

ESRC Seminar Series: Complementary Schools: Research, Policy and Practice Goldsmiths and King's College London

Seminar 2 (June 16 2009): King's College London

Every Child Matters and Parenting

Focusing on: how complementary schooling affects children's social and cognitive development, and reflects and impacts on parenting philosophies and strategies of minority ethnic families; how health, education and social welfare professionals working with children can support children from multilingual and minority ethnic backgrounds.

This report covers sessions on:

The Every Child Matters Agenda

Michael Stark (DCSF) and Maurice Irfan Coles (author of 'Every Muslim Child Matters')

Research Findings on Every Child Matters and Complementary Schools

Becky Francis, Louise Archer, Ada Mau (Roehampton/KCL), Vally Lytra (KCL), Charmian Kenner (Goldsmiths)

The 'Share Our Languages' project: working with parents in complementary schools

Kelly Badwal (National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education), Raja Rahawani (Malaysian Coventry Saturday Complementary School), Sharmin Ali (Halabja Kurdish School)

The 'Every Child Matters' Agenda and its relationship to complementary schools

Michael Stark (Head of Narrowing the Gaps, DCSF)

Every Child Matters agenda is about opportunities for all and narrowing the gaps in achievement. Low achievement is systematically shown to be linked with poverty. Free School Meals much stronger factor than ethnicity or gender. All main BME groups making more progress than white British children. Poverty gap has stayed the same – only realised recently when good statistics collected. However, achievement gaps are narrowing each year. Aspirations are a positive factor. Engagement of ethnic minority parents often strong.

Aim is to make schools the hub of their communities – a central point for involvement of families and integration of services. Results: 500,000 children lifted out of poverty, 3000 Children's Centres established, 16,500 Extended Schools, half of pupils getting 5 good GCSEs

Approach used: devise Children and Young People's Plans drawing on children's views. Five key principles of Children's Plan: Parents are key, enjoyment is key, every child has potential and can succeed, prevention is always better, a responsive service is needed

Aspects of approach: child protection, health, Children's Centres, workforce reform, Children's Trusts through which role of schools will be strengthened. Partnership in managing change. Treasury gives funding through Public Service Agreements in return for agreed outcomes.

School is supposed to offer broad and balanced curriculum, but may be missing: languages, cultures, role models, additional support for National Curriculum subjects. These aspects covered in supplementary/complementary schools.

DCSF terminology:

'Complementary schools' = after-school provision for National Curriculum subjects

'Supplementary schools' = after-school provision for language and culture, 'things that were never in the National Curriculum and schools wouldn't normally be teaching them'

[ie opposite way round to the terminology generally used in the ESRC seminar series]

Via National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education (NRC), supplementary schools can receive National Excellence Awards. Through the Quality Framework, supplementary schools being encouraged to set specified standards, follow particular objectives. Self-regulation rather than via DCSF. Not planning to inspect schools, but to establish good practice guidelines.

‘As a Department we support supplementary schools, short of cash. We think our money is better put into mainstream schools, but we see these schools as a key part of delivering our agenda.’

Responding to ‘Every Child Matters’

Maurice Irfan Coles (author of ‘Every Muslim Child Matters’)

Comments on Michael Stark’s talk:

- Where do complementary schools fit in with structures of managing change?
- Where do complementary schools fit in terms of poverty? Do some need particular support?
- Funding is an important issue for training and accreditation
- High aspirations are typical of complementary schools
- ‘Help us to meet your targets and this will raise achievement throughout’

Every Child Matters is essentially about identity. What makes up identity, and what is the complementary school’s role in it?

Identities are multiple – home, street, school....

Also affected by multi-faceted factors, eg children’s experiences of racism

Mixed-heritage children are an important group – will soon be more numerous than all others

For many families, faith is a key determinant

Conference of multi-faith groups found similar issues arising for young people. ‘If you’re happy with your faith background, everything else falls into place.’ Young people can then have an ‘integrated plural identity’ and be ‘skilled cultural and faith navigators.’

