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**Teacher Activism in Equity and Anti-discrimination in Scotland: An  
interpretive study**

*by*

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**Teacher Activism in Equity and Anti-discrimination in Scotland:  
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Title: Teacher Activism in Equity and Anti-discrimination in Scotland:  
An interpretive study

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This thesis explores the factors that contribute to developing Scottish teachers' interest in issues of equity and anti-discrimination. It does so by examining relevant literature on professionalism and activism and through empirical investigation, using a life history approach. In so doing, the thesis hopes to identify 'models' which teacher educators in Scotland can develop to support future student teachers to become pro-active in taking forward equity, inclusion and anti-discrimination issues.

**Keywords**

Teachers, equity, anti-discrimination, inclusion, Scottish, activism

## **Student Declaration**

“I, Rowena Arshad, declare that the Doctor of Education thesis entitled *Scottish Teacher Activism in Equity and Anti-discrimination in Scotland: An interpretive study* is except where otherwise indicated, my own work. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any academic degree or diploma.”

Signature:

## **Acknowledgements**

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I would also like to thank all the teachers who gave their time so willingly to help me achieve this qualification. Without their stories, this study would not have been possible.

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*To all of you...thank you.*



## **ABSTRACT**

Scots have long acknowledged that education has a central role in shaping a nation's identity, culture and economic prosperity. Education is a key area within which values and attitudes are formed and perpetuated. Scotland has also held sacrosanct the concept of 'education for all', viewing education as a democratic enterprise which can assist the reduction of privilege and contribute to the development of the collective democratic intellect. Teachers are key within that process as they arbitrate on what is taught and how it is taught. Research has shown that teacher expectations can be pivotal in influencing pupil motivation and achievement. Scotland's teaching workforce, just like that of all other countries in the Western world, is largely homogenous (white and middle class, female in the early years and primary sectors) and this profile is becoming increasingly mismatched to an increasingly diverse pupil population.

In Scotland, confidence and competence in engaging with issues of diversity and discrimination are unlikely to be achieved through immersion in diverse communities or through peer-education. Other ways need to be identified to generate teachers of tomorrow who are 'fit for purpose' for a diverse population as well as being able to teach on issues which are necessary for a global citizen to negotiate the complexities and tensions of values, belief and ideological differences.

This thesis adopts a life history approach to identify why some teachers in Scotland engage explicitly with equity and anti-discrimination issues as part of their approach to learning and teaching. Using interviews and narratives, the study explores particular factors that have prompted these teachers to develop an interest and activism in this area of work. Are the teachers influenced by particular theoretical frameworks? How has their commitment translated into practice? As a teacher education lecturer, I am interested to identify learning points that could assist those of us who select and prepare course content for such programmes. In particular, I am interested in models that can assist teachers to become more competent and confident in engaging explicitly with diversity and discrimination.

The study discusses these issues within the specificity of the Scottish context. The impact of the belief of Scots in the efficacy of their education system, coupled with their intrinsic belief in the Scottish commitment to egalitarianism (equality of opportunity) is explored in relation to whether such beliefs are enabling or disabling of the equity and anti-discrimination agenda with respect to teacher beliefs and attitudes. The concepts of 'teacher professionalism' and 'the activist teacher' within a Scottish context are also analysed in the context of promoting equity and anti-discriminatory practice in schools.

The narratives of the nine teachers (mixed in terms of age, gender, faith and belief, ethnicity, nationality and geography) in this study found that overall teacher beliefs and values are shaped prior to entering initial teacher education programmes. Key influences include parents and extended families, the church, peer groups in school, college or university and specific friendships. Teachers' personal experiences of discrimination contributed to developing a 'vested interest' in the area of anti-

discrimination work. Engagement with organisations external to the school, such as voluntary work with non-governmental organisations, activism within trade unions or political parties helped inform teachers of wider societal and global issues and added to teacher interest and confidence in working for a more socially just world. Teachers' practices were in the main based more on an intuitive sense of fairness rather than being underpinned by any theories relating to equity, social justice, power or anti-discrimination. As a result, while all were swift to address aspects of personal and cultural inequalities, many were less able to articulate ideas that address institutional or structural discrimination.

The study concludes by exploring possible ways that teacher education programmes and continuous professional development courses could assist teachers to 'border cross' and to develop more empirical reasoning and practical purpose for investing in pro-action on equity and anti-discrimination issues. Such crossings are particularly important to assist Scotland's homogenous teaching workforce restructure pedagogical practice so that equity and anti-discrimination issues are embedded as part of professionalism and professional practice rather than being viewed as 'bolt-on' issues.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

By way of introduction, it is necessary to locate myself and my experiences as they have shaped this thesis – both the topic and the approach. I came to England in 1977 from Malaysia. I was aware of prejudices and injustices particularly in relation to social class and gender. My parents divorced when I was very young. I was brought up by my mother in the 1960s in Malaysia where there was a strong stigma around issues of divorce. In a country with no welfare provision and with no financial support from my father I was acutely aware at times of how difficult it was financially for my mother to bring up a small child. In addition, my parents were of different faiths and ethnic groups: my father was Indian Muslim and my mother Chinese Christian. I was brought up in both traditions but also subjected to the values and demands of both ethnic and faith groups. A child of mixed parentage did not belong to either community. When I arrived in England, I brought with me an emotional awareness of class and ethnic inequalities but without the theories or concepts to articulate these emotions. It was not till 1983 when I joined a youth and community work course in Reading that I began to discover concepts to enable me to make sense of these feelings as well as to begin to understand at a more thoughtful level how prejudices and injustices develop and are perpetuated.

My thinking on social justice was shaped during my time at Bulmershe College when I began reading the work of writers such as A. Sivanandan (former Director of the Institute of Race Relations), academics at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies

at the University of Birmingham, namely Paul Gilroy and Hazel V. Carby and, on a more international scale, the writings of bell hooks, Angela Davis, Walter Rodney and Marcus Garvey. These writers provide a framework to examine the persistent and ever changing aspects of oppression. They address oppression related to patriarchy, class and colonialism. They explore ‘common sense’ assumptions and representations which can prevent oppression and discrimination from being viewed clearly. Most importantly, they believe in the critical role that ordinary people can have in dismantling oppression and in working in solidarity to create a more inclusive and just future for all. My thinking about issues of equity<sup>1</sup> and anti-discrimination were also informed by my personal experiences of racism since arriving in England (and latterly in Scotland). My practice has been shaped by my involvement in black political resistance movements at community level (mainly in England) and in Scotland via the trade union movement.

On qualifying, I began working within the voluntary sector as a youth and community worker. I moved from that into a lectureship at a teacher education college with a specialism on race equality.

This thesis is therefore shaped from that activist tradition which believes that racism, power, oppression and institutional discrimination must be explicitly addressed, particularly by those with authority (such as teachers) in order to make a difference.

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<sup>1</sup> The term ‘equity’ is used in this study in preference to the term ‘equality’. For further explanation, see Appendix 1.

My original thesis proposal was to focus on race equality and to explore the experiences of black minority ethnic teachers in Scotland. I wanted to find out how these teachers' sense of self was shaped or affected by their colour and ethnicity and the consequential impact of this on their practice. I wanted to find out how each of these teachers interacted with their context, particularly in relation to their contribution (or lack of contribution) as social transformers.

