

Dear Education Committee and Clerk,

Attached to this email are the abstract and main section of my evidence, as parts of my final year dissertation project.

Unfortunately, I am not able to merge these as a single word document due to problems with my computer. But both files will open as word documents.

I hope this evidence will be of benefit to the committee in tackling educational underachievement within marginalised groups and newcomer pupils.

Míle buíochas, many thanks-

S. Lam

1.0. Introduction

This project sets to explore the educational achievement of newcomer and ethnic minority pupils within an inner-city Belfast, English medium primary school.

1.1. Defining the term 'newcomer pupil'

Firstly, it is important to define and clarify the term *newcomer pupil* in the context of this Northern Ireland education system. DENI (*Department of Education Northern Ireland*) outlines the newcomer pupil as:

"... a child or young person who has enrolled in a school but who does not have satisfactory language skills to participate fully in the school curriculum and does not have a language in common with the teacher." (2009: iii)

1.2. The Northern Ireland educational context

This status of pupil has seen a sizeable surge since the turn of the 21st century within Northern Ireland, as a result of mass inward migration to the region and to other parts of the UK and Ireland. Figures show the extent of the increase in newcomer pupils starting from 1,366 in the year 2001/02, and rising to 12,932 pupils in the current year 2015/16 - an unprecedented uptake over 14 years, with an average annual rise of 68% (DENI, 2015). Consequently, this topic has been very current and at the forefront, with immigration being an area of contention in the upcoming referendum on UK membership within the European Union (Tilford, 2016).

In the realm of education, teachers within schools, community organisations as well as political leaders within the Northern Ireland Assembly have taken action in supporting newcomer children as they have begun to build their new lives and become educated here.

1.3. Challenges and opportunities

With regards to the families, it is documented of the challenges that they and their children will face when moving to Northern Ireland (Kernaghan, 2015). Especially in the most recent years, we have seen an intake of vulnerable immigrants into the region; namely, asylum seekers and refugees arriving from Africa, the Middle East and Asia (NISMP *Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership*, 2014). Therefore, these and other factors that obtain to newcomer families like past home experiences, socio-economic class, racial bullying and language barriers mean that they can be at various levels of disadvantage by the time they arrive here (Kernaghan, 2015).

But while they are at a 'disadvantage', this increase in the migrant population has enriched the the diversity of the population, the cultural perspectives and has changed significantly the range of languages spoken here (DENI, 2009). It is worth noting also that living and experiencing more than one culture and language can enhance a child to communicate, think and learn more effectively (Paradowsky, 2016).

1.4. Research questions

Hence, this current educational issue raises questions that are the basis of the research project:

- To what extent do newcomer children perform or achieve higher than their expected ability in school?
- And do they outperform their native counterparts in their class?

These two questions are proposed to explore the attainment of newcomer and BME (*Black and Minority Ethnic*) pupils against their own ability within this inner-city

primary school, as well as assessing them comparatively along with fellow indigenous learners. The overall purpose is to answer these two questions with the help of current educational literature, along with field-based research.

2.0. Literature Review

To answer the proposed questions, this chapter supports and critically assesses the current literature on this issue of newcomer, migrant and BME pupils within education as a means of validating the research being undertaken here.

2.1. Attitudes and motivations

The educational attainment of migrant, newcomer and BME groups are somewhat deemed as a phenomenon, despite the well-documented challenges that they face in a new country, as Leung argues;

'In view of the disprivileges and disadvantages faced by minority groups, the academic success of some of them begs the questions of how these successful minorities manage to surmount the odds against them and how they differ from those who fail.' (2003: pp290-291)

This *'against the odds'* theory of educational achievement is central to the overall aim of this project - to try and clarify answers as to why BME and newcomer pupils are sometimes perceived to be high performers in school.

One way of supporting this theory is to look at the cultural attitudes and motivations of this heterogeneous group. Leung (2003) sets out his folk theory of success, outlining that voluntary minorities have high aspirations and that their motivations lie in educational achievement as a means to attain success in the present society. Moreover, Stumme gives an insight to his experience as a teacher dealing with immigrant families as he concurs;

"... immigrant parents care deeply about the education of their children... they want a better life for their children, and education is the way to achieve it." (2010: 134)

Other in-depth studies also demonstrate cultures of aspiration, progress and educational achievement within Chinese, Indian (Walters, 2012) and Pakistani groups within the UK (Conteh, 2003). Purdy and Ferguson's (2012) findings display the attitudes of newcomers as being generally more positive, as well as them being more advanced for their age academically.

2.2. High educational attainment and results

In relation to quantifiable results within schools, newcomer and BME pupils show some tendencies to perform well (Cummins, 2014), and not only is it evident in the local and national systems, but it is consistent with findings in other 'Anglosphere' countries;

"First-generation immigrant students in Ireland exhibit relatively strong performance parallel to the patterns in Canada and Australia..." (Cummins, 2014: 7)

(The term 'first-generation' refers to the first generation of children born in the host country from original immigrants). Additionally in the UK, Lawrence (2012) finds that Chinese, Indian, and mixed Asian and White heritage children outperform children of other groups at Key Stages 1 and 4.

However, in the backdrop of this level of BME and newcomer achievement, some writers have expressed their concerns about White children and especially White working-class boys, who are underachieving (Sammons et al., 2015). Mason (2016) conveys his views on this issue - that ethnic minority children have the advantage of being armed with the narratives and skills for overcoming economic disadvantage.

To support this view in the context of Northern Ireland, schools have seen the effects of high achieving newcomers. One primary school principal, whose school has a substantial number of newcomer pupils, expresses her experiences;

"We find that newcomer children have at times outperformed their Northern Irish counterparts in assessments. This has meant pupils have an added stimulus to keep striving to be the best they can be as they see children who have English as their second language achieve so much and they want to achieve also." (Torney, 2014)

2.3. Bilingualism and Biculturalism

The principal brings up the bilingual and bicultural nature of newcomers, which plays an integral role in the educational development of the children in question.

