

## Chapter 18

# Who Are the Teachers and Who Are the Learners? Teacher Education for Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

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**Abstract** The focus of this chapter is a response to the publication of *Teaching Scotland's Future* (Scottish Government 2011a) a review into teacher education in Scotland. The author argues that teaching in this future will need to evolve to be more responsive to linguistic and cultural diversity in the schools of Scotland. This chapter draws specifically from the Scottish experience to consider what teacher education for diverse classrooms might consist of. The chapter incorporates data from three research projects conducted by the author in Scottish Schools in the twenty-first century to investigate the implications of this situation regarding teacher demography and teacher education in Scotland and the education of culturally and linguistically diverse pupils. The author argues for a greater exposure to and understanding of diversity throughout the pre service and inservice education of teachers.

**Keywords** Linguistic and cultural diversity • Scotland • Teaching profession • Linguistic capital

The focus of this chapter is a response to the publication of *Teaching Scotland's Future* (Scottish Government 2011a) a review into teacher education in Scotland. The report confirmed the importance of maintaining teacher education in universities, recognised the career long nature of teacher education, urged greater partnership between universities and schools and recommended that pre-service teacher education became more widely focused than the current pedagogical content. The Scottish Government subsequently endorsed the recommendations of the report (Scottish Government 2011b) and changes in the nature of teacher education at all levels are currently underway. Neither the report nor the government response made mention of what 'Scotland's Future' might look like and the author argues that teaching in

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this future will need to evolve to be more responsive to linguistic and cultural diversity in the schools of Scotland.

Across Europe there is increasing ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity due to a range of political and economic factors including the expansion of the European Union and the arrival of refugees from a wide range of Asian and African countries. This diversity is reflected in learner populations in schools across the continent. The EU (Commission of the European Communities 2008) *Schools for the twenty-first Century* acknowledges this increasing diversity throughout its report and reminds that *Every classroom is a place of diversity: of gender, socioeconomic groups, ability or disability, mother tongues and learning styles. Improving competences means teaching learners in a more personalised way. Better tailoring teaching to each child's needs can increase student interest and engagement in learning activities and improve their results, but its benefits should reach all students equitably.* (2008:6) The report recognises that *Teachers require specific training to work effectively in diverse classrooms (ibid).*

This chapter draws specifically from the Scottish experience to consider what such teacher training or education for diverse classrooms might consist of. However it is clear from the work of the international Diverse Teachers for Diverse Learners research group (see for example Ragnarsdóttir and Schmidt 2013) that the statistics and experiences described here are replicated across Europe and the Anglophone world.

Schooling in Scotland is free and compulsory for all young people aged 5–16 years. In addition there is free nursery school provision between the ages of 3 and 5 years old and young people may stay in school until the age of 18 years old. Further and higher education in colleges and universities is free of charge for those resident in Scotland for more than 3 years prior to entering college or university. Compulsory schools are organized in two cycles: 7 years of primary education and up to 6 years of secondary education. The curriculum across the nursery, primary and secondary sector is the Curriculum for Excellence 3–18<sup>1</sup> which aims for all young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. These are laudable aims but the differentiated routes to achievement need explored and all teachers require to have an understanding of the linguistic and cultural diversity of the pupil population.

Table 18.1 shows the ethnicity of pupils in Scottish schools. Ethnic categories are drawn from the UK Census categories. The additional complexity in this table indicates how these pupils identify in terms of nationality in addition to ethnic identity. So, for example, while 1,158 of the 2,491 pupils of Asian- Chinese ethnicity in Scotland identify as of British nationality, 586 pupils of Asian- Chinese ethnicity identify as Scottish.

Table reproduced from <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/suppupils2011>

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<sup>1</sup>Curriculum for Excellence: see <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/understandingthecurriculum/whatiscurriculumforexcellence/index.asp>.

