Research Title

Improving educational outcome of key stage four students from Somali heritage in the inner city schools of Bristol.

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Appendix
Introduction

This small scale research project, it is a dissertation, which will explore the educational outcomes of Somali heritage students in the inner city schools of Bristol. Particularly this research will focus on key stage four students of three schools. One of the areas this research will investigate is the extent of which schools invest useful resources for those students in order to meet their particular needs as soon as they join their schools. I will also investigate what causes the difference of outcomes of students from this ethnic group and how best could be shared if there are good practices in different schools and also the good practices and support parents provide for their children if there are some who are doing good in the school. One of the major strands of my research is going to be, if there is any link between the understanding and misunderstanding of parents in education system and children’s educational attainment.

In the dissertation, I will state why I am interested to do this research on these particular students from this specific community in their final stage of their compulsory education. To do that, I will extensively refer to a recent and old literature around the area of my study. I will also write about the methodology and the approach which I will use in order to conduct good research and collect a reliable data around this topic and I will make sure that I fulfil all the ethical guidelines which this research will demand.

Finally, I will use and analyse all the data collected, and see if there are any particular and plausible patterns that has not been considered or found in other research around this area. From this, I will attempt to produce the finding of my research and forward a number of recommendations for parents, schools and communities in order for them to tackle together this long standing issue of educational attainment for Somali heritage students in key stage four in inner city schools of Bristol.

Why I choose to research this area?

Firstly, the reason I have chosen to do this research is to find ways which community and schools can contribute to reduce the on going problems of low attainment of
Somali heritage students in inner city schools which is documented in (Institute of Community Cohesion) ICoCo report in 2009. There are many factors that clearly contribute to these problems as documented Amana & Barnados’ report (2006). However there has been a limited research which is designed to investigate this problem in order to find a solutions for this matter in Bristol. There are many researches and reports which highlight the fact that Somali heritage students are underachieving in secondary schools without any clear plan of finding the root of the problem. In order to reduce the educational gap between Somali heritage students and their peers from other communities, my small scale research intend to touch the surface of what causes their underachievement and what we can do about it, although, I doubt that I will find “real understanding of this issue” with my small scale research.

Secondly, personally I come from the same community of the children who I am investigating their low attainment. In my work place I have some responsibly of contributing the improvement of the attainment of children whom English is not their first language (EAL) which Somali students are part of. I am also a member of parent group who actively seek to find the educational barriers which could be responsible for the low attainment of the children of this community. I strongly believe that educating children is one way of improving the live chance of these children gaining better status in a very classified society, however with out finding the cause of their underachievement, its difficult to plan successful intervention which support students to overcome these barriers and help them to achieve as well as other children who are doing extremely well in education, particularly at key stage four.

In Bristol schools, especially inner city ones, there are a number of Somali heritage students (ICoCo, 2009, p, 18) who come from or born in different countries with little or none prior education. Some off them are refugees directly from Somalia where others are European citizens emigrated from Europe countries in order to get better life and opportunities in England. Many of those students struggle to achieve the benchmark of five GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) when they finish their secondary school. Good numbers of these who do not achieve that benchmark end up doing nothing and become easy target and vulnerable for criminal organisations who recruit them for their unlawful activities. There has been a gang related murder where Somali heritage children been killed or been the killer in the last two three years in Bristol (Evening Post, 2010). However there are considerable numbers of Somali heritage students from same schools and more likely same social back ground that did very well in education and now approaching to go to universities. So, the dilemma is
where these differences are coming from? What are the factors which contribute these
different educational outcomes? And can we learn a lesson from these teachers and
families for whom their students did very well in education?

Aims and Objectives

I want to investigate these differences and find solutions for those who are not doing so
well educationally by exploring what hinder or help educational outcomes of Somali
heritage students. As Mr Pring described in his book when he was talking the aim of
education research wrote:

Is attempt to make sense of activities, policies and institutions which, through
the organisation of learning, help to transform the capacity of the people to live

So, I am hoping that, with my small scale research, to shed a light on what causes the
underachievement of these particular children and find solutions for this long standing
problems which parents, communities and schools could use together to reduce the
number of children who finish secondary school without needed qualifications.

Literature review of educational attainment of Somali children in UK

More than one research has been carried out, exploring the educational attainment of
ethnic minorities in England (Demie, F. et al, 2008) and so many of them found that
there are considerable disparity between the attainment of the majority of ethnic
minority group students and white counterpart. However, Somali students are the
lowest compared to any other group in Bristol as it is described in BME (Black Ethnic
Minority) Attainment Action plan of Bristol.