Is there any research on faith-based complementary schools? [NB Three-year ESRC-funded project on how children learn language and literacy in faith settings has now begun at Goldsmiths] Also need research on raising attainment in complementary schools.

Every Child Matters agenda and identities:

Being healthy includes mental and emotional health, having an integrated plural identity

Staying safe includes staying safe from bullying and discrimination. Ethics of all faiths are same – to support each other, work against bullying. Faith community can give young people security and stability.

Enjoying and achieving requires relationship between supplementary and mainstream, to make children more confident learners. Also requires being secure in own culture and heritage.

Complementary schools also stretch children in their learning and help meet educational targets – community languages exams add to 5 GCSEs.

Making a positive contribution on citizenship, eg new ICE curriculum (Islam and Citizenship Education) – 44 lessons at KS2 and 3 within Islamic framework, help children develop self-confidence and cope with life changes, work against bullying and discrimination.

Points raised in discussion of Michael and Maurice’s talks

Research should look at the wider benefits of complementary schools, not only educational achievement, and recognise that work in the complementary sector is done under difficulties.

Mainstream schools could be encouraged to work more with complementary sector – eg funding formula from LEA can be made dependent on whether a school does this. Mainstream schools could work in partnership with clusters of complementary schools and funding could be channelled that way. Partnerships should be more official and formal.

Schools have been told not to make profit from premises, so should take this into account when hiring space to complementary schools.

Points from group discussions

What's special about complementary schools?

Historical research on complementary schools shows they were outside of mainstream. Radical political movement in 1960s mirrored what mainstream schools lacked – a negotiated curriculum, child-centred education, parental involvement.' 'It's much more than just filling in the gaps.' Now a new era of regulation of complementary schools – what's constructing the shift? Will this change the ethos of complementary schools?

Example of Russian school: as well as Russian language, provides other things missing from mainstream curriculum eg art, dance, music. Based on needs of children. 'They're only there once a week but they get a lot.' Parents not in position to pay for private tutors so appreciate hard work of comp school.

Comp schools provide social education as well as academic education. Some include many faiths – children do music together, learn to talk to each other and respect each other. Families are involved and can give time. Mainstream schools supposed to help children understand diversity too, but ethos in comp schools is that 'children are the greatest treasure' and teachers pass on their experience. Mainstream schools don't always handle contentious issues well. Comp schools can help mainstream eg with celebrations such as Black History Month – can then feed into lessons.

Comp schools help young people negotiate identities, by addressing Every Child Matters in emotional terms. Important to provide atmosphere where children are free to speak any language they wish, and code-switch creatively. Comp schools promote citizenship, eg celebrate different faiths (talk about Christmas in India), discuss green agenda and how to look after climate from Hindu point of view. Or healthy eating – fruit not sweets.

Government regulation

Now there's a whole different language about out-of-school learning - on how comp schools can support the mainstream – but this was not the reason for setting them up? The sector has resisted standardisation. Some comp schools may be teaching National Curriculum subjects but don't want to have anything to do with Government guidelines. For other schools, guidelines could be useful. Teachers from other countries working in comp schools may have different qualifications and professional knowledge, not recognised here. It's about getting the right dialogue.

Safeguarding measures now required and this places demands on comp schools. NRC offers free child protection training, but would schools prefer to go on this or local authority training? Quality Framework covers safeguarding – do LAs recognise the value of this? One of only times that Government seems interested in comp schools is when they are trying to regulate them – the rest of the time, they are invisible.

Strength of comp schools lie in their independence. Need reassurance on how extensive standards will be. And how will comp schools know about standards if Govt not funding them?

Mainstream/complementary school partnerships

Govt guidelines aim to help comp schools build partnerships. Good example from Chatham School, working in partnership with local comp school, giving training in ICT and teaching strategies. Other mainstream schools could share continuing professional development (CPD).

