Teacher Education for Diversity: The Scottish Policy Context

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Introduction

Scottish schools are becoming increasingly diverse. In recent years we have seen a growth in cultural and linguistic diversity, a movement towards increased inclusion of children and young people with more diverse additional support needs (ASN) and a rise in the numbers of children and young people affected by social disadvantage. The increasing diversification of the Scottish school population, and the implications that this holds for teacher education, can certainly be identified as drivers for reform within recent policy discourse. In this paper, I take a step back from the central issues of diversity in schools, and look at the current policy context of teacher education. I explore how this policy formation has come to be and how it could be effective. Key questions that have guided this exploration are: how are diverse categories of students represented in policy processes, and to what extent are other policy actors shaping policy formation and enactment?

The implementation of 'Teaching Scotland's Future' (Donaldson, 2011) provides a timely opportunity for this. This paper draws on findings from a wider doctoral research project, conducted between 2011 and 2014, which attempts to outline the current policy context in the development of teacher education in Scotland.

Instead of asking whether current teacher education provision responds to diversity, I ask: to what extent *can* teacher education policy respond to diversity; how can we ensure that policy processes allow space for the preparation of teachers to teach in diverse schools? In order to answer these questions, we need to examine how the mechanisms of policy operate. Once we know more about how teacher education policy is constructed and the forces that shape it, we may be in a better position to consider the space that exists within the process for responding to the changing nature of schools. Central to this paper is the assumption that for teacher education to fully respond to diversity, the voices of those actors who represent diverse categories of students must be heard within the policy process, which itself is a diverse space.

This leads to some important questions:

- What is the nature of policy processes in Scottish teacher education?
- Who or what appears to carry influence or force within this space of policy-making and implementation?
- Where is the power located and whose voices are heard in policy processes?
- What are the forces that work to drive the reform forward, and what is holding it back, particularly with regard to the preparation of teachers to teach in diverse schools?

Teacher Education for Diversity

In line with wider European trends linked to a range of political and economic factors, we have seen an increase in cultural and linguistic diversity in the Scottish school population. In 2010, a total of 136 different languages were spoken in our schools, yet there continues to be a monolingual use of English by the teaching profession. The increasing ethnic diversity within the school population is not mirrored in the teaching profession, and Smyth (2013) raises this as a major concern not only for teacher-pupil relationships, but also for the future development of teacher education. We have also witnessed a movement towards the increased inclusion of children and young people with more diverse ASN within mainstream schools (Florian, 2012). The Scottish Government reported that in 2013, 95% of pupils with ASN were being taught in mainstream schools (Scottish Government, 2014). This proportion accounts for 18.7% of the mainstream school population (124, 637 pupils in total). In 2010, this figure was almost halved[1] (69, 587 pupils in total). The inclusion of children with ASN has become a key priority within Scottish education policy, but there remain a number of barriers to its success, and some resistance and uncertainty amongst the profession (Allan, 2010; MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013). We have also experienced increasing diversity in terms of pupil background and the sustainment of an 'achievement gap' between school children from low and high socio-economic status homes. Although the most recent PISA data, gathered in 2012 and reported in 2013, suggest that this gap may be slightly decreasing, the link between educational underachievement and deprivation persists.

The changing demographics of schools outlined above have direct implications for teacher education provision. Early career teachers are now required to bring with them new kinds of pedagogic knowledge and experience in order to meet the needs of these diverse learners, while current teachers are expected to possess the knowledge and confidence required to adapt their teaching for those who learn differently. The effective preparation of teachers through initial teacher education (ITE), and the further development of teachers through career long professional learning (CLPL) are therefore two crucial spaces within which Scottish education can try to meet the need of diverse groups of learners. The rate of change in Scottish schools is rapid, but is teacher education keeping up?

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[1] It must be noted that categorisation and data collection techniques have varied somewhat between 2010 and 2013.

Teacher Education Reform: Teaching Scotland's Future

Teacher education in Scotland is currently undergoing ambitious reform following a large-scale review of provision and the subsequent publication of a report of recommendations: 'Teaching Scotland's Future: Report of a Review of Teacher Education in Scotland' (Donaldson, 2011). This policy text contains fifty recommendations for the improvement of teacher education in its entirety, spanning three key areas: ITE, CLPL and leadership. It recognises that expectations of Scottish teachers have grown in recent years and that the job itself has become increasingly complex and demanding.

