expect. So you get a vicious circle. Nine out of ten times there is conflict to do with teachers views and attitudes towards the students. Black boys are pinpointed as likely troublemakers and so teachers plan to stop them before they even breathe.

I know teachers make things up. They exaggerate and teachers always back each other up. Whereas girls say ‘I am not going to let you dictate how I am going to behave and achieve. I don’t need to be praised and be received with open arms, boys expect this.’”

When asked if they had experienced racism the response was:

“It is not something you can pin-point – it is too subtle. It is not something you can say is obvious because he/she called me this. It is so unnoticeable. Unless you have an eye for it you will never know. Not that you are looking for it – it is an awareness, not an event

so you can't give specific time and date. It happens everywhere where people are different.

Whites will think you are one-sided when you tell them this. They will never understand unless you are Black. To change you need to target Whites who are open-minded and they can influence others. To change the boys reactions you need to break them all, not just one of them". This really re-affirmed much of what I had found. It also so clearly fit in with Mirza's (1998: 268-277) findings which suggests that Black women do not resist as boys do but instead have evolved a system of strategic rationalisation which has its own logic, values and codes. Black women struggle for educational inclusion in order to transform their opportunities and so in the process subvert racist expectations and beliefs. These girls so clearly articulated this truth.

Mentors were encouraged to see mentees once a fortnight. It had been agreed in a meeting with a member of the SMT that these meetings could take place during registration and mentors who were tutors would get covered by their Head of Year. The majority of them agreed to this in principle but in practice it never really happened. This proved very difficult to arrange. At the end of the first term most mentors had seen their mentee but not on the regular basis I desired. Many mentors had failed to keep their diaries. On several occasions I asked mentors for the diaries they were asked to keep for themselves and for their mentee(s) and had diaries from only two mentors. Although the boys attended the after school session they often failed to have meetings with their mentor. It was clear that some mentees got on better with their mentor and after the first term one boy asked if his mentor could be changed. Some mentors did not put any effort

at all into the scheme and it was sometimes frustrating and I had to reflect on why they had agreed to become mentors. I had to acknowledge that taking on the role of a mentor involved additional responsibility in an already full schedule and so there existed tension between having empathy with mentors and wanting the job done. I had to consider this when appointing new mentors.

In 1998 two of the most committed mentors left to take other jobs and a year later a further two left. This was very hard for me to deal with. It also became increasingly difficult for me to meet with mentors due to the change in the school day in 1999 where staff had staggered lunch breaks. This really led to the phasing out of the role of the mentor and I had to take on the task of mentoring all the boys.

I received much praise for my work throughout the three years and this was confirmed by two evaluations, using questionnaires asking mentors for feedback of the purpose of the mentoring scheme and their effectiveness as mentors. Only three mentors responded via the questionnaire and I include a summary of their response below:

March 1999

1. Good idea

2. Able to fulfill role only weakly

March 2000

Regularly remind mentee but they fail to attend meetings

Frequent demand on time, idea great but practice flawed, system needs to be supported by real time rather than goodwill

3.Excellent idea

This mentor has been passionate about the scheme throughout

Parents - An integral part of the project was to underpin the work done with the boys by involving parents in their own support programme. The aim of the parents workshop was to further the partnership between the school and parents in order to help the boys maximise their educational potential and to explore school focused and parenting issues.

The more complex a social system becomes the higher the level of emotional maturity and formal education needed to negotiate that system successfully. The emotional maturity of parents directly correlates to the level of functioning researched by children.

It is more important than income.

Mothers are the first teachers and they have a responsibility to teach pride and respect for cultural, historical and genetic Blackness – celebrate their history.

My aims was to increase awareness of parents about their role as parents with a view to include: parent education groups and classes, and to explore specific aspects of parenting such as children's behaviour than the more informal interventions which occur at parents evening, phone calls and to create other settings where parents and children visit to receive advice and information about their child. From the perspective of practitioners in primary care, there are a variety of reasons for running parent education programmes (see Combes & Schonveld, 1992; Rowe and Mahony, 1993; Pugh *et al.*, 1994). These include:

- Improving the mental health of parents and of children.
- Improving social support networks among parents.
- Improving parents' knowledge, understanding and skills in dealing with their children's behaviour and supporting their development.
- Increasing the confidence of parents.
- Increasing parents' pleasure in their children.
- Reducing the number of exclusions which are often a strain on parents
- Improving parents' ability to make use of services and provision, and to ask for/organise provision where it does not exist.

My intention was to positively influence as many of the above as I could. The desired outcome was to have parents who were better at parenting because of a better understanding of the needs of their child and so the Parenting Workshops were designed to explore issues including:

- Basic physical care —security and safety
- Affection and approval
- Discipline and control—which are consistent and age appropriate
- Teaching and stimulation
- Provision of normal life experiences
- Response to the child's changing needs and awareness that these needs have precedence over the parent's needs

- Positive role models—‘children are educated by what the grown up *is* and not by what he says’ (Jung, 1968).

The parent workshops were attended mainly by five parents, four of Caribbean heritage. Attendance was usually very inconsistent and over the three years parents of fifteen of the boys attended meeting at least once. The boys of the four Caribbean parents tended to be the ones mostly in ‘trouble’ with the school.

Parents tended to need much emotionally support and displayed signs of being caught up in materialism. They seem to believe that providing materially for a child can compensate for lack of communication and emotional support. Boys are forced to be hard, and so do not have a safe place at home to show concerns, weaknesses, hurt etc; they spend most of their time with their peers who give them support not available anywhere else. The main themes/issues evolving from the parent workshops were:

Theme

Observation

Listening to their child

Parents had definite ideas of right and wrong – no space given for negotiating, very little time set aside to talk. Parents felt child didn’t need it

Setting boundaries

Discipline ideas were very authoritarian and is a reflection of what these parents had experienced as children, yet there was looseness. Threats were frequently made by some but not carried out.

Bedtime rules were set but parents seemed unable to enforce these.

Homework

There was no regular pattern of checking that child was doing/had done homework. Child is trusted to tell truth even after several times of lying.

Career guidance/future

Very little discussion about this took place, yet parents had great aspiration for their child. There was a strong belief that the school was doing this and parents felt they were being role models by their ability to hold down a decent job.

Awareness of child's friends/peers

Some knowledge but no control over choice even when it is obvious peers are having negative impact

Black History

Parents all had a little general knowledge, but little or no specific knowledge of Black history.

