

Improving Further Education Provision for Learners from Minority Ethnic Groups

A Review of the Evidence

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Executive Summary

Introduction

1. This paper summarises the findings from a review carried out by the National Research and Development Centre for adult literacy and numeracy (NRDC) for the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) between April and September 2007. The study sought to summarise what is known about the participation of those from minority ethnic groups in Further Education (FE) and to identify effective practice in helping them to achieve.
2. The study is largely based on a review of 52 papers published in academic journals or other media since 2001 supported by evidence from official statistics. All papers (except one from the USA) relate to the UK though some relate only to Great Britain and many relate only to England. Most of the statistical data relates to FE colleges rather than the FE system as a whole.
3. The review was augmented by evidence taken from six case studies of good practice and three focus groups of learners. The case studies were selected from the Ofsted Good Practice Database as being exemplary in relation to issues around equal opportunities and diversity. The focus groups involved learners from minority ethnic groups at community based adult education centres.

Policy Context

4. The review was undertaken in the context of government proposals for the reform of the Further Education System following the Leitch Review of Skills. It therefore has a particular focus on how far members of minority groups achieve nationally recognised qualifications, and are able to progress into employment.
5. It also takes note of the framework set by the National Improvement Strategy for FE in England and the LSC's Single Equality Scheme. Both documents encourage a systematic comparison of the performance of minority groups with that of the majority population.

Findings

Ethnic Minorities in the UK

6. Ethnic minorities make up between 8% and 10% of the population of England, though they form a larger proportion of younger age categories. They are not distributed evenly across the country; around a third of all minorities live in London, and there is substantial variation between regions and individual cities.
7. There are three main categories into which minority communities in England are usually grouped in the literature; Black, Asian and Chinese. The Black group is often subdivided into African, Caribbean and Other; the Asian group into Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage; and reports also often identify Mixed Heritage and 'Other' categories. Some reports use more or fewer subdivisions.
8. The minority groups are not distributed in the same way across the country although all are strongly represented in London. There are considerable differences within the nine main categories which can relate to religion, language or history.

Participation from minority groups

9. In general those from minority groups have higher rates of participation in the FE system than the White British category. This is partly, but not wholly explained by higher proportion of the former in younger age groups. Enrolment data for the FE sector for example shows that only around three quarters of learners are White British, although they account for 90% of the English population. Compared with other categories Asian learners are over represented at level one and relatively under represented at level 2.
10. Two of the studies examined suggest that learners from minority groups are more committed to staying in learning beyond compulsory school age but identify differences in the pattern of participation. Asian students seem more likely to follow an academic route whereas Black Caribbean learners are more frequently enrolled on vocational programmes. Asian learners are strongly over represented in the health sector.

Achievements of minority learners

11. There is some evidence that young learners from minority groups are more likely than average to drop out of study before completion, though this pattern is not so marked among the over 19s. It is not easy to reconcile this finding with another study that showed Asian and Caribbean male learners taking longer to achieve the same level of qualifications as their White counterparts, i.e. demonstrating greater persistence.

12. The overall success rate for learners from minority groups in FE in 2005/06 was, in all cases lower than that for the White category (77%) by between 1 and 8 percentage points. Most of the variation was accounted for by adult learners; in the 16-18 age group four minority categories achieved at the same or a higher rate than whites.
13. These differences need to be set against an overall upward trend in success rates in which all groups shared. Only two groups (Black Caribbean and Black Other) had a success rate in 2005/06 that was lower than that for the White group in 2003/04 (69% as against 70%)
14. The highest success rates are found among young people from the Chinese and Indian communities; the lowest among Black Caribbean and Black Other (though not Black African). These findings conform to popular stereotypes; and there are some studies that provide plausible explanations of the pattern. More detailed examination of success rates by subject, level and mode of learning however reveals a more complex picture and suggests caution is needed when looking at aggregate data.

Reasons for differences in performance

15. There are varying explanations of why some learners from minority groups perform less well in some circumstances. It is probable that a large part of the variation between groups can be explained by socio-economic status rather than ethnicity. For some groups difficulties with the English language may be a more important consideration than ethnic background, though in general bilingualism is not associated with underperformance.
16. Some studies suggest that the higher success rates of Chinese and Indian young people reflect the high value placed on learning in those communities. Other studies however highlight positive attitudes to learning among both young people and their parents in most communities, which is consistent with their relatively high participation rates.
17. It is suggested in some studies that teachers' expectations and 'institutional racism' may be factors contributing to the underperformance of Black Caribbean and Black 'Other' students. There is clear evidence that such students are more likely to be excluded from school; but it is not clear how to account for the fact that Black African students appear to perform as well as whites.
18. Some studies attribute the weaker performance of some Black learners to a shortage of appropriate role models either among teaching staff or in the wider community. It is suggested that outcomes can be improved by steps to rectify this, through, for example, programmes of visiting speakers. While this seems a reasonable hypothesis there is little hard evidence of its impact.

Good practice in working with minority groups

19. Several of the case studies emphasised the benefits of marketing approaches that used images of minority communities in publicity material and specifically targeted schools or areas with high concentrations of minority groups. It was noted that such an approach could also be effective in attracting boys into traditionally female occupations and vice versa.
20. Another case study and the focus groups highlighted the value of development workers or support staff who were either fluent in minority languages or well versed in the culture of a particular community. The provision of information in minority languages was felt to have both a practical and symbolic impact.
21. In several instances the case studies and focus groups identified features of general good practice that contributed to effective work with minority groups. Such factors included strong links with employers, a focus on the quality of teaching and learning and the availability of individually tailored support.

Conclusions and Implications

22. The principal conclusion from this study is that it is unsafe to generalise about the performance of learners from minority ethnic groups in England. There are differences between minority groups that are at least as large as the difference between any one group and the majority white community. There are differences within minority groups in terms of age, gender and sometimes language that can be at least as significant as ethnic origin.
23. The differences between groups are complicated by the fact that the performance of minority groups appears to differ significantly between settings. Some groups such as Caribbean and Bangladeshi boys for example, who often fall behind in classroom work seem to succeed well in some work based learning contexts.
24. The complexity of these issues suggests that the aggregate data is a poor guide as to where specific action needs to be focussed. Providers need to look carefully at their own particular context to guide their improvement priorities. The continuing gap between the overall success rates of minority communities and the majority population needs to be monitored but may owe as much to socio-economic differences as to ethnicity.
25. The increase in overall success rates for every group between 2003/04 and 2005/06 suggests that the strategies that providers have introduced to improve learning outcomes are generally effective across the board. A continued focus on factors such as initial assessment or classroom observation is likely to have positive results for majority and minority groups alike.

26. There is in fact little evidence of effective practice in meeting the needs of learners from minority groups that would not also be thought to be effective practice in respect of all learners. Among the more specific factors identified in good practice studies are the provision of role models from minority communities; the provision of support staff who understand a minority language and culture, and carefully designed and targeted recruitment materials.
27. Much of the good practice evidence relates to strategies to help engage minority groups. While this is important, and perhaps very important for some specific communities, the evidence suggests that encouraging participation is not the major issue. More attention needs to be paid to ensuring minority learners are enrolled on an appropriate programme and helping them to succeed once they have been recruited.
28. There are significant gaps in the literature that need to be addressed. They include the need for a more systematic analysis of participation rates that take account of the different age profiles of minority groups and better evaluation of the impact of mentoring schemes, and the provision of role models.

Recommendations

It is recommended that providers should:

29. monitor carefully the performance of learners from different minority groups. They should not treat learners from minority groups as a single category.
30. recognise that there may be differences within minority groups that are as important as differences between them, and consider how these differences might impact upon performance.
31. review how the performance of specific groups has changed over time, to help assess whether the general quality improvement measures that have been implemented have been equally effective for all groups
32. consider whether recruitment from specific groups might be improved by more careful targeting of publicity or the inclusion of appropriate images
33. consider procedures for the recruitment and promotion of staff in the light of the desirability of providing role models for minority learners as well as equal opportunities practice.
34. review the composition of the governing body to see whether it might better reflect the communities that the college serves

35. consider whether the provision of support workers who understand a minority language or culture might improve the participation or achievement of specific groups
36. pay particular attention to transitions, such as from community based provision to major sites as these can be the times when extra support is required.
37. focus attention particularly on helping learners from minority groups to achieve their learning goals. This may include more work to ensure that they are enrolled on an appropriate learning programme.
38. seek to ensure that examples and exercises used in teaching reflect minority contexts as well as those of the majority community
39. be sensitive to the different expectations of the roles of teachers and learners held in different communities
40. provide opportunities for members of minority communities to share aspects of their culture with the wider group and thereby help them to feel valued and respected.

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A Review of the Evidence

1. Introduction

This report summarises the findings from a review of the evidence on the performance of learners from minority ethnic groups in the English FE system. It was carried out by NRDC for QIA between April and September 2007. The study was based on a literature review, an analysis of administrative data, an examination of a series of case studies of good practice and three specially arranged focus groups.

The purpose of the study was to summarise what is known about the patterns of participation by learners from ethnic minorities in England; to examine the extent to which these learners achieve and progress to further study or employment; to identify reasons for underperformance where it exists and to provide evidence of effective ways of supporting those from minority groups to engage and succeed. The study also sought to identify significant gaps in the available evidence.

