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CHILDREN IN PRIMARY EDUCATION: DEMOGRAPHY, CULTURE, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

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CHILDREN IN PRIMARY EDUCATION: DEMOGRAPHY, CULTURE, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Primary Review Research Survey 5/1

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The report forms part of the Review's research survey strand, which consists of thirty specially-commissioned surveys of published research and other evidence relating to the Review's ten themes. The themes and reports are listed in Appendices 1 and 3.

This survey relates to Primary Review theme 5, **Diversity and Inclusion**.

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CHILDREN IN PRIMARY EDUCATION:
DEMOGRAPHY, CULTURE, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION

Abstract

This survey is concerned with reviewing the state of research on what we call the 'diversity' of the English primary school population, and with understanding the implications of that research for present and future policy. It argues that differences between children are constructed rather than simply described, and that the constructs embodied in official statistics and policy texts tend to dominate discourse in primary education currently. These constructions favour simplistic and evaluative categorisations which conceal as much as they reveal about diversity. Using 'bilingual learners' as an example, the survey shows how other, more productive, constructions are possible, and that they can be found in the work of critical researchers and in the practice of some teachers and schools. The authors advocate a dialogue between national policy and practitioners in developing these constructions, and outline the policy directions that would be necessary to support such a dialogue.

1. INTRODUCTION

This survey is concerned with reviewing the state of research on what we call the 'diversity' of the English primary school population, and with understanding the implications of that research for present and future policy. At its simplest level, diversity in this sense refers to the self-evident differences between primary-aged children. These include differences in attainment, gender, ethnic background, family and social background, interests and aptitudes, social skills, amongst many others. Although many types of difference between children seem to have no educational implications, others are seen as shaping educational experiences and outcomes, and often as calling for policy and practice responses. To take an obvious example, a cluster of perceived differences around children's attainments and capacities for learning have called forth a range of practices in schools and classrooms (sometimes directed by national policy) in terms of streaming, seating by level of attainment, grouping by homogeneous attainment, grouping by differential attainment, social grouping, withdrawing low attainers, and providing adult support.

Understood in this way, our task is the rather straightforward one of mapping what is known about the most educationally-relevant differences between children. However, it is our contention that understanding difference is, in fact, anything but straightforward. The difficulties are illustrated by the example we have just cited. Although children's attainments self-evidently differ, the curriculum in relation to which attainments have been assessed has changed significantly over time, as have the forms of assessment in common use. Moreover, notions of 'capacities for learning' have also changed, though perhaps less coherently, and this has inevitably led to different understandings of the sorts of policy and practice responses that might be appropriate.

It is instructive to compare some of the explicit and implicit theories of why children attain differentially in policy texts from different periods. The Plowden Report (Central Advisory Council for Education 1967), for instance, was much concerned with explanations to do with children's developmental processes and stages, and with the interaction between these and their family and social backgrounds. 'Children,' it concluded,

[…] are unequal in their endowment and in their rates of development. Their achievements are the result of the interaction of nature and of nurture.

<div align="right">Central Advisory Council for Education 1967: para. 1232</div>

Its recommendations were therefore couched in terms of the development of individually-appropriate, 'finding out' approaches to learning, unstreamed classroom provision, closer links between school and home, and favourable resourcing for schools serving disadvantaged populations. By the 1990s, however - in the 'three wise men' report (Alexander *et al*. 1992) and some of the work of Ofsted (HMI 1990; Ofsted 1996, 1999) – the focus had shifted to the role of teacher and school in generating attainment differences. The most important difference between children was not to do with their innate or environmentally-shaped capacities, so much as with whether they were fortunate enough to go to a 'good' school. Policy and practice implications began to be couched in terms of ensuring that all schools and all teachers were 'good' in the sense of making fuller and more structured use of group and whole-class teaching, becoming more sceptical about 'finding out' approaches, and instead using teaching techniques of proven effectiveness.

In recent years, the emphasis arguably has shifted back somewhat to a Plowden-like concern with family and social background. However, there is a more distinct sense now that structured interventions by policy makers and practitioners – through the Every Child Matters (DfES 2003) agenda in particular – can overcome any negative effects generated by background factors. So Ed Balls, the first Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, has recently argued:

As the Every Child Matters department, our collective responsibility is to make this an age of opportunity for all children, not just some children. I am an optimist. I believe that that every child has talent. That children can rise above the worst of all possible starts and exceed even the highest expectations of those around them. We should reject the pessimism that would tell us that there has never been a worse time to be a child and that many children are doomed before they even start. This is not true.

<div align="right">Balls 2007; emphases in original.</div>

What is clear from these examples is that the ways in which apparently self-evident differences between children are understood, the way those differences are explained, and the policy responses that are then deemed appropriate, are anything but fixed. The changing patterns we have identified here in terms of differences in attainment could equally well be found in relation to gender, ethnicity, social skills, aptitudes, or many other types of difference. Moreover, different types of difference seem to move in and out of focus over time. For instance notions from around the time of Plowden, that children could usefully be categorised straightforwardly in terms of their social class, or their access to particular linguistic codes, or their 'intelligence', have either disappeared or changed out of recognition. At the same time, more recent concerns with 'social exclusion' have generated different forms of categorisation, focusing on a wide range of groups – children in public care, Traveller children, disabled children, children from particular ethnic groups – who are perceived to be encountering particular barriers to learning. Nor is this merely a temporal phenomenon. Understandings of difference in primary education may change over time, but they also vary between cultural contexts, whether that be at the national level or at the level of particular institutions (Artiles and Dyson 2005; Raveaud 2005).

The implication of all of this is that difference in the primary school population is not so much identified as constructed; that in different times and contexts, attention is paid to this or that form of difference; that these forms of difference are understood in particular ways and explained in particular ways; and that implications for policy and practice flow from these constructions. Our task in this survey, then, cannot simply be to describe the important

differences in the population. Rather, we must describe the ways in which difference is currently constructed in research, and how these relate to policy and practice. With this in mind, we have chosen to interpret the term 'research' somewhat broadly. Much of what is known about diversity in the primary population comes currently not from scholarly research *per se*, but from the work of government and its agencies in collecting and analysing data about children – activities which have grown immeasurably in recent years. This government activity supports and is supported by research in academic institutions drawing on much of the same data and sharing many of the same assumptions about what diversity 'is'. The outcomes of these analyses are then used more or less directly to inform policy, which draws on them to sharpen its focus and to legitimate itself. There is a sense, therefore, in which policy both offers a further interpretation of the data and (as we shall see) constructs difference in ways that shape the further collection and analysis of data.

Beyond this there are, we suggest, two other broad approaches to diversity. First, there is a body of what we call here 'critical' scholarly research – critical in the sense that it rejects the assumptions of governmental and related analyses, and uses different kinds of data interpreted in different ways. Second, there are understandings of diversity which emerge in the work of at least some teachers and which, though often tacit, occasionally enter the public domain as practitioners collaborate with academic researchers to understand and develop their practice.