At KS4, the gap between BME and non BME pupils narrowed by 1% on 5+ A*-C (including English and Maths) and 3% on 5+ A*-C. On both measures the
lowest attaining group are Somali pupils. (LEA Bristol 2010 p, 2)

There are similar finding in London specially the research carried out by Lambeth Local
authority titled Raising achievement of Somali pupils, suggested that Somali children
are the lowest achievers in London as well, as you can see in this graph: (Figure 1)
Most of literatures agreed that there are so many factors which contribute this trend of attainment of Somali children in UK, like poverty, overcrowded houses, language barriers, lack of understanding of English education system and lack of role models (Demie, F. et al, 2008). But this is not enough to explain the fact that nearly 70% of Somali heritage students fail every year to gain the benchmark of secondary school qualifications. As you can see the above graph, there are so many other ethnic groups which share with Somalis these barriers; however they do much better than Somalis.

Some people (Strand, S et al. 2010. P, 76) may argue that Somalis are new community and they may need more time to settle and find their way into improving their children’s education. Although one can see and understand the legitimacy of this argument, however it can be little bit flawed, because there have been various other communities who is been through this difficulties before Somalis (settling in UK) so schools and local authorities should be better prepared to engage these eventualities (new arrivals) by using the lesson they learned from the other communities and deal more constructively in order to reduce and avoid identified barriers which prevent students to attain good results in their school.

It is well documented that Somali parents give education a high value and many of them send their children into tuition classes in order to support their learning (Demie, F. et al, 2008). Parents are aware that their children have got particular needs in terms of language and they try to supplement this in any way they can by sending their children to private tuitions or supplementary schools in their area. Culturally they believe that
living in poverty is not synonym or verdict of not getting good education. Most of the parents strive to give their children a better chance to educate and they know that in England they have a real opportunity to succeed that, but even parents have their own barriers which contribute the low attainment of Somali children:

Despite a desire to help their children, the level of parental involvement was often restricted by the parents’ own lack of formal education, difficulties in speaking/reading English, limited understanding of the education system and of the curriculum, and lack of time. It is a significant challenge to identify and learn from best practice in relation to interventions designed to enable parents to support their children’s learning, and to become involved in their children’s school. (Strand, S et al. 2010)

Sometimes by reading literatures, you can not help the fact that a lot of support and contribution for educational attainment is expected from parents. However when parents are the one which is described into this quote, there is no way which they can help their children unless schools and local authorities step in and do real and direct work in a way to empower these parents to play their part in education attainment by training parents and helping them to understand their role into education system. There are so many rhetorical statements in school visions which indicate that schools work hard to engage all parents and build true partnership with them, but these statements do not reflect on what researchers found on their research:

Parents sometimes complained of not understanding the information presented to them at parents meetings. It was clear that, given the limited knowledge of many parents, effective communication and engagement methods would have to be tailored to meet their needs; this was not always the case. (Strand, S et al. 2010)

What is more, there is on going blame culture where schools, when ever something is not going the way they would like, they tend to put the blame on someone else’s shoulder, particularly on parents, rather than trying to investigate and find what went wrong and address that problem.

The school factor is the most prominent contributor of educational attainment of ethnic minority groups as it is described the case studies of successful schools of Demie research on Lambath schools (2008 p, 32). It is clear that the vision of leadership of the school, particularly the principal can made huge difference for the way school plan for the improvement of the attainment of ethnic minority.

It is obvious that Somali students are new phenomena into the education research in UK, particularly their underachievement. Many schools assume that their needs are
similar to any other ethnic group and they associate so often with black African or sometimes with Afro-Caribbean students. Somali children have multiple needs starting from language. However there are so many needs which are pertinent to them and they may not be shared with any other ethnic group. But assuming that their needs are equal or similar to any other need of any other minority group is the mistakes which these children and their parents are paying high prices so long. Unless there is acknowledgement and deep investigation for their need, we may not have a lot of answers to their need.

Indicators of Low Attainment

There are so many indicators of educational attainment, which educators use to measure the likelihood of students attaining good results at the end of secondary school. One of them is Family Fisher Trust (FFT) and most schools use FFT (Demie, F. et al, 2008, p 19) to analyse the data and to predict if a student has a chance to gain good result when they finish their secondary school. However, there is a real problem for Somali heritage students, because most of them they do not have a prior data to analyse with them which support their knowledge, in order to predict what might achieve at the end of their secondary school. Unless school has other way of analysing and correcting the data they have from these students, they will be placing, even the most able student from this group, in wrong sets or wrong exam groups which in itself may have a serious effect on a student’s self esteem.