However, I decided that, while this would be ground-breaking and provide new data within a Scottish context, such a study was likely to have limited value in terms of overall structural transformation in Scottish education. If transformation was required to enable school education to be more anti-racist in Scotland, my focus had to include ethnic majority teachers, who are the predominant group in the Scottish teaching workforce. I recognised that, for greater change to occur, it was the majority group's values and attitudes that needed to be explored to seek what might motivate majority teachers' interest to converge with the aspirations of an anti-discrimination agenda. I decided not to limit my investigation to race equality but to explore factors that might assist a teacher to become interested in equity and anti-discrimination issues. I was also interested to explore how teachers who are interested in equity issues retain their commitment and enthusiasm for the issues. I felt that by concentrating on the wider question of teachers as change agents in relation to equity issues I would perhaps discover data that would be more helpful to me as a teacher educator.



## **1.1 Teachers as change agents**

Freire's concept of education in which he suggests that education can be used either to 'domesticate' (the banking concept) or to 'liberate' is fundamental to this study (Freire 1972). Teachers play a key part in the schooling process. They can try to be agents of change or they can be guardians of the status quo. Teachers arbitrate what is taught and how it is taught, providing cues as to what is important and legitimate; they also have an influence in creating the classroom ethos. Research suggests that teacher expectations can be pivotal in influencing pupil motivation (Ashton and Webb 1986; Good 1987; Macbeath 1998; Gillborn and Youdell 2000) and teacher attitudes critical in how they work with diverse pupil populations or consider issues such as race, sexual orientation, or class differences as part of pedagogy or learning and teaching (Mac an Ghail 1988; Wright 1992; Grant and Sleeter 1996; Cline et al 2002; Cooper 2003; Arshad et al 2005; LGBT Youth Scotland, 2006). Research has also shown that teachers can make a difference by explicitly addressing issues of social justice with their peers and with pupils (Connell 1985; Richardson 1990; Wrigley 2000; Kehily 2002).

However, my research (Arshad and Diniz 1999; Arshad et al 2005) and the research conducted by my colleagues within the Centre for Education for Racial Equality in Scotland (CERES)<sup>2</sup> has shown that a considerable number of teachers in Scotland are uncomfortable with engaging with terms such as anti-racism and anti-discrimination, preferring terms such as inclusion and diversity. These teachers argue that focussing on discrimination is itself discriminatory. The task of providing continuous professional

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.education.ed.ac.uk/ceres/Projects/Research.htm>

development (CPD) in this area to thousands of teachers in Scotland over the last two decades has allowed me to hear a range of views. Some teachers view equity and anti-discrimination work as pandering to political correctness or as transient fads in government policy while others perceive such work as detracting from the real task of education, which is to ensure that pupils acquire literacy and numeracy skills, or absorb subject content. Yet others have stated that such issues are simply irrelevant in their subject area. In my experience, the negation of equity and anti-discrimination work in Scotland is often achieved by simple omission of or tokenistic reference to the concepts from mainstream educational policy or curricular development (Arshad et al 2007:130–132). Teachers who do acknowledge issues of discrimination tend to attribute such practices to the one bad apple in the barrel, in the main believing that prejudice is largely unintended and that overall, all is well. There is also often a lack of understanding of how discrimination operates at a cultural or institutional level.

Teachers who are interested in the issues fall into two groups: those who wish to engage at a conceptual and theoretical level and those who prefer to be given checklists or ‘tips’ on how to embed equity and anti-discrimination issues in their practice. While the latter approach is understandable given workload demands, such an approach limits teachers’ ability to think through for themselves why such issues may be important and relevant to their daily work. These teachers also tend to prefer the safer elements of equalities work and are reasonably comfortable with considering issues of diversity but are often unwilling, or not sufficiently confident, to explore the concepts and practical

manifestations of different forms of discrimination.

The experiences of reluctance on the part of teachers to engage in debate on equalities issues has led me to consider possible reasons for this reluctance and the different requirements imposed on education, and their sometimes contradictory effects. In particular, it has led me to consider the tensions and contradictions in Scotland, which, on the face of it, presents a potentially fruitful environment for challenging discrimination, given the centrality of the concepts of egalitarianism and fairness as organising principles of education for Scots (Hunter 1968; Finn 1983; Paterson 1983; McPherson 1983; Anderson 1995; Pickard 1999; Paterson 2003; McCrone 2003).

Therefore, I set out to examine this puzzle by exploring relevant literature on professionalism and activism and by engaging in an empirical investigation, using a life history approach which sets out to explore the factors that contribute to developing a teacher's interest in issues of equity and anti-discrimination. I selected nine teachers who are active in the area of challenging discrimination and are recognised by their peers as 'champions' of equity issues. The intention, in part, is to acknowledge the work and efforts of these nine teachers and teachers like them, but also it is an effort to re-energise democratic and radical teacher professionalism so that the stories of ordinary teachers currently working on activist lines can encourage other teachers to do likewise.

By exploring the factors that have influenced these teachers, I hope to identify 'models' which teacher educators such as myself can develop to support future student teachers to

move beyond the conservatism that appears to characterise the Scottish teaching profession in relation to anti-discrimination issues. This is important in a Scottish schooling context which others have described as largely resistant to change (Humes and Bryce 2003:114). For example, reviewing thirty years of Scottish education from 1952 to 1982, James Scotland (1982), found that Scottish teachers in general remained impervious to the winds of policy change. Studying official documents, he notes that what was being said in 1955 about the need for Scottish primary pupils to improve in spoken English and to move beyond mechanical processes in learning mathematics was also being said in 1964 and 1980. He concludes that teacher conservatism had a part to play in this lack of change in these two areas. Humes and Bryce (2003:115), commenting on Scottish education, suggest that ‘resistance to change in working practices, reluctance to take on new challenges, unwillingness to accept leadership roles, reticence in the face of professional and bureaucratic authority – these are still recognisable features of life in Scotland’.

Identifying factors that influence teachers to activism is also important as it might shift the current state of ‘stasis’, a term used by Menter (1989) to describe a situation where a system is operating in a state of equilibrium inviting little or no change. The teachers in this study all dared to be different and this is worth exploring given that teachers, as Whitty (1985:148) suggests, form a professional group with a ‘professional culture at a chalk face’ that ‘retains a certain capacity to be resistant to change initiated elsewhere’ and operating within what Hargreaves (1980:141) describes as a ‘cult of individualism’.

Moreover, there is a concern about what one headteacher in this study describes as a ‘four walls mentality’ among teachers that may well be the current dominant model of professional behaviour. Ozga and Lingard suggest that while education policies may offer a potential framework for democratic practices in the delivery of education, it is ‘teacher pedagogies and curriculum frameworks which put them into practice’ (2007:67). That being the case, studying how teachers engage and take forward issues of equity and anti-discrimination is all the more important.

## **1.2 The Scottish context**

Providing CPD on equality matters with teachers, my colleagues and I at CERES have found that they often make reference to Scotland’s natural commitment to issues of social justice, equality and internationalism. The works of Robert Burns are frequently cited as an example of that egalitarian character, as is the phrase ‘we are all Jock Tamsin’s bairns’ which loosely means we are all the same under the skin. As a result, I have found it necessary to explore this intrinsic belief in Scottish egalitarianism (Devine 1999:389).

