Special education and minority ethnic young people in England; Continuing issues

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Abstract

In countries that have developed special education provision, whether in segregated settings or 'included' in mainstream, racial, ethnic and immigrant minorities continue to be disproportionatly represented. This has always been as issue of great concern to minority parents, often to the point of litigation. In England the disproportionate representation of minority students, especially African-Caribbean and Pakistani students in categories of mild learning difficulty, and behavioural, social and emotional difficulties either in segregated settings, 'included' in mainstream in lower sets, streams and tracks, or excluded into 'alternative' education provision, mirrors the situation in the USA. Much evidence there points to disproportionality in these categories of African American, American Indian and some Hispanic students. Explanations for placement in special education programmes continue to centre round assumptions of deficiciencies in student abilities to learn and 'behave', their family backgrounds and communities. Many policy-makers, politicians, schools and teachers ignore or are ignorant of the historical background and social contexts in which these students are expected to learn. The article overviews some of this history and policy responses concerned with special education, low attainment and troublesome school behaviour in England , including recent evidence and current explanations for the placement of the students. A premise here is that research, policy and literature is still separating what is happening in 'special' education from other areas of education. This cannot continue, as world-wide moves towards inclusive education has meant that mainstream schools and Colleges now incorporate (or still exclude) a range of students regarded as having learning difficulties or disabilities, and all young people are

now expected to acquire some kind of qualification or be prepared for independent living. (Tomlinson 2013)

Introduction

Race, minority status and social class continue to play a significant role in the segregation of particular students in special schools ,or included but separated in mainstream schools via special units or classes, lower sets, streams or tracks. The disproportionate numbers of students from racial and/or minority ethnic origins (1) in the expanding categories of special education, regarded as lower attainers, or candidates for alternative kinds of education, has for over forty years years been the subject of both large and small scale research in developed countries, notably the USA, Canada, Australia and European countries. In the USA studies have long indicated that African American and American Indian students were over-represented in categories of learning disability, mild mental retardation and emotional disturbance (for evidence this century see for example Artiles et al 2011), Blanchett 2006, Losen and Orfield 2010) In England the Department for Education and Science from the late 1960s took tentative steps towards collecting information on numbers of 'immigrant' children in special schooling, using categories of West Indian, Indian and Pakistani (DES 1973) and further information on assessment, placement and any 'over-representation' came from local authority and smaller scale studies. From 2002 a Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) collected information on every pupil from 5-16 regarding their school placements, attainments, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic backgrounds. Using this data it was possible to analyse in detail disproportionate placement in categories of special educational need, (SEN) taking account of ethnicity, poverty, gender and age. (Strand and Lindsay 2009). Strand later updated this analysis with data to from both PlASC and Longitudinal studies of young people (Strand 2012, 2013). By that time there were 19 official categories of 'ethnicity' and some 12 non- statutory categories of special educational need (see appendix). At the same time, achievement 'gaps' in mainstream between white and minority groups continued to be of political concern.

While it is now possible to investigate more complex questions as to which ethnic groups are to be found in which SEN categories, quantitative analysis appears to come to one conclusion that qualitative research has found for decades, namely that Black Caribbean and mixed white and Black Caribbean students, especially boys, are four times more likely to be identified in the category of Behavioural, emotional and social difficulty (BESD), and 40% more likely to be identified as having Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD) than white students. Black students are also more

likely to be placed in Pupil Referral Units , or excluded from regular schooling (Parsons 2005. DfE 2010) The explanations offered for disproportionate representation have been similar over the years- poverty and deprivation , ethnic and cultural difference, behavioural issues, school organisation and teacher attitudes, and racism in the wider society. This article briefly reviews the history of racial placements in special education, school exclusions, and low attainments in England from the 1960s to the present, and the limited efforts of policy-makers to address issues of over- representation and exclusion of some groups of young people into what are still regarded as stigmatised kinds of schooling. It also suggests a need to move beyond simplistic comparisons which set one ethnic group against another in terms of placement and achievement, especially of black African Caribbean versus other black groups. It concludes that making sense of what is happening requires a study of belief systems built up from the early 19th century in colonial Europe and post slavery in the USA. Education systems and their special sub-systems are not neutral elements. The decisions that place Black and other minority children in special education, or exclude them in other ways from regular schooling, and non-policies that fail to recognise the links between race and alternative forms of education, are a product of the historical beliefs that still shape the values and understandings of policy-makers, professionals and practitioners.

