THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL REPRESENTATIONS IN ECEC SETTINGS

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This chapter gives an insight into the subject matter that was investigated using various research methods. The aim of the study was to look into the importance of cultural representations in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) settings specifically Afro-Caribbean culture. From a personal perspective it was felt that the research was necessary for a number of reasons including; past experiences both personal and professional, as well the perspective of being a parent of African Caribbean children. In addition, the reality that there is little or no current research in this area that can be used to guide educational practice within ECEC. It also highlights the relevance this has for future academic research and adds voice to what appears to be a non-existent conversation or debate. This debate being challenged by comments made by the then Prime Minister David Cameron in 2013 about how the death of Stephen Lawrence had sparked 'monumental change in our society' (Gov.uk 2019). This change it could be argued would be reflected in all areas of society including education. However, over the following years it has been clear to see, that this issue of culture and race can still be problematic and has proved difficult for governments and policy makers for some time.

The task of providing a fair and racially unbiased system of education has been called into question repeatedly (Gillborn et al., 2017). Despite this being on the agenda for successive governments there appears to have been very little progress. Nevertheless, policy makers and institutions who should be bound by such policies are evidently not adhering to them. One source of evidence being that of the

generation which were labelled the 'Windrush Generation' as they were immigrant children from the Caribbean, who were welcomed here alongside their invited parents only to find that after many years later they are no longer welcome due to structurally unsound policies (Gentleman, 2019; Rawlinson and Gentleman, 2019). The Swann Report (1985) being the first of its kind was the catalyst drawing attention to the way Afro-Caribbean children were being stigmatised or labelled and ways to combat these negative perspectives and educational outcomes were suggested.

With schools dealing with issues related to Human Rights, Children's Rights and the Equality Act (2010) and an ever-changing political climate it is easy to see how many ECEC settings struggle with other added pressures such as curriculum changes and policies. These are things such as the closures of many Sure Start Children Centres and funding cuts within education which have a drastic effect on how resources are made available to nurseries, primary schools and other early years providers (Butler, 2019). The Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage (DfE, 2017, p. 6) (EYFS) states that each child is unique and that all children should be catered to by means of meeting their needs. However, this document does not make mention of addressing or providing for a children's cultural backgrounds.

For many years' studies of Afro-Caribbean children in various educational settings have been carried out and the children's lack of achievement or their attainment levels debated (Demie, 2004; Strand, 2011, 2012). In addition, it can be stated that

little progress has been made in order to change the current dialogue (Gillborn et al., 2017, p. 868).

The purpose of this particular study was to understand the importance of cultural resources particularly resources that portray Afro-Caribbean lifestyle and traditions. The main research question was 'What representations of Afro-Caribbean cultures are there in 2 ECEC settings in the West Midlands'. The subsidiary questions were:

- o What relevant resources are available in ECEC settings?
- o How are these resources used?
- o What is the level of knowledge and understanding of Afro-Caribbean culture amongst practitioners in the settings?

The research project focused on two settings in Dudley one based near the town centre and the other in the rural side of Dudley. As the two schools were in different locations this would give a wider and richer context to the findings. The one school's population has a diverse abundance of children and staff from different cultures, the other is made up of predominately white children with only a small mix of children from other cultures, with all staff being white.

The population of the two areas combined is 27,205 and the percentage of that number identifying as Afro-Caribbean (or of Jamaican decent) is 1.6% and a further 0.5% who identify as African (decedent's Zimbabwe and Kenya) (Opzm Local Stats UK, 2019). Statistics show that 5.3% of Dudley's entire population is unemployed compared with 4.4% nationally (Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, 2019). In terms of deprivation Dudley falls within the top 10% of the most deprived areas

which would have a direct impact on the infrastructure of their educational provision. As the nature and quality of provision is determined by Local Authority funds, distributed from central government this means that there is limited autonomy in the way these funds are spent.

The study is made up of a number of Chapters and what follows in Chapter 2 is a review of literature relevant to this topic area. The focus of Chapter 3 is on the methods used to undertake the study. Chapter 4 presents the findings and analysis and Chapter 5 concludes the study reviewing the methods used and providing possible ideas for future research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Roberts-Holmes (2014, p. 186) suggests that without a literature review it would be hard to assess if the content of a study was necessary and relevant to the subject matter. The literature review is considered to be an important part of a dissertation as it gives the reader the impression that the author of the piece understands and knows the subject matter that is going to be researched (Roberts-Holmes, 2014, p. 186). In addition to this the literature review allows for the collection of ideas that will be useful in the analysis and interpretation of the data (Mukerji and Albon, 2018, p. 47) In order to give a well based and grounded analysis of the questions set within a research project, O'Hara et al. (p. 6) states that thorough reading is needed in order to gain knowledge on that particular area of the study.

This chapter reviews various types of academic literature pertaining to the focus of the research being carried out. There are key themes identified relevant to the importance of having Afro- Caribbean resources in schools and Early Years settings such as Attainment and under Achievement, Young Children, Identity, Curriculum and Other Resources. Different theories related to such as labelling or self-fulfilling prophecy which highlight the experience of black children and link them to different concepts such as tokenism are included. The perspectives of individuals like Sleeter (2001) are used to identify the void in cultural pedagogy, that is key to bringing about a greater understanding of the issues. Various types of research design used to examine concerns around the importance of cultural representation in Early

Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) provision are identified throughout this chapter.

