The Power of the Small:
Education Equalities toward Ethnic Minority Students in the United Kingdom

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that the most essential course of the issue is education system and policy reformation in the UK. The paper presents some key points to discuss; education equalities, educational achievement, students' exclusion, and refugee education, which stress on the issues of students from ethnic minority. This paper could be the starting point to make further analysis toward the future implementation of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the United Kingdom especially related to the education for ethnic minority students. My major interest on education for ethnic minority students in the United Kingdom is based on two particular reasons. First, United Kingdom is a multicultural country where its society becomes a melting pot of a various ethnic minorities. Secondly, there are some special conditions in the UK education system especially related to students from ethnic minorities. As discussed earlier, education system and ethnic minorities in the United Kingdom will be closely associated with the issues of racism, discrimination, and the rigidity of education policies in the United Kingdom

Keywords: *education equalities, discrimination, education system*

Education has the major role in developing a society and is also intimately connected with the problems of plural societies. Intercultural education has a marked effect on the social and personal development of the individual. Of course the problems of individual development in a plural society cannot be solved by education alone. There are other forces such as structural and social systems in which people live that may seriously affect the development of an individual.

Discussing education equalities toward ethnic minorities groups cannot be separate it with racial issues. Racism in education means there is some prejudice and imbalance situation happened that made some ethnic minority groups have been placed in disadvantages position in the society regarding education sector. Racial prejudice and discrimination do much to lower socio-economic status in many minority groups. In order to explore the education equalities, it's important to look up who has the major role in establishing and applying the education system itself.

There are four major issues to analyze: (1) education equalities, (2) educational achievement, (3) students' exclusion, and (4) refugee education. Explanation of some issues will be done by examining some figures and tables.

Figure 1
Education Equalities
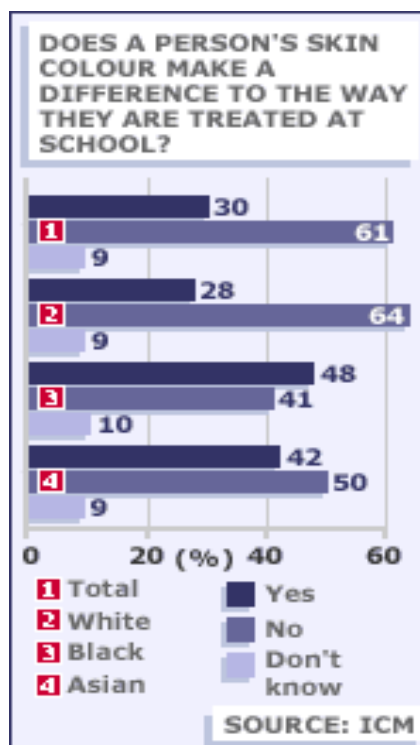
Based on the Figure 1, the survey comes into the detail perception of racial discrimination in education. 28% of Whites, 48% of Blacks, and 42% of Asians thought that skin color affected to the way of individual is treated in school. The result of the survey could not describe clearly how to measure the education equalities based on the way they are treated at school. What kind of treatment can be used to categorize that a student has been treated in the same or different way? But however, the survey showed the existence of racism in education process. And if we look at the number of respondents who answered 'yes', the highest answer came from Blacks, followed by Asians, and the fewest answer came from Whites. So if we simply conclude, the Black people have been treated more discriminately in school than other ethnic minority groups and White people.

Figure 2
Inequalities from Age 5 to General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in Relation to Local Education Authorities (LEA) Average