All of these activities generate constructions of diversity that have significant implications for policy and practice at the current time. We have, therefore, chosen to see them all as falling within the remit of this survey – though inevitably this means that we have to be selective in what we report. Moreover, given that the constructions generated by these different activities are themselves different and often in conflict with one another, it is our contention that no overview can be definitive, and that we must, therefore, take up a position in this contested field. Our own approach to diversity is based on a commitment to the promotion of equity (as we understand it) in the education system, and to a conviction that this is best achieved by adopting a stance of critical friendship towards practitioners and policy-makers. We are conscious that our own perspective is informed by discourses of 'diversity' and 'inclusion' that have their roots, amongst other places, in the racial politics of education in the USA (see, for instance, Baez 2004), and in the politics of the inclusion movement (if such it is) in England and elsewhere (see, for instance, Booth and Ainscow 2002). These origins will be evident throughout this survey, as will the implications of our stated aims for our own understanding of diversity. We have no difficulty in acknowledging that reviewers operating from a different basis would have produced a very different survey from the one that we offer here.

With this in mind we will begin the survey by considering the constructions of difference in official statistics and analyses, together with the constructions in policy that draw upon and drive these. We will then consider alternative constructions as they emerge in the work of critical researchers (and here we will use work on bilingual learners as a case that we can explore in more detail) and in some of the collaborative studies undertaken by practitioners and academic researchers together. Finally, we will consider how these alternative constructions might in turn inform alternative approaches to policy and practice.

2. CONSTRUCTIONS THROUGH OFFICIAL STATISTICS

2.1 The bases of official statistics

The English education system has become rich in official statistics in recent years. Most of those that are publicly available and relevant to understanding diversity in primary

education may be accessed via the DCSF (Department for Children, Schools and Families) research and statistics gateway (http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/). However there are other portals, maintained, for instance, by the Office for National Statistics (http://www.statistics.gov.uk/) and the Neighbourhood Statistics Service (http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/). There is, therefore, the capacity to bring together data on the primary school population from the national census, annual censuses of schools, and the performance of children in national assessments. In particular, the National Pupil Database (NPD) contains cumulative records for pupils in state schools, categorising them in relation to a wide range of characteristics, including age, gender, school placement, ethnicity, language status, entitlement to free school meals, attendance, special educational needs (SEN) status and levels of attainment. In this way, official statistics map out particular dimensions of difference within the student population.

Inevitably, these statistical constructions are constrained by the need to support large databases, and therefore have to focus on data that are easily quantifiable and easy to collect on a large scale. This has a number of consequences:

- Data are collected on some aspects of diversity, but not on others that are arguably just as significant in educational terms. For instance, NPD holds extensive data on children's attainments in national assessments, but says nothing about other outcomes that might be expected from education – notably, the majority of the outcomes in the Every Child Matters agenda (DfES 2003). Likewise, there are statistics on SEN and on ethnicity, but not on disability or on faith.

- Subtle and complex characteristics have to be reduced to whatever the most readily available measures make of them. So, for instance, socio-economic background is an important variable in relation to children's educational outcomes, but NPD uses the rather crude, binary proxy of entitlement or non-entitlement to free school meals (Hobbs and Vignoles 2007). Similarly, the categories used by the DCSF to collect information on ethnicity are characterised by a lack of internal consistency, confusing criteria based on racial characteristics, nationality and geographic origin (Buckler 2006).

- The allocation of children to some of the categories used by the databases is inherently unreliable. Ethnicity, for instance, is assessed by self-identification; entitlement to free school meals depends on the willingness of families to claim their entitlement; and SEN status depends on the highly variable assessments of different schools and local authorities.

In themselves these limitations are not necessarily fatal given that they derive from familiar problems of creating and handling large data sets, and that it ought not to be difficult to take them into account when interpreting the data. However, this is to overlook the powerful role that data of this kind play in informing policy and practice. At a time when government policy has focused on raising standards of attainment, NPD in particular makes it possible to relate the demographics of the student population to levels of attainment. As a result, diversity as constructed in national statistics is understood primarily in its relation to attainment, and a succession of government analyses via the research and statistics gateway document how some groups (as defined in the databases) do better than others. In turn, these somewhat uni-dimensional constructions feed into policy. If some groups do less well than others in terms of attainment, then policy interventions targeted at that group are seen to be called for. So, the low attainments of some ethnic minority groups call for an ethnic minorities achievement programme (http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities/), the relatively low attainments of

boys overall are seen as calling for responses by gender (http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/genderandachievement/understanding/), the low attainments of students identified as having SEN are seen as calling for efforts to 'remove barriers to achievement' (DfES 2004a), and so on.

2.2 Statistical constructions of diversity

Despite the caveats set out above, official statistics illuminate at least some aspects of diversity in the primary school population. Drawing on NPD (particularly when its data are combined with other national statistics, such as those from the national census), it is possible to characterise the primary school population in two ways. First, it is possible to describe the population and its sub-groups in terms of the individual categories within which data are collected. So, for instance, we know from the 2006 analyses (DfES 2006e), that[1]:

- The overall primary school population is something over 4 million and has been decreasing in size consistently over the last decade. There are marginally more boys than girls educated in maintained primary schools.

- About 16 per cent of the population comes from low-income families, as indicated by known entitlement to free school meals. This is more than in secondary schools, and is probably due to the greater take-up of the entitlement amongst primary children rather than to any differences in family income.

- Just over one fifth of the population is classified as of minority ethnic background. Since minority ethnic groups on the whole have a younger age structure than the White British group, this is a higher proportion than in secondary schools or amongst adults in the national population. National statistics recognise a range of different minority ethnic backgrounds, so that no single group constitutes more than 4 per cent of the population (the Pakistani group is largest at 3.3 per cent) and some groups constitute a very small proportion (for instance, Irish Heritage Traveller at 0.1 per cent or Chinese at 0.3 per cent).

- The percentage of pupils in primary schools (of compulsory school age and above) whose first language is known or believed to be other than English is around 12.5 per cent.

- Around 20 per cent of children in the primary population are regarded as having SEN, with the large majority of these (about 19 per cent) being placed in mainstream rather than special schools (DfES 2006f).

Whilst figures such as these go some way towards indicating the diversity of the primary school population, they disguise both the distribution of and interaction between different characteristics. A second type of characterisation is necessary, therefore, to take these factors into account. In recent years, a veritable industry of statistical analysis has grown up both within DCSF and in the research community to explore distributions and interactions, and it is beyond the scope of this paper to review all of the outputs from this work. However, there are some overarching findings that are of particular significance from our point of view.

For instance, the majority and minority characteristics that we have outlined above are not

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[1] The figures below and elsewhere in this survey are deliberately given as approximations to indicate they should be handled with some caution. Amongst other issues, the figures reported in national statistics change year on year, some of the categories are rather crude, and different figures relate to slightly different populations. Readers are therefore advised to treat our figures as indicative and to refer to the original sources for a more detailed presentation.

distributed evenly in geographical – and, therefore, in institutional – terms. So, the minority ethnic population in primary schools varies considerably by region as a proportion of the primary population as a whole – from about 4 per cent in the North East to nearly three quarters in Inner London (DfES 2005). These skewing effects are often magnified at school level as populations are concentrated in particular neighbourhoods and/or choose particular schools. As a result, there is a marked tendency for particular ethnic groups to be represented disproportionately in particular schools when compared to their presence in the school population as a whole. This applies as much, if not more, to White children as to those from minority groups (DfES 2006a; Johnston *et al*. 2006).

