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Ethnic Minorities in Britain: The Educational Performance of Pakistani Muslims

Manami Hamashita

The irrevocable changes that have formed the multi-racial and multicultural British society have their origins in the period of British imperialism. In the postwar period migrants from countries in the New Commonwealth were able to migrate to Britain without any restrictions in accordance with the British Nationality Act of 1948. The influx of migrants from these countries including the West Indies, India and Pakistan bringing with them their culture and customs had a profound effect, and British society was forced to change rapidly as a result.

In general, ethnic minority issues are often considered as a matter of 'assimilation' into the host society or under the concept of 'multiculturalism'. In either case education for ethnic minorities plays an important role. For this reason I would like to focus on the educational performance of ethnic minorities, in particular the performance of those of Pakistani origin. According to the 2001 Census, groups of Pakistani origin had the highest percentage of British-born (54.8%),[(1)] and so the education of this British-born contingent should be one of the most important issues for Pakistanis in Britain. Much has been written about the education issues of ethnic minorities but there is relatively little material concerning the education of Pakistanis. This subject has been given some attention by Muhammad Anwar, who is a leading researcher in the field of Pakistani Muslims. In his book *The Myth of Return*,[(2)] published in 1979, he provided evidence that Muslims had started to settle down in Britain in the 1970s, and that a short stay for purely financial reasons was already a 'myth'. *The Myth of Return* is considered to be an established reference text describing Pakistanis in Britain. In his latest book, *British Muslims and State Policies,* published in 2003, he shows that the majority of Pakistani Muslims show lower educational achievement as compared to whites or Indians.[(3)] However, is it also the case

(1) The ratio of British born Indian is 48.9% and of Bangladeshi is 46.5%. See further, *Census 2001*: *National Report for England and Wales,* Pt.2 (London: TSO, 2004), p. 33 (S102 Sex and country of birth by ethnic group).

(2) See Muhammad Anwar, *The Myth of Return, Pakistanis in Britain* (London: Heinemann, 1979).

(3) Muhammad Anwar and Qadir Bakhsh, *British Muslims and State Policies* (Coventry: University of Warwick, 2003), p. 18.

that Pakistani students underachieve in comparison to other ethnic minority groups? Indeed there seems to be a general assumption that Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic groups are comparatively less qualified. If this is the case, what are the possible causes for this situation? The purpose of this article is to consider why Pakistani Muslims are assumed to be comparatively less qualified than other ethnic groups and then to explore the actual education achievements of Pakistani Muslims.

In Britain studies of ethnic minorities have been taken very seriously and so there is a massive amount of material on the subject. For instance, the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) has been conducting national surveys periodically since the 1960s. When these studies were initiated, very little was known about the population, originating from migrants who at the time numbered less than a million. When the first survey was completed in 1966, the most pressing issue was discrimination, and as part of this survey people were interviewed and asked questions about their perception and personal experience of discrimination.[4] However, it also became necessary to analyze many of the other problems that accompanied the subsequent growth in the migrant population. The fourth survey of 1994 charted the experiences of ethnic minorities in Britain since the 1960s. It reported changes that have occurred in key areas of society such as family and household structure, education, qualifications and language, employment patterns, income and standards of living, neighbourhoods and housing. The 1994 survey also for the first time covered important new topics including health and health services, racial harassment and cultural identity. Another important source of information is the 1991 Census, that introduced the category of ethnic minority. This additional information has made it possible for the PSI and other researchers to analyze results in detail. Compared to the abundance of material in Britain about British Pakistanis, material on the subject in Japan is much more limited. Related materials include the works of Jiro Tomioka about ethnic minorities in general, of Kosei Sakuma, who wrote about education, and the survey by Masanori Koga, Masao Naito and Tsuneo Hamaguchi on South Asian migrants in Britain.[5]

The first section of this article describes migrant history and the current situation of Pakistanis in Britain. The second section shows the process of establishing Muslim schools and the actual conditions in schools.[6] In the third and last sections I would like to reveal the progress in education that has been made by Pakistanis in Britain, by comparing the performance of three generations

(4) Tariq Modood and Richard Berthoud, *Ethnic Minorities in Britain: Diversity and Disadvantage* (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1997), p. 1.

(5) *Imin kara Shimin he,* [*From Migrants to Citizens: Studies on Indian Communities Overseas*] (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 2000).

(6) I visited to several schools to have an interviews with a head teachers in Britain in 2005.

based on the definition of generation given by Tariq Modood,[7] who is a member of the PSI.

Migrant History and Current Situation of Pakistanis in Britain

The British Nationality Act which came into effect in 1948, allowed the people of New Commonwealth countries to migrate to Britain without restriction. In Britain Pakistani merchant sailors started to move from coastal areas of Britain and settled in inland areas in the early 1940s, but the main thrust of migration from Pakistan reached peak levels around 1961-2. Migratory movement tended to occur where there were already existing links between the sending and receiving societies, based on colonization, political influence, trade investment and cultural ties. However, non-economic and political forces, especially government policies in sending societies as well as in Britain, had just as great an impact on the pattern of migration.[8] Gradually the government tightened controls on migration by British subjects from other parts of the Commonwealth as a result of fears about increasing numbers of migrants from Commonwealth citizens in Asia and Africa. The first Commonwealth Immigrant Act came into force in 1962, and following that the immigration Act of 1971 introduced the concept of patriality, by which only British subjects with sufficiently strong links had the right to live and work in Britain. The principal nationality law today is the British Nationality Act of 1981, which established the current system of migrant controls. The announcement in 1961 of the forthcoming Commonwealth Immigrants Act triggered an enormous rush to 'beat the ban'. The rate of migration from India, Pakistan and Cyprus rose sharply and at first had the opposite effect to that intended by the legislation.[9] Economic hardship was the driving force behind the Pakistani migration to Britain. Wages for manual labour in Britain in the early 1960s were over thirty times those offered for work in Pakistan,[10] and there was also a demand for manual labour in Britain, as the economy was rapidly recovering after the Second World War.