**Table 18.1** Ethnicity of pupils in Scottish schools by national identity, 2011

|                         | Scottish | English | Northern Irish | Welsh | British | Other  | Not known/<br>not disclosed | Total   |
|-------------------------|----------|---------|----------------|-------|---------|--------|-----------------------------|---------|
| White – Scottish        | 475,153  | 9,831   | 421            | 347   | 92,546  | 1,156  | 7,995                       | 587,449 |
| White – Other           | 6,800    | 3,890   | 148            | 165   | 10,498  | 9,804  | 913                         | 32,218  |
| White – Gypsy/Traveller | 551      | 45      | *              | *     | 91      | 22     | *                           | 737     |
| White – Polish          | *        | *       | –              | –     | 16      | 2,157  | 71                          | 2,291   |
| White – Irish           | 62       | *       | 92             | –     | 51      | 175    | *                           | 411     |
| Mixed                   | 3,807    | 236     | 8              | 9     | 2,241   | 540    | 146                         | 6,987   |
| Asian – Indian          | 864      | 61      | 5              | –     | 1,233   | 1,179  | 221                         | 3,563   |
| Asian – Pakistani       | 3,326    | 147     | *              | *     | 5,321   | 1,233  | 861                         | 10,896  |
| Asian – Bangladeshi     | 159      | *       | *              | –     | 310     | 135    | 35                          | 650     |
| Asian – Chinese         | 586      | 33      | 6              | –     | 1,158   | 562    | 146                         | 2,491   |
| Asian – Other           | 344      | 44      | –              | –     | 866     | 1,784  | 239                         | 3,277   |
| Caribbean/Black         | 129      | 30      | –              | –     | 162     | 181    | 56                          | 558     |
| African                 | 286      | 103     | *              | *     | 862     | 2,157  | 373                         | 3,790   |
| Arab                    | *        | *       | *              | –     | 99      | 207    | 31                          | 363     |
| Other                   | 425      | *       | *              | –     | 447     | 1,295  | 483                         | 2,678   |
| Not known/not disclosed | 3,301    | 168     | 9              | 8     | 1,493   | 612    | 6,285                       | 11,876  |
| Total                   | 495,854  | 14,639  | 708            | 534   | 117,394 | 23,199 | 17,907                      | 670,235 |

**Table 18.2** Languages spoken by pupils in schools in Scotland

| Language                   | Number  | Language              | Number | Language                    | Number |
|----------------------------|---------|-----------------------|--------|-----------------------------|--------|
| <i>Number of languages</i> | 136     | Malayalam             | 511    | Tamil                       | 246    |
|                            |         | Russian               | 479    | Hungarian/Magyar            | 216    |
| <i>Number of pupils</i>    |         | Lithuanian            | 446    | Swahili/Kiswahili           | 214    |
| English                    | 642,498 | Chinese (Mandarin)    | 434    | Romanian                    | 212    |
| Polish                     | 6,249   | Tagalog/Filipino      | 426    | Shona                       | 185    |
| Urdu                       | 4,523   | Slovak                | 416    | Pashto                      | 174    |
| Punjabi                    | 4,398   | Latvian               | 407    | Sign language               | 162    |
| Arabic                     | 1,793   | Turkish               | 406    | Bahasa Malaysia             | 150    |
| Cantonese                  | 1,467   | Hindi                 | 331    | Thai                        | 149    |
| French                     | 825     | Portuguese            | 321    | Kurdish                     | 142    |
| Gaelic (Scottish)          | 606     | Farsi/Iranian/Persian | 274    |                             |        |
| Bengali/Bangala            | 593     | Scots                 | 265    | Not known/<br>not disclosed | 2,090  |
| German                     | 560     | Italian               | 257    |                             |        |
| Spanish                    | 522     | Somali                | 251    | Other                       | 2,611  |

The wide ethnic diversity of the pupil population is not mirrored in the teaching population. The teaching profession in Scotland is predominantly white, female and Anglophone. The Scottish Government publishes demographic statistics concerning the gender, age and ethnicity of teachers in Scotland by school sector (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/12/06114834/9>). In 2011 only 2 % of all teachers were from a minority ethnic group, with only 1 % in primary schools not being from a white ethnic group. It is also interesting to note that 92 % of primary school teachers and 62 % of secondary teachers in Scotland were female in 2011.