LEA's Baseline Assessments by ethnicity
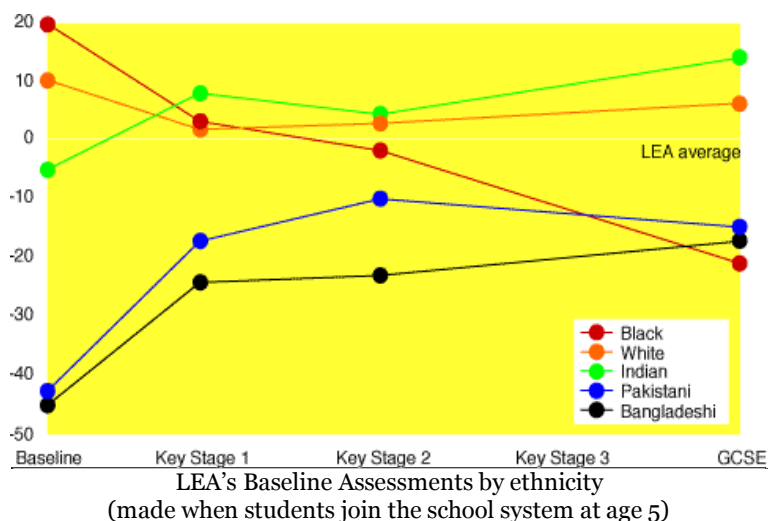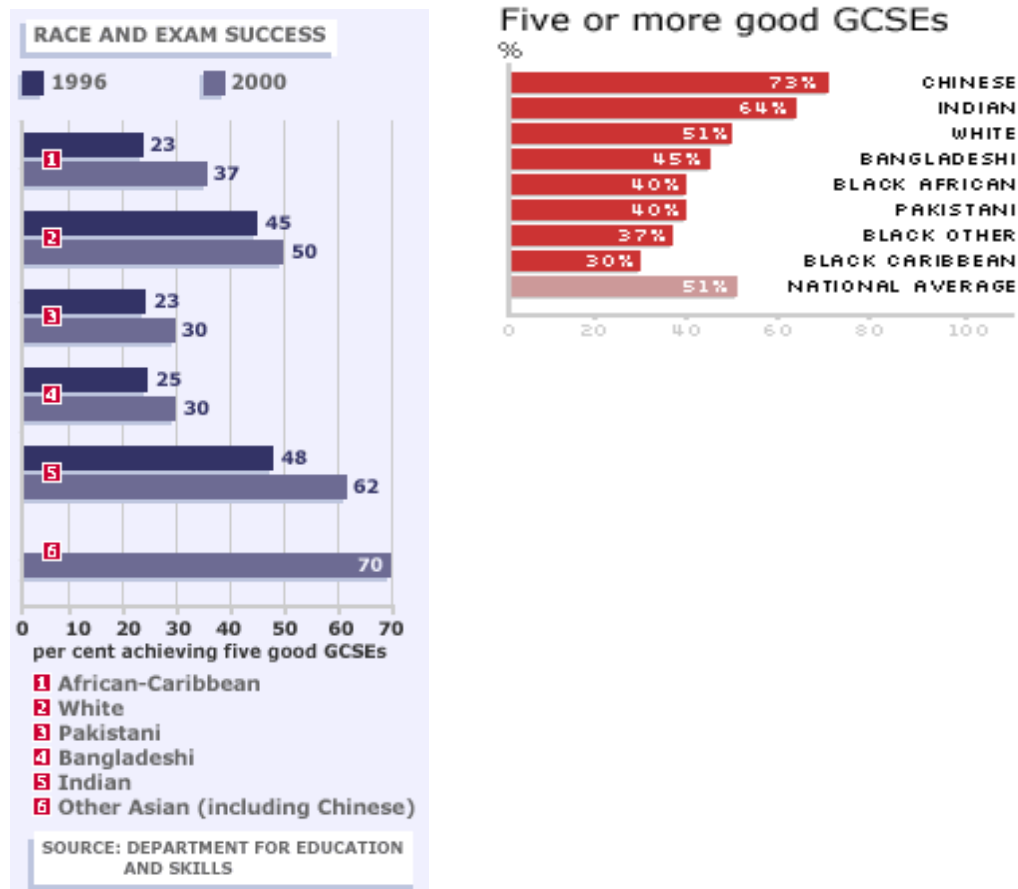(made when students join the school system at age 5)

Figure 2 had been made based on the research question, "do all ethnic minority students draw equal benefit throughout their time in school?" In order to answer that question, by seeing the graphs, we can find easily the inequalities in education result. It showed that African-Caribbean students' attainment related with the white, worsened between stage 1 and GCSE, also compared to other ethnic minority students. After examining the graph, I raised one main question, 'what is the main factor that affected to the African-Caribbean students so they placed the bottom ranking in education result compared with other ethnic minority students

and white students? In order to answer it, we should go on analyzing the educational achievement among both ethnic minority students and white students.

Figure 3
Educational Achievement

RACE AND EXAM SUCCESS
1996 2000

1 African-Caribbean: 23 (1996), 37 (2000)
2 White: 45 (1996), 50 (2000)
3 Pakistani: 23 (1996), 30 (2000)
4 Bangladeshi: 25 (1996), 30 (2000)
5 Indian: 48 (1996), 62 (2000)
6 Other Asian (including Chinese): 70 (2000)

per cent achieving five good GCSEs

SOURCE: DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Five or more good GCSEs %