The evidence on the participation and achievement of ethnic minority learners is principally drawn from administrative statistics and particularly the individualised learner record (ILR) produced by the LSC. This provides the most reliable evidence available on participation rates and comparative levels of achievement in the sector. These statistics are supplemented by data from the national population census, and more detailed studies described in the literature.

The literature review was based on an analysis of 52 papers published in academic journals and other media since 2001. Details of the papers accessed are given in Annex 1. The materials were identified by searching the internet and academic journals, and asking personal contacts; they were selected if they made reference to comparisons of the performance of different ethnic groups, **and** related to the English FE system. Key search terms were 'participation', 'achievement' 'success' and 'ethnicity'.

All the papers (except one from the USA) relate primarily to the UK; some only relate to England or England and Wales. Although the focus of the study is the English FE system some of the papers provide relevant evidence from studies in schools or higher education. The literature review is the principal source of evidence both for explanations of why participation and achievement rates vary between groups and proposals for how they might be improved.

The review also examined six case studies of good practice, drawn from the Ofsted good practice database. The researchers sought examples of practices said by the inspectors to be effective in promoting either the participation or achievement of learners from minority groups. The case study evidence was used alongside the literature review to produce a summary of motivating factors and barriers to learning.

The focus groups involved small groups of ethnic minority learners at three community based locations in Birmingham, Bolton and Liverpool. The aim of the groups was to explore issues affecting participation with learners who had not engaged with mainstream education providers. It was used to support the evidence on barriers to access and good practice in overcoming them.

The review was guided by an advisory group which included representatives from the Department of Innovation Universities and Skills (DIUS) public bodies such as the LSC, providers and voluntary organisations. The full membership of the advisory group is given in Annex 2.

2. The Policy Context

A better understanding of the nature of participation by members of minority groups is important for the implementation of a number of key government policies. The need to improve outcomes for these learners is highlighted in strategic documents, and more specific guidance on issues the sector needs to address is set out in several supporting papers.

Underpinning much recent policy for the FE sector is the report of the Leitch Review of Skills, published in December 2006. The report, **World Class Skills** was followed in January 2007 by proposals to reform the funding of the FE sector and in June 2007 by the Government's **Leitch Implementation Plan**.

The focus of the Leitch Review is on raising the skills of UK citizens in an effort to make the country more competitive. Leitch sets out a series of 'ambitions' or targets including the aim that 90% of the population should reach level 2 in literacy and numeracy. The report also set an employment target of 80%. According to Leitch, ethnic minorities, among others, have employment rates that are low in comparison to the overall population, and are less likely to hold even the minimum qualifications. Leitch reports that 30% of the white population in the UK have low or no qualifications while for the Asian heritage population living in the UK the number is over 40%.

The FE White Paper **Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances (2006)** similarly identifies the need to focus on gaps between the performance of ethnic minority learners and the majority white population. It suggests that work that needs to be done to

“...close the gap in success rates between minority ethnic groups and white learners and to tackle the historically low entry rates of women and minority ethnic groups into work based training” (p.15).

At the same time the **14-19 white paper** aims to have

“our education system...provide every young person with a route to success in life through hard work and dedication (p. 7) (Beasley & Sokoloff, 2005).”

The objective is to help young people to succeed regardless of ethnic background and family circumstances.

The LSC is responsible for implementing government policy in respect of further education, and in relation to ethnic minorities two recent papers are worthy of note. It has developed a **Learner Involvement Strategy** (LSC, 2007a) which tells providers that:

“Some learners will face barriers to involvement, and will need appropriate help or support to overcome them. The needs of the different learners [...] such as distance learners, learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or mental health issues, young people in care or care-leavers, learners with care responsibilities, and learners of different ethnicities, genders, sexualities or faiths all need to be taken into account over time as your approaches to learner involvement mature and develop” (p. 23).

The LSC has also recently published its **Single Equality Scheme: Our Strategy for Equality and Diversity** (LSC, 2007). Within that document, the LSC reports on its duty to promote equal opportunity and avoid discrimination. It is intended to cover race, disability and gender equality, as well as taking account of religion or belief, age and sexual orientation. The scheme has been devised to:

- Provide a single document to describe how the LSC will fulfil its statutory duties to promote equality of opportunity and avoid discrimination, and to demonstrate its commitment to equality and diversity
- Set out the framework for assessing the impact of the LSC’s policies, in terms of gender, race and disability equality

The report also sets out guidance on how to involve learners and employers, respond to equality and diversity complaints, and monitor, update and review the scheme.

Also in 2007 the QIA launched the **National Improvement Strategy** for the Further Education system in England (2007a). Whilst this is a strategy embracing all cohorts in the system, specific attention is paid in the document to the success rates of ethnic minority groups:

“... success rates for adults on Level 3 long qualifications lag behind those for 16–18 year-olds by 18 percentage points; there is a 26 per cent variation between the best and worst performing subject sector

areas in Apprenticeship (Level 2) framework completions and success rates for learners from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups still show variations. "(p.6).

Although much of the focus of government policy implicitly and often explicitly directs colleges and other providers to monitor the performance of minority groups and take appropriate action if they are out of line some commentators draw attention to the unintended consequences of government policy. Gillborn for example argues that too great a focus on raising achievement rather than widening participation could be one way in which inequalities are sustained. He argues that the English education system unintentionally reproduces ethnic inequalities as a result of educational *priorities*, and this can be seen by looking at the *beneficiaries* of the system and the educational *outcomes* (Gillborn, 2001, 2005). Priorities he maintains are focused on attainment at the expense of an inclusive education; beneficiaries of the system seem to be mostly white groups; the outcomes are perpetuating these inequalities, so that, for example, black students are underrepresented in the classes for gifted pupils, teachers' under-rate black students' motivation, and so on.

3. Findings

3.1 Ethnic Minorities in the UK

To understand the pattern of participation in FE by people from ethnic minorities it is first necessary to understand the nature and distribution of minority groups in the UK. The picture is very complex and is constantly changing, most recently as a result of migration within the EU and the movement of refugees from several different conflict zones.

Furthermore the pattern of ethnic groups as frequently delineated in the literature is challenged by shifting identities. Race is not the only basis on which to identify with a group. Religion, culture or historical bonds may prove more salient in group membership when people are asked about their ethnicity; for example, Barn (2001) mentions that Caribbeans may define themselves as Black African; or sometimes they may call themselves Black British and therefore fall under the "black other" group.

Inter-racial marriages produce a further category (the "Mixed" heritage group), which may itself be segmented based on the combination of ethnicities that mix. This complicates any understanding of factors affecting participation and success in FE because of the interaction between multiple cultural backgrounds.

Attention should be drawn to the limited evidence on some groups such as Gypsies, or Romany and Irish Travellers, and their participation and achievement in the FE system. Also those of Irish or Welsh heritage are largely embedded in the "white British" group ("Commission for Racial Equality", 2007) and the CRE has emphasised that the white heritage group is

as diverse as the rest in terms of cultural background, socio-economic status, and so on ("Commission for Racial Equality", 2007).

Notwithstanding all this complexity most researchers seek to distinguish three main minority groups which are often subdivided into a total of seven distinct categories. They are

- Asian groups (Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage),
- Black groups (Caribbean, African and 'other' heritage), and
- Far East groups (Chinese heritage).

These seven categories, together with 'Mixed' and a very heterogeneous 'Other' category are the most frequent basis for official statistics.

Table 1 shows the regional distribution of all ethnic minorities from the National Statistics Office as compiled from the 2001 census and indicates that minority ethnic groups make up almost 9% of the total population of England. It should be noted that statistics vary depending on how and when the data is collected. For example, there are some surveys which state that the minority ethnic population is around 8% (Foster & Willemstyn, 2005) and others find it to be 10% (*Single Equality Scheme: Our Strategy for Equality and Diversity*, 2007). Very recent migration patterns, for which no reliable data seems to be available, may have made the total even higher.

Table 2 shows the same data as table 1, but presents it in a different way allowing one to see more easily where specific groups are concentrated. Looking at table 1 for example, shows that only 1.7% of the population comes from a minority group in the North East region as opposed to 29.3% in London; table 2 shows that only 1% of those from minority groups in Britain live in the North East whereas 47.9% of all minorities live in London.

After the capital, the region with the largest proportion of its population from minority ethnic groups is the West Midlands (10.7%), followed by Yorkshire & Humber (6.3%) and the East Midlands (5.9%).

Although there is a clear overall pattern minority ethnic groups are spread across the regions differently. For example Black Africans, Black Caribbeans and Bangladeshis are more likely to be concentrated in London (76%, 59% and 56%, respectively). Pakistanis are more dispersed with 20% living in the capital, 22% living in West Midlands, 20% in Yorkshire and Humber and 17% in the North West.

