Effective Leadership in Multi-Ethnic Schools

Part I: Priorities, Strategies and Challenges

Part II: School Community Perspectives and their Leadership Implications

Authors

Part I: Priorities, Strategies and Challenges

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**Part II: School Community Perspectives and their
Leadership Implications**

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Preface

This research report explores issues relating to the effective leadership of English schools in which a substantial proportion of students are from minority ethnic communities.

The education of diverse groups of students from different cultural and minority ethnic groups continues to climb higher on political, social and educational agendas the world over (Banks & McGee Banks, 2003). Educational provision to best meet the needs of minority ethnic students and the communities they represent has for many years presented serious challenges to schools and school systems. These challenges have recently taken on a new complexity, as global, social and domestic demographics have shifted in response to political and economic circumstances, and through both forced and voluntary migration (Gardner, 2001). The nature of demographic movements means that the contours of ethnic diversity are constantly shifting. Global trends, whether driven by the imperatives of labour markets, or the consequences of military conflicts, are resulting in ever more fluid population movements. Communities, especially in urban areas, are increasingly dynamic in their ethnic composition. Such changes need to be reflected in our understanding of schooling and educational processes.

Ethnic diversity has long been a feature of schools in England, especially schools located in urban areas. Many of those in such schools have considerable experience of working in multi-ethnic environments. However, for several years, there have been concerns about the extent to which such schools are able to provide an education that meets the needs of both individual students from minority ethnic backgrounds and an ethnically diverse society. These concerns were most clearly articulated for the first time in the Swann Report (Swann, 1985), and have been the subject of continuous debate since then. More recently, the Macpherson Report (Macpherson, 1999), which followed the racially motivated murder of a schoolboy, Stephen Lawrence, has served to emphasise the persistent nature of these issues, whilst research relating to the differential rates of achievement between ethnic groups has persistently highlighted different, but related, concerns.

Though research on school leadership and management has tended to approach its subject matter from a context-neutral perspective – focusing on the generalities of leadership and transferring these unproblematically across schools, regardless of context - more recently, there has been recognition of the importance of context. For example, there has been increasing attention paid to the specificities of leading and managing schools in areas of social disadvantage (Louis & Miles, 1990; Stoll & Myers, 1997; Harris & Chapman, 2002). The project reported here seeks to add to the body of context-specific research by exploring issues of school leadership and management in schools with a significant proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds. It attempts to inform the work that headteachers have to do in meeting the challenges of providing worthwhile, socially responsible and equitable education to diverse groups. Those

challenges are at once both exciting and frightening. The challenges frighten because they confront prejudice, injustice and historical misconceptions that are so profoundly entrenched in the fabric of our systems that they often appear insurmountable. They are exciting not only for the potential vibrancy and richness they carry, but also for their too-often muted promise to help build a more equitable and even society.

Key findings

This research has highlighted the need to locate an understanding of school leadership processes within a school-specific context. The ethnic profile of the school student population decisively shapes this context and in turn shapes the actions and responses of school leaders. This study identified a number of factors that were important aspects of successful school leadership and that, when located within the context of a multi-ethnic school, took on a distinctive nature. It highlights three key findings.

1. Successful school leadership in multi-ethnic schools is based on the articulation and implementation of explicit values that promote an agenda of equality, fairness and respect. The notion of a values-driven leadership was central to the school leaders in the case study schools. These leaders defined their leadership, and their aspirations for the school, in terms of their commitment to principles of social justice. The clarity of these values provided school leaders with a moral compass with which to shape their leadership role.

2. School leaders in multi-ethnic schools project their leadership beyond the school and into the wider community. School leaders are well known in their communities and respected for the way in which they work with community representatives and respond to community needs. Leaders in the case study schools did not see their responsibility to their students as confined to the perimeter of the school fence, nor the ring of the school bell. Boundaries between the school and the community were largely ephemeral, with significant resources being devoted to ensuring that parents and the wider community were encouraged to participate fully in the life of the school.

3. School leadership is shaped decisively by context. Issues of ethnicity have an important role to play in forming that context. However, it is important to develop a more sophisticated understanding of context – in particular, the unique ways in which local community factors, based largely on demography, are interdependent with local labour market factors in which parents are able to exercise choice between schools. These micro-contextual factors exert a significant influence on how school leaders perform their role and it is important to recognise these when analysing how leadership is exercised in a multi-ethnic school context.

Defining terms

Throughout this report, the term 'ethnic group' is used to describe the background of students who provide a focus for this study. It is recognised that the terms 'race' and 'racial group', with their implied notions of biological determinism, are inappropriate and unhelpful in this context. Notions of ethnicity are largely socially constructed and are based on shared cultural values and norms that distinguish one group from another. This sense of cultural distinction can be highlighted by a number of factors including language, history, ancestry, religion and styles of dress. In this sense, it is important to recognise that 'ethnic differences are wholly learned' (Giddens, quoted in Gillborn, 1990). As such, this term best reflects the reality, and increasing complexity, of cultural diversity in contemporary England (Hall, 1996). The term 'minority ethnic group' corresponds to the Pupil Level Annual School Census descriptors that designate specific ethnic groups in this way. Within the context of this study, the particular ethnic profile within the case study schools varied considerably, with members of some 'minority' ethnic groups forming a majority of the student population in that school.

Part 1: Priorities, Strategies and Challenges

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Introduction

The challenges of multicultural education are not confined by national or societal boundaries. Educators in countries from New Zealand to Holland, Australia to Canada, Singapore to the United States (US), and China to the United Kingdom (UK), to name but some, face common if differently shaped issues at various stages of maturity. For example, Singaporean schools have, since national formation, consciously structured to battle racism and advance educational opportunities for Indian, Malay, Chinese and Eurasian students, while Hong Kong schools are only now becoming broadly aware of multicultural education. Schools in Australia, the US and New Zealand continue to battle institutionalised racism and the endemic underachievement of members of both indigenous groups and other minority ethnic groups. Gay (2004, p.30) describes the latter of these problems in the US thus: 'As disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes among ethnic groups continue to grow, the resulting achievement gap has reached crisis proportions'. Similar problems endure for certain ethnic groups in UK schools where the students who are 'most likely to underachieve come from African-Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Pakistani backgrounds' (Gillborn & Gipps, 1996, cited in Blair, 2002, p.82).

The real work of designing and implementing meaningful programmes for students from minority ethnic groups falls squarely on the shoulders of teachers, mid-level school leaders, parents, school support staff and headteachers, often in partnership with various formal and informal community support and interest groups. The focus of this report is headteachers in schools with substantial numbers of minority ethnic students.

This report is based on data collected from the headteachers of five case study schools as part of a larger project, which focused on the leadership of schools with substantial numbers of minority ethnic students This project was being undertaken by the University of Leicester's Centre for Leadership and Management on behalf of the National College for School Leadership (NCSL). The headteachers all had established reputations as 'good leaders' of multi-ethnic schools. The mother project collected perceptions from a range of formal school leaders, teachers, students and community members, and these are reported on in the second part of this booklet. This report draws on perceptions of the headteachers themselves and attempts to locate some of the challenges they face within an international context. This segment of the investigation has three main aims. These are to:

- elicit the perspectives held by headteachers of issues related to their leadership of schools with substantial numbers of minority ethnic students

- clarify the major priorities and associated effective practices employed by headteachers in leading multi-ethnic schools

- discuss the tensions and challenges faced by the headteachers as they attempt to exercise effective leadership

This report has four major sections.

- The first section introduces the headteachers as proactive and active leaders committed to addressing issues of social justice in their schools. Five forms of proactive leadership are described.

- The second section briefly outlines the six major priorities of the headteachers. These focus on demanding that staff work to understand the values and needs of the students, locating the school firmly within its constituency and building an inclusive culture.

- The third section attempts to isolate some of the strategies employed by the headteachers as they pursued their priorities. For example, the headteachers actively reaffirmed and encouraged the values and contributions of minority ethnic staff and community members.

- The fourth section discusses the often complex challenges facing the headteachers involved in the study. These challenges are augmented by related discussion from other contexts and raise awareness of the difficulties headteachers do and will continue to face. The data and ideas reported do not presume to cover all the priorities, strategies and challenges facing headteachers; this would be impossible to achieve here. However, they do represent at least some of the major issues headteachers must deal with and summarise their values-driven attempts to make a difference in the lives of the students in their schools.

Headteachers as proactive leaders

"The tendency to locate the blame for underachievement in students and their communities overlooks the role of schools as institutions, and teachers and headteachers as leaders, in processes that lead to poor student performance." Blair, 2002, p.182

The headteachers in the multi-ethnic schools involved in the study held a clearly articulated and unwavering commitment to attacking ingrained societal inequalities, particularly racism and poverty, and saw this as inexorably linked to students' achievements. They did not rest on their laurels or the rhetoric of their values and beliefs but loudly proclaimed them and expended considerable strategic and practical energy toward their realisation, often in the face of quite daunting obstacles.

The headteachers involved in the study were both active and proactive in anticipating future problems, needs or changes based predominantly on what the school could do to equalise opportunities for their students. Like their colleagues in Singapore (Walker & Dimmock, 2002a) and the US (Henze, 2000), they showed that, despite powerful constraints, they believed they could make a difference, including to better race relations.

The beliefs and strategic intentions of the headteachers in the study showed dedication to recognising what Banks (1994) labels 'cultural difference' rather than 'cultural deficit'. Cultural deficit is the notion that students from minority ethnic groups often fail in school because of the culture in which they grow up. The assumption is that students from minority ethnic groups do not have the skills and knowledge to succeed – in short, that the culture of the student is the problem, not the culture of the school. As a result of this line of thinking, action toward multiculturalism is isolated and does not target the school as the agent of change. Cultural difference, on the other hand, assumes that minority ethnic students often fail because they have different values from those of the school, not because they are culturally deficient. According to this assumption, schools must themselves change to respect and include all cultures and institute strategies that are consistent with the cultural characteristics of the students (Minnesota Independent School Forum, 2001).

Based firmly within a dedication to cultural difference, the proactive demeanour of the headteachers in the study took at least five interrelated forms. These combined to give an outline to their leadership.

■ First, they held strong, equity-focused values and were almost aggressive in communicating these within and outside school boundaries. Their values were very personal to their educational and personal existence and vision, and this appeared to be the main factor driving their constant and forceful messaging.

■ Second, as well as wearing their values 'on their sleeves', they regularly reflected upon these values and how to apply them practically as strategies within their schools and the broader community.

■ Third, they did not just follow policy, but worked actively to shape it, even though the sometimes uneven intersection between broad government policy and priorities unique to their schools and communities often resulted in stressful tension. The headteachers vigorously sought to build synergy internally and between external and internal priorities to promote equality and inclusion.