Another indicator of educational attainment is social class of the family, which can be translated into how wealthy the family is. The way they measure this indicator is looking and analysing the attainment of the children who are eligible for Free School Meal (FSM) against the students who are not eligible. There is a lot of research which indicates that students who are eligible FSM perform or attain lower grades than the students who are not eligible FSM. When it comes ethnicity most of the ethnic groups conform that finding. However what surprised me is the data I found from raising attainment of Black Minority Ethnic (BME) group plan for Bristol in 2010-2013, which clearly recognise that Somali children who are eligible FSM perform better than the one who are not eligible in both measurements as you can see in this graph: (Figure 2)
This data shows how important is, not to generalise the use of the data, when it comes to the needs of certain students, from certain background. This creates real complication of what universally been accepted regarding the link between underperformance and eligibility of FSM. It is clear that all other ethnic groups represented on this graph hold on what is been formally known, but why Somali children’s data on this occasion is opposite of what we normally regard as expected? I think this is an area for future research but it helps us to understand that, when it comes analysing data, especially in education and the way people learn and acquire knowledge based on ethnicity, we need to be careful putting together minority groups without analysing their differences which may have an impact on their attainment.

Another indicator of educational attainment, that I want touch on this literature review is the attitude of Somali students toward learning. Both Demie and Strand research found that their attitude toward learning is good as their parent and they give education high priority. Demie particularly commented: “Somali pupils and parents’ attitudes to education are good and school work is highly valued”. (Demie, F. et al, 2008 p, 45)

However that is not enough as we have seen earlier, their attitude and high inspiration of education from the students and their parents are not having expected effect on attainment. (strand, S et al 2010. P, 73) Although, it is a very important resilient on the adversity this group is going through.

Finally, before I explain the methodology and approach I use in order to collect empirical data for this research, it seems to me vital to conclude the review of the literature of underachievement of ethnic minority which Somali students are part of, this

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>FSM Eligibility</th>
<th>Number of Pupils</th>
<th>% of ethnic group</th>
<th>5+ A*-C inc English &amp; Maths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black Caribbean</td>
<td>Eligible</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>52.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Caribbean</td>
<td>Not Eligible</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>60.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Eligible</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>16.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Not Eligible</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>41.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somali</td>
<td>Eligible</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>44.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somali</td>
<td>Not Eligible</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White And Black Caribbean</td>
<td>Eligible</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White And Black Caribbean</td>
<td>Not Eligible</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>57.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White British</td>
<td>Eligible</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>37.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White British</td>
<td>Not Eligible</td>
<td>2098</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>66.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: Free School Meal eligibility, ethnicity and GCSEs 2009 (Source: EPAS Jan 2010)**
remarkable data which shows how big is the gap between the educational attainment of Somali students and other communities and how long it will take to fill that gap: (Figure 3)

(Figure 3)

**Momentum measure: educational attainment**

If the achievement of 11-year-olds at Key Stage 2 continues to improve at its current rate of progress, how long will it be before children from these ethnic groups close the attainment gap in English and mathematics?

- **2010** Bangladeshi
- **2014** Mixed White and Black Caribbean
- **2017** Pakistani
- **2025** other Black
- **2025** Black Caribbean
- **2045** Black African

*Fairness and freedom: the final report of the equalities review, Cabinet Office, 2007*

Although this data is not related to keystage four students, however it is an extremely important example which explains how big is the gap of attainment between these communities and particularly how long it will take before Somali children, who are part of Black African students in this data, become equal to other groups in terms of educational attainment in this year group and beyond.

Considering all the literature reviewed so far and the complications which they bring with them, compel schools and local authorities who serve large number of somali heritage students to reconsider the resource they use in order to tackle the issue of under achievement of Somali students. Because it is clear that these children, despite their similarity of needs with other BME groups they have so many peculiarities which can not be understimated. It is obvious that schools and local authority needs to do more particularly in Bristol, because there is no research in this area which is been done on Somali heritage students, investigating why they are underachieving and what can be done to address this on going problem. My small scale research will contribute to be, as I am hoping, the beginning of more bigger and large scale research on this problem in order to find bigger picture of this problem and provide schools, teacher and parents ways in which they can tackle this problem and help these students to be better position when they are finishing their secondary school. This is one way which we can contribute to change the trend of underachievement of these students and
preventing or avoiding the dying prediction of the achievement of Somali heritage students in Bristol.

**Approaches and Methodology**

In every research which researcher wants to carry out an investigation has to have approach and methodology which assist the researcher to do his/her research and collect the data he/she wants to analyse. It is important that the researcher choose carefully the approach and the methodology which he/she wants to use with in his/her research.

When I have started planning my education research which I am now writing, I was convinced that the best approach of my research would be evaluative one but after long reflection on what and how I want to carry my research I found, if I want to do evaluative research, I should have something or some programmes to evaluate, in order to see if they had the intended effect on what is been created for. Therefore I started having my doubts on suitability of this approach on the kind of research which I want to do, because what I am researching is to have a solution of well documented problem for many ethnic minority students particularly for Somali heritage students. The research approach which I believe will be suitable to my research is action research. As Mr Sharp argued, action research is designed “to find answers to questions and solution to problems that people ask and face at work every day and which address specific issues” (Sharp, J. 2009. p, 56). This is why I preferred this approach although there are other approaches which I considered like narrative research with out choosing it.