Parents involvement with the school

All the parents of the boys on the scheme attend parents evenings and the majority will attend other meetings and will ring in when they have concerns. There is potential for these visits to the school to be

more effective, where parents accept a less passive role and can contribute to strategies designed to help their children.

Relationship with child

There is a tendency for parents to disclose far too much information to the child – information about how much they had done for the child, as if their parental role is an obligation rather than a responsibility which they choose. Very often the single parent would remind the child of the sacrifice they are making for them even though the other partner is failing to fulfill their role. Yet this same child is also treated as an adult/partner when it suits the parents and emotional baggage is off loaded on to him. Some parents are very confrontational and on occasions have shamed the child in my presence. Parents reflected that it was hard for them to say sorry – and very seldom if ever do they question whether their approach is right or wrong. All the boys are well provided for materially.

Most of the boys displayed respect to their parents. However, three of the boys were at times very disrespectful and I was required to step in and exert some discipline. Yet these same boys at times displayed poor behaviour that I felt needed correcting, but

which the parents found funny and laughed at. The inconsistent boundaries led to confusion.

Incidents and implications

One conclusion of the Swann Report (1985) stated:

We do think that the problem (of Black boys underachievement) is complex and subtle and needs much more research if it is ever to be understood in full.

Because of the subtlety and complexity of racism and the processes of interpretation, recipients may 'pick up the vibes' of racism, but if asked to describe exactly what happened and why the interaction was racist, find it difficult to produce evidence (Nehaul, 1996 pg161). Throughout the study I was able to collect detailed evidence resulting from my constant contact with the various parties.

The following illustrates a number of incidents that occurred during the three years of my study which I believe sheds some light on some of the factors that impact the issue being investigated. They are important because, had I not been operating the mentoring scheme I would not have become aware of these occurrences.

1. It is helpful to get the support of the governing body of the school for any project. I was enthusiastic about the mentoring scheme and given the nature of the project I sought support from a Black governor. My first attempt to interact with him was my first encounter with a Black person who felt they had gained a position of respectability and under no condition should I rock the boat. Subsequent attempts to meet with him were shunned completely. I experienced embarrassment but realised

why we were not moving forward and resolved to press on regardless. My assumption was that he was aware of the plight of Black boys and like me was prepared to address this.

2. It seemed reasonable and a good idea to integrate the mentoring scheme into the schools PSE programme and this was agreed with a member of the senior management team. However every attempt to discuss this with the then Head of PSE was dismissed and a meeting arranged for this purpose was not attended. Later attempts to discuss the matter were refused on grounds of busyness. There was a refusal to reveal the contents of the PSE programme and a request to know “what politics you are into and what about equal opportunities?” Again I had the sense that it would be preferred if I just left things as they were. All the talk about raising achievement was just rhetoric. I recognised that my work would be viewed as political because it represented the interest of a particular group. However I know my work is educationally led not purely politically.

3. Given that the curriculum areas that the scheme could be integrated in did not want this to happen, I resolved to recommend relevant INSET to heads of curriculum areas. An INSET to help Heads of Maths and Science deal with the underachievement of African Caribbean boys led by another London borough was recommended to the heads of those areas. One was delighted and grateful, the other responded “What are you doing for White boys?” I explained to him that I would be happy to help him set up such a programme. My offer was not taken up indicating yet again a smoke screen

to avoid doing something. As an action researcher I did not choose to work from a perspective that would needlessly disempower another group or create barriers. My desire was that all would benefit through improved shared practices and shared understanding in a shared situation.

4. The mentoring scheme was publicized to the extent that it was mentioned in the weekly staff bulletin. It was also explained at the year meeting for the group concerned i.e. Year 7. In naivety I expected overwhelming staff support. This was not to be in some cases. Instead there were several incidents where staff deliberately tried to undermine what I was doing.

a) On several occasions I would put notes in the register for the boys to remind them of meetings and PSE sessions. Many would later ask me why they hadn't received a note even though they were in registration.

b) Many would give the boys detentions at the time when they knew the boys had after school PSE session deliberately as they felt this would force me to get involved in whatever issue/problem they had with that boy.

5. During INSET day the Head teacher asked me to lead a mentoring workshop. In the details that went out about the workshop it clearly stated that it would be about factors that affect African-Caribbean boys schooling and which led to underachievement. I led two workshops each with a maximum capacity for 20 staff.

I was pleasantly surprised when both were fully attended. Many staff congratulated me on leaving and commented on how much more enlightened they were. I was horrified a day later by the comments of a teacher who wanted to know “why I wasn’t also doing something for white working class boys”. The teacher further made a request that I reconcile the view that “Black boys underachieve yet they have good attendance but White boys underachieve mainly due to truanting with the fact that Black boys have the highest incidence of exclusions”.

6. The first PSE session led by a white staff ended in disaster. I was out on INSET that day and when I returned the teacher was distraught. The boys behaved very badly and in the end the session had to be abandoned. The teacher concerned wrote a statement evaluating and reflecting on what happened and wrote the following thoughts:

“My assumptions were that:

- 1) because the session was not a formal lesson, and attendance was voluntary there was no need to impose usual classroom conditions. 2) they would want to participate without coercion 3) I would be acknowledged as someone who was there to work with not against.

My mistakes were to:

- 1) assume the above 2) attempt to correct loutish behaviour 3) explain that I was disappointed by their reaction to me 4) ask them to do my written work 5) create groups without reference to scheme coordinator

My worries are that:

1) opinions/attitudes towards me as classroom teachers (whether good or bad) have been brought into the group 2)I failed to deliver the session in a way that they are accustomed.

My deeper worry is that as a white man I'm not seen as fitting into the view about who should be facilitating the boys”.

I led a special session with the boys to discuss what had happened and they wrote a letter of apology. They recognised that their behaviour with this teacher was different from the norm and that their behaviour had been unacceptable. They had not arrived with the intention to reject the teacher, but somehow they still felt resentment even though in a normal classroom setting they quite liked and respected him.

7. While teaching one of the boys on the Year 11 mentoring scheme came to get me urgently. He needed me to intervene in an incident between another boy and a member of the senior management team. As I approached there was obvious conflict between the student and the member of staff and they were being observed by another teacher. As soon as the two teachers saw me their whole demeanor changed and the boy who was being reprimanded was dismissed. I asked the boys what had happened and they explained that they were mucking about and one accidentally bumped into the teacher. The teacher immediately accused him of physical assault. The other teacher immediately lent support to his colleague. I was so angry and still am as I write this at the injustice of it all, yet my hands were tied.

