The Use of Ethnic Data Analysis in Promoting Inclusion

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Abstract

Within the context of a primary school in London, England, and the action taken there to foster inclusion, this paper focuses on the monitoring of trends from assessment data with regards to ethnicity. From a school's perspective, this is a key factor in improving achievement of minority ethnic groups, or either a bureaucratic exercise to comply with Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) and Local Education Authority (LEA) funding requirements. This paper seeks to analyse how the system of the monitoring of minority ethnic groups differs internationally and how this fits into the wider debate around race, diversity, social equality and inclusion. The practices to foster inclusion at the primary school in London will be critiqued against evolving models of inclusion, referencing the old and new paradigms of inclusion. This paper asserts that the practice of the highlighting of minority ethnic groups in assessment can promote difference, in line with the old paradigm for inclusion, and was not a significant factor in helping this school to raise achievement for pupils. Instead, effective assessment monitoring focused on the performance and needs of each individual, whilst maintaining high expectations for all pupils.

Key Words: Ethnic data; assessment; diversity; inclusion.

Introduction

The underachievement of minority ethnic groups in education has caused concern in England since the late 1960s following the arrival of immigrants from the former Commonwealth in the post-war period (Tikly *et al*, 2005). Many actions have been taken to address this concern, but instead this paper will focus on the practice of the assessment monitoring of minority ethnic groups. This focus will be looked at from two perspectives. Firstly, by considering the history behind the assessment monitoring of minority ethnic groups and how this exercise fits into evolving models of disability and inclusion. Secondly, by evaluating the impact of minority ethnic group monitoring and other assessment practices that were used in my time working as a Deputy Headteacher in a primary school in London. Reflecting on the actions that were put in place at my school following assessments, this paper will consider whether those actions

promoted the reductionist model of inclusion or the holistic-constructivist model which embraces social equality and diversity (Poplin, 1988a; Poplin, 1988b). For the purposes of this paper, the impact of inclusion will focus on pupil attainment, using evidence for attainment taken from The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) reports. In adopting a narrative orientation to this paper, it must be acknowledged that this is a historic perspective on events. The narratives chosen as illustrations and examples in this paper are personal and the recollection of which will be in the context of my own cultural experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 1986).

Primary School Context

'Excellence for All' was the motto of the school, of which I was the Deputy Head for 8 years until 2009. OFSTED (2004) concluded that it was a larger than average school, with pupil attainment on entry to the school judged to be below average, with a significant number of pupils from ethnic minorities and a broadly average number of children eligible for free school meals. As one of the school's strengths, it was stated in the report that 'inclusion is excellent. Every child matters and they all get a fair deal' (OFSTED 2004, p.5). In 2004, OFSTED judged our overall performance as 'good'. By the time Ofsted inspected us again in 2008 we were judged to be 'outstanding'. In the intervening period we had employed a number of strategies to foster inclusion. Effective formative and summative assessment of pupils' learning and attainment were central to the strategies and these will form the focus of this paper.

In 2001 I had become Deputy Headteacher and part of my role was Assessment Manager. In our OFSTED inspections in 2004 and 2008, assessment received positive feedback. 'Attainment is analysed by ethnicity and all pupils attain standards that reflect their capability. If action is required to address issues that arise as a result of this, the school does not falter.' (OFSTED, 2004, p.9). 'Teachers use school assessment information very well to ensure that work is properly matched to pupils' abilities and expectations are high,' (OFSTED, 2008b, p4). Assessment is one of the key areas on which OFSTED's judgements are made. The OFSTED Framework stated that when considering how well learners achieve, the inspectors should evaluate the 'learners' success in achieving challenging targets, including qualifications and learning goals, with trends over time and any significant variations between groups of 'learners' (OFSTED, 2008a, p.20). The monitoring of assessment data, using end of Key Stage assessment results in Year 2 and Year 6, and other annual tests, allowed us to track individuals and groups, focusing on the progress being made. To support this monitoring, the

Local Education Authority (LEA) issued a report each year. This drew together information from the school census data to support schools in tracking trends in groups; gender, eligibility for free school meals, English as an Additional Language (EAL), term of birth and ethnicity. Each year I prepared an analysis of the performance of groups within the school, to present to Governors and our LEA. I would assert that this analysis of group trends was a bureaucratic exercise to comply with OFSTED requirements and LEA funding and had little impact on inclusion and standards. As a school looking at effective teaching and learning, and monitoring provision for all children, the focus was the individuals, rather than groups of learners. It is important to contextualise my reflections, so I will begin by looking at the historical context that had led to the requirement for schools in England to analyse group and ethnic trends.