Data from England shows a higher number of ethnic minority teachers but this is in a population with higher overall ethnic minority numbers. DCSF<sup>2</sup> data on teachers in maintained schools in England shows that just 5.6 % of the teaching population identified themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority group. In primary schools in England, 23.3 % of the pupil population belong to an ethnic minority group, whilst in secondary schools the percentage is over 19.5 % of the pupil population.

The increased ethnic diversity in the pupil population has in turn led to an increased diversity in the pupils' home languages. Table 18.2 indicates the most common languages spoken by pupils in schools in Scotland. In 2010, there were 136 languages spoken by pupils in Scottish schools. The five most common languages after English which are spoken by pupils in Scottish Schools are Polish, Punjabi, Urdu, Arabic and Cantonese. None of these languages have any official recognition in the taught curriculum in Scotland although it is possible to take leaving certificate examinations in Urdu, Arabic and Cantonese.

<sup>2</sup>DCSF: Department for Children, Schools and Families.

There are no centrally gathered statistics regarding the languages spoken by teachers but the ethnic makeup of the teaching profession as earlier described can lead to an assumption of overall monolingual use of English among the teaching workforce. The linguistic assumptions of teachers are based on children who use English in school, go home and use English with their parents, watch English language television and read English language texts. A focus only on supporting children's acquisition of English as an Additional Language will not enable the linguistic capital of the multilingual children in Scottish schools to be utilized. Nor, by ignoring the linguistic skills of pupils will it help these young people to achieve their potential.

The 2009 PISA Survey of students in Scottish schools indicated that school students in Scotland were generally satisfied with the quality of the student-teacher relationship. For example, 85 % of students reported that they get along with their teachers, 68 % reported that teachers really listen, 76 % reported that teachers treat them fairly, 88 % report that teachers are available if students need extra help and 79 % reported that their teachers are interested in their well-being. What is important to consider in relation to the theme of this chapter however is the ethnic, linguistic and gender make up of the proportion of school students who were dissatisfied. Scotland can not be complacent if, as this data indicates, 32 % of learners in school do not believe that teachers really listen to them. Given the heterogeneous nature of the teaching workforce in comparison to the diversity found in the pupil population it might be that this in part accounts for pupils belief that they are not really listened to by their teachers. If their teachers do not share their home language and do not have an understanding of their home culture could this lead to unresponsive teachers, or at least to perceptions by pupils that their teachers are not really listening?

Internationally there has been increasing concern about the requirement for a culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) to facilitate and support the achievement of all students, particularly when the teacher does not reflect the background of the majority of the learners as has been shown to be the case in Scotland. This CRP is defined by Gay (2000) as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively. Internationally, research has demonstrated that the academic achievement of ethnically diverse students will improve when they are taught through their own cultural and experiential filters (Au and Kawakami 1994; Foster 1995; Hollins 1996; Ladson-Billings 1994). Richards et al (2007) emphasise that if teaching reflects the cultural and linguistic practices and values of only one group of students, then the students who are not part of this group are denied an equal opportunity to learn. Could this be the case in Scotland, and elsewhere, where the teaching profession is predominantly monolingual, monoethnic and monocultural?

Responding to pupil diversity is not explicitly mentioned in The Standard for Initial Registration as a teacher in Scotland (General Teaching Council for Scotland 2006) although the standard requires teachers to *Value and demonstrate a commitment to social justice, inclusion and protecting and caring for children* (2006:15). This of course must mean that all children's cultures and languages are valued in the

classroom but where the workforce is predominantly monolingual this may be difficult to achieve.