8. I had a sudden realisation that many of our young white female teachers were having a hard time with Black boys and at the heart of the matter was their racism. During the first year of the scheme there was a hard core group of about six teachers who fed off each others negative views of Black boys and complained to me constantly about their behaviour. Initially I gave them the benefit of the doubt and reprimanded the boys who they said was causing trouble and put them all on report. On talking through the issue with a senior staff we realized that the boys were being treated unfairly. This meant taking them off timetable and speaking with them and allowing them to explaining what was happening. After several meetings I felt I had won back the boys trust. I spoke to one head of curriculum area about the problems a staff in his department was having with Black boys. It was explained to me that the problem was with the staff concerned who needed to become more aware of their own prejudices yet the day after both of them were agitated at me in the staffroom and didn't want to speak. I reflected that as an adult I was having the hardest time dealing with teacher racism. How then did I expect 13 year old boys to cope?? On reading what the teacher had written about him one of the boys explained "I'm not being funny Miss, but I think that teacher has pictures in the head about me, definitely pictures in the head about me, and sees things that are not me". Another explained "I went up with my work and I touched the teacher on the shoulder and the teacher shrunk away and asked me not to touch and looked at me as if I had aids". He later went home and complained to his mother who rang the school the next day. This highlights to me what Sewell states, that these teachers are treating the boys according to a perception (wrong perception) that they have in their heads even

though the boys were not exerting any phallogentric style masculinity to intimidate them.

9. I had to deal with the dilemma of undermining teachers and letting the students know that I am there for them as a support and confidante. Over a two months period I grew very weary and everything just seemed to be going wrong. I was confused and angry and started expecting things to go wrong. I didn't seem able to get through to others what I was experiencing and there was an overwhelming sense of rejection. In my anger I came over as being aggressive and everyone assumes I am just behaving badly without taking the time to find out why. Then the penny dropped! This is what Black boys are experiencing on a daily basis. Therefore in sheer frustration they give up and become rebellious.

10. While dismissing my last class for the day four of the boys on the scheme burst into my class and were visibly upset and one who was very angry kept repeating "Miss I am so angry, please calm me down". This child is normally very clam and self-controlled and so I was extremely concerned. I hurriedly dismissed my class and ushered the four into the room where we normally meet. They explained that they had just come out of History, where the teacher had shown them a video of a recently released movie. They had not seen the whole film and so were confused about the context. They felt embarrassed and belittled by what they saw and ridiculed by the teacher. They didn't feel properly briefed about the film. I tried to explain the context as I had seen the film at the cinema and we then moved on to look at the topic

planned for the evening “self-concept”. The session ran over time because the boys were hungry for discussion about who they were and about slavery etc. As they were leaving, the boy who had been angry earlier came up and hugged me and said “Miss, I feel uplifted. I can walk home proud with my head held high”. I feel elated.

11. Throughout the three years the administration of co-coordinating the scheme and running the PSE programmes for students in the Spring and Summer terms and leading parents workshop was overwhelming. At times I was burdened by the realities of the workload and this forced me to continually re-assess my vision.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

Although much can be accomplished by means of individual industry and energy, it must be acknowledged that the help which we derive from in the journey of life is of great importance. From infancy to old age, all are more or less indebted to others for nurture and culture; and the best and strongest are usually found the readiest to acknowledge such help.

Samuel Smiles 1866

The purpose of this project was to gain a better understanding of factors affecting this groups schooling in order to help prevent underachievement. It provided access into the 'inner' world of the boys and their parents and I had an opportunity to look more closely at the activities of my school. In order to judge the schemes effectiveness, evidence was generated from teachers, parents, the group of boys and my own observations. The boys completed compulsory education in June 2001 and attended the weekly after school PSE workshop up to the end. The length of the project gave me an opportunity to collect substantial facts for my conclusion. The Autumn 2001 GCSE results were as follows:

	<u>%A-C</u>
Whole School	18
Boys	20
African-Caribbean boys	18

At the start of the project I had envisage the outcomes to be:

- 1. A document for teachers with information about how to impact/influence the behaviour/attitude of this group of students in order to raise achievement**
- 2. A set of guidelines to help students better manage their behaviour/attitude and hence improve achievement**
- 3. Develop tighter links between parents of this group and the school**
- 4. Black boys achievement to be on par with the school and exclusions to be reduced**

The following limitations were also identified as likely at the outset:

- 1. Inconsistent support from school management**
- 2. Mentors unable to keep diaries and appointments**
- 3. Mentees not accepting support and not meeting appointments**
- 4. Parents unable to stick to their initial commitment to be supportive**
- 5. Possible resentment from some staff who see the project as favouritism towards some students**
- 6. Resentment from parents and students both Black and White who may feel that one particular group is being singled out.**

All the expected outcomes have happened/been achieved. All the limitations identified at the start impacted the study to some degree as has been highlighted. I found action research a great instrument for change in a school. It gave me an all-encompassing view and allowed me to carry through and monitor the project from start to finish so that my judgements are based on 3 ½ years work not just a single experience. It also helped me

to identify where resource was needed and in my case helped me find resources to meet a need that clearly existed. It forced me to make time for the boys, parents and the various agencies I worked with and has given me greater knowledge and increased language with which to discuss the issues involved. I was also forced to look at the education process from the point of view of the researcher, teacher and to scrutinize the role of SMT. This was an opportunity to tell "the story" myself rather than allowing others outside to do so based on limited experiences and assumptions. It left me intolerant of the injustices I found and with a determination to fight it. It is an important tool for teacher professional development and has extended my leadership skills, especially the ability to plan, monitor and communicate with a variety of people.

The mentoring scheme operated in a school for which behaviour is and has been a whole school issue. I was aware that it would be difficult to attempt to impact these boys behaviour in isolation. Yet I was delighted by reports from teachers of positive change in the boys' behaviour for which they gave credit to the scheme, and such reports from the boys themselves. Throughout the three years I grew very close to the boys and was adopted as a parent – mom/auntie. This I felt comfortable with because my intention was not to remain neutral and disengaged. As a Black female teacher I felt my identity was an advantage. As a teacher I had knowledge of the education system and easy access. As a Black person I was able to identify with the boys experience of being Black in Britain and due to both of these and my age I had a good grasp of their "culture". I believe my work expresses a reality in my school and is not just based on my own personal feelings and belief.