■ Fourth, the leaders were proactive in their almost unshakeable belief that they could and would make a positive difference, not only in the immediate lives and learning of their students, but also to allay the disadvantages and inequalities too often attached to ethnicity and racism. The headteachers were generally positive people, even though they admitted they had a hard road to follow and faced considerable tension along the way.

■ Finally, the headteachers were not blind optimists: rather their proactiveness was grounded firmly in the realities of their own unique contexts. They stressed again and again, as do their colleagues in other countries, that each school, each community, each ethnic group and positions within the same ethnic group, vary, often to a significant degree.

In sum, the headteachers involved in the study were realistically proactive: they held strong personal beliefs about what they and their schools were attempting to do. They openly expressed and put into operation their values, using a range of strategies. They were transformers, who demanded action and commitment, rather than tolerators or tinkerers. They strongly believed that they could make a difference in their schools but were realistic about the influence of their context on what could be achieved: in other words, they recognised the inherent tensions of their jobs. They differentiated themselves from other cohorts of principals through their dedication to tackling disadvantages related to ethnicity, racism, culture and poverty aggressively. In short, they were committed to implementing in a very practical or hands-on way the principles of social justice.

Priorities, strategies and challenges

The work of the headteachers involved in the study can be described in any number of ways. For the purposes of this report, it will be discussed in terms of their priorities and strategies and the challenges they face. Findings within each of these elements reflect the headteachers' predisposition to take a proactive approach to school leadership.

■ **Priorities** here refer to the values, beliefs and principles, which the headteachers sought vigorously to embed into the life and operation of their schools. The priorities discussed here are not intended to encapsulate all those held by the headteachers, but do represent the strongest patterns that emerged from the data. In many ways, the six priorities identified here represent the non-negotiable or fundamental principles that guided their attempts to address issues of learning, living and social justice in their schools.

■ **Strategies** refer to the concrete actions taken by the principals to meet their priorities. The strategies of course varied considerably in terms of their shape and intensity across schools in line with their micro-contexts. They do, however, represent a collection of intentional actions taken by the headteachers. Although organised under priorities, the strategies were neither always linear nor deliberate, and they shifted in line with local conditions and the headteachers' predispositions.

■ **Challenges** are tensions, confusions or dilemmas faced by the headteachers as they attempted to pursue their complex agendas. These challenges often resulted from contradictory expectations, for example, between government policy and headteachers' priorities, between academic and social agendas or between personal and group goals. The challenges discussed include those raised by the headteachers involved in the study, as well as a number of those appearing in some international literature.

The following sections scan the headteachers' priorities and strategies, as well as the challenges they do or may well face during their tenure. The discussion draws on the conversations with the headteachers and a selection of international literature. More information, particularly relating to the priorities and strategies, can be accessed from the sister reports.

Priorities

The headteachers' values-driven priorities can be roughly grouped into six interrelated statements. The statements strongly reflect the principled and proactive pursuit of equity and equality. The priorities are given in no particular order as all appeared to be of approximately equal importance. Interestingly, they fit neatly with Blair, Bourne & Coffin's (1998) features of successful multi-ethnic schools: 'The most important characteristic of a leader [. . .] who is creating or who is going to create an equitable and excellent school is that this person has developed a strong ethical or moral core focused on equity and excellence as the only right choice for schools in a democracy. For this person, this is an indomitable belief, an indomitable commitment.' (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003, p. 100).

The headteachers' six most visible priorities are introduced below.

1. Demanding that the values of professional and other staff cohere with principles of social justice and equality

The headteachers were genuinely committed to the principles of social justice and redressing inequality at all levels through what happened in their schools, and they demanded that others working there held similar beliefs. As one headteacher stated, "I think the key quality is being prepared to stand up for what you believe is right in human justice terms [. . .] If you're not committed to that type of belief, I don't believe you can work in any school, but you certainly can't work in this school." The foundations of such beliefs have recently been suggested as key in Australian and US schools catering for minority ethnic students. Cooper & Jordan (2003) go as far as to suggest that the current school restructuring movement should include the restructuring of the norms that drive school mission and operation. They tie their argument strongly to catering for disadvantaged minority ethnic students:

"Restructuring of the norms that guide and direct policy and practice refers to altering institutional ethos in ways that value and celebrate the unique contribution and learning style of each student. This involves seeing racial affirmation, cultural history, family background, and native language other than English as assets to the learning process not as barriers to intellectual pursuits."

Cooper & Jordan, 2003, p.387

2. Demanding that professional and other staff demonstrate a willingness to understand the cultures and background realities of their students and school community

The headteachers themselves worked hard to understand their students' beliefs and value structures and to appreciate reality through their eyes. They also robustly promoted this among staff and the wider community, particularly in schools with a number of different minority ethnic groups. Headteachers constantly reiterated to staff the need to locate their leadership and work within the unique context of their school.

3. Attempting to recruit and retain staff with similar cultural and ethnic backgrounds to those existent in the school community

In line with the first two priorities, headteachers believed it was important that the staff profile, as much as possible, should parallel the ethnic profile of the school. They placed a high priority on both the recruitment and development of suitable staff, with the idea that they would provide positive role models for the students and bring cultural knowledge that comes only from living within a culture. Achieving a balanced staff profile was also seen as a means of openly expressing the school's dedication to its students and community.

4. Locating the school firmly within the immediate and broader societal context

The headteachers openly recognised that their schools could not be successful if they operated in a vacuum. They, without exception, stressed the importance of understanding and connecting with the broader community and held that the unique blend of local circumstances had a marked influence on their leadership and the culture of the school. The headteachers saw working beyond the school as essential if students were to achieve within the school.

5. Promoting the importance of improving high-quality learning and teaching as a way of addressing disadvantage

High-quality learning and teaching were seen as necessary prerequisites for raising students' self-esteem, achieving school mission, improving achievement scores and widening pathways to battle racism and other inequalities.

6. Consciously constructing and nurturing an inclusive school culture

As reflected in the other main priorities, the headteachers clearly linked their values to inclusive school cultures. A school-wide belief in inclusive cultures was seen as more important, or at least more influential, than technical systems or structures, although these were also seen as integral to facilitating inclusion.

The following section outlines a number of the strategies employed by the heads to put their chief priorities into operation. These are in outline form only and it should be noted that there was no one best strategy associated with any of the priorities – some worked in one context, but not in another, and vice versa. Discussion of the strategies is worthwhile, however, as they provide a grab-bag of ideas that have been shown to be useful in multi-ethnic schools, often in challenging circumstances.

Strategies

1. Demanding that the values of professional and other staff cohere with principles of social justice and equality

In demanding that the values typifying the school unequivocally support a social justice agenda, the headteachers clearly and regularly articulated these values and made no secret of the fact that these values should drive school relationships and actions. The headteachers moved beyond the 'said' to link the priority explicitly to practical school activities such as mission development, teaching and planning. For example, values demanding social justice were evident in formal school communication devices such as mission statement and school improvement plans. Through this widespread articulation, both within and outside school forums, staff were provided with opportunities to challenge wider structural inequities and ways to deal with them. While certainly recognising the constraints on embedding values coherence among staff, the headteachers were unapologetic about the openness of their quest and the importance of it in underpinning school success.

The headteachers' proactive approach to social justice saw them addressing the subtly embedded causes of ethnic conflict (such as racism), not simply its visible indicators. In their own ways, they recognised the interrelatedness of conflict in the school and community. They appeared to view conflicts through a similar guise to that described by Henze (2000), who reported the findings of a large-scale US research project into racial and ethnic tensions in schools. Henze's sample group involved schools where there was evidence of innovative

leadership to improve inter-ethnic relations. She found that school leaders viewed conflicts on a continuum. To use her words:

"The most overt conflicts, such as physical fights and racial slurs, are at one end; underlying conflicts and tensions, such as avoidance of certain groups and perceptions of unequal treatment, are in the middle. At the other end are the root causes of ethnic/racial conflicts, including segregation, racism and inequality – conditions endemic to the larger society." Henze, 2000, p.2

Purposeful strategies that pushed staff to look beneath the obvious through constantly challenging their worldviews and encouraging them into the community served consistently to re-focus attention on the need for social justice to be reflected across school life.

2. Demanding that professional and other staff demonstrate a willingness to understand the cultures and background realities of their students and school community

Closely aligned with strategies associated with the previous priority was the fact that headteachers strongly encouraged staff – both teaching and support staff – to view the school and broader society through the eyes of their students and the communities the staff served. Such action was based on the belief that the meanings students attached to the world were fashioned by their culture and place in society. The headteachers helped staff to see, for example, that refugee children often carried memories of harrowing experiences from their home countries and the sometimes perilous journeys they had undertaken. Likewise, Muslim students had very different interpretations of the events surrounding September 11 2001 than members of other ethnic groups. Heads were careful to note, however, that such interpretations also varied markedly among Muslims themselves, depending on other factors such as socio-economic status (SES) or the length of time they had lived in the UK. Headteachers encouraged understanding by celebrating cultural occasions and asking staff to get into the community.

Strategies to promote cultural understanding are also seen as essential in other countries. Cooper & Jordan (2003, p.287) stress that if the emphasis is to shift from academic failure to an examination of alternative structures and practices leading to improved academic achievement, then teachers, leaders and others must view different ethnic groups positively – or in terms of their successes, not just failures. The headteachers in the study acknowledged this not just through their requirement that staff look empathetically into the backgrounds of their students, but also through their human resource policies. Among these was their approach to professional development, which in some schools was integrated closely with knowing the community – such as language background, SES, primary school background and cultural awareness (Boothe, 2000).

3. Attempting to recruit and retain staff with similar cultural and ethnic backgrounds to those existent in the school community

The headteachers went to considerable lengths to try to develop a staff profile that broadly reflected the ethnic profile of the school community. This strategy targeted both teaching and non-teaching staff. In many instances, this was a difficult task as the schools' challenging urban situations made even recruiting enough staff regardless of ethnicity a problem, particularly in terms of senior staff. Such problems seemed common whether the school was largely mono- or multicultural. The heads actively (even aggressively) tried to recruit teachers who were either qualified or experienced from appropriate minority ethnic groups. However, since this met with minimal success in most sites, a number of headteachers instituted a more home-grown approach. This strategy mainly involved two, sometimes related, strategies. The first was to identify potential future teachers, provide them with involvement through non-teaching roles and then work on nurturing them toward qualified teacher status. The second was to try to achieve a more balanced profile by increasing the number of staff from minority ethnic groups in non-teaching support roles.
Other long-term strategies for retaining and attracting staff involved openly valuing and rewarding involvement by all staff, not just teachers, and focusing on any special contributions made by staff from minority ethnic backgrounds. Extra effort was sometimes made to encourage participation by these groups in response to language or cultural barriers. Such positive encouragement is also considered important in the US, where Mabokela & Madsen (2003, p.108) recommend that 'school leaders [need to] take proactive steps to scrutinize their organisational culture and create an environment that is supportive to African-American teachers and teachers of colour'.