Attainment and Under Achievement

Not having or incorporating a culturally diverse curriculum or framework for early years settings can be seen as one of the reasons for low attainment and under achievement in the Afro - Caribbean child. Siraj-Blatchford and Siraj-Blatchford (1999, p.127) present a deeper understanding into how early years education still maintains racialised discourses. They also provide evidence to show that there are inequalities within the educational system that create this situational deficit (Siraj-Blatchford and Siraj-Blatchford, 1999, pp. 129-130). Their work is a review of reseach undertaken related to the field of anti- racism in primary and early years education and set out to identify areas for future study The evidence for their views provided by Siraj-Blatchford and Siraj-Blatchford (1999, p.130) would be that the policy makers tend largely to be white middle class people whom have never experienced racism and therefore would not have the ability or capability to address the issues that arise due to their lack of knowledge. They make reference to such things as the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Code of Practice: Elimination of Racial Discrimination in Education 1989. The two authors also suggest that politics plays a big part in how policies and ideological frameworks affect productivity, in implementing effective and positive change within an environment that may not be conducive for equality.

This was the view presented in 1999 and six years later Crozier (2005) discovered in his work that nothing much had changed since this article was written. Crozier

(2005, p. 586) through research findings discovered that underachievement in the African Caribbean children was high. The author put this down to the way teachers perceived this particular demographic and how negatively they described black children. This piece of research used data from various types of interview techniques such as semi-structured and unstructured. This was qualitative research using the perspective of parents and how they deemed the education system in regard to how their Afro- Caribbean children were being treated. The author states that throughout the study when parents were giving their interpretations of experiences, a pattern emerged. This pattern was one of negativity as children were being described as emotionally challenging (Crozier, 2005, p. 589). A pathologizing discourse could be seen as another reason why Black Caribbean children were not achieving at the same rates as their other cultural peers. They were also blamed for being innately lawless and deficient (Crozier, 2005, p. 588). It was shown throughout that a parent believed the teachers to be disingenuous, telling the parents things to appease them but treating their children in the totally opposite way causing a distrusting environment within the setting. This made room for children not want to thrive in the classroom or within any educational setting (Crozier, 2005, p. 590).

Aspects of poor educational attainment within Afro-Caribbean children have also been identified by Strand (2011) in research involving documentary analysis. Here Strand looked at data from a longitudinal study of young people in England. He introduces straight away how in UK education this has been an issue for rather a long period of time. The work makes reference to the famous Swann Report of 1985, which specifically looked into and addressed the underachieving of Black

Caribbean children. Even though this particular piece of research by Strand (2011) was derived from work on older children there were similar indicators that came through. Indicators such as deprivation, less parental engagement and how children are viewed by staff (Strand, 2011, p. 217). A year later Strand (2012) addresses the issue again but this time using a longitudinal study. Again, it is concerning the disproportionate levels of the underachieving of West Indian children. It questioned why this was happening and what could be done in order to tackle issues such as 'institutional' racism within the educational system.

As this issue of racism in education was identified over 20 years ago, Gillborn et al. (2017, p. 848) in their most recent study address this. The study was constructed through the analysis of official government statistics (documentary analysis), as the authors were looking into the inequality of Black British students. They made the suggestion through their research that policymakers have caused a tremendous mess. Paralyzing the progress of bridging the attainment and achievement gap between Black British and the White British children (Gillborn et al., 2017, p. 850). Gillborn et al. (2017, pp. 851-852) proposed that this hinderance was caused because '…*differentiation might conspire to erase particular areas of discrimination…*'. Perhaps this suggest that the policies that are being created are in conflict with what needs to be achieved.

<u>Young Children, Identity, Curriculum and Other Resources</u>

Siraj-Blatchford (1994, p.4) uses a powerful statement that gives the reader food for thought. She suggests that the way children construct and form self-identity and that of their peers is crucial, it is linked to the very way they view each other. The author again gives another suggestion that the children should be given experiences using relevant activities and images, for example using teaching resources that reflect African Caribbean children involved in the practical application of different subjects such as Maths books. This she believes would break down racial prejudice. It can be seen that Siraj-Blatchford (1994, pp.70-71) champions the way forward for the acceptance of black children by pushing for the curriculum to be more balanced and inclusive. The change should be through a national stance regardless of whether the settings are predominantly white or a multicultural. It was also pointed out by Siraj-Blatchford (1994, pp. 73-74) that experiences through play are concrete and these play experiences can be created by the use of cultural resources. Once a young child has practical experiences, such as tasting, smelling and hearing this heightens the senses of the child allowing for social development and gives a richer understanding of the world they are living in. This might take the form of using cultural recipes at snack time and using Afro-Caribbean utensils in the home corner.

The importance of displays is discussed by Thomson, Hall and Russell (2007, p. 381) in the following way 'the walls (re)produce and promote normative meanings of 'good work', the 'good student', the 'good teacher' and the 'good school', which serve both internal and external purposes.' It is clear from this that a child's sense of belonging and identity can easily be gleaned from the use of carefully considered

displays. Thomson, Hall and Russell (2007, p. 381) also describe display as an instrumental tool in promoting an inclusive culture. From an external perspective this would initiate a process where children can construct narratives around their collective and individual histories in the school. In addition, Nutbrown and Clough (2009, p. 195), site that because children are intrigued by difference it is good to make these differences positive. This can be done by way of working closely with parents and the local community. As it is the belief that the parents know their child/ren the best then that should be given priority, and this should support that every child is unique.

Abdullah's (2009, p.159) qualitative study uses field visits and observations and conversations with ECEC staff to find ways of developing multi-cultural education. She stresses that racial tensions and cultural conflicts are on the increase in her own country of Malaysia, which is similar to the issues that are being experienced in England. She goes on to say that attitudes need to be changed in regard to changing values and systems. Knowledge and understanding of each culture should be put into place. As education has a vital role in bringing about change, early childhood is key to these changes. In addition, Abdullah (2009, p. 159) had taken on this research to provide information that early childhood would be the best time to instil values and correct prejudices. This came about because in her country (Malaysia) they had implemented a program to bring about accepting cultural and ethnic differences in late adolescent life. This was done through curriculum change to allow multicultural education to be a core subject within settings, rather than a stand-alone topic or tokenistic approach. Abdullah argues that as the curriculum or

framework is designed to aid the way in which learning outcomes are achieved, then this is the ideal way in which to implement change (Abdullah, 2009, p. 163).