Intervention in the form of a mentoring scheme was valuable and necessary given Black boys experience in my school. It was important for them to know that they had much ability, but also to be aware of their underachievement at an early enough stage where corrective action could be taken. I use the word 'underachievement' in a crude sense as I now believe like Troyna that the failure of the group to achieve academically is due more to 'mis-education'. My involvement with the boys transformed myself and them. I no longer need to talk in abstract but can describe and express their experiences without doubts because I invested time and effort into communing with the group.

When assessing the progress of this group it was evident that the boys attitude to learning was affected by the racial prisms through which they view the world. Our experiences are filtered through the lenses of the beliefs we hold about ourselves. I desired to help them see that although they are defined by 'race' they need not be limited by it. I did this with complete awareness of factors that constantly acted to negate my efforts. These included:

- Methods used to assess intelligence is purely cognitive with European based tests which completely ignores 'race' as an issue**
- Books on which English Language and English Literature exams are based are regarded as boring and culturally alien to this group**
- Lack of encouragement of parental involvement by an indifference to cultural heritage**

The scheme was set up as a form of preventative action. Although it was a small step I needed to start somewhere. Many will view my actions as aggressive but for that I make no apology. The boys needed to know that they had an arbitrator and some teachers needed to know this. This gave them and their parents a greater sense of security. They were challenged to be frank and open about their history and this cleared up a lot of lies and half-truth. I was able to help the boys start to act outside of expectations instead of conforming. What was in their heads at the start of the project changed as they became more enlightened, yet they are by no means achieving their best as far too many factors are working against them. Awareness does not necessarily lead to progress. They were able to experience school with less anxiety and so were better able to learn and to more easily get rid of resentment towards teachers unfairness as their understanding increased. They saw how patterns of thinking and acting contributed to the conflicts they were encountering in school. However, they recognised that they do fall back in the patterns they were trying to leave although over the three years this was happening less frequently. Most of the boys already had social skills to the extent that they could relate to each other well, but some needed to learn how to be less aggressive and more assertive. The peer group developed a more positive attitude to school. The occurrence of conflict between the boys and teachers decreased. They definitely increased their knowledge of self and of the world in which they live and have developed better discipline and study skills. They are making more conscious choices yet, some teachers continue to act from habitual, and stereotypical ways. They developed increased pride in their culture and now celebrate it more openly and are more secure as British citizens.

Working in a group which affirmed their cultural identity dispelled loneliness, confusion and isolation.

Several boys (Black and Whites) asked to join the scheme once it had started. Two of the Black boys who asked were ones who had been selected to join the scheme initially, but had not taken up the original offer. This disappointed me but also gave me satisfaction as the scheme was being viewed as worthwhile by them. One particular White boy asked continuously and refused my suggestion that a scheme be started for White boys saying "It would be boring sitting down with a group of just white boys". This saddened me, but I could not detract from my original purpose. I had explained the reason why the scheme was for Black boys.

However, there were/are many factors working against such a scheme as explained earlier: school ethos, school management, teachers, the curriculum, society/community, parents and the boys themselves.

Young people are just that, young. They will make mistakes and need guidance. As teachers/parents we are expected to have more wisdom and knowledge and so be in a position to offer guidance and support. We do this by teaching them their rights and responsibilities, by establishing clear boundaries and consequences. These are to be applied without bias. Sadly, many teachers and parents are continually inconsistent, often because they themselves have no boundaries or very loose ones. We are failing our children from all sides and attempts to pursue quick fixes (cosmetics) by parents through

material possessions and both national governments and local schools will not address what is a great injustice.

- 1. Young people are growing up in a society dominated by a global media. They have access to far more information than any previous generation and without any clear ethics. Many, including myself while believing that aspects of this is to be celebrated believe that there is a reduction in standards etc; Young people are having difficulty understanding which boundaries they are to live by. They are very aware of their rights but very lose on responsibilities.**

The young people on the scheme came from homes similar to their peers. All are from working class homes but where the parents have aspirations for a better life. Forty per cent are from single parent homes. There were no obvious differences between this group of students and other students in the school. One important thing is that their behaviour is interpreted differently. They display similar behaviour but at times are more boisterous (like myself) which means laughing with more excitement, being more passionate in a conversation, and so they are constantly criticised for being loud. The thing is, at home this behaviour is quite acceptable and is normally celebrated.

Having absorbed all that is thrown at them in terms of differential treatment, they become rebellious. In frustration they act out what is expected of them. Many are emotionally bruised by continual rejection and look for acceptance and self-worth from their peers who are often "outcasts" as well. At their age they are unable to

correctly articulate the sense of rejection they feel. This explains why many go into sports because of the ready acceptance when you win/perform well.

2. Many parents collude with the system by accepting and unwittingly imposing Eurocentric values, and teach them to conform to these. This is done, often indirectly, by complete ignorance, indifference and disregard for the child's history and heritage. The child comes to school ill-prepared for what he finds. It is amazing that in this day and age there are young Black children with so-called enlightened parent who have no knowledge of the past history of Black people. Parents are often unavailable and try to make up for this by compensating materially. They often force the boys to become substitute husbands/partners in terms of domestic decision making some of the time and then expect them to resort back to being a child on others. They often model an inconsistent lifestyle and have failed to transfer spiritual values to their children. Many have failed to teach and encourage their children to apply good study skills. When this is attempted at school, it is not reinforced at home. This lack of home support means Black boys often lack academic awareness and instead view school as a place to cruise and they receive very little help in developing ways of dealing with what society throws at them.

My expectation was that the parents' workshops would create a strong support group with maximum parents participation. In reality I found the parents to be dependent and needing emotional support especially during the workshops. They had good intentions and in their own eyes they are doing the best they can. To me this is not enough and is an easy way out.

3. Most teachers have long memories. Some can be mean, vindictive and do not forget or forgive. They are often ill prepared for the job, insecure and directly/indirectly racist. They have very little or no cultural awareness of the students they teach and in their ignorance do not wish to change from this position. They seek conformity and are never without colleagues to support their views. They will lie and do so frequently. Very rarely does the institution challenge this stance. Many view education as a "right" for white students but as a "privilege" for Black students for which they should be grateful. Hence there is a difference in expectation from these two groups. Black boys perceive this as unfair and this is one cause of conflict. A common point noted by Black boys in the school surveys in 1993, 1997 and 1999 was that teachers needed to listen more and also that they need to be more understanding and must better manage their class.

