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GATEway2Success Open Day and MEaP Symposium, April 2nd 2016

Commentary

Plenary Discussion

Discussion Points from Plenary	Brief Reflective Comments
<i>Partnership building between mainstream and supplementary schools</i>	<p>The discussion around this theme very much centred on how we could avoid a fragmented and self-segregating education system. However, one emergent conclusion was that mainstream schools were in fact already self-segregating by virtue of their reluctance to build partnerships with supplementary schools. This aspect of a closed market was highlighted by the mention of a lack of financial incentives for mainstream schools to engage. This appeared to be exacerbated by the general marketisation of the educational terrain and the approaching academisation of all schools. This meant that mainstream schools in feeling under threat by market competition were unlikely to open their doors to community organisations without the promise of direct economic benefit.</p> <p>However, this fragmentation and self-segregation appeared to be also driven by the PREVENT agenda, where a fear of the unfamiliar was seen to be driving the reluctance to engage. So, where we had talks around safeguarding and accountability, really what we were discussing was levels of 'opacity'. Elsewhere (Clennon, 2016), I write at great length about how a perceived level of threat posed by Muslim communities and their 'opaque' cultures generate self-fulfilling prophecies of perceived <i>risk</i>. This is a worrying trend because instead of reaching out to community organisations (supplementary schools) as a means of removing their perceived opacity, mainstream schools are using this opacity as an excuse for</p>
What are we doing to connect with mainstream schools?	
How can Local Authorities help to connect supplementary and mainstream schools?	
Using Local Authorities as brokers between mainstream and supplementary schools.	
Can we develop partnerships with mainstream schools through the shared provision of extra-curricular activities?	
Barriers to collaboration with mainstream schools seem to be about perception in terms of the professionalism of supplementary teachers.	
Mainstream schools would prefer to have control over supplementary school curricula if their premises are being used.	
Issues around accountability and safeguarding are major factors in discouraging mainstream schools to partner with supplementary schools.	
Logistical issues around building management (and costs) for hosting supplementary schools are also factors in the disconnect between supplementary and mainstream schools.	
Is the lack of partnerships between mainstream and supplementary schools down to financial issues?	
Can schools collaborate with each other without sharing physical resources?	



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How do we make sure that supplementary schools are working in partnership with mainstream schools and not in competition with them?	not engaging in partnership building and resource sharing. This excuse is both damning and damaging because it plays into the narrative of regarding all Muslim communities as being risky and deserving of mistrust. This cultural dimension of marginalisation was explored further in our discussion around critical theory and culture (see later section), where the effects of the closed market are not just limited to Muslim communities and their supplementary schools.
Academisation is making partnership building with supplementary schools more difficult.	
PREVENT has exacerbated these challenges.	
Can supplementary schools help mainstream schools to understand cultural issues within their communities more deeply?	
Is there a new role for supplementary schools as community liaison agencies for mainstream schools?	
<i>Data Collection Challenges for Supplementary Schools</i>	This discussion thread seem to be born directly out of the lack of partnership discussed earlier. Could university partnerships play a role in addressing this need for technical expertise? Would it be possible to build on attainment reports such as the 2015 <i>Paul Hamlyn Foundation: Supplementary Schools?</i> (Evans & Gillan-Thomas, 2015)
How do supplementary schools collect data around pupil progression and attainment?	
There is no (or very little) data sharing between supplementary and mainstream schools.	
A preparatory focus on the transition between primary and secondary/independent school.	
Supplementary school/parental partnership to help with baselining and data collection of pupil attainment.	
Supplementary schools need more resources to continue individual pupil assessment.	
How can supplementary schools capture the success stories of attainment apart from only relying on examination success?	
How can we distinguish between the impact of supplementary and mainstream schools on overall pupil attainment?	
<i>Pedagogy of Supplementary Schools</i>	This was an interesting discussion thread because it located the pedagogy ¹ of supplementary schools in the community. Using parents to help baseline their children's
What do we mean by "hands on" experience in supplementary education?	