Chapter Two discusses Scotland’s distinctive relationship with issues of equity and suggests that the Scottish people’s belief in their commitment to egalitarianism and meritocracy is double-edged. By this I mean that it can be enabling in that it can provide a seedbed for equity, anti-discrimination and social justice to flourish. Equally, it can be disabling and contribute to ‘stasis’ by ignoring, marginalising or negating the existence

of discrimination, viewing any discussion about discrimination as a potential attack on the core identity of the Scottish people. Some of the conversations with teachers in this study have also assisted me to recognise ways in which elements of ‘Scottishness’ are experienced in family and community life which subsequently impact on teacher beliefs and attitudes towards issues of difference and discrimination.

### **1.3 The labour context, professionalism and activism**

Avis (2005:217) reminds us that any progressive possibilities must be understood within the overall labour process context that the individual is operating within. Schools, departments, and staffrooms are all ‘arenas of struggle’ (Sparkes 1987:38) and teachers promoting an agenda for change need to negotiate their way through these arenas. The work of teachers in Scotland is determined by a range of external influences which call for increased quality and accountability and better value for money as well as more relevance to the needs of industry and commerce (Livingston and Robertson 2001:185). It is therefore important for me to acknowledge the presence of tensions and realities in the work that teachers in Scotland are called upon to do. Chapter Three explores the concept of teacher professionalism within a Scottish context and reflects upon the nature of activism within the Scottish teaching profession.

While this study seeks to identify circumstances that produce anti-discriminatory teacher activists, it also recognises that education cannot be a panacea for societal ills nor a magic formula to address accompanying complexities. However, education is a very

important socialising institution and can have a profound impact, positively or negatively, on many people.

Education is contested and there exists a range of beliefs as to its core purpose; debates on this have a long unresolved history. For example, Socrates in ancient Greece argued that education was about drawing out what was already within the student (education in Latin being *educere*, ‘to lead out’) and we recognise educational practices, such as child centred education, built on this view. However, education is not just individual learning, growth and development, it is also about providing structured opportunities for employment. The Chair of CBI Scotland, Jack Perry, defined a ‘fit for purpose’ education system as one that produced learners with appropriate skills for business as well as for adult life (CBI Scotland 2003). Educational qualifications are important screening devices for employers looking to select the most suitable and competent people for their various areas.

As well as contributing to the economy, education serves an important social function. It helps to maintain social order by socialising young people into accepted norms and practices. In contrast to those who view education as providing a framework to maintain conservative social order, Scotland has produced radical critics of this system such as A.S. Neill who reacted against traditional approaches, and particularly against what he perceived as a non-child-centred approach in Scottish education, which led him to establish his now famous experimental school at Summerhill in Suffolk. Another was

R.F. Mackenzie, a follower of Neill, who also distrusted the conservative and authoritarian nature of education and advocated approaches such as creative play. While Mackenzie's views have had some influence in Scottish educational thinking, both Neill and Mackenzie were sidelined and excluded from the Scottish state system. Neill certainly became more influential outside Scotland.

The philosopher and reformer John Dewey saw education as being a practical process and advocated learning by doing, seeing the purpose of education as being to broaden intellect and develop problem-solving and critical thinking skills in order that learners develop skills and knowledge that would be really useful to them as people and citizens. To achieve this, he advocated democratic schooling systems and processes which would bring democracy to the life of learners; he develops this in his book *Democracy and Education* (1916).

Like Dewey, informal educator Paulo Freire (1972) saw the purpose of education as being about liberating human beings by developing the ability for creative intelligence and critical consciousness. These he saw as necessary aims for education if people were to have appropriate knowledge and understanding to transform their lives in order to address the oppression that affected them. Yet others question whether education can ever be a liberating force and Illich, in his book *Deschooling Society*, suggests that 'the institutionalisation of values leads inevitably to physical pollution, social polarisation and psychological impotence: three dimensions in a process of global degradation and



modernised misery' (1970:9). For Illich, education through schooling can never be liberating, as the purpose of institutionalised education is to serve the needs of societies and economies rather than meeting the needs of individual learners.

It would therefore be naïve to assume that all teachers share a common analysis of the purpose of education or to assume that, once they agree on a purpose, their practice dutifully stays within that framework. It would also be naïve to assume that, even if all teachers in Scotland were to enthusiastically embrace equity and anti-discrimination principles, that would make a tangible difference to the manifestations of inequalities in society. It would be equally simplistic to assume that, if teachers do not explicitly espouse anti-discrimination principles, the status quo of societal inequalities would be maintained. Nevertheless schools and teachers have a contribution to make to shaping pupil thinking and can provide opportunities for pupils to think and act for social justice.

If individual teachers have an important role in shaping pupils' social identities, self-esteem, academic success or failure and aspirations for the future (Pavis et al 2000; Thorne 1993), it is important to establish whether there are life experiences or opportunities that help motivate teacher interest in the areas of equity and anti-discrimination. Why are some teachers prepared to engage with issues that are clearly controversial, political and sensitive? These questions have shaped this study

## **1.4 Methodology**

Retrieving and representing authentic voices accurately is difficult and despite the use of numerous direct quotations, I will not be able to truly reflect the voices of every teacher. Czarniawska (2004:55) states that there are two ways to deal with interview transcripts. The first is to ‘concoct a researcher’s own narrative out of them, that is, to write up, or to rewrite, or to interpret them’ and the second is to analyse them as narratives of interviews, involving conversational analysis. To make sense for others, I have used the former approach.

Chapter Four discusses in greater detail methodological issues related to this study. In brief, I locate my study within a critical interpretive theoretical framework using interviews to obtain narratives from nine teachers. The critical interpretive approach enabled me to locate this study within a clear anti-discriminatory framework where there is recognition of institutional power and the impact this has on the lives of teachers as well as others within the wider school community such as pupils and parents. It also enabled me to recognise the power-relations inherent in social research processes, e.g. between researcher and researched, and to work in a collaborative way with the teachers in this study to co-construct, as far as possible, the emerging themes in Chapters Five and Six.

## **1.5 Interrogating concepts**

Allan (2003) suggests that, with devolution in 1999 and the setting up of the Scottish Parliament, there are real opportunities for ‘transforming “conservatism and caution”

into “innovation and forward thinking” (289–90) thereby disrupting the ‘inertia which has characterized the system’ (300).

In the concluding chapter, Chapter Seven, I argue that if Allan’s hopes are to materialise, certain concepts such as ‘meritocratic egalitarianism’, ‘inclusion’ and ‘additional support for learning’, all of which form much of Scottish education’s discourse around issues of equity, require to be unpacked and debated if social justice is to move beyond an aspirational idea. The final chapter also draws out what I have learnt from engaging in this piece of work and concludes with considerations of how teacher professional formation could be enabled to support such a shift.

The key research questions this study addresses are:

1. How do teachers who are known to be promoting equity, diversity and anti-discrimination as part of their professional practice initially develop their interest in these issues?
2. To what extent do these teachers have a theoretical analysis of equity and discrimination issues?
3. In what ways does their commitment to equity issues impact on their practice?