The headteachers in the study also placed a premium on professional learning and career development opportunities as a way of retaining and even attracting the right staff. These strategies were strongly linked to the building of an inclusive school culture, one where the headteachers worked hard to create organisations where staff wanted to be and could make sense of what they were doing, in both social justice and academic terms. As with all strategies, the headteachers were realistically proactive – they did not underestimate the difficulties of hiring and retaining the right staff – but chose to approach the exercise in a positive way. This issue is further discussed in the section on building an inclusive school culture.

4. Locating the school firmly within the immediate and broader societal context

"Emancipatory leaders know when they are out of their depth in complex socio-cultural areas: they acknowledge the greater expertise of community members or colleagues in certain situations linked to concerns for diversity, and they act accordingly." Corson, 1998, p.16

All the headteachers recognised the importance of connecting with and understanding their extended communities. Such communities included those directly associated with the students, and the various social,

social service and community groups with a meaningful place in their lives. Strategies for locating the school within its context involved inviting people into the school and moving purposefully outside school boundaries. Both forms of linkage were vital and considered critical to a school's ability to make a difference to its students' lives and learning.

Involvement within the school included inviting students, parents, governors and members of community groups to serve on school committees. It was emphasised that these committees had a genuine role to play and were not just concerned with selective events such as organising cultural festivities, for example. Moving outside school boundaries was equally important for the headteachers and all other staff members. External connection was necessary for the headteachers personally as it demonstrated their commitment to their students and their circumstances. It also allowed them to better ground their leadership in the contexts of their students. Similarly, moving into the community allowed (or forced) other staff to understand more fully the cultural heritage of their students and also sensitise their awareness of community concerns and aspirations.

Through their efforts to build coherent values within their schools and to locate these schools squarely in their broader communities, the headteachers attempted to increase leadership capacity – a capacity grounded in shared ownership and responsibility. Henze's (2000, p.3) description of US principals captures succinctly the essence of what the headteachers were trying to do: 'This [involving multiple people and ethnic groups] paved the way for more diverse leaders to take on formal leadership roles in the future, and ensured that efforts to improve

human relations were not "owned"' by any one individual or group. Thus they had a greater likelihood of being sustained'.

Locating the school within the wider community consumed considerable time and other resources but was non-negotiable in terms of making schools meaningful places for the minority ethnic students. Again, although the leaders had a clear vision of how to connect with the community there was no best way to do it. The headteachers saw school governance issues as stretching well beyond traditional school boundaries and towards greater inter-agency collaboration. Although such inter-agency links have traditionally been weak (Capper, 1996), such collaboration was seen as providing a powerful means for understanding, interacting and empowering different minority groups. Capper suggests that community-based inter-agency collaboration can promote the involvement of traditionally disempowered groups across the gamut of human welfare service provision. Connections deliberately and consciously forged between the school, systems, agencies and informal community service organisations that have long been seen as peripheral to schools can be harnessed to promote meaningful multiculturalism in schools.

5. Promoting the importance of improving high-quality learning and teaching as a way of addressing disadvantage

Headteachers of schools with varied multi-ethnic populations implemented strategies to monitor or track the performance of different ethnic groups. This was seen as a way of assisting the school in identifying achievement patterns and then planning and applying appropriate interventions. There did not appear, however, to be formal strategies in place to track shifts (positive or negative) in attitudes to racism and other destructive attitudes.

The headteachers accentuated the importance of teaching and learning in their schools and expressed concern for infusing culture into the curriculum. They encouraged staff to structure curricular experiences that reflected cultural diversity and countered racism and other forms of discrimination. However, reflections of ethnic diversity, as recognised by the headteachers, tended to be restricted to humanities subjects, such as art and drama, and there seemed little direct acknowledgement of the influence of culture on learning styles. The headteachers linked the balance of staff and student profiles to building a more diverse approach to the curriculum, but progress often seemed blocked by more pragmatic policy pressures.

Of the priorities identified, and the strategies implemented, the efforts to address ethnic diversity in the classroom generally and in particular in learning, showed that little direct account was taken of ethnic diversity in terms of teaching and learning in most classrooms.

6. Consciously constructing and nurturing an inclusive school culture

In pulling together the priorities, the headteachers sought to build and foster an inclusive school culture – one that reflected the ethnic and cultural diversity of the broader school community. Such a culture has been defined in the US as one in which 'students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social groups believe that they are heard and are valued and experience respect, belonging and encouragement.' (Parks, 1999, p.11). The headteachers in this study in many ways mirrored this belief, while the values and strategies touched upon for each of the other priorities helped to form the components of the inclusive school model they pursued. To build and sustain an inclusive culture, the headteachers vigorously promoted the participation and representation of the range of actors, from students to teachers to parents to community groups. They established structures for this involvement, for example, through student councils, professional development days, prefect systems and community-linked groups. In this endeavour, the headteachers once again attempted to parallel the ethnic make-up of the student body.

While recognising that differences within as well as between ethnic groups was a key leadership issue, the headteachers nurtured the inclusivity of their organisations' cultures through celebrating ethnic diversity as reflected in student projects and other outputs. They also consciously sought to build the self-esteem of staff, students and others associated with the school. The culture-building acknowledged the inseparability of bureaucratic or structural linkages from those of a cultural nature. The headteachers

implemented supportive and influential structures and systems, such as clear policies against racism (which they ensured were understood). They established committees to promote inclusion and monitor change initiatives. Showing disrespect to people on ethnic or other grounds was frowned upon and carried definite consequences. Resource allocation was also considered an important strategy to build a focused and inclusive culture. Both the level of resources devoted to multicultural activities and the distribution of resources in support of a multicultural curriculum can provide a benchmark for the school's seriousness with regard to multiculturalism.

Headteachers saw building inclusive school cultures that reflected the values of multiculturalism as a key responsibility. As illustrated in the above priorities, they acknowledged that culture is partly built and influenced through their actions in modelling and demonstrating their own values in interacting with others, making appropriate public pronouncements, establishing supportive reward and discipline systems, and valuing students from all races and ethnicities. Banks (1993, p.17) refers to 'an empowering school culture', where a learning environment is created in which students from diverse racial, ethnic and social groups believe that they are heard, valued and that they experience respect, belonging and encouragement.

For all of the strategies, the headteachers rejected a one-size-fits all framework – they continually returned to the uniqueness of their environment (Henze, 2000). While claiming considerable progress in their schools, they acknowledged that not everything was working, that both personal and institutionalised racism remained widespread and that academic underachievement

continued to plague their schools. These and other tensions disrupted their priorities and associated strategies but, in the process, may serve as sparks to further positive avenues for their leadership.

The headteachers' priorities and strategies seemed to match quite closely with what Lindsey, Robins & Terrell (1999) call 'culturally proficient leadership'. The authors define five essential elements of cultural proficiency and then describe the principals' responsibility within these elements. In outline these elements are (p.54):

- **Value diversity:** The articulation of a culturally proficient vision for the school
- **Access culture:** Assessment of the culture/s of the school
- **Manage the dynamic of difference:** The provision of training and support systems for conflict resolution
- **Institutionalise cultural knowledge:** Model and monitor school-wide and classroom practices
- **Adapt to diversity:** Access and change current practices where appropriate

Notwithstanding the dedication and proficiency of the headteachers involved, they continued to face significant and often complex challenges.

Leadership challenges

The challenges discussed in this section cut across the priorities and strategies. This reflects the reality of school life which can rarely be neatly categorised. At least four major challenges emerged from the study:

■ the challenge of seeing more than ethnicity

■ the challenge of using culture to improve learning and teaching

■ the challenge of parallel staffing

■ the challenge of professional leadership learning

1. The challenge of seeing more than ethnicity

One of the major challenges for headteachers in schools with significant numbers of minority ethnic students is the apparently paradoxical issue of encouraging staff and others to build understanding of the values, beliefs and underpinnings of ethnic cultures in order to address learning and social justice issues while, at the same time, helping others to realise that other contextual factors are also vital when building school and community capacity.

Headteachers in the study had to fight the assumption that ethnicity on its own was at the root of all disadvantage, and that if this was addressed, the school would automatically become more successful. While there is no doubting the relationship between ethnicity and social disadvantage, other factors also play a major role and impact on students and the school. For example, SES, geographical location and history, local politics and the stability of the school population all have powerful effects on the students' and schools' success. One notable example of this, as explained by one leader, was that within and outside the school white students are categorised in terms of SES or social class, while non-white students are categorised only in terms of their ethnicity. This discounts the fact that economic and class distinctions are as broad within as between ethnic groups. It can also give the false impression that all members of an easily identifiable ethnic group hold the same values, beliefs and predilections, or that ethnic homogeneity requires less active leadership and understanding. This has implications for leadership and staff management, as one African-American teacher in the US stated about his colleagues: "Teachers here think I know everything about black children, but I never grew up in the city and never

experienced the difficulties these students have had […] Yet, the teachers expect me to have access to every Black student, and I find that really troubling." (cited in Mabokela and Madsen, 2003, p.104). The challenge of parallel staffing is discussed in more detail below. Another example of contextual influence in some settings is the transience of certain groups (for example asylum seekers). This is often accompanied by disturbances in inter-ethnic hierarchies, which can destabilise the school community and even increase conflict within the school and the wider community.

A related challenge is that many schools are faced with catering for not one or even two, but for a multitude of different ethnic groups. Given that diverse groups can hold vastly different values and expectations, this can create blockages to building a school where social justice is not only addressed, but is also seen to be addressed, for all. Given the energy, time and openness needed to explore and understand any group (not to mention individual students), this is a huge task and can distract from the academic job teachers have. Understanding diverse ethnic groups can also be fraught with misunderstanding in that it can lead to dangerous overgeneralisation about specific racial groups and the differences between them. The challenge again is to build awareness that just as many differences may exist within as between different ethnic groups. As can be seen clearly in the Singaporean context, groups within groups can look very different, depending on multiple contextual factors, including their history, politics and socio-economic profile (Walker & Dimmock, 2002a).
A word of caution is necessary here. Although the challenge to see through and beyond ethnicity needs to be addressed, it is important that this does not overshadow the fact that huge gaps in achievement

continue to exist between minority ethnic and majority-ethnic students, regardless of other factors. Citing Gillborn & Mirza (2000, p.64), Gardner (2001, p.45) reminds us:

"A child's social class is an influential factor in educational achievement and although since the 1980s the gap in attainment between the highest and lowest social classes has widened and is evident within ethnic groups, certain minority ethnic groups continue to underachieve even when class is taken into account."