Table 1: Distribution of ethnic groups within Government Office Regions, 2001/02

	North East		North West		Yorkshire and the Humber		East Midlands		West Midlands		Eastern London		South East		South West		Wales		Scotland		England and Wales		
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
White	98.3	94.8	93.7	94.1	89.3	95.7	70.7	95.8	97.8	98.1	91.2	91.6											
Mixed	0.2	0.6	0.8	0.5	1.1	0.7	2.4	0.8	0.5	0.2	1.0	0.9											
Indian	0.3	0.9	1.0	2.7	3.2	0.9	5.8	0.9	0.3	0.2	1.9	1.8											
Pakistani	0.4	1.8	3.0	0.7	3.1	0.6	2.0	0.6	0.1	0.6	1.4	1.4											
Bangladeshi	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.3	2.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.5											
Other Asian	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	2.2	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.5	0.5											
Black Caribbean	*	0.5	0.5	0.8	1.6	0.5	4.9	0.3	0.3	0.1	1.2	1.2											
Black African	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.3	5.7	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	1.0											
Black Other	*	*	*	*	*	*	0.7	0.1	*	*	0.3	0.1											
Chinese	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.9	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3											
Other	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.4	2.6	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.6	0.6											
All minority ethnic groups	1.7	5.2	6.3	5.9	10.7	4.3	29.3	4.2	2.2	1.9	8.8	8.4											

*sample size too small for reliable estimate.

Source: Annual Local Area Labour Force Survey, 2001/02, Office for National Statistics

Table 2: Distribution of ethnic groups across Government Office Regions, 2001/02

	Yorkshire and the Humber														England and Wales				
	North		East		Midlands		West		East		London		South		Scotland		Wales		
	East	West	Midlands	East	Midlands	West	East	London	South	East	West	London	South	East	West	Scotland	Wales	England	Wales
White	4.7	12.2	8.8	7.4	8.9	9.8	9.8	9.8	14.5	9.1	9.8	14.5	9.1	5.4	9.3	85.3	90.7		
Mixed	1.1	8.3	7.9	4.4	11.3	7.8	7.8	35.8	13.6	4.9	2.9	2.0	2.0	2.9	2.0	95.1	98.0		
Indian	0.8	6.4	5.0	11.7	17.0	5.3	43.3	7.4	7.4	1.3	0.7	1.1	1.1	0.7	1.1	98.2	98.9		
Pakistani	1.4	16.6	19.7	4.1	21.9	4.4	19.6	6.6	6.6	0.8	1.2	3.7	3.7	1.2	3.7	95.1	96.3		
Bangladeshi	2.7	9.6	3.3	3.6	9.4	6.5	55.8	5.5	5.5	1.5	1.4	*	*	1.4	*	97.9	99.4		
Other Asian	1.4	4.7	3.6	2.8	3.6	5.1	63.1	8.5	8.5	3.1	1.2	3.1	3.1	1.2	3.1	95.7	96.9		
Black Caribbean	*	5.2	4.3	5.1	14.1	4.6	59.2	4.1	4.1	2.6	0.4	*	*	0.4	*	99.4	99.9		
Black African	0.4	3.5	1.4	2.5	3.7	3.4	77.5	3.6	3.6	1.4	0.6	1.8	1.8	0.6	1.8	97.6	98.2		
Black Other	*	*	*	*	*	*	73.5	6.2	6.2	*	*	*	*	*	*	97.9	98.3		
Chinese	1.6	9.5	6.2	5.3	7.2	5.8	35.5	13.1	13.1	4.7	3.0	8.2	8.2	3.0	8.2	88.9	91.8		
Other	0.9	5.2	3.6	2.0	4.9	5.9	58.1	10.0	10.0	4.6	1.6	3.2	3.2	1.6	3.2	95.2	96.8		
All minority ethnic groups	1.0	7.9	7.0	5.5	12.5	5.2	47.9	7.4	7.4	2.4	1.2	2.1	2.1	1.2	2.1	96.6	97.9		
All ethnic groups	4.4	11.8	8.7	7.3	9.2	9.5	12.8	14.0	14.0	8.6	5.1	8.8	8.8	5.1	8.8	86.2	91.2		

* sample size too small for reliable estimate.

Source: Annual Local Area Labour Force Survey, 2001/02, Office for National Statistics

It is important to remember that within many of these groups there are differences that are often as important as the differences between that group and the majority population. The Indian community is divided by religion (Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Christian) and by language (Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi etc.) Within the Black African category there are native English speakers and those who speak no English. There are communities that are predominantly Christian and others that are Muslim. There are those that come from relatively well educated and urban contexts as well as those from a largely rural background. Since the whole Black African category forms just over 1% of the population of England many of the different communities that make up that total are very small indeed.

For this reason national data, based on averages across different communities will be a very unreliable guide to the needs of any specific group that may be concentrated in one locality. Local action needs to be informed by an understanding of the specific characteristics of local communities. For this reason Annex 3 gives a brief profile of the major categories and the numerically important subdivisions within them.

3.2 Participation by minority groups

In general those from minority groups have higher rates of participation in the FE system than the majority population. In 2001, when the Labour Force Survey estimated that minority ethnic groups made up 8% of the population of England as a whole, the ILR showed that students from those groups represented 14% of FE enrolments. **Table 3** gives more recent data which suggests that although the White British category makes up 90% of the total population it accounts for fewer than three quarters of those enrolled in schools, colleges and work based learning.

One reason why participation from minority groups might be higher than expected is that the age profile of these communities is different. There is a higher proportion of younger people among many minority groups and particularly among those who have more recently arrived. The data does not allow this issue to be explored in great detail but table 3 suggests that it cannot be the only factor at work. The over-representation of minority groups in the FE sector is even more pronounced among adult learners than in the 16-18 population.

Table 3 Participation in LSC funded learning by ethnicity.

Ethnicity	2004/05						2005/06					
	Young People		Adult		Total		Young People		Adult		Total	
	Vol	%										
any other	18,200	1.3%	100,500	2.1%	118,800	1.9%	17,500	1.2%	90,800	2.2%	108,400	2.0%
Asian or Asian British - any other Asian background	12,300	0.9%	55,600	1.2%	67,900	1.1%	13,800	1.0%	56,900	1.4%	70,700	1.3%
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	14,800	1.1%	32,000	0.7%	46,800	0.8%	15,400	1.1%	31,400	0.8%	46,700	0.8%
Asian or Asian British - Indian	36,800	2.6%	102,700	2.1%	139,500	2.3%	36,200	2.5%	93,000	2.3%	129,300	2.3%
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	38,000	2.7%	89,300	1.9%	127,300	2.1%	38,000	2.6%	84,700	2.1%	122,700	2.2%
Black or Black British - African	33,000	2.4%	123,000	2.6%	156,000	2.5%	35,800	2.5%	124,500	3.0%	160,200	2.9%
Black or Black British - any other Black background	7,500	0.5%	25,400	0.5%	32,900	0.5%	7,400	0.5%	24,700	0.6%	32,100	0.6%
Black or Black British - Caribbean	24,800	1.8%	79,300	1.7%	104,200	1.7%	26,500	1.8%	74,900	1.8%	101,300	1.8%
Chinese	6,700	0.5%	25,500	0.5%	32,200	0.5%	6,900	0.5%	23,500	0.6%	30,300	0.5%
Mixed - any other Mixed background	9,300	0.7%	16,100	0.3%	25,400	0.4%	10,200	0.7%	15,300	0.4%	25,500	0.5%
Mixed - White and Asian	6,200	0.4%	11,000	0.2%	17,200	0.3%	7,000	0.5%	10,400	0.3%	17,400	0.3%
Mixed - White and Black African	4,000	0.3%	12,700	0.3%	16,700	0.3%	4,400	0.3%	13,500	0.3%	17,800	0.3%
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	13,600	1.0%	16,700	0.3%	30,200	0.5%	15,400	1.1%	16,700	0.4%	32,000	0.6%
White - any other White background	27,000	1.9%	225,300	4.7%	252,200	4.1%	29,300	2.0%	257,700	6.3%	286,900	5.2%
White - British	1,100,800	78.5%	3,593,400	75.2%	4,694,200	76.0%	1,122,700	78.2%	2,992,800	72.9%	4,115,500	74.2%
White - Irish	5,400	0.4%	40,000	0.8%	45,400	0.7%	5,400	0.4%	33,600	0.8%	39,000	0.7%
Not known/ not provided	44,500	3.2%	228,800	4.8%	273,300	4.4%	44,900	3.1%	163,500	4.0%	208,500	3.8%
Total	1,402,700	100.0%	4,777,400	100.0%	6,180,200	100.0%	1,436,600	100.0%	4,407,700	100.0%	5,544,300	100.0%

Source: LSC ILR data and PLASC (May 2007); Excludes specialist providers

The overall pattern of participation in FE masks some significant differences in the nature of participation. White British learners for example are more strongly represented on programmes at level 2 and 3 than at level 1. The converse is true for the Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities. Table 4 below compares the proportions of learners at levels 1 to 3 for some of the major groups for the year 2004/5; and for comparison also includes the proportions of the population shown in the 2001 census.

Table 4 Participation in FE by Level of Course

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	All FE	England
Bangladeshi	1.0	0.6	0.8	0.8	0.5
Indian	2.3	1.9	2.4	2.3	1.9
Pakistani	2.6	1.6	2.1	2.1	1.4
Black	5.2	5.0	5.2	4.8	2.4
White British	69.8	78.8	78.2	76.0	91.2

Source ILR 2004/05 Note: excludes levels 4 and 'unknown' level and some minority groups

Two research studies corroborate these findings. Bhattacharyya *et al* (2003) and Payne (2003), found that ethnic minorities, irrespective of gender or social class, are more likely to participate in FE or study for a qualification than are whites. When looking at GCSE level learners, minority ethnic group learners with high GCSEs results are more likely to take up A-levels than their white peers; where results are not good they are more likely than whites to enrol on vocational qualification programmes.