4. Are there common characteristics or experiences that shape the attitudes and values of such teachers?

## CHAPTER 2: THE IMPORTANCE OF SCOTLAND AS A CONTEXT

Scotland small? Our multiform, our infinite Scotland *small*?  
Only as a patch of hillside may be a cliché corner  
To a fool who cries ‘Nothing but heather!’

Hugh MacDiarmid, ‘Scotland Small?’

The origins of discussions on egalitarianism and education in Scotland are often attributed to John Knox’s Book of Discipline of 1560 which resulted in the establishment of a school in every parish and thus established mass schooling in Scotland considerably earlier than in other parts of Europe, including England.<sup>1</sup> The Knoxian principle of egalitarianism promoted scholastic achievement ‘on the basis of merit, hard work, ambition and seriousness of purpose’ (Devine 1999:391). This particular combination, or model of ‘meritocratic egalitarianism’, has fundamentally shaped Scottish education and has become ‘a badge of identity, a potent symbol of Scottishness’ (ibid:389), but, as the term suggests, it contains considerable tensions, and as I shall argue, has produced a particular orientation towards equity that may help explain the lack of inclination among the Scottish teaching profession to engage with matters of equity and anti-discrimination.

These virtues of the Scottish system are personified in the phrase ‘lad o’ pairts’ which Devine suggests originates in the story ‘Domsie’ by Ian MacLaren of the Kailyard<sup>2</sup> school of Scottish fiction (ibid: 390). The story was about a boy from a humble, rural background who through his hard work and merit achieved a double first degree at

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<sup>1</sup> Frequent comparisons are made later in this chapter and across the study between Scotland and England as GB equalities legislation is not a devolved matter. Both countries are subject to the same laws but have different interpretations and applications.

<sup>2</sup> The kailyard is a small cabbage patch usually adjacent to a cottage. The term Kailyard is used here to mean a genre of Scottish fiction which was sentimental and idealised humble village life.

university. 'From the humblest of Scottish homes there was now a direct connection through the schools to the class-rooms of the College, and the ladder of learning, rudely fashioned and with uneven steps, had become a reality' (Morgan 1927, cited in Walker 1994:24). There is considerable pride in the system of Scottish education that has, since the Reformation, offered academically bright pupils the opportunity to access educational opportunities regardless of their social origin. This version of equality is very much limited to the academically intelligent and does not address issues of diversity of achievement or inequalities that produce different attainment outcomes.

However, the national belief in meritocratic egalitarianism and the perception of its fairness is held widely and deeply in Scotland. For example, in CPD sessions I have held with teachers in Scotland over the past two decades, it is not uncommon for teachers to voice surprise that intentional discrimination exists, particularly in areas where teachers have less knowledge and experience such as racism and homophobia. In general, there remains a tacit belief that Scotland is an essentially egalitarian, fair and welcoming nation which would not practice discrimination or injustice knowingly. Such a belief is a potential hindrance in developing equity and anti-discrimination work as it may prevent open debate about different forms of discrimination and oppression that exist in Scotland. This then prevents solutions from being identified and appropriately resourced.

## **2.1 The egalitarian myth**

Knox's belief that everyone who merited it should have access to education was not born out of desire to see a citizenry that was enlightened or progressive. It had more to do with

the needs of the Protestant church. Following the Reformation there was an urgency to spread the Word according to the Protestant tradition and in order to achieve this there needed to be clergy and church workers (superintendents) to establish and support local congregations. Candidates were scarce. The church deplored illiteracy, seeing the ability to read, particularly the ability to read the bible, as being an essential skill for self-improvement. Education was the vehicle to achieve this from the primary level (mass education of the working classes so that they could read the bible and play their part in shaping a godly nation) to universities whose core task would be the training of the clergy (Anderson 2003:219).

While schools existed as a result of the efforts of the church, the level of education was often basic, affording only enough literacy to access the bible. Scotland, despite being one of the poorest countries in Europe, also became 'Europe's first modern literate society' albeit at a basic level (Herman 2001:23). Literacy, while restricted in its purpose, nevertheless laid the groundwork for writing and for access to other texts. By around 1720, male literacy stood at around 55% and by 1750 it was 75%, compared with only 53% in England. Not till the late nineteenth century did England catch up with Scotland (ibid).

After the Scottish Reformation, it was also recognised that education was an important vehicle to combat the 'three Is' – ignorance, irreligion and immorality (Darling 2003:27). Over time, the meritocratic principles were reinforced so that the possibility of advancement for those who had the ability was sustained (Devine 1999:390).

From the early eighteenth century, the ideas of the Scottish Enlightenment promoted a more philosophical approach to education and a more liberal education programme was devised. There were clear advances in science and industry which led to the industrial transformation of Scottish society. In mainland Europe, a similar picture was developing. Following the French Revolution, the purpose of education was being re-examined and an education system that once only served the requirements of the Catholic church was now being reformed to also serve the wider needs of the country. C. Duncan Rice claimed that the abolition of black slavery could be linked to the growth of an increasingly critical intellectual outlook across Europe but was also a result of the Scottish Enlightenment during the eighteenth century (Degler 1976; Meier 1977).

However, the beneficiaries of liberal education tended to be the middle classes, the gentry and those who lived within larger towns. While the 'lad o' pairts' did exist, the reality was that those who advanced were in the main promising young men from middle-class backgrounds rather than those who were really poor. If you were a 'lass', the educational ladder remained elusive. There have been many heated debates between Scottish educators about whether the 'lad o' pairts' concept is real (Walker 1994) or a misrepresentation of the real existence of class divides (Anderson 2003; MacLaren 1976:2, cited in McCrone 2003:243). Both are in fact true. For some, there was certainly a ladder of opportunity based on meritocracy, but for many others this was not the case.



Corr (1997:356–357), in her paper debating the myths of equality in Scottish education, cites a range of Scottish academics such as Robert Anderson, Christopher Smout, Walter Humes, Hamish Paterson, Alice Brown, Esther Breitenbach and Fiona Myers who have all convincingly argued that far from being an egalitarian system, the education system neglected the bulk of learners, particularly the poorest and women.

For those who were genuinely poor, those who lived outwith the major cities, for girls, for children with disabilities and no doubt for others, there remained a tension between the comforting view of Scottish education as a passport to betterment and the reality that they faced, which was an education system that continued to be hierarchal, selective and divisive: a system that saw selection into separate types of school and the channelling of boys and girls into self-contained curricular areas with only limited overlap. Curiously, while on the surface such a move would today be seen as divisive and not equitable, the result of such separation is commented upon by Anderson (2003:223) as a possible contributory factor which accelerated female literacy. This was due largely to the need for women teachers to staff all-female schools, and, for these women teachers, having a job assisted them into independence and created social mobility. After 1872, mixed education became the norm.

The Education (Scotland) Act 1872 is generally regarded as a landmark Act as it began the process of modernising and secularising Scottish education. As well as funding state education it created accountable structures that were controlled by the state rather than by the church. It aimed to provide a level of quality and a standard which were seen as

necessary for Scotland as a growing economic nation after the industrial revolution. By legislating for compulsory free schooling it also aimed to remove any obstacles to very poor families being able to send their children to school. For the first time, some women, those with independent means, were allowed to hold positions in the governing structures of these state schools. However, the Act did not provide for diversity in terms of language, such as the maintenance of the Gaelic language. Instead, it insisted on English as being the key medium of instruction rather than giving any support for bilingualism.

