BTEG
BLACK TRAINING & ENTERPRISE GROUP

RAISING ASPIRATIONS

Supporting and Strengthening BAME Families

Karl Murray
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Executive Summary

As evidenced in the Executive Summary Report (BTEG, 2010), it is our view that an absence of effective parenting skills, leading to poor boundaries being established, is more than likely to lead to poor educational outcomes and possible involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour. Arising from the Phase 1 report, three projects were identified including a follow up case study with a Chinese supplementary school: a) Parents in Partnership (PiP); (b) London Borough of Southwark and Associated Complementary Education Services (ACES); (c) Haringey Chinese Community Centre.

The action research approach adopted enabled us not only to engage with parents at their level, to understand their voices and utterances, but enabled us to test out some theories and to explore others. What is abundantly clear is that the implications of not being able to obtain a good start in life have far reaching implication for later life chances and opportunities. The research demonstrated that it is not the case that any one factor stands out but rather a combination and pattern of circumstances coming together, at certain points in time, to produce the net outcome. We found that:

- Parental support and home circumstances are vital building blocks for an effective upbringing and these cannot be left to chance. Parent need to recognize the signs that contribute to poor attainment and poor outcome and of their role within the learning and enculturalisation process to be able to make a difference. They too need support on this journey, and recognizing that this is needed, is perhaps the first step towards obtaining that support. The PIP programme attempted to provide a forum, a space for parents to begin to articulate their fears and concerns and to seek a 'community' approach to obtaining the support they need.

- The development of an assessment tool to help organisations determine their effectiveness moves us towards another layer of support that many would like to see in place, where parents feel that their role is being supported by good quality provision and services, whether statutory or voluntary and community provided.

- Solutions are not always found where we expect them and perhaps by looking towards those who seem to have found a way to maintain high aspiration may provide part of that solution. This raises opportunities arising from understanding the Chinese experience in the education system, for instance. Parents need to start taking a more proactive role in their children's education at home as well as in the wider community.

It is imperative that parents provide the right engagement, encourage aspiration, inspire and motivate their children to achieve to the highest standard, which will entail hard work, and provide the right set of opportunities for success. Based on the work to date, we express this as the *'bottom line'* culmination of the research findings[1]: ***S = PE + A + 2H + O.*** Bottom line, because being able to recognize the signs that contribute to poor attainment and poor outcomes is crucial in ensuring an appropriate and relevant support structure is put in place and parents are at the centre of the transformational change process; there is no '*either/or*' option. In other words, there is *no choice.*

[1] Success = Parental Engagement + Aspiration + Hard work (or working twice as hard) + Opportunities

Introduction

In October 2010 BTEG published on-line the interim report of Phase I of the research on understanding the support needs of Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) families with vulnerable boys (BTEG, 2010)[2]. In that report we drew attention to the context and challenges which formed the driving force behind the research. Rather than repeat the content of that report, it is worth reminding ourselves of some of the key features that inspired BTEG to undertake the research in the first place:

- School exclusion and attainment reflected worrying trends and concerns. Black children (boys in particular) are three times more likely to be excluded than their white counterpart (Blair, 1991 & 2001; Department for Communities and Local Government, 2010);

- In the criminal justice system, BAME groups continue to be disproportionately represented. Black young people are seven times more likely to be stopped and searched by the police than their white peers (Youth Justice Board, 2009; Ministry of Justice Report, 2010; Bromley Report, 2010);

- In the field of healthcare, Pakistani and Bangladeshi people are more likely to report that their health is poor or very poor, and along with Indians, are significantly more at risk from diabetes (Chakraborty and McKenzie, 2001; Bebbington et al, 2007; National Health Service, 2010).

The aims of the research were:

- To investigate and gain an understanding of the support needs of BAME vulnerable families in relation to existing support programmes in place to improve and enhance opportunities for families and individuals.
- To evaluate the extent to which *The Think Family Strategy* supports the needs of vulnerable BAME families in raising aspiration leading to better outcomes for their young boys with regards to education attainment, mental healthcare and offending/anti-social behaviour.
- To initiate an action research 'support' model in response to the needs identified by BAME families.

The responses and contributions reported in the Phase I Report showed that BAME families were justly concerned about the progress their young boys are making in today's society; and particularly in education. Taking responsibility, whether in the re-prioritization of personal goals or ensuring that there is good and positive 'role modelling' taking place within families, was seen as a critical factor within the parenting process. What we were able to achieve through the Phase 1 process was a snapshot and some tentative observations based on a particular approach. While further work is necessary, and is on-going, we were able to show that there are a range of circumstances and factors at play in raising the aspiration of children; in particular, young boys. Overall four broad areas of support were identified with four 'levels' indicated as to where actions will need to be taken if we are to make a difference. The four support needs identified were:

[2] The Phase 1 Executive Summary Report is available to download via www.bteg.co.uk

1. Parenting skills and confidence-building.
2. Counselling support arrangements.
3. Information, advice and guidance.
4. Opportunities for young boys to engage in inspirational activities.

The four levels at which action need to be taken are:

- Individual/personal level
- Community services
- Statutory services (or local government)
- National government (policy and strategy)

In moving forward, we identified two support needs drawn from the 'Recommended Action' matrix - attached in the interim report as Appendix 1 – which we wanted to 'test' and explore.

They were:

- *Parenting skills and confidence-building* ; and
- *Opportunities for young boys to engage in inspirational activities.*

The *'action planning'* phase (Phases 2) consisted of the exploration of two projects that reflected the needs indicated above. The first related to work at the *'individual level',* looking at what parents can do to make a difference in their own circumstances in terms of the support need of acquiring and developing '*Parenting skills and confidence'* seen through the 'Parents in Partnership'(PiP) programme as part of the *100 Black Men of London's (100BMOL*) Community Mentoring Programme; secondly, to focus on the support need of *'More inspirational things for young boys to engage in'* by focusing on the quality and effectiveness of 'supplementary/complementary' education linked to the role of a local authority (i.e. at the levels of the *'community'* and *'statutory'* services). Initial work began during Phase 1 with respect to the Chinese experience which was followed up as part of the Phase 2 approach. We therefore considered a case study of the role of supplementary schools in the Chinese community; a community that has been recognised as achieving consistently the highest attainment rate, performing well above the national level, despite sharing many of the same socio-political conditions as other ethnic and working class communities.

As the first report focused on the first two aims, that is, identifying the main support needs and consideration of FIP programmes, this report is concerned with the third aim, focusing on the lessons learnt as a result of exploring two particular needs identified. The aim here is to shed some light on approaches and/or programmes which could make a difference.

SECTION 1 | METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

As our research focused on understanding the support needs of BAME families, it was deemed important and crucial that we got a sense of the family members' own perspective as well as professional perspectives. To obtain this we adopted qualitative action research approach, involving desk research and literature reviews, focus groups, survey questionnaires, case studies, structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews. By action research we mean "learning by doing", whereby we look at an issue or problem and put in place a process to test the efficacy of the approach and hence replicability. O'Brien (1998) offers a succinct and useful definition which guided our approach: the *"…study of a system and concurrently to collaborate with members of the system in changing it in what is regarded as a desirable direction. Accomplishing this twin goal requires the active collaboration of researcher and client, and thus it stresses the importance of co-learning as a primary aspect of the research process."* (pg 3)

In developing the approach to engage parents a number of concerns had to be addressed and it was our intention to ensure we developed a process and approach that truly engaged with those who are the object of the enquiry; to find a way to ensure that their voices and utterances were audible. And in some cases, where this would add strength and authenticity to the contribution, we retained the argot and phrases of individual as the language reflects very much their lived experience; so crucial in the understanding of where they are. The research was undertaken across three cycles: Phase 1 involved 'diagnostic' and analysis (see interim report: BTEG, 2010); Phase 2 engaged with the implementation of the 'idea' for action and change; Phase 3 involves evaluation of the implementation of the 'idea'.

Fig 1 below is an adapted version of a model produced by Gerald Susman (1983), cited in O'Brien (1998), which provides a useful diagrammatic overview to understand the process and the cyclical and iterative nature of the action research methodology adopted. Susman identified five cycles (or stages) in the process: diagnosing, action planning, taking action, evaluating and specifying learning, and these stages form the backdrop to the framework used in our approach. The appeal in adopting this approach is that:

- People learn best and are more willing to apply what they have learned where they are party to the solution themselves;
- The research takes place in real world situations and aims to solve real problems (i.e. acting upon the conditions one faces in order to change them);
- The researcher engages with participants within the environment of concerns. They are part of the solution and not an 'objective' bystander (i.e. client collaborative approach);
- Where circumstances require flexibility and change as the desirable outcome;
- It is invaluable in effecting and influencing social policies;
- A holistic approach to problem–solving rather than a single method for collecting and analyzing data.

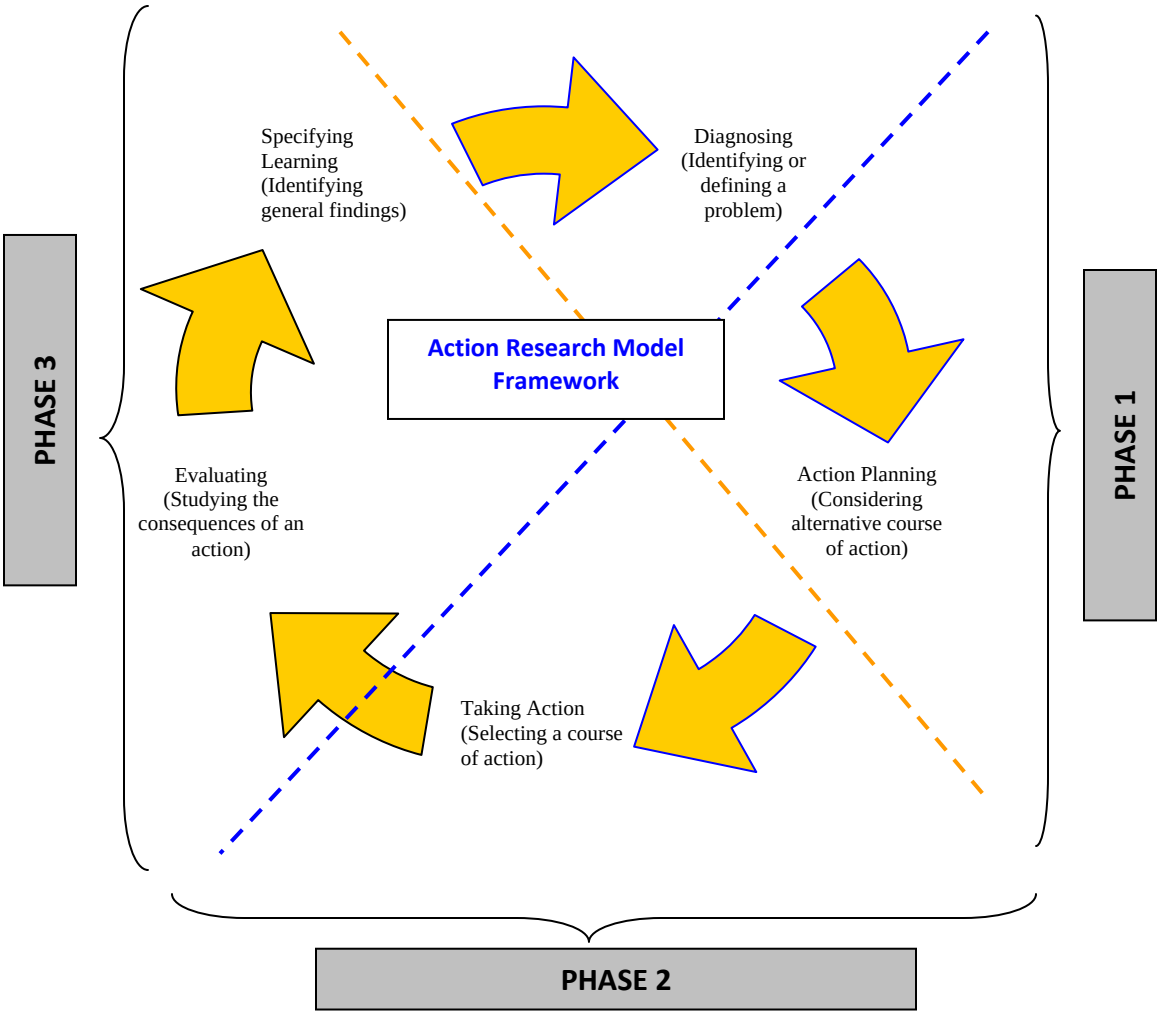


Fig 1: Action Research model (after Susman, 1983, cited in O'Brien, 1998)