Bhattacharyya et al. found that

"Black Caribbean and Black African children and children for whom English is an additional language make relatively greater progress during pre-school than White children or those for whom English is a first language... EAL pupils generally make better progress between Key Stages." (2003: 3)

Likewise, Robinson and Díaz (2006) explain that young bilinguals who maintain their mother-tongue generate differentiated forms of cultural capital, and Dantas and Manyak outlines bilingualism as

"... a special emblem of academic competence." (2010: 6)

The benefits of bilingualism transcend to emotional intelligence as Devarakonda (2013) describes the mature thinking that develops from an early age, including the empathy to support other bilingual and bicultural children. Similarly, Tickell (2011) reiterates the cognitive flexibility and metalinguistic awareness that is associated with young bilinguals.

2.4. Additional benefits

Along with the aforementioned points, newcomers and BME pupils bring additional benefits to their respective classrooms and schools too. Purdy and Ferguson's study reveals the positive feedback of teachers in their teaching of newcomer children;

"The results show that almost all (95%, n=42) of the respondents recognised that the presence of immigrant children presented an opportunity to learn about another culture, with 85% (n=37) reporting that the children were also able to learn about tolerance at the same time." (2012: 35)

Diller (2004) further supports this notion of the opportunity to learn about another culture, stating that it made her stronger as a teacher. These learning opportunities translate through to the pupils in the classroom;

'... awareness of diversity at a young age enables children to empathise and respect people from other cultures.' (Devarakonda, 2013: 53)

In turn, schools that exemplify this quality can attract prospective parents, as one principal shares;

'...some indigenous Northern Ireland parents had chosen [the] school specifically because of [the] diverse pupil intake. However, other parents at the same school had expressed concerns regarding the increasing numbers of newcomers, and others intentionally elected not to send their children to that school for the same reason.' (NISMP, 2014: 4)

Thus, there can be limitations and challenges to the diversity of pupils in schools.

2.5. Racism, bullying and abuse

As referred to in the introduction, there are certain challenges that newcomer and BME pupils face, and one of them is the threat of racism and bullying. McDermott (2014) reports that over 40% of participants believe there was more racial prejudice

in Northern Ireland in comparison to 5 years prior to 2014. Other studies echo the experiences of racism within minority pupils and newcomers;

"... BME children did experience a higher rate of particular types of bullying. BME children from a European background were more likely to feel excluded (45%) compared to local children (38%) or those from an Asian background (20%)." (Kernaghan, 2015: 26)

Therefore, this can affect newcomer children when they are in school. In the wider context of the UK, research indicates racism explicitly as a primary factor in the underachievement of certain minorities in education, with the consideration of teacher and institutional racism (Walters, 2012). Wallace et al. (2013) also makes the point of teachers handling racist bullying poorly and schools lacking in the understanding of diversity.

In special educational needs, newcomer pupils can potentially be more prone to difficulties in learning;

"The trauma and upheaval of moving to a new country may well be the cause of delayed progress in learning; the distress of leaving family behind may provoke lack of sleep, resulting in memory impairment and slower processing, which might appear to be signs of SpLDs (Specific Learning Difficulties), but which have an emotional rather than a cognitive origin." (Smith, 2015: 17)

Factors like this are considered especially for vulnerable migrants such as asylum seekers and refugees who may have had traumatic experiences prior to arrival and became newcomer pupils with interrupted education and no English (Moore, 2011).

2.6. Social, linguistic and cultural barriers

Along with the beneficial circumstances of bilingualism and biculturalism in newcomers, current literature also shows a negative impact on these pupils as they

are attending school. Kernaghan highlights the language barrier as a common theme that occurs in her study of newcomers in Northern Ireland schools;

"... this was problematic in terms of being able to communicate with newcomer pupils to understand their needs, assess their progress and ensuring they they could access the NI Curriculum." (2015: 7)

Problems with speaking the host language often means that these pupils are focused on assimilating quickly and as a result, schools miss out on opportunities to appreciate newcomer linguistic accomplishments as identity affirmation, as well as using L1 (their first language) as a cognitive tool (Cummins, 2014).

What is more, these specific issues pertaining to the use of the mother-tongue can create more potential pressures on newcomer students at home as they fulfil the role of being intermediaries and translators for their families too;

"Unlike English-only speakers, bilingual students have to assume roles that are usually reserved for adults. As a result, they are forced to mature rather quickly, causing stress."
(Leonardo and Grubb, 2014: 45)

Added stress and lack of consideration for their first language leaves these children devalued, and disowning part of their identity leaves them unlikely to engage in school tasks (MacGillivray et al., 2004).

Likewise, with socio-economic status, newcomer and BME groups are at a disadvantage. Bhattacharyya (2003) states that EAL (*English as an Additional Language*) children are more likely to come from low-income families than non-EAL children, with ethnic minorities (Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black groups particularly) often being in the lower socio-economic groups.

Moreover, Wallace et al. (2013) point out to the larger risk of BME groups being susceptible to disadvantage, with the regular reporting of low pay, in-work and child poverty and high rates of unemployment. From here, disadvantages seem to be exacerbated and in turn, it can play a detrimental part to these minority groups as they progress through their formal education;

“Overall, the disparity in achievement between ethnic groups increases significantly over the course of schooling. There is more inequality in attainment between ethnic groups after their time in compulsory education than there is at entry to school.” (Bhattacharyya, 2003: 9)

With this view of disadvantage, it is reflected in the specific demographic of Black Caribbean pupils in the UK, as they are three times more likely to be excluded permanently from school (Bhattacharyya, 2003). Consequently, teachers and schools can be liable for stereotyping and pre-judging pupils from minority groups;

‘Social class, race and ethnicity, special educational needs and behaviour problems have become filters through the desirability or undesirability of particular students is understood. On most counts, minority students, particularly Black Afro-Caribbean, are less likely to be regarded as desirable students by the majority of schools.’ (Tomlinson, 2000: 28)

As it is evident here, there are multiple circumstances and variables in the critical literature to show that newcomers and BME pupils are indeed at a disadvantage, which in contrast to the arguments of this project, can lead to educational underachievement.