3.3 Retention rates of minority groups

The research evidence is more difficult to interpret when considering retention in learning or persistence. A study by Simm *et.al.*, (2007) reports that

“among those aged 16-18, cases of early leaving were significantly more likely than completions to involve learners from minority ethnic backgrounds, and learners who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) before starting the course” (p.2).

Table 5 shows that a lower proportion of early leavers from this cohort are white than the proportion of those who complete; whereas taking all minority groups together the converse is true. There are however some significant differences when the data is broken down by ethnic category and age. Black learners in the 16-18 age group form the same proportion of leavers and completers whereas in the 19+ age group they are a higher proportion of the early leavers. The opposite is true for the other non white groups taken as a whole.

Table 5: profile by ethnicity, early leavers and completers

	All early leavers	Early leavers 16-18	Completers 16-18	Early leavers 19+	Completers 19+
White	80	78	85	81	83
Asian	8	9	6	7	8
Black	6	5	5	6	5
Other non-white	5	7	4	5	4
Refused	1	1	—	1	—
<i>Base N</i>	2,180	849	530	1,332	6,687

Source: IES/BMRB, 2006

The two studies quoted earlier, (Bhattacharya and Payne) tell a different story. They conclude that when other factors are controlled for – including gender, attitudes towards school, lone parent families - members of minority ethnic groups are **less** likely to leave vocational qualification training when compared with their white peers (Payne, 2003) The studies suggest that when other factors are controlled, ethnic minorities show a greater commitment to participating and persisting in post-16 education than do white heritage learners, despite potentially greater disadvantages (Bhattacharyya et al., 2003; Foster & Willemstyn, 2005)

Analysis of the ILR suggests a picture that is closer to the account given by Bhattacharya and Payne. Table 6 shows the overall retention and success rates for a range of ethnic groups over a three year period. Among the minority groups six had a retention rate greater than that for the white population and three a rate that was lower. This was true for both 2004/05 and 2005/06 and for both adults and young people.

An alternative way of assessing persistence is to look at how long individuals take to complete a learning programme. Groups seem to vary in the amount of time they take to finish the same FE qualification. Caribbean males take half a year longer than white males while Africans and Indian male learners take a full year longer. Pakistani and Bangladeshi male learners study for two additional years to obtain their qualifications compared with white males (Barn, 2001).

3.4 Achievement Rates by minority groups

The overall success rate for learners from every minority group in 2005/06 was less than that for their white counterparts (77%) by between 1 and 8 percentage points. Most of the variation however was accounted for by adult learners; in the 16-18 age group four minority categories achieved at the same or a higher rate than whites. The figures are set out in full in table 6.

These differences need to be set against an overall upward trend in success rates which all groups shared. Only two groups (Black Caribbean and Black Other) had a success rate in 2005/06 that was lower than that for the White group in 2003/04 (69% as against 70%).

Table 6 Success Rates by ethnic group

		2003/2004			2004/2005			2005/2006		
		16-18	19+	Total	16-18	19+	Total	16-18	19+	Total
Bangladeshi	Starts	23,666	36,762	60,428	23,565	36,367	59,932	23,337	30,731	54,068
	Success Rate	68%	70%	69%	70%	72%	71%	73%	73%	73%
	Retention Rate	85%	86%	85%	86%	88%	87%	88%	88%	88%
	Achievement Rate	81%	81%	81%	81%	82%	82%	83%	83%	83%
Indian	Starts	54,217	100,590	154,807	50,963	92,611	143,574	47,010	77,772	124,782
	Success Rate	72%	69%	70%	75%	73%	74%	78%	74%	76%
	Retention Rate	89%	86%	87%	90%	87%	88%	91%	88%	89%
	Achievement Rate	81%	81%	81%	84%	83%	83%	86%	84%	85%
Pakistani	Starts	58,159	95,794	153,953	57,553	89,631	147,184	55,840	77,625	133,465
	Success Rate	67%	65%	66%	69%	69%	69%	73%	71%	72%
	Retention Rate	85%	84%	84%	86%	85%	85%	89%	86%	87%
	Achievement Rate	79%	77%	78%	80%	82%	81%	83%	83%	83%
Other Asian	Starts	19,105	68,814	87,919	17,870	64,672	82,542	18,801	54,437	73,238
	Success Rate	69%	68%	68%	73%	71%	71%	75%	74%	74%
	Retention Rate	87%	85%	85%	88%	86%	87%	89%	87%	88%
	Achievement Rate	80%	80%	80%	83%	82%	82%	84%	84%	84%
Black African	Starts	52,724	137,431	190,155	54,916		188,190	56,280	118,963	175,243
	Success Rate	68%	65%	66%	72%	69%	70%	75%	71%	73%
	Retention Rate	86%	84%	85%	88%	85%	86%	90%	86%	87%
	Achievement Rate	79%	77%	78%	82%	81%	81%	84%	83%	83%
Black Caribbean	Starts	32,738	73,948	106,686	33,720	70,668	104,388	34,143	61,221	95,364
	Success Rate	60%	61%	61%	64%	66%	65%	68%	70%	69%
	Retention Rate	80%	81%	80%	81%	83%	82%	83%	85%	84%
	Achievement Rate	76%	76%	76%	79%	79%	79%	82%	83%	82%
Black Other	Starts	10,290	23,288	33,578	10,076	23,143	33,219	9,220	20,431	29,651
	Success Rate	63%	62%	62%	64%	65%	65%	69%	69%	69%
	Retention Rate	81%	81%	81%	82%	83%	82%	85%	84%	84%
	Achievement Rate	78%	77%	77%	78%	79%	79%	82%	82%	82%
Chinese	Starts	15,048	36,975	52,023	13,394	33,806	47,200	11,934	25,023	36,957
	Success Rate	71%	68%	69%	76%	72%	73%	80%	74%	76%
	Retention Rate	88%	86%	87%	89%	88%	88%	92%	88%	89%
	Achievement Rate	81%	79%	80%	85%	82%	83%	87%	83%	84%
Mixed	Starts	39,225	53,546	92,771	44,617	55,050	99,667	47,634	49,194	96,828
	Success Rate	64%	64%	64%	67%	69%	68%	71%	71%	71%
	Retention Rate	80%	82%	81%	82%	84%	83%	84%	84%	84%
	Achievement Rate	80%	79%	79%	82%	83%	82%	85%	84%	85%
White	Starts	*	*	*	*	*	4,509,750	*	*	*
	Success Rate	69%	71%	70%	72%	76%	75%	75%	78%	77%
	Retention Rate	83%	86%	85%	85%	87%	86%	86%	87%	87%
	Achievement Rate	83%	83%	83%	86%	88%	87%	88%	89%	89%

* Data was not available from LSC for these cells.

The table confirms that the variation in success rates owes more to differences in achievement than in retention rates; it suggests therefore that providers need to focus particularly on helping learners from minority groups to succeed, rather than simply engage in study.

The highest success rates are to be found among young people from the Chinese and Indian communities; the lowest among Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean and Black Other – though significantly not Black African. These findings conform to popular stereotypes and indeed there are some studies that provide plausible explanations for the results. It needs to be stated strongly however that once the analysis moves beyond the headline data the picture is more complex.

More detailed analysis of the ILR by mode of study and sector suggests for example that (in 2005/06 at least) Bangladeshi learners outperformed whites in Language, Literature and Culture or that Black Caribbean learners have a higher completion rate in retail apprenticeships than their white colleagues. Pakistani learners do not always fare worse than those of Indian heritage; the Chinese do not always appear as the most successful. It would be wrong to read too much into these figures which are often based on relatively small groups of learners; but they are a necessary corrective to the idea that some groups achieve more than others always and in all contexts.

The evidence is less ambiguous when it comes to progression into employment. In 2003, the LSC organised a symposium on ways to increase participation on apprenticeships. What was found during a review of the apprenticeship programme is that 48% of young people from minority groups completing WBL training find jobs. The contrast with the 72% of white young people finding jobs is striking. These figures suggest there is likely to be little incentive for BME youth to enrol on apprenticeship and WBL programmes and it is therefore not surprising that fewer than 3% (1700 learners) of 16-19 year old minority ethnic learners start an Apprenticeship programme. (BTEG, 2003)

3.5 Reasons for variations in performance

There are varying explanations as to why some learners from some minority groups perform less well in some circumstances. One factor that seems to explain some of the variation in performance is socio-economic status or social class. In relation to retention rates for example Payne (2003) and Bhattacharya (2003) suggest that once class and other factors are controlled for apparent variations in retention rates disappear.

Socio-economic status is also seen by some to be a key factor in explaining the success rates of minority ethnic groups. Low status may be the latent factor explaining lower teacher expectations and negative social stereotypes leading to a lack of confidence in minority ethnic learners and hence failure to achieve and progress (Bhattacharyya et al., 2003). In addition, low status adults may have unfavourable working patterns and poor financial

circumstances which may affect progress in their studies (Connor et al., 2004).

In fact socio-economic status is very strongly related to academic success and cuts across ethnic boundaries. Its influence begins from birth. In a recent paper, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation reported that it is white working class students, and boys in particular, that under perform in schools (Cassen & Kington, 2007). Although this study refers to success in compulsory education, this is strongly related to participation and success in FE.