The recommendations from 'Teaching Scotland's Future' were further developed and implemented by two partnership groups: the National Partnership Group (NPG) and the National Implementation Board (NIB). The recommendations cover many areas of teacher preparation, however one interlocking theme throughout is teacher professionalism and the reconceptualisation of what it means to be a teacher in the 21st century. Central to this vision of the teacher, is the need for teachers to feel confident and able to work in a fast-changing and challenging environment. Although some of these 'fast' changes can be attributed to an increasingly globalised and connected world, and advancements in technology, it appears that these have now given way to diversity as the main driving force.

Within the original policy document, a number of explicit references were made about the need for teacher education to prepare teachers for diversity. The Donaldson Review, conducted in 2010, found that many teachers in Scotland did not feel confident in their abilities to manage challenging classroom behaviour or to support learning for pupils with significant ASN. The report recommended the following:

> All new teachers in Scotland should be aware of the key challenges we collectively face… they should be confident in their ability to:
> * Address underachievement, including the potential effects of social disadvantage
> * Address additional support needs (particularly dyslexia and autistic spectrum disorders)
> * Know how to manage challenging behaviour
>
> (Donaldson, 2011, p. 36)

Universities currently provide provision in this area and inclusive practice features heavily in undergraduate and post graduate teaching courses. However, the nature and scope of this provision seems to be heavily dependent on the particular interests of staff, with the development of optional courses in, for example linguistic and cultural diversity, only possible when knowledge and expertise is available within the department (Smyth, 2013). Allan (2013, p.794) stresses that teacher education courses should provide opportunities for teachers to "understand and engage critically with the challenges of inclusion and diversity".

However, the extent to which these opportunities can be provided within ITE provision, which is often considered to be 'over-crowded', is unclear. In their final report of recommendations (Scottish Government, 2012), the NPG stated the following:

> The expectation that initial teacher education will cover all that the new teacher needs to know and do is unrealistic. Teacher education needs to be seen as something where foundations laid in the initial phase continue to be built thereafter.
>
> (Scottish Government, 2012, p. 17).

They continue: "…some children may need additional support to enable them to make the most of the opportunities available to them… They (teachers) should be able to identify and access appropriate CPD to enable them to meet those needs" (Scottish Government, 2012, p. 7). There is a sense that provision for preparing teachers for inclusive practice is best placed within 'in-service' or 'professional development courses' (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013; Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007), and the NPG appear to be promoting this. This perception may be aligned with the belief that it is about developing 'expertise' or 'new skills' to add on to existing knowledge developed within ITE, which itself may be a problematic and work to sustain the fragmentation of provision (Allan, 2010).

Donaldson (2011) entertains a vision of teachers as expert practitioners, who are themselves the engines of professional progress. He believes that they should be empowered as professionals, and distinguished by their capacity for self-determination and judgement. Central to this vision is the belief that teachers should take responsibility for identifying their own professional development needs and locating the relevant provision required. This undeniably raises a number of issues around engagement, motivation, awareness and accessibility to provision across the workforce, which may limit the reach of teacher education for diversity.

This is one of the main concerns that I would like to communicate in this paper. Essentially, it could be argued that we are seeing a shift in responsibility from those who develop and run provision, to teachers themselves. Its achievement, within the context of current policy reform, is heavily dependent on teachers' willingness and ability to engage with CLPL in its current form and in the current context of wider educational change.

Global and Local Forces

Before we can consider the extent to which teacher education for diversity can be realised, we must understand teacher education reform within its very particular local and wider global context. In recent years, teacher education reform has become a key focus across many developed countries (Cochran-Smith, 2013; Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2012). Despite

differing national contexts and traditions, these reforms share the underlying assumptions that teacher quality is central to student learning and that teacher education is a major factor in the improvement of teacher quality. These assumptions have been heightened by the work of the World Bank and OECD (Hanushek & Wossman, 2007), and they are evident in the discourse that emerges from them (e.g. the influential OECD report 'Teachers Matter'). 'Teaching Scotland's Future' can be regarded as a direct response to this global policy trend. Findings from the OECD's (2007) country report on Scotland and test results from PISA are used throughout the report to justify the need for reform. Following the announcement that the OECD will conduct an 'independent' evaluation of 'Curriculum for Excellence', which may incorporate an evaluation of the implementation of 'Teaching Scotland's Future', it could be suggested that this global actor is playing an increasingly influential role in the reform of Scottish education.