ESN and Maladjusted from the 1960s

Black children from West Indian (Caribbean) islands, and those from the Indian subcontinent, arriving in England from the 1950s, were incorporated into an English education system imbued with negative beliefs about them and their families. Nineteenth century Victorian thinking on race represented a collection of pseudo-scientific theories about the intellectual capacities of black people. The incorporation of Darwin's ideas of biological hierarchies led to a doctrine of Social Darwinism and claims of white British superiority over non-white races. Lloyd noted that by the 1860s British opinion had moved to a simple belief in "the Empire's black and brown subjects as natural inferiors" (Lloyd 1984), and an Anglo-Saxon 'race' was presented as a superior group, biologically, economically, politically and culturally superior to colonised races and non Anglo-Saxon nations. A qualification to this was that numbers of lower working class whites, especially poor women who produced "dull and degenerate" children (RCCCFM 1908) were regarded as a danger to what was then described as the "British race". By the 1960s schools and teachers had not had any special preparation to teach children in a society where wider belief systems still incorporated images of inferior cultures and people. Beliefs in racial and cultural superiority still permeated the school curriculum and popular culture (Tomlinson 1989). Neither had views of the likely educable defects of white working class children diminished. The arrival of children from the

Caribbean had coincided with a reorganisation and expansion of statutory categories of special education, with eleven (then ten) 'categories of handicap' to which children were assigned. Pre-war 'educable defective' and dull children were to be merged into a category of educationally sub-normal and a new category of maladjusted created for children who displayed emotional and behavioural problems in schools (Tomlinson 1982)

The large number of 'immigrant', especially black children admitted to schools for the educationally subnormal (ESN) was first noted by the Inner London Education Authority in the mid 1960s, an ILEA survey of 22 schools reporting that 'misplacement' was four times more likely for immigrant children . In 1971, Bernard Coard, from the Caribbean island of Grenada and having taught in ESN schools, published his book *How the West Indian Childn is made Educationally Sub-normal in the British School System,* noting that by 1970 ESN schools in London had some 34% of 'immigrant', pre-dominantly black children attending (Coard 1971). By 1970 ESN schools had become ESN (M) for mild difficulties, with ESN (S) for those with severe difficulties. In 1973 the Department of Education and Science sent a memo to all local authorities noting that while Indian and Pakistani pupils were in the same proportion to white children in ESN (M) schools, West Indian children were four times over-represented, the memo recommending improved intelligence tests and teacher observation. (DES 1973).The same year the DES gave evidence to a Select Committee in the House of Commons on the issue, blaming assessment problems, and language and dialect difficulties for over-representation and Education Secretary Margaret Thatcher claimed that badly structured family life was a cause of lower achievements (Select Committee 1973). By 1977 a further report by the Select Committee found the over-placement of black children in ESN (M)schools to be "a very bitter area- the West Indian community is disturbed by the underachievement of its children at schools and seriously disturbed by the high proportion in ESN schools" (Select Committee 1977 vol 1). Black activist Dhondy had suggested in 1974 that the ESN issue had become symbolic of the failure of the whole school system to educate black children successfully (Dhondy 1974), and in a study carried out in the 1970s following children referred for ESN schooling black children were placed more speedily in special schools than whites, eleven months compared to two years. The criteria Head teachers used for referral corresponded closely to the ' problems ' they identified concerning black children which were that they were likely to be educationally slow, behaviourally troublesome, from disorganised families and poor socio.-economic backgrounds. (Tomlinson 1981) - a catalogue of 'explanations' that have persisted over the years.