There are similar variations in the proportions of primary-aged children eligible for free school meals (DfES 2004b) or regarded as having SEN (DfES 2006f). The implication is that the primary school population in a particular region, local authority area or school may look quite different from the national population. In particular, it is not the case that children with particular characteristics are distributed evenly across the population, but that they are more concentrated in some places than in others. Another way to put this is to say that there are degrees of segregation within the population: the more the population of particular areas and schools is made up of children with similar characteristics, the less those children mix with peers whose characteristics are different.

These phenomena are compounded by the interactions between the characteristics that are recorded in national statistics. Again, these interactions are complex, but a few examples will suffice. There is, for instance, an interaction between ethnicity and entitlement to free school meals, with particularly high rates of entitlement amongst Travellers of Irish Heritage and Gypsy/Roma, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, and Black groups (DfES 2005). Similarly, variation is apparent in the SEN population by gender, ethnicity, free school meals status and age. The incidence of pupils with SEN without statements in primary and secondary schools is greater for boys (around one in every five boys) than for girls (almost one in every eight), as is the incidence of pupils with statements of SEN; members of certain ethnic minority groups (particularly Travellers of Irish heritage, Gypsy/Roma, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Black, and White/Black Caribbean and African pupils) are most likely to be identified as having special educational needs, and White and Asian, Indian and Chinese pupils least likely; the proportion of pupils with SEN and known to be eligible for free school meals (28 per cent in primary schools) is much higher than for those pupils with no SEN; and the incidence of pupils with SEN without statements peaks at ages eight and nine (whilst the incidence of pupils with statements of SEN peaks at age 14) (DfES 2006f).

These interactions are also evident in relation to another key category used to characterise the primary population – level of attainment. Since national assessments are criterion-referenced, they tell us – in principle at least – something about the capabilities of the population. However, it is clear that attainment is impacted upon by other population characteristics. So, gender, ethnicity, entitlement to free school meals, and SEN status all impact upon attainment (DfES 2006c). Given that these factors interact with each other and are not distributed evenly in geographical or institutional terms, it follows that there is also an uneven distribution by attainment, and that there is some tendency towards the concentration of children with particular levels of attainment in particular schools. Low achievement, as a recent analysis has observed (Cassen and Kingdon 2007), is a predominantly urban phenomenon, and, within that, is concentrated in particular urban areas. The corollary, of course, is that higher levels of achievement must also be concentrated outside these areas.

National statistics thus present a somewhat paradoxical picture of the primary school population. Viewed as a whole, that population is diverse in that children differ from each

other in terms of a wide range of characteristics. The implication is that policies and practices are needed which are capable of responding to this diversity by educating children with different characteristics in the same system, schools and classrooms. This would seem to imply the sorts of individually-responsive forms of provision that lie at the heart of the Plowden recommendations, that have been integral to the development of inclusive education, and that have resurfaced more recently – and in a somewhat different form – in the call for 'personalisation' (Teaching and Learning in 2020 Review Group 2006). However, it is also clear that the diversity of the population as a whole is not necessarily reflected in full in every area or school. The tendency towards concentration, and hence towards segregation, is not necessarily a new one, or one that can be understood solely in relation to the policies of marketisation in recent years (Gorard 2000; Johnston *et al*. 2006). However, it does make the concept of diversity more complex than is sometimes supposed, and may call for very particular policy and practice responses.

3. CONSTRUCTIONS THROUGH POLICY TEXTS

In combination with these official statistics, or in addition to them, *policy texts* draw attention to particular aspects of diversity. In principle, such texts could offer quite different characterisations from those implied by official statistics. In practice, however, policy in recent years has been much concerned with what commentators have called 'performativity' (Ball 2003; Broadfoot 2001), and what government itself tends to call 'delivery'. Put simply, policy has focused on bringing about measurable changes, driven ultimately by Public Service Agreement Targets, to the performance of the education system as a whole, of individual authorities and schools, and of children (Dyson 2007). As a result, it has tended to characterise the primary population in ways that present it as susceptible to interventions aimed at raising performance. This in turn means characterising the population in terms of its current and desired performances, and of those characteristics that are likely to facilitate or inhibit those performances. The sorts of official statistics we set out above support just such a process.

Paradoxically, this process is often at its clearest when texts appeal to a different, perhaps more 'liberal', view of education, and where the contradiction between this and the inherent instrumentalism of official constructions rises to the surface. For instance, in 2000 Ofsted published guidance to inspectors and schools to assist them, in the words of its title, in *Evaluating Educational Inclusion* (Ofsted 2000). The document is intimately concerned, as one might suppose, with the diversity of the school population and with the ways in which schools respond to that diversity. However, the meaning of diversity and inclusion is spelled out in a distinctive way:

> Educational inclusion is […] about equal opportunities for all pupils, whatever their age, gender, ethnicity, attainment and background. It pays particular attention to the provision made for and the achievement of **different groups** of pupils within a school. Throughout this guidance, whenever we use the term **different groups** it could apply to any or all of the following:
>
> - girls and boys;
> - minority ethnic and faith groups, Travellers, asylum seekers and refugees;
> - pupils who need support to learn English as an additional language (EAL);
> - pupils with special educational needs;
> - gifted and talented pupils;
> - children 'looked after' by the local authority;

- other children, such as sick children; young carers; those children from families under stress; pregnant school girls and teenage mothers; and

- any pupils who are at risk of disaffection and exclusion.

Ofsted 2000: 4, emphases in original

What is significant here is that the appeal to equal opportunities resolves itself into a focus on achievement, and that this in turn requires a search for groups in the school population who might not achieve as highly as possible without some form of careful attention. Many of these groups are the same as those constituted by the categories of official statistics, though, working at the school level, Ofsted is able to identify other groups on whom such statistics are not collected.

A similar process is at work in the Every Child Matters agenda (DfES 2003). On the face of it, *Every Child Matters* signals a significant break from the intensive focus on standards of attainment that marked the first years of New Labour government. However, the structure on which the characterisation of the school population is based remains the same. Children are seen primarily in terms of the performances that might be expected of them, conceptualised in terms of the 'five outcomes' – being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, and achieving economic well being. This in turn makes possible a further categorisation in terms of the barriers to which different groups of children are subject and which might prevent their achieving these outcomes:

[…] certain factors are associated with poor outcomes including:

- low income and parental unemployment

- homelessness

- poor parenting

- poor schooling

- post-natal depression among mothers

- low birth weight

- substance misuse

- individual characteristics such as intelligence

- community factors, such as living in a disadvantaged neighbourhood.

Outcomes also vary by race and gender. Underachievement and school exclusion are particularly concentrated in certain ethnic groups. Boys have higher rates of offending and exclusion, while self-harm and eating disorders are more prevalent among girls.

DfES 2003: 17-18

Given the focus on performativity, policy-makers tend to provide mechanisms whereby these characterisations of the population can be brought directly to bear on practice. So, for instance, schools are encouraged to use a Pupil Achievement Tracker (http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/performance/pat/) to monitor the performance of individual pupils and whole populations in relation to the sorts of categories used by official statistics and articulated in these policy texts. Similarly, professionals working with children are encouraged to make use of a common assessment framework (http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/caf/) in order to assess children's current performances and the potential facilitators and inhibitors of their achieving the desired outcomes.