There is an assumption that because a teacher is Black he/she will automatically be a role model for Black students. This could not be further from the truth. The factors that determine an effective teacher is the same for all teachers regardless of colour. However, my perception was that Black teachers and Black governors would see themselves as having the added responsibility of fighting injustices when they see it. I cannot imagine doing otherwise. Unfortunately some are "coconuts", preferring to bury their heads and pretend they are blind and deaf than fight injustice. Others are down right lazy, who get excited when other Blacks fight social injustices, but they themselves are not prepared to sacrifice any of their own time and energy. Their

slapdash, undisciplined approach (happily conforming to society's expectations) often damage efforts being made to correct injustices and inequalities. Of course, the school often accepts this stance because it is less threatening. Strategic decisions are taken to put these non-threatening Blacks who will not rock the boat ('yes people') into prominent positions to give the impression of lack of institutional racism. The idea is that weak people, who are often incompetent and some inexperienced are promoted above their level of capabilities. Knowing this they will become agreeable people. This form of lip service is easily believed by the naïve and ignorant.

- 4. Senior management is often aware of the inadequacies of some teachers, in terms of their lack of classroom management skill and their racist views. To some extent their hands are tied in that some staff are inherited and because of various rules and union protection these teachers have. Often though, senior management are scared of confronting "unpleasant issues" and are quite ill prepared for the job. They themselves are often not up to scratch.**

Management will always opt to do what makes them look good now and not what is best for Black students in the long run even though they will make this claim in policy documents. They assume that details of schooling including the valuing of each individual is not as important as getting it done. The end result is what's important to the neglect of the process that many students experience. In theory they supported the scheme but in reality they undermined it by their policies and lack of interest especially in the first two years. They espouse diversity but in reality demand conformity and assimilation. The school and curriculum is not designed so

that all students can see their value. Encouraged by the governments approach of “subsuming the issue of racial equality into the ‘effective school’ theme”, my school has left the matter to be dealt with voluntarily. It has assimilated ethnic differences in achievement into the universal discourse of raising standards, seeing the curriculum as unproblematic and students cultures as irrelevant.

Like Troyna, I believe culture is important and that the teaching and learning process cannot/ should not be divorced from students culture if we desire achievement for all.

A good school is one with strong leadership from the top which engenders in the staff a passion for teaching and learning in order to promote equality of opportunity for all.

Much has been said about promoting equality of opportunity in schools, both by the national government and in this case locally by my school. However this rhetoric has not resulted in equity of educational outcome. The evidence is conclusive and shows that we are failing many students, but Blacks even more so because out in society/the community there is nothing to redress the balance – no visible role models, increased racism which acts to support what they experience in school rather than negate it. However, it is still not too late for positive change to take place.

All that we can imagine doing and all that we will do or fail to do is a result of that picture of “self” derived from our total experiences from birth onwards. That picture becomes the basis for all our behaviour patterns. Too frequently Blacks have an inaccurate knowledge of their history. The history they have been taught in school began 400 years ago and tells them that their people were slaves and that colonization was a

blessing that bestowed European civilization. It tells them that even after centuries of being exposed to this they have failed to make use of this privilege and have made little if any contribution to the development of human knowledge. In social discourse the concept of Blackness represents all that is vile, treacherous, ugly and unholy. The teaching of Geography, History, Art, Science, Music and Social Studies confronts him with more evidence of his supposed inferiority. Implicit in this form of cultural racism is the belief that the solution to underachievement is internal cultural changes among Blacks rather than government action. There is still a prejudice of not wanting to learn from the Black culture because as a people they/we are still regarded as of inferior intellect. Education is a social process and is the most important method of transforming society, a social process which is directed by politics.

Throughout his education what he is taught continues to create in his mind doubts concerning his human worth and dignity. His humanity is determined by the opinions and attitudes of the dominant white society and is reinforced by the school structures. Nehaul (1996) concluded that “it is clear that behaviour and pupil motivation are the key pupil variables to consider at secondary level. Confidence appears to be less important at this stage because many pupils develop their own goals and criteria for success based on peer evaluation”. This is often the case but in my view it should not be so. Ineffective parenting and schooling is what leads students to rely so much on peer support. Students will be motivated when they feel good about themselves, and when they do not see failure as inevitable.

Reflecting on my own role was continuous. Throughout the project I recognised the influence of my own status without which I would not have had the school's co-operation and the boys respect. I had to be flexible and open to new problems. For example, mentors very rarely kept their diaries and could not help the mentees to keep theirs. I often had to mentor several in any one week because they had not seen their mentor. Also, at the end of year 10 when I wanted to end the scheme, the boys wanted it to continue until the end of their GCSE exams in year 11.

The dilemmas I faced included:

- Trying to get a balance between encouraging and being protective of the boys and on the other hand challenging them to achieve their best. At times they felt I was demanding and hard on them.
- Being used by Senior management to intervene in conflicts between the boys and teachers
- Acting on behalf of a parent who believes her child has been treated unfairly
- Being the boys mother, friend, teacher, and trying to adapt to a role depending on the context
- Constant tiredness because the work involved in the mentoring scheme had to be done after my day's teaching. This also involved writing up notes after leading a PSE session or a Parent Workshop

I believe the data collected to be credible. This was gained from many hours spent with the boys in formal and informal settings. The researcher must establish indicators that provide evidence that the information generated in the research is trustworthy and

believable. Criteria for judging qualitative data for the interpretive paradigm are: dependability, credibility and confirmability.

I believe my research has achieved these three standards in that:

- **Dependability** – there is consistency among the different types of data collected. Under similar circumstances the data can be replicated if similar methods are used by others in a similar environment.
- **Credibility** – Steps were taken to ensure correspondence between the way the boys actually perceive social constructs and the way I portrayed their viewpoints through regular debates, discussions and feedback sessions and whole group reflections. This was enhanced by: prolonged and substantial engagement, peer debriefing and triangulation
- **Confirmability** – Data collected can be traced back to its original sources and is not just a figment of my imagination.

Although I make no claims to originality, I believe my results confirm what Troyna and Clark claimed when they highlighted earlier empirical work which reveal that teacher professional judgements of students are often viewed through the lens of a discriminatory 'racial frame of reference' which they are often not conscious of. There is no doubt at all that institutional racism exist in my school and that this is one of the factors leading to underachievement. However, as noted in this paper parents are failing in their role also.