Ethnic Group Monitoring in England and Internationally

Despite concerns about the achievement of minority ethnic groups in England since the 1960s, at this time no national data related to achievement was collected and limited research was undertaken (Tikly *et al,* 2005). In 1966 money was given to LEAs under Section 11 to provide assistance for those authorities that had substantial numbers of pupils from ethnic minorities. Section 11 funding was administered by the Home Office and distributed to LEAs based on the number of EAL learners. Initially this funding was aimed solely at providing language support for those pupils with EAL, with LEAs employing language support staff who were allocated to schools. However, in 1993 this was extended to include all those pupils from ethnic minorities at risk of underachievement. In 1998 Section 11 funding was replaced by the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) which was administered by the Standards Fund from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). This funding hoped to raise the achievement of ethnic minority groups as well as supporting EAL pupils (Tikly *et al*, 2005).

Since 1966 some LEAs, such as the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA), had collected data concerning the achievement of different groups and the monitoring of their progress (Tikly *et al*, 2005). However, in 1989 the Department for Education and Science (DES) issued Circular 16/89, which required all LEAs in England to collect ethnic data from primary and secondary schools for submission to the DES (Foster, 1994). This circular claimed that there were five main uses for the ethnic data: first, helping teachers, students and LEAs to recognise students' needs; second, enabling LEAs to target resources more effectively; third, for LEAs to monitor the effectiveness of provision for ethnic groups; fourth, identifying practices that may be disadvantaging ethnic groups and finally, supporting the DES in

monitoring the effectiveness of measures to reduce ethnic underachievement (DES 1989, cited in Foster 1994).

One of the ways that the LEAs used the ethnic data was to apply for EMAG funding from central government. This was a change to Section 11 funding, where schools had been allocated funds on the basis of the number of EAL learners. LEAs were now required to complete action plans or bids with information regarding minority ethnic students which included achievement data, targets for raising achievement and strategies for reaching those targets (Tikly *et al*, 2005). Schools in turn needed to apply to their LEA for EMAG funding, providing evidence of how it would be spent, focusing on the impact that this funding would have and proving this impact, by way of results.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) in Scotland also believes that the use of data can challenge underperformance of minority ethnic groups in schools:

> Pupils' progress and attainment should be monitored by their ethnic group and schools should have clear approaches to tackling underachievement and measuring improvements. (HMIe 2004, p.2)

In the USA the use of statistics and data to highlight inequalities has been a focus since the civil rights legislation was adopted in the 1960s. In contrast, France and Sweden challenge underperforming groups differently, principally because the use of ethnic classification data is not allowed for two main reasons. Firstly, the collection of ethnic data is viewed as infringing upon the right to privacy. Additionally, whilst name, geographic origins and citizenship are objective, race and ethnicity are considered to be subjective (Ringelheim, 2008; Möschel, 2009). Having looked at the positions taken by different countries, I will now elaborate on some of the reasons behind these differing practices.

Race and Ethnicity

The discourses of race and ethnicity are heavily interwoven. DiAngelo (2012) considers that race is what we can see with our eyes and there is the 'assumption that colour (above religion or culture) is the non-negotiable part of ethnicity' (Ahmad, 1999, p.125). However, scholars have also acknowledged race as a social construction. For example, DiAngelo (2012) considers that perceptions of race change over time. European ethnic groups such as Irish and Italian immigrants, who are today considered white, in the past may have not have been included in this category. Race also perpetuates 'white' as the norm, since people of colour are considered

to be those who are not identified as being white (DiAngelo, 2012). The defining of ethnicity faces similar issues in promoting the norm of 'white' as white people are considered to have no ethnicity:

> Attempts at ethnic categorisation encompass this duality of conceptualising non-white minority groups: white people are just that, 'white'; ethnicity resides in those who are different in culture and colour. (Ahmad, 2009, p.125)

Furthermore, the categorising of ethnicity is not without its problems, since there are many further factors that can be associated with ethnicity, including language, culture, religion and geographical origin. Ahmad (1999) asserts that although ethnicity is an important means of identification, it can also be flexible and situational. Since people's self-classification can vary depending on their situation, personal definitions of ethnicity can have associated problems in terms of reliability. Indeed, as mentioned previously, for some countries it is the subjective aspect of ethnic data that means that it is not collected (Möschel 2009). There is also the added difficulty of ensuring the number of ethnic categories is meaningful to the respondents, without making the amount unmanageable (Ringelheim, 2008). Through highlighting the debates around race and ethnicity, it is possible to understand why countries approach this matter differently. For some countries, like England, the practice of the monitoring of assessment results of minority ethnic groups is believed to promote social equality and inclusion.

Social Equality and Diversity

Equality in education is not a new concept and is relevant to all schools. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child assert that:

> State Parties recognise the right of every child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity. (UNICEF, 1989, p.9)

More recently there has been a shift in the discourse associated with social equality to a focus on diversity, which Ahmed (2007) believes serves to highlight individual differences, thereby concealing inequalities. The Oxford Advanced Learner defines diversity as 'a range of many people or things that are very different from each other', whilst the Cambridge Dictionary states it is 'the fact of many different types of things or people being included in something; a range of different things or people.' Both of these definitions mention difference: one refers to inclusion, neither alludes to equality and there are concerns that the lack of an agreed definition of diversity leads to an open interpretation depending on who is defining it. Indeed, Ahmed (2007, p.240) believes that it may be possible to define diversity in ways that may prevent

action, since some people may focus on differences and 'counting people who look different'. She proposes that diversity can be rooted in concepts of ethnic differences, rather than a drive towards social justice and equality. This lack of consensus over diversity is replicated in the evolving nature of inclusion and its definition.

Diversity and Inclusion

Following the UN Convention in 1989, the Salamanca statements of 1994 focused on Special Educational Needs (SEN) and how inclusion could evolve to ensure equality of opportunity for all by responding to the diverse needs of students (UNESCO, 1994). Broadening the remit of effective inclusion beyond pupils with SEN, this was developed further by UNESCO (2003) to highlight the importance of meeting the needs of all learners. Rather than focusing on how learners could be integrated into mainstream education, instead the focus was on the transformation of education systems in response to the diversity of learners. The diversity of learners was recognised and the importance of transforming practice to meet their different needs was emphasised.

The focus on diversity can demonstrate aspects of both the old and the new paradigms of inclusion, therefore it is important to focus on how models of learning disabilities have changed within the two paradigms. Under the old paradigm of inclusion the discourse was one of deficit. Between the 1950s and the 1980s education moved through four models of looking at Learning Disabilities: medical, psychological process, behavioural and cognitive. Poplin (1988a) believes that there are many similarities between the four models and that they are all grounded in viewing learning disabilities in a reductionist manner. Similarly, with reference to diversity, Ang believes that although the issue of diversity is embedded within the curriculum, 'one of the main assumptions underpinning this rhetoric is that there is a normative standard that compares to a somewhat diverse or 'different' way of being in the world' (Ang, 2010, p.45). Indeed, she is concerned that it is only those that deviate from this norm who are 'diverse', and thus in need of support. Again, the fault lies in the emphasis on the 'diverse' group who do not meet the norm.

The new paradigm of inclusion highlights a shift from reductionist to constructivist learning theories. Poplin's (1988b) view of the holistic constructivist approach to learning is that effective learning is achieved by constructing, revising and reconstructing meanings within the context of the learner's experience, but also taking into account the holistic side of feelings and interest in the learning. In the context of diversity this can be seen as ensuring there is a

curriculum in which practitioners have a critical understanding of diversity, which ensures 'they make adjustments in their own practices and provisions' (Ang, 2010, p.50).