As part of the Phase 1 approach, focus groups and workshop sessions were conducted across four regions (London, West Midlands, East Midlands and North West), working with over 100 parent/families identified as in need of support with respect to their child (ren) who were exhibiting signs of poor education outcomes, concerns regards mental health care support and those with offending/anti-social behaviour. Focus groups averaged 10 people per session, reflecting a cross section of ethnicity. To engage participants a number of approaches were adopted – with varying degrees of success. The most successful approach was that of word of mouth and 'personal' contacts through key informants or community facilitators. Below are the ranges of approaches that were tried:

- Personal contacts
- Website (BTEG; *Facebook*)
- E-bulletins (BTEG; external medium)
- Mail shots to Directors of Children Services and PCT in the respective regions
- Voluntary sector (in particular BAME forums)
- Targeted projects working with families and parents (statutory and voluntary)
- Integrated Youth Support Services
- Political Members
- Government Departments

- Word of mouth (including access through community facilitators)
- Presentation, conferences and workshops

The Phase 2, '*Action planning and implementation*' phase, sought to build on the 'traditional' (or classic) model of 'solution conferencing' (O'Brien, 1998; Nunes and McPherson, 2008), an approach that characterised much of the early work of the Training and Development Agency (TDA) and many other 'action – focused' models within the organisational development sector (both private and public). It is therefore not new, but a well developed tool and approach that does have implication for social change and therefore civil society. As we move towards the realisation of the Big Society, it is conceivable that more and more services will want to consider how to ensure services are fit for purpose in trying to meet the needs of the 'market' and their effectiveness in reaching those markets.

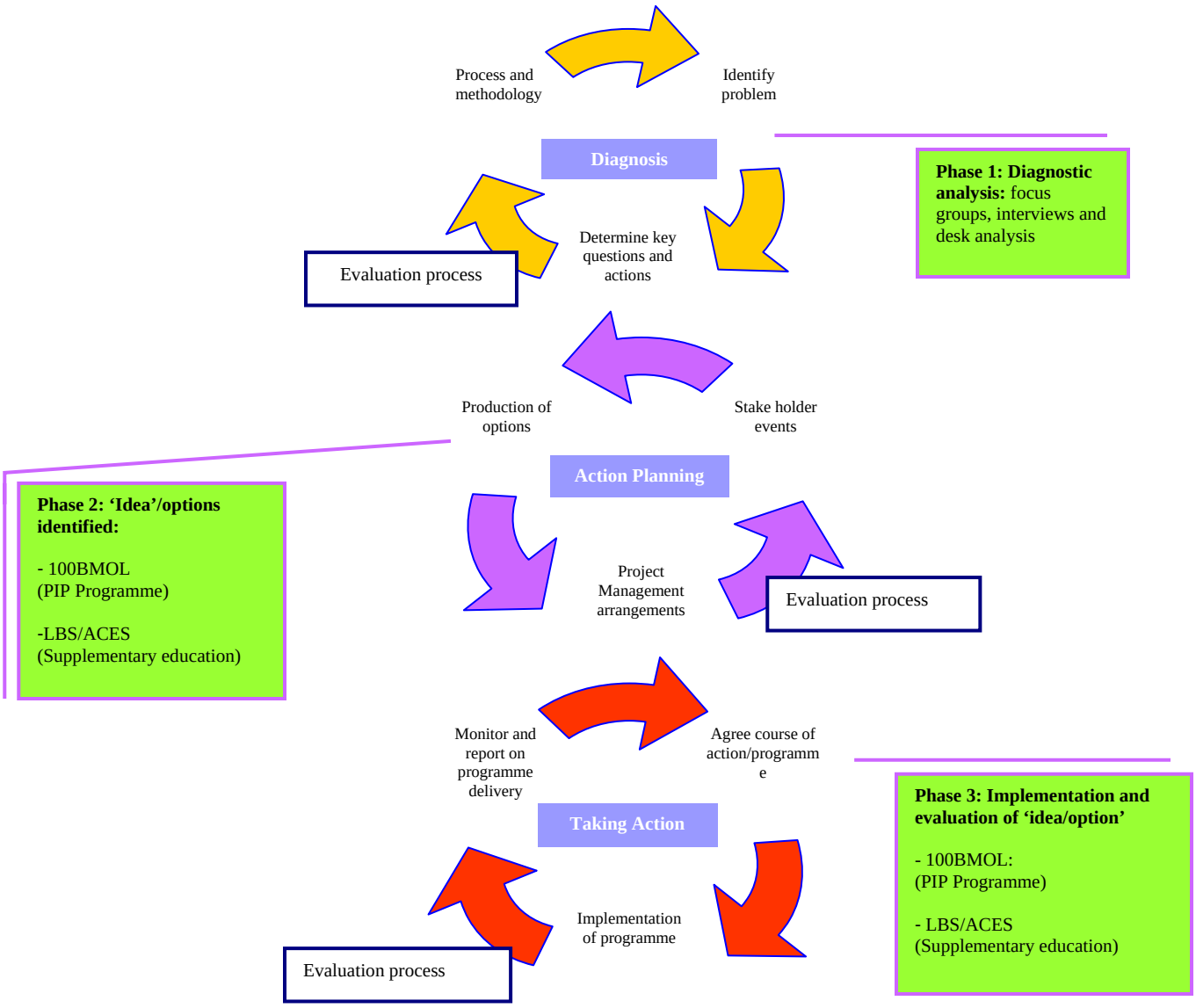
The delivery of Phase 2 is best seen through the model attached a Fig 2, which was developed as the process unfolded. In broad terms, there are three phases: **Phase 1** was the diagnosis phase; **Phase 2** involved looking at possible 'partners' to work with in order to 'pilot' and 'trial' the support approaches we wanted to explore. With respect to the 'parenting programme', a number of voluntary and community sector agencies and local authorities were approached to see if they would be willing to work with us through this approach. As a result of one of our focus group activities the *100 Black Men of London (100BMOL)* were at the time exploring the development of a 'parenting' strand to their mentoring programme with young people and so were interested in exploring what this could mean for them. This afforded us the opportunity to work specifically with the African and Caribbean parents, a community for whom much is written about and yet, educationally at least, still remain at the foot of the attainment league table but disproportionately high in the criminal justice system.

With respect to supplementary schools, it was the opportunity to work with a local authority as they grappled with commissioning concerns and the quality of delivery of providers. This brought us in contact with three local authorities (one indicated that they were going through a major re-organisation and not able to participate while the other wanted to wait until they heard the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) that had yet to be announced). We were therefore fortunate to be able to work with the *London Borough of Southwark* as they were working closely with an 'umbrella' infrastructure' organisation (*the Association of Complementary Education Southwark – hereafter ACES)* to oversee the delivery of the supplementary education provisions, especially as the previous umbrella organisation that they were working with had ceased operating two years previous. They funded 21 supplementary providers in 2009/2010 and wanted to find ways to quality assure the providers and the effectiveness of the programme in raising attainment. Linked to this agenda (i.e. the role and significance of supplementary schools), following on from our desk review of the 'Chinese experience', we sought to explore further the relevance of the Chinese Supplementary Schools within that community, to ascertain to what extent it supports the Chinese success in the education system. **Phase 3** involves the implementation and evaluation of the programmes and/or process.

After determining the two projects that we wanted to develop with our partners, a number of clarifying sessions were held. The frequency and level of involvement varied according to the project and their capacity. For instance, work with the 100BMOL involved programme coordinators as well as members of the 'leadership' team within the organisations, including the most senior executive officer. In the case of LBS/ACES, discussions took place with the senior management
structure

responsible for the supplementary education grants programme in parallel with the interim management structure of the umbrella organisation, ACES. At all stages with each project there were open dialogue and opportunities to clarify and meet face to face. It was important that we clarified purpose and outcome expectations, as well as how the work would be monitored and information shared. This approach enabled us to secure buy-in as well as enabled access to the particular cohort/participants under consideration (i.e. parents, on the one hand, and supplementary education providers and policy makers on the other).

Fig 2: Implementing the action research programme: support needs of BAME families



SECTION 2 | ACTION PROJECTS

As changes take place over time, and with more and more young people playing their part in the wider community, there will be the need to balance the tension and conflict between generations and any new 'cultural traits' derived as a result of assimilation and integration in the shaping of civil society (i.e. the *Big Society*). Support structures, therefore, will need to be more complementary and integrated as resources become scarce and hotly contested. There is no 'ideal' family type arrangement that produces poor education or economic outcomes; most children achieve well and secure good and positive outcomes, despite their socio-economic or ethnic background. No particular type of family configuration guarantees success or failure. Success or failure will therefore rest on a range of factors, none of which is reducible to a single point of causality. What is clear is that parents play a vital role in the shaping of attitudes and in the opening up of opportunities for their children. This should not be left to chance. Arising from the Phase 1 report, two projects were identified with partners as well as a follow up case study with a Chinese supplementary school, to explore the extent to which certain types of interventions could make a difference in providing support within the parenting process. It is to these projects we now turn.

1. Parents in Partnership (PiP Programme)

In setting out the rationale for the establishment of the Parents in Partnership (PIP) programme within the 100 Black Men of London's (100BMOL)[3] 'Community Mentoring Programme' (CMP), the project coordinator puts it thus:

"…the parents themselves, who in support of their children, have always formed as a hub at the edge of each fortnightly 'Me I Can Be' mentoring session. The idea to remove them as a group into a separate area, to be organised on a more formal basis, was introduced as a way of making more positive use of their time and energy in the hope of forming a support network both for each other, their children as well as for the 100."