Community cohesion agenda now important and inspected by Ofsted – should motivate mainstream schools re partnership. Ofsted also looks at cultural/social/spiritual development. Some mainstream schools doing this well – need to share good practice through partnerships. Comp schools can provide support for mainstream to understand cultures and different learning styles of new arrivals and of British-born adolescents.

Yet many mainstream schools not getting involved – comp schools finding difficulties in forming partnerships. Experiences of racism and prejudice around bilingualism. Because mainstream schools now need to be self-financing and self-organising, encourages them to be inward-looking instead of having well-developed links with LAs. Schools focus on cost and risk of extra opening hours. Think that providing premises at cost = ‘support’ to comp schools. Extended Schools seen as way of ‘doing’ community cohesion, but after-school activities mainly seen as ‘childcare’ rather than cultural or linguistic enhancement.

Our Languages project has produced Toolkit with useful advice on partnership. Comp school reps need to be prepared to meet all senior management in mainstream schools to ‘sell’ mutual benefits of partnership. If get one person on board, they will bring others. Parent governors another key group to contact. Comp schools can point out how contribute to Every Child Matters. Explain that knowing about comp school attendance can enhance mainstream teachers’ relationship with pupils. Flag up how comp schools contribute to attainment.

Suggestions:

- volunteering opportunities, eg 6th form maths students can volunteer in comp schools;
- work by mainstream teachers in comp schools could contribute to staff development;
- share ICT resources with comp schools;
- initial teacher education (ITE) placements – Goldsmiths PGCE languages students supplement teaching practice in comp schools, praised in Every Language Matters report
- Nuffield-funded Curriculum Guides for community languages useful for both sectors
- British Council funding for comp/mainstream partnership projects

Faith and secularity

Some scepticism/concern re faith comp schools being offered as a panacea. Question as to whether faith comp school agendas and outcomes are necessarily same as language-based comp school ones? Important not to regard secular kids as in deficit – secular ethics are also valid.

Third generation issues

Concerns for some comp schools re drop off in attendance of third generation children. Bilingual teaching (rather than mother tongue only) can help third generation. Comp schools need to be bilingual spaces for developing multiple identities. Partnership with mainstream can raise status of comp schools and increase motivation for pupils to attend. Family learning with parents at comp schools can also reinvigorate participation.

Poverty gap in complementary schools and funding issues

Area for research – does poverty prevent some families from attending? Big differences between resources of different comp schools. Frustration and time consuming nature of trying to get funding. Yet comp schools are filling in for gaps in mainstream curriculum, especially for

families who can't afford private extra-curricular activities. DCSF wants to take credit for what's going on in comp schools, but without providing funding support.

Research findings on Every Child Matters and complementary schools

British-Chinese Pupils' Identities, Achievement and Complementary Schooling (ESRC)

(Roehampton/King's College London): Becky Francis, Louise Archer, Ada Mau

Findings related to Every Child Matters:

Staying safe critical mass of British Chinese young people in comp school was important to pupils. For once, they were part of a majority, free from racism and intimidation. Had a safe space to explore their hybrid identities.

Enjoying and achieving could adopt more playful learner identities in comp school, noisier and cheekier. Less pressure to achieve. In mainstream, always constructed as diligent, quiet pupils. Half felt comp school had no impact on mainstream schooling – some adamant that it did, eg helped them learn other languages, or fostered learning skills such as revision and memorisation, as well as giving confidence and motivation to learn. Practices appreciated in comp school included: holistic approach (eg using history and literature as part of language learning), competition/reward culture, greater teacher involvement, small classes, intrinsic love of learning.

Economic well-being middle-class pupils in particular saw Chinese as economic capital, to be used in jobs here and abroad

Implications: govt (and comp schools selves) need to recognise comp schools as authentic learning spaces. Govt should address lack of funding and parity between mainstream and comp sectors, and look at how sectors can work together. Yet pupils experienced almost total separation. If there are lessons for mainstream education, why is there not more recognition? Not only a question of the mainstream professionalising comp schools – pupils valued the holistic, culture-rich approach often lacking in National Curriculum. Need mutual exchange.