Socio-economic status is not the whole story. For some groups of learners difficulties with the English language may be a more important consideration than ethnic background. Minority ethnic households are often bilingual, that is, using other language/s in addition to English for every day communication. Approximately 9% of children in schools in England are reported to have English as an additional language. This may be a factor that differentially delays educational achievements as some schools offer limited language support. There is, for example, a concern that under achievement arises from a lack of fluency in English, particularly from Bangladeshi and Pakistani students (since English fluency can foster academic progress). Bangladeshis and Pakistanis do not perform well in GCSEs, and their English language abilities may compound lower success rates (Barn, 2001).

Other research however, indicates that most bilingual learners progress well academically and that bilingualism does not seem to be a great inhibitor to success. In some instances, the linguistic minority groups may even surpass academically their English-language only peers (Bhattacharyya et al., 2003; Haque, 2000). We should also note that studies showing higher levels of success amongst bilingual learners do not necessarily use a Pakistani and Bangladeshi sample.

Some studies suggest that the higher average success rate of Chinese and Indian young people reflects the high value placed on learning in those communities. There is evidence that such families have a strong influence on educational choices but high parental expectations are not confined to those communities. For example male and female Asian students, but also Caribbean males believe their parents want them to have a professional career such as a doctor or lawyer. This finding is corroborated by Shain (2003). Only 10% of white women, 16% of white men but 20% of the Caribbean women sampled felt their parents desired their children to hold a traditional career.

However, parents' occupation is irrelevant to perceived career expectations according to Bhavnani (2006.) These findings indicate that parents' wishes for their children are not as important a factor in academic success as is ethnic background. Research has shown that Caribbean heritage males do not achieve at levels as high as other ethnic groups even though they perceive their parents to hold traditional and ambitious career wishes for them (Bhavnani, 2006).

It is suggested in some studies that teachers' expectations and 'institutional racism' may be factors contributing to the underperformance of Black Caribbean and Black Other students. There is clear evidence that such students are more likely to be excluded from school than others, but it is not clear how to account for the fact that Black African students appear to achieve at the same rate as the white majority.

In any event the evidence from studies of learners' attitudes to education does not uniformly suggest an antagonism between Black learners and education institutions. Evidence from England points to the fact that learners from minority ethnic groups are more likely to have positive attitudes towards education upon leaving schooling; 77% of Asian learners and 75% of Black learners compared with 57% of White learners felt positively about their experiences. The Asian learners indicated that they enjoyed the social aspect of the learning experience. LSC data (LSC, 2006) indicates that 72% of Black learners and 68% of Asian learners claim they are very likely to return to learning within the next three years, whilst only 59% of White learners make this claim. These data are consistent with what we know about the relatively high participation rates among minority groups.

The survey data does not all point in the same direction. White heritage groups were more likely to report high levels of satisfaction with the teaching staff at 28% compared with 21% of the Black and Asian heritage groups (LSC, 2006). Furthermore, White learners were more likely to report specific aspects of good teaching and rate their teachers more highly when compared with their Black and Asian heritage counterparts. For example, Whites were more likely than Blacks to indicate that teachers were knowledgeable on the subject and that they were satisfied with how the teacher related to the student as a person. In addition to those two factors, Whites were also more likely than Asians to report that the teacher made the subject interesting and enjoyable and could manage the group of learners.

It may be the case that there are cultural differences and as the majority of teaching staff are White, the White students were comfortable with the culture of the classroom which was set by the teacher of the same ethnic background. However, there could be other factors at play and it is important to dissect the underlying reasons why minority ethnic learners did not report as positively on teachers and the classroom as White heritage students. Even with these differences, Black, Asian and White heritage learners reported roughly equal levels of satisfaction with feedback provided by teaching staff, as well as how time was used in the classroom.

Some studies attribute the weaker performance of some Black learners to a shortage of appropriate role models either among the teaching staff or in the wider community. Approximately 7% of staff in FE colleges, mainly Black heritage, and 7% of trainee teachers are from minority ethnic groups. Whilst it is not necessary that minority students are taught by minority teachers, lack of minority teachers, who could serve as role models, may contribute to lower rates of success among minority students (Clancy, 2003).

Bush, Glover, and Sood (2006) conducted a systematic review looking at minority leaders in education nationally and internationally. They found that minority teachers are not promoted as regularly as their white colleagues which may indirectly send a message about achievement to the pupils. For example, only 29% of white female and 35% of white males remain as classroom teachers as compared with 52% minority ethnic teachers

The Black Leadership Initiative has also collected data which support the view that there is a lack of ethnic minority role models in FE colleges. Out of 389 FE colleges, 147 had no ethnic minority governors ("Black and Minority Ethnic Governors in the Further Education Colleges Sector of England", 2005)

Many research studies argue for the importance of role models in boosting academic success, as well as the fact that certain minority ethnic groups do not have such models to aspire to (Barn, 2001; , "Ethnic Minorities and the Labour Market", 2003; Foster & Willemstyn, 2005; Okon, 2005). Most suggest that it is best practice to match learners with mentors as this may help break down stereotypes of failure and tackle low career aspirations. For example, some schools bring in successful Black Caribbean men to mentor boys; a number of schools have such mentoring programmes in place. Others identify existing learners from their environment who are academically successful, as well as popular and use these as examples of how academic success need not detract from peer respect. These proposals have intuitive appeal, though it needs to be remembered that there is no robust evidence for the impact of such strategies.

It is possible that the lower success rates for learners from minority ethnic groups are linked to their greater rates of participation. There is some evidence to suggest that such learners participate in FE because of discrimination in the labour market, rather than because FE is the optimum choice. The low rates of participation in work based learning are consistent with this hypothesis as is the low rate of progression from apprenticeships into work. If FE is a second choice option for more minority learners even greater care needs to be taken to ensure that they are on the most appropriate programme.

A final reason for variations in success rates may be more prosaic. Different types of courses have different success rates built into them; hence the development by LSC of a range of 'curriculum adjusted success rates' which recognise, for example that A level pass rates are set higher than those for vocational subjects. We know that Black learners are more likely to enrol on vocational programmes whereas Indian and Chinese students favour the academic route. Further study of how far this factor accounts for apparent variations between groups might be useful.

3.6 Good Practice, Motivators and Barriers

The researchers identified from the Ofsted Good Practice database a series of case studies of providers which had been identified by the inspectorate as being exemplary in tackling issues around equal opportunities and diversity.

The individual case studies are presented in more detail in Appendix 4. The case studies, together with evidence from focus group work were used to build a summary of motivating factors and barriers to success.

One element of good practice, shared by several providers, is the recruitment of support workers from within a specific minority community as a means of engaging with and building the confidence of that community. In one case it was a development worker recruited to do outreach work; in another the engagement of former students as 'learning ambassadors'; in yet another the recruitment of community leaders to support and mentor younger students.

A second common feature was the use of specially designed marketing material that included images of individuals from under-represented groups as well as information in a range of languages. This was seen to be effective in a variety of settings; and one training provider had used the same technique to challenge gender stereotyping in relation to occupational choices.

Some providers had been effective in engaging 'hard to reach' communities by designing as a first point of contact a range of programmes that had resonance with some aspect of a minority group's culture. Hat making and flower arranging were specific examples quoted as having been effective in bringing some groups of women into learning.

Effective providers were often characterised by a 'whole institution strategy' that promoted inclusion and high levels of achievement. This was supported by clear written policies and effective monitoring arrangements such as lesson observation.

One of the case studies highlighted the importance of pastoral support as well as a focus on teaching, recognising that although minority learners often had a very instrumental approach to education they nevertheless had other issues that needed to be addressed. A support worker who understood the problems faced by a minority group in everyday life could help students to complete their course of study.

One college made effective use of enrichment activities such as sport and drama to help integrate learners in a very mixed community. Progress was rewarded by the award of 'enrichment vouchers' which proved to be an effective source of motivation.

The researchers identified a number of principal barriers to effective learning that needed to be addressed to help those from minority groups to engage and succeed. These included a lack of time and money for many potential learners who were engaged in low paid jobs for long hours. They included the location of provision: in some instances it might be distant, but in other cases a formal education establishment might be felt to be too intimidating. For some groups there was insufficient recognition of specific cultural values, such as the need for access to a place to pray.

Motivating factors included the provision of role models including a diversified teaching force and the use of community based mentors and support workers. Taster programmes, and particularly ones that reflected aspects of a community identity can encourage 'hard to reach' groups to engage, as can recruitment material tailored to specific groups. Many aspects of general good practice such as effective systems of pastoral support, strong links with employers or a sustained focus on high quality teaching are equally important for learners from minority communities.

4. Conclusions and Implications

The principal conclusion from this study is that it is unsafe to generalise about the performance of learners from minority ethnic groups in England. There are differences between minority groups that are at least as large as the difference between any one group and the majority white community. There are differences within groups in terms of age, gender and sometimes language that can be at least as significant as ethnic origin.

The differences between groups are compounded by the fact that the performance of minority groups appears to differ significantly between settings. Some groups such as Caribbean and Bangladeshi boys for example, who often fall behind in classroom work seem to succeed well in some work based learning contexts. The relative performance of different groups often differs by level or subject area.

The complexity of these issues suggests that the aggregate data is a poor guide as to where specific action needs to be focussed. Providers need to look carefully at their own particular context to guide their improvement priorities, and to monitor performance within their own institution rather than rely on the national picture.