In a recent ethnographic study Barron (2011, p. 655) set out to find out the importance of ethnicity in how young children choose friends to play with. Barron (2011, p. 656) claims that young children formed their friendships through a sense of self, as they mainly played with children of their own likeness. As observations were made by Barron (2011, pp. 665) he noticed how the activities were carried out and saw how the influence of the way the activities were delivered and what activities were chosen had a profound impact on the children's engagement. This study showed that staff need to have a knowledge of their children's cultural background before making decisions about what activities to choose.

Teachers as resources

Teachers are one of the most expensive assets a setting may have (Nuffield Foundation, 2018, p.25). However, it can be shown that teachers are one of the most valuable resources a school or quality setting has (Rose and Rogers, 2012, p. 68). This section of the Literature Review looks at teachers as resources.

The work of Demie in 2005 set out to discover and identify common themes which helped raise the attainment level of Afro- Caribbean decent. One of the themes that was highlighted was the use of staff and their knowledge of different cultures (Demie, 2005, p. 504). As black Caribbean's have the lowest attainment levels in Britain, this study showed that resources such as teachers and leadership play a

major part in how these particular groups of children are viewed. In other words, this means that by cultural understanding, teachers find it relevant for all children not just Afro- Caribbean children.

The study by Calzada et al (2015) highlights the importance of diverse and well-trained teaching staff as a resource for engagement with parents which in turn aids attainment in Afro- Caribbean children in the US (p. 889). This was highlighted, again in the US, by Durden et al (2014) where there are specific programmes for training teachers to work in diverse classrooms (p. 1003). However, Sleeter (2001, p.102) in her paper titled 'Preparing Teachers for Culturally Diverse Schools; research and the overwhelming presence of whiteness' noted that these programmes alone were not enough and that extensive community based work needed to be a part of the programme as this practice aids a holistic approach to cultural education. More recently she has expounded on how teachers need to learn and adopt other cultures into their pedagogical arsenal (Sleeter, 2018). Within this research Sleeter (2018, p. 44) notes that teachers do not see themselves as cultural beings, which boxes their thinking and allows them to continue with their 'othering' ideology. 'Othering' is described by Moosavinia, Niazi and Ghaforian (2011) as:

> By the process of Othering, the colonizers treat the colonized as 'not fully human', and as a result, it dehumanizes natives. Othering codifies and fixes the self as the true human and the other as other than human. The Colonizers consider themselves as the embodiment of "proper self" while label the colonized as "savages" (Moosavinia, Niazi and Ghaforian, 2011, p. 105).

So, this shows that the practitioner may not attach the appropriate level of importance to Afro-Caribbean cultural identity which is outside of their own. In order for staff to be confident in their approach to children from an Afro-Caribbean

background, having an understanding of their differences as well as their similarities breaks down stereotypes, labelling (Haralambos and Holborn, 2013, p.362) and 'othering' (Said, pp. 121). These types of negative systems and beliefs lead to children being in a vicious cycle of 'Self -fulling prophecy' (Haralambos and Holborn, 2013, p.702) and has a big impact on their future. The significance of these concepts and how they operate was observed by Gillborn (1990, pp. 42-43) one instance that was recorded in his research was that of how the teachers did not take criticism from the Afro-Caribbean children on how they were being mistreated by them. The teachers merely thought that the children were using their ethnicity as a diversion. Gillborn (1990, p. 43) goes on further to explain that these types of challenges become a major contributing factor to the staff's culture. Unless there is knowledge and understanding of the Afro-Caribbean culture then these forms of discrimination will continue.

This is further noted by Chowbey et al. (2015, p. 2) whose study shows that children who are labelled early in their education disadvantages children from minority ethnic backgrounds who may also be socially and economically disadvantaged. In addition, this briefing paper revealed that children from a Caribbean heritage had other cultural values that would interfere with how they are viewed by educators (Chowbey et al. 2015, p. 7). One of the key messages in the report was the need for teachers to be equipped to deliver support to children and parents from multicultural contexts. This means that teachers should be trained in cultural awareness which would help to eradicate the ideology of the 'ideal client' (Becker, 1951, 1952 cited in Gillborn, 1990). Gillborn (1990, pp. 25-27) argues that teachers who are not of Afro-

Caribbean background would differentiate and gravitate to children of their own likeness.

Ways to combat these practices can be through the leadership of a school. In the research of Demie (2004, pp. 481, 483, 490, 491) good leadership is highlighted. She found that good leadership means the head teacher makes sure that the staff are as diverse as the children and there is an ethos where staff and children are encouraged to cooperate and embrace each other without bias. In the DfCSF (2008, p. 27) guidance there were key priorities that should be reflected in leadership giving value to Afro-Caribbean children's educational experience. Some of the key priorities include; A commitment from all staff to address any inequalities; When recruiting maximum effort should be made to include professionals from Afro-Caribbean backgrounds and where this is not the case then staff should be able to demonstrate a willingness to learn about the children's background (DfCSF, 2008, p.27).

The themes that have been identified in this Literature Review were; teachers as resources, attainment and under achievement and young children, identity, curriculum and other resources. It should be noted that there was limited literature in this area which is why reference was made to international literature on the topic. The limitation of literature also supported the rationale for the present study. In addition, the review revealed that across the sources the Afro-Caribbean community was described in different ways, for example in some articles they were referred to as Black, Black British, West Indian or even Black Caribbean.

What follows is the Methodology Chapter which describes the approaches that were used and how they were applied in order to help gather and collect valid data.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

Mukherji and Albon (2018, p.74) state that the methodology chapter in a study is important as it helps the reader and the researcher understand the principles behind the methods used for data collection. Newby (2014, p.53) describes research methodology as being about the research tools within a study. He argues that: '…methodology is how the toolkit of research methods is brought together to crack an individual and specific research problem' (p.53).