The concept of egalitarianism has become a useful tool regardless of one's position in the Scottish political spectrum (McCrone 2003:243). For the nationalists, it is a concept which generates pride as Scotland demarcates itself from other nations but most particularly from England; for the socialists, these are credentials that appeal to their radical instincts; and conservatives would be assured that the moral purpose of Scottish education was intact and working well. Wherever Scotland's political allegiances may lie, the concept, or myth, of egalitarianism 'matters because of its framing assumptions rather than its substance' (ibid).

## **2.2 Egalitarianism, meritocracy and the shaping of Scottish education**

In the period between the Reformation and the enactment of the Education (Scotland) Act 1872, some fundamental concepts were laid down which this study believes have strongly influenced how the Scottish education communities view issues of equity and fairness. McCrone postulates that myths rarely survive and flourish unless there is some evidence to connect them with reality (2001:97) and suggests that education has been a key carrier

of the Scottish identity of egalitarianism and that ‘the ideology has been kept alive by the experiences and beliefs of those who have led that system’ (ibid:93).

The myth of egalitarianism shaped the first principle, the establishment of an education system that is democratic and open to anyone, that is education for all. This belief has shaped education legislation and policies as evidenced through the 1872 Education Act which provided for compulsory education for all aged 5 to 13, the democratisation of the system with free access to elementary education, the opening up of subject choice to include liberal studies in 1903, and the establishing of comprehensive schooling by the mid 1970s. The comprehensive system since then has been, for Scotland, a system that was ‘non-negotiable’ particularly for those from the political left (Bryce and Humes 2003:48).

Scotland’s commitment to egalitarian educational principles may have impacted on diminishing class differentials in the current period. Croxford and Paterson (2006), drawing from their analyses of comparable youth cohort datasets in England, Wales and Scotland for the period 1984–1999, found that schools in Scotland were less socially segregated as compared to schools in England and that segregation is consistently lower in Scotland than in England. Raffe et al (2006:8) found that working-class young people in Scotland enjoyed higher absolute levels of attainment and participation than their English counterparts. This finding is echoed in the work of Paterson and Iannelli (2005, cited in Raffe et al 2006). However, both studies found that in relative terms, the gaps at post-16 level continue to be wider in Scotland than in England and again this is supported

by Iannelli's work (2006, cited in Raffe et al 2006) which found that while overall inequalities in post-16 education were reducing in England, this was not the case for Scotland. Raffe et al do sound a note of caution in that the data they analysed do not take into account more recent educational initiatives such as Higher Still in Scotland or Curriculum 2000 in England. Nevertheless, they conclude by stating that up to age 16, Scotland's comprehensive system appears to be impacting on opportunities and chances for Scotland's working-class young people with inequalities between social groups narrowing, albeit slowly and slightly, as compared with England. However, post-16, there would appear to be less equality of attainment between social groups in Scotland as the middle classes continue to occupy the places within higher education. Raffe et al conclude by stating that 'across all cohorts and all classes, levels of attainment and participation were higher in Scotland' (op cit:11) when compared with England. They attribute this to the Scots' valuing of education in its own right.

In 1999, the commitment to education being free at the point of entry was retained as the Cubie Committee (Independent Committee of Inquiry 1999) rejected the payment of up-front tuition fees for students in higher education in Scotland. The Cubie Committee proposed the reintroduction of the grant system for the poorest students. A graduate endowment was also introduced where students had to repay their fees after graduating and only once they earned beyond a minimum threshold. The report was supported by all the parties within Scotland's first devolved Parliament and represented a break from student funding policies set in the Westminster Parliament. The swift manner in which the Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) have begun the process of abolishing the Graduate

Endowment when it formed a government in May 2007 has confirmed that Scotland continues to believe that education should be affordable and accessible to all who can benefit from it.

The second principle surrounds the development of a meritocratic system. The development of such a system attempts to ensure that talent, wherever it comes from, could be enabled, nurtured and harnessed for the benefit of the nation as a whole. This served well the needs of a nation moving into enlightenment and beyond. The Scottish education system organised itself to foster access opportunities for those who are most academically bright regardless of social class or background. Today this is evidenced by Scotland's commitment to widening access to universities, particularly for learners who come from disadvantaged areas and/or may be the first in their family or community to enter a university course. The Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council sets aside specific budgets to encourage universities to develop widening access strategies and the Council closely monitors gaps in levels of participation, particularly those related to gender, geography and social class (Scottish Funding Council 2008).

The belief in meritocracy continues to dominate, particularly within the older universities, in Scotland where, despite espoused support for both concepts of egalitarianism and meritocracy, the operational practices work to favour those who are deemed most able; the elite. The Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council report *Learning for*

All found that while the percentage of undergraduates from the most deprived<sup>3</sup> areas had grown by 8% between 1999 and 2003, people from the wealthiest areas were still twice as likely to go into higher education as those from the poorest areas (Scottish Funding Council 2005:10–12). The report also reported that from 1996 to 2001, ‘only the newer universities and the Open University in Scotland increased the proportion of their students from the areas containing the most deprived 40 per cent of the population’ (ibid). Since then, there has been a slight increase in the older universities and in 2003–4, for example, the figure went from 26.4% to 28%; but it still remains the case that people from deprived areas are particularly unlikely to attend some of the most highly sought courses within the older universities.

Education today is largely accepted by the Scots as a democratic enterprise which seeks to reduce privilege and to develop the collective democratic intellect (Davie 1961). Craig (2003:9) adds that ‘this view of Scots as an unpretentious hard-working people, who believe in equality, is the bedrock for most of the positive statements about Scotland and the Scottish people’.

### **2.3 The impact of myths in shaping national discourse on matters of equity**

Knoxian principles of egalitarianism imbued Scots with (acceptance of) the principle that they should become self-effacing as people and a nation before God. Such sentiments may have contributed to reducing Scotland’s need to feel ‘superior’. One resulting

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<sup>3</sup> The definition of deprivation is taken from the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) which divides into 6,505 data zones which are ranked by deprivation.

consequence was that, unlike in England, superiority was never harnessed as a concept to assist the shaping of Scotland's national identity. England, for example, used 'race' and 'otherness' as justifying categories for promoting and prolonging the colonial and imperial project, making the 'them and us' concepts more palatable.

Sociologist and race relations academic Robert Miles argued that 'race' and 'otherness' were not used as central influencing concepts within the Scottish political agenda (Miles 1993:77–78). This, coupled with Scotland's intrinsic belief of egalitarianism, was to have an impact that was felt centuries later in the Scottish propensity to deny that racism happens in Scotland (Miles and Muirhead 1986; Lopinska 1991; Kelly 2000; Netto et al 2001). This denial, or negation, of Scotland's engagement with racism, past or present, can be seen once again in the recent publication by the Literary Editor of *The Herald*, Rosemary Goring's *Scotland: The Autobiography – 2,000 Years of Scottish History by Those Who Saw It Happen* (2007). In this book, Goring presents Scotland's history in the words of the people who lived it, covering not just key moments of Scottish history, but the testimonies of ordinary people such as an 8-year-old factory worker from Dundee. As a publication, it has been much acclaimed and will be a valuable resource to scholars of Scottish history as well as to members of the general public with an interest in Scotland.