The overall evidence suggests that there is not a general problem of low participation from minority communities. While there are clearly some 'hard to reach' groups within minority communities that need to be targeted participation rates for both young people and adults are generally high.

There is a gap in success rates between all minority communities and the majority population which has been maintained despite significant improvements for all groups in recent years. The gap is in large part a consequence of lower achievement rates rather than reflecting higher levels of drop out suggesting that providers need to look carefully at whether minority learners are accessing the right courses, and whether teaching strategies are equally effective for all groups.

The continuing gap between the overall success rates of minority communities and the majority population may owe as much to socio-economic differences as to ethnicity. A strategy that focuses on the needs of disadvantaged students generally may prove effective with learners from minority groups.

The increase in overall success rates for every group between 2003/04 and 2005/06 does suggest that the strategies that providers have introduced to improve learning outcomes are generally effective across the board. A continued focus on factors such as initial assessment or classroom observation is likely to have positive results for majority and minority groups alike.

There is in fact little evidence of effective practice in meeting the needs of learners from minority groups that would not also be thought to be effective practice in respect of all learners. Among the more specific factors identified in good practice studies are the provision of role models; the provision of support staff who understand a minority language and culture, and carefully designed and targeted recruitment materials.

Much of the good practice evidence relates to strategies to help engage minority groups. While this is important, and perhaps very important for some specific communities, the evidence suggests that encouraging participation is not the major issue. More attention needs to be paid to helping minority learners succeed once they have been recruited.

There are significant gaps in the literature that need to be addressed. They include the need for a more systematic analysis of participation rates that take account of the different age profiles of minority groups and better evaluation of the impact of mentoring schemes, and the provision of role models.

Recommendations

It is recommended that providers should:

- monitor carefully the performance of learners from different minority groups. They should not treat learners from minority groups as a single category.
- recognise that there may be differences within minority groups that are as important as differences between them, and consider how these differences might impact upon performance.
- review how the performance of specific groups has changed over time, to help assess whether the general quality improvement measures that have been implemented have been equally effective for all groups
- consider whether recruitment from specific groups might be improved by more careful targeting of publicity or the inclusion of appropriate images
- consider procedures for the recruitment and promotion of staff in the light of the desirability of providing role models for minority learners as well as equal opportunities practice

- review the composition of the governing body to see whether it might better reflect the communities that the college serves
- consider whether the provision of support workers who understand a minority language or culture might improve the participation or achievement of specific groups
- pay particular attention to transitions, such as from community based provision to major sites as these can be the times when extra support is required
- focus attention particularly on helping learners from minority groups to achieve their learning goals. This may include ensuring that they are on the appropriate learning programme
- seek to ensure that examples and exercises used in teaching reflect minority contexts as well as those of the majority community
- be sensitive to the different expectations of the roles of teachers and learners held in different communities
- provide opportunities for members of minority communities to share aspects of their culture with the wider group and thereby help them to feel valued and respected.
- Be aware of the important role that can be played by good systems of pastoral support than can address the wider needs of learners from minority groups.

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Annex 3 Characteristics of Minority Communities

Indian heritage group

Those from Indian heritage backgrounds make up the largest minority ethnic group in England (2% of the total population). This group is not homogeneous in terms of religion or in terms of regional origin. For instance, there are English born Indians of Hindu, Sikh, Christian and Muslim religion as well as Indians from the Indian peninsula and from East African countries. Indians speak a number of languages with English being common. It is relevant to note that as many Indian heritage learners speak English fluently they do not have language as a barrier when entering the FE system.

The Indian presence in England dates as far back as the 18th century although the biggest influx took place in the 1950s. The largest proportion are concentrated in the capital (43%), however one may find large Indian populations in the West Midlands (17%) East Midlands (12%) as well as the South East (7%). One quarter of the population in Leicester (East Midlands) are of Indian heritage ("Commission for Racial Equality", 2007).

Pakistani heritage group

The Pakistani heritage community makes up 1.4% of the total English population, making it the second largest ethnic group. The largest immigration wave had occurred by the 1960s and was a result of economic and political change in the Indian subcontinent. Single men travelled first, inviting families later. Pakistanis are dispersed within England, with 20% living in the capital, 22% living in West Midlands 20% in Yorkshire and the Humber and 17% in the North West. Hindi and Urdu are widely spoken in the Pakistani communities as well as Punjabi. Islam is the dominant religion and 96% of Pakistanis in Britain report themselves as Muslims. Many Pakistanis do not arrive in England with fluent English language skills. The Pakistani women have particular difficulties in this respect. .

Bangladeshi heritage group

Bangladeshi heritage individuals make up around 0.6% of England's population. Despite being the most recently settled of the major South Asian communities, Bangladeshi heritage communities in England are well established. Many have settled in inner-city areas in the North-West (10%), West Midlands (9%) Eastern regions (7%) but by far the largest number may be found in Tower Hamlets in East London, where they constitute over a quarter of the population. In Tower Hamlets' schools, over half the pupils are of Bangladeshi heritage ("Achievement of Bangladeshi Heritage Pupils", 2004; Shain, 2003). As with Pakistani heritage learners Bangladeshi learners may lack skills in English which may contribute to lowered success rates in FE.

Immigration in significant numbers first took place in the 1960s. The population is mainly Muslim and younger than other South Asian communities

(i.e., Indian and Pakistani heritage) in England (Shain, 2003). Working age males tended to arrive first. Unlike those of Pakistani heritage, the men waited a substantial amount of time before bringing their dependents to England. This caused a wave of expansion in the late 1980s when dependents and families arrived. Bangladeshis in England are mostly Muslim and may have ESOL needs.

Black Caribbean heritage group

Black Caribbean heritage peoples come from the Commonwealth West Indies countries such as Jamaica, Barbados, Antigua, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Grenada. The links with England are longstanding with most of the Black Caribbean heritage population. Although Black Caribbeans were present in England before this date, these communities were primarily established between 1940 and 1960. The Black Caribbean heritage group comprises 1.1% of the total English population.

Fifty-nine percent of the Black Caribbean heritage population is concentrated in the capital and a further 14% live in the West Midlands. The remainder is fairly evenly distributed among the regions. They migrated as family units and tend to speak English as their first language. We should mention here the co-existence of Patois and Creole English with the Standard English language, which may have an impact on students' education. There are frequent references in the literature to the inequities and obstacles faced by speakers of creoles and related 'non-standard' or minority dialects in formal education (Siegel, 1999). Once again the issue of English fluency is not straightforward for these communities, which may impact on success in FE settings. In terms of religious profile they have a similar breakdown to those of white heritage (74% Christian and 11% reporting no religion). Other religious affiliations of smaller numbers within the Black Caribbean community are Muslim, Rastafarian and Jehovah's Witnesses.

Black African heritage group

This group comprises 1% of the total population. Despite their small number they are the most diverse, originating not only from various parts of the continent of Africa (the second most populous continent with more than 50 countries) but also settling in England in a small but constant migration flow since the 19th century. Indicative countries of origin of many Black Africans are Nigeria, Ghana and Zimbabwe, countries historically tied to England because of the colonial past. More recent African migration consists of ethnicities such as Somalis, Eritreans, Sudanese or Rwandans, and these are mostly due to civil war and unrest in these countries. Learners coming from East African countries are starkly different from those coming from West Africa in terms of language, culture, religion and educational experiences. Languages spoken by Black Africans as well as religions followed by the group are equally diverse: Swahili, Yoruba, Somali, Tigrinya and Twi are most commonly spoken. 69% are Christian, 20% follow Islam and 2% follow no religion. The largest concentration is found in London (76%) where Black Africans surpass Black Caribbeans in numbers. Liverpool and Leeds also have significant

Black African populations . Their great variety in origin and background creates a patchy picture for the academic success of this demographic group in FE. The majority of surveys do not break down Black African groups further so it is difficult to determine whether there are particular issues such as language, culture, country of origin, etc that contribute to success.

Chinese heritage group

The Chinese heritage group comprises people coming mainly from Hong Kong, China, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. They make up 0.5% of the total English population.

There has been a flow of Chinese heritage people from the early 19th century but it was during the 1950s when great numbers arrived from Hong Kong. Again the pattern was single working age men meaning to stay temporarily but who ended up as permanent residents and ultimately brought their families.

Another large wave, this time from mainland China, arrived in the 1980s specifically for educational purposes. This may have an effect on the progression and achievement rates in FE of this group.

The majority of Chinese heritage groups are concentrated in London and the South East (35% and 13%, respectively) and the rest are distributed across the English regions. They speak a variety of Chinese dialects and the majority follow no religion (52%). Those who say they have a religion are mainly Christian (21%) or Buddhist (15%).

Other ethnic groups

This category is too broad to permit adequate coverage within the confines of this paper. We will therefore briefly summarize the: a) “other” population who do not identify with one of the groups described above and b) “other” part of the Asian, Black, and Chinese groups.

The people who tick the “other” box are a very diverse 0.4% of the total population in England. The Commission for Racial Equality gives an indicative breakdown and numbers of ethnicities that comprise the “other” category. Although their numbers do not distinguish between the English and the UK population, we may assume that these will not be very different given that 95% of the “others” reside in England. The majority of the “other” (53%) was born in Far Eastern countries (mostly the Philippines and Japan), followed by 16% UK born, 10% Middle East born (including Iraq and Iran), 7% African born (including Egypt and Morocco) and 6% South Asian born, mainly from Afghanistan (“Commission for Racial Equality”, 2007).