These global forces are mediated and translated by local forces through a process of 'vernacular globalization' (Ozga & Lingard, 2007), in a way that allows them to fit in with longstanding culture. I will now briefly outline some of the core local forces that create this culture. Scottish education has been separate from the education systems of England, Wales and Northern Ireland for over 300 years. Historically it has played a crucial role in shaping our national identity (McPherson & Raab, 1988). Associated with Scottish education are a set of characteristics and values that are often used to show us as distinct from the rest of the UK, particularly England: *democracy, egalitarianism* and *meritocracy*. However, it has been suggested that there may be a degree of mythology associated with such claims (Bryce & Humes, 2008; McPherson & Raab, 1988). Nevertheless, the '*Scottish myth*' operates as a powerful actor in the development of education policy and the processes used by the policy community (Grek, 2010; Menter & Hulme, 2008). The policy community in Scottish education has been described as small and close-knit (Humes, 1997), with each of its members knowing each other on a personal basis. This has allowed for the continued circulation of the '*Scottish myth*' and the preservation of traditional values. This in turn has created a conservative policy space, which can at times be somewhat resistant to change (Menter and Hulme, 2008; Patterson, 2000).

A Short Note on Methodology

This paper has emerged from part of a wider doctoral research project that traces the implementation of 'Teaching Scotland's Future' in action, as it occurs in 'real time'. The research draws on literature around theories of democratic network governance (Sorenson & Torfing, 2008) and policy network analysis (Ball & Exley, 2010; Rhodes, 2006) to conceptualise and interrogate the networks of policy actors.

Bargaining and negotiation between key actors are key features of policy-making, and the mediation and translation of competing interests and agendas is important to consider. I

therefore use concepts and ideas from Actor-Network Theory (ANT; Fenwick & Edwards, 2010; Latour, 2005), to describe the way in which these interests and agendas interact with and shape each other.

An ANT inspired conceptual framework has allowed me to trace the journey of different actors within the policy process and to explore the way in which 'policy as text' (Ball, 1993) becomes distorted as a result of the interests of key policy actors. The ANT translation model of change sees a policy as unfinished, and would consider the text itself as a *token* (for a wider discussion about the concept of 'token' see Gaskell & Hepburn, 1998). As the *token* (the original policy document) travels through policy networks, it is either ignored or picked up by actors who see their interests translated within it; however, by simply picking up the *token*, they distort it in some way. Essentially, what goes in to the process is not the same a what comes out, and this is in part due to the way that policy actors are positioning themselves in this policy space.

The data used within the wider research project consists of thirty semi-structured interviews with members of the NPG and NIB. Additionally, a number of working policy documents, minutes from meetings of the NPG and NIB and press releases were used to 'trace' the *token*. However, this paper only draws on interview data.

It is important to note that the analysis of data is ongoing; however, I would like to share some initial findings in this paper that are relevant to the context and aims of teacher education for diversity. To what extent are actors who represent and support diverse learners included in the policy process? What are the barriers to engaging all teachers in CLPL? What is the nature of the wider teacher education policy process and what is its capacity for responding to diversity?

Policy-Making: The Messy Reality of 'Teaching Scotland's Future'

National Partnership Group and National Implementation Board

Before I introduce some of the emergent findings from my research, I will describe the structure and function of the NPG and NIB. Each individual within the NPG was asked to represent the interests of their organisation, within this larger network. Over 28 organisations accepted the invitation to participate in the NPG in some way (there were also a number of individuals listed as representing schools) and more than 49 individual representatives were officially listed as members of the NPG. The NPG consisted of one main group with a tripartite chairing system; three sub-groups, each with their own chair; and, a strategic reference group. The membership of these groups was made up by individuals from different associations, organisations and national bodies with an interest in teacher education. All of the 'key players' such as the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS), Education

Scotland, Scottish Teacher Education Committee (STEC) and Association of Directors of Education Scotland (ADES), were represented throughout the NPG.

In addition to these 'key policy actors', a number of 'other' organisations were invited to participate in the NPG. These actors, many of which are third-sector organisations, could be considered as 'peripheral' actors in the provision of teacher education. The inclusion of such a broad range of stakeholders was considered by some to be an unusual and somewhat surprising move, as it had implications for the size and structure of the group, as well as the speed at which it could operate and make decisions. Nevertheless, it was broadly welcomed as an opportunity for those actors who are rarely invited to participate in the direct development of policy, to translate their interests and ideas into the policy agenda. A number of these actors can be considered as being directly linked to supporting diverse learners in education, such as Dyslexia Scotland, the Association of Scottish Principal Educational Psychologists, National Deaf Children's Society and Children in Scotland. To what extent were these actors able to influence the policy agenda? This is an important question that I will return to later in this paper.

The many interests, agendas and views represented within this policy space were diverse and during the process, it started to become clear that they were at times competing with each other. Actors' interests and agendas were not always made explicit, and some appeared to be emerging from more of a personal position rather than professional. Nevertheless, over the lifespan of the group (almost two years) much of the confusion and uncertainty was ironed out, and a report of recommendations for implementation was produced (Scottish Government, 2012). One of these recommendations was to set up another partnership group, which would essentially take over from the NPG and deal with some of the slightly more problematic recommendations from the original policy text.

In November 2012, the National Implementation Board (NIB) was established by the Scottish Government. In contrast to the NPG, the NIB has one 'independent' chair and only ten members. These members represent the following organisations, all of which could be considered as the 'key players' in education: Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), STEC, GTCS, Education Scotland, Scottish Government, Universities Scotland, Teachers' Panel, ADES, School Leaders Scotland and NHS Education for Scotland. It is notable that the majority of these members come from the most senior level within their organisation. For example, the Chief Executives of Education Scotland and NHS Education for Scotland both sit on the working group. It could be suggested that the changes between the structure and nature of the two groups say something about the intended pace of change, as determined by the current political climate. As we are fast approaching the referendum on independence, to be held in September this year, it would not be naive to assume that the government is keen to evidence effective change as the result of policy implementation.

Some emergent findings: what is the nature of the policy process?

So we can see that the process of implementation is achieved through apparent 'partnership' and 'consultation'. The nature of implementation therefore was and continues to be very much dependent on what happens in these two groups, and this if of course influenced by who is in them. There was a general sense that this consultation period helped to ensure that each of the main partners were on board, and provided much needed opportunities for organisations to sit around the same table and work together. However, concerns were raised about there being too much focus on representation. By ensuring that every organisation was represented within the NPG, this actually slowed the process down:

> "…the focus.. was representation of specific groups, and not always on having the right person in the group…"

> "…the thing about partnership is that representation becomes the issue"

Although the process opened up traditional boundaries, providing opportunities for a number of actors to 'have their say', it may have also acted to narrow and control participation. Rhodes (1997, p. 9-10) writes that policy networks "limit participation in the policy process" and "privilege certain interests", by mediating access and favouring particular policy outcomes. Specific individuals were chosen to represent specific organisations in the NPG and NIB. The civil service orchestrated this selection process; however, the rationale for selection was considered by some members of the NPG as somewhat opaque.

The process was messy and complex, and may have concealed an unequal distribution of power. Some individuals felt that it was difficult to get their point across, citing the sheer size of the group as the main reason for this. There were a significant number of different organisations represented within the NPG, all of which had their own interests, agendas and beliefs about the future of teacher education. Within this messy and dynamic space, some actors felt that their ideas became lost or distorted through the process of translation.

Given my earlier discussion about the nature of the policy community in Scotland, it was not surprising to find that there was a collective conservatism operating within the NPG, emerging as a resistance to change. Individuals of the NPG appeared to be somewhat frustrated with the apparent opposition to 'thinking outside of the box':

> "…there was an opportunity to think radically and they chose not to"

> "…It was just so, let's keep it the same and not change it"

Remarkably, the majority of individuals that I interviewed commented negatively on the pace of change. If everyone was aware of the limiting and restrictive effects of conservatism, then why was it sustained? Clearly this force is more complex than it may first seem.

Some members of the NPG commented that they were confused about the processes by which the group operated. There was a lack of clarity around procedures, and some actors, particularly those within the strategic reference group, were unsure about the extent to which their thoughts and ideas were reflected within the working documents that would emerge at various points. It appeared that the space within which policy was made, was not the larger NPG but smaller separate networks. Much of this occurred through private conversations, in informal meetings with a smaller number of 'key' actors:

> "Those meetings [strategic reference group] were pretty unsatisfactory to be honest in my view. They were more symbolic than substantive. That was almost inevitable."

> "We didn't have the conversations we always should have had. It was usually that there were 'other' meetings"

We should bear in mind that this does not mean that policy-making was not happening in partnership; it was still being achieved through negotiation and consultation. However, for various reasons, it was not possible to achieve this within the larger network.

This raises a number of questions about the purpose of the NPG. We also need to be mindful of this in relation to the involvement of actors who represent the voices of diverse groups of children and young people. A small number of these actors were invited to participate in the NPG, but were they granted access to the 'real' policy-making space? The following quotations come from one such actor. The organisation that they were representing could be considered as a 'peripheral player'. It is not central to teacher education when compared to associations and organisations like the GTCS or STEC; however, it is important in terms of providing support for students and also in preparing teachers for complex and challenging classrooms.

> " I think we [voluntary organisations] felt at times that we're slightly marginalised…"

> "…sometimes people can forget about those other partners… although in a lot of Scottish stuff, government policies, you know, the rhetoric is always in support of the third sector, sometimes that can be lost in practice... I think it's very important that that side isn't lost."

It should be noted that some individuals from similar organisations who were part of the strategic reference group, only met with the wider NPG a limited number of times. They also

commented that the channels for providing feedback on proposals by the group were not clear, and they were unsure about how much influence they actually had on the final report of recommendations.

Research has consistently shown that building ownership amongst those most central to implementation is important if a policy is to be successful, particularly in education. Indeed, a number of policy actors with a responsibility for the development or provision of teacher education were included in the implementation of 'Teaching Scotland's Future' in a way that allowed for the development of a sense of ownership over the policy agenda. For substantial change to be successfully implemented, the OECD (2005) warn that teachers and their representatives must be actively involved in policy formation in order to feel a sense of ownership. According to Donaldson (2011, p. 18) "extended professionals are agents of change, not passive or reluctant receivers of externally- imposed prescription..." However, it appears that they are missing from, or at best underrepresented in, this first crucial stage of enrolment and translation. Ironically, the nature of the process itself has positioned them as 'passive receivers of externally-imposed prescription'.

There was some representation of teachers on the NPG, and this was achieved through the inclusion of individual teachers and head teachers; however, the extent to which this was successful is arguable. There was no teacher union representation within the main NPG group. Of course possible explanations could be imagined as to why they were not included in this early phase; however it is starting to appear that that this decision has had detrimental effects on the implementation of 'Teaching Scotland's Future'. The following quote illustrates such effects:

> "I suppose one of the challenges for us from the beginning was that because teachers weren't involved in the middle stage of it… there are probably things that might have been written differently if we'd been directly involved from the very outset."

There was limited opportunity for teachers or their representatives to translate their interests into the policy text at the earliest stage. Teachers are represented within the NIB by the collective body 'Teachers Panel'; however, it may be too late to develop a full sense of ownership amongst the profession. As a policy is further defined, it becomes decreasingly malleable to change and translation. When compared to other actors, such as the key organisations and associations in Scottish education, teachers are not enrolled in the policy network; as new developments are put into place and provision changes, the opportunity for developing a sense of teacher ownership fades.

The following quote was echoed in interview data from a number of policy actors in the NPG and NIB:

> "And I think the really worrying thing is that the vast majority of teachers, if you said to them, 'what is Teaching Scotland's Future?' they genuinely wouldn't know.

I think this could potentially be the biggest stumbling block in the implementation of the policy agenda. How can teachers, these 'agents of change', implement and engage in something that they are completely unaware of?

Conclusion

I have argued throughout this paper that in order to consider the extent to which teacher education policy responds to diversity, we need to take a step back and look at the policy process as a whole. Policy-making is messy, chaotic and ad-hoc. Policy implementation is complex, multiple and fluid. It is an uncertain process; nothing is ever stable and what goes into the process, is not the same as what comes out. Using the implementation of 'Teaching Scotland's Future' as a case study, and focusing particularly on the work of the NPG and NIB, I have provided some explanations for why this is the case, and demonstrated the implications that such a process may have on education reform.

We may need to identify new policy mechanisms to ensure that there is space within the policy process for the translation of those interests linked to issues of diversity. If we are to effectively prepare teachers for the complex reality of today's classrooms, then we need to create a space in which this can be embedded in teacher education policy at the earliest stage of development. We need to ensure that the voices of those who work to support learners with diverse needs are heard in the policy process, and that there are opportunities to participate in a non-tokenistic way.

Within this paper I have also attempted to demonstrate how current teacher education policy positions CLPL as the optimal space for the preparation of teachers for diverse classrooms. This policy discourse also highlights the expectations that are now placed on teachers for identifying their own needs and locating suitable provision. This has obvious implications for responding to issues of diversity. My research has identified a number of barriers to the implementation of policy recommendations around CLPL, all of which emerge from the limited representation and involvement of teachers and their representatives in the policy process. These issues must be overcome if we are being serious about the effective preparation of teachers to support children and young people with diverse needs.

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