At its core were the values which had been promoted by the parents that we had interviewed as part of the Phase 1 process. That is, in the face of increasing family breakdown, there was a need for parents to take the reigns of rebuilding their families; to mentor each other, support each other, and hold each other accountable within society (which was seen as being hostile to parents and appearing to favour agency intervention above that of the traditional family support structure).

[3] The philosophy of the 100 Black Men International is based on the *'Mentoring the 100 Way Across a Lifetime'* approach**.** The programme is premised on the belief that supporting the family within the mentoring framework contributes not only to the benefit of the individual family, but also to the wider community and society in general. Mentoring the 100 Way® is a holistic mentoring programme that addresses the social, emotional and cultural needs of children ages 8-18. Members of the 100 are trained and certified to become mentors, advocates, and role models for the youth within their communities. The programme focuses on building essential skills needed to become productive, contributing citizens. 100BMOL's The *Me I Can Be* is a community-orientated mentoring and education programme, offering structured group mentoring for boys and girls age 10 to 15 years old, specifically of African/Caribbean heritage, by providing leadership development workshops, motivational workshops and cultural enrichment and community activities. Participants on the programme are involved in Saturday Academies in a series of two-hour workshops designed to address and develop important life issues, such as self-identity, communication skills, social behavior, cultural exposure, business and entrepreneurship, male/female relationships, health and fitness, personal responsibility, Black history, substance abuse awareness and peer pressure.

From the outset, the approach was to develop the programme's *'curriculum'* organically, shaped by a few core ideas as it's foundation while allowing for parents to *"inform and build the programme as a result of their own experience"* (Project Coordinator). In so doing begin to create a sort of cooperative support network - run by parents for parents who set the agenda according to the needs and requirements of the group (see report, Sept 2010).

Further to this aim, the overarching goal was to develop the Parents in Partnership Programme as an adjunct to the established young people focused 'mentoring programme' within the 100BMOL Community Mentoring Programme, which would be offered to parents of children attending the programme as well as those parents sharing the desire to develop confidence in parenting and to be with other parents as a support network.

During the pilot phase of the initiative, which took place between January and June 2010, it had become apparent to the coordinators that the 'fluid' approach which had initially been adopted, contributed to parents not actively engaging on a regular basis, seeing the group as a 'drop-in' with only a few making a conscious effort to invest the time in developing the aims of the group. The 'fluid' approach, which had originally been adopted, was soon set aside in favour of a more 'formalised' and flexibly interpreted approach, which seemed to have engaged the parents on a more regular basis. This approach led to the emergence of the main themes of regular discussions: the stories told from personal parenting experiences; of raising children, problems encountered along the way and lack of community. Some contributors were prepared to be very candid about their own needs which focused the direction of discussions. It soon became clear that many parents saw themselves in isolation. Specific topics emerged, which formed the bedrock for the pilot programme from November 2010. They were:

- The difference between raising boys and girls
- Social Networking sites - uses and abuses
- Sex
- Lack of common values in child rearing
- Isolation - Lone parenting (particularly as it relates to women raising boys)

Following a series of meetings and discussions with the coordinator and members of the 'Leadership team' within the organisation, it was agreed that the PiP Programme will operate two sessions monthly as part of the 100 BMOL Community Mentoring Programme, serving the needs of parents in both North and South London. In order to be accessible to parents whose children already attend the Community Mentoring Programme, the programme operated from at the same time as the *Me I Can Be* Programme and at the same venue.

What has been the impact so far?

As can be seen from the programme outline at Appendix 2, the programme extends beyond the scope of the research period, which suits the need of the organisation. It is therefore premature to comment on the full impact of both the approach and the programme until the end of the process (June 2011). That said, there are some early indicative emerging themes coming out of the early 'Rounds' of the process.

(a) **"It Takes A Village….."**

One of the recurring theme arising from the focus group process, amongst the African-Caribbean parents we spoke to was the feeling of a loss of community; a feeling that there was no longer a sense of a "village…" attitude to raising children. The programme sought to encourage parents to *"…become active participants in the building process*" in developing the community.

For many parents, what would make a difference within a conceptualization of a community/village approach was the presence and active involvement of 'male' role models as well as mutual respect from young people in the home and in the public realm (socio-political environmental interface, where social actors learn to share and develop one to the other). Further that this 'village' need not be physically identified; that is, with increasing and developing technological advance, there was the recognition that this village may need to be conceived as a 'virtual' embodiment of the principles of 'all for one and one for all' approach. Key to this was the recognition that parents had to learn how to be a 'parent'; to realize that boundaries need to exist between the parent and the child. As one parent puts it, knowing and being clear *"…who is the parent and who is the child – this is causing children to adopt positions that are negative."*

And another parent was of the view that *"…notions of love and respect are not mutually exclusive. Knowing when and how to act within the relationship is important."* This parent went on to explain that parents need to *"knowing when an adult approach is preferred"* and when *"a parent approach"* need to be adopted within parent-child relationship. There needs to be "*fear alongside love and respect. A balance need to be struck...."*

At the beginning of each session, parents are asked to give a brief introduction (i.e. who they are and what they hope to achieve from the session etc). On one occasion two of the participants were Aunties and had each accompanied children to the *Me I Can Be* programme. They were reluctant participants, fearing that they could not contribute as they were not 'parents'. They were persuaded to stay. This demonstrated, at one level, that the underlining notion of a 'community' of people is invaluable and at another, that good parenting is not just about being the biological birth bearer but that others can play just as effective a parenting role as if they were the biological parent. In fact, this idea of shared care or Village Parenting is precisely the leitmotiv that runs through the PIP programme. These participants exemplified that principle perfectly by engaging fully. The coordinator sums this up aptly, when she said *"…their commitment serves as a great example to all of us who may not have children of our own, but who have young people in our midst and are concerned about what we see happening around us. Whether we are related to them or not is of little consequence; if we want to see a difference in the life of our community and make a difference to our children's future, we have to* ***be*** *the difference and take responsibility by getting involved and playing an active role in the lives of our young people."*

(b) Differences in raising boys and girls

This particular session was the second in the PiP programme, and it considered the question of parents' attitude, based on their own upbringing largely, in how they were now raising children in terms of gender: how much of our parental responses are informed by hardwired gender stereotyping and how much are they a bespoke, gender neutral response to our children as individuals?

Attitudes to parenting, and co-parenting in particular, reflected strong views. This also reflected how people were themselves raised and this was seen as invaluable acknowledgments of the parenting processes that many adopted. The extent to which parents actually considered what it would mean to raise a child was not something they had on their mind. Furthest still, was what it would mean for two parents to be involved in the parenting process. As some parents reported back: "*… no consideration was given to the long term effects of parenting, particularly cultural differences. The pregnancy was just a consequence of sex*." In this suggesting that not much planning went into the values of co-parenting. Most parents were not taking into consideration the practicalities of raising children and if they were, they were now finding that they are learning about parenting at the same time their children were having their own child/ren (i.e. teenage parents). Our own experience of how we were raised were said to strongly influence how children are raised; and it soon became evident that one size does not fit all (i.e. the needs of boys and girls can be different). Each child is an individual and learns differently and these need to be considered in raising the child.

However, this must be built upon strong foundation of values and beliefs, and these need to be uniformly applied regardless of gender, age and personality, recognising that the method of teaching those values can differ between children. There is often 'parental baggages' and therefore following the example of our parents and the way that we were raised, may not be the most appropriate style or approach. Being able to mix and adapt to the changing circumstances of the time will be necessary.

(c) Social networking

One of the most animated and engaged session dealt with the proliferation and impact of social networks on parenting, in particular the relationship engendered as a concomitant effect of using social networks such as Facebook, Bebo, Hi Five, Flickr, Twitter and so on, as 'surrogate parents'. Simply put, the role of parents were seen as being usurped and undermined by children's gravitation to conducting their 'affairs' on the internet as well as recognizing the insidious ways it has crept into everyday life. We heard from parents who struggled to maintain control of their children and of their awareness of who their child/ren is talking to on-line. As one parent puts it "… how can they have so many friends!" (a reference to the many 'friends' that some say they have on their Facebook account). Interestingly, some parents were very 'clued up' and managed to use Facebook, for instance, to locate their child who had gone missing. It was recognised that, as a tool, it does have the propensity to be good as well as bad. It was deemed that parents need to 'embrace the tool' as it is likely to be with us for many years. As another parent puts it, *"… The internet is here to stay and we need to find ways, as parents, to ensure it works for us and not the other way round".*

One of the issues for parents was how to get the message to their children of the dangers of social networking sites? Suggestions offered varied. However, many felt that:

- parents need to access a 'network' of other parents by way of support structure (e.g. could keep an eye on what children are saying/doing and refer back to parents; build skill and confidence in how to use and understand the networks that the children are accessing – building a virtual 'village');

- parents need to have conversations with children about the pros and cons of social networking sites and to have these conversations 'together' by way of a joint session (i.e. parents and children) within the 100BMOL experience[4]. Just as important, many parents were very clear that the attitude of some adults leaves much to be desired when they are using the social sites themselves – as their attitudes could also exacerbate notions of good parenting (i.e. some conducting their torrid and inexcusable behaviour in a public way).

Concluding remarks

The evaluation found evidence to suggest that a number of the activities undertaken as part of the programme were valued by the parents, since they were purposely developed to enable them to make the most of the learning opportunity.

Work is still ongoing as the project continues until June. The indicative outcomes can perhaps be summed up in some of the actions that parents have so far indicated as being things they can start to do as a result of being on the programme[5]. They are:

- Taking control of own life and to access information support of their needs

- Develop and sustain networks and support structures;

- Prioritise education and skills development in their children to enable them to access opportunities as they develop.

- Co-parenting expectations to be discussed with children as part of 'sex' education and role modeling approaches in the home (e.g. *"…I was inspired by your PiP article in the most recent 100BMOL newsletter covering the issue of the difference in parenting boys and girls."* A respondent to an article on the PIP programme)

- Be more involved and create an atmosphere conducive to learning and community involvement (e.g. community could be virtual and not based solely on family ties);

- Improve own communication skills as well as create environment and opportunities for effective communication to take place with children. Monitor both use of internet as well as determine whether children actually need access to mobiles at an early age (e.g. under 10yrs, for example). Be proactive in being part of the solution rather than the

[4] This has now been taken up as a consideration for the joint session programmed with the children: *An Audience with our Children,* planned for later in the programme. See Appendix 2 of the accompanying project specific report on the BTEG website: www.bteg.co.uk.

[5] Part of the evaluation process is the use of a reflective diary, mid and post programme interviews. The post programme interviews will take place in June.

problem, as the children are able to access internet from outside the home (i.e. mobiles, internet cafes, schools, friends and relatives)

The focus group discussion with the parents was invaluable because it relied on them to share their experiences and views across a range of concerns, including reflections on their use of the 'reflective diaries'. This was important as at this mid-point, if we are to make changes it is necessary for us to recognise what else need to happen in order to provide the experience that would make the difference and begin to reshape the way they have been seeing things. This is even more so as many were expressing concerns at the outset about the journey some of their boy children, in particular, were taking. It was a process that provided an opportunity to hear their voices and allowed them to express their views about the programme.