Most of the Pakistani migrants originated from just a few areas in Pakistan: Faisalabad and Jhelum Districts in Punjab, Mirpur District in Azad (Free) Kashmir, and Attock District in the North West Frontier Province.[11] These areas have a long tradition of migration, and the pattern depending on the region, but most migrants decided to go to Britain to earn money. For instance, Abdul Majeed Mallick, who was born and brought up in a small village in the Mirpur

(7) Professor at the University of Bristol, department of sociology.

(8) Humayun Ansari, *The Infidel Within: Muslims in Britain since 1800* (London: Minority Rights Group International, 2003), p. 157.

(9) *Ibid.*, p. 158.

(10) *Ibid.*, p. 152.

(11) Alison Shaw, 'The Pakistani Community in Oxford', in R. Ballard (ed.), *Desh Pardesh: The South Asian Presence in Britain* (London: Hurst and Company, 1994), p. 37.

District, and has lived in Britain for many years explains, "Our people have a sense of travel, communication skill, and a sense of adjustment".[12]

There were two other historical factors that drove Pakistanis to migrate. First, the partition of British India into Pakistan and India in 1947 led to a large-scale population exchange between the newly formed states.[13] After the partition, many original Hindu and Sikh settlers returned to Indian Panjab, while Muslims from India ventured across the border to Pakistan to obtain land. Many of those who had to leave their homes chose to migrate to Britain and to send back remittances to support relatives they had left behind. Secondly, the Pakistan government decided to build a dam at Mangla, which would submerge some 250 villages in the Mirpur District in 1961, and it withdrew the restrictions on emigration with the intention of compensating Mirpuri villagers who would be dispossessed of land by the construction of the dam. Although some of them were granted acreage in Punjab or given a subsidy from the government in order to obtain land somewhere else in Pakistan, those that had friends or relatives in Britain could emigrate through an agency.

It is characteristic of Pakistani migrants to settle down in a certain area, and although precise figures are not available, there are, for instance, about 30,000 Pakistanis in Bradford, more than 90 percent of whom originated from Mirpur.[14] The reason why most people from a certain village went abroad lies in the social network of the migration process itself, which is described as 'chain migration'. The chain would begin when a group of close relatives pooled their savings to sponsor another relative to migrate, the next group, then pooling their savings to bring over more of their kin. This process of chain migration was repeated many times over with earlier migrants helping later ones to find accommodation and work, the result being that people from the same village in Pakistan tended to live close together in Britain.[15]

The result of repeated chain migration is that Pakistani communities were established in urban cities across Britain. According to the 2001 Census, the predominant majority of the British population is White (92.1%). The remainder (7.9%) consists of other ethnic groups, half of which are from South Asian groups. The total number of South Asians, including the 'Other Asian' population, was 2,331,423, which accounts for 4.0% of the total population, and 50.3% of the non-white population. South Asian ethnic groups are composed of 1,053,411 Indians (42.3%), 747,285 Pakistanis (32.1%), 283,063 Bangladeshis (12.1%) and the remaining 247,664 other

(12) See further Irna Imram, *Home from Home: British Pakistanis in Mirpur* (Bradford: City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council, 1997).

(13) Roger Ballard, 'The Pakistani: stability and instrospection' in Ceri Peach (ed.), *Ethnicity in the 1991 Census,* Vol. 2: *The ethnic minority populations of Great Britain* (London: HMSO, 1996), pp. 121-2.

(14) Imran, *Home from Home*, p. 6.

(15) Shaw, 'The Pakistani Community in Oxford', pp. 37-8.

Census area	Pakistani	Indian	Bangladesh
North East/North West	131,042 (18.0)	2,373 (30.1)	32,171 (11.4)
G. M. M. C	75,187	35,391	20,064
Yorkshire and The Humber	146,330 (20.1)	51,943 (4.9)	12,330 (4.4)
W. Y. M. C	122,210	42,430	8,213
East Midlands	27,829 (3.8)	122,346 (11.6)	6,923 (2.4)
West Midlands	154,550 (21.3)	178,691 (17.0)	31,401 (11.1)
W. M. M. C	138,007	157,062	29.085
East/South East	97,310 (13.4)	140,254 (13.3)	33,862 (12.0)
London	142,749 (19.6)	436,993 (41.5)	153,893 (54.4)
Inner London	43,559 (6.0)	85,471 (8.1)	128,314 (45.3)
Outer London	99,190 (13.6)	351,522 (33.4)	25,579 (9.0)
South West	6,724 (0.4)	16,394 (1.6)	4,816 (1.7)
England	706,539 (97.1)	1,028,546 (97.6)	275,394 (97.3)
England and Wales	714,826 (98.3)	1,036,807 (98.4)	280,830 (99.2)
United Kingdom	727,285 (100)	1,053,411 (100)	283,063 (100)

Table 1 Geographic Distribution of South Asian in England and Wales (2001)

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages. G. M. M. C=Greater Manchester Metropolitan County including Manchester. W. Y. M. C=West Yorkshire Metropolitan County including Bradford. W. M. M. C=West Midlands Metropolitan County including Birmingham.
Sources: *Census 2001: Key Statistics for Local Authorities in England and Wales* (London: TSO, 2003), (Table KS06); The UK Population by Ethnic Groups, April 2001.