This shift between the paradigms can further be exemplified by the change of language from integration to inclusion. Under the old paradigm integration was possible when the students with disabilities or difficulties were able to follow the same curriculum as all the other students. Whereas in the new paradigm, it is the responsibility of the school to ensure that teaching and learning meets the needs of all children (Thomazet, 2009). The onus is on the school to consider what all pupils can achieve with an appropriate curriculum and learning environment. The collection and monitoring of minority ethnic data is believed to be one way in which to address issues of inclusion (DfES, 2004). It is important to consider how this practice fits into the old and new paradigm for inclusion.

Ethnic Data and Inclusion

Foster (1994) proposes that the collection and monitoring of ethnic data enables funding bodies to allocate funds effectively to particular ethnic groups. It can also provide a general indication of the effectiveness of educational provision for different ethnic groups. A further reason for the monitoring of ethnic data in assessment is to challenge discrimination, for example through the implementation of affirmative action programs to promote equality for disadvantaged communities (Ringelheim, 2008). This has been widely practised in the USA, for example, offering preferential treatment to members of disadvantaged groups to promote access to higher education. This practice is consistent with the social model of disability and the old paradigm for inclusion, where the barriers are caused by society rather than the person.

For some, the use of ethnic trends in assessment is perceived as being fraught with dangers. The action of grouping people into ethnic groups can itself promote ideas of race and difference, which tends to stigmatize and can lead to discrimination. This focus on difference is in line with the old paradigm for inclusion (Ringelheim, 2008). Additionally the monitoring of ethnic trends can hide the root of the problem of groups underperforming, since it is not the pupils' results, but the assessments themselves that are embedded in discriminatory practices. Campbell (2015, p.517) claims that in teacher assessment, 'stereotyping of pupils may contribute to assessment and thereby attainment inequalities'. She also asserts that the continual focus on monitoring ethnic trends of assessment results can be damaging for two reasons. Not only is it possible to mask the important issue of unconscious bias, but the message conveyed to schools and teachers in targeting pupil groups may build a sense that these groups are less

capable and therefore contribute to the unconscious bias and stereotyping (Campbell, 2015). An additional cautionary note is the danger of looking at the performance of any ethnic minority group as a whole; this practice encourages generalisations and detracts from looking at each individual's needs (Campbell, 2015; Foster, 1994). I now wish to consider some of the assessment practices that we employed to promote inclusion and reflect these against the old and new paradigms.

Reductionist or Holistic Constructivist Practices

I believe that our use of EMAG funding certainly perpetuated this normative standard as it was used to employ an EAL teacher to withdraw EAL pupils. Our policy stated that each child had to have been in the country for at least six months, to allow them time to be immersed into the English language, before they could be considered for additional targeted support. This practice was endorsed by Tikly *et al* (2005). Proposals were put forward by the class teacher for individual pupils to receive support. These proposals used evidence from class-based informal observations by the class teacher and tracking and monitoring of assessment results that I provided. This additional input was meant to be a short-term, targeted intervention, although the reality meant that the pupils often continued to receive support for longer. Although one might argue that it is important for the EAL pupils to receive language development support from a specialist teacher, I believe this practice could be considered to be part of the reductionist learning theory. The child was removed from their setting in order to give them support to be able to learn effectively in the class. The class curriculum and learning environment didn't change, just the child. Not only did this practice promote the theme of difference, but class teachers often absolved themselves of responsibility for leading the child's language development. The perception was that this responsibility lay with the EAL teacher. Focusing on constructivist learning theories would have been a far more effective way of supporting our EAL learners; the EAL teacher could have worked with the class teacher to improve his/her practice for supporting their needs. This would have improved the learning experience for all the EAL learners in the class, regardless of whether they were eligible for additional support. It has also been noted that the dissemination of good practice amongst mainstream teachers is important for effective support of EAL learners (Day & Prunty, 2015; Tikly *et al*, 2005).

Evidence of holistic constructivist learning process can be seen in many of our actions (Poplin, 1988b). As part of our assessment tracking, the Special Educational Needs Co-

ordinator (SENCo) and I analysed the progress being made by individual pupils and highlighted any concerns. Through the mapping of support given to all pupils with SEN and EAL, we were able to ensure that they were receiving effective intervention that was having a positive impact on their progress. This progress focused on broad educational aims, both in terms of attainment and their emotional well-being. Support involved the modification of teaching and the curriculum in class, or short-term intervention through withdrawal. Through this combination of assessment tracking and support mapping we ensured that we were able to meet the needs of all learners. The personalisation of education provision with varied teaching methodologies being used and the progress of individual pupils was key to this effective inclusive practice, rather than the tracking of minority ethnic groups (Day & Prunty, 2015).

To be able to ensure that the curriculum and the learning environment met the pupils' needs, we established a rigorous target setting system, to enable the teachers to identify what resources and support were needed. All teachers were required to set annual targets for each child against the National Curriculum. Each teacher then had three meetings, with either the Head Teacher or myself, to focus on these targets. During these meetings we discussed what the teacher was going to do to ensure the children could meet their targets and any further support that was required. In the spring term, there was a mid-year review to discuss any barriers to meeting the targets. Finally, in the summer term the targets were reviewed, giving an opportunity for reflection if pupils had not achieved their targets, as to what could be done differently the following year. The target setting process ensured that teachers had challenging expectations for all pupils, it challenged unconscious discrimination. Maylor *et al* (2009) identified this as a key factor in minority ethnic underachievement, proposing that institutionalized racism and bias has a negative impact on teacher expectations and the assessment of black and minority ethnic learners. Through the target setting process there was a focus on changes that could be made by teachers. This demonstrated an inclusive approach in line with the new paradigm through the modification of the learning environment.

With high expectations for the behaviour of all our pupils, a playground incident book was established to improve communication between the lunchtime playground supervisors and teachers. I looked at the book daily to see if there were any incidents that needed follow-up discussions. As part of our behaviour policy, I also monitored the playground incident book looking for patterns as to what may have been causing the incidents and actions that could be taken to prevent these incidents from re-occurring. I noted that some of the upper junior boys were having difficulties managing confrontational situations, particularly concerning football

and other ball games. This was having a significant impact on their learning, since on returning to the classroom after playtime the boys were not in an appropriate emotional state to learn. Following discussions about their behaviour, 7 boys were identified, 4 of whom were Afro-Caribbean. We established an anger management programme within the school, which consisted of weekly meetings chaired by an Afro-Caribbean mentor. Participation in the group was voluntary, with consent from their parents. This had a two-fold impact, not only did it give all the boys an excellent role-model, but it also gave them a more informal setting in which to discuss many of their emotions in the context of the playground and the wider school. Tikly *et al* (2005) in her review of the success of EMAG concluded that providing role models for Afro-Caribbean pupils was a successful way of combatting underachievement. Ethnic data was used to establish that the majority of the boys in need of support were Afro-Caribbean, however support was not given exclusively to this ethnic group. This was an example of the holistic constructivist learning process, since the boys were given time to reflect on errors with someone they trusted (Poplin, 1988b).

Conclusion

This paper has focused on some of the strategies that were used to foster inclusion in a primary school in London and the significance of the analysis of minority ethnic trends in implementing these practices. In reviewing the practice of monitoring minority ethnic trends within education, it can be concluded that, although this practice has value for evaluation and targeting purposes at local authority and national level, it is in line with the old paradigm for inclusion in promoting difference. It did not bring about social equality or promote inclusion in my school. Instead, it can serve to perpetuate the idea of a 'diverse' group who do not meet the norm. Through the examples given of inclusive practices that were used in my school, there is evidence that most of them ensured that we modified our practice to promote social equality and embrace diversity, using the holistic-constructivist model of inclusion. In a school judged by OFSTED as 'outstanding', none of the practices that we established to foster inclusion was implemented as a result of monitoring the assessment of minority ethnic groups. The primary focus for all our actions was the individual pupils and the appreciation of the diversity of our learners, in our determination to achieve 'excellence for all'. Based on this experience, underperformance is challenged best by schools having high expectations for all. The focus should be on the performance of individual pupils, making modifications for any pupil who is underachieving, and working with all stakeholders to ensure that each pupil fulfils their potential.

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