As had been already noted through the work group sessions that were held as part of the weekly sessions, some parents talked openly about the difficulties they were experiencing in raising their children, some of them as single parents. Part of the problem was the lack of understanding of the impact of their parenting on their children and their inability to discipline by setting clear boundaries and guidance. From sessions such as *'The difference between raising boys and girls*', some were reflective of their upbringing and recognised where they were *"parenting according to stereotypical practices"* and from their own upbringing both here in the UK and from the Caribbean and Africa. They discovered that the quality of their parenting had a profound impact on how they were parenting their children[6] *("not wanting to do things the way their parents did things"*) and some were looking for *"new ways and approaches as to dealing with their problems and wanted their children to have the freedom and opportunities that they didn't have."*

The parents came with different expectations because they were concerned about the destiny and life chances that they felt their children would be subjected to if they were not "educationally equipped" to be able to cope with the pressures of society. The wider concerns around 'gang culture' and the wanton taking of live and, as one parent puts it, "disrespectfulness", were concerns that propelled many parents to engage with the programme. Thus, the programme offered more than just 'educational or child development' theories but offered a 'space' for the parents to start re-building and reconnecting, first with themselves as parents with a busy life schedule; and secondly, as a body of people requiring 'chilling out time' to explore and support each other in the common pursuit of child rearing.

The evidence shows that the programme is meeting a need for a number of reasons. The evidence showed that:

- Advertising the programme widely to parents of children on the *Me I Can* and by using the parents to spread the word amongst the group.
- Establishing trust and confidence was crucial to achieving change.

[6] The Phase 1 approach had revealed that within the African/Caribbean communities there were differences in approach in parenting between African and Caribbean parents. In some respect this was reflected in the length of time spent in the UK versus the time spent either in Africa or the Caribbean and differentiated also in terms of whether the parent was younger or older with some 'life experiences'. Within the group sessions, it was clear that these variations and considerations informed the discussions and provided some insights into opportunities and possibilities. However, it is far too soon at this stage to determine the extent to which these differences influence educational as well as other socio-economic opportunities. What is clear, however, is that there were strong views that their own upbringing definitely had a bearing on how they were raising their children. This aspect of generational parenting styles and approaches, from the perspective of 'home country' v UK, is an area for further studies.

- The facilitators were flexible and responded sensitively to the parents needs managing the issues that resulted from open discussions.
- The parents had gained insight into the impact of their parenting, thus making them more conscious of the need to communicate with children in more effective ways.
- The ability to share new ideas in an open and honest way in a supportive group setting;
- The information provided was seen as empowering since it created a state of consciousness.
- Some parents had expressed a feeling of confidence and competence in parenting in their management of their children's behaviour.
- A theme which emerged from the focus group discussion was 'building the village' through participation and involvement.

2. Quality and effectiveness of supplementary/complementary education provisions

The phase 1 report highlighted the use being made by parents of the voluntary sector provided supplementary education[7] provisions as well as other 'complementary' educational programmes, such as those delivered through faith organisations (i.e. the mosque). Parents argued for greater recognition and support for more of these types of provisions. However, they had concerns over the quality and effectiveness of some of these projects and programmes. Parents had reported that they look to the voluntary sector to provide additional support and yet many of them found the sector lacking the capacity and so were not as effective as they could be.

Where supplementary (or complementary) education provision was in place, many parents found it supportive and helpful. Most of the parents we spoke to, and who expressed concerns over the educational direction of their son(s), felt the need to 'pay for' private tuition in order to augment the school curriculum to support their child. Many felt that it gave them greater control over the learning agenda, which included a focus on religio-cultural aspects as well as basic learning skills. Other 'complementary' provision came in the guise of 'mentorship' programmes, which provided for some 1:1 support as well as whole group interface. All of these were highly praised by the parents who used them. However, discussions with some providers highlighted a number of critical concerns about the future as well as current delivery of supplementary education provision. On the one hand, some were fearful of the lack of available resources to develop their provision, and given the then impending general election, it was felt that these services would cease to operate, come the new academic year starting in September 2010. Some parents questioned the quality of the delivery and wanted to know which providers were effective and of *"good quality."* For some, it was a case of *"supporting local community provision"* (South London parent) while others saw the provision as plugging the academic gap in the education of their child. Work was deemed necessary to demonstrate to parents which provision was effective so that they had real choices and options. These also raised questions about the commissioning process at the local authority level as part of the wider support provided to children and families: what are local authorities doing with respect to assuring the quality of the services they are funding?

Invitations were sent to a number of local authorities to gauge their interest in working with BTEG and their own voluntary sector partners in developing the capacity and quality assurance standards for supplementary education provision in their area. The thought was that if some form of quality assessment and standards were available then parents could therefore make informed choices. Initial contact with the lead education officer responsible for commissioning supplementary education provision in the London Borough of Southwark indicated that they were in the throes of developing systems and exploring new arrangements to improve the quality and direction for the delivery of supplementary education provision within the borough.

The Southwark *Study Support Strategy* recognised and valued the positive benefits of supplementary education and mother tongue classes offered by complementary education providers in the community and voluntary sector in its delivery. Key to this approach is the development of a partnership model with the voluntary and community sector to enable that

[7] Supplementary education/school is sometimes referred to as 'complementary education/school', that have been set up by a community group or organisation which usually takes place during evenings and weekends. Most staff are volunteers with many teaching mother tongue languages (or even English as a second language), cultural activities such as music, drama, arts and 'religious and moral education'. Many now provide national curriculum subjects such as maths, English and Sciences. For the purpose of this report we will use the terms inter-changeably, which, in part, reflect the philosophical and political discourse surrounding this particular education approach. In Southwark, the preferred term used is 'complementary' education/schools.

sector to function on a self-sustaining basis and respond flexibly and quickly to ever changing local needs. That partnership is reflected in support given to capacity building services and organisations that are best placed within the sector to provide services as part of the commissioning process. Complementary education sector providers are encouraged, through the commissioning process, to work in partnership with each other to provide mutual support, to share ideas, to learn, to improve the quality of Study Support services and to achieve economies of scale. This overarching approach and 'single line' commissioning of complementary education provision was being considered through the *Associated Complementary Education Services Community Interest Company (C.I.C).*

Following a series of 'conferences', as part of the 'pre-conference' phase within the research cycle, key objectives were agreed which provided the basis for the intervention. They were:

1. To support the development of a quality mark scheme for supplementary education managed through the emerging second tier entity for co-ordination complementary education provision in Southwark *(Associated Complementary Education Services* [ACES]);

2. To determine the most appropriate and relevant support and development arrangements for ACES so as to enable the organisation to better support providers of supplementary education provision across the borough.

The role of ACES in supporting the development and management of supplementary and complementary education in Southwark

ACES aims:

"To carry out activities which benefit the community and in particular (without limitation) to promote, support and provide locally based community run education projects such as supplementary education and mother tongue classes for school age children and young people in the London Borough of Southwark."

The complementary education sector in Southwark provides services for children and young people drawn primarily (but not exclusively) from minority ethnic communities. The Council and other funders of the voluntary sector want to move away from grant funding of organisations to commissioning specific services. Within this, the London Borough of Southwark (LBS) is developing an approach to commissioning which is focused on the impact of the services commissioned rather than the mere outcomes. This means that the complementary education sector has a real opportunity to demonstrate value for money in terms of the impact that the services provided have upon individual children and young people who are the beneficiaries

The impact of the recession, credit crunch and the recent Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) has led to a very tough funding environment which seems set to endure for far longer than most analysts care to predict, especially as public sector 'reductions' become more marked[8]. The complementary education sector is already experiencing acute pressure as lettings costs for suitable premises increase, capitalisation of Council owned properties lead to groups being evicted from premises they have occupied for a number of years; schools seek to maximise their income by letting premises at rates that are prohibitive to the community and voluntary sector;

[8] The most recent Labour Market survey, produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), showed that the number of people in public sector employment was 6.01 million in September 2010, down 33,000 from June 2010. However, the number of people in private sector employment was 23.11 million, which remained unchanged from the same period (Statistical Bulletin, *Labour Market Statistics,* 15 December 2010, ONS).

over 25% cuts to central and local government grants to voluntary and community organisations is likely to see many organisations close by the end of the second financial quarter. Faced with these pressures, ACES will need a coherent and proactive approach to meet the challenges.

In moving forward, ACES is seeking to develop and put in place processes and systems that will enable them to manage the arrangements and the expectations that their role will demand. Firstly, they want to assure the local authority commissioners that they have in place an effective and 'fit for purpose' organisational structure and arrangements that the local authority could engage with by contract; secondly, they want to provide quality assurance as well as support to the sector, especially to organisations who may have limited resources though performing at a level deemed good or better; thirdly, they want to be both a critical friend in the delivery of services as well as take a lead in setting and maintaining quality and standards of the effectiveness of supplementary education delivery.

To meet these challenges, ACES is progressively establishing a *Sector Leadership Group (SLG)* of key complementary education providers to support the delivery and implementation of its quality assurance strategy. The SLG is being drawn from 10-20% of the most effective complementary education providers in the borough currently totalling around 51 organisations (see Fig 3). The SLG will be the link between the community and the ACES *Executive Board.* The SLG will be a 'bridge' between providers on the ground and the strategic project management of the company where responsibility for the overarching monitoring role of ACES will lie.

As part of the process, an audit and survey was undertaken of complementary provision in the borough, where we found 51 identified complementary education service providers, of which 21 were directly funded by the Council in 2009/10. However, it is estimated that the overall number of providers is increasing and as such reflects the importance that the various communities within Southwark place on education. According to our survey of supplementary education providers funded by the council, the majority of children who engaged in supplementary schools were drawn from within the African and Caribbean communities (60%). Other communities served by supplementary schools included Asian, Chinese, Middle Eastern and European (see Fig 4)[9]. This reflects the history of supplementary education in the UK where it originated in Caribbean communities in the 1960s and subsequently developed in other BAME communities via mother tongue classes[10].

The main purpose of the work with LBS/ACES, therefore, was to develop a tool and process that would enable ACES to meet its aims and that would be recognised by the local authority within their commissioning strategy. The development of the *BTEG Organisational Capacity Assessment Schedule* (hereafter BOCAS), focused in the first instance, on determining the quality and effectiveness of supplementary education provision, which ACES could use both to assess and determine the capacity of organisations; and secondly, to provide support to organisations as a 'critical friend'.