Teaching in Scotland is an all degree profession and there are only limited routes to qualify as a teacher: Primary teachers can either do a 4 year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed<sup>3</sup>) degree or do a 3/4 year degree in any subject followed by a 1 year Professional Graduate Diploma in Education. Secondary teachers must have a 4 year degree in the subject they will teach followed by a 1 year Professional Graduate Diploma in Education. During their education all student teachers undertake placement experiences but there is no guarantee that these placements will be in diverse settings and all placements are in schools in Scotland. This can lead to monocultural experiences which reinforce the monolingual norm and do little to increase student teachers' ability to respond to the needs of pupils with linguistic and cultural backgrounds which differ from their own experience. There is no guarantee that student teachers in Scotland will be explicitly educated during their pre-service experience in issues of linguistic and cultural diversity. In some universities where there are staff with particular interests in these areas optional courses for students may be offered. It can not be said at this time that Scotland is meeting the recommendations of the EU 'Schools for the 21st Century' report.

The next part of this chapter incorporates data from three research projects conducted by the author in Scottish Schools in the twenty-first century to investigate the implications of this situation regarding teacher demography and teacher education in Scotland and the education of culturally and linguistically diverse pupils. The data presented comes from researcher field notes and interviews with teachers.

The first project (Smyth 2003), was an ethnographic study with 12 experienced primary school teachers who were themselves monolingual in English and were not familiar with teaching students from linguistic or cultural minorities. The teachers worked in six primary schools in areas of Scotland which were predominantly white and monolingual but which had recently experienced a changing demography. In each of the 12 classrooms studied there were four or less pupils from linguistic minority backgrounds. It was found from an analysis of the teachers' discourse, in both observed interactions with pupils and interviews, that the teachers' limited interactions with such pupils led to an overarching belief that in order to achieve, pupils from a minority linguistic background would require to become monolingual in English, the language of the classroom. This was manifested in limited understanding of learning norms in other cultures and a 'non-hearing' of languages other than English.

Prior to the conversation offered here as an example of this, the researcher had observed a 5 year old boy of Chinese origin making marks on paper which resembled Chinese writing. The researcher commented on this with the class teacher who had not seen the way in which the child had copied a star and then begun to make Chinese symbols. The researcher then wished to query with the class teacher how the child used his home language in the class to make sense of his learning.

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<sup>3</sup>This will change to a BA in Education in some universities from 2013.

R (Researcher): Does he ever use Chinese in class?

T (Teacher): Very occasionally. I think that there was once we were watching television and there was something about some Chinese celebration, I don't know if it was the Chinese New Year and they were obviously speaking words and J (the child) was saying 'Oh, I know what that is'. That was nice because he could say to the other children so he was trying to teach the other children wee words in Chinese but there aren't very many occasions when he uses that.

R: I wondered if he sometimes used any Chinese words when he didn't have the English for it?

T: He doesn't usually no, he used to point to something and get quite frustrated if you weren't picking up what he was saying and he would try and explain in Chinese but he doesn't do that anymore.

This teacher had some awareness that the child had linguistic knowledge beyond English but she did not positively encourage him to use Chinese nor did she appear to hear the Chinese that he did use as a skill. Rather the teacher seemed to consider that Chinese had been a passing phase for the child which was no longer required and had no benefit for his learning.

A further example of this limited understanding of ways of learning came from another teacher who was worried about how to explain to Chinese parents how the class homework should be done. In many Scottish primary schools pupils who are beginning to read work with graded texts from commercial schemes and these are sent home on a nightly basis. Teachers indicate the pages of text to be practised at home for the following day. The Primary two class teacher in this case expected parents to listen to the child reading these pages aloud and was concerned that the parents of a Chinese speaking child were not doing this but the child was bringing in copies of the text neatly written out several times:

T: Somebody at home is making him write it out, the pages you set. They are all written out. Not just once but he writes the sentence about four times. Should I not send it home? It would be nice to know. Am I doing the right thing?

Both these teachers were concerned and experienced. They valued their children and cared 'to do the right thing' but their limited exposure to learners who did not match the monolingual, monocultural norm of the Scottish pupil population meant they did not have an understanding of language acquisition or differing cultural learning practices. The parents of this child had learned to read Mandarin in a very different way from which their son was learning to read in English. Their reading acquisition had been closely linked to their writing acquisition and they wrote in Mandarin to practice the formation of characters alongside the reading. No-one

from the school had explained the practices used in literacy acquisition in the Scottish context. In both these cited cases, the learners were Chinese, but similar findings were found amongst teachers of children from other ethnic groups. The teachers were unsure of the language spoken by their pupils, the cultural norms and values and the benefits of linguistic transfer.