They recognised that they fall short of their own aspirations and insisted that I publish my work so that others would pursue partnership with their sons' school earlier than year 8.

My firm belief is that Black boys can be taken to a place mentally where they are able to totally reject assumptions of inferiority while positively pursuing academic and or skilled qualifications with no illusions as to the obstacles. Yet they can pursue realistic careers, determined to succeed without sacrificing their Blackness and Black culture and heritage in the process. This requires schools/teachers and parents recognising that the playing field is not level, but that much can be done to make it more even by both working together. They will only succeed educationally to the extent that the patterns of interaction in school challenges and reverse those that prevail in society at large.

Mentoring as a process aids the pursuit of equality of opportunity by helping to create a level playing field. The only way to break old habits is to form new ones. The old system is not working and these boys are a challenge to it to find new ways of communicating with them. Their culture must be taken into account when seeking to improve the teaching and learning process to make it more effective. The school can no longer preach "equality" yet practice discrimination. It can no longer pursue politically sensitive ideas and update policies yet perpetuate the same old system that benefits the few.

The CRE Chairman sees the problem as political and I too believe that political action is vital. Only political action can change education policies and affect economic and social background. However this action needs to be based on research carried out using appropriate methods. Although my school is deficient in many ways the management has

the ability to camouflage its activities and unfortunately OFSTED and HMI Inspectors are easily pleased by superficial evidence. In the first week of December 2001 the school prepared for an OFSTED. The school was a wash with activity, and every pastoral strategy that could be put in place was implemented – “all on a trial basis” up until the end of term when they will be assessed and decisions taken as to continuation. The whole system was a complete farce but so neatly package that there is nothing one can do. Seventeen inspectors came in for one week. All were white, except for one Asian lady who was the inspector for Religious Education. The school statistics given to the inspection team showed the school population as:

African Caribbean	- 44.1%
Asians	- 10%
Whites	- 43.5%
Other	- 2.4%

An Art teacher explained to me that her inspector had no interest at all in her lesson and only wanted to know “how it was that she got Black and White students to work together so well”!! He was from Cornwall.

It is amazing that both Estelle Morris and Tony Blair have visited my school (all in an effort to promote – Estelle Morris: City Learning Centres, Tony Blair :Graduate Teacher Training in Schools) which lead to favourable write ups in the press yet the Chair of Governors despairs at the level of racism. The motives for these visits were political for the visitors and for the Head, purely to enhance her career. The interest of the students was certainly not a priority, yet this continuous public relations activity/window dressing continues. In the meantime students develop this impression that they are only

important when “special visitors” are coming. One of my sixth form student explained to me that he nearly got his head bitten off by the SMT members because he dared to mention that they were only painting the building and laying down new carpet because Ofsted was coming.

At the start of this document I referred to the fact that a member of the governing body had been unwilling to offer me help when I tried to enlist his support in setting up the scheme. Since then this person has gain a position of some prominence. At the time he had a child in Year 11. Now he has a son in Year 7 who has been experiencing much injustice and unfairness and he wanted my help in dealing with it. He has not disclosed this to the Head teacher nor other members of the governing body. He is still enjoying his token position and will not openly rock the boat. He requested my advice as to how to be more proactive in the school to ensure equality of opportunity for all.

As a Christian teacher I felt a sense of responsibility to value and promote human dignity. I recognised an injustice in the process and documented it and will continue to do so. My methods were simple practical choices. Other Action Research methods/models recognise the value of listening, prior knowledge, history etc but do not view moral responsibility as a priority in teaching and will recommend improvement but involvement is restricted because the researcher cannot fully identify with the subjects. My role involved complete participation, improving understanding while seeking to change social reality.

The purpose of my work is to do more than add to the theoretical debate. It is to give practical solutions, not to get intellectual acclaim. It is to provide knowledge and language to promote discussion. I bring the truth and regard myself as a reliable source. I was enabled to develop my own opinions rather than rely on others. I did not take a short-term approach purely to label the issues. I truly believe that the results are repeatable. The evidence collected depicts the reality of my school and I believe describes the experience of Black boys in most schools. Evidence was collected using triangulation to ensure validity. My evidence might not conform to the 'partyline', but it represents a truth that needs to be told. The boys, parents, teachers and SMT have all declared verbally and in writing that the scheme was a positive experience.

As a Black female adult I went in believing I could effect change. I believed I worked in a system that was managed by people of integrity who truly wanted change. In the end it became clear that if I failed to toe the partyline I would be undermined. Consensus is what is acceptable, not change. Education is not about doing what is right and true. No outside researcher or ordinary teacher would have seen what I saw. I was given access initially due to my position in the school and my many roles. A teacher who has worked in the school for 27 years told me that I was given access because "I am/was a young, black upright woman with strong morals". The chair of governor explained that I had been the Head's prized pupil! Both recognised that I had fallen from grace because I had not joined "their club". Politicians and OFSTED came in and bestowed legitimacy on what is a very corrupt system. Change is needed now more than ever but my eyes have been opened to the enormity of the problem.

I started with a picture based on my experience, recognising I didn't necessarily have the big picture. My work allowed me to stand back and observe, more aware and to direct others. I am now confronted with a situation of "if you don't like the message, shoot the messenger". During the three and a half years I experienced many situations where I was rendered voiceless or attempts were made to render me as such. Yet my presence was demanded. I experienced instances of being misunderstood, unacceptable and when I tried to clarify there was no desire to listen and dialogue was not encouraged. I felt hurt, frustrated and apprehensive about future encounters. Without my faith resentment would have built up, which is debilitating and I probably would have given up. I carried on because I know that teaching is my calling and that I can make a difference. Nothing I experienced or observed is beyond positive change. All that is required is a willingness to embrace change that may not directly benefit the change agent but will benefit many others and help to build a more just society. My evidence shows clearly that much of the underachievement of Black boys can be directly attributed to factors controllable by the school (see list of incidents p.158) and that corrective action can be taken (Appendix 1). The question is "Is there the political will to take that action on the part of the government?"

And given that schools and head teachers have relative control over allocation of their funding, will they choose to correct practices by doing what needs to be done?

CHAPTER 6 RECOMMENDATIONS

All persons are more or less apt to learn through the eye rather than the ear; and whatever is seen in fact, makes a deeper impression than anything that is read or heard. This is especially the case in early youth, when the eye is the chief inlet of knowledge. Whatever children see they unconsciously imitate.