This study looks at the 'problem' or issue of the way in which Afro-Caribbean cultures are represented in early years settings. It looks into resources and the way in which they are used and valued. It also examines the knowledge and practices of staff. The research aims and questions came about through interest in research concerning the low attainment of Afro-Caribbean children especially boys (Demie, 2004; Gillborn, et. al., 2017; Strand, 2011). Another influence was the lack of representation of Afro-Caribbean culture in books (Wilkins, 2017; Everitt, 2019). The study took a qualitative approach which according to Bell and Waters (2014, p.9) is useful when looking into individuals' perceptions of the world as in this research. Robson and McCartan (2016, pp. 24-25), describe a qualitative approach as interpretivist and the best way to focus and understand key social issues. According to Bell and Waters (2014, p. 9), qualitative data is non-numerical and consists of unstructured data. This data can be collected through interviews, observations, documents and other such mediums. This approach will be a great

benefit to the way information gathered will be correlated and understood, as it asks questions such as, Why? What? and How? (Bell and Waters, 2014, p. 9). The reason for the use of this particular approach is that it will enable the researcher to interpret what the teachers and other members of staff say in response to questions asked about their setting. In addition, a qualitative approach is suitable for the proposed study as the research undertaken is small-scale and was conducted over a short period of time (Denscombe, 2017, pp. 6-7).

An interpretivist paradigm is widely linked to qualitative approaches, whilst a positivist paradigm is closely related to that of quantitative approaches (O'Hara et.al, 2011, pp. 84-85). Newby (2014, p. 47) points out that the function of a paradigm is to make a link between practice and philosophy within research. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p. 5) identified that different paradigms were supported by various factors, such as religion and scientific knowledge. They expound on this by explaining how over time paradigms have been added because beliefs, principles and identity has changed. This could be because of the acceptance of qualitative research. This study works within an interpretivist paradigm as it aims to make sense of participant answers to questions posed about a specific topic within two ECEC settings rather than being concerned with findings which can be generalised (Mukherji and Albon, 2018, p.20). O'Hara et.al (2011, pp. 9-10) suggest that people are not just subject to their environment but are active participants whose actions have meaning. Burton and Bartlett (2009, p. 21) add that in the interpretivist paradigm there is no one reality but different versions of events or situations. In contrast the positivist paradigm and positive research sees the social world as being

studied in the same way as the natural world (Denscombe, 2017, p.8). It most often uses quantitative data to create statistical tables (Burton and Bartlett, 2009, p. 20). As this study looks at people's understandings of situations a positive approach would not be suitable.

Within this qualitative approach a case study is used. Yin (2014, pp. 3-5) states that it is a valid form of social science research which looks at real-life issues. The small-scale study looked at real-life issues in two schools in relation to cultural representation. According to O' Hara et.al (2011, pp. 99-100) there are several advantages to case studies including the fact that they use different sources of data such as documents, observations and interviews which provide a 'rich' representation of the area under discussion. Denscombe (2017, p. 6) argues that quantitative research by nature involves large numbers of results, allowing for more generalisability which is statistically more reliable. However, Punch and Oancea (2014, p.151) note the issue of generalisability in case studies but argue that the purpose of a case study is important and that much can be learned from a particular case. Therefore, they look at providing depth on a specific topic. In this study questions raised might bring an awareness of the issues under investigation.

In terms of reliability it has been pointed out by Blaxter et.al (2010, p. 245) that in order to be judged as a more reliable source, the research should be conducted in such a way that another researcher could possibly gather the same data if the same tools and techniques were used. However, this may not necessarily yield the same interpretation. In terms of this research a qualitative approach was more fitting as it

was carried out in two settings and the methods for data collection were the same in each one; this adds to the reliability of the research. However, suitability of research methods was most important within this research to ensure that detailed accounts could be generated (Burton and Bartlett, 2009, p. 24). This approach also allowed for much richer responses to be collected.

Pilot Study

As a part of this research a pilot was conducted consisting of semi-structured interviews with two practitioners. According to Bell and Waters (2014, p. 167), doing a pilot is an important step in collecting data as it allows for necessary changes to be made in order for productive and good quality data to be gathered Piloting any type of data gathering is recommended by Bell and Waters (2014, pp. 167-168) as they suggest that it is good for time keeping purposes and it helps to check that methods used give usable data.

During the pilot it was found that the practitioners had difficulty in answering some of the questions posed. Both gave very limited answers especially related to knowledge of Afro-Caribbean culture. As a result of the pilot it was decided that the order of the questions would be changed with questions related to more general topics coming before the specific ones about cultural representations (Appendix 1). This was because each one felt uncomfortable with their lack of knowledge and understanding of the topic.

<u>Sampling</u>

A sampling strategy was applied to both the selection of the schools and the

participants. Purposive sampling was used as according to Goodson and Sikes (2001,

p.24) this is chosen when the researcher selects specific settings and people with

certain experiences and characteristics. In addition, Denscombe (2017, pp. 41-42)

states that purposive sampling is the process of tightly focusing in on a deliberately

chosen group. He then goes on to explain how this particular strategy is better

suited to exploring and getting the information to enable the researcher to obtain

more relevant and valuable key points.

The two schools that have been a part of this research are set in two very different

demographical areas. School A is in a busy urban area and School B in a more rural

neighbourhood built purposely near a park and a small woodland area. These

schools were chosen because of the differences in the diversity of the children and

staff in terms of their cultural backgrounds with School A having more diversity.