2.7. Peer recommendations

Whilst acknowledging the provision already given for newcomers in Northern Ireland schools already (DENI, 2009), further recommendations have been cited in

the current literature to address the challenges of a more culturally and linguistically diverse educational context.

2.8. Diversifying the workforce

One area that was highlighted was the lack of diversity in the teaching workforce within the UK and more so, in the island of Ireland. Leavy's study (2005) reveals that over 90% of pre-service teachers are white and from hegemonic national, religious and cultures here. She further determines,

"... these restricted experiences with people of diversity pose a significant challenge to educators whose task is the preparation of teachers to teach in a diverse student population."

(Leavy, 2005: 172)

Conteh (2003) also criticises the lack of diverse and bilingual teachers, who are able to identify with specific aspects of newcomer pupils' learning and inform fellow monolingual practitioners to support those newcomers too. This is in line with Smith (2015) and her recommendation to take the cultural background of the newcomer into account prior to teaching.

2.9. Lack of relevant data

Furthermore, precise data on this specific topic of BME and newcomer pupils' and their progress within their new host country is lacking. The Northern Ireland Department of Education has stated,

'... there is no clear evidence that newcomer children are likely to underachieve, the Department recognises that there are gaps in the data it collects in relation to the educational achievement of newcomer pupils and of ethnic minorities.' (DENI, 2009: 23)

Wallace et al. (2013) concur with the lack of precise data within education, along with health, housing and receiving of benefits despite much emphasis being placed on their access to these public services.

To conclude, it has been stated of the diverse and multi-linguistic environments of schools as a result of newcomer and BME pupils. In relation to this, Robinson and Díaz recommend a validation in the diversity of language within schools;

"... languages other than English must attain forms of institutionalised cultural capital (at the setting) in which the policies, pedagogies and curriculum approaches provide enabling linguistic markets through the provision of opportunities for the use of languages spoken by children, families and educators." (Robinson and Díaz, 2006: 123)

This recommendation is supported in line with the Department of Education's guidelines (DENI, 2009), to welcome newcomer pupils by turning the linguistic, cultural and ethnic diversity to the advantage of all.

3.0. Field-based Research and Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the purpose and the rationale behind the research in order to answer the proposed questions for this project:

- To what extent do newcomer children perform or achieve higher than their expected ability in school?
- And do they outperform their native counterparts in their class?

It also discusses the assessment of these and other research methods as well as the actions taken to implement the proposed research methodology.

3.1. Ethical issues

Before conducting research, there are several aspects to consider in this process of the project. One aspect is ethics. Ethics is a concept that must be considered throughout the whole research process; from the initial planning right through to the methods of research and then to the implementation of the research with participants. Lack of consideration in ethics could lead to complications such as lack of validity and unsuccessful relations with participants. As explained by Wiles in the ethics of care approach,

"...ethical decisions are made on the basis of care, compassion and a desire to act in ways that benefit the individual or group who are the focus of research, recognising the relationality and interdependency of researchers and research participants." (2013:15)

One important ethical issue when conducting research with participants is informed consent. Wiles (2013) describes informed consent as participants knowing

fully what the research will involve. Once participants are made fully aware of what the research entails, they either accept or decline to take part in the study. This providing of information is crucial as it has to be clear, concise and factually correct.

Another ethical issue is anonymity and confidentiality. Whilst collecting data and researching, protecting the identities of the people who are participating may be worth considering to protect their privacy. Wiles also explains that

"Confidentiality of data also includes not deliberately or accidentally disclosing what has been said in the process of data collection with others in ways that might identify an individual." (2013:42)

It is worth noting that at times, research participants may want to be named and not kept anonymous as well.

Finally, in order for the researcher to be ethical in their work, they must assess potential risk, including the safety of themselves as well as the participating party/parties. Especially within social research, Wiles (2013) argues that the majority of risks are to do with participants' psychological or emotional wellbeing.

3.2. Sampling

Depending on the size of the undertaken research, sampling is a method of data collecting that would lead to an inferential or a descriptive conclusion by the researcher. In qualitative inquiry, sampling takes a very broad spectrum of methods and differs a lot with quantitative strategies. Punch reiterates that

"The basic ideas behind the specific [qualitative] sampling strategies vary considerably, and reflect the purposes and questions guiding the study." (2014:161)

However, he also points out the commonality with most qualitative sampling, that they are all purposive, or that they normally fit with the purposes, questions and overall strategy of the research (Punch, 2014).

In quantitative sampling, it also deals with a varied amount of data collecting methods but in nature, deals more with numbers and logic. First, it is important to identify what overall group or population will be the focus of the data collecting, and then progress into obtaining a group of participants or subjects to gather data from that population. The method in which the smaller group, or sample is collected, is where the variation stems from. Creswell (2014) highlights single-stage and multistage sampling where, depending on the size of the population, the researcher is able to directly obtain a sample straight from that population.

3.3. Encouraging involvement and participation

Encouraging people to participate in research can be a challenge. Therefore, it is a possibility that incentives and rewards are given to subjects who are willing to take part in research. This method presents both benefits and drawbacks as well. Wiles states;

"Recompense can be viewed as an incentive or inducement that may offer considerable encouragement for some groups to participate in research, who might without the 'reward' offered, decline to participate." (2013:32)

Moreover, advertising and presenting the relevant research proposal can promote interest. Educating and informing the public of project goals produces no real or tangible reward but it does attract interested parties and collaborative partners also. Pink (2009) argues that intrinsic motivators are more effective and successful with

support of a number of international studies, in contrast to extrinsic motivators like money or other tangible rewards.

In light of Pink's argument, if there is provision of rewards or incentives and the researcher is concerned over whether the quality of their study will be affected by the 'lure' of extrinsic motivators, this can be altered to become a gesture of gratitude that can be given at the end;

"The challenges that 'rewards' for participation pose for informed consent can be offset by not informing participants that they will be paid until after they have agreed to participate."