All headteachers are charged with building firm links with the broader community, and recognising that their students' communities are important, even when these communities do not geographically surround their schools. There is no one best way of connecting with the community and headteachers are continually challenged by how to balance personal and organisational resources in pursuit of this connection, especially when they face obstacles such as language and differing work patterns. This challenge can be accentuated in some contexts because of the imposition of preferential boundary areas, where, as a consequence of parental choice, the schools' and students' immediate communities are geographically disconnected.

Structural inequities and inequalities such as those associated with gender, ethnicity and class present a major challenge to creating inclusive cultures. The goal is to build understanding of, and respect for, ethnicity and culture across all facets of school life and also simultaneously to ensure that schools are not constructed purely in terms of ethnicity or ethnic homogeneity.

2. The challenge of using culture to improve learning and teaching

"School administrators and teachers should not only capitalise on students' inherent characteristics and tendencies to improve student learning but also use the opportunity to expand personal expectations and behaviours."

Escobar-Ortloff & Ortloff, 2003, p.256

Another important challenge facing headteachers is how to make the curriculum, and particularly learning and teaching, more sensitive and responsive to ethnic or cultural background. This study found that culture, more often than not, was left at the classroom door, and that the influence of culture on learning and teaching was downplayed, sometimes because of the demands of central assessment requirements. This tension between local context and policy was accentuated (if not driven) by the limited extent to which the formal curriculum reflected ethnic diversity. One challenge then is to find ways to expand awareness of the place of culture in learning and teaching, while also addressing the more instrumental approaches demanded by common accountability mechanisms. A continued concentration on the latter may lead to neglected opportunities to infuse culture into the curriculum and which may, in turn, impact negatively on student engagement, achievement and outcomes.

Given the continued gap in academic achievement between majority ethnic and most minority ethnic students, culture-bound approaches to teaching and learning must be challenged (Dimmock, 2000). Cooper & Jordan (2003) note (when discussing male African-American students) that minority ethnic students can be better served educationally when traditional notions of teaching and learning are re-conceptualised. It is axiomatic that different cognitive strategies used by students for learning have implications for teachers in their choice of teaching strategies and for leaders in promoting good learning cultures and practices in schools. The nurturing of learning is part of instructional leadership. Since the cognitive processes and technical skills involved in learning vary across cultures, this should be reflected in different interpretations of learning-centred leadership. Moreover, conceptions of the good student and the good teacher also vary cross-culturally. According to Watkins (2002), a good student in a country such as Australia, regardless of ethnicity, is seen as one who pays attention to the teacher and does what he or she is told. In China, however, this is the expectation of all students, with the result that teachers can focus more on academic and social matters. Likewise, students see the good teacher in countries such as New Zealand as one who raises students' interest and uses an array of effective teaching methods. In contrast, the perception of an effective teacher held by students in Hong Kong tends to centre on warm, caring, friendly relations combined with deep subject knowledge and an ability to model a strong set of morals – all within a hierarchical structure (Walker, 2004). Notions of what constitutes effective group work and questioning also differ between many UK and Chinese students.

Drawing on his rich experience as a principal of a multi-ethnic school in the US, Adcock (1997) expresses his pragmatic view of why the challenge of understanding culture in teaching and learning is so vital. He states:

"Effective learning in a multicultural setting depends on 'comprehensible input' – that is the level at which the teacher can make content understandable to the learner. This can be done in a number of ways which include using the student's native language, using visual supports such as gestures, pictures, maps etc to enrich what is being said." Adcock, 1997, p.3

Another dimension of this challenge is for headteachers to find ways to support staff when the demands for inclusion and for improved results in public examinations appear opposed. Staying true to personal values when they may threaten your job security, and convincing others to do the same, is certainly a test of anyone's values. To help teachers meet these sometimes contradictory forces, headteachers can work to provide a meaningful professional learning programme in the school that helps teachers understand the influence of culture and ethnicity on learning and teaching and learn how to design appropriate programmes and pedagogies to take advantage of this.

An example of culture-sensitive teaching strategies is provided by Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield & Trumbull (1999). These authors describe the problems faced by many teachers in the US who have Latino children from Central and South America in their classes. These immigrant children bring collectivist values with them to school, making it invaluable for their teachers to understand the ramifications of collectivism in an otherwise individualist society. Collectivism emphasises the interdependence of family members, with children taught, above all, to be helpful to others and to

contribute to the success and welfare of the group to which they belong, beginning with the family. Even knowledge of the physical world is placed within a social context. In reality, North American, Australian and UK schools tend to foster individualism, viewing the child as an individual who needs to develop independence and value individual achievement. While collectivism emphasises the social context of learning and knowledge, individualism emphasises information disengaged from its social context. As Rothstein-Fisch et al (1999, p. 64) comment: 'When collectivistic students encounter individualistic schools, conflicts that are based on hidden values and assumptions can occur'. They go on to illustrate how children from collectivist cultures can misinterpret the teacher's expectations when asked questions. They also show how teachers can incorporate more collectivist values by allowing children to do tasks in pairs and groups, and by allowing the children to introduce elements of their social life and background into science lessons. They conclude:

"When teachers understand and respect the collectivist values of immigrant Latino children, the opportunities for culturally informed learning become limitless. Our examples in classroom management, reading, math, and science demonstrate that educators can design instruction responsive to diverse groups that does not undermine home-based cultural values."
Rothstein-Fisch et al, p.66

The headteacher's task is to help teachers, regardless of ethnicity, to realise that their own practices are cultural in origin rather than there being only one right way to do

things. This is important; research in the US has found that teachers often modify their pedagogical practices in response to cultural difference (Mabokela & Madsen, 2003). Headteachers can encourage teachers to explore these cultural differences as opportunities to expand their knowledge of learning styles and their repertoire of teaching techniques, classroom management and curriculum tailoring, just as they encourage them to get into their communities to understand more general values and traditions. As Cunningham & Cordeiro (2000, p.105) note: 'Teachers who accept cultural pluralism constantly ask themselves how to help students respect and appreciate cultural diversity in the classroom, school and society'.

3. The challenge of parallel staffing

One of the headteachers' major priorities is to develop a staff profile that matches the student profile. This is indeed a challenge, but it is not as simple as equalising the ethnic profile of staff. Before discussing some of the issues around this priority, it should be noted that it is important to have suitable numbers of teachers with the same ethnic origins as the students (Blair, Bourne & Coffin, 1998). However, research in the US has shown that token representation of minorities tends to highlight their visibility within the organisation, and this can be problematic. Citing Kanter (1977), Cose (1993) and Anderson (1999), Mabokela and Madsen (2003) explain that this can lead to the marginalisation of minority workers. Their comments may also hold credence for tailoring approaches to learning and teaching:

"This [the presence of minority workers] results in a polarization where the minority worker threatens the commonality of the group and is made to feel like an outsider. Thus, majority workers create group solidarity by emphasising those cultural elements that they share in contrast to those of the minority person [...] Because of these heightened boundaries minorities are forced into pre-existing generalizations, which results in them being entrapped in a role within the organization. Because of role entrapment, minorities have to cope with status levelling and stereotypical role induction." Mabokela & Madsen, 2003, p.92

In their own study of African-American teachers, Mabokela and Madsen (2003) found that boundary heightening influenced their interaction with European-American teachers in terms of differences in pedagogical and management strategies, debunking negative stereotypes held about children of colour and negotiating insider-outsider status. In terms of the last item, the minority ethnic teachers 'were seen as insiders who provided insights about students of colour', but, on the other hand, 'were treated as outsiders whose narrowly defined African-American expertise resulted in their being isolated and unable to attain informal social power' (Mabokela and Madsen, 2003, p.102). Based on the lessons of such experience, the trick for headteachers is not only to hire more minority ethnic teachers, but to make sure that those who are already employed feel valued for more than just their cultural knowledge and connection. The headteachers in this study seemed well aware of this challenge.

Based on the above discussion, three further associated issues challenge headteachers of schools with large numbers of minority ethnic students. The first challenge is for headteachers to develop school cultures where individuality, especially for minority ethnic teachers, is as valued as their association with a particular ethnic group. The second, again recognised by the headteachers in this study, is not just how to hire minority ethnic teachers, but also how to help minority ethnic educators prepare for formal leadership positions within the school and broader education system. The third and perhaps most difficult is the challenge of deciding whether effectiveness as a teacher or membership of a certain ethnic group, is more important for a school. Cooper & Jordon (2003, p.391) claim that 'though an effective teacher of any racial background is more preferable for Black male students than an ineffective teacher of African-American descent […], the advantage of the latter in terms of successful role modelling, use of shared knowledge and, sometimes, shared social experiences, may hold great potential for raising success rates'. However, as the same authors point out, this is complicated further by the fact that most black male teachers are, by definition, middle class. So the challenge is in no way as straightforward as achieving cultural synchronisation – progress in matching ethnic mixes between teachers and students may well rest more on teacher and leader preparation programmes, and affirmative in-school professional learning opportunities.

Challenges of parallel staffing are further complicated in some settings, such as in the UK, where there is continuing difficulty in recruiting teachers to urban schools, which tend to enrol greater numbers of minority ethnic students. This often makes recruiting staff of almost any ilk difficult, much less staff representative of the student population, an issue which is explored further in Part II.

4. The challenge of professional leadership learning

Growe, Schmersahl, Perry & Henry (2002) state that while US principals are under increasing pressure to develop empowering school cultures that create learning environments that support students regardless of ethnic background or social class, they are being inadequately prepared for the job. The same must be said for school leaders the world over. The challenge for headteachers in the UK and beyond, and the systems that propose to support them, is how to improve both pre- and ongoing learning opportunities to improve their work in schools.

A number of authors in different countries have drawn attention to the shortfalls of learning opportunities for leading and managing multicultural schools (eg Newton, 2001; Collarbone, 2001). Comments generally relate to the generic, cross-phase nature of the training, with insufficient regard paid to specific school context, as well as the unquestioned assumptions of the leadership models and theories that underpin such programmes. As scholars such as Hallinger & Kantamara (2002) and Walker & Dimmock (2002b) have noted, the development of leadership theory for diversity may require new paradigms and ways of thinking. The leadership learning situation in the US is a case in point. In an incisive critique of the US licence schemes for school principals, Hess (2003) draws attention to the weakness of overly generic programmes, stating that the emphasis should be placed instead on having the right leader for the right

situation, rather than a particular type of leader for all situations. Hess states: 'There is legitimate concern that leaders should be sensitive to the cultural needs of the organizations they lead. However, administrative preparation today devotes little or no attention to such considerations' (p.9). As a consequence, there are major barriers to diversity, partly due to a lack of recruitment of school leaders from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and partly due to a lack of adequate support and professional development in multicultural leadership for serving principals.