CHINESE 73%
INDIAN 64%
WHITE 51%
BANGLADESHI 45%
BLACK AFRICAN 40%
PAKISTANI 40%
BLACK OTHER 37%
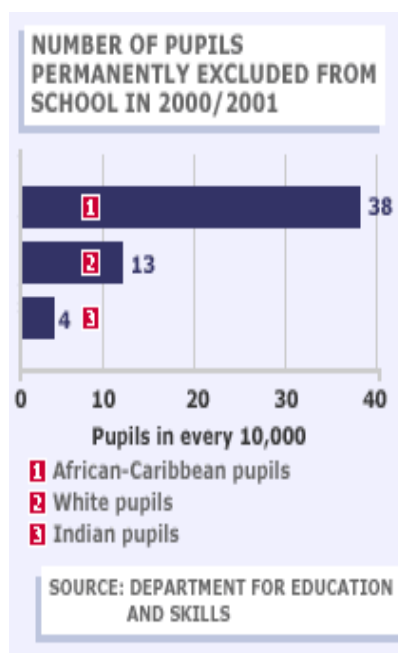BLACK CARIBBEAN 30%
NATIONAL AVERAGE 51%

From the two figures above, it's clearly pictured that basically all of student groups have improvement in educational achievement in comparison between 1996 and 2000. We can find the balance of quality each groups and it's difficult to search the correlation among the education equalities and educational achievement by using those figures.

Students from ethnic minority groups may be treated differently from white students in schools, but by no means they get worse result in educational

achievement compared with white students; somehow they have highest result, such as Chinese students. I think the problem is, what factors became the background of those examination results regarding students' ethnicity? Actually in order to view educational achievement, there are some other factors supposed to be considered as the background of examination result such as maternal/paternal interests in school performance, social class, and self-esteem. But the differences for each ethnic group are complex. For example self-esteem are important for White and West Indian students, but not for South Asian origin (Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and Indians) (Verma 1982, 98).

Influences from family, school and peer groups also held the essential roles in shaping the students' motivation in the context of educational achievement. Students will be able to encourage themselves to reach good results in the examination if in those environments they get motivation.

Figure 4
Students' Exclusion

NUMBER OF PUPILS PERMANENTLY EXCLUDED FROM SCHOOL IN 2000/2001

Pupils in every 10,000
1 African-Caribbean pupils
2 White pupils
3 Indian pupils

SOURCE: DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS

The analysis on exclusion problems has been focused since it has been found that African- Caribbean students have been excluded several times more than whites or

other ethnic groups as shown in the figure. Thirty eight in every 10,000 of African-Caribbean students were permanently excluded. There are three main interesting phenomenon that related with exclusion problems in the UK. First, the exclusion number of African-Caribbean students (the figure above). Second, mostly excluded students fail to return to full-time mainstream education. Third, there has been a new trend among African-Caribbean families to send their children for education in West Indies as they assume that teachers more understand the way to deal with their children's needs in education.

When I got into the detail, there were several questions regarding exclusion problems in the UK such as, why the excluded students mostly come from African-Caribbean race?, what kind of policy or systems that have been applied by schools and government in order to solve the exclusion problems? When I tried to connect some causes of exclusion with the large number of excluded students come from African-Caribbean races, so it came up the question, does it mean that most of African-Caribbean students intend to do such disruptive behavior in the school? If it's true, what kind of aspects that really affected to them in doing so? In order to trace the problem among the ethnic minority students, we should come back and see the way of British society look at them as a part of the society commonly and education environment particularly. Based on some testimonies by some excluded students in an article, they said that in doing such disruptive behavior, and when they had been excluded, they think it could be happens to other students from other races. But they felt they had been badly treated more because they are African-Caribbean students (The Kwesi Project 2002)

It also happens in school activities when teachers treated them discriminately. Then it appears a new trend among African-Caribbean families to send their children to West Indies in order to get better education in the context of finding teachers who will be able to understand their children's situation and can find the way to handle their academic problems. This new trend indirectly raised the issue of racial equality to deal with by the government. One of its aims was to recruit more teachers from ethnic minorities. The Teacher Training Agency says its target of 7% of trainees from minority ethnic backgrounds by 2001/2002 was achieved. (Action for Ethnic Minority Pupils, n.d.).

The problem happens over the exclusion is the difficulties of excluded students to return to full-time education. They usually have been replaced to *Pupil Referral Units*, where they are given lessons with other excluded students with behavioral problems (Q&A: Expelled Pupils, n.d.). But of course the conditions in Pupil Referral Units are never be the same as full-time schools. In that kind of place, students felt to be treated differently, have been punished continuously, and less confidences among friends. In order to reduce the number of exclusion in UK, the Education Department and the Ministry of Defense have sponsored the Skill Force

Program to offer teenagers team building and problem solving activities (http://news,bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/education/4083105.stm, 1 Agustus 2008).

The problem in the current system is there are too many excluded students in some schools because of spare places. Those made some schools are hard to drive up standards of discipline. In order to solve that problem, government suggested schools in particular areas to agree a policy on admitting excluded students so they can shared around. And as an incentive, money which spent by local authorities on expelled students could be devolved down to the individual schools which took in a student (http://news,bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/education/4083105.stm, 1 Agustus 2008). It is hardly to find such government statements regarding the exclusion problem for certain ethnic minority group. The statistic data also show the general number of excluded students categorized by ethnic group.