(Wiles, 2013:33)

3.4. Research methodologies

The potential methodologies presented in this section are associated with the concept of *action research* - a specific form of practitioner research pertaining to practical problems in the workplace or community and engaging participants to solve the problem (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Along with this, they state that

"Most action research studies are qualitative action research studies, since most collect only qualitative forms of data; however, as we have seen, it is possible to include a quantitative component in an action research study." (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016: 53)

There are a range of qualitative and quantitative methods in order to conduct research. Depending on the scope of the proposed research and the researcher's disposition or circumstances, qualitative and quantitative research is able to answer different questions and thus provide varied conclusions for the researcher. Barbour explains,

"Qualitative research can make visible and unpick the mechanisms which link particular variables, by looking at the explanations, or accounts, provided by those involved."

Quantitative research excels at identifying statistically significant relationships between variables..." (2014:13)

Popular quantitative methods of research include surveys, questionnaires and tests where a series of questions are administered to willing participants or pupils. And a method that is synonymous with education and action research is testing, as Taber explains;

"... tests are ways of collecting evidence about student knowledge and understanding. Indeed, formal examinations (such as SATs, GCSEs, etc.) provide an immense amount of data that has been used as a source of a great deal of educational research." (2013: 260)

As mentioned by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), quantitative methods are seldom considered when taking action research. But as the following proposal will explain, the use of testing and pupils' results may be most useful in the research of this project compared to surveys and questionnaires.

Whilst testing and assessment may provide a wealth of data for educational research, it can have negative implications of limiting the broad range of learning that it is supposed to measure in pupils (Taber, 2013). A culture of '*teaching to the test*' can be fostered and as Taber further explains,

"The tests may be useful in establishing in establishing league tables for schools, and claiming educational standards are improving, but become a rather poor measure of the actual quality of teaching and learning." (2013: 261)

Other popular methods of research include interviews and focus groups, both of which are qualitative and relevant to practitioner research goals. Interviews comprise of a dialogue between two parties; this case being the researcher in dialogue with the subject(s). Usually, the purpose of interviews is to provide data

and information that is detailed and extensive, where the structure of interview is either structured, semi-structured or unstructured (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).

Taber reminds us about the purpose of interviewing as a means of qualitative research;

"Interviews are often an especially useful way to explore how people experience situations, how they understand concepts, and what they think about things." (2013: 275)

Whilst similar to interviews, focus groups differ in a few areas. Wilkinson and Birmingham describe focus group research as

"... a form of qualitative method used to gather rich, descriptive data in a small-group format from participants who have agreed to 'focus' on a topic of mutual interest. The emphasis is on understanding participants' experiences, interests, attitudes, perspectives and assumptions." (2003:90)

Of course, interviewing can have its disadvantages and limitations. Questions and answers can be misinterpreted, interviewers may be interested in aspects of belief that are tacit and interviewees may give incomplete and dishonest answers (Taber, 2013). But he also clarifies the directness and the flexibility in interviewing as a method of data collection, as it allows interviewers to follow up on questions, seek elaboration and rephrase questions to seek more clarity on topics;

"A skilled interviewer can often obtain valuable data from an informant who is in a position to provide information and is prepared to do so." (Taber, 2013: 275)

3.5. Research proposal

With these research methods in mind, a mixed-methods approach was decided - using both qualitative and quantitative forms of research to answer the proposed questions of this project. Consequently, the mixed-methods approach is well suited

to the pragmatic worldview of action research within education in that it generalises results to a population and then seeks to collect detailed views using open-ended interviews (Creswell, 2014).

First, an inner-city Belfast primary school with a substantial number of newcomer pupils was consulted. In line with good ethical practice, the research proposal was taken to the project supervisor for approval. The ethical implications were reviewed, of which there was no risk (see Appendix C). Initial meetings with the school principal and vice-principal were clear and informative, and they informed their interest and consent for the conducting of the research.

For quantitative research, a data capture was decided to ascertain the pupil demographics within the school, including the amount of newcomers and BME pupils attending there (in line with ethics and child protection). All pupil data given for this project was anonymous and no names were given. Data of newcomer assessment results in the core curricular areas of Literacy and Numeracy within the largest Key Stage 2 class in the school would be captured via SIMS (*School Information Management System*), the software used to compile pupils' data. This sample would have the highest numbers of newcomers in the cohort. Choosing this Key Stage 2 class would be done precisely because of a high sample. The progress test scores of the pupils in English and Maths would be gathered, as well as their original CAT or '*Cognitive Abilities Test*' scores in verbal (language) and quantitative (mathematic) abilities which were taken at the start of the academic year (GL Assessment, 2015).

In order to answer the research questions, comparisons would be made in the progress test scores of these newcomers to their own individual CAT scores to see if they achieve higher than their expected cognitive ability. Secondly, the mean progress test scores of the newcomers in English and Maths would be calculated, and compared to the mean scores of the native pupils within the class sample in order to answer the second research question.

For qualitative research, the vice-principal of the primary school would be interviewed to give her perspectives on the educational attainment of newcomer pupils and the provision given to this group within the school. The interview questions would consider Patton's 6 types of questioning (2015) - relating to experiences and behaviour, opinions and values, feeling, knowledge, sensory and background/demographics. This interview would be recorded, transcribed (see Appendix A) and later deleted to protect the names mentioned in the recording. Specific names would also be removed from the transcript to protect the identity of the school, the staff and the pupils as a further measure of confidentiality and data protection.