Whilst such tools undoubtedly have their uses for practitioners and bring some benefits to

children, they nonetheless reinforce a particular way of understanding the diversity of the school population. The emphasis on performativity means that the school population is relentlessly characterised in relation to outcomes. The aspects of diversity to which most attention is paid are those that are held to bear most directly on the achievement of these outcomes. As a consequence, differences are never neutral. Belonging to a particular ethnic group, or coming from a particular social background, or even having a particular gender, has a value insofar as it inhibits or facilitates the achievement of particular outcomes. Characteristics with a negative value are cast as obstacles to be overcome through policy and practice interventions. Given the tendency, outlined above, for poor outcomes to be associated with particular clusters of characteristics, and for these clusters to be distributed unevenly in geographical terms, this means that particular groups of learners in particular places are likely to be seen as overwhelmed by negative characteristics – as are the schools that serve them.

Again, an example may be useful. Primary schools have long prided themselves on what they see as their positive relationships with parents, and, indeed, the Plowden Report (Central Advisory Council for Education 1967) long ago recognised the importance of such relationships. However, recent policy has begun to cast these relationships in a particular light. Given the concern with performativity, a child's family background is to be judged in terms of its capacity to promote the achievement of desired outcomes. As the government's parenting strategy, *Every Parent Matters*, puts it:

> Our vision is of responsive public services driven increasingly by ever greater numbers of parents with high aspirations and expectations for their children. Public services need to be respectful of parents as adults with expertise of their own and provide a personalised approach […] That said, for a small minority of parents who have lost, or never had, the capacity to parent responsibly, public services must be ready to intervene promptly and sensitively […] [W]e have to accept that this journey may be a long one and compulsion for the few, through measures such as parenting orders, may sometimes be required to ensure that responsibilities to the child (such as getting them to school every day) are being properly fulfilled.

DfES 2007: 6-7

The evaluative nature of this approach is clear. Some parents – those with 'high aspirations and expectations' – are able to facilitate their child's achievement of desired outcomes, and deserve a respectful approach from public services. Other parents – those who lack the 'capacity to parent responsibility' – demand intervention and, ultimately, compulsion. So, another set of evaluative categories is created through which the school population can be characterised. In this way, the rather minimalist information on families contained in official statistics is supplemented by a more qualitative set of categories around children whose parents are deemed to be more or less 'responsible', more or less 'aspirational', and more or less 'hard to reach'. These categories may never appear in official statistics, but they inevitably inform the ways in which schools view and approach their pupils' families, and may well make their appearance in pupil fields, pupil trackers and common assessment forms.

4. ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES

We have suggested above that the constructions of difference in official statistics and policy texts are 'dominant' in the English primary system. Indeed they are, if by this we mean that they tend to inform policy as it emerges at national level and, in a centrally-directed system, tend therefore to create a framework within which practitioners and local policy-makers have to operate. However, this does not mean that such constructions are unchallenged. On

the contrary, alternatives are formulated by researchers out of their critiques of official discourse and, as we shall see later, also emerge from the work of practitioners as they engage with the complexities of pupil diversity in classrooms.

In this part of the survey, therefore, we wish to focus on these alternatives. Space does not permit us to deal with all of the critiques of official constructions that have emerged in recent years. We propose, therefore, to take a particular case – so-called 'EAL learners' – that has been the subject of considerable activity on the part both of policy-makers and of researchers, and explore how this category is used in official discourses and what alternative constructions have been advanced.

4.1 The EAL category

Official statistics use a category of 'pupils whose first language is known or believed to be other than English', into which some 12.5 per cent of primary children fall. It seems that the size of this group is growing and there is official concern that not only are their attainments lower than those of children for whom English is their first language, but that little progress has been made in closing the attainment gap, particularly in primary schools (DfES 2006a: 61). Until very recently (see DfES 2006e), data have not been collected on the language(s) spoken by these children, and policy decisions about provision have often been made on the grounds of ethnicity, following the categories developed for the National Census in 2001, rather than specific language background. The implication presumably is that what matters is the perceived deficit they experience in not having English as their 'first' language.

In terms of policy texts, the most widely used term for pupils who speak other languages than English in primary schools in England is 'EAL (English as an Additional Language) learners', though recent documentation has begun to use the term 'bilingual pupils' (DfES 2006b). 'EAL' has been used extensively through policy and pedagogical documents for the last 10 years, including – significantly for professional development and classroom discourses – in teacher training discourses, where among the standards required of newly qualified primary teachers is the requirement to know how 'to support those who are learning English as an additional language'. 'EAL learners' are almost always constructed as needing support (Bourne 2001; Conteh 2006, 2007; Martin-Jones and Saxena 1995, 1996, 2003), and nowhere more emphatically than in the National Curriculum 2000 statement on inclusion (DFEE and QCA 1999), where it is suggested that 'learning English as an additional language' could constitute a 'barrier to learning', resulting in the need for special provision along the same lines as those required for learners identified as having SEN.

Such a deficit model seems to be embedded in teachers' expectations of their pupils with EAL, as suggested by the disparities between teacher assessment and test results at KS2 for EAL learners, particularly in English (DfES 2006a: 71-73). Indeed, the proportionality of these disparities by ethnicity matches the socio-economic status of the different groups, with Bangladeshi and Black African pupils showing higher percentage point differences than Indian and Pakistani. The problematising of bilingualism is made visible in primary classrooms with the deployment of 'bilingual support assistants' – the only bilingual professionals encountered by most primary pupils. The rationale for the support assistant's role can be traced back to the Swann Report, where it was characterised as:

> [...] providing a degree of continuity between the home and school environment by offering psychological and social support for the child, as well as being able to explain simple educational concepts in a child's mother tongue, if the need arises, but always working within the mainstream classroom and alongside the class teacher.

DES 1985: 407

Bilingual assistants have been a key aspect in the construction of the 'transitional' model of bilingualism (Cummins 2001) in primary classroom practice over the years. Researchers such as Cummins argue that this model has a negative effect on bilingual pupils' attainments and potential for success.

In these ways, the 'EAL' category and accompanying policy discourses follow the pattern we have identified elsewhere: a category is created because of its apparent relevance to educational outcomes; the characteristics which it seeks to capture are evaluated in relation to their perceived tendency to facilitate or inhibit the achievement of those outcomes; and minority characteristics tend to be cast as deficits calling for policy and practice intervention. Policy thus comes to be based on a construction of difference that, as Leung *et al*. suggest in a seminal article (1997), makes two characteristic assumptions:

- pupils learning 'English as an additional language', while being linguistically and culturally diverse, constitute a distinct group with common characteristics and learning needs that are different from other pupils; and

- ethnicity and language are fixed concepts which have a neat one-to-one correspondence and which position 'EAL' learners as linguistic and social outsiders separate from the monolingual mainstream.

Leung *et al*. go on to argue that fluidity in language choice and use is hardly recognised in the mainstream education system. Official educational discourses view languages as individual attributes, as separate and hierarchical. National policies and pedagogical resources related to English primary classrooms use a wide range of terms and categories to define and describe language diversity. However, as a study by the VALEUR project (based at the European Centre for Modern Languages: http://www.ecml.at/mtp2/VALEUR/) is finding, although languages are categorised in multiple ways, the terms in use tend to be value-loaded in the ways they are perceived as mediating attitudes to language diversity by and for teachers, their pupils, and policy-makers.