Leadership development in Singapore has for some time attempted to recognise cultural sensitivity and the link between school capacity and broader multicultural policy. Recent developments in continental Europe have included the Intercultural Education Project initiated by the Dutch government in 1994 (Leeman, 2003). Over a four-year period, the outcomes of this programme drew attention to *direct* leadership strategies that can be taken to manage diversity, including a revision of the curriculum and teaching strategies to reflect the needs of a multicultural student population. However, attention was also drawn to equally important *indirect* approaches designed to promote a positive school climate and culture, including the creation of a safe and democratic school environment, opportunities for inter-ethnic contact and co-operative learning groups, and a clear repudiation of bullying or any form of discrimination (Dimmock & Walker, in press).

Ideas and strategies generated internationally may provide useful insights for facing the challenge of creating a professional learning framework for leaders of multicultural schools. Those developed to date appear to have considerable legitimacy, not only because they are research based, but also because they draw on the insights of experienced and highly successful school-leader practitioners. In line with present thinking in the UK, recent international approaches decry prescriptive solutions to complex problems and emphasise the importance of school context and the necessity for professional dialogue, support and networking.

The challenge to improve learning for teachers and leaders in multicultural schools is not only a system responsibility, but one which must also be addressed by headteachers and their staff. This appears to be borne out by major movements in the US, and to a lesser extent Australia (Su, Gamage & Mininberg, 2003). The bottom line may well be that if headteachers do not demand changes in present opportunities, and express what these should entail, it is unlikely that the challenge will be met.

The challenges noted in this section only touch the surface of the issues that leaders of multi-ethnic schools face. They are, however, important challenges and reflect the complexity of their jobs.

Conclusion

Despite facing considerable and often convoluted challenges, the headteachers involved in the study approached their jobs in a positive and proactive manner.

■ Their actions were firmly grounded in strong personal values focused on social justice issues such as racism and inter-ethnic tension.

■ They saw a strong link between the social disadvantage associated with ethnicity, and believed issues such as racism and academic achievement were intractably interrelated.

■ Based on their values and propensity toward action, the headteachers shared a core set of at least six priorities. These targeted the inculcation of a set of values and beliefs, involving members of minority ethnic groups in the school in a multitude of ways and building an inclusive school culture.

■ The priorities were put into operation by a wide-ranging collection of formal positional and informal strategies and tactics. These varied between headteachers, depending on the ethnic and other contexts of their school communities. Within schools, however, strategies were generally coherent, and avoided what Henze (2000) calls a 'hodgepodge of unrelated approaches' and aimed to meld activities into a total effect that exceeded the sum of its parts.

■ Despite the concerted attempts to address disadvantage and its influence on schools, the headteachers faced, and indeed continue to face, an array of intricate challenges that can shift and change form depending on the availability of human resources, demands of government policy and a range of social factors. Among the more intractable challenges are how to understand and then address the influence of culture on learning. Tailoring curriculum and teaching approaches to the needs of the students is a major hurdle that needs to be overcome. Another challenge is acquiring the learning opportunities needed to drive success in multi-ethnic schools.

Each headteacher stressed that there is no simple recipe for successfully leading a multi-ethnic school, and that each must operate in a different context, one which may either support or hamper the development of the school's achievements and more positive race relations. The headteachers worked in circumstances which both excited and frustrated them. Their aim was to advance the school and redress the disadvantage associated with ethnicity and class, and, in the process, improve the lot and place of their students in an uncertain future.

Part II: School Community Perspectives and their Leadership Implications

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Introduction

The investigation reported here in Part II aimed to:

- elicit the perspectives held by leadership team members (including headteachers and deputy headteachers), teachers, students, parents and local community members of issues related to ethnicity and culture in schools with substantial numbers of minority ethnic students

- clarify how school leaders relate to their multi-ethnic communities, and to identify good practice in that regard

- draw implications and make recommendations for the improvement of the leadership of multi-ethnic schools and their communities

Leading multi-ethnic schools: identifying the leadership contribution

This research has sought to establish common features of successful school leadership in multi-ethnic schools. In so doing, it recognises the complexity of this analysis. Many of the approaches to leadership displayed by headteachers in the case study schools have a generic application across all schools, and reflect the findings of many studies of school leadership. However, in the specific application of these approaches to the context of multi-ethnic schools, it was possible to identify important instances in which school leaders conducted their leadership in distinctive ways. The broad headings within which these factors featured are identified in Figure 1. These approaches are detailed below. In some respects, these differences reflected the personal histories and approaches of individual school leaders, while in other respects, they appeared to be shaped crucially by the micro-context of individual schools.

Articulating and implementing values

A defining feature of all the school leaders in the case study schools was the extent to which they articulated their own leadership in terms of their personal values and beliefs – a point made strongly in Part I of this report. That is why this factor is placed at the centre of Figure 1. These values were clearly articulated and strongly grounded in a commitment to principles of equality and social justice. Within this broad values agenda, there were often appreciable differences of emphasis and nuance between school leaders, and there were certainly significant differences in their views on how these values may be applied in a school context. However, a common theme that emerged was that being the headteacher of a multi-ethnic school provided an opportunity to challenge wider structural inequalities in society. Whilst recognising all the constraints imposed by

factors external to the school, these headteachers were driven by a belief that schools can make a difference, and that they have a duty to make a difference for those disadvantaged by wider inequalities.

The formulation and development of these values was clearly personal to individual headteachers. However, a common feature of these school leaders was the extent to which they clearly reflected on both the development of their personal values and the application of these values within the context of their schools. Values were rarely implicit, for either the individual or the organisation, but were always explicit. One practical way in which this might be demonstrated was in the form of an explicit reference to ethnic diversity in the school's mission statement. Whilst such statements are always vulnerable to the charge that they are bland and irrelevant, the case study schools provided several examples of how such

Figure 1. Values-driven leadership
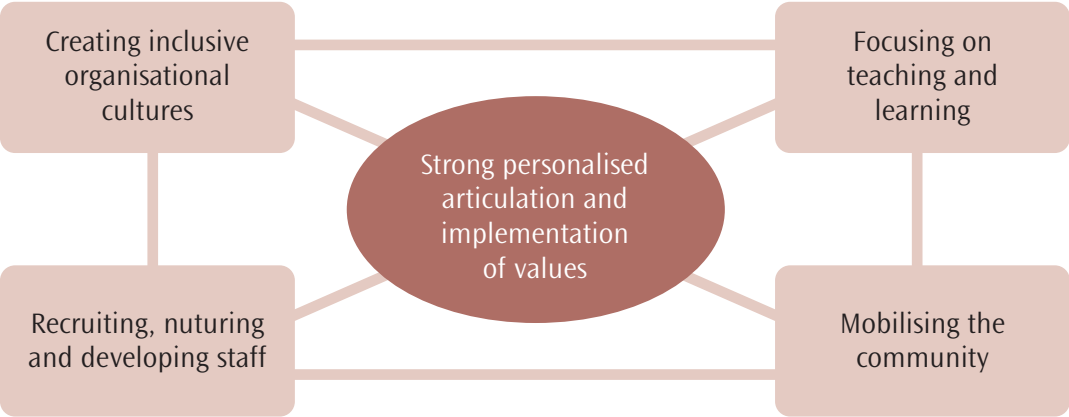
statements were specifically used to inform practical school activity. Not least, there were explicit links between the school's statement of values and aspirations and the content and priorities of the school improvement plan. In these schools, the commitment to ethnic diversity was no after-thought: it was central to the core purpose of the school.

Interview evidence provided by students emphasised the importance of these values. Concepts of fairness, justice, respect and equal treatment were keenly felt by students. Students were acutely aware of the implications of these values for multi-ethnic schools, and they valued the commitment of the school to principles of fairness, equality and justice. For the students, it was important that these values permeated the ethos of the organisation and were translated into their lived experience of being a learner in the school.

School leaders were supported in their aims by the development of the inclusion agenda within national educational policy. Inevitably, this agenda was interpreted differently by different school leaders, and headteacher participants were by no means uncritical of aspects of this agenda. However, the inclusion agenda has clearly opened up possibilities for promoting issues associated with ethnic diversity, and a feature of the school leaders in the case study schools was the extent to which they were able to capitalise on this agenda and align it with their own priorities for progress. In these cases, school leaders did not simply follow policy, but actively shaped it, so there was a powerful synergy between internal and external priorities in the pursuit of promoting inclusive multi-ethnic schools.

"When I arrived it was an ethos of control and I wanted to turn it into an ethos of respect and equality of opportunity. I think whatever systems and structures you have, the key way that you do that is by leading by example, and making it clear that you are what you preach. You put into action ways of working which are based on your fundamental principles of human beings – that is why I am a head, and that is what I have tried to do while I've been here." Headteacher in interview

Creating inclusive organisational cultures

The interdependent nature of school leadership is illustrated by the link between leaders' personal values and the commitment to creating inclusive organisational cultures within the school. Booth et al (2000, p.9) identify the need to create 'a secure, accepting, collaborating, stimulating community in which everyone is valued, as the foundation for the highest achievements of all students.' School leaders in the case study schools placed strong emphasis on the creation of such cultures and clearly prioritised these over systems and structures which, in contrast, were perceived as facilitators to support the development of such an organisational culture.

The existence of structural inequalities, such as those associated with ethnicity, gender and class, present a major challenge to inclusive organisational cultures. Where inequalities exist and create barriers to the equal representation and participation of the whole school

community, it is necessary to develop appropriate policy responses. Apparently neutral, one-size-fits-all approaches are inadequate to meet the challenge. At best, they leave inequalities unaffected, and at worst they reproduce and compound them. Differential responses were required to secure equitable outcomes. School leaders in the case study schools were committed to ensuring that all aspects of school life reflected the ethnic diversity of the school's local community. This required measures that tackled the twin, and related, issues of representation and participation.

It is possible to identify three levels at which such inclusive cultures might be considered to operate – students, staff and the wider community. Staff and community issues are discussed later in this report. Student issues are the focus of this section. A feature of many of the case study schools in the project was the high level of student participation in all aspects of school life. Genuinely effective student councils were common, as were other forms of more traditional student involvement, such as head girls and head boys and the use of prefects. In these cases, efforts were made to ensure the ethnic profile of these bodies and positions reflected the ethnic profile of the school population. However, in some of the case study schools, student participation went far beyond what is described above. For example, students represented the school on local community action groups. In another case, a teacher-training day on underachievement and ethnicity involved students from various ethnic backgrounds being involved with teachers in planning and running the training. Where this was the case, students enthused that their contribution was both sought and valued.