There are some methodologies which I believe work well with the action research approach but also there are other methodologies. It is been difficult for me to choose which, the qualitative or quantitative, methods in order to collect good and reliable empirical data for my research. There is real dualism between qualitative and quantitative methods in education research, but as Pring suggest:

………A sharp distinction is made between qualitative and quantitative research. And the distinction is made on the basis not of appropriateness to task but of epistemology and even ontology. (Pring, R. 2000. p, 44).

After long reflection on what kind of method I should choose for my small scale action research in order to collect data, I found that interviews, fit for purpose (Sharp, J. 2009)
of my research considering the way that I want to carry my research and the people who will participate in it.

I am going to do interview and it will be semi-structured one, because I want to find how certain participants respond certain issues which I will ask on the interview, in order to produce a data which I can fully analyse and reflect on it, and to find the answer or the solution of the problem which I am investigating. In the interview, what I am trying to find is what the participants do in their part to prevent the adverse consequences of the issues which I am investigating. I believe that the interview is a good way of having a real insight of participant’s point of view of single problem. My interview is going to be semi-structured one as I said, because what I do not want is to have an open discussion where participant can talk even something which has not got any relevance to the subject, although my intention is not doing something which can make participants feel as I am patronising or dictating to what they should talk and tell me (authoritarian person). This method has its own limitations which I have to bear in mind. For example with the interview I can collect a lot of information, and then I have to select which one I think is important and have relevance to my research. This will determine ethical issues and I should justify the reason which I have chosen certain data. There are other methods which I looked at, like observation but I found that it does not fit with the purpose of my research.

This approach and the method which I have describes so far are the one I think would be suitable to my research. It has its pros and cons as any other approach and method, but I feed it fits the purpose of my research.

There are good numbers of ethical guidelines which I have to follow before I undertake my research. The reason which I have to follow these guidelines is to respect the people who will participate, the knowledge, the democratic values, the quality of educational research and academic freedom as described on BERA guideline (BERA, 2004). And as a researcher I have to respect all the people who are going to participate this research directly or indirectly regardless of their age, sex, race or religion.

Before I interview any participant, I am giving all the information regarding this research. Including: why I am doing this research? Why it is important to do this research? I am going to guarantee the anonymity of all participants, and what benefit participants would have and who else would benefit this research and how I will publish this research. So if they are happy with the research and they want to participate they
should fill and sign informed consent form which you will see in the appendix III. I also tell all participants their right to withdraw at anytime they wish. There will be young people who will be part of my research. But before they become part of this research I would tell all their right and asked their parents to sign consent form to participate this research.

The reason I am following these strict guidelines is, because I want to collect data without deception, and I know that the validity of my data depend on how I implement the ethical guidelines. During my research, if I encounter any behaviour which I judge unlawful, I will disclose to the relevant authority, however I have to make a careful consideration. As a researcher I have to comply all legal requirement of collecting and storing data by following the data protection act (1998) and I should not disclose any participants’ details without their written permission.

As it is clear on BERA guidelines, it is unethical to do a research designed to advantage on particular group over others but I believe that this research is not giving any particular advantage to the Somali heritage students, because, it is trying to find a solution of particular problem for this particular community. All the findings which are causing underachievement of these students would be something shared to anyone who is interested to do something about this problem. Any community or group which share same problems can also benefit the finding of this research when it is published.

**How I conducted the research and the background of the families who participated this research.**

As I explained in the introduction Somali community is a very diverse community, (Harris, H. 2004 p, 24) because so many of them are citizens from other countries of Europe having lived so many years in these countries. Their children are more likely to be attended schools in these countries before they arrive in UK, and may speak more than one language, however many of them do not speak English language when they arrive in UK. Also there are many other Somalis who directly come from Somalia or other neighbouring counties of Somalia. Their children are more likely to have experienced some sort of educational interruption or not being school at all. Most of them are monolingual Somali speakers and many of them do not write their own language.

These families and their children who are participating this research live inner city area of Bristol. All the children go to the neighbouring secondary schools and the attainment
of these schools (5 GCSEs A*-C Incl. Eng And Maths) are low compared to the

In order to cover these diversities with in the Somali community, I am compelled to
carefully sample the families who are going to participate this research. To do that, I
decided to interview two families who moved from Europe and two families who directly
moved from Somalia. Also I wanted that the attainment of the children and the length of
time these families are here must be mixed, in order to try to see the different angle of
the same problem. One of the families who I selected to interview lived here more that
ten years where others been here about seven to four years.

The compositions of the families are also mixed. Some families are very large families,
where others are fairly small families compared to normal size of Somali families.
Economically, they are not well off families and they all live in social housing
accommodation and most of them only one family member is the winner of the family
bread. Seventy five percentages of the students who are participating this research
receive free school meal and they all live in a very deprived area of Bristol.