[9] Unpublished survey of 21 funded supplementary and mother tongue providers: 2009/2010, BTEG (Dec 2010)

[10] See The Swann Report (1985), Education for all: Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups, London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Also, BTEG (2008), *Six of the Best: Developing partnerships between supplementary and maintained schools;* London, Black Training and Enterprise Group

Fig 3: Breakdown of supplementary schools in Southwark by Community Council areas: 2009/10

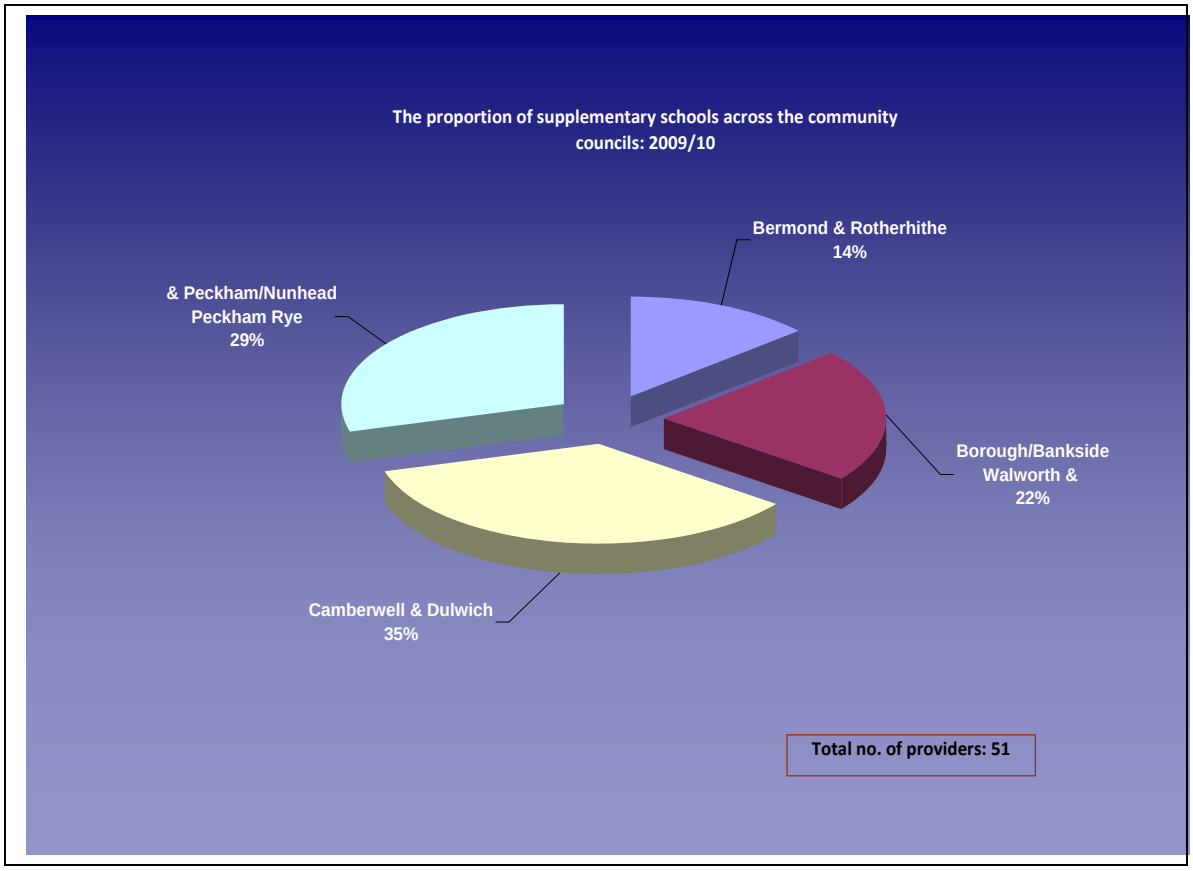
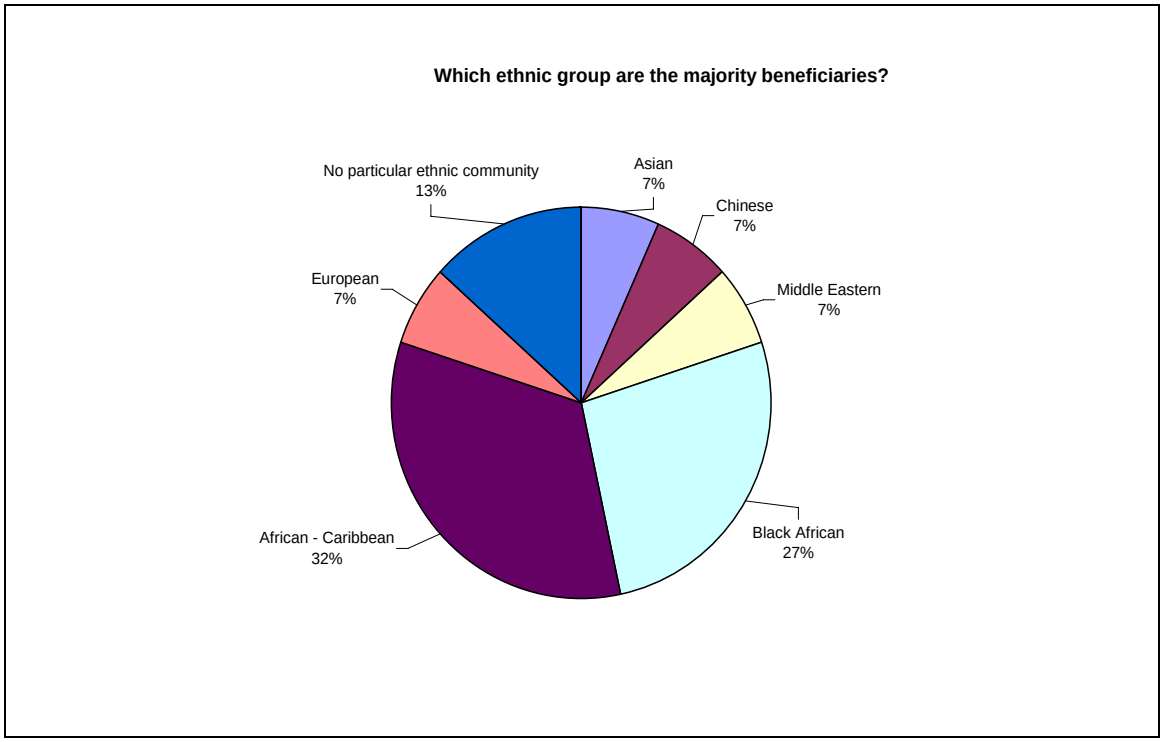


Fig 4: Ethnicity of majority participants engaged in supplementary schools: 2009/2010



What has so far emerged?

The process has been to develop some key principles around which the new umbrella consortium would function and the key instruments of measurement that they could use in order to provide the reassurance which parents would require and that funders would recognise. A feature of this has been the development of the Organisational Capacity Assessment Schedule. The *BTEG Organisational Capacity Assessment Schedule (BOCAS)* is a derivative product of the Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool (OCAT) created by McKinsey and Company for Venture Philanthropy Partners (www.vppartners.org) and published *in Effective Capacity Building in Non-profit Organisations* (2001)[11].

How the tool works

The tool is based around five 'organisational imperatives' against which organisations would be assessed. As the particular focus is on supplementary (or complementary education), the fifth imperative is focused on this particular environment[12]. Each imperative comes with a range of 'capacity elements' that forms the indicators for the assessment. Scoring for each element is set against the four levels identified below:

[11] BTEG has been granted permission to use and adapt the capacity assessment tool, created by McKinsey and Company and distributed with the permission of Venture Philanthropy Partners. As the derivative product is based on the *Organisational Capacity Assessment Tool*, (OCAT) the intellectual property rights and copyright of the derivative product remain with Venture Philanthropy Partners (www.vppartners.org). The OCAT is an assessment tool to measure operational capacity and identify areas which need improvement. It can be used as a self-assessment tool and as a tool for funders. To date, more than 70 organizations have requested permission to modify or replicate the tool, post it on their websites, or distribute it among their own grantees

[12] The tool allows for programme/environment specific focus to be considered. The fifth aspect may need to be tailored, depending on the sector within which the organisation is located (e.g. training; health; personal and social education; sport and recreation; the arts etc).

Assessment scoring system

Rating score	Capacity Level	Quality Description	NRC Standard Equivalence[13]
1	Level 1	Inadequate capacity in place	
2	Level 2	Basic level of capacity in place	Bronze
3	Level 3	Moderate level of capacity in place	Silver
4	Level 4	High level of capacity in place	Gold

Each completed *'Indicator Measure'* (see example below) rolls into an overarching table with a graphic representation. These are used to engage with organisations to produce an *'action plan',* which will be devised in concert with the assessed organisation – and which could be used within the commissioning process, for example, by way of 'areas for development' or in determining level of funding based on capacity need. The result could be shared with stakeholders, especially parents, in the same way *'Ofsted'* shares its outcome of inspections. Thus providing parents with a good basis to make choice and also elevates the sector in terms of quality and effectiveness.

The BOCAS organisational imperatives and capacity element descriptors

The BOCAS framework, unlike the original McKinsey OCAT product which covered seven 'operational areas', is broken down into five 'organisational imperatives and builds on the Ofsted principles of effective teaching and learning[14]. The full range of the capacity element descriptors are outlined as follows:

Organisational imperative 1: Governance and leadership

Indicator Measure	Description of capacity elements
1.01	Mission
1.02	Clarity of vision
1.03	Organisational goals and targets
1.04	Strategic planning
1.05	Advocacy for policy and systems change
1.06	Shared beliefs and values
1.07	Shared references and practices
1.08	Board governance
1.09	Board member leadership
1.10	Board development
1.11	Board structure

[13] The National Resource Centre (NRC) has produced a set of 'standards' for supplementary schools, which came into existence in 2009. In developing the assessment tool, consideration was taken of a number of 'quality standards', including that of the NRC's. It was felt necessary to show where synergy existed between the tools, so as to avoid duplication and confusion. The BOCAS is an assessment tool that supports the need for external quality assurance; it is not a self assessment tool nor is it a set of standards. It aims to 'check' and/or validate the capacity of an organisation to deliver work of a particular kind. It therefore complements the NRC framework, which does not offer 'inspection and developmental' possibilities which supports capacity building and requirements.