A key element in the creation of organisational cultures, for students, staff and the wider community, was the capacity for schools to demonstrate that ethnic diversity was valued, and indeed celebrated. Research from the case study schools provided a host of examples of how this was achieved – from the celebration of students' work, through the physical presentation of the school's environment to the reorganisation of the school day to accommodate religious festivals. However, it is important to recognise that there were significant differences in approach between the case study schools, and the specific context of each school had a substantial impact on school leaders' room for manoeuvre. For example, schools with a large majority of Muslim students found it easy to change the timing of the school day significantly during the month of Ramadan – a measure identified as hugely supportive, and much appreciated, by the local community. In contrast, in schools where different ethnic groups were more balanced, school leaders found it more difficult to adopt such measures.

Finally, whilst organisational culture was central, it was clear that culture was buttressed by appropriate systems and structures. For example, clear policies existed for dealing with racism. These were widely understood and students trusted them. Similarly, some schools supported their inclusion agenda with working parties or committees that were specifically tasked with promoting inclusion and monitoring the effectiveness of policies and initiatives. In some cases, these groups included governor and student representation.

Focusing on teaching and learning

In their different ways, all the case study schools demonstrated how they had prioritised improving the quality of teaching and learning. The provision of high-quality teaching that engaged students and promoted achievement was seen as an essential precondition to achieving wider objectives in the school. This emphasis on high-quality teaching and student achievement accorded with evidence from interviews with students. When asked what they valued most about the school, a common response was to identify good teachers who were effective subject teachers, and who delivered interesting lessons and responded sympathetically to students' needs.

The research also sought to explore the extent to which the curriculum itself reflected the cultural context of the school, both in terms of curriculum content (what students learn) and curriculum processes (how students learn). In all the case study schools, examples were provided of how different subjects reflected and valued cultural diversity and sought to prevent racism. Often these examples were to be found in similar curriculum areas – religious education, art and drama for example. However, examples of how the curriculum reflected ethnic diversity outside these subject areas tended to be conspicuous by their absence. For example, there was often considerable discussion about learning styles, with little awareness of how these might reflect ethnic diversity, a point which has been discussed earlier in Part I.

In all the case study schools, a high priority was placed on supporting language acquisition by students, and this often appeared to be the dominant feature of curriculum development in the case study schools.

It is worth noting that students' expectations that ethnic diversity would be reflected in the formal subject curriculum appeared to be low. Many of the student participants were in examination years and their focus was on achieving their target results in public examinations. Their attitude to studies had become quite instrumental. Students expressed surprise when asked if their maths lessons in any way reflected a multi-ethnic perspective – "maths is just numbers, isn't it?". One teacher of South-Asian heritage indicated that students expected to "leave their culture outside the door" when they entered their classroom. Whilst they may want lessons to reflect their ethnic identity, they did not expect that they actually would receive such lessons. The research indicated that the extent to which the formal curriculum reflected ethnic diversity was limited. This was not necessarily seen as problematic by participants, neither staff nor students, but it may suggest that opportunities are being missed to reflect fully the cultural context of the school, which in turn may impact on student outcomes in terms of engagement and achievement. Given concerns regarding the apparent underachievement of students from specific ethnic backgrounds, this may be a key issue.

The encouragement of minority ethnic teachers was one obvious strategy used by schools to develop a more ethnically diverse approach to the curriculum. Whilst this was almost certainly an important development for a number of reasons, there was little evidence that this, of itself, generated a distinctive approach to curriculum delivery. The combination of league tables, centralised

inspection arrangements and the national curriculum exerts a powerful influence on curriculum delivery that may militate against innovation and creativity generally, and specifically in terms of reflecting ethnic diversity. Certainly, this research suggests that even in schools where at a whole-school level ethnic diversity was recognised and celebrated, often in dynamic and colourful ways, there was little evidence that these issues penetrated the majority of classrooms.

The importance of monitoring student performance by ethnicity was identified as a key issue in some of the case study schools. In some instances, where the school profile reflected the dominance of a single ethnic group, this was less of an issue. The very small numbers of students from other ethnic groups made it difficult to draw meaningful comparisons from the data. In these instances, the emphasis was on the use of data to support individual target-setting. In schools that were more ethnically diverse, monitoring by different ethnic groups was a key tool for identifying appropriate intervention strategies. In one school, there was evidence of highly sophisticated monitoring by ethnicity that sought to monitor achievement in relation to the linguistic background of students. In this school, the headteacher invested considerable resources, supported by personal commitment, in using monitoring by ethnicity of student performance to identify appropriate strategies for intervention. Where patterns of underachievement were identified, the school was prepared to follow through with specific strategies focused on particular ethnic groups. In this case, the school provided examples of specific initiatives it had developed to support Bangladeshi and African-Caribbean students in response to data generated by its own monitoring by ethnicity.

Recruiting, nurturing and developing staff

A feature of the case study schools that was common to all those in the project was the high emphasis placed by school leaders on the recruitment and development of staff. This was presented as a key priority for the school leadership and one that assumed corresponding importance in terms of the allocation of organisational resources and the personal commitment of the school leader. Human resource priorities broadly fell within two, complementary areas, both of which were identified as problematic. First was the need to recruit and retain high-quality staff at all levels of the organisation. Second was the commitment to develop a staff profile that broadly reflected the ethnic profile of the local community and the student population in the school. All of the case study schools struggled to develop a staff profile that reflected its local community and problems of under-representation increased at higher levels within the organisational hierarchy. This is in part illustrated by the fact that all of the headteachers in this study were white.

Recruiting and retaining staff was problematic for all the reasons relating to national teacher shortages that are already well documented. However, within the case study schools, these problems were often compounded by the urban and challenging context within which multi-ethnic schools are often located. For obvious demographic reasons, multi-ethnic schools are largely located in urban areas and experience many of the social deprivation factors that are characteristic of schools in such localities. These are demanding places to work, and schools in these areas generally find it more difficult both to recruit and retain staff. In the case study schools, school leaders had to work hard to recruit and retain high-quality staff successfully.

Developing a staff profile that broadly reflected the ethnic profile of the local community and the student population was a high priority for headteachers in the case study schools. The need to provide positive role models was an important objective. However, national staff shortages in the education sector were considered to be more acute amongst staff from minority ethnic backgrounds, and this in turn impacted on the ability to recruit and subsequently retain such staff. Students identified several reasons why they considered it important for their school to have an ethnically representative staff profile. First, they valued the role models provided; second, they valued staff whom they felt understood their cultural background; third, and most importantly, they argued that the ethnicity profile of the staff was a visible and genuine indication of the school's commitment to equality issues.

Promoting an equalities agenda for staffing was a major priority for the school leaders in the case study schools. Careful consideration was given to how difficulties might be overcome, and it was possible to identify a number of strategies that had met with some success in these areas.

Headteachers indicated a commitment to recruiting staff who were themselves committed to working in a multi-ethnic environment. In some cases, staff suitability was assessed within the selection process with specific interview questions focused on ethnicity issues. In other cases, headteachers relied on presenting the school as it is. As one headteacher aptly stated: "We're absolutely upfront about what sort of school we are and what we stand for – if you don't like it, you won't come here. But everyone knows what they are coming to."

A common approach to tackling problems of recruitment, and more specifically the recruitment of staff from minority ethnic communities, was to adopt a longer term, 'grow your own' approach. Many of the schools reported that the increase in non-teaching staff in recent years had increased the profile of staff from minority ethnic backgrounds within the school. These staff are more likely to be drawn from the immediate local community than is the case with teachers. A feature of leaders in the case study schools was the way in which they nurtured these members of staff, often with a long-term aim of supporting them in acquiring qualified teacher status. There was a clear recognition that there were no quick fixes to this problem, but rather a willingness to take a longer term perspective to support and invest in staff development. In this sense, school leaders had a crucial role to play in talent-spotting.

Retention strategies were equally, if not more, important. It is possible to identify two approaches that appeared to be common, albeit in different forms, across the case study schools. These approaches are not discrete, but interdependent. First was a commitment to staff support. School leaders valued the work of their staff, and they showed it. They took an interest in what staff were doing and they took time to acknowledge their contribution. This was not restricted to an interest in teachers, but related to all staff, from those working directly with students in the classrooms, to those involved in support roles. Staff felt recognised and valued. They also felt engaged and involved. A feature of the inclusive organisational cultures identified previously was the way in which school leaders involved staff in decision-making processes. The prevailing organisational culture was collective and collaborative. Staff were provided with

genuine opportunities to be involved, and to work together. Specific attention was also paid to valuing the contribution of staff from minority ethnic backgrounds. Responding sensitively to the needs of staff from minority ethnic backgrounds was highly valued by those staff we interviewed. Regrettably, some minority ethnic staff had not always experienced such a positive approach in previous posts and reported that this had impacted on their career decisions to move schools.

The second approach was to focus on staff development. The case study schools were dynamic places to work in, and school leaders had seized opportunities both to develop staff directly and to provide opportunities that indirectly developed individuals' career trajectories. Retention was in part achieved by ensuring that careers were moving forward. This was not serendipitous, but was part of a wider strategy to provide career opportunities, not simply to develop staff effectiveness, but to ensure that good staff wanted to continue to work within the organisation. In some cases, it was clear that positive action was taken to develop the careers of minority ethnic staff within the school, and again, the willingness to do this often reflected the personal values and priorities of the school leader.

All of these approaches required commitment, planning and resourcing. The commitment was often over and above that which might be sufficient in many other schools, especially those located in less challenging localities. In these urban schools, staff, as with students, required nurturing. This is about recognising that schools in urban contexts present more challenges, and experience greater pressures, than schools where the levels of deprivation are less significant. Leading staff in

such circumstances is correspondingly more challenging. For school leaders, creating schools in which staff want to work, and continue to work, requires careful consideration.

Mobilising the community

All of the case study schools had strong links with their students' communities, while recognising that the school community and their students' communities were not necessarily synonymous (in some cases the impact of preference area boundaries, or the consequences of parental choice decisions, resulted in schools and their immediate local communities being disconnected). Creating strong links with the community was a high priority for all the schools and perceived as essential. Each school leader had devoted substantial resources, both in terms of their own time and commitment and in terms of the school's wider resources, to developing effective links with the community. A feature of these schools was that this was not seen as a luxury or a bolt-on, but central to the core activity of the school. Working beyond the school was a prerequisite if the students were to achieve within the school. Despite this common emphasis on community links, it is important to recognise that there was no one best way to develop these links. A powerful message that emerged time and again was that school communities are unique to each school. There are significant differences between ethnic groups, and there are significant differences within ethnic groups. A particular ethnic group, in a particular location, will have its own context shaped by a number of factors, including its history, its politics and its socio-economic profile. Individual school leaders needed to develop their

school's links with their own community, and this required them to learn to lead within the context of the community in which they were working.