To carry out this research I have prepared a number of questions, because I want to do
a semi structured interview, where I ask students and parents two sets of questions (as
you can see in appendix II) which is all same for the students and also same questions
to the parents and some time when I interviewed I also asked more questions in order
to clarify what they mean about something they said to me. The reason I have chosen
to do this way is to find out if these questions produce same or similar answers from
different students and from different parents. Then, these answers will give me an
empirical data which I can analyse and discuss further its finding.

In order to find ways of improving educational outcomes of Somali heritage students, I
tried to design certain question which I tough will help me to get answers for my
research question, which was what help or hinder educational attainment of Somali
heritage students in inner city schools?

These questions cover the knowledge of the parents, their educational inspiration and
attitude toward learning, their English language competence, their understanding of
education system and the kind of collaboration schools have with the parents. They
also cover the students attitude toward learning, the resource and the interventions
which schools provide for these students as they join their schools, what the children
feel is the highest barrier they encountered during their school time and finally what the parents and schools can do together in order to support these students to overcome these barriers which prevent them to achieve as well as other ethnic groups or better.

Although I also planned to interview some teachers and some school based staff in order to find what is their view regarding what prevent Somali heritage students attain good grades, I finally decided to abandon just because the restriction of timescale of my research and it is clear that I can not do the triangulation I wished to do in order to get more accurate and reliable finding in this research. However there are so many researches which focused on what the teachers think about this problem and their finding is more or less similar. I do not know if my interview would have contributed the finding of any different responses from the teachers, because, personally I do not believe that, as a researcher coming from the same background of these students would have changed the responses of same teacher or make them to rephrase the way they should answer compared to the answer they would give any other researcher from different background of these particular students asking same questions. But I do not find any research which back up this hypothesis which I think itself would need a separate research.

My research would focus on students and parent’s perspectives of the underachievement of Somali heritage students and what they think would be good to do in order to improve the attainment of these students when they are finishing their secondary school. It also tries to enquire parents and students if there are anything they want to suggest which school, parents and students can do together in order to strength their collaboration, which then will help the achievement of their common goal which is the improving of educational outcomes of these students. To do that as you can see at the next part of the dissertation I would analyse and discuss the finding of my research by using the questions I have asked and the responses parents and students gave me during my interview.

Finding and discussion of this research

As I have mentioned previously this research is focused on students and parents perspectives of what causes low attainment of Somali students and how these children can improve their attainment.
All parents whom I interviewed in this research, agreed that there are so many factors which contribute under attainment of these students, but they also argued that some of these problems are temporary problems (like language acquisition) and they think that these children would overcome these issues if they are supported properly by schools and create close collaboration between schools and parents and the community as whole.

There are three main areas which I focused on this research. Most of the questions I asked parents and students lead or contribute to find out something about these three areas. The first one is the resource schools provide for newly arrived students when they first join the school. Second one is, if there is any link between the understanding of education system of the parents and the achievement of their children and the final one is, what the parents and students think about what contributes the educational outcomes of Somali children in inner city schools.

Before I go into details through these three areas of my research which will help to answer my research question about what hinder or help educational attainment of Somali children in inner city schools in Bristol, I need to analyse some general finding of these students, particularly their economic background, the resources families invest on education and how that effected their children’s learning.

As it is represented on figure 4 seventy five percentages of the students whom I interviewed are eligible for FSM and it is higher than what Demie found in her research (Demie, 2008). Despite the fact that these children are from different schools and can not be compared to school cohort, it is significant to known that as a researcher I have not chosen those students, for their eligibility of free school meal but it was just by chance and it shows how common is the eligibility of FSM with in this community.
However, as we have seen earlier on Bristol ethnic minority attainment plan 2010-2013 (LEA Bristol 2010 p,2) there is no correlation between being eligible of FSM and their attainment. As its represented on figure 5 all these students are predicted to gain their 5 GCSEs A*-C, when they finish secondary school and half of them are predicted to gain 5 GCSEs A*-C included English and Maths.

According to this data and the one on the Figure 2, findings are similar but they do not necessarily explain why these students are not conforming the uphold theory of the link between low attainment and eligibility of FSM. One thing they both confirm, though,
is the necessity of being careful of using data, particularly when their prediction can have unwanted effect on some students like lowering the expectation of them achieving good grades. For this particular students, it is important to investigate more in this area and if the other research confirm same finding it is important that schools and local authority rely less on this particular measurement, because there is real contradiction between what this indicator measure and how that reflect on these students.

The attainment of these students who participated this research is not low and I tried to find out more about what contributed to this good result. To find out more, I wanted to see what parents and children do after school and what they have in their houses which may contribute these good results. More than seventy five percentage of them confirmed that they had or having some sort of extra tuition outside of the school. They said that, all of them have got computer and internet access at home which they use for education and entertainment purpose, and half of them have a place to do their homework at home or near to the house despite the overcrowded houses. Those who have not got space at home, they use their bedrooms to do their homework.