¹ Meaning everything to do with teaching – its methods and practice.



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<p>Team teaching between university and supplementary school staff.</p>	<p>attainment was significant because it meant that parents were used as pivotal agents between their children's mainstream and supplementary schools. This also implied the need for parents to be given the skills and confidence to navigate their children's mainstream schools' systems in order to be able to collect the necessary data needed for baselining. This idea of parents' engagement with mainstream data collection as an integral part of supplementary pedagogy was powerful. Would it be possible to systematically train/mentor parents as co-researchers to co-produce knowledge via attending PTA meetings where they actively archive school reports and progress statements (collecting data) for the application in their supplementary schools? Is this something that universities can help to develop, alongside existing team-teaching opportunities? In other words strengthening the assessment work and parental mentoring supplementary schools already undertake.</p>
<p>Supplementary schools can engage more effectively with parents and this can have a positive effect on potential mainstream partnerships.</p>	
<p>Using parents to help monitor educational progress.</p>	
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<p><i>Critical Theory and Culture</i></p>	
<p>How can we promote diversity within our supplementary schools' curricula?</p>	<p>The matter of culture and how we teach culture was an intriguing matter that was raised by our audience. In many ways, these are central issues in defining the role and function of supplementary schools.²</p> <p>This points to the heart of supplementary education and its strong inclinations towards a critical pedagogy. In questioning Eurocentric knowledge centres³, we are questioning the very systems which (re)produce social inequalities. Education is the prime site of contestation for identity and epistemology because it informs the function and role of all of our institutions, which are vestigial remnants of our colonial past and present.⁴</p>
<p>Are mainstream schools' ideas of diversity only skin deep?</p>	
<p>Recognising the nuances between different ethnic groups within BAME. For example, is it possible to recognise the distinct diasporan history of the Caribbean?</p>	
<p>The Jamaican sociologist, Stuart Hall calls this the "Diaspora Experience". Hall says that "cut and mix" is a feature of hybridity and this is a central feature of the Caribbean. (Hall, 1996, p. 448)</p>	
<p>Decolonising our history means acknowledging the non-Eurocentric origins of much Eurocentric knowledge.</p>	

² i.e. how we form counter-narratives to the mainstream that include everyone's history.

³ Everything to do with knowledge, its origins, its generation, its curation, its transmission is summed up by the term epistemology.

⁴ In his *Logic of Practice*, Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53) describes habitus, as [s]ystems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and



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<p>The PREVENT agenda is exacerbating the erasure of the historical Muslim contribution to the canon of European history and knowledge.</p>	<p>I was particularly struck by the identification of the need for nuance in discussing culture and cultural contribution. The argument for decentralising Eurocentric epistemology in favour of the inclusion of other cultures was especially key from the perspective of representing all cultures and their contributions and moving away from a cultural homogenisation whether Euro or Afrocentric.⁵</p> <p>In view of the current wider campaigns to 'decolonise' our education (#RhodesMustFall and others), we have the opportunity to look at how supplementary schools can decolonise their epistemologies. Can we examine the processes by which decolonisation could take place through the application of liberatory teaching and ideas (via extra-curricular activities) as opposed to the emancipatory, where there is a conscious attempt to de-link knowledge production from our colonial knowledge systems?⁶</p> <p>The suggestion that a decolonisation of education could actually lead to more effective community cohesion in relation to the PREVENT agenda was profound. This line of thought was significant because it explicitly linked the decolonisation of our education to a wider political (civil</p>
<p>Looking to complete our understanding of everyone's contribution to world history.</p>	
<p>This is also known as "decolonising" our education.</p>	
<p>Could acknowledgement of historical non-European contributions, pave the way for true community cohesion?</p>	

representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them.