General features of community contacts that were highlighted by the research were:

- detailed knowledge of individual children and their personal circumstances outside of the school. Understanding what is happening, or has happened, in the lives of individual children outside of school was seen as crucial to promoting achievement within school. Understanding students' cultural heritage was one feature of this information-building.

- strong parental links. A high priority was placed on contact with individual parents. A number of barriers might exist to such contact (language issues, local working patterns, lack of safe transport options), and in the case study schools, in different ways, considerable efforts were undertaken to overcome these difficulties. An obvious example is the high level of outreach work in which school staff visited parents in places, and at times, that minimised the problems identified above.

- links with community groups. A feature of many ethnic groups is that they retain a more collectivist culture with a strong network of local organisations and self-help groups. These groups were seen as a powerful resource in terms of articulating community concerns and aspirations and working with such groups was a common strategy adopted by school leaders.

Whilst much of this work was undertaken by senior staff in the school, or those with a designated community-link role, it was clear that for each headteacher in the case study schools, the issue of their personal participation in developing community links was crucial. School leaders demonstrated their commitment to their communities by being seen working in, and with, their communities. In these schools 'walking the job' was not restricted to classrooms and corridors, but extended to wherever it was necessary to develop links with the wider community.

As indicated, much of this work was underpinned by the crucial role played by staff with a community-link role. These individuals did not simply support more effective communication, but could often provide the most detailed knowledge about aspects of the communities represented in the preference area. In some cases, this role had a connection to particular funding streams. For instance, increasingly, aspects of this work were taken on by learning mentors funded through the Excellence in Cities initiative (although not all the case study schools could access this source of funding). Certainly these roles were seen as pivotal. However, as they were not part of the mainstream activity of classroom teaching, it was potentially easy for them to be marginalised. School leaders had a clear vision about how the activities of these individuals could be brought from the margins to the mainstream of the school's work. This was not peripheral activity, but central to the school's mission.

In summary, these schools did not see their commitment to their students stopping either at the school gate, or at the end of the school day – these boundaries of time and space were considered largely artificial. This support for students derived from the personal values and convictions of the school leader and other staff.

"I think the staff realise we're an extended school. School is such a limited part of students' life. I could never take the view - and there are heads in the town I know, and there are heads who have been here who take the view - that once the child leaves the boundary of the school they're not their responsibility. I can never subscribe to that. I cannot take that attitude." Headteacher in interview

Values-driven leadership, within and beyond the school

It is worth emphasising yet again how leaders in the case study schools were motivated strongly by their own personal convictions and values. There was often a passionate commitment to use education as a means of challenging inequalities and promoting values of fairness, respect and justice. In the case study schools, these headteachers lived these values and modelled them. They were able to inspire and motivate others through their own practices. As such, they secured high levels of commitment from across the school community. However, a crucial factor in the leadership of multi-ethnic schools is that any conception of the school community could not be restricted to within the organisation, but must look beyond it. School leaders in these schools were passionate about making connections between the school and the wider community – parents, community representatives and local residents. In these schools, this was no added luxury, but absolutely central to what the schools were about, and what they were trying to achieve. Figure 2 illustrates three domains within which school leadership functions – the individual classroom, the whole school and the wider community. A feature of multi-ethnic schools is the absolute need for the headteacher to function across all these domains. To this extent, boundaries between the school and its wider community were seen as artificial. In the case study schools, these boundaries were not sharply defined, but rather they were porous, appropriately represented by the broken lines in Figure 2.

*Figure 2. Leadership within, and beyond, the school*

However, it is important to recognise that each individual school's community context was unique, and this in turn shaped the leadership response of headteachers.

The importance of the school's micro-context

A key proposition of this study is the need to recognise that the context of each school is unique. Although it is possible to identify largely common leadership approaches across the case study schools, it is equally important to recognise where there were distinct differences. Such differences were often shaped by the micro-context of individual schools. Within the constraints of this small-scale research, it is possible to identify a number of factors that appeared to exert a significant influence on what school leaders did, and how they did it. These factors reflect the way in which school context is shaped by both community and market influences. These are not discrete, unconnected concepts; rather, they are intimately connected in the way they define the school's context.

Figure 3. The micro-context of the multi-ethnic school
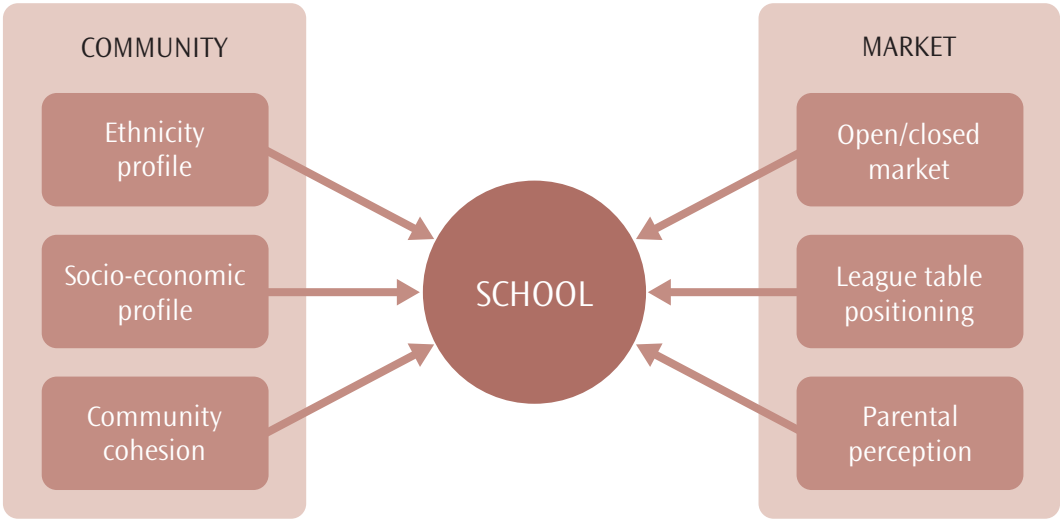
The community context

It is important to assert that there is no identikit 'multi-ethnic school'. Each school has its own community, made up of a unique configuration of different ethnic groups with their own history and cultural traditions in their locality. Schools with a similar proportion of students from a particular minority ethnic background are no more likely to be the same than two schools that are very largely all-white are likely to be the same. In the case study schools, the headteachers emphasised the need to locate their leadership approach within the unique context of their own school. It was certainly the case that different ethnic groups presented different issues. For example, the central importance of faith to some ethnic groups was highlighted as a major issue following the events of September 11 2001 and the invasion of Iraq. However, it was also important to recognise the differences within, as well as between, ethnic groups. Recognising and responding to these differences was a key issue for the leadership of the school as it sought to develop community links. This research did not seek to establish different experiences of achievement, exclusion and discrimination between ethnic groups, but there is substantial research that provides evidence of this.

It has already been indicated that many multi-ethnic schools are urban schools, a fact that highlights the important interplay between factors of ethnicity and social class. Throughout this study, interview respondents defined white students in class terms – 'white working class' and 'white middle class' – but students from minority ethnic backgrounds were never labelled in terms of social class descriptors. To re-emphasise a point made in Part I, the research highlights the need to take account of the socio-economic profile of the school, and the way in which issues of social class and ethnicity connect. The complex way in which structural inequalities in society such as racism and poverty combine are crucial to defining school context. Some ethnic groups, in some communities, clearly experience disadvantage both more acutely, and in more complex forms, than other ethnic groups. This inevitably shapes an approach to leadership that is underpinned by a deep philosophical commitment to equality and social justice.

These issues appeared to be further complicated in those communities where the local population was more transient. Disadvantaged communities tend to be characterised by more fluid population movements, and more recently this fluidity has been influenced by the arrival into some areas of increased numbers of asylum seekers and refugees. The extent to which school populations could be considered stable or turbulent did appear to be a decisive factor in shaping school context. Increased turbulence clearly presented specific challenges as local inter-ethnic hierarchies were often destabilised, and resulting conflicts within the wider community then emerged within the school.

The market context

The promotion of policies associated with parental choice has also decisively shaped the context within which schools function, and these factors were influential, in different ways, in shaping the leadership approach of headteachers in the case study schools. In a technical sense, all markets faced by schools may be considered open, since the regulations relating to school admissions are largely national in character. However, if levels of market competition may be judged by the amount of student movement between preference areas (often referred to as catchment areas), then it is possible to distinguish between those schools that operate in a more closed market (ie having relatively little movement into, or out of, the preference area), and those that might be described as more open (ie with higher levels of cross-preference area movements).

Some case study schools enjoyed a relatively closed market position. These schools tended to be academically successful, in relatively settled communities and in local education authorities (LEAs) with few surplus places. In other cases, markets were clearly much more open, with parental preferences exerting a significant influence on student populations. Where this was the case, ethnicity was often a factor in shaping parental choices. For one school, a significant part of the white community deliberately opted for an alternative school that was considered locally to be the 'white school'. This resulted in the case study school becoming effectively mono-ethnic. The consequence of this was that the school's desire to be genuinely multi-ethnic was thwarted, whilst its ability to reflect, and work with, its local community was also diminished as many white students in the local community walked past it to go to another school. In this instance, the case study school enjoyed considerable academic success. However, for some in the community, parental choices based on ethnicity were more important in determining school-choice decisions than criteria relating to academic performance or other criteria. This example highlights the impact of market context on community cohesion.

In other case study schools, the link between market context and league table position was more complex. In one case study school, decisions by largely white parents to opt for schools outside the preference area, based at least in part on issues of ethnicity, deprived the school of some of its potentially higher achieving students. This then impacted on overall levels of academic achievement, which further undermined parental confidence. In this case, the market context offered a different challenge to the school leadership from that described above – how to maintain the very strong commitment to inclusiveness and at the same time improve pupil performance in public examinations – both for the students themselves and in order to ensure organisational survival.

Developing successful multi-ethnic schools: identifying strategies

Research from across the five case study schools identified a number of strategies adopted by school leaders and their colleagues that appeared to have common threads, although in the context of individual schools these could be played out and applied in a multiplicity of ways. It is important to identify and recognise these common threads, and in this section key strategies deployed in the case study schools are identified and discussed. However, this can be no panacea list of quick-fix solutions. This research has highlighted the need to locate studies of multi-ethnic schools within their specific micro-context, and therefore any discussion of strategies must be prefaced by the need to apply these within the specific conditions of individual schools.