Figure 6

Designated Learning Area in the House

- Yes, I Have
- No, I do Not Have
- I Use Community Hall

25%
25%
50%
One particular student told me that he has not got a place at home to do his home work, but he said that, he uses community room which most of the time is availible and he finds the resources he needed by himself, as he described on here:

Yes, I use this community room as a place to read and do revisions, when it comes resources, I personally identify what I need then I try to find my self, because there is no that much here. I always go and research into the internet to print staff and so on and that is something I personally do and there is no one who tells me what to do or where to find resources. (Appendix I Student A, 2011. P, 1)

This shows how resourceful these children are, despite the economical difficulties they are in, they are aware that they can find the necessary means to achieve what they want, for example; finding where to do their home work. It also shows that these children are highly motivated to learn and they see that they are responsible for their learning. This is something which I have not explored very well in this research but, as Student A said in above quote, they personally try to fill the gap between what they need and what their parents can provide for them. For these children and particularly the highly motivated ones, their economical circumstances are not a real indicator which can predict their attainment.

With in the interview I have asked all the participants, how long they have been in UK. Most of them told me that, they have been here less than six years except one family who has been here for ten years. One of the major contributors of low achievement of Somali children is the fluency of English language, As Cameron (2002 p, 148) noted in her paper of measuring the vocabulary size of English. EAL children take five to seven years to gain expectable level which will help them to perform as their peers. There is a correlation between how long student been here and the possibility they can become a fluent speaker which can perform expected level of their year group.

As you can note on figure 5, only fifty percentages of students who I interviewed are predicted to achieve 5 GCSEs included English. So I have asked students, if they get any support from the school to help them get better in English language. All of them said that they had some sort of support, but they all feel that the support were not enough compared the work they have to engage in the class and they recognise that all their schools should improve the support they give these students, not only when they are new but they reckon that they need on going support and assessment until they become confident in writing, because they see that the writing is the area which they struggle the most. So they suggest that schools should invest more in supporting their need which is completely different than other students.
To prove, if there is a link between the low attainment of Somali background students and understanding of their parents in education system of this country, I have asked parents their knowledge about education system of UK. Most of the parents I interviewed have got some knowledge of the education system of the country, although they recognise that they are always finding new things because almost everything in education is a continuously changed. One particular parent compared his knowledge of education of when he first came to the country and now, and he said:

When I first enrolled my children into the schools, especially the first four years, I used to take children to the school and leave them when they go into the school and I have not found anyone who explained me what I am supposed to do in order to support my children, I thought that the school would deal the education of the children. When I meet the teacher at the parent evenings, teacher tells you, a lot of good things of the children without directly telling you what the education level of the children are. But if the teachers tell to the parents that their children would not achieve what they suppose to achieve, then parents would try to help their children, but if the teacher do not give the parents the right information parents would only get these right information when it is too late to deal with it. After four years I learned the role of the parents in the education of this country and I started to do all the possible ways which I can support my children to do well in education. Personally, I learned the expected levels of each key stage, which helped to plan better of what each child needs. That is what helped me the most, in terms of supporting and participating my children’s education. With out my support, it would not be possible that my children do as high as they are doing now. (Appendix I Parent A, 2011. P, 4)

This show the importance of giving parents all the information they need as soon as they join the school. It also shows that these parents are ready to support their children and deal to their needs, but many of them get these vital informations when it is too late as Parent A described. One of these parents is parent governor and he has been working with the school, since his children started this school. I asked him if the school has supported him to understand the parent role in education in this country and he said:

I do not think that school helped me to understand my role in education but, it was me who initiated. Schools should help parents to understand education system, especially newly arrived parents and they have to tell their role in education. This will help schools and parents and its schools responsibility to contact and invite parents and explain their role in education. (Appendix I, Parent C, 2011. P,16)
This is what almost every parent said, regarding the role of the school in order to support newly arrived parents to understand the educational differences between their country of origin and this country.

All the parents who participated this research were well informed regarding their role in education. That awareness helped them to do their part in improving their children’s achievement. The demonstration of the link between understanding of education system and the attainment of the children in this research is clear, because most of these children are doing well despite some of them being here less than five years. What also contributed their achievement is not just their mere understanding of the education system, but their willing to act on what they have learned regarding the difference between educational system of this country and their county.