This is very much how our institutions act and how education works to protect their powers of domination. The heart of institutional function as habitus is their ability to define their own rules and impose them as "everyday" normality for the populous. If these institutional rules have within them, embedded ideologies and systems of social inequality, then they become very powerful and dangerous in being the civic mechanisms of control and vehicles for structural inequality.

⁵ This has implications for the present call for a contemporary Pan Africanism. However, the same issues of homogeneity can easily apply when blurring the distinct histories and political movements of specific African Diaspora groups. A blanket Pan Africanism which is led by an apparent African American universalisation of civil rights is yet just another form of Americanisation and indeed a subset of Eurocentric expansion, as explored elsewhere (Clennon, 2016; Clennon, 2015) and is as dangerous as direct Eurocentrism.

⁶ The Argentine semiotician and academic, Walter Mignolo clearly outlines the ideological differences between emancipatory (Eurocentric) and liberatory (non-Eurocentric) ideologies in his edited volume *Globalization and the Decolonial Option* (Mignolo & Escobar, 2010)



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	rights) agenda and located it in the liberatory power (potential) of our supplementary schools.
<i>Culture of low expectations in our classrooms</i>	<p>Following on from the discussion around critical theory and culture, the feeling that low expectations existed in mainstream classrooms was very strong. Elsewhere (Clennon, 2014), I write at length about the mainstream’s superficial appreciation of culture in favour of a Eurocentric grand narrative of British cultural colonial achievement. The obvious consequence of this institutional cultural amnesia is that the children whose heritages are forgotten are perceived to not hail from communities with a distinct intellectual heritage. This asks direct questions about mainstream teacher training and its lack of cultural competency training and in depth study of critical theory. Without this form of training in initial teacher training programmes, these knowledges cannot be incorporated into national (or otherwise) curriculum teaching.</p> <p>However, what was interesting was the report of the rising trend of some Muslim schools to focus on attainment rather than on cultural and heritage study. I wonder <i>if</i> we were able to use the appropriate teaching tools like the ones described in the <i>Mentoring in Education Commentary</i>, whether we couldn’t strive to do both, simultaneously?</p>
Culture of low expectations in our mainstream classrooms.	
We are talking about British born children (from various communities) who are not being catered for.	
7000 children in Manchester each week attend supplementary education.	
In the manner of some African Caribbean schools, many Muslim supplementary schools are beginning to focus on academic attainment instead of culture and religion.	
<i>University Partnerships</i>	<p>As the <i>Educational Excellence Everywhere</i> white paper seeks to welcome the opening of 500 more Free Schools and UTCs⁷ by 2020, there would appear to be a structured opportunity for supplementary schools to work closely with universities to explore these issues around critical theory, cultural competency, liberatory education <i>and</i> teacher training. As universities are increasingly obliged to demonstrate the public impact of their research in order to receive research funding from HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England), I wonder whether it is now the right time for supplementary schools to boldly explore</p>
Can universities involve supplementary schools in the placement of their education students?	
Finding the gatekeepers within the university to build partnerships with supplementary schools.	

⁷ University Technical Colleges



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	funded university-school partnerships to address these cultural and epistemic issues at the grass roots?
<i>Opportunities for Supplementary Schools</i>	One conclusion from this discussion thread was the need for supplementary schools to involve themselves more deeply in enterprise education. It was discussed that in the absence of an open market with equal access to all, communities had to think about ways of generating enterprise opportunities for themselves. We also discussed supplementary schools forming partnerships with local businesses who could provide work placements and employment opportunities. This thread underlined the central position supplementary schools occupy in their communities and that they need to make more use of their expansive community networks and the fact that they are often the nodal centres of these networks.
Supplementary schools need to strategically examine Educational Excellence Everywhere to look for opportunities.	
The educational white paper seems to neglect enterprise.	
We need to develop entrepreneurial skills in our children from an earlier age.	

For more symposium commentaries visit <https://critracemmu.wordpress.com/making-education-a-priority-meap>

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