Goring has not included the voices or stories of those who perhaps contributed somewhat negatively to Scottish history such as those who supported Scottish slavery or Scottish interests in the New World. Names like Henry Dundas, James Wedderburn and the Tobacco Lords of Glasgow such as John Glassford, William Cunninghame and Andrew

Buchanan are missing. Professor Geoff Palmer, author of *The Enlightenment Abolished*, lamented that Goring's excellent book engaged in a degree of 'presenting controlled rather than honest stories' (2007:152).

Four years after devolution, Craig (2003:123–133) suggested that this myth of egalitarianism has held Scottish people back in terms of their self-confidence. She argues that Scots invariably feel positive about their egalitarian values but that this has led them to accept their place rather than to pro-actively challenge inequality. She suggests that in America, equality means understanding that an individual is special, while the Scottish variant of being equal means to be the same, with no one being special, uniformity is thus equated with equality and treating people differently with being unfair. She asserts that Scots therefore have become less ambitious, less collectively confident and successful, with Scots who are more successful, creative and ambitious emigrating to seek their fortunes elsewhere. She suggests that the only way for Scottish people to achieve success is to free themselves from the constraints of these aspects of Scottish culture.

Craig's suggestion that the egalitarian myth has been a double-edged sword and a paradox is worth reflecting on. Craig asserts that on the one hand, the myth has fostered 'deep, democratic, egalitarian and humanitarian instincts' (2003:213) which Scots pay homage to each year on the 25th of January with the celebration of Robert Burns, but, on the other hand, it has been a strangely controlling force to 'keep people in their place' and not getting 'above themselves' (2003:129).



McCrone (2001:93) suggests that there are two interpretations Scots can draw from egalitarian and fraternal ideals such as those espoused by Burns in 'A Man's a Man for a' that'. On one hand there is the 'idealist' version, which accepts that equality, justice and fairness are primordial qualities of the essential Scot. McCrone suggests that this is an uncritical version. McCrone states that the other interpretation is the 'activist' version. This is an altogether more revolutionary approach which demands action, encouraging critical questioning of the norm, such as in Burns's 'Holy Willie's Prayer' which is not so much about anti-religion, as some might think, but is a criticism of the hypocrisy of the officers of the church, institutional religion and self-righteousness.

The 'activist' interpretation has given root to different forms of activism in Scotland which continue to give Scotland its proud history of challenging injustice, from political and industrial militancy, as in the emergence of 'Red Clydeside' with names like John Maxton, James Wheatley and John Maclean (Devine 1999:313), to massive campaigns of non-payment of the poll tax in the mid 1980s. Within school education, the period of the 1980s saw Scottish teachers being central to much of Scottish political activism (Paterson 1998:282), demonstrating a level of militancy which surprised government officials in Scotland and in Westminster (Cowper 1986:153). The dispute, led by Scotland's largest teaching union, the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), and supported by the smaller Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association, called for an independent review of teachers' salaries and conditions of service. This dispute, the longest in teacher trade union history in Scotland, was won by the teachers almost two years later. The dispute produced lessons for both the unions and the government (Anderson 2003:233). The unions

recognised that militancy in the form of national stoppages was no longer practicable as a result of restrictions imposed by Conservative anti-trade-union legislation, and the government learnt that reliance on members of one profession at a classroom level was risky as this placed too much power in the hands of individual teachers. Since then, materials for classrooms have become far more centrally produced, particularly at certification levels.

Nevertheless, the dispute demonstrated that resistance and activism can be strong in defence of a system under threat. The importing of a marketisation model, a threat to the egalitarian and comprehensive system as well as teacher professionalism was sufficient to activate and galvanise action against such intrusions. Many activists within the EIS who were involved in that long dispute are still teaching today and can often be identified at the forefront of developing and promoting equity and anti-discriminatory practice at national level or from within their local associations. This can be evidenced by the EIS's publications<sup>4</sup> on a range of equality issues such as racism and sectarianism and by the promotion of these materials within their local associations. However, a question that arises is why the activism of teachers in defence of a system under threat is not carried through to action against cultural and institutional discrimination? The theme of teacher activism is returned in the next chapter.

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<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.eis.org.uk/public.asp?id=245>

## **2.4 Changing times**

Up till 1979, the Scottish educational project of promoting merit, equality and access evolved as systems do without too many tensions. However, from the late 1970s to the mid 1990s, highly directive measures from the Thatcher and Major Conservative governments were imposed on education within the United Kingdom. A consumerist message for school reform was proposed with the push for ‘opting out’ so that schools could become self-governing institutions. In England and Wales, a detailed National Curriculum was being imposed, and the push for greater teacher accountability saw power being transferred from the teaching profession to parents in terms of how schools would be run. In addition, the publication of ‘league tables’ allowed failing schools to be identified and the overall package provided a clear signal to the teaching profession of the emergence of a new managerialism culture (Pickard 2003:233). The Education Minister at the Scottish Office during this time (Michael Forsyth) was pro-actively promoting the Thatcherite education agenda and brought forward legislation to create school boards in order to ensure Scotland kept in line with changes south of the border.

However, Scottish parents made it clear that they were not interested in running schools, seeing that task very much as that of the teaching profession. Scotland also reacted strongly against the idea of national testing in the early 1990s, and in 1997 Scotland demonstrated a resounding rejection of such ideas by returning no Conservative Members of Parliament in the 1997 general election (Darling 2003:34).

What produced this reaction in Scottish education? Was it an intrinsic belief in the concept of equality and education for all? Was it because teachers in Scotland have a greater involvement in policy-making than teachers in England? Did Scots have greater trust in their teachers? Was the consumerist message an unpalatable one in a country where education was seen as a basic right, a public service to develop the democratic intellect? Was it a simply a reaction to anything imposed from south of the border? Was it a desire to protect the distinctiveness of Scottish education in areas such as devolved school management and the retaining of a single national examination body, the Scottish Qualifications Authority, or was Scottish conservatism (slowness to change) a contributory factor?

It is difficult to identify any single reason why Scotland appeared resistant to the aggressive ideological and policy changes pushed forward by the Thatcher and Major governments but a combination of factors such as Scotland's belief in the importance of public education for all and in the professionalism of its teaching workforce would appear to have enabled the basic shape of Scottish education to remain intact unlike in England and Wales.

By 1999, Scotland had a devolved parliament. New Labour was in power in Westminster. Issues of standards, attainment, improvement, quality, reducing the achievement gap, addressing inequalities in staying-on rates, improving transition between levels of education, improving participation of learners from disadvantaged areas in higher education, and delivering for the economy and skills agenda were high on the Scottish

Government's agenda for Scottish school education. Though these were matters of equal importance to the Westminster government, the approach taken south of the border was influenced by market models as opposed to the public sector model.