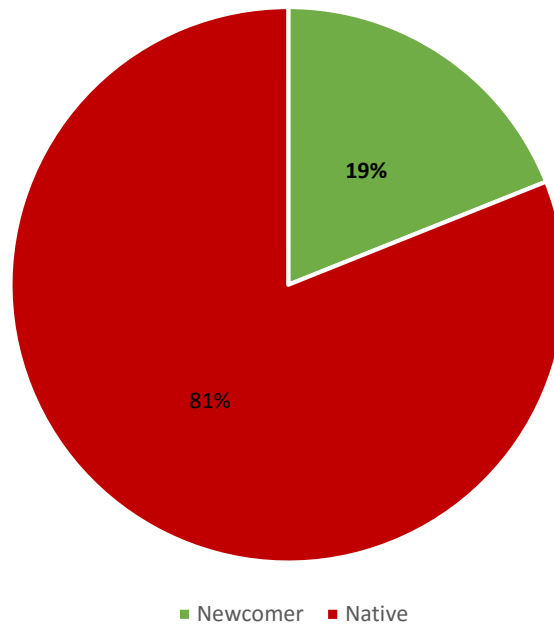
4.0. Presentation and Analysis of Data

This chapter presents the findings of the data gathering and action research for this project. It also analyses the data obtained from the data-capture (quantitative) and the recorded interview from the vice-principal of the inner-city Belfast primary school in question (qualitative), in relation to the proposed research questions.

4.1. School demographics

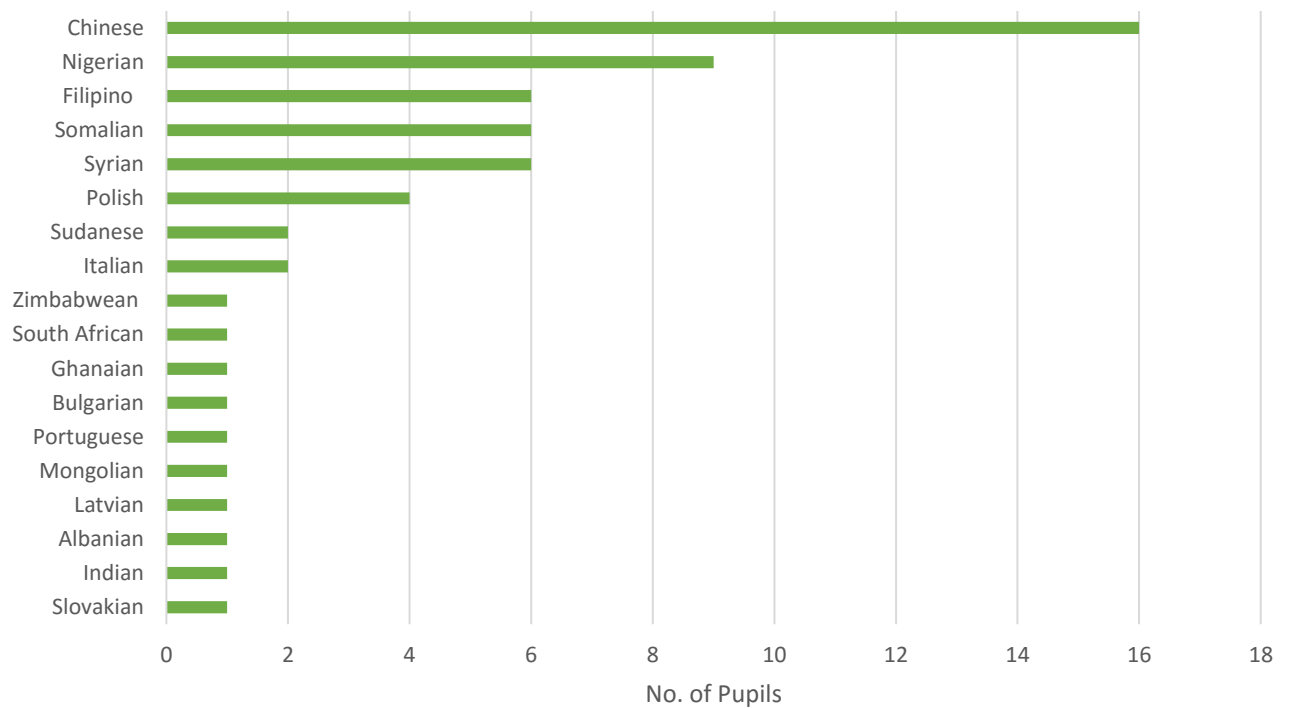
From the data collection in the primary school, there is a total of 322 pupils attending the school and 61 of them are newcomers (all BME pupils in this school fit the status of newcomer too). Thus, 19% of the school cohort are newcomer pupils (Figure. 1).

(Fig. 1) Inner-city Belfast Primary School: Pupil Intake



Within this newcomer group, 18 nationalities are represented within the 19% demographic of the overall school pupil population (Figure. 2).

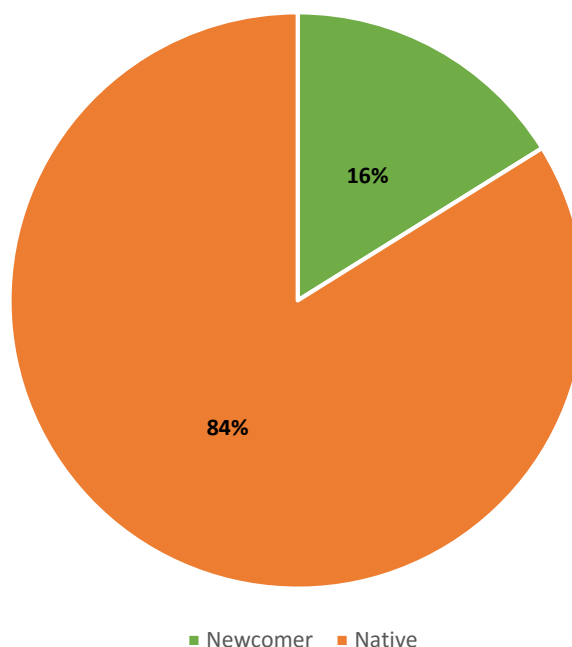
(Fig. 2) Number of Newcomer Pupils in School: by Nationality



Though not specified with any nationality, the school has a number of pupils who have refugee and asylum-seeker status and staff are informed once information is obtained in collaboration with the families concerned and with community organisations.

