

Beyond The Data: What Misinformed Data-Driven Policies Perpetuate Inequality

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Abstract

This paper examines the adverse impacts of data homogenisation in the context of ethnicities within UK education attainment statistics. By categorising diverse groups into broad classifications, such as "Black African" or "White Other," we risk oversimplifying complex realities and misrepresenting the unique academic abilities and needs within these populations. Such generalised approaches can obscure individuals' varied experiences and achievements, leading to a distorted understanding of educational attainment.

One significant impact of this homogenisation is the creation of data-fed profiles for students before they even step foot in a classroom. These profiles can shape expectations, with students often needing to fight against negative assumptions or the pressure to live up to positive ones. This pre-established narrative can hinder their confidence and influence their performance, as they may feel constrained by the expectations attached to these profiles.

The implications of this homogenisation extend beyond mere statistical inaccuracies; they can adversely affect the performance and aspirations of students. By positioning certain ethnic groups uniformly at the lower end of performance tables, we perpetuate a cycle of underachievement and diminished expectations that can hinder individual potential.

The benefits of such racialised generalisations are questionable at best. While these categories may aim to simplify data collection and analysis, they ultimately erase nuanced experiences and achievements. This homogenisation can lead to misinformed policies that fail to address the specific needs of distinct communities, perpetuating inequalities and reinforcing stereotypes.

In essence, broad categorisations diminish individual potential and hinder the development of effective, targeted educational policies. By recognising the diversity within ethnic groups, we can foster equity and success across all student populations, ensuring that every student's unique needs and strengths are acknowledged and supported.

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