South Asians (10.6%).

While about 35% of the South Asian population (excluding the 'Other Asian' group) lived in London in 2001, Pakistanis tended to live more dispersedly in big urban centers across the country (Table 1).

For example, in Bradford in West Yorkshire Metropolitan County, there are 67,999 Pakistanis, accounting for 14.5% of the whole population, and it is worth noting that there are three inner city wards (Toller, University and Bradford Moor) in Bradford where the proportion of Asian or British Asian is more than half the total ward population (69.6%, 68.1% and 66.4% respectively).[16]

Generally speaking, the minority ethnic groups of Britain have a younger age population than the majority white population reflecting the past migration and reproductive patterns. The proportion of the British-born population continues to grow over time. The percentage of the British-born Pakistanis is the highest (54.8%), (excluding Scotland and North Ireland), and as shown in Table 2, Pakistanis have a young age structure, demonstrating that education is inevitably one of the most serious concerns for Pakistanis.

(16) See *Census 2001: Census Area Statistics on Neighbourhood* (London: TSO, 2003).

	Under 16	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	64-	Total
1991	203 (42)	83 (17)	68 (14)	55 (12)	34 (7)	25 (5)	8 (2)	477
2001	250 (35)	134 (19)	130 (18)	79 (11)	55 (8)	32 (4)	30 (4)	715

Table 2 Pakistanis Age Structure
Note: Figures in parentheses are cell percentages (thousands).
Sources: *1991 Census, Social focus on Ethnic Minorities* (London, 1996), p. 10; *2001 Census*, p. 121 (Table S101).

The Process of Establishing Muslim Schools

From the 2001 Census, we can obtain data such as population distribution, employment and education achievement categorized by religion. As we can see in Table 3, 92.0% of Pakistanis are Muslim and Pakistanis account for 42.5% of the total Muslim population in Britain. As we saw above the Pakistani population has a large proportion of youngsters, so I would like to investigate in this section how they have made a strong effort in establishing Muslim schools, and to show that many Muslim students have made significant achievements in some of those schools.

As the youngsters from this surge of migrants entered the education system schools were inevitably affected by students with values that were often very different to traditional British ones. The LEAs (Local Education Authorities) were authorized to form educational policy, over the issue of migrant students gradually increased during the 1960s. After the first attempts at 'assimilationism' from the 1960s to the mid 1970s, the LEAs recognized that they could not solve the problem of migrant students with this limited policy. In the 1970s the concept of 'multiculturalism' emerged but diminished after the Conservatives came into power in 1979 and educational policy became increasingly influenced by the ideologically dominant 'New Right'.[17] For the first time, the government assumed direct responsibility for the school curriculum and its assessment. The Education Reform Act of 1988 was a landmark in the history of English and Welsh education.

As educational policy transformed, Muslim parents made many efforts to improve the state of education for their children. However, no matter how hard they tried, state schools did not share their power with minority groups since the predominant authority was the white group. Muslim parents demanded that their children should be educated exclusively according to Islamic doctrines which form the foundation of every aspect of their lives.[18] For instance, girls who reach puberty have to be educated separately from boys, and regarding food, they are allowed to eat

(17) The New Right refers to a form of conservatism that carried on from the Old Right through the likes of Margaret Thatcher. Its adherents are ideologically committed to neo-liberalism as well as being socially neo-conservative. The best known examples of their reforms in Britain involved the privatization of many utilities.

(18) Masaharu Amano and Yokuo Murata, *Tabunnka Kyouseishakai no Kyouiku* [*Multicultural Education in Britain*] (Tokyo: Tamagawa University Press, 2001), p. 225.

	numbers	%	% of Total Ethnic
All people	1,546,626	100.0	3.0
White	179,773	11.6	0.4
Mixed	64,262	4.2	9.7
Indian	131,662	3.5	12.77
Pakistani	657,680	42.5	92.0
Bangladesh	259,710	16.8	92.5
Other Asian	90,013	5.8	37.3
Black Caribbean	4,477	0.3	0.8
Black African	96,136	6.2	20.0
Other black	5,732	0.4	6.0
Chinese	752	0.0	0.3
Others	56,429	3.6	25.7

Table 3 Muslim Population by Ethnic Group in England and Wales (2001)

Souses: *Census 2001: National Report for England and Wales*, Pt. 2 (London: TSO, 2004), p. 33 (Table S104).

only *halal*[19] meat and so on.

Religious communities have been concerned about the issue of education, which is considered to be the most important element in determining their social status. Muslims in Britain have put forth an effort in developing their own ideal educational curriculum, however, their efforts have been in vain due to the prejudice or social restrictions surrounding them. Muslim parents began establishing Muslim independent schools in the early 1980s by themselves. There were 66 independent Muslim schools in 2000, and by 2003 there were a total of 98 schools.[20] It is estimated that there are about 100 schools financed by communities in which Muslim students learn in their own way.[21] It is worth noting that the establishment of Muslim independent schools is linked to the existence of mosques in places like London, Leicester, Birmingham, and Bradford. In the beginning they used mosques as schools and received indispensable financial support from the local community. There were only 10 mosques in 1945, but mosques have been built rapidly so there were 329 mosques in 1998, and 1,493 mosques in 2003 in Britain.[22] Mosques provide opportunities for Muslim students to study at an Islamic divinity school, called 'madrasa', and many Muslim students go to mosque after school. Some mosques open their facilities all day at weekends. For instance, the East End Mosque has 350 Muslim students in the evening on weekdays and 250 students at weekends studying the Koran and Arabic.[23] However, it does not have enough teachers or facilities, and finance in particular is a serious problem. Moreover, there are not enough places at Muslim independent schools to accept all students who wish to apply.