<u>Research Methods</u>

Two methods of data collection were used in the study. Firstly, interviews were used

and Mukherji and Albon (2018, pp. 252, 256), identify that interviews help to acquire

in-depth knowledge from the participants in order to understand the theme or topic

being discussed. The type of interviewing method that took place was that of semi

structured interviewing. Semi- structured interviews are best suited to this research

as it gets the best out of the participant as key issues can arise whilst the

interviewer listens attentively (Roberts-Holmes, 2005, pp. 109- 110). The advantage

of using this type of interview practice according to Sharpe and Benfield (2017, pp. 202-203) is that the semi-structured process is a good method to prompt both parties. Interviews work well with the type of study as it is a clear way to get information from the participants as they have the knowledge and experience needed to be able to consider the questions asked. The questions in the semi-structured interview were used as a guide and they were open-ended giving the participant some sort of flexibility (Mukherji and Albon, 2018, p.). The interviews were undertaken with six participants who work within the chosen area of interest; including three senior management and two practitioners in the two schools including a teacher and teaching assistants from nursery, reception class and Year 1 in order to gain information and perspectives from staff at different levels. The participants were all white females and their ages were varied. Through the help of the gatekeeper the participants were chosen, and the selection was made due to availability.

The interviews were recorded onto a Dictaphone as this had a great advantage for the interviewer as this backed up notes that were written and was also a tool for remembering important things (Mukherji and Albon, 2018, pp. 253-254). The interviews in this study were transcribed which was used in conjunction with the audio recording in the analysis.

A second method used was an audit of resources. This was called a 'learning environment walk' (DfCSF, 2008, p. 35) when discussing this with the schools as the word 'audit' could seem to be formal and intrusive. During this 'walk' resources were

observed and recorded by taking photographs and making note of the materials in the settings that represent Afro- Caribbean culture or community. This audit is classified as an observation as it involved the researcher looking at resources, taking photographs and keeping records. Using observations according to Robson (2002, p. 310) can act as a supportive method to other methods such as interviews and can be used to validate information gained. However, Mukherji and Albon (2018, p.116) note that there is the possibility of observer bias because each observer will have had different experiences which could mean they will focus on different things. In the case of this research this might be because of the researcher's own cultural heritage. To help with this a recording sheet was created (Appendix 2) which had prompt statements and questions regarding the resources in the areas chosen. The specific locations were the reception area, hall /dining area, library and the classroom in which the participant teachers work. The general areas were chosen because they are frequently accessed by all pupils. They are also the main focal points for the parents/carers, and other adults who use these facilities. These areas were thought to be appropriate as they reflected elements of culture, community and the ethos of the settings in terms of equality. In addition, photographs were also taken of these areas to act as further data which was reviewed and analysed. It is important to note that photographs were used once permission was granted and they did not infringe on the identity of the setting. This additional data, along with researching in two settings, provides triangulation in a way to add validity as according to Roberts-Holmes (2014, p. xix) this is most often used within an interpretivist approach to research.

Ethics

Ethical approval had to be gained from the Newman University Ethics Committee before conducting any form of research (Appendix 3). Ethics is there to protect the welfare of the participants, as well as supporting the validity of data. BERA (2018) notes that: 'All social science should respect the privacy, autonomy, diversity, values and dignity of individuals, groups and communities' (BERA, 2018, p. 4). In this research a number of actions were taken in order to make sure the participants and settings in the research were informed and their identities protected.

A letter was sent out to the gatekeeper of each setting asking for permission to conduct the research including details of the aims and purpose of the research and what their participation would involve. This included asking the gatekeepers permission to take photographs (no photographs of the children/staff) with the assurance that nothing was included to disclose the setting's identity.

Confidentiality was assured unless there was a disclosure. If a child or adult disclosed sensitive information at any time while the researcher was in the setting, the setting's safeguarding policies and procedures would be followed. Although the researcher was not be working directly with children, if a safeguarding issue were to be witnessed then the setting's safeguarding procedures and policies would be followed.

Once the gatekeeper's permission was granted then consent letters (Appendix 5) were sent to participants in order to secure their informed consent which also included details of the aims and purpose of the research and what their participation

would involve. Included in these letters was a section stating that each participant would be given the right to withdraw and this was stated before, during and even after the interviews had taken place. Participants were informed that if they decided to withdraw then their data would not be used in the research and would be destroyed. All participant data was kept either on a password protected computer or a locked drawer. Participants were informed that their data would be treated with confidentiality unless they disclose something that might jeopardise the welfare of a child in which case it would be shared in line with the settings safeguarding policy. Throughout this project, pseudonyms were used in order to protect the settings and the staff. Details of a debriefing opportunity were also included in the consent letters.

Conclusion

This chapter has explained how this research was undertaken. It has emphasised the importance of the researcher having the correct tools to carry out a non-bias small research project. What follows is the findings and the analysis chapter, this will give a detailed account of what the data collection yielded.

Chapter 4

Findings and Analysis

As O'Hara et al. (2011, p.13) point out analysis should be done in a coherent way based on the evidence gathered and by all means not be found to have uncorroborated conjecture or conclusions. Denscombe (2017, pp. 261-262) sees three stages in data analysis: description, explanation and interpretation. This chapter presents the findings and analysis of the data collected related to research into representations of Afro-Caribbean culture in ECEC settings. The subsidiary questions that were posed were:

➢ What relevant resources are available in ECEC settings?

➢ How are these resources used?

➢ What is the level of knowledge and understanding of Afro-Caribbean culture amongst practitioners in the setting?

Two ECEC settings were researched with 3 staff members in each setting ranging from Teaching Assistant (TA) to Head Teacher interviewed. These different staff levels provided different perspectives. It should be noted that all participants were female and of white-British heritage.

The following Table provides information about the participants.