## **2.5 Scottish education and diversity**

In England, since the early 1960s, with changing demographics due to mass immigration, there had been growing concern with diversity and social justice issues in education. In the 1970s, two major pieces of equality legislation were enacted in Great Britain (Northern Ireland was not subject to these pieces of legislation): the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Race Relations Act 1976. Research in education began to focus on gender and race as attempts were made to understand the role of education in challenging or maintaining inequalities. It is impossible to do full justice in this study to the wide range of activity which took place in England within education through research, curriculum development and learning and teaching but in that time, feminist researchers began engaging with issues of gender and education (Deem 1978; Spender and Sarah 1980; Arnot 1985; Weiner and Millman 1985; Weiner 1985; Grafton et al 1987) and found evidence of sex differentiation in schools and of schools channelling boys and girls into different roles. A full bibliography relating to gender, class and education covering journal articles, government reports and academic research for the period from the early 1970s to the early 1980s in Britain can be found in Walker and Barton (1983). Other researchers (Milner 1975; Carrington 1983; Troyna and Williams 1985; Troyna 1987; Mac an Ghail 1988) began recording their research on how race impacted within school

settings and education policy arenas. A comprehensive bibliography of the literature, books, articles in education journals, research and government reports covering the areas of race and class for the period 1963–1982 for Britain (though a scan of the several hundred entries does not identify a single Scottish source) can be found in Tomlinson 1983 (211–234).

There was a flurry of activity in academic circles south of the border as well as in the media, in central and local government (for example, within the Greater London Authority and within the Inner Education London Authority in particular) and within teaching unions. All of these institutions and arenas were beginning to consider diversity and discrimination within increasingly pluralist and complex societies. Bignell and Maguire (1997:68) stated that schools were having to rethink their work and provision in relation to pupil needs and to recognise how factors of race, gender and class impact on the ethos, learning and teaching and general life of the school. The impetus in England was further fuelled with the publication of the Department of Education and Science's Swann Report (DES 1985), *Education for All*, which was the first government report to mention 'institutional racism' as a problem in British society and to urge all schools, irrespective of ethnic composition, to confront the issue of racism as part of political education. However, despite the early efforts in taking forward race, gender and class issues in England, Osler and Starkey's (2005) synthesis of literature on education for democratic citizenship in the school sector in England for the period 1995–2005 found that a key failure of literature on democratic citizenship had been a lack of contextualisation within an equity and anti-discrimination paradigm. They suggest that,

unlike research from the United States, citizenship studies in England largely ignored the effect of diversity and cosmopolitanism on the concept of citizenship within contemporary England.

In Scotland, there is little evidence of any tangible shift in educational thinking to meet societal changes. For example, on matters of race, by the mid 1970s, England and particularly the metropolitan authorities, recognised that the prevailing policy of assimilation was an inadequate response to the culturally and linguistically diverse populations in schools. England was moving to multicultural and anti-racist approaches which sought to promote a recognition and understanding of differences as well as addressing issues of racial inequalities and racism. At the same time in Scotland, the emphasis continued to be on assisting children for whom English was a second language to 'catch up' with their English-speaking peers.

Brown et al (1994:92), in the first major review of research on gender equality in Scotland, reported that there were 'few major studies which have resulted in the publication of substantial works, [and] an almost total absence of studies which attempt to provide an overview, or from which advances in analysis or theory can be made'. A notable exception was the work of the Centre for Educational Sociology (CES), at the University of Edinburgh, cited by Riddell (2003:887). CES had conducted the Scottish Young People's Survey from 1972 to 1992 which did investigate the relationship between gender and a range of other variables. Riddell stated that why 'gender was a neglected area until the mid 1990s demands to be addressed' (ibid). Riddell suggests that

the key reason was the disregard the Scottish Office had for gender issues, not viewing this as a priority area and assuming that gender inequality was not an issue as girls were outperforming boys. Ducklin and Ozga (2007), looking at gender and management in further education in Scotland, report on the continuing paucity of research related to gender in this context. Powney et al (1998:66), reviewing published and unpublished research on race issues in education, found that most of the Scottish research was small-scale, conducted by committed enthusiasts, mainly parochial with little contribution to vigorous theoretical debate concerning education and minority groups. This picture on race issues had not altered much by the time Netto et al (2001) published an audit of research on minority ethnic issues in Scotland which included a chapter on education. On other equality areas such as sexual orientation, a similar picture emerged where there was no evidence of research or substantive pieces of work on how homophobia or matters concerning sexual orientation are addressed in school education until several years after devolution (LGBT Youth Scotland 2006:Section 3).

Early indications of Scottish teacher activism on issues of social justice addressing race, gender and class were confined to some local authorities, mainly the former Strathclyde Region, through groups like the Minority Ethnic Teachers' Association (META) and the Scottish Anti-Racist Teachers Network (SARTEN) and to the Educational Institute of Scotland when it set up its first sub-group on an equality issues, the Multicultural and Anti-Racist Sub-Committee, in the early 1990s.



Paterson (1998), analysing the civic activism of 801 Scottish teachers, found levels of activism were high with nine out of ten respondents reporting membership of at least one voluntary organisation. The type of organisations identified were diverse, ranging from those he terms 'weakly political' to those that were 'strongly political'. Organisations most cited were ones related to hobbies or sports (29% of respondents: weakly political) and those related to church or religious organisations (21% of respondents: moderately political). Only 9% were involved in organisations termed as strongly political such as school boards, community or civic groups, educational working parties or political parties. Paterson acknowledges that the sample may well be biased towards people whose levels of activism were above average, but he nevertheless felt they were broadly representative (1998:297).

There has been no substantive piece of research or study exploring Scottish teachers and activism since the Paterson study and it is difficult to explain why Scottish teacher activism in challenging discrimination related to racism or sexism remains relatively hidden or low. One possible explanation might be that the inherent belief of Scottish meritocratic egalitarianism reduced the perceived need for any targeted activism, unlike in England. Whatever the reason, it would appear that activism by Scottish teachers is selective. It was able to galvanise to resist the marketisation of education, rejecting Thatcherite visions of education, but such activism is self-interested, reactive and defensive. The type of activism which can be evidenced in England that is open and proactive and where teachers galvanise to campaign against social injustices or against

institutional discriminatory policies and practices within the schooling system is less evident here in Scotland.

## **2.6 Summary**

Scottish confidence in meritocratic egalitarianism has, this study believes, impacted on how equity and anti-discrimination issues are being taken forward in Scottish education.

It has impacted in two ways. Firstly, it has enabled Scottish education to avoid robust discussions about oppression and discrimination in the mistaken belief that its fair and egalitarian system is effective for all. Scottish egalitarianism is 'naïve egalitarianism' (Causey et al 1999:34) based on an unproblematic understanding of the term 'egalitarianism'. The belief is that all people are equal, should be treated equally and have equality of opportunity. The fact that we are not starting from a clean sheet and that not everyone is at the same starting point, which therefore means inequality is inherently present, is conveniently ignored. Naïve egalitarianism can result in a denial that some people may have privileges as a result of their gender, skin colour, ability, social class, faith and belief for example. Naïve egalitarianism can have particular detrimental impact for certain groups: for example, in Scotland, where there is still colour homogeneity and where there is an absence of radical discourse around racial issues, the presence and manifestations of 'everyday racism' (Essed 1991) are not acknowledged or discussed. In England, sheer numbers (critical mass) of black and other visible minority people have enabled issues to be forced onto political and social agendas. In Scotland, there are few visible minority ethnic people who can galvanise a significant enough voice to counter the dominant national, institutional and cultural view that racism does not exist, so the

national assumption that all people (regardless of who they are) can have equality of opportunity remains largely unchallenged.