Multilingualism in Complementary Schools in Four Communities (ESRC)

(Birmingham, UEL, KCL, Birkbeck): Vally Lytra

Enjoying and achieving Comp schools found to be vibrant social and cultural spaces where students can experience multilingual practices and transform and re-create identities, including successful learner identities. Students' efforts are celebrated in comp schools, publicly praised at ceremonies. High achievers – role models. Success in extra-curricular activities is linked to confidence in multilingual abilities. Counters mainstream narratives of academic failure and widespread idea of ethnic minority under-achievement. School leaders and parents discuss how to raise achievement in both settings, and schools help parents learn about British education system.

Making a positive contribution comp schools help young people combine heritage language and culture with British culture. Emphasise need to draw on full range of linguistic and cultural resources rather than reinforcing divisions, eg teachers commenting 'we'd like you to speak Gujarati and English as well' or 'you must give back 100% to the community'.

Economic well-being students in comp schools do national exams – enhances educational qualifications, improving access to higher education and economic success

Comp schools make a unique contribution – addressing shortcomings of mainstream with extra-curricular and cross-curricular work, involving parents.

Developing Bilingual Learning Strategies in Mainstream and Community Contexts (ESRC and Paul Hamlyn Foundation) (Goldsmiths): Charmian Kenner

ESRC study showed benefits to children from comp school learning, and need to link with mainstream. Current research project funded by Paul Hamlyn Foundation sets up direct partnerships between mainstream and comp school teachers. Before partnership, mainstream teachers tend to know little about comp schools. Example of teacher who said ‘we don’t really get to see that other part of the child...there’s always that little bit that’s missing’ – yet she thought perhaps it was the children’s wish that the two settings be kept separate. Comparison with another mainstream teacher’s comments after working on the project: ‘it’s about the whole child really for me...just by having contact with their community schools I feel I can understand a bit more about their learning in a broader context’. She noted that when she and her complementary school partner teacher devised a bilingual poetry unit and it was implemented in the mainstream class, children confidently took on the task using their mother tongue.

Implications: it’s not the children who want to keep their mainstream and comp schools separate. Rather, more powerful authorities such as the DCSF construct these as separate spaces institutionally. When teachers from both sectors work together to create shared spaces, children respond accordingly and this enhances their educational enjoyment and achievement.

The ‘Share Our Languages’ project: working with parents in complementary schools

Kelly Badwal (National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education), Raja Rahawani (Malaysian Coventry Saturday Complementary School), Sharmin Ali (Halabja Kurdish School)

Share Our Languages (part of the DCSF-funded Our Languages project): family learning in different languages, based at complementary (and some mainstream) school settings. Malaysian school: usually develop own curriculum in Malay, English and Arabic. Found Share Our Languages training and resources very useful – interactive, fun, adaptable to any language. Brought in parents so numbers at school grew. Activities included samples of food from around world, input from parents, learn words with children. Traditional rhymes and songs together – also translate into English. Learning language and culture at same time, parental help is vital. Kurdish school: project builds closer relationships in families. Health topic: discussed diet, importance of healthy snacks. Family maths: counting trees/cars in street. Kurdish books for children to read at bedtime. Parents as friends and teachers for children.

Closing remarks (Li Wei, Birkbeck)

Every Child Matters – remember that every parent, family, culture, faith also matters. Role of parents in comp schools is critical – paid for, taught and governed by parents.

Govt focuses on measuring educational achievement, but how measure social achievement, identity development, aspirations developed in comp schools? Competences such as multi-modal skills and electronic communication also show up in informal environments of comp schools.

Comp schools need to be self-reflective and critical. Eg consider mixed parentage children, and third/fourth generations. Need bilingual teaching so can include British part of their identities.

Teacher and curriculum development is vital: promote teacher exchanges between comp schools as well as with mainstream.