The second project from which data is offered (Smyth 2006) was another ethnographic study, this time in one school where children from families seeking asylum in the UK were being educated. This time the whole school population changed almost overnight from being monolingual to having pupils with 17 different home languages. The rapid change forced the teachers to rethink approaches to teaching and to reconsider their preconceived ideas of language and literacy achievement. The researcher spent 18 months in the school investigating the creative responses of the newly arrived pupils to a new language, culture and education system. Participant observation was recorded in extensive field notes and accompanied by pupil and teacher interviews.

The Primary six teacher in this school annually undertook an environment based project on Scotland with her 10 year old pupils. As usual this year she began this series of lessons by asking the children to tell her the names of places in Scotland they thought visitors would like to visit and told the class they would be making tourist brochures for Scotland. The change in ethnic composition of her class this year quickly became apparent as the children did not have as many ideas as she expected. This year, her 30 children came from 10 different countries, with only 11 of the children having been born in Scotland. She started to suggest some further places the children might include in their tourist brochure and realised most of the children had not heard of these places. One boy then said

*Miss, we want to be tourists.*

This was a turning point for the teacher who recognised the assumptions she was making and the limited cultural capital of the children in her class in this context of a new country, new language and new education system. Reflecting on this she told me:

T: I threw the curriculum out of the window at that point and realised that of course they did not know about Robert Burns or Edinburgh Castle. In fact it helped me realise that many of the Scottish children did not know these things either. I had put my assumed knowledge onto the children and they were not going to accept it. So instead the children planned and funded a tourist trip for themselves and they learned so much more and so did I.

The teacher was very prepared to change her perceptions and her approach but this was brought about by having a critical mass of learners who did not meet her expectations. Had there only been one or two such children in the class (as in the schools in the earlier cited project) she may not have noticed the varied cultural knowledge and these learners would have been disadvantaged and assumed to have under performed.



The teachers in this school were initially overwhelmed at the prospect of teaching large numbers of pupils who had limited English, the language of the classroom. However the positive leadership and community approach to learning and teaching enabled the teachers to overcome their trepidation and find new ways of teaching and assessment. A particularly significant teaching moment (Woods and Jeffrey 1996) occurred when the Primary 7 class were working to construct group poems about space. A linguistically and ethnically mixed group of 4 eleven year old children were trying to construct a poem about what they might see, hear, taste, smell and feel in space. Ivan, a boy who had recently arrived in Scotland from Russia, suddenly said:

*A Russian man was the first in space.*

Another pupil from a Farsi language background asked Ivan: *Do you know his name?* and Ivan replied that he would write his name 'Yuri Gagarin' in Russian in the poem.

The teacher told me afterwards:

*I have to say that up until that point I hadn't been thinking about them knowing other languages and other ways of writing. I had just been thinking how can I get them to learn English quickly and I used lots of strategies like games and collaboration and buddying. Then I realised that of course they knew lots of other things that would help them to learn and I didn't know those things so they would have to help me to know what I didn't know.*

The teachers in this school were all female, Scottish and monolingual in English. They shared these 'teaching moments' with each other and developed a culturally responsive pedagogy for these young children from a wide range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. I ultimately characterised the school as working as a highly effective multilingual conference where the teachers were the keynote speakers but the pupils often took over the stage to contribute their knowledge and skills as translators of language and interpreters of meaning.

In both these studies the teachers were all white, and monolingual. The third project was a study with teachers from countries across Asia and Africa who had arrived in Scotland as asylum seekers and wished to regain their professional identity by teaching in Scotland (Smyth and Kum 2010). 370 teachers in total registered with the RITeS<sup>4</sup> project, funded by the Scottish Government, 2005–2011. Data was collected about their country of origin, gender, languages, teaching qualifications and teaching experiences. In addition 23 of the teachers, representing a demographic range, were interviewed about their past teaching experiences, their present situation and their hopes for the future.