Samuel Smiles 1866

If schools and local education authorities want to raise the achievement of Black boys, it is important that they consider mentoring as part of a multiple intervention package. The government has started to promote its use and should continue to do so and make more funding available. Immediate steps need to be taken to ensure that the promotion of “inclusive practices” includes both general and specific policies and these should have clear directives for implementation at both the national and local levels. It is imperative that action is taken over and above just labeling the problem.

The findings are consistent with previous research and confirms that Black students tend to experience a sense of disconnectedness which produces apathy, which leads to less effort and hence underachievement. My work indicated that damage is done by schools and society at large through racist practices (which including having a condescending attitude, knowingly failing to adopt the curriculum to embrace diversity) and that change beyond the superficial is needed. It also highlights the fact that change takes time and in

order to get positive results there must be free and fair debate involving all stakeholders and greater attention to the social and emotional climate in which learning takes place.

To consciously observe takes time and effort, but it is the observations made by ordinary people in the same environment as themselves that these boys are likely to listen to, and which has made a real difference to the way in which they understand the world.

It is possible to improve Black boys achievement in school through a package of measures. Mentoring helps to foster a healthy self-esteem and at the same time raises achievement. A real partnership between parents, community, government and school is needed with each willing to work together for positive change.

Schools have a responsibility to support all students in reaching their full potential and so it is imperative that we understand and acknowledge all students culture in the school curriculum and teacher/students interaction that leads to conflict and injustice. Teachers need to have a good understanding of educational theory. Attention must be paid to developing students socially, morally, spiritually and culturally. Currently many are bugged down in target setting to gain the end result but with no interest in the process purely because this is what is being measured.

Troyna (1997) noted that teachers professional judgements are often viewed through the lens of a discriminatory "racial frame of reference" which provides their basis for decision-making. Teachers need training to develop an awareness of this and to recognise that they and these boys come to school with the hidden rules of their socialisation.

Black boys develop coping skills in response to hostility to their gender and “race” and as already noted, have limited resistance compared to Black girls. They behave the same as White boys but their behaviour is interpreted differently (Sewell, 1997). This fact was confirmed by OFSTED reports in March 2001. The issue is made worst by a failure to recognise Black contribution in the curriculum. This has increased doubts regarding intellectual ability and a perception that success is a White prerogative. It is important that resources in departments are reviewed to ensure they represent diversity. Black boys need to be helped to liberate themselves from the mental slavery of colour symbolism. Teaching methods must take into account cultural differences in learning styles.

Any people who have been deprived of an understanding of their past and of a positive ‘people concept’ cannot hope to function as an equal and potent power in society. We need to work consciously and deliberately towards an independent Black self-understanding. Independent of white standards, values and definitions which has conditioned Black people to hate themselves.

Teachers are ignorant of Black students culture (habits, customs) and so are unable to help them correct deficiencies. Many students experience pain and suffer from teachers lack of sensitivity and sheer ignorance. These are so called well meaning teachers, who are in fact too lazy to ensure they are delivering equality of opportunity. It is not enough for schools and curriculum areas to produce equal opportunity policies. These need to be monitored to ensure they are being acted upon.

The project indicated and affirmed my belief in the importance of pastoral care in schools. A co-coordinated approach is needed. Much training is needed to improve understanding beyond just the superficial and cultural diversity must be valued. Student success needs to be celebrated timely and at every level. The inclusion policy must be developed fairly and must be clearly explained to all concerned. As Nehaul (1995) alluded, it is the pastoral programme that needs greatest attention in order to transform the situation. All staff needs to be trained in identifying and dealing with disaffection and alienation.

To reduce conflict, teachers need to see bad behaviour as changeable, not permanent. They should attack behaviour not character. They need to display more empathy and less disgust. They need to treat students with respect, not just demand respect from students. Solutions should involve more reflection on teacher factors, not assume the blame lies with the home and students only.

My experience of the past three years indicates that the boys were not totally freed when they were helped to unshackle their minds from the negative concepts and values of their false beliefs. They have started a process which will result in greater freedom when the combined forces of the mind and the body unites with people of similar experiences to deal with the institutions which keep them in economic and political slavery. They do this by facing their failures, apathy and social impotence and by evaluating the dominant issues that relate to total well-being, one aspect of which is 'spiritual' needs.

Since the Black family is the first social setting in a racist society in which the Black child begins to experience inferiorisation, it is of key importance that all Blacks understand the function of the family and how inferiorisation occurs. This is the one place they can exercise control and cultivate patterns of self-help and self-development – changing dysfunctional behaviour through the exercise of will power.

For too long Black male children have been deprived of strong male role models through whom they can develop pride, useful self and group supporting behavioural patterns and true respect for the Black male adult position. Only after addressing this will they grow up respecting themselves as future men. They will recognise the purpose of disciplined study to achieve academically and will start to establish standards for academic achievement and codes of behaviour conduct for Black children. It is imperative that parents establish clear boundaries and stick to them and educate their children about their cultural heritage. Parents need to take their own history seriously, not just expect others to.

In the end I firmly believe that school can make a difference and that the mentoring scheme made a difference to the group of boys with whom I worked. However, for now parents are better able to compensate for failing school to a greater extent than schools can compensate for unsatisfactory parenting. Both needs to take their responsibilities seriously, and better still, work together in a real partnership.

The mentoring scheme compensated for the failing of both to a degree but was unable to do all it had the potential to due to the many hindrances. In 1999 the new Head teacher was very positive about the mentoring scheme and attended both a PSE sessions and a

parents workshops. She noted that for a small group it has had a positive impact and stated that she could see the difference in students' attitude. To achieve optimal success it needed to be embedded in the school structure. It is not enough to buy new ideas and to update policies but to continue to perpetuate the same old systems. Managing cultural diversity should be a mandatory feature of a new head teacher's qualification. The government has a responsibility to ensure school review their policies and procedures and make appropriate adaptations to reflect true diversity. It then needs to ensure implementation takes place consistently. It must also look for long term solutions to the problem of underachievement and not be quick to embrace temporary answers.