The new category of maladjusted increased from zero in 1946 to 13,000 in 1978 with teachers in mainstream schools commenting that 'it was a relief to get the children out' (Ford Mongon and Wheeler 1982 .p.54) Black children were over represented in these schools, as were boys and working class children, middle class students did not appear to become either ESN or maladjusted. Ethnicity, culture, school attitudes and societal expectations plus medical models, were some explanations offered. There were also a variety of non-statutory ways of excluding pupils from regular schooling developing. Guidance centres, behavioural units, nurture groups, and intermediate treatment centres were largely a response to what was perceived as troublesome behaviour. In 1974 the Community Relations Commission in Birmingham found black children over-represented in these forms of education with schools claiming that this was mainly to prevent them from disrupting the education of others.. A further formal investigation in Birmingham by the Commission for Racial Equality in 1984 found a disproportionate number of black children suspended from schools, and 43% of pupils in one Guidance Unit alone were black (CRE 1985). The introduction of the notion of special educational need, following the Warnock report in 1978 (DES 1978) replacing the old categories of handicap, did little to reassure black parents, a Haringey Black Pressure group meeting then Shadow Education Minister Neil Kinnock in 1981 to express their fears about over-representation in new descriptive categories.

EBD and Exclusions.

In the 1980s and 1990s information on the placement of minority children in special education could only be obtained from local education authorities or by research studies. National collection of information on ethnic background of pupils had been attempted but discontinued in 1972. From 1989 all schools were required to collect information on pupils entering schools but with no requirements about ethnic background, not even for children with a Statement of SEN (2). Research studies in the 1980s suggested that black students continued to be regarded as lower achievers and were over-represented in new forms of mild and moderate ESN schools, by now called MLD (mild learning difficulty) schools. Numbers of black children attending these schools did however decline, as regular schools by now were mindful of the parental concern over the 'ESN issue'. Instead pupils regarded as troublesome were predominantly referred into the category of EBD, emotional and behaviourally disturbed, which had replaced the maladjusted category. Bagley used data from the National Child Development Study initiated in 1958, to demonstrate that black students were six times more likely to be in special schools and more likely to be described by their teachers as 'delinquent, rebellious, aggressive and easily-led" (Bagley 1982. p127) In their study of multiracial comprehensive schools Smith and Tomlinson noted that teachers thought that black students were

more likely to have emotional or behavioural problems, which was code for behaviour troubling to schools (Smith and Tomlinson 1989), and an Inner London Education Authority survey found black students twice as likely to be suspended or excluded from school as white or Asian pupils. (ILEA 1990). A large-scale study carried out by Cooper and his colleagues in 1989-90 found that black boys were four times more likely to be over-represented in EBD schools, and black girls also more likely to be regarded as EBD than white girls. While this research gave due weight to social class, they suggested that teachers continued to stereotype black pupils, misunderstand cultural attributes and regard them as potentially deviant in ways that could lead pupils to adopt deviant identities. (Cooper et al 1990) Curiously, a major report from Lord Swann's Committee of Enquiry into the education of children from ethnic minority groups (DES 1985) included a chapter on comparative achievement between groups but out of 807 pages gave one brief reference to special education and ESN schooling (ibid:70) The Committee did however, commission a paper on the issue of race and IQ, possibly as a sop to academics Jensen and Eysenck (Jensen 1969, Eysenck 1971) and those who persisted in claims of genetically influenced lower intelligence of black (and in Eysenck's case-Irish) groups.

By the 1990s several researchers were pointing out that while in the 1960s and 1970s black parents had mobilised over ESN placements, there had been no assertive collective voice thereafter, despite the assertion and activity around anti-racist and equal opportunity movements and resulting policies. Troyna and Vincent pointed out in 1996 that special education had remained de-politicised and regarded as an individual problem to be dealt with in paternal and humanitarian ways, relying on an' ideology of expertism', whereas anti-racist and equal opportunity movements and resulting policies were based on notions of social justice and equality (Troyna and Vincent 1996). Daniels and his colleagues, studying special schools in two LEA's noted that "The practices of SEN seem to have been insulated from the gaze of equal opportunity initiatives" (Daniels et al 1998 p.) In their study there was an over representation of boys, especial African-Caribbean boys, in the schools and they suggested that models of individual deficiencies preclude the kind of societal explanations that drive equal opportunity policies.