[14] Office of Standards in Education (June 2009), Framework for inspection of maintained schools in England, London: Ofsted

Organisational imperative 2: Operational and organisational management

Indicator Measure	Description of capacity elements
2.01	Budget and financial planning
2.02	Cash flow management
2.03	Accounting systems and procedures
2.04	Financial policies and internal controls
2.05	Funding stability
2.06	Funding strategy
2.07	Fund raising skills
2.08	Evaluation and performance measurement
2.09	Organisational learning and continuous improvement
2.10	Operational Planning
2.11	Programme relevance and integration
2.12	Communication and marketing
2.13	Outreach
2.14	Partnership and Alliance
2.15	CEO/ED leadership
2.16	Senior Management team leadership
2.17	Management Team and staff
2.18	Community presence and involvement

Organisational imperative 3: Human resources

Indicator Measure	Description of capacity elements
3.01	Staffing range and experiences
3.02	Individual job design
3.03	Human resources planning
3.04	Staff development, recruitment and retention
3.05	Volunteer management

Organisational imperative 4: Procedures, systems and infrastructure

Indicator Measure	Description of capacity elements
4.01	Facility infrastructure
4.02	Health & safety
4.03	Telephone, fax and video
4.04	Information technology
4.05	Information management systems
4.06	Web presence
4.07	Print marketing materials
4.08	Management of legal & liability matters

Organisational imperative 5: Curriculum, content, design and delivery

Indicator Measure	Description of capacity elements
5.01	Inter-functional coordination
5.02	Teach effectively
5.03	Pupil's achievement & attainment
5.04	Leadership and management of the curriculum
5.05	Engagement with stakeholders and parents
5.06	Effectiveness of safeguarding
5.07	Cultural, personal and social education
5.08	Deployment of resources

How the assessment will be undertaken

Based on the above scoring system (i.e. 1 – 4), an *'assessor'* will rate the capacity of the organisation according to the criteria and evidence obtained. This is not meant to be a self-assessment tool and therefore a preparatory process will need to be put in place (i.e. a realistic time scale will need to be arranged in advance with all concerned). How the process works is captured in the accompanying document: *Conducting the Assessment - Guidance for using the Organisational Capacity Assessment Schedule (BOCAS).* Fig 5 provides a useful overview of the key components of the assessment process.

Fig 5: The five stages of the assessment cycle

The process consists of five stages:

1. **Preparatory stage:**
    a. Clarify purpose, agree objectives and confirm information required, and time-scale;
    b. Data review and analysis;

2. **On -site visit stage:**
    a. Interviews with key programme personnel,
    b. Classroom observations;
    c. Group session interviews (i.e. students, parents and other stake holders as appropriate)

3. **Reporting stage:**
    a. Completion of the Assessment Schedule
    b. Discussion of findings with organisation
    c. Identify priorities arising from assessment

4. **Action Planning stage:**
    a. Draft action plan based on agreed priorities (see 'Reporting Stage')
    b. Agree support package between ACES and the organisation
    c. Agree review process

5. **Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Action Plan.**

Concluding remarks

The process of developing the tool is still ongoing with trialing under way with some providers within the borough as well as outside London who have shown an interest in how it could support and enhance their own development[15]. At the second feedback/plenary sessions with providers, representatives felt that the tool could offer them an opportunity to demonstrate their capacity and therefore offer a possibility to secure funding. Not only this, the discussions came at a time when the local authority had issued them with a letter inviting them to submit an application for 'transitional funding', to mitigate the effects of significant budget cuts about to fall on the entire community and voluntary sector. One criterion was the extent to which organisations were able to identify their transitional need and, of course, their capacity to sustain the organisation and programme delivery. Consideration, as a result of this ongoing work, has meant that the groups were in a position to identify needs with the BOCAS as tool of support. Furthermore, the process had galvanized many of them to recognise the opportunity to rethink how they can be better supported going forward through a 'consortia' arrangement in which a tool such as the BOCAS would help identify the priorities for development within such partnerships. Two organisations, who have been part of the consultative groups and three others outside this arrangement, have all included the need to establish a consortium to take forward the agenda with the BOCAS at the centre of their capacity assessment analysis.

One of the strength indicated by participants was the fact that the *"…assessment would be done with them rather than to them."* This they liked and welcomed the prospect of *"…demonstrating what they do and to get this recognised. We are always asked to produce reports, monitoring and evaluation information but no one ever comes back and let us know what they think. Last year we were asked by Southwark Council to fill in a long self evaluation form and it took us a long time to do. No one has ever come back to say anything about it. At least this way we can talk to someone and they can see what we are doing and the report could go further to those who matters: parents and wider community."* Another participant commented that their organisation had registered to undertake the PQASSO assessment but found *that "…it was too cumbersome and required so much time and costly. What we really need is for some one to come to us, visit us, see what we are doing and comment on how we are doing. I know how we are doing. The children know how we are doing. Parents know how we are doing. It is funders who don't know and if we do it ourselves, who is going to believe us?"* And another chimed in that they had *"just completed the Bronze level with the NRC...We wondered what was the point as it didn't really challenge us other than to show that we had certain policies and procedures in place. We just did it because we have been encouraged to do so and thought it would make a difference in making funding applications. Where is the credibility?"*

The aim was to provide a 'tool' for commissioners of services that could be used to assess the capacity of organisations' fitness for purpose and so support their commissioning programme. While the tool was initially focused on the needs of supplementary school provision, it became evident that its applicability goes beyond the specificity of this sector (and the needs of BAME communities) with the overarching principles recognised as forming the bedrock for any quality not-for-profit organisation to assess their capacity as an organisation. The assessment tool is emerging as having the potential to be used alongside other 'standards' and tools available to voluntary and statutory commissioners. In February, the Department for Education's *Capacity Building* funding programme identified the need for organisations to be commissioned by the

[15] The first pilot group is currently underway, and we are therefore unable to share much at this point other than to indicate that initial discussions have so far revealed that some of the organisations need support in thinking through their vision and direction; production of a business plan; developing the capacity and effectiveness of their management committee members.

Department to demonstrate that their *"action plan must be supported by a robust diagnostic assessment of the organisations business development needs. The diagnostic assessment must provide a comprehensive review of he current situation, focusing on organisational strengths and identified gaps, with objective of building upon what exist already to identify opportunities for future business development and financial sustainability."*[16] Also, the recent Grass Roots Funding programme, announced by the Office of Civil Society (OCS), identified organisational capacity development as an objective that they would fund[17]. The point to be made here is the timeliness of the development of the BOCAS now offers organisations a robust diagnostic tool, built and developed over many years through the work of the Venture Philanthropy Partners and the work of the McKinsey Foundation in working with non-profit bodies, and being trialed with organisations looking for a rigorous tool that provides for an external 'inspectoral' approach to quality assurance. And importantly, something that builds on strength and which is not too cumbersome and time consuming for them as small and developing organisations. As one participant indicated, *"large organisations already have the capacity to self assess; that is our problem. We don't have the capacity to self assess using many of those tools and they are not relevant to our sector anyway (i.e. a reference to PQASSO[18])."*

[16] Unpublished ring fenced application guidelines for programme providers bidding into the Department's commissioning programme as outlined in the National Prospectus, November 2010. It was indicated that successful organisations would be eligible for an 'additional' funding focused on 'capacity building' to enable them to be sustainable beyond the period of the Department's funding programme.

[17] The Capital Community Funding, (Feb 2011), www.ccf.org.uk

[18] Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisation (PQASSO), Charities Evaluation Services (CES), http://www.ces-vol.org.uk/index.cfm?pg=42

3. The Chinese experience: Parental involvement in raising educational attainment

In October 2010, BTEG published its policy *Briefing Paper* entitled *"What more can we takeaway from the Chinese community?"* The paper attempted to raise awareness of the success of the British Chinese children in the education system. Rather than focusing on why some groups were failing, we sought to answer the question, *why were some groups succeeding?* In so doing, we hoped to find out if there were certain aspects of the different communities that made a difference and if so, what these were. We looked at the Chinese community as their children appeared to be bucking the trend, despite sharing some of the same socio-political conditions as other minority ethnic communities. The key points that arose from that paper were:

- British Chinese parents place a high value on education and recognize that attainment in education is a fundamental element towards higher social mobility in later life.
- Chinese culture emphasizes effort over natural ability
- British Chinese parents show a strong commitment to their child's education via supplementary education irrespective of financial barriers
- British Chinese parents appear to limit their children's exposure to counterproductive influences that might hinder their educational attainment
- British Chinese boys have a higher level of achievement than the national average for girls in all attainment categories.
- According to the 2001 census, 30 percent of the British Chinese post-16 population are full time students compared to a UK average of 8 percent
- Despite facing similar disadvantage, 71% British Chinese pupils who were eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) achieved 5 A*– C (incl. Maths and English) in contrast to the national average for all pupils on FSM of 27% in 2009/10[19].

As part of the Phase 2 approach, we sought to explore, through focus group and semi-structured interviews[20], whether there were particular facets of parenting that marked the Chinese experience from all other communities that could explain the consistently high level of educational attainment amongst British born Chinese (or *BBCs* as the young respondents referred to themselves as). A key feature that arose in the writing of the *Briefing* paper was the role that parents played and the value of supplementary schools in the parenting approaches within the community. Though supplementary schooling is an important feature within the education process, it was the underpinning values of parent-child interface that played the most significant role in the shaping of the Chinese success in the education system.

The first thing to note is that Chinese parents were as committed as other parents to playing a significant role in their children's education. However, unlike many of the other parents that we spoke to as part of the research process (i.e. African, Caribbean and Asian), they were more focused on instilling and transferring a high value towards gaining higher social mobility later on in life through education achievement; what educationalist term 'deferred gratification'. One parent commented:

"…the most important thing is family values….Western parents don't cherish their child."

[19] Department of Education (2010), Statistical First Release, GCSE results 2009/10, 16 December

[20] Focus group session was undertaken with 23 parents arranged through the Haringey Chinese Community Centre and semi-structured interviews with 4 Chinese students drawn from West London and South London. The majority of participants were female (82%).

And another remarked that:

"They (western parents) just send them to school and that's it… (It) is the most important thing, top priority."

And, to reinforce the point, another parent responded by saying:

"Higher education is very important for the future…Chinese children realise education gets you places…it is part of Chinese culture."

Delia Davin, emeritus Professor of the National Institute of Chinese Studies at Leeds University, reinforced this view in her interview for *Stylist Magazine* on the success of Chinese women in business, when she says:

"…Chinese women grow up with the idea that it is very important to repay their families and do the best they can for them. Your parents are bringing you into the world and looking after you and you ought to repay them." [21]

The remarks reinforced the conclusion of the DfE report on parental involvement in education, [22] in that *"parental involvement has a significant effect on children's achievement and adjustment even after all other factors (such as social class, maternal education and poverty) have been taken out of the equation between children's aptitudes and their achievement" (DfE, 2003).* Parental involvement in the form of the 'at-home' relationship and modelling of aspirations was said to play a *"major part in impact on school outcomes"* and that "*other forms of parental involvement do not appear to contribute to the scale of the impact of 'at-home' parenting".* The review went on to capture what perhaps lay at the heart of the Chinese experience, and that is parental enthusiasm and positive parenting style affecting the child's perception towards *"motivation, self-esteem and educational aspirations"* which then *"bolstered their motivation to succeed".* What parents do, therefore, with their children at home *"is much more significant than any other factor open to educational influence"*. As one father puts it, *"Chinese children are brought up to please parents.*" It is this notion of impressing parents, the desire to ensure that the 'hierarchy of the relationship between parent–child-community' is maintained throughout the parenting process[23].

The concept of 'saving face' in the Chinese Community plays a large part in the socialization process and is fundamental in achieving good education success. Unlike some other BAME communities, Chinese parents see the education of their child as perhaps the single most important role that a parent can perform. The responsibility of educating the child is the primary focus of the parents; if a child does not succeed, it is seen from a community perspective as a parental failure in upbringing. This provides motive and drives expectations as to social status and achievement, which a good and higher education qualification confers. Said one of the students we spoke to:

"…if we got a poor grade than one of our friends, then my parents would want to know why. They would say that so and so got a better grade and that I must work harder."