In this circumstance the Education Reform Act of 1988 had a big impact in that it made it possible to establish state-funded schools (a state school under the direct control of government) receiving financial help without the permission of the LAEs. The effect of the Education Reform Act of 1988 was not only to weaken the power of local authorities but actually to seize power as

(19) This word refers to anything that is permissible under Islam.

(20) Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 44.

(21) *New Community,* Vol. 17, No. 4, July 1991.

(22) Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany*, p. 47.

(23) Interview with the headmaster of Adam primary school, in East End Mosque, 27 February 2005.

well. As a result state schools have to teach several religions according to the syllabus. However, if the majority of students are Muslim, then a state-funded school can choose its own syllabus made by the board of directors.[24]

The issue of state-funding became a powerfully symbolic one for Muslims, who wanted the state to recognize the legitimacy of their demand as a religious community, and it has also become a contentious political issue in Britain. For well over a decade, Muslims pressed the government to provide state aid to their schools under the same conditions that it grants money to Anglican, Catholic, and Jewish ones.[25] Muslim parents have entreated the establishment of Muslim state-funded schools for many years, claiming that there were some Christian and Jewish state-funded schools already in existence and that it is unfair not to be able to receive financial help, even though they pay the same amount of taxes as Christians and Jews. They also found it difficult to teach many essential subjects like Islamic doctrine or Arabic at mosques, and many Muslim parents had no doubt that the education system in Britain did not meet their needs. They were afraid that their children would be assimilated culturally, morally and religiously into British society.

Muslims also motivated other schools to improve their educational level by giving approval to the Islamia Primary School to act as a model for the schools to aspire to. There were 32,290 Muslims in Brent in 2001, which is 12.3% of all residents,[26] and their community was well established, which was cited as an advantage in getting approval from the government.[27] The Islamia Primary School is indeed the first state-funded Muslim school. However the process of getting support from the state was very hard. The school was established as an independent Muslim school in October 1983. It has expanded each year and now has a nursery school, kindergarten and primary school. It submitted applications to the Department for Education over and over again in vain according to parent demand, Muslims had to face obvious prejudice against them while Christians and Jews did not have difficulties in gaining approval for financial help from the government.

There was also a strong demand for a Muslim school for girls in Bradford, with the belief that Muslim girls should be educated separately from Muslim boys.[28] As we have seen, there are many Pakistanis in Bradford, and the communities have been established since the early stage of migration. For instance, the MAB (Muslim Association of Bradford), which was set up in the late

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(24) Amano and Murata, *Tabunnka Kyouseishakai no Kyouiku*, p. 225.

(25) Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany,* p. 43.

(26) See *Census 2001: Key Statictics for local Authorities in England and Wales: Laid before Parliaments pursuant to Section 4(1) Census Act 1920* (London: TSO, 2003).

(27) Interview with headmaster of Islamia Primary school, 1 March 2005.

(28) Philip Lewis, *Being Muslim and Being British The dynamics of Islamic Reconstruction in Bradford* (mimeo, n.p., n.d.), p. 78.

1950s, making it one of the oldest Muslim organizations in Bradford and Yorkshire has been the major player in establishing a Muslim independent school for girls with a very strong connection with the migration of the first Muslim migrants to Bradford from across Asia. With this background, the Bradford Council was forced to change policy to adjust to the situation. In 1981 it made a new policy, the Race Relations Policy, and it declared that they commit themselves to encourage equal opportunities and to fit both racial discrimination and racial disadvantage with positive action. It also recognized that Bradford is a multi-racial, multi-cultural city and that every section of the community has an equal right to maintain its own identity, culture, language, religion and customs.[29] After this policy was enacted, Muslim communities began to take part in educational issues. At the beginning, they established mosques and used them as madrasas.[30] In the meantime, the MAB formally recognized the importance of a separate educational provision for girls of Muslim families in Bradford. They established a Muslim girls school, although some assimilationists attacked them, claiming that migrant students should assimilate into British society as long as they stay in this country. They were also concerned that migrant students might leave school without any connection with White students. After struggling with these arguments, the MAB inaugurated the Bradford Muslim Girl's Community School in 1985, later to be known as the Feversham Colledge. The Feversham College is the only all-female Muslim girls' 11-8 state-funded secondary school in Britain. Their mission statement is: "To strive to provide the best education, in a secure Islamic environment, through the knowledge and application of the Qur'an and Sunnah". Although the application to the Department for Education had all-party backing from Bradford Council, it was turned down by the Government in 1995. But it continued to grow in stature and success, and the then Secretary of Sate for Education and Employment, David Blunkett, granted VAS (Voluntary Aided Status) to the Feversham College on Friday, 6 October, 2000. *The Guardian* reported the news: "Bradford gets first Muslim State Secondary. After being refused twice before, and following a very long campaign, it was finally announced that the school would switch from the independent sector to a voluntary aided state similar to many church schools".[31]

In general, Muslim students in mainstream British schools perform less well on standardized tests than do white students, yet the Feversham College in Bradford achieved the city's highest average test scores in 2002,[32] and was the sixth in Britain at adding value from Key

(29) Jiro Tomioka, *Igirisu ni okeru Jinsyu to Kyouiku* [*Read and Education in Britain*] (Tokyo: Akashi shoten, 1998), p. 600.

(30) The website of Muslim Association of Bradford (http://www.geocities.com/patela9/index.htm).