The survey data indicates a rich source of linguistic and cultural capital which could greatly enhance the teaching profession in Scotland. However the interview

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<sup>4</sup>RITeS: Refugees into Teaching in Scotland.

data tells an unfortunate story of loss of professional identity among this group of teachers, all of whom are committed to teaching and education but feel that structural and institutional barriers are placed in the way of finding an opportunity to practice that commitment in their new country. Most of our respondents had a genuine desire to be able to teach in the UK and connected this closely with their identity:

I am a teacher. I want to remain a teacher. I haven't done any other thing outside teaching. I don't see myself doing anything else apart from teaching. I want to bring my contribution to this country through teaching (Male Secondary teacher from Congo Brazaville).

They say once a teacher always a teacher. That's what I love doing. I enjoy it. And I would hope that at one point I will be able to do that but I have faced a lot of challenges and difficulties (Male Secondary teacher from South Africa).

All the teachers recognise that a teaching qualification from one country does not automatically entitle one to teach in another system. The teachers are humble about how much they have to learn before they can become employed to teach in Scotland. However they all felt that some of the barriers to achieving this reprofessionalisation were difficult to surmount:

I think there is . . . quite a range of barriers. As far as I am concerned, first the qualification I had from home was not recognized as an equivalent so they asked me to do 1 year teacher training programme . . . The second barrier was about language. . . . if English is not your first language, you struggle. . . . Another barrier was the education system . . . you had to familiarize yourself with . . . how the system is organized, . . . (Male Secondary teacher from Democratic Republic of Congo).

Several of the teachers reported direct discrimination from both fellow teachers and also from parents:

When teachers hear you are a refugee, a black for that matter, it looks like they want you to go for cleaning jobs. That is where they think you belong. They see your efforts to teach as straying into an area that is their domain and where you do not belong to. It is ignorance, it is racism and it is not healthy for a multicultural community where my children belong. (Female Secondary teacher, Burundi).

This teacher is referring to existing teachers as ‘they’ in this interview extract. Her belief that teachers in Scotland see teaching as their exclusive domain is a powerful one that needs challenged if the hopes expressed in Teaching Scotland’s Future (Scottish Government 2011a) are to be realised by ensuring school and teaching are positive places for all learners and teachers and not just those from the hegemonic white, monolingual mainstream.

This discrimination was not only faced by visible minority teachers as in the case above but also by others who were not perceived as fitting. So field notes of a discussion with a white female primary teacher from Albania revealed:

She said that some schools and parents have prejudices against foreigners. She cited an incident when last year, a parent came to school and said in front of other teachers and students ‘you should not be teaching here’. . . . She felt very low and intimidated and the parent apologized 3 months after. But that did not change anything because the statement had been made, her personality hurt and the notion that she was not liked remained.

The demographic gap between the teacher workforce and the pupil makeup is very slowly changing. It is not suggested that the only response is to diversify the teaching profession. Apart from the reductionist position that such an argument implies, it would take many decades for this to be achieved. Rather, what is required is a much greater exposure to and understanding of diversity throughout the pre service and inservice education of teachers.

In order to achieve this there needs to a consideration of student placements across their initial teacher education to ensure that student teachers are placed in diverse settings which do not necessarily replicate the known and familiar. This diversity in placement needs to consider linguistic, cultural, ethnic and socioeconomic factors. While reflective teaching has long been encouraged and pursued in the literature and in the practice of teacher education, this reflection may need guidance to consider diversity – to consider what the teacher takes into the classroom and how this may differ from what the student takes into the classroom. The invisibility of difference needs to be countered and that difference valued, celebrated and utilised in the classroom. As one of the refugee teachers said in interview, *if you don’t use it you will lose it*, referring to the way in which teaching skills were being wasted. Similarly the students who are not heard or understood will suffer and lose the knowledge and skill they already possess if they are not empowered in classrooms globally to utilise their existing cultural and linguistic capital and enrich the teaching and learning environment. Utilising the available linguistic and cultural capital of teachers and learners will lead to an enhanced professionalism for teachers and increased educational involvement for learners.

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