4.2 Beyond EAL

It is, however, possible to construct differences around language in other ways. A growing body of qualitative research carried out in different British cities, usually of a sociolinguistic and/or ethnographic nature (for example Aitsiselmi 2004; Rampton 2005a, 2005b; Harris 2006) has shown how the conceptualisations of ethnic and language diversity described by Leung *et al*. (1997) are simplistic and unhelpful in understanding the complex nature of English society today. Bilingualism, indeed multilingualism, has been shown to be a natural and normal part of the lives and the personal and social identities of many second and third generation 'ethnic minority' pupils in English primary schools. For such pupils, moving across and between languages is a natural aspect of their daily lives (Conteh 2007). For many of them, English is their dominant language and so to use the term 'EAL' to describe their language experiences and identities or to state that English is their 'second language' acknowledges only a small part of a complex whole. Aitsiselmi (2004: 34), in a case study conducted in Bradford, reported that while English has 'become the main language of communication among siblings, peers and friends for the younger generation', there is a clear consensus among informants of all ages that the heritage languages 'should continue to be used' for a range of purposes. Such qualitative findings are corroborated by national figures (DfES 2006a: 24) which show the flexible language use of minority ethnic pupils aged 5-16, particularly those of South Asian heritage.

Two linked and growing strands of research into language diversity in primary classrooms are beginning to challenge the prevailing monolingual ideologies and provide evidence for different conceptualisations of language and ethnicity from those described by Leung *et al*.

(1997). These are the work in multiliteracies or 'simultaneous literacies' (Datta 2001; Kenner 2000; Gregory *et al*. 2004) and in children's learning in complementary settings (for example Martin *et al*. 2003; Conteh *et al*. 2007).

The work around multiliteracies has built on concepts which have come to the fore over recent years, mainly through anthropological research, of literacy as a social and cultural practice (Street 1984), and through classroom- and home-based qualitative research which reveals the 'many pathways' (Gregory *et al*. 2004) along which children growing up in multilingual environments become confident users of the range of literacies available to them. While it is argued that such learning experiences are positive and have potential for benefiting children's learning in mainstream classrooms, they remain largely hidden from, and little understood by, mainstream teachers (Kenner 2000: 14). Indeed, as another manifestation of the deficit discourses discussed above, researchers such as Robertson (2007) show how children who are becoming multiliterate are sometimes categorised by their mainstream teachers as in need of extra support and even as having SEN.

Like multiliteracy, primary pupils' experiences in community-based settings (commonly called 'supplementary' or 'complementary' schools) are usually not well known outside the communities themselves. A large, ESRC-funded, research study in Leicester (Martin *et al*. 2003) has begun to reveal the philosophies, ethos and practices of such schools. It shows the importance of after-hours education in the maintenance of bilingualism, the enhancement of learning, and the widening of minority ethnic pupils' choices and uptake of identities. The importance of out-of-school learning for enhancing bilingual pupils' attainment is beginning to be recognised; for example, Tikly *et al.* (2002) have linked attendance at supplementary schools to enhanced attainment for pupils of African Caribbean heritage. It seems that the government has begun to recognise the potential value added nature of complementary schooling. A forthcoming edited collection (Conteh *et al*. 2007) provides several illuminative case studies from community-based settings in different regions of England, as well as an introductory chapter that describes the historical contexts and suggests theoretical and methodological frameworks to help shape future research.

These new perspectives point towards different kinds of policy and practice response. For instance, there is evidence that some of the problems around the deployment of teaching assistants for bilingual learners can be resolved where bilingual support assistants are able to use the full range of languages that they share with their pupils along with the knowledge they often have of local and cultural contexts. In this way, they are able to develop classroom interaction that differs from that which occurs with monolingual teachers in the kinds of affordances for learning it provides (Martin-Jones and Saxena 2003). There is evidence of similar processes at work where bilingual primary teachers' use code-switching in mainstream and community-based primary classrooms (Conteh 2007, in press).

4.3 Some wider implications

It seems to us that the case of bilingual learners offers some important pointers towards alternative ways of understanding diversity in the primary school population. In particular:

- The construction of difference in terms of fixed categories tends to conceal as much as it reveals about diversity. Constructing children as either having or not having English as a first language is useful in statistical terms for simplifying the process of data collection, and the formulation of targeted interventions. However, it conceals the actual fluidity of language use and the variations that exist across an identified population.

- The evaluation of difference in relation to sometimes narrowly-conceptualised outcomes tends to overlook the resources to which those differences give children

access. So, seeing children's use of languages other than English as a 'barrier to learning' overlooks the resources that are embodied in 'multiliteracies' and the potential for capitalising on those resources through practices which recognise and respect them.

- Constructing diversity in terms of evaluative categories overlooks the role of the child as agent. Children effectively come to be seen as the sum of their categorised characteristics, some of which facilitate their achievement of outcomes, some of which act as barriers. They are then subject to increasingly powerful interventions (for which the successive 'waves' of the national strategies are paradigmatic examples) to overcome those barriers. However, this overlooks the sense in which children are using the resources at their disposal to make sense of and act within their worlds. Specifically, in the case of bilingual learners, it overlooks the ways in which children develop fluid language use and their identities as multiliterate learners.

In an interesting study of 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' in the classrooms of two apparently inclusive primary schools, Benjamin *et al*. (2003) show how such alternative understandings might be operationalised. They resist treating the categorised characteristics of children (their gender, ethnicity, attainments and so on) as fixed, as determining how children will perform educationally, or as calling for particular educational responses. Instead, they focus on the processes whereby the meaning of children's characteristics, the identities they achieve, and the responses that their peers and teachers make to them are subject to 'moment-by-moment negotiation and renegotiation':

> What we have shown in the paper is that children were active participants in those negotiations, but that the negotiations themselves were far from arbitrary. They were in part produced through a complex constellation of systemic indices of difference – primarily those of social class, 'race'/ethnicity, gender/sexuality and perceived academic ability. The children used this constellation of multiple and intersecting indices of difference, together with the schools' own formal curricular and policy cultures to produce moments of inclusion and exclusion.

Benjamin *et al*. 2003: 556

This points to a much more situated and fluid understanding of diversity in terms, not of a fixed set of characteristics but of negotiated constructions, set in particular contexts, and shaped by underlying educational imperatives and social structures. Such an understanding does not yield the neat evaluative categorisations that currently dominate official statistics and policy texts. Indeed, it throws into doubt the project of characterising the diversity of the primary population in some definitive way, or of formulating policy and practice responses on the basis of such a characterisation. To that extent, it is less useful to, and more problematic for, policy-makers and practitioners than are currently dominant discourses. Whether it has any implications for these constituencies, or whether it is simply a powerful analytical tool for critical researchers is an issue to which we turn in the next section of this paper.

4.4 Alternative policy and practice responses

In these final sections, we consider the extent to which different understandings of diversity are able to support adequate responses to diversity in policy and practice. This is, of course, something of a chicken and egg question since the adequacy of the response is likely to be judged in terms of the understanding that informs it. In our analysis, however, we take at face value the statement of purpose by Ed Balls, cited earlier in this survey:

> As the Every Child Matters department, our collective responsibility is to make this an age of opportunity for <u>all children,</u> not just some children.
>
> Balls 2007, emphasis in original

Whilst such a statement is capable of many interpretations, we take it as meaning – at the very least – that every child should be valued, that the particular characteristics of every child should be taken into account by the education system, and that the system should do all it can to enhance the life chances and improve the life quality of every child. We take it that, in broad terms, aims such as these are part of a long tradition in primary education, traceable at least as far back as Plowden, evident in the absence of selection by 'ability' in this phase, compatible with the notion of inclusive education as it has been developed in this country (Booth and Ainscow 2002), and, perhaps most important, consonant with the avowed aims of very many primary practitioners.