London and the South East houses the largest concentrations (58% and 10% respectively) and their religious profile is Christian (33%), Muslim (26%), Buddhist (15%) and no religion (14%).

The “other” group may also be embedded in a major minority ethnic group. For instance, the “other-Asian” heritage group comprises 0.5% of the total English population and includes people from Sri-Lanka, Middle East, Oceania and Asians born outside of their ethnic countries of origin. This group tends to be Muslim, Hindu or Christian and over half is concentrated in London.

The “other-Black” heritage group (0.2% of the total English population) includes people who were mainly born in England, followed by Africa and the Caribbean as well as Black people born in North and South America. The most common self-description is “Black British”. Most of the “other-Black” people’s religious profile is similar to the Black-Caribbean and white (i.e. a majority of Christians followed by those claiming no religion). However, a larger proportion of those “other-Black” born in Africa are Muslim.

Finally, the “other-white” heritage group is both substantial and diverse (2.7% of the total English population). Unlike some groups of “others,” the majority of this group was born abroad, primarily in Western Europe, followed by Eastern Europe and North America. The patterns are rapidly changing, such that from 2004 to 2006, the Foreign Office registered approximately 264,000 Poles (these individuals are not accounted for in the official statistics as the census took place in 2001 but may already comprise 0.4% of the English population). The majority of the “other-white” claim Christianity, no religion, Islam, and Judaism, in this order, as their religion (“Commission for Racial Equality”, 2007).

Mixed groups

Interestingly, the “mixed” category was first used in the 2001 census because until then the assumption was that people would identify themselves with one of the ethnicities of their parents. The mixed category comprises 1.3% of the English population. As with the “other” group, the Commission of Racial Equality gives us the following numbers and ethnic breakdowns without distinguishing between the populations of England and Britain. The largest mixed group is Black Caribbean and white (35%), followed by 27% Asian and white, 23% non-defined mixed groups and 11% Black African and white. One third of mixed group individuals live in London although there are a considerable number in the North West and South East of the country. Christianity (52%) attracted most adherents, followed by no religion (23%) and Islam (10%) (“Commission for Racial Equality”, 2007).

Annex 4 Case Studies of Good Practice

Introduction

This section presents examples of sites which have shown an outstanding ability in tackling diversity issues and improving minority ethnic achievement. The sites are located in a variety of FE sectors, and have been selected from the Ofsted Good Practice database (formerly the Adult Learning Inspectorate database) as being exemplary, tackling issues around equal opportunities and diversity as well as motivation, participation and achievement (Ofsted, 2007).

The summaries emphasise the strategies used in each site which address local needs and circumstances, and which worked well for their specific cohorts. They also show on a micro scale the complex interplay of factors that account for success rates; and that “success” as often understood in policy does not always coincide with what learners’ themselves view as “success”, or with what they have in mind when they identify what they want to go on and succeed in.

Norfolk Adult Education Service - Development worker for ESOL learners

Norfolk County Council's (NCC) adult education service is an Adult and Community Learning (ACL) provider, offering a variety of courses which include access courses, Skills for Life, vocational courses and supported learning. NCC is one of the country's largest adult education providers with approximately 30,000 enrolments a year. It serves Norfolk's population which is widely spread in small communities not well served by public transport. Norfolk's level of poverty is surprisingly high and there is also rural deprivation in the west and northeast coastal areas. Levels of basic skills in Norfolk seem relatively low: 24% of the county's population has poor literacy and 23% has poor numeracy (Ofsted, 2007).

Norfolk has recently seen an increase in people from minority ethnic groups, particularly due to migrant workers; the most typical countries/regions of origin of migrant workers are Portugal, Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia and the Far East. It is estimated that approximately 12,000 Portuguese migrant workers live in the Thetford area alone. Most have arrived in the past 4 years and are working on farms, factories or meat/poultry industries.

Many of these adults, when they enter education, have English language needs; some of them have little previous education. In addition, many do not have much information about the education available to them in England. Retention and attendance rates on programmes with migrant workers tend to be poor.

In order for NCC to address the language needs of many of their learners they decided to appoint a development worker whose native language is Portuguese. Duties would include:

- organising taster courses in English and to encourage prospective learners
- giving advice and information on aspects of life in England in general: housing, health and so on
- organising courses that will appeal to migrant workers, such as cookery, first aid and fishing courses which include English language teaching.

Personal contact between the development worker and these learners encouraged learners to ESOL courses, as well as providing reassurance that they are on the right course.

According to Ofsted the results of implementing the strategy were:

- More learners wanted to join classes
- Recruitment, retention and achievement rates improved.
- All staff were convinced that the development worker had a very positive effect;
- Learners and teachers had a greater understanding of each other's expectations.
- Extra support was given to break down cultural differences and solve learners' immediate problems.

Key messages

The implementation of the “Development worker” strategy may be generalised and used in other educational settings with diverse populations, particularly those with learners who have English language needs. The appointment of a development worker may help:

- Develop empathy with learners who share a common language and culture.
- Develop links with local support agencies.
- Raise awareness that expectations of learners and staff may differ.
- Develop flexible provision.

7.3 Michael John Training Liverpool - Attracting under-represented learners

Michael John Training is a private training provider in hairdressing. It receives funding from the Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council and offers hairdressing and beauty therapy training programmes. It caters to 200 trainees, all of them already in employment or work-placements in the Liverpool area. Michael John is involved directly in the local community in

various ways, e.g. giving training tasters to the local African-Caribbean and Chinese communities.

Liverpool city is characterised by high levels of economic and social deprivation, with unemployment rates roughly three times the national average. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in the Liverpool area is lower than that of the national population. Achievement in schools has been consistently well below national averages in Liverpool.

Michael John trainees are a mixture of ethnic groups as well as a range of learning needs. Over half of Michael John learners, 54%, have additional learning or social needs. Michael John aims to reach out to minority ethnic learners, particularly from the Black Caribbean and Chinese communities of the city.

The strategy sought to attract learners from under-represented groups into the hairdressing and beauty therapy industry modern apprenticeships. They were primarily minority ethnic learners, men and those with additional learning needs.

Promotion of training and the development of equal opportunities action include initiatives such as:

- encouraging learners from local African-Caribbean and Chinese communities to participate in training. A short course for adult Chinese women was successfully run in the training centre.
- developing links with the African-Caribbean community by attending career events in the community centre, and giving career talks in three local schools with high proportions of minority ethnic pupils. Afro-Caribbean hairstyling is one of the options available to learners.
- targeting men to bring into hairdressing through the promotion of a training programme for barbers. A director has actively promoted the barbering course in three boys' schools. Images of men are used in promotional literature.
- Michael John keeps records of its learners by gender, race, and disability, and sets targets for improvements to recruitment.
- promoting cultural diversity in marketing literature. A learner from an Asian ethnic background won the UK hairdressing learner of the year award in 2002. Michael John promoted her success and the company image of cultural diversity with a poster campaign and press advertising. Images on the covers of promotional literature feature learners from the three main ethnic groups in the area, white, African-Caribbean and Chinese. The main headings on this literature are in English and Chinese.
- during the past year Michael John has effectively supported two hearing-impaired learners.

- access to premises for people with mobility problems was one of the first thoughts in designing the main training centre, and is also included in the brief for any future training centres.

As many of Michael John's learners have additional learning needs the provider does not shy away from these issues. Key skills are promoted actively within the modern apprenticeship training, as many of the learners are told about the support for developing literacy and numeracy skills.

Since the summer of 2003, there has been a full-time basic skills tutor and plentiful resources in a new learning suite. A poster and leaflet effectively gets the message across. The text shows the importance of literacy, application of number and communication, as well as the practical talents required to be a stylist or therapist.

The training programme of Michael John can be described as holistic where the educational achievement of trainees is tackled not only by increasing the participation and motivation of hard-to-reach learners, but also by providing the proper support at a delivery and promotional level. Indeed, Michael John's strategy is a combination of actions at the organisation, provision and support level, and it reaches out to the local communities. It does not specifically target minority ethnic groups, but it considers learners with learning difficulties. The strategy is an approach to involve under-represented groups, and to train them by addressing their learning needs. These can be minority ethnic individuals, male learners in what is traditionally considered a female profession and individuals with special needs.

Key messages

Michael John's strategy can be adapted by any training provider. Firstly, the method of targeting boys' schools and schools with higher proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds can be adapted in terms of promotional material. Secondly, gendered professions can be promoted effectively to both sexes as exemplified by Michael John's strategy. Providers that work in female-dominated professions such as hairdressing and beauty may find successful ways of attracting boys; and male-dominated occupational areas such as construction and engineering can target girls' schools, making use of images of women learners.

Thirdly, generalising the measures used to reach out to local communities and respond to local needs can be done elsewhere. Michael John was effective in targeting diverse groups of students and making them feel comfortable in their learning environment.

Finally all providers can develop an up-front support service for basic learning needs as well as building these into their service (e.g. apprenticeship with embedded basic skills). This seems to give students a feeling of comfort as well as increasing confidence.