Achievement, Markets and Competition

By the early 1990s a competitive market in schooling had been established in the UK, with schools competing with each other for students, policed by a new inspectorate, and with football style league tables compiled for school examination results. Some 91% of secondary age students were in comprehensive schools, (7% in private schools) with competition for the remaining 164 grammar

schools skewing intakes in some areas. Around 3% of children had Statements of SEN, but some of these were 'integrated' in mainstream schools, with around 18% of students claimed by schools or parents to have various learning and behavioural problems, but with local variation. Despite a decrease in segregated special schools overall, numbers of schools for behaviour, emotional and social difficulties increased. In the school market place some students were regarded as valued and desirable 'customers' and others as troublesome, to be discouraged. Comprehensive schools could also now select 10% of students on 'aptitude, and suspend or exclude problem students. Rates of referral to EBD schools and exclusion rose, and Pupil Referral Units, for troubled and troublesome students were developed One irony was that market effects led to a concentration of children rejected by some schools in other schools which accepted them but were then penalised for low examination results, regarded as failing and put into 'special measures', with threats of merger or closure. One example of this was Hackney Downs School in London, demonised in the press as 'the worst school in Britain' and closed in December 1995 at a time when the school included 80% minority students, 70% of them second language speakers, 50% from household with no employment, a high proportion excluded from other schools and a majority having some kind of special educational need (O'Connor et al 1999).

Levels of achievement, as measured by numbers of students passing school examinations at the newly developed key stage tests at 7,11, 14 and the General Certificate of Secondary Education at 16, improved during the 1990s, especially as more young people were now taught and entered for public examinations, the GCSE results becoming a benchmark for school success or failure.. However, a review of minority achievements over ten years pointed to significant differences in examinations by different ethnic groups and in different local authorities over the years. (Gillborn and Gipps 1996) While all groups had raised their achievement levels African-Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Pakistani students continued to achieve below other groups, while those of Indian origin performed best in some, but not all, local areas. In the study of multiracial schools during the 1980s, it was African-Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups who were less likely to be entered for the 'O' level, the public exam replaced by the GCSE (Smith and Tomlinson 1989) and into the 1990s these groups were less likely to go into higher education. Overall white pupils continued to have the highest achievement levels at 16, with social class and gender affecting achievement in all groups. Black students were more likely to attend Colleges of Further Education and gain vocational qualifications.

New Labour and Special Needs.

The Prime Minister of a New Labour government, elected in 1997, asserted that it was committed to social justice and to education as a means to create a socially just society (Blair 1998). The government had inherited an unequal society with more children living in poverty than any in Western Europe, especially children in minority families, and embarked on a number of policies aimed at disadvantaged and minority young people. These included setting up a Social Exclusion Unit in the Cabinet Office with a brief to inquire into black school exclusions and placement in EBD schools, a White paper which suggested a Standards Task Force to lead a 'crusade' for higher standards, including raising the achievements of ethnic minority students and those with special educational needs ((DfEE 1997a) and a National Childcare Strategy. A Green Paper in 1997 claimed a" determination to show that children with SEN are capable of excellence" (DfEE 1997b foreword) and a House of Commons report in 1998 made links between low attainments, school exclusions and truancy and attempted to qualify the costs of school disaffection to the public purse (House of Commons 1998).