(31) *The Guardian*, 7 October 2000.

(32) Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany*, p. 44.

Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 and the third for adding value from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 in 2003.[33] Al-Hijrah School in Birmingham, which is a state-funded Muslim school, was also awarded the same status in the autumn of 2001.[34]

There are some normal state schools with an admissions policy that has catered for the needs of Muslims. For instance, the Iqra Primary School in Bradford with 320 Muslim students and only two White students has satisfied the needs of Muslim parents within the national curriculum. Students basically learn in the same class room where they are divided into four groups according to English ability level. Although most of the students can speak English, some came to Britain relatively recently and have yet to develop any English speaking ability whatsoever. There are assistant staff members who speak both English and the mother tongue of students in their assigned group, and in this way students are given exhaustive English lessons. It is interesting that there are more assistant staff members than regular teachers: this seems to be characteristic of this school. According to the headmaster of the Iqra Primary School, almost all students leave the school with an excellent English ability. He also mentioned that Muslim parents who chose a state school and not a Muslim school made the right decision.[35] The OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education), the inspectorate for children and learners in England, reported that the Iqra Primary School provides a good education for its pupils and that the headmaster provides very strong leadership and direction to the work of the school. The headmaster said that it is very sad that parents effectively restrict the knowledge of their children by sending them to Muslim school.[36] From these observations, it would seem that state schools are very negative about Muslim school policy.

According to the headmaster of the Islamia Primary School, nineteen Muslim independent schools have applied for approval to become state funded schools and many Muslim parents seem to agree with the idea of state-funded Muslim schools. As one Muslim active in the field of education said, "It seemed not so much a matter of educational choice for Muslim parents but a matter of civil rights for the community".[37] However, there are only six state-funded Muslim schools in Britain, and this slow progress and the concern still felt by many Muslim parents that their children are not getting a fair deal academically, ensure that the demand for the establishment of Muslim Independent schools also remains strong. The debate over underachievement continues and it remains to be seen how great the resulting long-term impact on the education of British Muslims will be.[38]

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(33) A Key Stage is a stage of the state education system in the UK setting the educational knowledge expected of students at various ages. Key Stage1 (aged 5-7) Key Stage2 (aged 8-11) Key Stage3 (aged12-4) Key Stage4 (aged 15-6).

(34) Ansari, *The Infidel Within*, p. 337.

(35) Interview with the headmaster of Iqra Primary school, 28 February 2005.

(36) Interview with the headmaster of Bangabandhu Primary School, 25 February 2005.

(37) Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany*, 2005, p. 43.

(38) Ansari, *The Infidel Within*, p. 399.

The Educational Performance of Pakistani Students

Disadvantages in education and employment are two crucial facets of racial disadvantage. Without a decent education and qualifications, a school leaver is unlikely to find the sort of job to which he or she aspires. In this context, Asian parents seem to put a great value on educational achievement. As we pointed out in the section 1, most early Pakistani migrants were from villages such as Mirpur, and they were taught that they did not need education under the traditional patriarchy. They could not get a job with good conditions so they had to work many extra hours as unskilled workers and raise their children. That is the reason why they encourage their children to go on to further and higher education for the future. Pakistani parents put great emphasis on the importance of education, and some Pakistanis currently work as professionals and have management status. However, Pakistanis in general still underachieve.

It was at schools in the 1970s that the dispute started over the lower educational achievement of ethnic minorities, especially Pakistani and Bangladeshi, compared to that of White students. Although they have somewhat closed the gap it is clear that significant polarities exist among the ethnic minority groups and within specific minority groups.[39] Parents who belong to the middle class seem to take it for granted that their children will go on to higher education, meaning university. Many Pakistani students said that they feel pressure or expectation from their family[40] and most ethnic minority students seem to feel that their family puts strong emphasis on higher education. The main reason to encourage them to go to higher education is to get a better job. Another reason is that they will have a higher status in the community if their children go on to university.[41] Students whose parents have a qualification of higher education background also have a tendency to go to higher education, combined with a cultural acceptance that leaving the educational system is inappropriate.[42] Here I will attempt to explore the educational level of Pakistanis and consider if it is true that the educational performance of Pakistanis, in general, is lower than that of other ethnic groups by comparing each generation using T. Modood's definition of specific generations.

These three generations are as follows; the first group are the migrants who came to Britain, aged 16+; the second are those who came to Britain under the age of 16 and so had some schooling in Britain, or were born in Britain, and the third are those aged between 16 and

(39) Anwar and Bakhsh, *British Muslims and State Policies*, p. 54.

(40) Tariq Modood and Tony Acland, *Ethnic Minorities and Higher Education* (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1994), p. 54.

(41) *Ibid*., p. 55.

(42) Charlie Owen, Peter Mortimore and Ann Phoenix, 'Higher Education Qualifications' in Valerie Karn (ed.), *Ethnicity in the Census 1991,* Vol. 4: *Employment, Education and Housing among the Ethnic Minority Populations of Britain* (London: Stationery Office, 1997), p. 27.

24, most of whom were born in Britain and had most, if not all, of them had their education in Britain. Strictly speaking, these are not true 'generations' *per se*, since there could be an age overlap between the first and second group, and the years are not evenly spread across the three categories.[43]

The 2001 Census provides the result of a survey of higher education and qualification by ethnic minority group and the age of each group is divided into six categories (age 16-24, 25-34, 35-49, 50-9, 60-4 and 65-74). I classify those aged over 50 as belonging to the first generation, those aged 25-49 as the second generation and those aged 16-24 as the third generation, following T. Modood's definition mentioned above. Table 4 shows the highest level of qualification by generation.