Viewed in these terms, the dominant constructions we outline above are by no means entirely negative in their impact. The use of clear (if problematic) categorisations identifying groups whose characteristics are held to act as barriers to learning has proved particularly powerful in enabling practitioners and policy-makers to target their efforts on individual children deemed to be in need (for instance through the SEN system, or the national strategy 'waves' of intervention), on particular groups within the primary population (for instance through the ethnic minority achievement strategy, or the gifted and talented strand of the Excellence in Cities programme), or on schools where needy groups are concentrated (for example through the Schools Facing Challenging Circumstances programme). At the time of writing (August 2007), for instance, the Primary National strategy website (http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/) hosts lead items on a strategy for children who are newly arrived in the UK, on professional development materials to support gifted and talented education, on resources to support work with children whose social and emotional skills are deemed to be in need of development, and on developments for 'youngsters who have special educational needs, learning difficulties and/or disabilities'.

The analysis we have offered above, however, casts doubt on a response to diversity that relies on this categorise-and-intervene approach. Whatever the merits of such an approach, we suggest that it is inevitable that it will miss the complexity of diversity, reinforce the deficit view of those children (and families) deemed to be experiencing 'barriers to learning', and underestimate the role of children as agents in their own learning. Moreover, we saw above how different constructions of diversity are possible that appear to be less prone to these limitations and, therefore, hold out the promise of more equitable policy responses.

The work of critical researchers is, of course, essential in deconstructing dominant discourses and identifying alternatives in principle. However, if we want to know what those alternatives look like in practice, and how they can be operationalised in the complexities, contradictions and unequal power relations of schools then we suggest it is necessary to look towards the practices of some – perhaps many – schools and teachers. As Nias (1989) noted many years ago, the practice of primary teachers is not simply a straightforward matter of reproducing techniques acquired in training, nor of implementing policy devised elsewhere. Rather, teachers' practice emerges from the interaction of their identities as people, what they see as the aims of their work, and their need to build and sustain relationships with the children they teach. Nias predicted that, in this context, highly interventionist government policies act as a destabilising factor, creating a set of 'dilemmas' (Woods and Jeffrey 2002; Day *et al*. 2006) which they have to resolve. Whilst it is easy to view this situation negatively as the undermining of the supposedly 'child-centred' practices of primary teachers, it can also be seen in a more positive light. As teachers interact constantly with children, their struggles to reconcile their avowedly 'Plowdenesque' values with the very different

constructions of recent policy creates a site in which new forms of practice can, potentially, emerge.

We say this particularly in the light of two potentially important recent studies, which have looked closely at how practices that respond effectively to learner diversity in primary classrooms develop. Both studies are located in the current policy context and see teachers struggling with the constructions of difference in that context. Significantly, perhaps, both studies also present teachers who have access to an external perspective – provided by researchers – and who may therefore have a better than usual chance of developing and sustaining practices outside current orthodoxies.

The first study, *Learning without Limits*, examined ways of teaching that are free from determinist beliefs about ability (Hart 2003; Hart *et al*. 2004). The researchers worked closely with a group of teachers who had rejected ideas of fixed ability in order to study their practice. They started from the belief that constraints are placed on children's learning by ability-focused practices that lead young children to define themselves in comparison to their peers.

Drawing on the ideas of Bourne and Moon (1995), the researchers argue that the notion of ability as inborn intelligence has come to be seen as 'a natural way of talking about children' that summarises their perceived differences. They go on to suggest that national policies reflect this assumption, making it essential for teachers to compare, categorise and group their pupils by ability in order to provide appropriate and challenging teaching for all. So, for example, inspectors are expected to check that teaching is differentiated for 'more able', 'average' and 'less able' pupils. In this context, what is meant by ability is not made explicit, leaving scope for teachers to interpret what is being recommended in ways that suit their own beliefs and views. However, it is noted that the emphasis on target setting and value-added measures of progress leave little scope for teachers who reject the fixed view of measurable ability to hold on to their principles.

Through examining closely the practices and thinking of their teacher partners, the researchers set themselves the task of identifying 'more just and empowering' ways of making sense of learner diversity. In summary, this would, they argue, involve teachers treating patterns of achievement and response in a `spirit of transformability', seeking to discover what is possible to enhance the capacity of each child in their class to learn and to create the conditions in which their learning can more fully and effectively flourish.

The second study, *Understanding and Developing Inclusive Practices in Schools*, also pointed to the importance of inquiry as a stimulus for changing practices. Carried out by a research network that was part of the Economic and Social Research Council's Teaching and Learning Research Programme (Ainscow, Booth and Dyson 2004; Ainscow *et al.* 2003, 2006), the study involved 25 schools in exploring ways of developing inclusion in their own contexts, in collaboration with university researchers.

In broad terms, what was noted in the participating schools was neither the crushing of inclusion by the standards agenda, nor the rejection of the standards agenda in favour of a radical, inclusive alternative. Certainly, many teachers were concerned about the impacts on their work of the standards agenda and some were committed to views of inclusion that they saw as standing in contradiction to it. However, in most of the schools the two agendas remained intertwined. Indeed, the focus on attainment appeared to prompt some teachers to examine issues in relation to the achievements and participation of hitherto marginalised groups that they had previously overlooked. Likewise, the concern with inclusion tended to shape the way the school responded to the imperative to raise standards.

In trying to make sense of the relationship between external imperatives and the processes of

change in schools, the study drew on the ideas of Wenger (1998) to reveal how external agendas were mediated by the norms and values of the communities of practice within schools and how they become part of a dialogue whose outcomes can be more rather than less inclusive. In this way, the role of national policy emerges from the study in something of a new light. This suggests that schools may be able to engage with what might appear to be unfavourable policy imperatives to produce outcomes that are by no means inevitably non-inclusive.

The common thread running through both studies is the way in which teachers who are required to work within the framework of categorical constructions are nonetheless capable of moving beyond those constructions and of developing new responses in a 'spirit of transformability'. An example may serve to illustrate this point. Dyson and Gallannaugh (in press, 2007) report how a primary school participating in the *Understanding and Developing Inclusive Practices* project faced a situation in which many of its pupils appeared unable to make adequate progress in writing using the strategies that were favoured by the then National Literacy Strategy. Faced with this situation, and with considerable external pressure to raise attainment, the school could have opted simply to intensify its existing approaches. Instead, it sought to understand why its pupils were not responding, and came to the conclusion that they lacked the life and language experience they needed to profit from established approaches. Instead, therefore, of intensifying its teaching of reading, the school opted to embark on an experiential approach in which children participated in activities designed to extend their experience, in which they were then encouraged to talk about those experiences and in which only then, if at all, were they expected to write.