Table 1 Participant Information

Participant Pseudonym School A	Level	Teaching/ TA Experience
Mrs Yellow	TA	Child Minder TA for 8 years in School A
Miss Orange	Teacher	Worked 10 years in a private day nursery Parent Support Worker Teacher for 7 years in School A

Mrs Blue	Head of Early Years	Started at School A as NQT and then has been Head of EY for 11 years
Participant Pseudonym School B	Level	Teaching Experience
Mrs Green	TA	Nursery Nurse for 25 years Started in schools in 2005 6 months at school B
Mrs Pink	Deputy Head	Working as a teacher for 32 years
Mrs Purple	Head	Teacher whole Career. Head teacher at School B 2 years

The data was analysed using a thematic system from reoccurring issues brought through by the participants and also from the evidence on the 'walk through'. This walk- though provides triangulation as it uses different data alongside the data from the interviews. Therefore the chapter is organised using these themes: The importance of people as resources, stereotyping and tokenism, lack of culturally specific resources. In addition there were a number of more subtle themes including: curriculum pressure and financial constraints. In terms of the analysis, the findings will be interpreted using literature to support or highlight difference.

The Importance of People as Resources

In the interviews undertaken, Mrs Purple, the Head teacher of School B stated that: '…*human resources are the most valuable…*'. This section looks at teachers, parents and children as resources in ECEC settings.

<u>Teachers</u>

Rose and Rogers (2012, p. 68) noted it can be shown that teachers are one of the most valuable resources a school or quality setting has. In the interviews undertaken participants in School A did not identify teachers as a resource. However, in School B each of the three participants identified staff as the most important resource with Mrs Pink stating: '*…the biggest resource is the staff. It's your biggest spend, it's your biggest asset and you've got to get it right'*. However how valuable they are as resources for presenting and promoting Afro-Caribbean culture within the setting would be dependent upon their attitudes, knowledge and understanding of Afro-Caribbean culture.

<u>Attitudes, Knowledge and Understanding</u>

The attitudes, knowledge and understanding of the staff interviewed were highlighted in their responses to questions related to the term Afro-Caribbean and its culture. Certain themes became apparent as the staff discussed and described their knowledge and understandings, these being stereotyping and tokenism.

When asked about their understanding of the term Afro-Caribbean a number of them found it hard to define. Four of the participants tried to define this term through reference to colour, place of origin or community. However, Mrs Yellow (TA School A) and Mrs Green (TA School B) both suggest that if the staff included cultural diversity within the setting, all staff would gain a better understanding of this term. This highlights a need for more staff training. This finding is supported by earlier work of Sleeter (2001, p.102) who argues that teachers should not only do

stand-alone multicultural courses but be a part of community-based immersion experiences which has a strong element of coursework attached with it. This should also be coupled with further professional development training.

Staff were asked to describe their understanding of Afro-Caribbean culture. Five struggled to give answers with Ms Orange (Teacher School A), Mrs Purple (Head Teacher School B) and Mrs Yellow giving what could be seen as a superficial response. Ms Orange saying: '*Food, music, clothes, celebrations, different festivals...*'. This showing a mixture of terms used around culture, tradition and religion. Both Mrs Yellow and Mrs Blue provide what could be seen as stereotyping views. They make reference to things that portray Afro-Caribbean people in a very generalised way such as wearing brightly coloured clothes and suggesting that everyone is happy. Mrs Blue said: '*Everybody's happy, inviting, friendly...*' The work of Gillborn (1990, p.5) gives a firm criticism and warns against using combinations of simplistic generalisations in this way, by stating that we may lose sight of important differences in opportunity and experience by doing this. However, Mrs Pink (Deputy Head School B) provides an interesting outlook saying:

> ' *Well that's interesting, I think Afro-Caribbean culture is a very diverse concept because in the sense that if you considered the definition of being anybody from African or Caribbean heritage it's an umbrella for lots and lots of different cultures, who would all have individual character. So, it's a very difficult thing to define in one brisk stroke. And I would think that Afro-Caribbean culture would probably be really hard to define for people who are from the Caribbean or from Africa because their own cultures would all be very different, depending on where they originated from what they their religions are, what their country of origin, how long have they been in other countries or in the UK all influence what their culture.*'

This shows some wide variation in the definition and understanding of the term Afro-Caribbean and it also can be a reflection of this particular participant as she has been in the field for a relatively long time. Sleeter (2018, p.44) explores the idea that by building relationships with children and their families, teachers within her study were able to familiarise themselves with local cultural knowledge and resources, which in turn were routinely brought back into the classroom. In simple terms this means that if teachers are trained and embrace the children's culture then it enriches the learning environment. It would also lead to teachers and settings having a less tokenistic view of Afro-Caribbean culture and other cultures that are accessible to learn about.

To illustrate the tokenistic views that were subtly demonstrated three of the participants listed out the various cultural festivals, celebrations with religious connotations and traditional practices. This made them seem as if they were a part of a tick list, Mrs Orange stated '…we do Eid, we do Diwali, we do Chinese New Year…' This is an indication of teachers meaning well but not having the understanding needed. Gillborn (1990, p.10) again however, puts forward another criticism that through his observations some teachers when dealing with the complexity of culture even the well-meaning teacher can act in a tokenistic way.

Children

Through the recent work of Rodriguez (2018) how the child and the teacher sharing mutual experiences their journeys can make a difference and even break down stereotypes. This was mentioned through several participants when answering

questions posed within the discussion. As Mrs Blue highlighted that she saw children as a resource by '*…allowing the children to share their kind of views… their experiences as well.*' Again, this pedagogical approach to viewing the child as a resource could be linked to an understanding of the child holistically. Mrs Purple, the head teacher solidifies this saying '*…we often do child led assemblies sometimes the children….do show and tell within their classes*.' This indicates that the leadership of school B promotes and values the children as a resource that gives value to not only the other children around them but the staff within the setting. Lawson (2010) endorses this type of practice and pedagogy, as she states that we live in a world that has human rights and children's rights. Thus, giving the child the right to express and have an input into their education and that of others. Rodriguez (2018, p. 215) adds to this in his study by addressing that when children and staff bring in their own personal stories and experience to the setting it brings about change. This means that children as a resource can be a vital ingredient to conquering inequalities and injustices and is substantiated by Mrs Yellow. She believes that the staff can learn from the children saying when talking about having an understanding of the term Afro- Caribbean '*… if we did more in* [the classroom] *we would be educating ourselves as well'*.