Within the specific Key Stage 2 class sample, 16% of the pupils are newcomers (n=5) and 84% of the pupils are native-born (n=26) (Figure. 3).

(Fig. 3) KS2 Class Sample: Pupil Intake



4.2. Newcomer assessment scores

The progress test scores of newcomers in this sample were investigated and compared to their CAT scores. Initially, it was clear that two of the newcomers in the sample had not attended the school when CAT tests were being taken at the start of the year; and one of these two pupils entered the school at a much later stage, meaning that they did not have any data at all. This issue of interrupted education for newcomers was highlighted by NISMP (2014). Therefore, the two pupils were disregarded for the first research question.

With the remaining newcomer pupils in the sample, the results show that all of the newcomers achieve at their expected ability in English according to SIMS (Figure. 4).

(Fig. 4) CAT and Progress Test Scores of Newcomers in KS2 Sample (English)

Newcomer	SEN	CAT Score (Verbal)	Prog. Test Score (English)
Y		-	-
Y		-	105
Y		85	85
Y	Cognitive & Learning	86	88
Y	Moderate Learning Difficulties	80	73

However, newcomer progress test scores in Maths display that they do not achieve at their expected ability, as highlighted by SIMS software in red (Figure. 5).

(Fig. 5) CAT and Progress Test Scores of Newcomers in KS2 Sample (Maths)

Newcomer	SEN	CAT Score (Quantitative)	Prog. Test Score (Maths)
Y		-	-
Y		-	102
Y		95	81
Y	Cognitive & Learning	81	69
Y	Moderate Learning Difficulties	83	69

To answer the first question, the data shows that newcomer pupils do not achieve higher than their expected ability in the curricular areas of English and Maths (or Literacy and Numeracy). In fact, these results are in contrast with the concept of English language challenges that newcomers experience (Kernaghan,

2015). Additionally, it also contradicts the concept of Mathematics being a universal language and thus, being more accessible to all (Maths Careers, 2016). In relation to SEN (*Special Educational Needs*), the CAT scores took these into account and this did not affect the validity of the data in relation to the first research question.

4.3. Comparative mean scores

The mean progress test scores in English and Maths were calculated for both newcomer and native groups (Figure. 7) from the class sample table of progress test scores (Figure. 6).

(Fig. 6) Whole-class Progress Test Scores in KS2 Sample

Pupil	Newcomer	SEN	Prog. Score (English)	Prog. Score (Maths)
1.	Y		-	-
2.	Y		105	102
3.	Y		85	81
4.	Y	Cognitive & Learning	88	69
5.	Y	Moderate Learning Difficulties	73	69
6.			110	97
7.			120	113
8.			114	99
9.			114	106
10.			109	95
11.		Cognitive & Learning	81	73
12.		Cognitive & Learning	87	76
13.			90	81
14.			110	106
15.			104	86
16.			92	95
17.			106	80
18.			109	108
19.		Dyslexia/SpLD	93	78
20.		Cognitive & Learning	98	96
21.			117	97
22.			110	96
23.			101	94
24.			103	97
25.		Cognitive & Learning	83	80
26.		Cognitive & Learning	95	81
27.			102	77

28.			113	103
29.			102	91
30.			100	94
31.			99	79

(Fig. 7) Comparative Mean Progress Test Scores in KS2 Sample

Newcomer (n=5)*		Native (n=26)	
Mean Prog. Test Score (English) [351 ÷ 4]	Mean Prog. Test Score (Maths) [321 ÷ 4]	Mean Prog. Test Score (English) [2,662 ÷ 26]	Mean Prog. Test Score (Maths) [2,378 ÷ 26]
87.75	80.25	102.38	91.46

* Newcomer calculations are divided by 4 due to late arrival of one newcomer who did not take any progress tests (thus, having no obtainable data).

These comparative mean scores reveal that native pupils outscore newcomers by 14.63 test points in English, and by 11.21 test points in Maths on average within this sample. Therefore, to answer the second research question, this sample indicates that newcomers do not outperform their native counterparts in the core curricular areas of English and Maths (or Literacy and Numeracy).

4.4. Limitations to the quantitative research

Of course, there are limitations to the data and the calculations taken for this study.

The number of newcomers in this class sample are small and thus, it may not have been significantly large enough to reflect the achievement that would be closer to the overall newcomer population. To add, the two newcomer children with interrupted education within the sample would have affected the research undertaken here.

Finally, it would have been more beneficial to consider the SEN of these pupils of this sample in an integrated way for a more valuable analysis and presentation.

4.5. Interview with the vice-principal

The vice-principal of the school in question was interviewed, giving a context of what they do to support newcomer pupils and sharing her views of what she has seen in the qualitative educational attainment of these children in her school (See Appendix A).

4.6. Personal and social achievement

The vice-principal spoke in length about the pastoral care that is provided so that newcomers achieve well personally and socially;

"... there are a lot of different things that happen throughout the year and pastorally, it's most important that children are happy and settled. And also, a lot of our teachers in this school are very clued in for what to look out for- you know they go through that quiet 6 month period when they start. That's their quiet period, and [the teachers] know what's meant to come next and they're very good at developing the skills with them, to try and push them on."

This extract acknowledges the initial stage in school where it is challenging for the newcomer to integrate and become part of the school community. This is expected, and she reiterates the mode of assessment that is used to gauge where their communicative proficiency is, by using the CEFR (*Common European Framework of Reference*) benchmarks (see Appendix B);

"In terms of assessment personally and socially, the CEFR form does that, about how they're settling in and how they're making friends and if they're going through that quiet period that they go through."

The practitioner admits that high achievement is not expected when working with newcomers and that monitoring measures are needed for their development. Extra

provision and resource-making shows that more attention is needed for them to acclimatise and support them;

"This year and particularly last year, our SEN teachers put together a newcomer resource pack- so working from the very basics of pictures of who the vice-principal is, the principal, the secretary... they get all this to take home with them to share with their parents, and then the basics of letter formation."