The point here is not that the school had discovered some significant new way of teaching writing; the proposition that children learn by talking about their experiences is hardly new in primary practice (see, for instance, Tough 1977). Nor is it that the school had somehow escaped categorical and deficit-oriented thinking; as the researchers make clear, this was far from the case. However, the school was able to problematise the categorical and deficit-oriented thinking informing national policy by confronting its own experience of working with children to whom what was on offer did not readily apply. In this sense, the school entered into a 'negotiation' about how the characteristics of its pupils were to be understood, and about what responses were called for by those characteristics.

4.5 Some implications for policy

These studies open up interesting possibilities for the way policy responses to diversity in primary education might go in future. Currently, we suggest, policy is caught in something of a trap. Despite the occasional rhetoric about devolving decision-making, national policy-makers continue to believe that improvements in the system can be driven from the centre – the continual re-making of the Primary National Strategy being a case in point. In terms of responses to diversity, this assumption drives the categorisation of the primary population in ways that appear to be actionable from the centre. That categorisation in turn constructs the population in ways that tend to legitimate centrally-driven initiatives.

Any change in this situation, we believe, requires recognition that inclusive and equitable responses to diversity necessarily involve teachers working within their professional and institutional contexts to make sense of the complex situations they face. This in turn implies that the role of central policy is not to generate fixed categorisations and responses to those categorisations, but to support and facilitate responses that can be made at school and classroom level.

Whilst this may sound like a radical change of direction, we do not have in mind a return to a pre-1988 situation where schools and teachers had largely unlimited freedom – and very

little by way of robust guidance – to respond to their diverse populations as they saw fit. Rather, we envisage something more like a dialogue between the broad generalisations, the overarching aims and the large-scale resources that national policy can bring to bear on the one hand, and the knowledge of detailed interactions that teachers can bring to the table. Whatever the limitations of national policy in recent years may have been, it has at least acknowledged difference as an issue and has tried to formulate responses that, for all their limitations, have aimed at least some version of equity and inclusion. With this in mind, national policy even now is able to act as a resource in providing teachers with conceptual tools, problematising their existing responses, and offering material resources and guidance frameworks within which their practices can be developed (Ainscow, Booth and Dyson 2006: 30ff.). Needless to say, the more policy pursued inclusive and equitable ends, the more productive it would be in this respect.

Beyond this, policy has much to do in building the capacity of schools and teachers to respond to diversity. Much of that capacity building depends on work done and led at school level. There is, therefore, an issue about the development of, and support structures for, school leaders who are concerned with diversity and know how to develop their schools in this respect. This may, of course, be a quite different task from developing school leaders who are able to implement national imperatives with maximum efficiency and fidelity. However, capacity building also depends on creating structures so that teachers have access to what practice actually looks like when it is being done differently, and exposure to someone who can help them to understand the difference between what they are doing and what they aspire to do (Elmore, Peterson and McCarthy 1996). It involves conceptualising teacher development in terms other than simply learning how to implement centrally mandated practices. In particular, it involves finding processes whereby teachers can be enabled to think through their shared experiences so that they can help one another to articulate what they currently do and define what they might like to do (Hiebert, Gallimore, and Stigler 2002). This means creating 'spaces' in schools and in the national agendas within which taken-for-granted assumptions about particular groups of learners can be subjected to mutual critique (Dyson *et al*. 2003).

SECTION 5. SOME CONCLUSIONS

Characterising the diversity of the primary school population is far from the straightforward task it may appear. It raises questions about what aspects of diversity are attended to, how those aspects are understood, and what educational responses they are seen as requiring. It cannot be divorced from questions about why the population is being characterised in a particular way – and these in turn lead to questions about how the purposes of education are understood. Finally, it raises questions about who is doing the characterising and the power that some constructions of diversity have to shape policy and practice.

In this survey, we have attempted our own characterisations – of the constructions informing official statistics and policy texts, of the critiques of and alternatives to those constructions proposed by critical researchers, and of the more implicit alternatives emerging in some forms of professional practice. Our survey is far from comprehensive. Critical work on dominant discourses is far more extensive and, in some cases, has proceeded at a far more theoretical level than we have attempted to show. Likewise, studies of practice and practitioner thinking go well beyond those we have been able to cite in this paper.

Instead, we have tried to formulate an argument that will have some purchase with researchers, practitioners and policy-makers who are concerned with how primary practice might move on from its current position. So, we have argued that currently dominant

constructions conceal as much as they reveal, and mislead as much as they guide. We have argued that they rely on overly rigid forms of categorisation, that they are too simplistically evaluative, and that consequently they overlook both the complexities of and resources within the pupil population. We have argued that more fluid constructions of diversity are possible and that such forms can be found underpinning primary practice in some schools and classrooms. With this in mind we have argued for a reorientation of policy, from the generation of categories and categorical responses to providing a supportive framework for schools and teachers as they attempt to make sense of diversity in their own contexts.

Looking back at the history of primary practice over the past forty years, it is difficult not to see it in terms of a pendulum swinging first from faith in schools and teachers, to faith in central direction, and now, perhaps, beginning to swing back again. Our argument, however, is not for a return to the *status quo ante*. At the current time we see real potential for a partnership between reoriented national policy, and practitioners who are once again trusted but not simply abandoned to their own devices. Within such a partnership, we suggest, a more productive and equitable set of responses to diversity may well be possible.

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APPENDIX 1

THE PRIMARY REVIEW PERSPECTIVES, THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

The Primary Review's enquiries are framed by three broad perspectives, the third of which, primary education, breaks down into ten themes and 23 sub-themes. Each of the latter then generates a number of questions. The full framework of review perspectives, themes and questions is at www.primaryreview.org.uk

The Review Perspectives

P1   Children and childhood
P2   Culture, society and the global context
P3   Primary education

The Review Themes and Sub-themes

T1   Purposes and values
        T1a   Values, beliefs and principles
        T1b   Aims

T2   Learning and teaching
        T2a   Children's development and learning
        T2b   Teaching

T3   Curriculum and assessment
        T3a   Curriculum
        T3b   Assessment

T4   Quality and standards
        T4a   Standards
        T4b   Quality assurance and inspection

T5   Diversity and inclusion
        T5a   Culture, gender, race, faith
        T5b   Special educational needs

T6   Settings and professionals
        T6a   Buildings and resources
        T6b   Teacher supply, training, deployment & development
        T6c   Other professionals
        T6d   School organisation, management & leadership
        T6e   School culture and ethos

T7   Parenting, caring and educating
        T7a   Parents and carers
        T7b   Home and school

T8   Beyond the school
        T8a   Children's lives beyond the school
        T8b   Schools and other agencies

T9   Structures and phases
        T9a   Within-school structures, stages, classes & groups
        T9b   System-level structures, phases & transitions

T10   Funding and governance
        T10a   Funding
        T10b   Governance

APPENDIX 2

THE EVIDENTIAL BASIS OF THE PRIMARY REVIEW

The Review has four evidential strands. These seek to balance opinion seeking with empirical data; non-interactive expressions of opinion with face-to-face discussion; official data with independent research; and material from England with that from other parts of the UK and from international sources. This enquiry, unlike some of its predecessors, looks outwards from primary schools to the wider society, and makes full though judicious use of international data and ideas from other countries.

Submissions

Following the convention in enquiries of this kind, submissions have been invited from all who wish to contribute. By June 2007, nearly 550 submissions had been received and more were arriving daily. The submissions range from brief single-issue expressions of opinion to substantial documents covering several or all of the themes and comprising both detailed evidence and recommendations for the future. A report on the submissions will be published in late 2007.