The boys spent their last two years far more relaxed in school and knew that there was another to whom they could take their concerns and grievances. They have also developed a friendship within the group which has given them extra support. Additionally, parents found the school more approachable, and I was regularly used as a mediator. Some teachers now seek my advice, where they may have continued to act in ignorance. The scheme therefore served many functions and is a valuable tool that can be used to help raise achievement of this group of students. I recommend that it be undertaken on a much larger scale and start in year 7 as was expressed by the current group. Mentors need to be carefully chosen as not every teacher has the ability to act as a mentor. They must have the personal qualities of patience, commitment and cultural/gender understanding and a passion to see these boys do well. They need to be given proper training by an organisation such as The Windsor Fellowship and time to undertake the role in an already crammed schedule. More than anything, the school

needs to be prepared for a mentoring project. It is one way of intervening in the present so that the future does not replicate the past.

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POSTSCRIPT

This project has had far reaching effects even though the results have not yet been widely disseminated. The issue being investigated has become a concern in most schools and so I have been called upon to facilitate in many ways.

In June 2001 I led a workshop at Roehampton Institute, University of Surrey for teachers. Since then I have had enquiries and have given telephone consultations.

I have also given support and resources to the agency that provided funding through Wandsworth Borough Council.

I have led workshops within my own school to help teachers better understand how to manage these pupils. I have also worked individually with teachers to help them develop more appropriate curriculum material.

A consultant employed by the government also requested my help and I was interviewed and this information was used to develop a project for the North of England

Appendix 1

Strategies To Address Black Boys Underachievement: The Way Forward

School issue needing attention/action needed	Curriculum Area	Action
<p>1. Climate</p> <p>Schools must actively seek to promote the positive value of our multi-cultural society by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● expanding pupils knowledge and understanding of their own and other cultures ● creating opportunities for students to celebrate their diversity and extend contact with other cultural perspectives ● increase pupil's capacity to examine their own attitudes and values in the light of history as well as present-day situation 	<p>Whole school/ Assembly/Mentoring</p> <p>Whole school/Assembly Mentoring</p> <p>Whole school/Assembly Mentoring</p>	<p>Staff to use/celebrate the cultural experience of pupils and their families through planning and organising whole-school events such as outings, plays, exhibitions and social functions</p> <p>Teachers are to receive mandatory training to raise awareness of the role they play in creating an atmosphere and in using methods which encourage pupils from a range of cultural backgrounds to work together</p> <p>Curricular and extra-curricular programs developed by the school. the resources used should support this</p>
<p>In developing policies the school needs to consider the extent and nature of the involvement of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teaching staff ● Support staff ● pupils ● parents ● others from the local and wider community 	<p>Whole School PTA Community Links person External Agencies</p>	<p>Schools to acknowledge through open discussion and celebration pupils particular religious practices, moral codes, diets and dress requirements Program of PTA meetings</p>

<p>a policy is needed and its application should be monitored. Discuss it/ debate it, get staff/students to relay experiences and document these strategies for responding to incidents such as :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Racist name calling ● writing of graffiti ● circulation of racist literature ● racist attacks and conflicts <p>The school must look at the circumstances within the school, which hinder pupils of particular ethnic groups from achieving their potential and take black boys underachievement seriously</p>	<p>Regular Whole school Equal Opportunity workshops</p> <p>Equal Opportunity Committee Students Council</p> <p>SMT to direct Middle Managers Conflict Management INSET</p>	<p>specific training for teachers should be provided to develop an awareness that equality of opportunity is not achieved solely by straightforward provisions, since children, like adults are constrained by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the preconceptions others may have of them ● the images and expectations they have of themselves <p>Experiences and developments to be disseminated and shared through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Statements and guidelines ● Other projects ● Inset <p>Staff must be encouraged within their classrooms as well as outside their area of direct responsibility to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recognise antagonisms and conflicts at an early stage ● develop strategies to guard against them <p>find and share ways of resolving them</p>
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2. Strategies in the Classroom

Staff to understand and use a variety of teaching styles to meet students different learning styles by:

- Encouraging collaborative learning through small group work
- creating purposeful tasks through which children need to work together

a)Curriculum/Environment

Ensure that the curriculum reflects in its stated objectives and in its content and activities, that our society is multi-cultural

Pupils should be given opportunity to explore and share the ideas, opinions and interests which derive from their particular cultural experiences

Teachers show, by the example they draw upon in discussion and written material they make available, that they value experience from a range of cultures

Pupils to know that each society has its own values, traditions and styles of everyday living which should be considered in the context of the society as well as compared with their own

the curriculum must ensure that pupils understand that migration and movement of people , and thus cultural diversity, are underlying

Whole school INSET on Teaching & Learning methods specific to ethnic groups

All areas especially English Language & Literature
History
PSE

Whole Staff INSET
PTA meeting

History/Geog/RE
Guests from each ethnic group

SMT/Display
Co-ordinator

A variety of sources and teaching methods to be used so that it engages pupil's feelings as well as giving them information

The curriculum should create an understanding of and interest in different environments, societies, systems and culture across the world
Have more social gatherings between school and community

Opportunities must be provided to show the contribution that different societies have made to the growing understanding and knowledge of humankind

Schemes of work to be written to represent diversity

<p>themes in History and the contemporary world</p> <p>Respect needs to be shown for languages, other than english, which are spoken by pupils in the school by using them in displays and notices</p>		<p>Images projected in the school's displays in hallways/corridors and classrooms and staff make-up including admin staff and premises staff should reflect positively and relate in an appropriate way to cultural diversity</p>
<p>b) Resources complete audit of resources to ensure they reflect the needs of pupils learning in a multi-cultural society and represents a full range of cultures within the school and society</p>	<p>Whole school</p> <p>Librarian/Heads of Departments</p>	<p>develop policies and criteria through staff discussion, for examining and selecting materials to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● support a multi-cultural curriculum within each subject area ● encourage the development of new curricular initiatives to improve education for a diverse society ● review the general resources of the school, for instance, the library and ensure teachers are able to use biased material which still exist in non-biased ways ● devise new strategies to work

		with parents, community groups and specialists outside the school to develop and build on resources
<p>3) Community Links/Involvement</p> <p>The school needs to create opportunities for staff and parents to meet and discuss aspects of racism and ways must be established to talk with parents for whom English is a second language</p>	<p>Community links person</p> <p>PTA meetings and social gatherings with staff</p>	<p>staff need to make more effort to have an awareness of the lives and concerns of the local community</p> <p>ways must be devised to encourage parents and the community to contribute to the life of the school</p> <p>Improve quality of guidance & support to parents and be more approachable</p> <p>Appoint Governors with experience and expertise about educational matters</p>