Furthermore, these measures are a testament to ensure that underachievement does not occur, as opposed to an acknowledgement that newcomers are developing better than expected in a personal and social capacity. Nevertheless, she realises that newcomers provide a special element that would otherwise leave the school lacking unexpectedly if they were not there;

"They completely enrich our education, the way we teach and the way we socialise. Think of all the skills, the language and the experience they can bring."

Hence, to answer the first research question, the findings in the interview suggest that in spite of the enrichment they bring to the school community in their diversity, the school commits to giving increased provision for newcomer children to ensure that they are able to access the curriculum because they are at a disadvantage. Developing higher than their expected ability is not evidenced and thus, these arrangements are implemented to support them.

4.7. An equal approach in provision

The data gathered from the interview express more of an emphasis on social need, instead of the needs in newcomer and minority groups. The vice-principal shares that it is not the case of newcomers doing better than native pupils, but it is more

apparent that support measures are needed for all pupils in the school. She discusses the implementation of PASS (*Pupil Attitudes to Self and School*);

"That's another thing, but that's for everybody! That's not just for newcomer children, and there's nothing that we do that is just for newcomer children. We have obviously tailored resources, but we would have tailored resources for SEN children or children that would have other difficulties (like a child with dyslexia or a child with autism). All our teaching is differentiated and tailored to support. The fact that they don't have any English, well that's just one minor barrier and we do everything we can to overcome that in the same way as we do everything we can to overcome any other issue that a child might have. And they're treated in exactly the same way."

It is the equal provision for all that is seen in the school, and there is no clear evidence in her experience that newcomer and BME children fare better than their native counterparts in their personal and social development in school.

The responses indicate that the emphasis is on tackling underachievement, rather than looking at high achievement and whether newcomers tend to achieve higher than native pupils. Again, the vice-principal highlights a challenge that is distinctive to the area around the school;

"And it is reflected in these that newcomers experience the same things that other children experience in school because it's more a reflection of socio-economics and the actual area of --- -- being an area of social deprivation and disadvantage. We just try and cater to whatever pupils we have and from what we see here, the newcomer pupils respond well to the provision we give to take care of them and we celebrate their diverse contribution to our school community."

Disadvantage and social deprivation are the pressing issues within the locality, and the school delivers equally to the needs of the pupils who are attending; be it special needs, newcomer-specific needs (like language help) or social needs. Likewise, the response shows that the provision is for the benefit of all and that everyone is seen to profit from it, not just newcomers over native children but all those who are in need of it.

4.8. Limitations to the qualitative research

There were some limitations that were evident when obtaining this form of research. As suggested by Taber (2013), although Patton's guidelines of questioning (2015) were considered, some questions seemed vague. In hindsight, it would have been more beneficial to the study if some closed questions were asked in order to obtain clear and relevant data. For example, although there was some relevant data obtained from the final response, it was intended originally for the interviewee to evaluate how the personal and social achievement of newcomers was developing. Instead, it was interpreted as the various modes of 'assessment' that the school used to measure their pupils' qualitative educational development (see Appendix A).

5.0. Conclusion

Overall, the conducted literature review and action research has revealed a range of conclusions to this educational project. The current literature has demonstrated evidence of newcomer and BME pupils having differing attitudes, cultures and motivations that influence their educational attainment. It also reiterates the bilingual and bicultural benefits that these pupils have whilst learning in school, with their diverse backgrounds providing an enriching dynamic to their respective host communities.

Yet still, critical literature reveals that newcomer, migrant and BME children are susceptible to racism, bullying and abuse. Furthermore, they face other barriers to learning which include language proficiency (lack of English), prejudiced attitudes on their desirability, added responsibility and stress in the home environment and low socio-economic class too.

On reflection, the action research for this project was successful in answering the proposed questions. Subsequently, it served to support the critical literature in the review – that is, newcomer and BME children do not achieve higher than expected in comparison to their own ability, nor do they outperform their native counterparts in this study. Conversely, it is the issue of underachievement that needs to be emphasised as a result of this research.

5.1. Recommendations

In line with the peer recommendations of the literature review and the limitations of the research, relevant data of minority groups living in Northern Ireland (and the

UK) and their educational attainment is lacking. Moreover, the lack of newcomer and BME data relating to their socio-economic background and their provisions for healthcare and education necessitates further study and wider research on this topic.

Due to the limitations of this small-scale research, a sample with a larger number of newcomers could have provided a more comprehensive analysis than the one that was concluded here. Likewise, the conducted interview could have been steered towards clearer answers that could have further informed the research questions. Another interview was proposed with the parental officer of the school but due to illness, she was not available for the study. This would have given multiple perspectives and a more diverse data-set for the research. Nonetheless, the undertaken literature review and resulting action research was successful in providing conclusive answers to the proposed questions for this education project.

6.0. List of References

Books

Barbour, R. (2014) *Introducing Qualitative Research*, 2nd edn., London: SAGE.

Conteh, J. (2003) *Succeeding in Diversity: culture, language and learning in primary classrooms*, Staffordshire: Trentham Books.

Creswell, J.W. (2014) *Research Design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods approaches*, 4th edn., California: SAGE.

Cummins, J. (2014) Language and Identity in Multilingual Schools: constructing evidence-based instructional policies. In: Little, D., Leung, C. and Van Avermaet, P. eds. *Managing Diversity in Education: languages, policies and pedagogies*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters, pp. 3-26.

Devarakonda, C. (2013) *Diversity and Inclusion in Early Childhood: an introduction*, London: SAGE.

Diller, D. (2004) Learning to Look through a New Lens: one teacher's reflection on the change process as related to cultural awareness. In: Boyd, F.B., Brock, C.H. and Rozendal, M.S. eds. *Multicultural and Multilingual Literacy and Language: contexts and practices*. New York: The Guildford Press, pp. 77-92.