At the same topic, I asked students what they think is the major barrier which prevents Somali students to achieve well. Half of the students recognise that, what these students are lacking is the support of their parents. Because, if the parents are aware of what is the need of their children in education, they would be better prepared to support their children as student A said:

> I think, it goes back to the parents, the reason I say this is, if the parents are not aware the importance of the education, importance of going school every day and keeping their children into the right truck, if the parent are not doing that, the students at that age they will put themselves into the bucking order in the school and try to be fool and show off everyone. If no one tell them how education is important and are not watched, they tend to slack off and quit education. (Appendix I, Student A. 2011. p, 3)

Another student said:

> Not gaining enough support. Most of them think, that, because they come late this country, they can not achieve. I am little bit fortunate because my dad can speak English and he can support me, but many of these children, parents do not support them and the only people who support them is either their peer group mentor or teacher. (Appendix I, Student C, 2011. P, 14)

All these understandably demonstrate why Somali students are not doing well in education, despite students and parents claim to give education high value. What we need to differentiate here, is the real participation of the parents in education, which is needed in this country and the mere claim of high value which parents give education with out doing anything. If parents value education as they claim and support their children, it is more likely that their children do as the one I have interviewed, but it is
clear that many parents do so little to support their children, at the same time they have not got schools that hold parents into account of what is expected from them.

Finally, I have asked students and parents what they think school and parents can do together to improve educational outcome of these children. And one parent commented:

The most important thing is that, the school provide for these students the necessary support they need and parents to build good communication with the school and if they can, they should provide their children the necessary tools of learning including tutors, like one to one tuition. Also community has to support the students. Now days, students are drifted away from education. They are tempted to go into the streets, to hang around. This is also a problem for Somali community. Schools has to play role, teachers should provide the support Somali children need. If we want to improve educational attainment of Somali children, schools has to do more, parents has to do more and community has to do more and work together as a partners. (Appendix I, Parent C, 2011, P 17)

Most of the parents recognise that the schools need to improve the communication between parents and school; also I feel that school should consult Somali parents when they want to plan an intervention for these students. They must consult individual parents, which their child is going to have an intervention and together agree what school should do and parents do at home in order to work in harmony and reduce any confusion which can create a problem for the student.

Students also recognise, that more support staff will improve educational outcome of these children by providing for them one to one sessions:

They should provide students one to one session and after school classes. Also it is important that schools employ people who can speak these children’s language and understand their culture who can support them through out the school. School and parents should try to create the children’s mind the greater benefit of succeeding in school. Also improving the communication between school and parents would have good effect. (Appendix I Student C, 2011, p 15)

This is very close of what other research found:

All those interviewed believed that one important step that would help Somali students and their families is to hire more Somali teachers and teaching assistants. Their presence would help with the language barrier, as well as provide positive Somali role models and improve the cultural awareness and sensitivity of schools (Rasmussen, J. 2009, P,14)

Over all, these children and their parents, despite the economical difficulties they are in, they have got a lot of strength and most of them are willing to take their part in improving the educational outcome of Somali origin students, but something important is missing, which is school factor. I believe, unless schools particularly secondary
schools open themselves and try to go extra mile, in order to equip these parents and their children what they needed, we may not necessarily overcome this problem. However I put forward all my recommendations and further research which I believe will contribute the solution of this long standing problem.

Further research

This research is a very small research, to get full picture of what causes the low attainment of somali heritage students in key stage four, however it gives us some understanding of what we need to do which we will see in the reccomentation. It also helped us to recognise which area we should do further research in order to get full picture of this problem.

One of the finding of this research was that, the resource provided from schools to these children are not enough to support them learn English language. Also children received these support when they were only new. It is important to researcbh in order to know the stracture of these support and how it effects the childrens attainment of English language. This is unclear and it is a very important factor which can contribute the progress and the attainment of these children when they are finishing secondary school.

Another area which I would like to suggest in order to carry out a full research is, the teachers prespective of low attainment of these students, especially the teachers who work in inner city schools of Bristol and compare with the prespective of the parents and students.

The final point which I think would be good to research is why schools are reluctant to help parents to undersatnd their role in education in general and particularly to these newly arrived parents, who desprately need to understand the education system and what prevent schools to support these parents?

There are so many other areas which I could suggest but these three seemed to me, that they need immidate attention, because they all seem that , they would have direct effect on improving the children’s attainment in secondary school. The other reason which indicates the need of these researches is the lack of literature of this area which support these schools, who want improve the attainment of these children but do not have literature which support their ideas, particularly research done in Bristol, regarding
reducing the low attainment of the students from Somali community. By doing good qualitative research around these three area will probably generate good finding which will shape a good recommendation where schools can use as a bases to assess their strategies and also use it to make any change if its needed.

Conclusion

To answer my research question, which was what help or hinder good educational outcome of Somali heritage students in key stage four in inner city schools, my research, I focused on three areas;

- Resource provided by the schools to these student and if that is enough to contribute good educational outcome of these children
- The link between understanding of education system of the parents in this country and the likelihood of gaining good grades
- Why some of somali children are performing well

Although, it is clear that good attainment depend on so many factors, the understanding of education system is the major contributor of education success, because unless parents know where they children are compared to their age group, even if they want to support their children, they can not provide a relevant support which help them to overcome their educational barriers. At the same time every one recognised that school factor is an important contributor of good resultes, but the resource these children received from their school are non sufficient to improve their attainment. And finally, from this research, it is not strongly clear why some Somali students performe better than others. However, there are findings from this research which helped these students to performe well, like; the educational support student get from school and outside of the school, the emotional and academical support they get from their parents and children’s determination of doing well in education are all what can be seen contributed educational success of these children.