By now government was worried by an increase in parental claims for resources for an increasing variety of 'special needs'. From 2001 three levels of support were envisaged- School Action where schools would offer extra support, School Action Plus, where schools would have specialist assistance and the Statement of SEN where after inter professional assessment there was legally prescribed education either in or out of mainstream. While historically all social classes admitted to producing children assessed as having sensory or physical needs, middle class parents had avoided the more stigmatised categories associated with learning and behavioural problems. The government faced historical dilemmas over the costs of educating young people who might not be economically profitable to society, especially as middle classes and aspirant parents were increasingly claiming funding and resources for those of their children who were unlikely to achieve in competitive, market –driven schooling, A paper on *Meeting special educational needs: a programme for action* was intended to reduce parental demands and require local authorities to monitor their SEN policies.(DfEE 1998). In 1999 an *Excellence in Cities* programme was initiated.(DfEE 1999). This included separating out slower learners into Learning Support Units and setting up programmes for the'gifted and talented'. Schools were required to nominate 5-10% of students in the G and T programmes for summer schools and enrichment activities. Research eventually established that while one in ten white students were identified as gifted and talented, only one in twenty-five black students were chosen.B;acl students were less likely to be gifted in the academic area, more likely to be talented at sports!(DfEE 2005). Black parents, professionals

and church leaders were prominent in attempting to combat stereotypes of black young people and provide more equal educational opportunities and confidence to succeed (Cork 2005) but a determined right wing had not given up on efforts to persuade policy-makers that black people had lower intelligence than whites. An interview in 1999 with 77 year old Arthur Jensen recorded his belief that on average black people had an IQ 15 points lower than whites and that 'high level' politicians in Britain believed that compensatory programmes did not work. (Turner 1999)

With a global agenda now committed to 'inclusive' education, and confusion as to who should be identified as disabled or having special educational needs, in 2001 a *Special Educational Needs and Disability Act* for the first time linked SEN and disability, extending a 1995 Disability and Discrimination Act to ensure that discrimination against disabled students was unlawful, and in 2004 *Removing Barriers to Achievement* (DfES 2004) offered early interventions, improved teacher training and more help for parents. Despite inclusion, there was actually a 1% increase in children with Statements between 1999 and 2003, with much local variation. Boys accounted for 77% of those with statements, Roma and Traveller students being over- represented and African – Caribbean boys excluded from mainstream in disproportionate numbers, placed in Pupil Referral Units and EBD schools. The long saga of addressing the lower educational achievements of some minority groups, especially African-Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups, continued. By this time children in minority groups extended to refugees and asylum seekers from conflicts around the world, including Somalis fleeing civil war in Somalia, those from conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, more African young people especially from Ghana and Nigeria, and Eastern Europeans, including Roma, migrating to the UK after the 1992 Maastricht Treaty. An Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) had replaced previous schemes, which had been mainly intended for second language speakers, and an Ethnic Minority Achievement Unit set up in the Department for Education. A further report on minority achievements demonstrated rising levels of achievement at GCSE level for all groups but again with African Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups less likely to improve year on year. (Gillborn and Mirza 2000) Gillborn and Youdell had also demonstrated that school were less likely to enter black pupils for higher level 'tiers' in these examination (Gillborn and Youdell 2000).

Continuing Concerns

Anxieties over the lower educational attainments of pupils variously described as disadvantaged or deprived continued and a paper in 2009 on *Breaking the link between disadvantage and low attainment: Everyone's business*(DFCSF 2009) worried that despite all-round improvements, poor

children (3)were still half as likely to get good GCSE grades, the paper noting that social class gaps opened up early and that some young people from traditional working class backgrounds showed less ambition than more recently arrived groups. This was a reference to data now showing that Indian, Chinese and some other groups were attaining better at GCSE level than some white working class students, especially boys. This paper also noted that poor children were more likely to be in the School Action Plus category of SEN. Costs of funding the increasing numbers of schools and parents claiming children had special educational needs continued and the last paper produced by the New Labour government was worried that some 900,000 students were identified at School Action level. (DfCSF 2010b) The paper again noted the strong connection between "having SEN" and being from a low-income family. The incoming Coalition government later that year confirmed that this had risen to 916,000, with a million young people between 16-18 not in employment, education or training, perjoitively referred to as NEETS, many of whom had been identified as having SEN. (Haywood et al 2008). The new government set in train a quick review and promised a 'radically different system of identifying SEN', proposing to abolish the existing stages of support and overcome "the perverse incentives to over-identify children as having SEN" (DfE 2011:9). From 2014 there was to one school-based category and an Education, Health and Care Plan, replacing Statements, and the age of staying in education or training was in any case to rise to 18 by 2015, (the Care Plan extending to age 25 if necessary). However, the new government also produced a paper promising 'radical reform' in all schools, which did include a Pupil Premium to be paid to schools catering for poor children. A whole section of this paper was devoted to behaviour in school, with poor white working class and Black students singled out as three times more likely to be excluded from schools for bad behaviour, but schools were to have more responsibility to ensure excluded students received alternative forms of education.(DfE 2010).