It is clear that most (66.2%) of the first generation, who migrated to Britain as adults, do not have a high level of qualification. On the other hand, 15.7% have a level of qualification which is higher than that of Whites (14.0%). This is probably because they received a qualification in their country before coming to Britain.[44] There is no great gap between Whites, Pakistanis and Caribbeans, but the gap between Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, whose proportion for high qualification is the lowest (11.7%), and Indians whose proportion is the highest (23.0%), is remarkable. It is worth noting that Pakistani and Bangladeshi proportions of no qualification are much higher than those of the other three ethnic groups (66.2% and 76.4% respectively).

Next, I would like to look at the second generation whose age ranges from 25 to 49. While the percentage of those with no qualification among Whites (16.4%), Indians (21.5%) and Caribbeans (13.8%) is about half of that of the first generation, figures for Pakistanis (45.2%) and Bangladeshis (56.7%) are still high. However, it is worth remarking that the number of Pakistanis with higher qualifications has increased. This shows that progress has been made in terms of the level of education, especially at university level,[45] and that the second generation has had many more opportunities to participate in education. Comparing these two generations, there are still fewer Pakistanis with higher qualifications as compared to other ethnic groups, but it is worth noting that there is a remarkable progress in terms of level of qualification. It is also interesting to note that the percentage of younger people (aged 25-34) with a higher level of education is larger than that of older people (aged 35-49) within the second generation (27.6% and 17.9% respectively). Similarly, the percentage of older people with no qualification is higher than that

(43) Tariq Modood, 'Ethnic Differential in Educational Performance', in David Mason (ed.), *Explaining Ethinic Differences: Changing Patterns of Disadvantage in Britain* (Bristol: Policy, 2003), p. 66.

(44) Modood and Acland, *Ethnic Minorities and Higher Education*, p. 54.

(45) Tariq Modood and Richard Berthoud, *Ethnic Minorities in Britain: Diversity and Disadvantage* (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1997), pp. 67-9.

	White	Indian	Pakistani	Bangladesh	Caribbeans
16-24 (Third Generation)					
No qualification	15.8	10.5	22.5	21.6	16.2
Level 1	15.5	11.1	17.4	19.7	19.9
Level 2	33.3	29.3	27.2	28.7	35.2
Level 3	21.9	27.8	19.3	18.4	17.0
Level 4/5	11.4	19.5	11.0	9.3	8.6
25-49 (Second Generation)					
No qualification	16.4	21.5	45.2	56.7	13.8
Level 1	24.5	14.3	12.1	11.0	25.4
Level 2	22.7	14.7	10.5	7.6	22.1
Level 3	7.5	6.3	4.9	4.3	7.2
Level 4/5	23.7	38.9	22.8	15.8	24.4
50-74 (First Generation)					
No qualification	52.1	53.9	66.2	76.4	57.8
Level 1	8.3	6.8	5.2	2.8	6.7
Level 2	10.7	7.8	5.2	2.8	6.7
Level 3	3.0	3.5	3.0	2.1	2.4
Level 4/5	14.0	23.0	15.7	11.7	16.1

Table 4 Age and highest level of qualification by ethnic group Age 16-74 percentage

Note: The highest level of qualification variable uses both the educational and vocational qualification question, and the professional qualification.

No qualification: No academic, vocational or professional qualifications.

Level 1: 1+'O' level/5+GSE/GCSE (any grade), NVQ level1, foundation GNVQ.

Level 2: 5+'O' levels, 5+CSGs (grade1), 5+GCSEs (gradeA-C), School Certificate, 1+'A' levels, 4+'AS' levels, NVQ level 2, Intermediate GNVQ or equivalents.

Level 3: 2+'A' levels, 4+'AS' levels, higher school certificate, NVQ level 3, Advanced GNVQ or equivalents.

Level 4/5: First degree, higher Degree, NVQ levels 4-5, HND, Qualified Teacher Status, Qualified Medical Doctor, Qualified Dentist, Qualified Nurse, Midwife, Health Visitor or equivalents.

Source: *Census 2001: National Report for England and Wales* (London: TSO, 2003), (Table S117).

of younger people (54.8% and 35.5% respectively).

Lastly, I consider the educational performance of the third generation. Most of these were born or educated in Britain and many of them are still in the education system, so for this study I have assumed that they will go on to higher education. As we can see from Table 4, there are only few people aged 16-24 with higher level education. Compared with the other two groups, the percentage of Pakistanis with higher qualifications is still low, however, it is much higher than that of the second generation (25-49). This fact implies that the educational performance of the third generation has been getting higher, although of course it will take more time to see an accurate result.

The YCS (Youth Cohort Study) was the only organization for educational performance of Pakistani students run under the auspices of the DFES, and it has provided national resources. Figure 1 shows the attainment of Pakistani students from 1992 to 2002.

Although there are some fluctuations, the third generation obviously made significant progress over the time shown, a fact which can be explained by noting that education has been

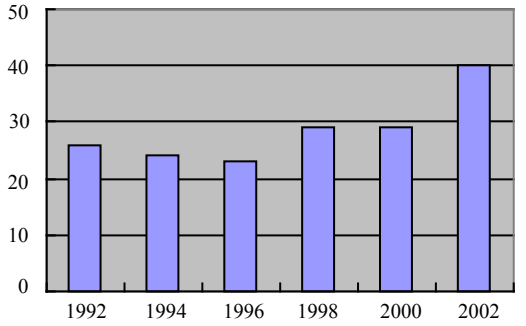

Figure 1　The attainment at 16+ by Pakistani-heritage pupils (1992-2002)

Note: Figures are cell percentage.