Parents

Calzada et al. (2015, pp. 871-872) stated in their research that they see parents as an important resource in regard to the child's education and care. The authors also imply that parents need to work together with the setting and the educators

(Calzada et al., 2015, p. 872). However, it was evident from the discussion that there were conflicting ideas about parents acting as resources. As for example Mrs Yellow, Mrs Purple and Mrs Green point out that due to the circumstances of some families or parents they may not have the knowledge or the means to aid their child or children. This was demonstrated when discussing the value and significance of Afro-Caribbean resources, Mrs Purple voiced the view that '*…if parents aren't giving them the knowledge and imparting that …then it's our responsibility isn't it*'. Adding to this view point Mrs Green stated that some parents may not have the financial support they need to further make the link between school and home using access to books and internet as an example. It can be concluded, that using parents as resources from an early age can have a positive impact on the child and it promotes social and cultural understanding, thus giving the child a beneficial start in their educational journey.

Lack of Afro- Caribbean culturally specific resources

Nutbrown and Clough (2009, p. 195) site that because children are intrigued by difference, it is good to make these differences positive. This can apply to the resources in settings including a range of resources such as displays, books, toys. During the walk through which was to observe any Afro-Caribbean representation of images or resources in the settings, a number of areas in each school were audited. These included classrooms, play areas, outdoor areas, libraries and book corners, main entrances and multi-purpose hall. Due to the constraints of scale, only a number of images were chosen to discuss.

Images 1 and 2 shows displays from each school.

Image 1 Children's Paintings of themselves

Image 2 Children's Paintings of themselves

Both Images 1 and 2 show displays of faces which the children have painted. The

faces appear to represent many different cultural groups. This means that the

children have had an opportunity to visually portray themselves and chose a variety

of coloured paints. The children are here being used as a resource and the display

does depict Afro- Caribbean children as in each school there were children of Afro-

Caribbean heritage. These displays reflect the importance noted by Thomson, Hall

and Russell (2007, p.381) who describe display as an instrumental tool in promoting

and inclusive culture. These images are an interpretation or an example of what

they meant by narratives being individually constructed then put together as a collective.

However, although Images 1 and 2 seem to show a representation of Afro-Caribbean culture through the images of children and how these could be used, these are small examples as the walk-through showed that the majority of display spaces were not used to include the promotion of Afro-Caribbean culture. For example a display (Image 3) which was in a main corridor in one school which all children use, an opportunity to promote a range of inspirational Britons was lost in that all images focused on white British individuals.

Image 3 Display in Main Corridor (As children's faces have been superimposed their identity has been protected).

Toys and Play Equipment

Toys and play equipment play a big part in the child's learning and development. Siraj-Blatchford (1994, pp. 80-81) states that not many educators understand the negative connotations and stereotypes that come from some toys. When asked about resources which represents Afro- Caribbean culture in School A Miss Orange and Mrs Yellow mention dolls and in particular by Miss Blue Small World People (

Hope Education, 2019). During the walk through there was no evidence in this school of dolls representing Afro- Caribbean people however the Small World People were seen (Image 4).

Image 4 Small World People in school

Image 5 Small World People from Hope Educational Catalogue

These toys are promoted as educational resources that should aid and bring about awareness of different cultural groups (Hope Educational 2019). The school had recently purchased these items as a result of the recent review undertaken which they had failed. In one classroom the figures were in a storage box which children could choose from. Image 4 shows this resource placed by a TA to be photographed. Image 5 shows how the figures are displayed in a catalogue with text saying: '*This special offer lets you purchase the Asian, Black, White, and Special Needs figures together and save*.' Here the wording describing the figures is rather confusing to whoever

might be purchasing the items as it begins with using a description of a continent and then goes on to describe the people by their colour. In addition, these are grouped with figures who have Special Needs. Although these figures represent the different colours of people they do not represent anything of their culture. However having a positive representation of black children through toys, puzzles and other educational resources promotes the real world around them for what it is, multicultural (Siraj-Blatchford, 1984, p. 80).

It was apparent whilst on the walk through, that both schools had very few resources showing this type of representation, and this can be seen in the example of Images 6 and 7.

Image 6 Storage Box School B

This box of figures in a storage box had only 2 representations of people from different cultures.

Image 6 Music Area School A

This could be because a number of staff in both schools did not see the need to single out any one culture. With Mrs Blue suggesting that '*… it's important that our children need to see that we are just all as one…other than distinguishing between you know different cultures*.' With this type of attitude educators need to be very careful as Vandenbroeck (2008, p. 28) states that trying to treat all children as equal can lead to a 'denial of differences' and excepting a form of 'colour-blindness'. This too can lead into tokenism overlooking the intricacies of the child's or children's personal history (Vandenbroeck, 2008, p. 28). What was interesting however was that Mrs Blue made reference to the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS) audit which had been carried out which showed that the school did not have enough diverse resources. Mrs Yellow also commented on the fact that she did not think the school had enough resources that represented Afro-Caribbean people or culture. As identity is a huge part of the social make up of each child if they do not see positive representations of self then assimilation and conformity becomes a struggle. This leads later to the low attainment and under-achievement of Afro-Caribbean children (Siraj- Blatchford and Siraj- Blatchford, 1999; Crozier, 2005).

Subtle Themes

Curriculum and Financial Pressure

The curriculum can be seen through both schools as a hindrance to the incorporation of understandings of Afro-Caribbean culture through activities and resources. Mrs Yellow pointed out: '*And its like that three hours we are trying to fit so many things in, and I get that Maths and phonics, its important, but then they will get to maths and phonics throughout the rest of school*.' However, there could

be ways that teachers could incorporate maths and phonics with cultural activities and resources. Mrs Purple said:

> '*We are reviewing all of our curriculum because Ofsted. Because obviously the big drive is on curriculum has been this year and it definitely will be next year with new inspections and some enrichment and the cultural side of things will be paramount if not more so you can…I think in all schools you will see a change and a shift*.'