As noted, the New Labour government extended the pupil level annual school census (PLASC) completed in January of each year by all schools, to include ethnicity, gender and socio-economic background. This provided the Department for Education and researchers with data on around six and a half million students between 5 and 16 on school achievements , gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status, although there is no comparable national data on post-16 students, their achievements or special needs in Colleges of Further Education, Higher Education, or alternative forms of education or training. Strand and his colleagues using PLASC data have undertaken research into the disproportional representation of students in the various categories of SEN, calculating the odds ratios of falling into the categories before and after adjusting for age, gender ethnicity and socioeconomic disadvantage. They described some categories as non-judgemental-

those which Tomlinson (1982) described as normative categories, where there could be some agreement on sensory or physical disabilities, and those non-normative categories where value judgments from professional and practitioners came into play. In the USA these are often referred to as 'high incidence' categories. The papers (Strand and Lindsay 2009), usefully analyse the complex relationships between poverty, age, gender and ethnicity, including detailed analyses of any over or under representation of different ethnic groups in all current SEN categories. However the explanations offered for placements are, as in qualitative research, speculative. Unsurprisingly it is the mild learning difficulties and behavioural categories where there is still an over-representation of Black Caribbean students, especially boys, in the BESD and MLD categories. Additionally Strand (2013) used data from a Longitudinal Study of Young people in England (4) to analyse a black-white achievement gap indicating that Black Caribbean students 11-14 are the only ethnic group making less progress than white British students and that socio-economic status cannot account for this gap. Explanations suggested revolve round family background, parental attitudes and student behaviour, school contexts, teacher attitudes and neighbourhood deprivation. Black students are again noted as less likely to be placed in higher examination tiers, and more likely to be excluded from schools and placed in BESD schooling. Strand has particularly noted over representations of Black and 'mixed' Caribbean students but not Black African, a point taken up below.

Political Understandings

Providing some kind of public education for all young people in England is part of a long process continuing for over 150 years. But developing some extended education and training for working class young people has been in train for less than forty years, when a recession in 1973 saw the ending of a youth labour market in the UK. Educating minorities in a system designed for white majorities has only been attempted for some fifty years In addition global acceptance of the inclusion of most of those with disabilities and learning difficulties in mainstream education is a vision which has been around for less than twenty years. Reluctance to accept all this has been apparent from some educationalists, policy-makers and politicians for whom the education of the underclass, the disabled the disadvantaged, and racial minorities has always been problematic, buttressed by claims of lower intellence, and uncontrollable behaviour. The views expressed by for example, Terman in the early part of the twentieth century for whom 'feeble-minded' children contributed to an 'increasing spawn of degeneracy' (Terman 1917), by Eysenck who recommended " the abolition of the proletariat as a whole, both black and white" (Eysenck 1971:150) and by Herrnstein and Murray, for who cognitive ability was mainly heritable and a great dividing line in