[21] Stylist Magazine, Issue 66, Feb. 23 2011, pp 41 - 42
[22] Department of Education (2003), *The Impact of parental involvement, parental support and family education on pupil achievement and adjustment, London*
[23] See Amy Chua, Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother, reprinted in The Times, Feb 2011

And another chimed in by saying that *"it doesn't look good if your parents sacrificed so much to get you a good education and you fail".*

And another:

"…we cannot go to any university it has to be one that is well known and respected. Whatever it takes, our parents will sacrifice everything to ensure we get the best education and we are then expected to go back and help out. Maths and sciences are the only subjects we are expected to do well in; they do not want to hear that we are studying arts subjects."

If the children, as seen through the eyes of the students we interviewed, were clear about 'saving the face' of their parents, the parents themselves that we spoke to were equally clear about their role. Both the students and the parents were asked about the avoidance of intergenerational conflicts that we so often hear about; especially in relation to reprimanding unruly children. The parents were very clear:

" … [we] put them out in the real world…they always come back. When I was young my dad got me a job as a dishwasher in a Chinese restaurant, I came back straight away! Once children have a taste of the real world, they realise education is the best way"

And another parent puts it clearly:

"…the child can never have the same experience as the parent. It is their role to show them the right way; and it might not be the best but it is the right thing. The child must learn and understand this".

The student's response was just as clear:

"… When we see our 'guailo' friends (non Chinese[24]) doing things we feel we ought to as well. We some times feel we are missing out and would like to do some of the things they do, but know that some things will not be good. There does need to be a balance."

One explanation is seeing this as integral to Confucian teaching, which is said to be at the heart of the Chinese culture. This approach, so the argument goes, views education as not only an accumulation of knowledge, but an active means of self transformation through personal and communal endeavour. Parents are the primary role models in driving this responsibility as Confucianism teachings that a person does not become a capable human being unless educated through deliberate efforts. Although features of positive 'at-home' parenting can be found in all cultures, from our engagement with the parents and some young people, we can clearly see that, while they did not extol the virtues of Confucianism as a religious reference point in the same way we had found with our discussions with Muslim and Christian parents, in particular, its predominant ethos and influence on parenting and education were clearly visible and reflected a distinctiveness that was prominent with respect to hard work and effort. Considerations in Confucianism around Filial Piety, for example, reinforce this ethos whereby there is a general code of conduct in terms of interaction and deference to generational roles within the family. That is, younger people must defer to the older generation (parent and child, teacher and child). As one parent puts it:

"…Chinese culture teaches you to respect your elders…teaches you politeness and respect the

[24] This is a Cantonese slang to refer to non Chinese people, often reference to those of Caucasian extractions.

hierarchy…this isn't found in today's schools;"

And another, that:

"Education can't teach you everything. Chinese parents at home teach children to respect themselves."

This is followed through in the home, in the community and at school, where it is further reinforced through the hierarchical structures of the schooling system. The role of supplementary schools, within this context, plays a pivotal role in reinforcing the values of the family. The value and importance of the 'Chinese School' was unequivocal; both from the organisation's perspective, in terms of why there is the need, and from the parents' perspective, ensuring the culture of the community is reinforced. Not only does the supplementary school provide support in grasping the basic learning skills required to do well at the respective Key Stages, but they provide the foundation wherein the cultural values are further reinforced and inculcated. An example of this was the 'Manual', developed by Chinese Associations, provides a curriculum framework for the teaching of the cultural values that forms the bedrock of the community (e.g. Cantonese and Mandarin language, cultural mores, belief system and values)[25]. The school become a place of involvement, participation and recognition of aspirations and further reinforces that aspiration through the competitiveness that it engenders through its reward ceremonies. This helps to bind and bring the community together. As one parent puts it: *"… All teaching (Supplementary schools) is based on Chinese culture…It fills in the Chinese parents concern about western education."*

And another remarked:

"… At the Chinese school, we compare children. This brings parents closer together as a community. Chinese parents see other children do well and say 'I want to beat their children'".

One father makes the point*: "…. For my children, (competition) motivates them. They want to be the best and impress me and their mother…it works."*

In the same *Stylist Magazine* article quoted above, Ling Valentine, a 37 year old entrepreneur based in Newcastle, commented that the hall mark of Chinese success lay in the work ethics and the valuing of the family. The child, she contends*, "is the old age pension for most families so when there's only one child, that child is pushed to being the best they can be. Fierce competition means fighting against our peers for a slice of the action. Failure was not an option…Competition is not something we have to disguise or play down. It is what makes the world go round."*

While our conversations are very impressionistic at this stage, based as they are on a small group of parents, drawn from a particular local area, it nevertheless points to an important feature involved in the parenting process. That is, the impact that parents (and parenting approach) can have on the child's development and education; and that this cannot nor should it be relegated to triviality or unimportance. While cultural value systems are different and, in many cases very diverse, there are some underpinnings that are certainly common; though differentially executed. What we have been able to so far ascertain is that the value base for the Chinese success has some synergy with notions of respect for elders and drive to 'pleasing' parents, almost to the exclusion of ones' own individual gravitation and leaning. It is not an

[25] The North London Chinese Association and the North Wales Chinese Association, for instance, both offer 'text books' (or manual) to be used by Chinese schools. Many of the Chinese Schools' curriculum (in the UK) cover Chinese grammar, idioms, literature, history and traditional Chinese art form (see www.nlca.org.uk; www.chineseassociatoon.org.uk).

indictment on the cultural values of this community, rather it's the strength that we have heard other communities lament and wish existed in their own. With regards to raising aspiration and educational attainment, it is vital and crucial that parents are involved. The positive 'at-home' parenting is an important factor that does have an impact on educational outcomes. This could go a long way into explaining why British Chinese pupils do so well despite experiencing the same effects of deprivation that pupils from other ethnic groups are also experiencing.

Concluding remarks

What more can we learn from the Chinese experience? Without a doubt parents play a key role in the improvement of their children's educational attainment and these are not germaine to any one culture over another; rather, there are definite practices that can, and have been proven, to make a difference. These include:

- Engaging children in a positive, sustainable environment that encourages learning at home. Although schools play an integral part in education, when coupled with at-home parental involvement, pupils perform above average.

- Creating positive attitudes towards education from parents to children. When parents have a positive attitude towards education, there is a strong chance that this attitude will make an imprint on the child. Parents should engage in activities that promote education and learning skills with the child.

- Raising aspiration in seeing the 'value' of education as a means to an end. When parents reinforce the link of high achievement in education with better prospects in the future, it gives children and parents a long term positive goal to aim for.

- Promoting and almost going back to the 'old protestant ethics' of hard work and effort being its own reward, recognizing that effort can be motivating. A reliance on natural abilities alone suggests that there are limitations – and there ought not to be a limitation to aspiration and therefore development potential. Setting aside time for 'homework' and ensuring that that is done to a good standard should be principles that can be adopted by all parents, irrespective of culture and ethnicity.

- Providing a source of supplementary education, which plugs the 'gap that the schooling system' is failing to fill. Sometimes children need an extra 'boost' in certain subjects and of the importance of certain fundamental values for life and living. In our survey of supplementary schools, culture and heritage imperatives were said to form features of the curriculum and these are features that our experience shows is not likely to be conveyed through the schooling system. Establishing good and quality supplementary schools is a start, and where this exist, they have proven to be effective.

SECTION 3 |CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As time lapses, societies and cultures evolve, and with this come the tension between generations and the new 'cultural traits' derived as a consequence of assimilation and integration in the shaping of civil society (e.g. the *Big Society*). The space where this is likely to be hotly contested will be in retaining and grafting on 'old' cultural values to the new and through this, the establishment of new cultural values, complete with new transitional support structures. Support structures will therefore need to be complementary and integrated as resources become scarce and hotly contested. The family, as the first line of support, will be placed under tremendous pressure and tension, charged with ensuring that the new socio-cultural values are translated, transmitted and reinforced.

There is no 'ideal' family type arrangement where this will not be problematic nor with out its fair share of dysfunctionality. There is no type that produces poor education or economic outcomes; most children achieve well and secure good and positive outcomes, despite their socio-economic or ethnic background. No particular type of family configuration guarantees success or failure. Success or failure will therefore rest on a range of factors, none of which is reducible to a single point of causality. What is clear is that parents and families play a vital role in the shaping of attitudes and in the opening up of opportunities for their children. This should not be left to chance. As we concluded in our interim report, it is our view that an absence of effective parenting skills, leading to poor boundaries being established, is more than likely to lead to poor educational outcomes and possible involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour.

Parents need to start taking a more proactive role in their children's education at home as well as in the wider community; they need to realise that education does not start and stop at the school gates. And as we have learnt through our discussions with parents, aspirational and natural ability can only take you so far unless the positive values that underpin it are practiced and reinforced at home and in the public realm. It is not only the State's responsibility, but a parent's responsibility to provide their children with a positive and sustainable learning environment. Parental support and home circumstances are vital building blocks for an effective upbringing and in raising aspiration and these cannot be overlooked or understated. It is therefore imperative that parents provide the right engagement, encourage aspiration, inspire and motivate their children to achieve to the highest standard, which will entail hard work, and provide the right set of opportunities for success. Based on the work to date, we express this as the *'bottom line'* culmination of the findings:[26] S = PE + A + 2H + O. Bottom line, because being able to recognize the signs that contribute to poor attainment and poor outcome is crucial in ensuring an appropriate and relevant support structure is put in place and when all has been written and argued over, parents are still at the centre of the transformational change process; this is no '*either/or*' option and as we have seen, where this occurs, the result is far too often negative. In other words, there is *no choice.* Too often the voices and concerns of parents have not been taken seriously and so many parents take it upon themselves to seek out support in the guise of alternative and supplementary education opportunities, for example.

The qualitative approach adopted tried to go beneath the surface to explore with families their perspectives on the support they need to be effective parents and to better understand the impact and implications of the concerns they are grappling with (and just as important, was the need to understand how these needs could be supported). For this we adopted a qualitative action research approach, involving desk research and literature reviews, focus groups, survey questionnaires, case studies, structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews. Most

[26] Success = Parental Engagement + Aspiration + Hard work (or working twice as hard) + Opportunities

importantly, by engaging directly with parents and providers using a particular iterative action development model, we were able to make a start at what could be achieved at particular levels of the support need matrix identified in the Phase1 report (i.e. Appendix 1 of that report).

With support and help from partners we engaged with parents trying to better understand for themselves what it means to be a parent; to help develop their confidence and skills as parents; and secondly, at the provider end of the spectrum, to look at the quality and effectiveness of supplementary education provisions. Accessing the Chinese community, therefore, afforded a useful bridge to see how it was that this community manages to ensure consistently a high attainment rate despite sharing many of the same socio-economic conditions as other BAME communities. In other words we tried to see what we could learn from the Chinese experience to help us find solutions for further communities.