7.4 HMP Winchester - Making learning a priority

Winchester prison is an adult male prison taking up to 568 inmates. It also has a specialised induction and resettlement centre. As a local prison serving courts, there is daily prisoner movement, and some are employed in industrial workshops or work as orderlies and cleaners. A FE college provides education courses; these are mainly part-time literacy, numeracy, ESOL, information and communications technology and key skills among others.

Different languages have been catered to during the promotional strategy for learning, ensuring that the prison considers a significant population of speakers of languages other than English.

Winchester prison has developed a successful communication strategy to promote learner-centred education on its premises. The learning and skills priority of the prison is highlighted by the logo, which is displayed all over the prison, and what makes a positive impact on prisoners and staff. This is displayed in various ways such as posters, signs and paper work. The prisoners are also given T-shirts with the learning and skills logo on the front, and in different colours according to the area where they work (e.g. blue for the library, green for the education workshops, etc.). This indicates the priority of learning within the prison, which also promotes learning amongst the prisons.

A quality improvement group was set up to ensure the success of the prisoners' training. It introduces improvements and suggestions from learners on various courses and prison activities.

Guest speakers are invited into the prison, and links have been established with the Essential Skills Unit to establish learning opportunities for prisoners once they are released. All possible opportunities for work opportunities, training, courses and qualifications are made known to the learners with leaflets. For example, two leaflets are produced to give details of opportunities for learning and preparing inmates for life after their release: "Ready for Work" and "Regime Information".

On every prison wing there is an interactive touch screen monitor that depicts learning and employment opportunities, as well as information on other aspects of prison life. The text is available in five different languages. This ensures not only that people from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds are informed on equal terms, but also that they should be integrated on all levels of educational provision and work opportunities.

The learning and skills message is an integral part of all learner activities at Winchester and the community links beyond its walls. From initial induction to release into the community, the prisoners have access to programmes which are clearly meeting their needs and interests, not only while they are in custody but after they are released as well.

Many have taken up learning as a result of this promotional strategy and many of the needs of minority ethnic groups are met by means of information being provided in their own language.

Key messages

Branding and prompting of learning takes into account learners' perceptions. Prisons should consider how their populations perceive learning when planning promotional strategies.

Touch screen technology may be adapted for use in many providers, and is already in use in a number of prisons. It offers easy access to information in a range of languages. This has been particularly useful in reaching diverse inmates from a variety of ethnic groups easily and without intimidation.

The technology could be adapted by providers in different contexts, to give information in their reception areas, including text in major local community languages. It could also be used to provide an information point in community areas, such as hospitals, libraries and learning providers such as Jobcentre plus, adult and community centres and adult education.

7.5 Accrington and Rossendale College - Student-run hotel

Accrington and Rossendale College is a FE college in East Lancashire. It is active within the areas of Hyndburn, Rossendale and the Ribble Valley, with Hyndburn being an area of significant deprivation. Estimates of the local population with poor literacy, numeracy and language needs are higher than national averages, particularly in Hyndburn and Rossendale. The college's hospitality provision was awarded grade 1 (i.e., excellent) in its most recent inspection.

The college does not target any specific minority. However, the strategy raises awareness of minority groups with a Muslim cultural background. In addition, it raises awareness of minority groups with special needs.

The student run hotel gives learners the benefits of real work experience in every aspect of hospitality. More specifically they gain:

- awareness of equal opportunities issues
- an opportunity to gain housekeeping qualifications and /or an opportunity to progress to a foundation degree
- experience in business management
- good links with employers and the industry in general

The learners work for four days and spend one day in the classroom. They learn from working in the hotel and use this information for their NVQ portfolios.

The hotel hosts guests, meaning that students gain practical experience in equal opportunities, and from the diversity of their clients. The hotel also hosts guests with mobility or hearing problems, which gives students the experience of dealing with people with special needs.

Learners find out about other cultures, through having to cater for guests of particular minority ethnic or cultural groups; for example, providing information about halal, kosher and vegetarian meals via short courses.

The strategy of creating a real working environment for training purposes had positive results on various levels. Firstly it helped raise an understanding different cultures and ethnic groups as well as improving the ability to cater for them. Secondly, the training offers the opportunity to gain a hospitality qualification and the option of applying for the foundation degree course run by the college. Finally, the strategy offers links with the industry and a chance for potential employment via these links.

Key messages

The strategy can be applied to programmes in retail and commercial enterprises to hospitality and catering programmes which are offered by some FE and sixth form colleges. The successful application of the strategy is likely to require:

- carry out successful marketing strategy
- offering the training experience needed by learners
- ensure college commitment
- maintain the business attractiveness to trainees by arranging a variety of activities e.g. celebrity events, competitions etc.

7.6 Pendle Re-Employment Project Limited for Jobcentre Plus - Effective ESOL Plus programme

Pendle Re-Employment Project Limited (PRP) is a private training provider based in Nelson, East Lancashire, and PRP provides training in a variety of areas (information and communications technology, health public services and care, business administration and law and preparation for life and work). Training in language skills is delivered in partnership with a local college and PRP works for Jobcentre Plus.

PRP ESOL employability training comprises construction skills taught with literacy and numeracy skills. This also includes sub-contracted training support from the local college and the use of prayer facilities on Friday afternoons. The local college carries out the accreditation of entry-level language qualifications.

A high percentage of Nelson's population (15%) comprises minority ethnic groups. There are a variety of speakers of languages other than English, and a diversity of cultural and religious backgrounds. This is a good example of

effective links between ESOL, literacy training and employment. The programme responded to ESOL needs in the town with the objective to improve participants' language, literacy and numeracy skills. Another key objective was to prepare for employment.

The programme had employment as the main focus. It had the capacity to provide a basic language qualification at entry level, and awards in-house certificates for practical aspects of the programme.

Participants receive an initial assessment and learning activities are supported by a comprehensive individual learning plan. The plans are flexible so that they can provide additional training if further needs are identified. There is a monthly progress review on the learners, and action plans are drawn up by discussing the reviews. Action plans are informed by participants' views, and they are gathered formally (e.g. by questionnaires) or informally throughout the programme. Their tutors have been picked for their understanding of other cultures. Tutors are able to decide on their own delivery style, but they all work with a set of clear objectives.

Activities that contributed to the ESOL training being enjoyable and effective including these:

- questions and exercises used to develop communications skills quickly
- participants work on personal statements about the things they would want to tell an employer
- practical construction exercises to develop literacy and numeracy skills

The major outcomes due can be summarised as follows:

- development of effective communication with employers
- improvement in participants' confidence
- improvement in retention rates to 81%
- good progress into employment at 73%

Key messages

This strategy of building on learners' employability can be applied in the context of Jobcentre Plus provision, as well as to entry to employment programmes. Elements that could be adapted include:

- initial assessment that identifies the most appropriate programme for realistic short-term goals
- engaging in activities to training for employment, giving participants more confidence in their job searching

- careful staff recruitment which ensures that staff have the teaching skills and specialist knowledge to give appropriate advice and guidance to participants
- screening process to deal with any problems quickly, the development of good links with employers, ensuring that participants receive up-to-date information on the local labour market
- frequent feedback from employers on the type of information they need from applicants on CVs and interviews

7.7 South Leicestershire College

South Leicestershire College is a general further education college operating out of two sites near the city of Leicester. Of the 6,300 enrolled in 2005/06, 81% were over the age of 19 years. Twenty-seven percent of the learners are from minority ethnic groups. The college provides courses in 12 of the 15 sector subject areas. Approximately half of the college courses are in health, public services and care and in preparation for life and work.

A training agency is run which has about 100 work-based learners on modern apprenticeships. Nearly 300 14-16 year olds attend one day per week, following vocational programmes linked to their school courses. (Ofsted, 2007).

Just over 11% of the population in Leicestershire are from minority ethnic groups. The vast majority of those individuals are of Indian heritage. A number of them will not have language issues. However, there is also a substantial Bangladeshi heritage population. That group may have problems with English language which needs to be considered when looking at FE colleges.

South Leicestershire has several strategies it employs to increase success of its learners. The college has a teacher observation programme which allows administrators to have an accurate assessment of the quality of teaching and learning at the college. All teachers receive training in IT. The college promotes general good living policies (e.g., anti-littering policies). It has links with local employers. Guidance and support are outstanding.

There is a celebration of diversity and very good social inclusion policies. This probably aids the minority learners to an exceptional extent. Collaboration, self-assessment, focus on equal opportunities and have strong performance management. It seems that it is possible for students to feel included, succeed, and have an overall positive feeling about schooling at the FE level.

This college achieved their outstanding by having an 83% success rate overall, and above national average success rates for both adult and aged 16-18 learners. Of particular note is that success rates for ethnic minorities have risen for the past three years in a row.

According to Ofsted the results of implementing the strategy were:

- A thorough assessment of learners on language, literacy and numeracy. Support is provided once a need is identified.
- Vocational programmes for 14-16 year olds is strong
- learning mentors are valued by learners
- Collaboration yielding success in meeting local and regional needs

Key messages

Employing a top down practice of engaging the teaching staff which then translates to learner success may prove useful. Learners have high standards of success and develop good practical skills. This serves them well in the labour market.

- The college's links with local employers enable work experience in a range of settings
- Attendance is good.
- Personal and learning support are provided on an as needed basis.
- The response to educational and social inclusion is excellent.

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