■ Share the core values: fairness, justice and equality

Clear values, shared within the organisation, provide the glue that bind organisations together. A common characteristic of school leaders in the case study schools was that their values were explicit and clearly articulated. People talked about values. They had a common language for discussing values and they understood the link between personal values and the school's mission. Values and aspirations were presented in a way that made them accessible and able to be internalised by students and the wider community alike. This is not to assert glibly that values were universally shared – they

were not. Schools are messy, complex organisations and searching for a school with commonly shared values is harder than hunting the unicorn. However, in the case study schools, the organisation's values were recognised and discussed. These schools were not driven entirely by external agendas; rather, they created the space to discuss what mattered most to them – the students and their lived experience of the school. These values provided a clear and widely understood framework for the school community, and where individuals stepped outside of that values framework, for example by engaging in racist behaviour, they knew they would be challenged.

Within the context of a multi-ethnic school, with all its attendant diversities, a clear commitment to the celebration of diversity is essential. Student and parent participants placed considerable value on the importance of acknowledging and celebrating ethnic diversity. This was not a case of wanting special treatment, but rather equal treatment, based on the recognition of difference. Equal treatment did not therefore mean the same treatment. Ethnic diversity was seen as a virtue to be developed, not a problem to be suppressed.

School leaders placed a premium on values over the establishment of systems and structures. However, systems and structures were far from irrelevant. School leaders created effective systems and structures, supported through resourcing, that gave practical expression to the organisation's values. For example, the deployment of staff, or the allocation of staffing responsibilities, ensured that issues of equality were accorded a high priority. In other cases, the establishment of committees or working parties, often involving

governors and students, ensured that issues of ethnic equality were constantly being driven forward and their progress monitored.

■ Develop inclusive organisational cultures

Perhaps one of the clearest expressions of how the values in the case study schools were reflected in the lived experience of those studying and working within the organisation was in the development of inclusive organisational cultures. In the case study schools, significant commitment and resources were allocated to maximising the participation and engagement of the whole school community. This functioned at three levels – students, staff and the wider community.

Engaging students was seen as crucial. This was in part about engagement in the learning process – directly in the classroom, but also beyond the classroom. Student participation was valued and encouraged, and steps were taken to ensure that participation in all aspects of school life reflected the ethnic balance within the school. In the case study schools, monitoring by ethnicity went beyond the analysis of academic achievement and included a much broader picture of young people's experience of school. Ethnic differences can create significant barriers to engagement, and challenging these barriers needs to be a key priority.

Considerable attention was devoted to creating an environment in which it was possible to be inclusive. At one level, this involved attention to the physical environment. Several case study schools used the physical environment to demonstrate how ethnic diversity was valued within the school, and this was a feature of both individual classrooms and communal areas within the school. Bright, vibrant wall displays not only enhanced the environment generally, but sent a clear signal to all about the values and commitments of the schools.

However, the environment also embraced less tangible issues, of which the most notable was safety and security. Racism presents a very specific and real threat to those from minority ethnic groups. This was perceived as a potential issue both within the school, and for school students in the wider community. In all of the case study schools, student participants reported only isolated examples of racist behaviour. These schools had clear policies for tackling racism that were widely known and well understood. Students were confident that racism was taken seriously and dealt with accordingly. More difficult to deal with was the possibility of students experiencing racist activity in the immediate vicinity of the school, an issue that was more of a problem for some schools than others. In these cases, the school took very seriously the concerns of students and their parents and were prepared to take measures to ensure safe travel to and from school. Close liaison with related agencies (the LEA, racial equality councils, housing departments and the police) was also a feature of these schools.

■ Focus on the learning

Much of the research on school improvement has focused on the centrality of the classroom as the starting point of young people's experience of school. This was reflected in the experience of the case study schools, in which a high priority was placed on continually seeking to improve the

learning and teaching experience, and trying to ensure that the curriculum met the needs of the student community. Students in the case study schools valued the ethnic diversity within the school community and valued the way in which this was reflected in the curriculum. The need to ensure that the curriculum adequately reflected the ethnic groups represented in the schools was a clear priority in some subject areas and teachers worked creatively to develop schemes of work that made use of students' own experience. In several of the case study schools, there was considerable work being undertaken to increase teachers' and students' understanding of the importance of learning styles. This may further support the development of a curriculum that reflects cultural and ethnic diversity by recognising the link between learning styles and cultural difference.

The national curriculum, and the pressures of a league table culture, were seen as a constraint on developing curriculum provision that reflected the ethnic diversity within the school. However, some teachers identified a willingness to take risks in terms of this issue, and the role of the school leader in supporting this was considered important. The introduction of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, with its requirement to develop a curriculum that makes a positive contribution to tackling racism, provides a welcome counterweight to these pressures.

Although much of the discussion about the curriculum focused on individual subject areas, this too was recognised as being too limiting, and one headteacher was much happier to refer to the curriculum as "everything children experience here". In this way, every aspect of school life became an opportunity to demonstrate to young people the value base that might be considered appropriate for life in a multi-ethnic society.

Monitoring by ethnicity was a high priority in the case study schools. Considerable resources were devoted to this activity, and in some cases the degree of detail generated went far beyond that expected in national guidelines. This data allowed the identification of patterns of achievement, and possible underachievement, in quite sophisticated detail, and was then used to inform policy responses at subject and curriculum area and at whole-school levels.

■ Develop the staff

It may seem axiomatic to argue that recruiting and retaining high-quality staff are central to the success of any organisation, and in this sense the case study schools were no different from any other school. However, given the challenging nature of the environments in which these schools were often located, ensuring the recruitment and retention of such staff was more difficult. Headteachers had to work hard to ensure that their schools could overcome negative stereotypes of urban schools. This was partly done by being successful and celebrating successes. Celebrating the benefits of ethnic diversity was often a key feature of the way a school presented itself. This in turn ensured that job applicants were aware of the school's ethos and sympathetic to its values and objectives.

Retaining staff required a strong commitment to the nurturing and development of individuals and teams.

School leaders took an interest in their staff, valued their contributions and celebrated their successes. Strong teams were deliberately developed to provide a robust source of support to individuals, and to develop the capacity within the wider organisation. Attention was paid to individuals' career development, and opportunities were provided to access professional development and to offer career development opportunities within the school. In all of these respects, there was rarely a sense of hierarchy. Staff throughout the organisation felt they were part of a wider team, and that their contribution and their ideas were valued.

A high priority in the case study schools was to develop a staff profile that reflected the ethnic profile of the local community. This was a considerable challenge. A wide variety of strategies were used to support this, ranging from consideration of where job advertisements were placed, through to long-term commitments to support non-teaching staff in acquiring qualified teacher status. Non-teaching staff were more likely to be drawn from the immediate locality, and therefore to better reflect the ethnic profile of the student population. Long-term investment in such staff was seen as crucial in terms of both practice and principle.

■ Look beyond the school

Strong links between the school, parents and the wider community were absolutely central to what these schools were seeking to achieve. Headteachers committed substantial resources in terms of their own energy and commitment to establishing links with community representatives, local faith leaders and the wider community. This not only built up headteachers' personal understanding of the context from which their students were drawn, but also signalled strongly that the schools valued their local communities.

Schools also invested significant amounts of organisational resources to building and sustaining school-community links. This was often facilitated by external funding, but these initiatives were also financed from the school's general budget and this resourcing was not seen as an easy target when budgets were tight. There was widespread recognition that a range of cultural factors could militate against parental and community involvement in the school, and in these cases schools took steps to minimise such barriers. The use of community languages and the timing of school events to take account of local working patterns or religious festivals were just some of the ways in which schools responded flexibly to their local communities. However, there was a recognition that internal changes could only go so far in overcoming the barriers to participation that existed, and therefore considerable emphasis was placed on the school going to parents, rather than expecting parents to come to the school. Here the part of staff with a community-link role was pivotal. In these schools, community-link staff were both encouraged and valued. They were given space to take initiatives and were made to feel they were central, not peripheral, to the school's mission.

Working with parents often extended well beyond ensuring that they were informed of their child's progress; rather, the school actively sought to engage parents in supporting the learning process.

Appendix 1: research design

This research was conducted in five case study schools, drawn from a range of LEAs in England, namely, Birmingham, Bradford, City of Leicester, the London Borough of Hounslow and Northamptonshire. These LEAs were identified for their geographical spread, and for the ethnic profiles they represented. Schools in this study were identified as having a 'substantial number' of students from minority ethnic backgrounds. There was no attempt to define 'substantial' in terms of a given threshold, but rather the intention was to ensure that the sample of schools reflected a diverse range of ethnic profiles. Within the sample of case study schools, the proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds ranged from 21 per cent to 95 per cent.

In the first instance, participating LEAs were contacted and asked to identify schools with a substantial proportion of minority ethnic students, and where the school leadership was considered to be of high quality. Working from the list of schools identified by the participating LEAs, the researchers chose one school from each LEA. The choice was determined by the desire to reflect overall a wide range of school contexts – principally in terms of ethnic profile, but also in terms of other factors, such as academic performance in public examinations. It is important to reiterate at this point that this study focuses on effective leadership in multi-ethnic schools, rather than effective schools per se. It is the conclusion of this research that effective leadership in such schools can be demonstrated in a wide range of contexts, and for reasons presented in the main body of this report, there can be important contextual reasons why effective leadership may not necessarily correspond

with narrow definitions of school effectiveness that is quantified, for example, in terms of pupil performance data. Indeed, this research suggests that such definitions of effectiveness are too narrow, and often unhelpful, when applied to the context of many multi-ethnic schools.

Within each case study school, detailed research was undertaken based largely on semi-structured interviews and supported by an analysis of school documentation and relevant contextual statistical data relating to the ethnic composition of the school and related material. In each school, interviews were conducted with the following individuals:

- headteacher
- deputy headteacher (generally with specific responsibility for multi-ethnic issues and inclusion)
- teacher (with middle leader responsibilities)
- teacher (with no additional responsibilities)
- member of non-teaching staff
- member of staff with responsibility for community liaison and links
- community representative (parents or school governors)
- students

Most interviews were with individuals, but interviews with parents and students were often in a focus-group format. Interviews were recorded and then analysed to identify common themes and issues.

Following data analysis, emerging themes and issues were identified and these were further discussed with a reference group of practitioner teachers and headteachers, LEA officers and representatives from the teacher professional associations and the research funders. Research results were also reported to a seminar of post-16 students in order to further debate key propositions that had emerged from the research, and to test these from a student perspective.

Throughout, this process was supported by a literature review that provided a framework for exploring issues of effective leadership generally, and leadership within multi-ethnic schools in particular.

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