society, requiring dull, (black) women to stop giving birth to an underclass community (Herrnstein and Murray 1994: pp 22-25, p520) are still resonant. The long-standing debates on the contribution of genetic inheritance to low intelligence (as measured by IQ tests) in lower class and racial groups, has recently resurfaced, buttressed by developments in cognitive neuro-science and behavioural genetics. There is some evidence that hereditarian views are influencing politicians in England. Cummings, an adviser to Education Secretary Michael Gove, presented a 237 page study to his Minister in August 2013, entitled "Some thoughts on education and political priorities" (Cummings 2013) . Starting from statement that "the education of the majority even in rich countries is awful to mediocre", a section of the paper revived the century old debate on the relative contribution of genes and environment to school performance. Cumming's understanding of the issues depended heavily on the work of Robert Plomin and his colleagues, who have a long record of work in the psychometric tradition, carrying out twin studies and with a book on *Behavioural Genetics* (Plomin et al 2008) going into a fifth edition. Plomin, an American now working at King's College London, has claimed the overwhelming importance of specific genes in reading disabilities, aggression, ADHD and other conditions, and Cummings quoted him as asserting that scores in national curriculum tests at 7-9-12 are 60-70% are dependent on habitability. Cummings also claimed, in an echo of Arthur Jensen's views on compensatory programmes in the USA (Jensen 1969) that "political pressure to spend money on such things as Sure Start (a programme for disadvantaged children from 0-3) had resulted in " billions spent with no real gain".

Historical Understandings

Despite reluctance or hostility, the institution of education has and continues to be, a crucial element in the absorption of minority young people into the socio-economic and citizenship structures of society. Making sense of statistical data requires a study of the historical and political context in which racial and ethnic minorities have been incorporated into education system, especially as the English system is one that employs a rhetoric of meritocracy and equality of opportunity to disguise a system of increasing inequalities. Immigrant and minority children, especially Black Caribbean students, have over the years suffered more than white students from the assumption that they had 'equal chances to be unequal' but some groups of young people, notably those from parts of India, East Asia , East and West Africa, have been better placed to benefit from English education than others. The educational placement and attainments of black and other minority students cannot be understood without some knowledge of the social structures of Empire, the reluctant acceptance of an end to Empire, and the negative or positive assumptions made about minorities from different former colonies.

Rex (1970) among others has described a number of historical contexts in which to understand the social structure of a British Empire colonised by military conquests, appropriation of land and wealth, slavery ,forced labour, forced migration and denial of human rights. Where migrating groups came from is of crucial importance in understanding the beliefs held by descendents of the colonisers,- the white English public, their politicians and educators. It is especially important to know whether the migrants came from former slaveholding societies where slaves were legally chattels, as in the West Indies and American southern states, from countries as in West Africa that were slave-sending countries, or from countries practising bonded labour, as in Latin American countries, where labourers were not regarded as sub-human, or from Asian countries with home cultures based on a language, religion and kinship structures not destroyed by slavery. Robert Winder, in his book *Bloody Foreigners* graphically illustrated the different reactions to migrants from the Indian sub-continent and the West Indies. "Caribbean islanders in London or Birmingham moved through a daily barrage of four-letter words and physical intimidation" (Winder 2004:373). Despite the "Paki-bashing" and antipathy towards migrants from the Asian sub-continent in Britain they have been able to develop their entrepreneurial skills, Caribbean descendents have had fewer such opportunities. The anti-migrant hostility and racism towards different groups is underpinned by different historical beliefs and the opportunities they have had to prosper in Britain.

Thus, observation that South Asian and Chinese groups are under-represented in the non-normative categories of SEN, (MLD and BESD), depended on the judgements of professionals, is unsurprising. Professionals dealing with these groups of students have different historical understandings of their backgrounds and capacities. They are not regarded as problematic in learning or behaviour (apart from second language learning for some students). Strand and Lindsay claim that the over-representation of Black Caribbean but not Black African groups in MLD and BESD "raises particular challenges for interpretation "(ibid : 88). It should, in fact be relatively easy to examine the beliefs of professionals about the likely learning and behavioural capacities of the descendents of slaves, versus the descendents of African slave –sending societies, especially given the superior post-colonial development of education systems from which most of the Black African students have come.(see World Bank 1998). It is also of interest to note that in a recent study in Scotland, Pakistani and Bangladeshi students achieve on average or better than the general Scottish school population.(Weedon et al 2013?) Perhaps the beliefs of the Scots, themselves once colonised by the English (Hecter 1975) about minority educational capacities are different!