Lawrence, P. (2012) Race, education and children's policy. In: Craig, G., Atkins, K., Chattoo, S. and Flynn, R. eds. *Understanding 'Race' and Ethnicity*. Bristol: Policy Press, pp. 151-166.

Leonardo, Z. and Grubb, W.N. (2014) *Education and Racism: a primer on issues and dilemmas*, New York: Routledge.

Leung, B.K.P. (2003) The Making of School Success and Failure: the case of the new immigrant students from mainland China. In: Salili, F. and Hoosain, R. eds. *Teaching, Learning, and Motivation in a Multicultural Context*. Connecticut: Information Age, pp. 289-314.

MacGillivray, L., Rueda, R. and Martinez, A.M. (2004) Listening to Inner-City Teachers of English Language Learners: differentiating literacy instruction. In: Boyd, F.B., Brock, C.H. and Rozendal, M.S. eds. *Multicultural and Multilingual Literacy and Language: contexts and practices*. New York: The Guildford Press, pp. 144-160.

Merriam, S.B. and Tisdell, E.J. (2016) *Qualitative Research: a guide to design and implementation*, 4th edn., San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Moore, M. (2011) Understanding the role of leadership in responding to diversity. In: Miles, S. and Ainscow, M. eds. *Responding to Diversity in Schools: an inquiry-based approach*. Oxon: Routledge, pp. 32-44.

Patton, M. Q. (2015) *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*, 4th edn., Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Punch, K.F. (2014) *Introduction to Social Research: qualitative and quantitative approaches*, 3rd edn., London: SAGE.

Robinson, K.H. and Díaz, C.J. (2006) *Diversity and Difference in Early Childhood Education*, Berkshire: Open University Press.

Stumme, S. (2010). Teacher Commentary. In: Dantas, M.L. and Manyak, P. eds. *Home-School Connections in a Multicultural Society: learning from and with culturally and linguistically diverse families*. New York: Routledge, pp. 131-134.

Taber, K.S. (2013) *Classroom-based Research and Evidence-based Practice: an introduction*, 2nd edn., London: SAGE.

Tomlinson, S. (2000) Ethnic Minorities and Education: new disadvantages. In: Cox, T. ed. *Combatting Educational Disadvantage: meeting the needs of vulnerable children*. Oxon: Routledge Falmer, pp. 7-36.

Walters, S. (2012) *Ethnicity, Race and Education: an introduction*, London: Continuum.

Wiles, R. (2013) *What are Qualitative Research Ethics?*, London: Bloomsbury.

Wilkinson, D. and Birmingham, P. (2003) *Using Research Instruments: a guide for researchers*, London: Routledge Farmer.

Journal Articles

Leavy, A. (2005) "'When I meet them I talk to them": the challenges of diversity for pre-service teacher education', *Irish Educational Studies*. 24 (2-3), 159-177.

Purdy, N. and Ferguson, J. (2012) 'Newcomer Pupils: facing up to the cultural and linguistic challenges', *Critical and Reflective Practice in Education*, 3, pp. 31-41.

Smith, A.M. (2015) 'EAL or SpLD? ', *Special Children*, July / August 2015(225), pp. 16-18.

Tilford, S. (2016) 'Britain, Immigration and Brexit', *CER Bulletin*, December 2015/ January 2016(105), pp. 2-3.

Reports

Bhattacharyya, G., Ison, L. and Blair, M. (2003) *Minority Ethnic Attainment and Participation in Education and Training: The Evidence*, Nottingham: DfES Publications.

DENI (Department of Education Northern Ireland) (2009) *Supporting Newcomer Pupils*, Bangor: Department of Education.

DENI (Department of Education Northern Ireland) (2015) *School Enrolments - Northern Ireland summary data*, Bangor: Department of Education.

Kernaghan, D. (2015) *Feels like Home: Exploring the experiences of newcomer pupils in primary schools in Northern Ireland*, Belfast: Barnardos.

McDermott, P. (2014) *A 'Shared Society?' Attitudes on immigration and diversity*. ARK NI Research Update 86, Belfast.

NISMP (Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership) (2014) *The integration of newcomer children with interrupted education into Northern Ireland schools*, 2014: NISMP.

Sammons, P., Toth, K. and Sylva, K. (2015) *Background to Success: differences in A-level entries by ethnicity, neighbourhood and gender*, Oxford: The Sutton Trust.

Tickell, C. (2011) *The Early Years: foundations for life, health and learning. An independent report on the early years foundation stage to Her Majesty's Government*. London: DFE.

Wallace, A., McAreavey, R. and Atkin, K. (2013) *Poverty and Ethnicity in Northern Ireland: an evidence review*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Online Articles and Websites

GL Assessment (2015) *CAT4 Cognitive Abilities Test Fourth Edition*, Available at: <http://www.gl-assessment.co.uk/products/cat4-cognitive-abilities-test-fourth-edition> (Accessed: 14th April 2016).

Mason, P. (2016) *The problem for poor, white kids is that a part of their culture has been destroyed*, Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/apr/04/the-problem-for-poor-white-kids-is-that-a-part-of-their-culture-has-been-destroyed> (Accessed: 6th April 2016).

Maths Careers (2016) *A universal language*, Available at: <http://www.mathscareers.org.uk/article/universal-language/> (Accessed: 2nd March 2016).

Paradowsky, M. (2016) *The Benefits of Multilingualism*, Available at: <http://www.multilingualliving.com/2010/05/01/the-benefits-of-multilingualism-full-article/> (Accessed: 4th April 2016).

Torney, K. (2014) *Dramatic increase in newcomer pupils attending NI's schools*, Available at: <http://www.thedetail.tv/articles/dramatic-increase-in-newcomer-pupils-attending-ni-s-schools> (Accessed: 20th February 2016).

Videos

Pink, D. (2009) *The puzzle of motivation*, Available at: http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_pink_on_motivation/transcript?language=en (Accessed: 20th March 2016).