Source: YCS, *The Achievement of British Pakistani Learners* (London: Trentham Books, 2004), p. 18

an essential factor for Pakistanis to succeed in British society. One of the important factors we have to take notice of is that the education level of Pakistanis varies between regions. Table 5 shows the attainment of Pakistani heritage students at the GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) by region. As we can see in Table 5, there is a polarization between regions.[46]

The educational achievement of Pakistani students in London is higher with more than 50% of students getting A-C on five subjects in GCSE. The achievement of students in Birmingham, West Midlands, and Bradford is relatively higher, but that of students in small communities such as the South West and the East of England, is lower compared with that of other communities. It is not wrong to say that the size of community affects the educational achievement. It is also surprising that the educational achievement of girls is higher than that of boys in all regions, considering that almost all early women migrants from poor areas did not have any education at all decades ago.

As we have considered, the proportion of Pakistanis with no qualifications still remains high but it is worth remarking that there are more and more Pakistanis with higher qualifications. The younger generation in particular has made significant progress in higher education even though they have the following disadvantages compared with white students. Firstly, the social status of their parents is generally low which might be an obstacle in applying for university entrance, since some universities limit the number of ethnic minority students. Secondly, since their languages and cultures are different from those of Britain, they need to make extra effort to adjust to school, and thirdly, even though there are several acts against discrimination which provide for equal opportunity, they still have to face discrimination in school. How have they made such significant progress under these circumstances? One of the reasons could be that their parents value education as the most important element in society, since most of them had a hard time getting the type of job that they wanted as mentioned at the beginning of this section. They have faced very high unemployment rates compared with whites and others from the same areas. This is partly due to racial and religious discrimination but also to the fact that their social class

(46) Kaushika Amin et al., *Black and Ethnic Minority Young People and Educational Disadvantage* (London: Runnymede Trust, 1997), p. 33.

	a	b	c	d	e	f
North East	246	33.6	47.9	40.7	46.4	−5.9
North West	2,363	35.2	47.6	41.0	49.1	−8.1
Yorkshire and the Humber	3,016	29.1	39.4	34.0	45.4	−11.4
East Midlands	527	44.8	50.2	47.4	50.4	−3.0
West Midlands	2,990	34.3	48.9	41.0	49.9	−8.9
London	2,346	47.4	58.7	52.8	50.2	2.6
South East	1,147	36.8	52.5	44.0	55.1	−11.1
South West	101	24.6	47.7	34.7	54.4	−19.7

Table 5 Attainment of Pakistani heritage students at 16+ by region, 2003

Notes: a Number of Pakistani heritage 16 year olds in 2003. b Percentage of Pakistani heritage boys achieving 5A*-C in 2003. c Percentage of Pakistani heritage girls achieving 5A*-C in 2003. d Percentage of all Pakistani heritage pupils achieving 5A-*C in 2003. e Percentage of all pupils achieving 5A*-C in 2003. f Difference between Pakistani heritage and regional average.

Source: PLASC (Pupil Level Annual Schools Census), *The Achievement of British Pakistani Learners*, p. 22.

and economic position has combined with the effects of racial discrimination and stereotyping to hold back Pakistanis in particular.[47] Table 6 shows the socio-economic status of ethnic groups.

While the proportion of self-employed Pakistanis is higher (22.2%) than that of Indians (17.0%), the proportion in professional occupations is very low (11.7%) compared with that of Indians (17.0%). The number of Pakistanis who work as process, plant and machine operatives, is twice that of Indians, however, there is no big difference between Pakistanis and Whites in terms of professional occupations (11.0%). The proportion of those who are Pakistanis engaged as process, plant and machine operatives is the highest (19.4%) of all the groups. Pakistanis are mainly employed in manufacturing industries, there is also a growing number of Pakistanis working in the service sector, although the unemployment rate is very high (15.5%) compared to Indians (6.6%) and Whites (4.8%), the highest rate is seen in the Bangladeshi group (18.1%). Although it is inappropriate to say that educational performance is largely related to socio-economic background, their parent's experiences in finding a job seem to be a drive for their children to enter higher education, and it also can be argued that lower educational achievement might adversely affect their employment opportunities.

It is hard to conclude that Pakistanis as a whole have made significant progress in terms of education since as we have seen there are considerable differences between individual Pakistani students, as expected. Some achieve a high level of qualification but there is still a large proportion without qualifications. While there are many complicated factors involved, based on data the gap between other groups and Pakistanis does seem to have narrowed and in some areas

(47) Davis Gillborn and H. S. Mirza, *Educational Inequality: Mapping Race, Class and Gender: A Synthesis of Research Evidence* (London: Ofsted, 2000), p. 10.

	White	Indian	Pakistani	Bangladeshi	Black	Chinese	All People
Economic activity							
Employee (% of total workers)	86.4	83.0	77.8	84.7	91.7	74.5	86.3
Self-employer (ditto)	13.6	17.0	22.2	15.3	8.3	25.5	13.7
Part-time worker (ditto)	22.8	17.7	24.3	37.8	18.8	17.8	22.6
Unemployment rate	4.8	6.6	15.5	18.1	13.5	6.0	5.2
Occupation							
Managers and senior officials	15.2	16.6	12.5	12.0	9.6	17.0	15.1
Professional occupations	11.0	17.0	11.7	9.1	11.1	18.1	11.2
Associate professional and Technical occupations	13.8	10.9	8.4	7.0	17.2	12.9	13.8
Administrative and secretarial occupations	13.3	13.8	10.1	10.1	16.2	9.5	13.3
Skilled trade occupations	11.9	6.3	6.9	18.3	7.4	17.4	11.6
Personal service, sales and Customer service occupations	14.5	14.3	17.2	17.1	18.4	11.2	14.6
Process, plant and machine Operatives	8.5	10.6	19.4	7.1	6.6	2.5	8.5
Elementary occupations	11.8	10.4	13.8	19.3	13.4	11.5	11.9

Table 6 Socio-economic Characteristics of Faith Groups in England and Wales (2001) (%)

Note: (a) 'All people' includes other ethnic groups. (b) Figures relate to the age group of 16-74.