Conclusions

This paper has discussed continuing issues concerning the on-going debates about the disproportionate representation of immigrant and minority students in the various and expanding categories of special education, and lower attaining and excluded groups, whether in segregated or inclusive settings in England. It has noted that the debates over the representation of black students in stigmatised categories of special education are similar to the situation in the USA. In the USA discussion of the situation is more open and connected to race. In England, now that more data is available on the relative positions of different ethnic groups in categories of SEN, in their achievements and placements in school, and their exclusions and placements in alternative forms of education, explanations are still coyly claiming that some issues are 'too sensitive' to be discussed (for example the possibilities that some Muslim sensory and physical disabilities might be connected to cousin marriage). However the explanations concerning disproportionate placement of black Caribbean students in stigmatised SEN categories, lower levels in mainstream schooling, school suspensions and exclusions may not mention 'race' but are firmly related to student, family and community 'cultural' deficiencies. The interaction of placements with poverty is a focus of analysis and suggestions are made that poverty does not explain black over-representation. This should not be surprising as middle class black families and students are often viewed negatively by teachers. (see Gillborn et al forthcoming.) This paper asserts that politicians, professionals and practitioners making value judgements on the students are influenced by historical beliefs and (lack of) understandings of the historical position of minorities in the social structure of Empire, and particularly the way that black Caribbean students have been over the years, been especially penalised by negative stereotypes and treatment. Comparisons with black African students are particularly pointless given the different history of migration and the development of education systems in West African countries and the Caribbean.

Government in England has been concerned over the past the years with an expansion of parental and school claims that students fall into one or more of the increasing categories of special educational need which is not financially sustainable. There has been little attempt to link these claims to the market- engendered failure which is a result of competitive schooling and high-stakes testing. The current government is engaged in further changes to the GCSE to take effect from 2015, which will, through 'more difficult' tests and raised levels of what counts as success, produce more failures. This will affect black students in particular and will also lead to more parents of all ethnicities and social classes claiming resources for special needs. There is a strong disjunction now between assertions that all students, whatever their difficulties or disabilities, must gain some kind

of qualification and be an economic asset, not a burden, on the state, and the policies which continue to stigmatise and prevent success.

Notes

(1) There is a large amount of literature discussing the social constructions and definitions of race and ethnicity. Here the definition by Rex (1986:17) is adopted. “Racial and Ethnic groups are groups to whom common characteristics are imputed rather than the groups having these characteristics. Racial groups are groups thought to have a genetic or other deterministic base, ethnic groups are thought of as those whose behaviour might change.

(2) From 1945 official ‘Handicapped Pupils’ forms referred to children who had a ‘disability of body or mind’. From 1975 five Special Education (SE) forms replaced these and from 1983 after inter-professional assessment children who qualified for legally prescribed special education received a Statement of Special Educational Need. This is to be replaced from 2014 by an Education, Health and Care Plan.

(3) The long-standing definition of poor children in English schools has been to define them by those in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM), which has stood as a proxy for low socio-economic status. It was always a dubious category. Many minority families for example, declined FSM, or indeed any school meals for their children. Here children from poor households are referred to as poor.

(4) A Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE) also known as the Next Steps study, was initiated in 2004 by the then Department for Children Schools and Families. A sample of 15,000 young people 13-14 were to be followed for at least ten years. By 2010 some 8680 of the sample were still in the study and the now Department for Education continues its funding.

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Appendix

- Ethnic Codes. (DfE 2011)
- White British,White Irish, Other White groups, mixed White and Black African, mixed White and Black Caribbean, mixed White and Asian, any other mixed background, Traveller Irish, Roma,Indian, Pakistani,Bangladeshi, any other Asian,Black African, Black Caribbean, Black other, hinese,any other ethnic group, unclassified.
- SEN categories. (DFE 2011)
- No SEN, MLD, (Mild learning difficulty) BESD,(Behavioural, emotional and social difficulty) SLCN (speech. Language, communication needs) SPLD (specific learning difficulty)ASD (autistic spectrum disorder), Other difficulty or disability, PD (physical disability) SLD, (severe learning difficulty) HI (hearing impairment) VI (visual Impairment, PMLD (profound and multiple learning difficulty) MS (multisensory impariment)