Looking back of how I carried out this research, there are somethings which I probably need to improve if I should take again this kind of research. First of all the time which I had availible was not enough, compared with the work I suppose to do in order to collect a data from all contributers of successful education. For example, I planned to interview students, parents and teachers in order to get good triangulations around the causes of under achievement of Somali children, but because of the time constrain, I
decided to scale down and I only interviewed parents and students. I also wanted to interview mix gender of students and parents but the number of the people who were willing to participate this research were only boys and fathers. I can understand, that this could be contributed to the culture of this community, but if I had more time I could be used different channels to include girls and their mums in the interview, however what boys and fathers said about the causes of the underachievement of Somali children might be general regardless their gender. Also if I had improved the kind of questions I asked to the parents and the children could have contributed more finding, then what I discussed on this research.

What helped me the most, which I will repeat doing it, if I should carry similar research is, the extent of literature which I have read, before and during the time I was doing this research. These readings helped me to see what other researcher found and what they recommended. Here, there is a risk of agreeing what other researchers found and become bias toward their findings. Having that awareness helped me to recognise that, I had to be careful, regarding what the interviewees answers could be and sometimes I asked again the same question to clarify if they mean what they said. Also sharing my idea with other colleague were something which I think contributed the development of my research which I will do if I should carry a similar research. And finally the discussion I had with community members regarding this issue contributed the overall importance of researching in this area and boosted my confident and helped to be determine of finishing this research.

After this research and the finding it generated, I strongly believe that these children have got an excellent possibility to improve their attainment levels in key stage four, but it requires synchronised energy from school and parents. As I have analysed the finding of this research these children and this community were not fully analysed their peculiarity, and there are so many indicators which they do not fit as other ethnic minorities, and doing more research will help to determine more unknow reality regarding this community, but of course, will help to determine what can have positive impact on attainment of these children in inner city schools.

The ultimate goal of the school is improving the attainment of all children in their school and Somali parents ultimate goal is their children to do well in every year group they are in, despite all the adversity they are facing in their adapted city. But this would never be easy to achieve, it needs courage and determination from both sides, however building good and trustworthy partnership between parents and schools is the
only way forward which will contribute more interesting collaboration between parents and the school. I do not believe that, each one of them can have the solution without the contribution of the other, but both of them can contribute more sustainable solution for this problem, so schools, has to admit that they can not resolve this problem by themselves and they have to encourage parents to be their equal partners. Schools have got the authority which parents have not got, for that reason, if schools and particularly school leadership are not willing to build these equal partnership, under attainment problems would exist or would never be reduced as much as we wanted.

Recommendations

My recommendations are directed into four different bodies which I think, each one has its own input, regarding educational outcome of Somali students at key stage four and they are; Local Authority, Schools, Parents and Somali community.

Local Authority:

- Should invest more research on understanding of the barriers which prevent Somali students to do well in education in key stage four.
- Should invest and train Somali teacher and support staff, who can become a role model to these parents and their children.
- Should improve the data collection of schools and Somalis should be recognised an ethnic group like; Bangladesh and Pakistan, in order to find more accurate data from these children.
- Should invest more resource in literacy and literacy support into the schools where there are high number of Somali children.
- Should develop a good and sound relation with supplementary schools and help them to develop.

Schools:

- Should listen and engage with the parents and act up on their concern.
- Should build strong partnership with parents, which is not a ticking box, which is created to show Ofsted, but real and genuine partnership which is two way relationship.
- Should have well regarded EAL department, which liase and help newly arrived students and their parents.
• Should provide for parents information sessions, where schools explain parents their role in the education of this country.
• Should invest more in language acquisition and writing skills.
• Should hire more Somali staff who can help the school to understand the background of these students.
• Should provide newly arrived student, particularly the one who join the school at the key stage four, more reduced curriculum, which help them to learn core subjects.
• Should provide extra classes for newly arrived children, to help them catch up their peers.

Parents:

• Should engage with the schools and ask schools to help them to understand the education system of UK.
• Should support their children academically and emotionally.
• Should avoid blame culture, where they think that schools are not helping their children, but they have to help themselves first then ask help from the school.
• Should improve their understanding of English language in every level.
• Should support each other and share their knowledge regarding education.
• Should praise their children and stop belittling them.

Somali Community:

• Should support Local Authority and schools to understand Somali culture.
• Should organise achievement days, where children are given certificates and praise for their hard work.
• Should build strong relationship and collaboration between supplementary schools managed by Somali members.
• Should organise events where the community give recognition anyone who supported these children to succeed, whether they are teachers or parents.
Bibliography


Bristol City Council (2010) Targeted Interventions to Raise BME Attainment:


