

Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Progression: Evidence Submission from the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights

The Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER) is a Scottish strategic anti-racism organisation which works to eliminate racial discrimination and promote racial justice across Scotland.

Our primary concern in relation to teacher recruitment and retention is its implications on racial equality. A more equally representative teaching workforce is essential to racial equality – BME teachers provide strong role models for BME pupils, BME pupils are more likely to discuss racism and discrimination with BME teachers, and BME teachers are more likely to discuss issues of racism and prejudice with their classes. As such, we are grateful for the opportunity to submit evidence to the Education and Skills Committee to provide an overview of some key points for consideration.

Race Equality Framework for Scotland 2016-2030

During the development of the Scottish Government's Race Equality Framework for Scotland 2016-2030, CRER engaged with many BME communities around issues of education, including representation in the teaching workforce. These concerns are reflected in a key goal of the Framework, namely: "*Scotland's education workforce better reflects the diversity of its communities.*"¹

To meet this goal, the Scottish Government committed to working with the Strategic Board for Scottish Education to consider how to address equality and diversity issues in the Scottish education workforce, particularly the gender balance and ethnic diversity of the workforce. The Committee may wish to ask the Scottish Government about initiatives it is undertaking to improve representation in line with this commitment.

Representation

There is considerable under-representation of BME teachers in the Scottish education system. Only 1% of primary, 2% of secondary, and 2% of special school teachers come from a BME background, despite BME groups comprising 4% of the Scottish population at the 2011 Census.²

In the four local authorities with the largest BME population – Glasgow (12%), Edinburgh (8%), Aberdeen (8%), and Dundee (6%), representation is also critically low. The most recent information published shows that:

- In Glasgow, BME individuals make up 2.4% of teachers, 1.7% of principal teachers, 0.6% of deputy head teachers, 2.7% of head teachers (albeit this is only 6 individuals), and 0.0% of school psychologists, for a total of 2.2% overall.³
- In Edinburgh, BME individuals represent only 1.6% of teachers - a more complete breakdown was not readily available.⁴
- In Aberdeen, only 0.7% of the education workforce has a BME background; a more complete breakdown was not readily available.⁵
- In Dundee, 1.0% of the education department has a BME background; a more complete breakdown was not readily available.⁶

¹ The Scottish Government (2016). [Race Equality Framework for Scotland 2016-2030](#).

² The Scottish Government (2015). [Summary statistics for schools in Scotland – No. 6: 2015 edition](#).

³ Glasgow City Council (2016). [Workforce profile by ethnicity](#).

⁴ City of Edinburgh Council (2013). [Progress report on the framework to advance equality and rights](#).

⁵ Aberdeen City Council (2015). [Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2015-2017. Employee Information](#).

⁶ Dundee City Council (2015). [Mainstream Equality Progress Report 2013-2015](#).

Research conducted in 2007 by the General Teaching Council for Scotland shows that in some Scottish schools there are significant numbers of pupils from BME communities, yet there appear to be very few teachers from these communities. It is clear that there are still barriers that young people from these communities face, especially those whose families are second or third generation residents of Scotland, which make teaching less attractive as a career for them.⁷

Recruitment

Public Sector Equality Duty reporting varies in consistency across local authorities, so it is difficult to draw conclusions across the four local authorities with the highest BME population (Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and Dundee). However, the most recent published figures show:

- In Glasgow in 2016, 3.0% of teaching applications were from BME applicants, with 2.7% of those progressing to interview, and only 1.4% of those appointed having a BME background. BME teacher applicants are twice as likely to be rejected after interview as their white counterparts – a pattern that is replicated throughout the public sector.⁸
- In Edinburgh in 2011, for all Council positions, 8.7% of applicants, 6.5% of shortlisted candidates, and 4.9% of successful candidates were from a BME background (figures specific to the education workforce were not readily available).⁹
- In Aberdeen in 2014, 7.2% of applicants for employment in the education authority and 2.7% of successful applicants were BME individuals (a breakdown specific to teachers was not readily available).¹⁰
- In Dundee in 2014, 1.3% of job applicants to the education department were BME individuals, but no successful applicants reported a BME background (a breakdown specific to teachers was not readily available).¹¹

We would recommend that the Committee strongly encourages more robust reporting of employment, recruitment, and retention in relation to the teaching workforce in particular. CRER also notes that Scottish-specific data on the ethnicity of those undertaking teacher training courses is not available. This information would be immensely useful to have, as a lack of equal representation in these courses could contribute to a lack of representation in the teaching workforce itself.

In a recent report from Runnymede Trust and NUT - “Visible and Invisible Barriers: the impact of racism on BME teachers” – many teachers interviewed suggested that ensuring senior leadership teams reflected staff diversity in schools would aid in recruitment of BME teachers. Other suggestions for improving representation included having targeted mentorship and shadowing programmes, increasing accountability for senior leadership teams to be inclusive in recruitment, and highlighting BME teacher role models in recruitment campaigns.¹²

Retention and Progression

The Runnymede Trust report also found that 60% of existing BME teachers surveyed expressed a desire to leave the workforce, despite a passionate commitment to the vocation. The survey found that BME teachers were not only overwhelmed with the workload, but were also affected by everyday ‘micro-aggressions’ by other staff members, as well as low expectations and support by senior staff.¹³

⁷ General Teaching Council for Scotland (2007). Ian Matheson. [Current demographics in the school teaching population in Scotland](#)

⁸ Glasgow City Council (2016). [Recruitment internal and external](#).

⁹ City of Edinburgh Council (2013). [Progress report on the framework to advance equality and rights](#).

¹⁰ Aberdeen City Council (2015). [Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2015-2017. Employee Information](#).

¹¹ Dundee City Council (2015). [Mainstream Equality Progress Report 2013-2015](#).

¹² Runnymede Trust and NUT (2017). [Visible and Invisible Barriers: The impact of racism on BME teachers](#).

¹³ The Independent (2017). [“Black and ethnic minority teachers face ‘invisible glass ceiling’ in schools, report warns”](#).

The publication also reported BME teachers experiencing structural and systematic racist barriers to progression, such as assumptions about capabilities based on racial/ethnic stereotypes. Those interviewed for the report spoke about an invisible glass-ceiling and perceptions among senior leadership that BME teachers reach a certain level but do not go beyond it. Some respondents felt that this exclusion was premeditated, while others felt unconscious bias may be to blame. These barriers result in lower confidence and self-esteem for BME teachers.¹⁴

It is worth noting that while this study only involved BME teachers in England and Wales, we would not expect the situation to be largely different for BME teachers in Scotland.

Experiences of Racism

The report from Runnymede Trust also found that:

- BME teachers from all ethnic groups complained about being given stereotypical responsibilities, such as behaviour responsibilities or coordinating Black History Month, rather than challenging intellectual Teaching and Learning Responsibility roles. Some felt this limited career progression.
- Black teachers in particular felt that they were labelled as ‘troublemakers’ or viewed as being ‘aggressive’ if they challenged any decisions.
- Some BME teachers reported feeling isolated and lacking in management support regarding racist incidents and career progression.
- Some BME teachers reported experiencing ‘micro-aggressions’ and ‘casual’ racist remarks from other members of staff. At times, this accentuated a lack of support and recognition about the seriousness of the incidents from other members of staff.
- Several teachers interviewed reported that racist behaviour towards them from students was treated as ‘behavioural issues’ rather than racist incidents.
- BME teachers viewed themselves as important role models for BME students, both protecting students from ‘Prevent/Islamophobia’ and racist narratives, and in giving them positive role models.

Again, due to the restrictions of the publication, these findings are limited to England and Wales. We would ask the Committee to consider recommending that similar reports be commissioned to engage Scotland’s BME teachers.

The General Secretary of NASUWT Teachers’ Union recently spoke about the endemic racism faced by BME teachers, which risks the already low presence of BME teachers in the workforce. A survey of NASUWT BME members found that twice the proportion of BME teachers (31%) compared to their white peers had reported discrimination in the workplace in the past year, with higher proportions of BME teachers facing verbal abuse by pupils (64% vs. 51%). 79% of BME teachers felt that they were not being paid at a level appropriate for their skills and experiences, with 52% feeling that their work was not valued by school management.¹⁵

Conclusion

The need for an education workforce that better reflects the diversity of Scotland’s communities is essential and work to achieve this needs to begin now. CRER asks the Committee to keep these issues in mind as it considers teacher recruitment and retention, as the experiences of BME teachers and communities must not be neglected.

For further information on this issue, please contact:

Rebecca Marek, Policy and Parliamentary Officer, CRER
rebecca@crer.org.uk 0141 418 6530

¹⁴ Runnymede Trust and NUT (2017). [Visible and Invisible Barriers: The impact of racism on BME teachers](#).

¹⁵ NASUWT: The Teachers’ Union (2017). [Many BME teachers face endemic racism](#).