Specifically, we found:

Parenting skills and confidence

With regards to the work with the 100BMOL, through the Parent in Partnership (PIP) programme, though work is still ongoing and not due to be completed until June 2011, some indicative outcomes have been identified. These are best summed up in some of the actions that parents have so far indicated as being things they will be doing as a result of their involvement on the programme. They were identified as:

- Taking control of own life and to access information and learn more about social networking sites (engaging more with schools, for instance, that at present)
- Develop and sustain networks and support structures;
- Prioritise education and skills development in their children to enable them to access opportunities as they emerge.
- Co-parenting expectations to be discussed with children as part of 'sex' education and role modeling approaches in the home
- Become more involved in creating an atmosphere conducive to learning and community involvement (e.g. community could be virtual and not based solely on family ties);
- Improve own communication skills as well as create environment and opportunities for effective communication to take place within the home. Monitor use of internet as well as determine whether children actually need access to mobiles at too early age (e.g. under 10yrs, for example) and proactive in being part of the solution rather than the problem, as the children are able to access internet from outside the home (i.e. mobiles, internet cafes, schools, friends and relatives)

The parents came because of their concerns about the destiny and life chances that they felt their children would be subjected to if they were not "educationally equipped" to be able to cope with the pressures of society, especially the emerging socio-cultural norm that many young boys, in particular, portray on the streets. The programme offered more than just 'educational or child development' theories but offered a 'space' for the parents to start re-building and

reconnecting, first with themselves as parents with a busy life schedule; and secondly, as a body of people requiring 'chilling out time' to explore and support each other in the common pursuit of child rearing.

As an emergent theme, the programme and processes so far recognise that parents are concerned enough to want to do something about their own confidence ands skill level and they recognise that they will need further support and guidance from a much wider 'community base' on this journey. Emerging from the sessions, and running throughout the approach, has been the notion of *'it takes a village to raise a child*'. This has bound the parents together in trying to work out what can be done as individuals and as a community. What the parents have been at pains to identify is that their parenting role is inextricably bound up with the social and economic climate of the time; that is, for the 'village principals' to be established and grounded into practice, it will require determined action from all concerned within the community. Principal amongst which will be the extent to which the dominant culture is transmitted and translated. It will require an adherence to a new way of thinking and behaving and the transmittal form to be accepted as the way things are done without equivocation. Herein lie the real challenge for both parents and community.

Recommendations:

Three broad recommendations can be identified:

1. There is a need for a shift in attitudes towards parenting – boundary setting (e.g. who is the parent); establishing and reinforcing values and beliefs; setting high aspirations; motivate and create support 'spaces' for reinforcement of attitudes)
2. Parents need to engage and be involved in community endeavour – enable and engage in social networks (build and strengthen 'bridging social capital')
3. There is a need to forge and develop links with the *Me I Can* programme – sharing and having joint 'parent – child' sessions on areas of mutual concerns (e.g. forging the relationships to embed the first two objectives)

Opportunities for young boys to engage in inspirational activities

The aim of this strand of the action phase of the approach was to develop and provide a 'tool' for commissioners of services that could be used to assess the capacity of organisations' fitness for purpose and so support their commissioning programme. In so doing, the outcome of the assessment would be available to parents wanting to access supplementary school provisions in their respective area. One of the key ingredients of the approach was the need to engage providers who wanted to develop their own practice and to look outside the box as to how they could deliver an effective service. By working with the 'umbrella' organisation, ACES and the Local Authority Children's Services (Southwark), we were able to engage with a wide range of providers who were receptive to change and desirous of looking at new ways to improve. The development of the tool is still ongoing with trialing of the tool just agreed with two organisations[27].

Not withstanding the trialing of the assessment, one of the strength indicated by providers was that the *"…assessment would be done with them rather than to them,"* which was the intention

[27] We had anticipated that this would have taken place by now but because of the reductions to local authority funding, announced by the Government as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review, many groups were (and many still are) unclear if they would cease operating. This had therefore put back this aspect of the process by months. Trialling will start once the groups know whether they have funding beyond March 2011 (i.e. the outcome of the local authority's 'Transitional Fund' process).

behind the approach. Furthermore, many felt that the tool offered an 'external' assessment of their effectiveness which could go towards parents recognizing the worth and value of the work of supplementary schools in a way that other tools on the market does not. The National Resource Centre's (NRC) *Quality Framework for Supplementary Schools - Standards*, for example, was indicated as being helpful at one level, but only if an organisation moved beyond the *Bronze level*, as at this level direct engagement with the delivery of the programme was not considered, focusing as it does on policies and procedures, and as many local authorities were only considering Bronze as the 'bench mark' of conferring a particular standard, it did not reflect programme delivery effectiveness. The BOCAS was seen as a valuable approach with its on-site visit and observation of practice and *'action plan'* was seen as positive and supportive.

Recommendations:

In going forward, as a support mechanism to enable parents to be better informed on the quality of supplementary schools, it was stressed that the external evaluation (or inspection) of practice was a feature to be developed. The initial evidence suggests that the BOCAS assessment tool support parents by providing a means for them to better understand the effectiveness and quality of the provision that they are accessing. Specifically, the tool will ensure:

1. Quality assurance and critical friend support – providing a framework for assessing the capacity of organisations and programme delivery; external assessment;
2. Capacity diagnosis and prioritisation of action plans – enabling organisations to identify and determine organisational priorities for development and sustainability
3. Credibility and value – as derived from an internationally recognised assessment framework for organisational capacity and Ofsted framework for inspecting educational provisions, it offers the possibility of credibility with commissioners and with parents.

What more can we learn from the Chinese experience? By looking closely at the delivery and work of this community, we were able to identify some influential and, possibly transformational approaches that the supplementary school sector could learn from. Underpinning the success story of the Chinese attainment in the education system is the role of parents within the culture. Parents are accorded unreserved respect and this is conveyed through the supplementary schools as a means to *"fill the gaps that the schools"* are not able to do. There in lies an opportunity for all supplementary schools. Our own survey of supplementary schools in Southwark indicated that alongside the national curriculum subject, many of the supplementary schools who responded included teachings around 'heritage and culture'. However, there is no evidence of a national framework with what counts as 'socio-cultural imperatives' and this may be an opportunity for supplementary schools to develop such a framework[28]. Inspections and standards, therefore, could be measured and achievements identified. If this foundation enables the children to be part of something, in terms of identity, then that could be measured and/or given due recognition which then reinforces their effort and increases aspirations. In seeing the pleasure on the faces of family members of the Chinese

[28] The National Association of Black Supplementary Schools (NABSS) has one of its aims as "encouraging all black supplementary schools to have some form of Afrikan history element in their curriculum". Laudable as this is, such a framework does not exist and it is unclear what such a curriculum would actually entail. What it illustrate, however, is that if supplementary schools are to have a place in the education process of the child, it does need to have a distinctiveness that build a sound foundation for learning and the raising of aspiration. The difference between this approach (and attempt) and that of the Chinese is that the Chinese framework is clear about the values it wishes to instil as a community built upon clear principles of filial piety, which are reinforced in the home and in everyday interaction and processes. In building the 'village' the African/Caribbean communities would need to transmit those values it deems most appropriate and relevant through practices and processes that reinforces the 'golden thread' that binds the community. Supplementary schools could play an enabling role, but only if they are organised and galvanised around the transmission of the relevant cultural values and precepts.

School in Haringey, at their awards ceremony, demonstrates the value held of the role of the school in the community.

Recommendations:

While there is much more to the Chinese experience, it is nevertheless possible to identify some crucial facets that all communities striving to raise the profile of their children's education could learn from. We would recommend that:

1. There is a need for parents to accept responsibilities for parenting and for establishing clear familial values – notion of filial piety, where the young accords respect to an elder both in the home and in the public realm; that parents must ensure that the child grows up with these values and work to 'please' them through their effort and endeavour in life (i.e. having high aspiration)
2. Parents do not under-play effort and merit and encourage competitiveness – seeing competition and hard work as motivating with reinforcement of these values within the community;
3. Supplementary schools are sites for reinforcement – family values are inculcated and transmitted through teaching methods and curriculum; they are sites for 'community' enrichment, in the same way 'building a village' is the leitmotiv underpinning the work of the PIP project (i.e. the parent – child - community interface) .

Finally, the approach developed by and through the research, has enabled us not only to engage with parents at their level, to better understand their voices and utterances but has enabled us to test out some theories and to explore others. As is always the case with research, more questions tend to be posed than answered. This is no different. However, what we believe we have been able to achieve within the short time scale is an understanding of some of the pressures that some parents are encountering and that for some the struggle will continue in striving to find answers to some specific questions. What is abundantly clear is that the implications of not being able to obtain a good start in life have far reaching implication for later life chances and opportunities. Employment opportunities, by and large, are reflective of a good grounding in education. There is a vast body of research and information showing the link between poor educational aspiration, offending behaviour and mental health care and employability. While pre-employment issues are of immense concerns, and therefore having implications for parenting approaches, we were particularly concerned with the raising of attainment of young boys who are in secondary education because this is the period where attitudes become grounded. It is this period that begins to place them as individuals as well as members of a wider community of players. Physical and psychological changes occur that create problems for all concerned. Identities, which sometimes lead to live long allegiances, are formed and shaped. It is the period where they transition into adulthood and become a functioning member of civil society. For these reasons we had concentrated our focus on the support needs of families with young boys aged 11 - 16yrs who exhibited signs of poor educational attainment (e.g. truancy, absenteeism, poor behaviour etc), offending behaviour and/or mental health concerns.

Just as the reasons for poor outcomes are multiple, so are the solutions. The research has demonstrated that it is not the case that any one factor stands out but rather a combination and pattern of circumstances coming together at certain points in time to produce the net outcome. Parental support and home circumstances are vital building blocks for an effective upbringing

and these cannot be left to chance. Parents need to recognize the signs that contribute to poor attainment and poor outcome and of their role within the learning and enculturalisation process to be able to make a difference. They too need support on this journey and recognizing that this is needed is perhaps the first step towards obtaining that support. The PIP programme attempted to provide a forum, a space for parents to begin articulating their fears and concerns and to seek a 'community' approach to obtaining this. The development of a process tool to help organisations determine their effectiveness moves us towards another layer of support that many would like to see in place, where parents can feel that their role is being supported by good quality provision and services, irrespective of who provides it. In the final analysis, solutions are not always found where we expect them and perhaps by looking towards those who seem to have found a way to demonstrate high aspiration may provide part of that solution. This raises opportunities arising from understanding the Chinese experience in the education system, for instance. Too often the voices and concerns of parents have not been taken seriously and we hope that through this research we have managed at least to articulate some, if not most, of their concerns and aspirations. The journey starts with the taking of that first step. I feel we have taken that step and now look forward to the next.

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About BTEG

BTEG is a national charity providing a voice to government for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations. BTEG has a successful track record of advising government departments and non-departmental bodies and providing organisational support for local groups. BTEG is a member of several central governmental advisory groups including Department of Works Pension's (DWP) Ethnic Minority Advisory Group, the Department for Education's Third Sector Group and Communities and Local Government's Voluntary and Community Sector Board.

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