Soundings

This strand has two parts. The *Community Soundings* are a series of nine regionally based one to two day events, each comprising a sequence of meetings with representatives from schools and the communities they serve. The Community Soundings took place between January and March 2007, and entailed 87 witness sessions with groups of pupils, parents, governors, teachers, teaching assistants and heads, and with educational and community representatives from the areas in which the soundings took place. In all, there were over 700 witnesses. The *National Soundings* are a programme of more formal meetings with national organisations both inside and outside education. National Soundings A are for representatives of non-statutory national organisations, and they focus on educational policy. National Soundings B are for outstanding school practitioners; they focus on school and classroom practice. National Soundings C are variably-structured meetings with statutory and other bodies. National Soundings A and B will take place between January and March 2008. National Soundings C are outlined at 'other meetings' below.

Surveys

30 surveys of published research relating to the Review's ten themes have been commissioned from 70 academic consultants in universities in Britain and other countries. The surveys relate closely to the ten Review themes and the complete list appears in Appendix 3. Taken together, they will provide the most comprehensive review of research relating to primary education yet undertaken. They are being published in thematic groups from October 2007 onwards.

Searches

With the co-operation of DfES/DCSF, QCA, Ofsted, TDA and OECD, the Review is re-assessing a range of official data bearing on the primary phase. This will provide the necessary demographic, financial and statistical background to the Review and an important resource for its later consideration of policy options.

Other meetings (now designated National Soundings C)

In addition to the formal evidence-gathering procedures, the Review team meets members of various national bodies for the exchange of information and ideas: government and opposition representatives; officials at DfES/DCSF, QCA, Ofsted, TDA, GTC, NCSL and IRU; representatives of the teaching unions; and umbrella groups representing organisations involved in early years, primary education and teacher education. The first of three sessions with the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee took place in March 2007. Following the replacment of DfES by two separate departments, DCSF and DIUS, it is anticipated that there will be further meetings with this committee's successor.

APPENDIX 3

THE PRIMARY REVIEW INTERIM REPORTS

The interim reports, which will be released in stages from October 2007, include the 30 research surveys commissioned from external consultants together with reports on the Review's two main consultation exercises: the community soundings (87 witness sessions with teachers, heads, parents, children and a wide range of community representatives, held in different parts of the country during 2007) and the submissions received from large numbers of organisations and individuals in response to the invitation issued when the Review was launched in October 2006.

The list below starts with the community soundings and submissions reports, which have been written by the Review team. Then follow the 30 research surveys commissioned from the Review's consultants. They are arranged by Review theme, not by the order of their publication. Report titles may be subject to minor amendment.

Once published, each interim report, together with a briefing summarising its findings, may be downloaded from the Review website, www.primaryreview.org.uk .

REPORTS ON PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

1. *Community Soundings: the Primary Review regional witness sessions* (Robin Alexander and Linda Hargreaves)

2. *Submissions received by the Primary Review*

PURPOSES AND VALUES

3. *Aims and values in primary education*. Research survey 1/1 (John White)

4. *The aims of primary education: England and other countries*. Research survey 1/2 (Maha Shuayb and Sharon O'Donnell)

5. *The changing national context of primary education*. Research survey 1/3 (Stephen Machin and Sandra McNally)

6. *The changing global context of primary education.* Research survey 1/4 (Hugh Lauder, John Lowe and Rita Chawla-Duggan)

LEARNING AND TEACHING

7. *Children's cognitive development and learning*. Research survey 2/1a (Usha Goswami and Peter Bryant)

8. *Children's social development, peer interaction and classroom*. Research survey 2/1b (Christine Howe and Neil Mercer)

9. *Teaching in primary schools*. Research survey 2/2 (Robin Alexander and Maurice Galton)

10. *Learning and teaching in primary schools: the curriculum dimension*. Research survey 2/3 (Bob McCormick and Bob Moon)

11. *Learning and teaching in primary schools: evidence from TLRP*. Research survey 2/4 (Mary James and Andrew Pollard)

CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

12. *Curriculum and assessment policy: England and other countries*. Research survey 3/1 (Kathy Hall and Kamil Øzerk)

13. *The trajectory and impact of national curriculum and assessment reform*. Research survey 3/2 (Harry Torrance, Dominic Wyse, Elaine McCreery and Russell Jones)

14. *Curriculum alternatives for primary education.* Research survey 3/3 (James Conroy and Ian Menter)

15. *Assessment alternatives for primary education*. Research survey 3/4 (Wynne Harlen)

QUALITY AND STANDARDS

16. *Quality and standards in primary education: national evidence.* Research survey 4/1 (Peter Tymms and Christine Merrell)

17. *Quality and standards in primary education: international evidence.* Research survey 4/2 (Chris Whetton, Graham Ruddock and Liz Twist)

18. *Monitoring, assuring and maintaining quality in primary education.* Research survey 4/1 (Peter Cunningham and Philip Raymont)

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

19. *Children in primary education: demography, culture, diversity and inclusion.* Research survey 5/1 (Mel Ainscow, Alan Dyson and Jean Conteh)

20. *Learning needs and difficulties among children of primary school age: definition, identification, provision and issues.* Research survey 5/2 (Harry Daniels and Jill Porter)

21. *Children and their primary schools: pupils' voices.* Research survey 5/3 (Carol Robinson and Michael Fielding)

SETTINGS AND PROFESSIONALS

22. *Primary education: the physical environment.* Research survey 6/1 (Karl Wall, Julie Dockrell and Nick Peacey)

23. *Primary education: the professional environment.* Research survey 6/2 (Ian Stronach, Andy Pickard and Elizabeth Jones)

24. *Teachers and other professionals: training, induction and development.* Research survey 6/3 (Olwen McNamara, Rosemary Webb and Mark Brundrett)

25. *Teachers and other professionals: workforce management and reform.* Research survey 6/4 (Hilary Burgess)

PARENTING, CARING AND EDUCATING

26. *Parenting, caring and educating.* Research survey 7/1 (Yolande Muschamp, Felicity Wikeley, Tess Ridge and Maria Balarin)

BEYOND THE SCHOOL

27. *Children's lives outside school and their educational impact.* Research survey 8/1 (Berry Mayall)

28. *Primary schools and other agencies.* Research survey 8/2 (Ian Barron, Rachel Holmes, Maggie MacLure and Katherine Runswick-Cole)

STRUCTURES AND PHASES

29. *The structure and phasing of primary education: England and other countries.* Research survey 9/1 (Anna Eames and Caroline Sharp)

30. *Organising learning and teaching in primary schools: structure, grouping and transition.* Research survey 9/2 (Peter Blatchford, Judith Ireson, Susan Hallam, Peter Kutnick and Andrea Creech)

FUNDING AND GOVERNANCE

31. *The financing of primary education.* Research survey 10/1 (Philip Noden and Anne West)

32. *The governance, administration and control of primary education.* Research survey 10/2 (Maria Balarin and Hugh Lauder).

The Primary Review is a wide-ranging independent enquiry into the condition and future
of primary education in England. It is supported by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation,
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The Review was launched in October 2006 and aims to publish its final report in autumn 2008.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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