Refugee Education

When we talk about refugee education, it's like seeing two sides of a coin, opposite to each other. In one side, refugee education is surely important, as everybody has the right to pursue education, whatever the condition they have and wherever they live. But in pursuing education as a refugee is somewhat complicated to be achieved. The host country somehow sees the providing of education for refugee is a problem. They exclusively try to find 'best' solution for refugee education. The government policies have been created, whether it is in purpose or not, somehow just wider the distance between the refugee and the society in host country. Just like what happened in the UK.

It is estimated that there are now around 70,000 refugee children in the UK and of these over half are in schools in London and the Southeast. And around 6000 children have been 'unaccompanied minors', who had flee to UK without their family or any adults whom they know (http://www.irr.org.uk/2002/november/ak000003.html, 10 Oktober 2008)).

They come to school with particular problems as they have had to move very suddenly from traumatic situations and English is not their first language so it's difficult to adapt quickly with school environment and neighborhood. Refugee children supposed to get special care and education but nowadays there are less specialist units for refugee education as most of them have been removed based on the government policies that decided to place refugee children in the detention centers. And it is just the same as placing and educating them in a prison. Their mentality condition will be worse in isolation environment like in detention centers. It seems that they never be allowed to feel like home in the UK.

The Refugee Education Panel which took place in Dalfsen, July 1999 stated:

> Education is the key to integration. Education should not be a one-way process of teaching skills and rules to an unknowing person, with adaptation as its ultimate aim; education should be a two-way process during which both sides – teacher and student, host society and refugee community – can learn from each other. The knowledge brought by refugees should be used to enhance the diversity of the host society and to improve integration, children should be taught in mainstream classes, and only exceptionally should they be separated into different groups (Salinas and Müller 2000, 5).

Those statements are opposite with the situations have happened in the UK. Government intends to place refugee children in detention center for their education and live separately from British society. It seems that the UK's government policies created the distance between society and those refugee children in order to diminish their presence among British society.

Conclusion

There is a difference between perception and reality. The result of survey is weakly could show the real condition happen in education equalities. And the meaning of equalities for each ethnic group is actually different to each other. What is calling inequality for one ethnic group is possibly equality for other ethnic group. There is a bias phenomenon regarding education equalities. Equal benefit in school also has to be seen from many aspects, not only from the GCSE results. Beneficial aspects are actually can be reach from the school facilities, the teachers' quality, and in the major one is the quality of education itself.

I think the general meaning of education equality is if the education system can share the equality in education right that can be enjoyed by all students from both ethnic minority and majority, and it includes all aspect of education such as the providing of school facilities, teachers' quality in teaching, and opportunities in school activities.

There is quite wide discrepancy between the ways of students in each group fare. The educational achievement cannot be seen only from the side of examination result. We supposed to look at it as the whole parts of students' life as a part of family, school, and peer group environment, and mostly their identity as ethnic minority groups. They have such mores and norms they supposed and intended to follow which are different from one ethnic group to other.

Factors such as self-esteem, maternal/paternal interest in school performance, and social class held the roles in shaping students' motivation for reaching achievement in education. Of course there are many other factors following those three influential factors which become the background for ethnic minority students regarding their behavior in school. So, in order to point out which condition is calling achievement and which is under achievement, it can not only based upon the examination result, but also view the background of students following with some influential and essential factors behind.

Low expectation and racial stereotyping may also be the causes of students' exclusion. The excluded students mostly come from African-Caribbean race is closely related with their position in British society commonly and in education environment particularly. Low expectation and racial stereotyping have the main roles when it comes to the exclusion of students from schools. The other factor is the education system which is the African Caribbean students are hardly to adjust in, such as teaching methods.

The government and schools have some programs and policies in order to reduce the number of exclusion in school. But the systems or policies that have already applied are sometimes difficult to be socialized in some schools with certain conditions. And there is no evidence enough for such statements and policies which come to the deeper problems of exclusion by ethnic groups. So it is difficult to analyze more detail for the government policies and school system regarding exclusion problems.

The UK is known as one of European countries that can accept the existence of refugee children in mainstream education, but nowadays, the UK's government policies created the separation and wider distance between refugee and British society by educating refugee children in detention center rather than allowing them to enroll in regular schools. Government has eliminated some NGOs which provide free education for refugee children just to centralize in detention center.

This condition is sharply creating the racism issues in the British society. The society will never learn how to share sense of belonging with the ethnic minority groups as long as the government keeps those kinds of policies regarding refugees and their rights among British society. The policies will put the refugees and ethnic minority groups in disadvantage position in some extent. They will feel being excluded and lack of rights in the society.

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