This gives the impression that the policy makers have noticed that there is some sort of deficit in the approach to how settings are dealing with diversity and equality. It could also mean they will address the way time is allocated to the various subjects. Finance was another subtle theme highlighted through the analysis. Miss Orange commented on the way that staff provide a variety of resources themselves as there is limited budget for activities linked to different cultures. Mrs Blue also noted that providing specific culturally diverse resources was difficult due to lack of funding.

Conclusion

This chapter presented an analysis of the data gathered in this research project. It discussed a number of themes including the importance of people as resources, stereotyping and tokenism, and lack of culturally specific resources. In addition there were a number of more subtle themes including: curriculum pressure and financial constraints. In summary the key things that were found were that the majority of participants had very little knowledge or understanding of Afro-Caribbean culture. Schools had limited resources to provide children with a rich opportunity to learn and appreciate Afro- Caribbean culture. Another issue was that some participants did not see the need to have specific resources for this group. There were also limited opportunities for children from this cultural group to see their culture celebrated and

valued giving them a sense of belonging. A lack of resources was partly explained by limited budgets and curriculum constraints.

The final chapter provides discussion of the findings, issues in the methodological approach taken as well as identifying possibilities for future research.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter sums up the main points of the Literature review and then assesses the findings and analysis from the study. This includes what evidence was found, a critique of the methodology and the challenges that were met. Recommendations are made along with suggestions for future research regarding the importance of Afro-Caribbean representation within ECEC settings.

The literature reviewed showed that children from Afro-Caribbean backgrounds are still underachieving. It also revealed the importance of resources, including the staff having the knowledge and training needed in order to provide the children with a sense of belonging. Giving the child the tools with which to build self-esteem and confident.

Findings

First and foremost, it was found that none of the participants had a clear understanding of what Afro-Caribbean culture was. Generally, understandings were somewhat superficial and with some participants, tokenistic because for the majority their perspectives on Afro-Caribbean culture tended to be quite passive. Gillborn (1990, pp. 26-27) through his research expressed that it was this passivity that often led to misinterpretation of the importance attached to cultural identity. This could mean that many children miss out on having rich learning experiences due to educator's lack of knowledge.

Another one of the main findings was how sparse the provisions of actual physical resources were in the respective settings. Siraj-Blatchford (1994, p. 80) gives some comprehensive definition to how this might look by suggesting that there should be a vast amount of positive cultural representation within every aspect of the learning environment, as this gives the child a clearer picture of the world around them. It can be identified from this research that lack of understanding along with the lack of knowledge about Afro-Caribbean culture needs to be addressed before resources could be used effectively. In order for this to happen educators will need to be willing to immerse themselves in practical cultural experiences to be better equipped.

Challenges in the methodology

The semi structured interview was found to be rather difficult to conduct, as participants found the questions (though simplistic) hard and so tried to cover this by digressing onto other topics. On the other hand, questions could have been less rigid in their construction and perhaps a more conversational style could have been adopted during the interview which might have captured more specific responses. To elaborate on this, it should be noted that once the audio recording devices were turned off, in many cases this gave rise to further and more in-depth discussion around the meaning of Afro-Caribbean identity and its importance. The reason for this might have been because they may have felt embarrassed by their lack of knowledge. As the researcher conducting the interviews was of the Afro-Caribbean community.

Other limiting factors were those that relate to time constraints and availability of the participants. In one setting the Head teacher, explained that no teaching staff could be made available to participate due to their time table commitments which meant that only particular staff were available. In some cases, interviews were rushed due to unforeseen issues that had arisen and required immediate and personal attention.

Additionally, it would have been interesting to have conducted semi-structured interviews with a wider variety of educators. This could have included males or females from the Afro-Caribbean community. Perhaps this would have made the data collected more diverse.

Interviewing three staff in two schools and gathering photographic data in both settings, generated a considerable amount of data. If the study were to be repeated the focus of this might be to gather a smaller amount of data to analyse in depth as this proved to be problematic in being able to determine the most relevant data to use. It might have been more efficient to gather practical evidence from one setting. In addition, issues around photographs arose whilst completing the audit as some areas had a high concentration of children which made it difficult to take photos as photographing children would have been a breach to ethical guidance. Not only did the issue arise about children's presence in different areas but as their pictures were incorporated with some displays it was not possible to take these pictures. As pictures speaks a thousand words the interpretation of photographic images for data analysis became extremely complex. Realistically the research could

have been based upon just the pictorial evidence gathered. This was because there was limited space to analyse in detail the many photographs that were taken. Another study might just use photographic evidence or even be used as a basis for discussion with practitioners.

Recommendations

For future studies to be conducted in this area of Afro-Caribbean representation in early childhood as it was apparent there was a lack of secondary data. There needs to be a forum of early years educators, parents and children (who are of this heritage) so that training and policies can be discussed to bring about a positive change. Another recommendation is that cultural heritage should be included in the curriculum as a daily practice not just a tokenistic gesture of meeting the tick box requirement.

Whilst conducting the research it was clear that the two participating settings would like to do more. They both expressed were interested in receiving the necessary training and even asked for recommendations of were to purchase resources that would portray Afro-Caribbean culture.

Summary

It can be seen from this research that cultural representation is important and that more needs to be done to address the ways in which this issue is addressed. Practitioners and other educators do need the training and a deeper knowledge of Afro-Caribbean culture, in order to make sure that equality is truly a part of the

child's educational experience. If all children are entitled to receive the tools in order

to reach their full potential, then all educators should be fully equipped to deliver or

facilitate this partnership.

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Appendices

Appendix 1   Questions

Appendix 2   Recording Sheets

Appendix 3   Ethnic Certificate

Appendix 4   Letter to Gatekeeper

Appendix 5   Consent Letter