Sources: *Census 2001: National Report for England and Wales*, pp. 123-6, 230-3 (table S102, T13).

their educational achievement at the GCSE level is higher than the average in some areas.[48]

The LEAs and schools started arguing about the low educational performance of migrant students compared with white students in the 1960s. They adopted a policy of assimilation to try to solve the problem. However, it became clear that it was inappropriate to assimilate different cultures, customs and religions and this policy ultimately ended in failure. Multicultural policy, which aimed at respecting different identities and cultures and giving equal opportunities, emerged. In the meantime, the Education Reform Act of 1988 was enacted, which introduced the National Curriculum, and the central government took the power from the LEAs. It is obvious that the government's aim was to standardize the education system, which was totally against the concept of multicultural policy as The Swann Report claims.[49] Given these circumstances, parents of Muslim students were concerned that their children could not receive a proper education under the government policy. They wanted their children to learn their traditions, religions and cultures that they brought with them, and as a result Muslim communities took the lead and

(48) Bhikhu C. Parekh, *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain: Report of the Commission in the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* (London: Profile Books, 2000), p. 146.

(49) See Michael Lord, *Education for ALL: The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1985). Officially called Education for All, this was a government report advocating a multicultural education system for all schools, regardless of institution, location, age-range or ethnicity of staff/students.

started tackling the educational issue. They founded Muslim independent schools in the 1990s, which followed Islamic doctrines, teaching the Koran and Arabic language and providing meals cooked with *halal* meat. There are currently about 100 Muslim independent schools that have been established but there are not enough places to accept all student applicants, and they still have problems related to mother-tongue teaching, religious education, prayer facilities, uniforms for girls, and single-sex education.[50] The OFSTED estimates that there will be more and more Muslim independent schools in the future and also warns that Muslim parents should have a choice to give their children a proper education. However, Muslim independent school should be careful not to be blind in terms of other religions. The OFSTED is concerned about Muslim students who cannot develop a sense of responsibility and duty towards British society and says that it will continue to observe Muslim independent schools and should not be indifferent to religious diversity in order to unify the nation.[51]

Muslim communities have also made an effort to get financial aid from the government to establish state-funded Muslim schools, which have to follow the National Curriculum. State aid to Muslim schools is a big point of contention because the state was already financing Christian and Jewish schools,[52] but Muslim schools had not been given approval by the government. It is worth mentioning that there are only 5 state funded Muslim schools and these have only recently received state funding, while several thousand (almost 7,000) Church of England, Catholic and Jewish schools have received state funding for some time.[53] However, by considering that there are only nineteen Muslim independent schools applying for state aid out of more than one hundred, it seems unlikely that all Muslim parents consider that state-funded Muslim schools are needed. Some parents also have doubts that separating children from majority White students would help them in society after leaving school. Considering there is no firm opinion even within the Muslim community, it seems unlikely that many Muslim independent schools will apply for aid despite the OFSTED alarms.

I considered the educational performance of Pakistani Muslim students in the section 3. As seen we have, there has been significant progress in the educational level of the younger generation but also there are large differences among Pakistanis. Since more than 50 % of Pakistanis are British born, they have fluency in English, which eliminates the difficulties that the earlier migrants had, and might give them a motivation for future education. OFSTED recently commissioned a definitive study showing that language was not a central explanation for lack of educational achievement. David Gillborn and Heidi Safia Mirza's report pointed out that

(50) Anwar and Bakhsh, *British Muslims and State Policies*, p. 20.

(51) *Ofsted News*, 15 January, 2005.

(52) Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britainm France, and Germany*, p. 57.

(53) Anwar and Bakhsh, *British Muslims and State Policies*, p. 20.

Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are not the only South Asian group who speak another language at home.[54] The report showed that Indian students who are also bilingual were, as a group, the highest performing of all the South Asian categories. As the report concluded this is a highly significant pattern, for one thing, the attainment of Indian students suggesting that having English as an additional language is not an impenetrable barrier to achievement. Indeed, although a majority of the younger generation have a knowledge of English, it is not appropriate to assert that English as a second language is not an obstacle to attaining the high level of education, and we need to consider that a gap in English ability sometimes still exists in the same ethnic group depending on social or underlying cultural factors. Racism and stereotyping of Muslims in schools seem to be one of the problems, and it is true that Pakistani Muslim students are not satisfied with the school system. Many students said that some aspects of the education system go beyond being just a failure to meet the needs of Muslims, and are actively hostile to Islam, Muslim students and their parents.[55] Thus we need to consider not only problems internal to Pakistani Muslim students themselves but also external factors as well.

Pakistani Muslim students display radical diversity and extreme contrasts in their educational attainment. However, it is clear that we can see that they have had a strong educational drive over several generations and the true extent of the Pakistani Muslim students drive for qualification is revealed.

(54) See Gillborn and Mirza, *Educational Inequality*.

(55) Anwar and Bakhsh, *British Muslims and State Policies*, p. 21.