Secondly, by favouring meritocracy, Scotland has focussed on the ability of the individual rather than examining ways in which institutional and cultural forms of discrimination might exclude individuals from progress. Should an individual fail to take up access to provision then it is the individual's failure to take up the opportunity that is focussed on rather than any institutional disabling factors. In the case of visible minority ethnic people, those who fail to achieve in Scotland are at risk of being seen as the ones with the least ability and/or the ones who have put least effort into succeeding. That institutional or cultural racism may be contributory factors is discounted. Any adjustments for the individual would be seen as discriminatory as the creation of special circumstance or reasonable adjustments would mean that there will not be equal treatment of all. Gander suggests that an absolute belief in a meritocratic model would be to say 'the fault is no longer with the system but rather with nature' (Gander 2003:53).

MacLaren (1976:2) suggests that if the meritocratic conditions of the post-Reformation era were applied today, it is very likely that a meritocratic approach would be deemed an elitist rather than egalitarian approach. I would suggest that it is not only elitist but also discriminatory. The result of such a restricted interpretation of egalitarianism is limited, as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) country review of Scotland's school review points out in its condemnation of the system for tolerating large-scale failure for non-academic pupils, the forgotten 20% who are offered

little or nothing by the system. (2007).

It could be argued that the meritocratic model leads to institutional discrimination. The concept of ‘institutional’ discrimination, while not new, was brought to public attention with the Macpherson Report of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry (Macpherson 1999). The Macpherson Report recognised that British institutions and structures often systematically discriminate against non-white individuals through routine operational processes, practices, behaviour and values that institutions can hold. Such discrimination can be unwitting and unintended but unless these processes, practices, behaviour and values are actively interrogated for potential bias and for racial structuration, they will become part of what Berger and Luckmann (1967) call ‘the taken-for-grantedness of everyday life’. While the Macpherson Report focussed on racism, much the same can be said of other forms of discrimination. Therefore an institution that adopts meritocratic egalitarianism is unlikely to examine itself for institutional discrimination in the way Macpherson suggests.

Meritocratic egalitarianism can easily become a deficit model. Such a model does not problematise the term ‘success’ and, as Benjamin (2003:105) points out, ‘the hierarchisation of what can count as success is an important dimension in the enduring reproduction of educational and societal inequalities’. The model is susceptible to ‘blaming the victim’. Such a model is also likely to disempower those who the system does not deem as being ‘of merit’ resulting in some individuals internalising the label of ‘failure’ which the system has labelled them (albeit unintentionally). These could lead

individuals to take part in unconscious collusion with the oppressive environment. Freire refers to this type of psychological colonisation as ‘the oppressed playing “host” to the oppressor’ (cited by Hardiman and Jackson 1997:17).

Comments made within the OECD report (ibid) also caution against a simplistic understanding of the concept of equity. The OECD review of Scotland warns that formal equity may mask social disadvantage. The report takes formal equity to mean ‘ ..that class-sizes and student teacher ratios do not vary from school to school, that all pupils have access to the same levels and quality of teaching resources, and that there are not great differences in facilities and also in support services’ (op cit: 63). This apparent fairness, the report suggests, may provide the impression that there is equity for all pupils but the report also suggests that ‘comprehensive schooling favours equity, but does not guarantee it’ (op cit: 141). It suggests that there is danger that where pupils are not attaining or achieving than a deficit approach might emerge where the failure is attributed to the lack of merit on the part of the pupil or parent rather than to systems failure. The report also suggests that in terms of achievement and attainment the background of each child (who they are) is more likely to matter than the school the child attends. The challenge the OECD sets for Scotland is to move beyond viewing uniformity (treating everyone the same) as being sufficient evidence of equity.

The tensions between these two concepts are not new. Michael Young, the sociologist who coined the phrase ‘meritocracy’ in his book *The Rise of the Meritocracy* (1958), warned that meritocracy, a concept that is used uncritically, would create a new elite and

would disempower those who are deemed to not have merit or those who have been failed by the system. Young comments that ‘It is good sense to appoint individual people to jobs on their merit. It is the opposite when those who are judged to have merit of a particular kind harden into a new social class without room in it for others’ (Young 2001).

Saunders (2006:193) suggests that ‘meritocracy resonates powerfully with deeply held ethical values about *fairness*, and these are broadly shared throughout the population’. Saunders draws that conclusion after conducting surveys of public attitudes over two decades both in Britain and Australia. He claims that the meritocratic ideal is deeply held within ‘the Anglocentric world of liberal capitalism’ (ibid).

It is this conflation of the concepts of egalitarianism and meritocracy that poses a difficulty for present-day diverse Scotland. The question for Scotland is whether it can be both meritocratic and egalitarian, for the two concepts appear to be irreconcilable. If it is possible to be both egalitarian and meritocratic then what adjustments are required at education and social policy level to ensure that Scottish education’s operational practices do not disengage with issues of personal, cultural, institutional and structural discrimination?

In theory, the teachers in this study should find a collegiate and agreeable environment to take forward issues of equity and anti-discrimination, but will they?

## CHAPTER THREE:           TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM, ACTIVISM AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICE

Dominie, Dominie  
There was nane like John MacLlean,  
The fightin Dominie

Matt McGinn, 'The Ballad of John Maclean'

This chapter begins by exploring the concept of 'teacher professionalism', particularly within a Scottish context. It moves on to discuss the concept of activism and the 'activist teacher' and locates all of this within the context of the focus of this study, the promotion of equity and anti-discrimination within Scottish school education.

### **Professionalism: a contested concept**

Professionalism and associated terms are contested and problematic concepts. To complicate matters, terms such as 'professional' (the person engaged in a particular job or occupation that one is paid to do, as with a 'professional lobbyist'), 'profession' (referring to an entire professional group such as accountants), 'professionalism' (referring to the conduct and/or integrity of people belonging to that profession) and 'professionalisation' (referring to how an occupational group might seek to enhance its status and standards) are often used interchangeably (see Hextall et al 2007:32 citing Goodson and Hargreaves 1996). Much of the writing about the professional and professionalism within a Scottish context concurs that these terms often present conceptual and functional ambiguity (Kennedy 2007; Christie 2003; Teelken 2000; Cameron 1990).

Humes claims that ‘the notion of professionalism in Scottish education has become fundamentally incoherent’ (1986:54). Cameron (1990:86) suggests that the conceptual blurring of the term ‘professional’ has impacted on discourses about professionalism. She states that ‘the use of the term in recent educational documents leads to the conclusion that its function has become principally ideological in nature, its meaning appropriated by whichever party is claiming ownership’ (ibid). However Bottery (1998:1) makes clear that it is not only governments that might appropriate the concepts and terms but institutions and individuals themselves may also engage in the process and will be selective in how they interpret the terms depending on what he calls ‘the wider ecological’ context which would take into account the state of the economy, politics, societal value systems, culture and personal interest. Humes (1986:136–157), in examining the different sectional interests of key Scottish education stakeholders, teacher education institutions (or colleges as they were then known), teacher organisations (unions) and the General Teaching Council, supports Bottery’s views that the concept of professionalism is used by different stakeholders in different ways and at different times to suit their own agendas and priorities.

Literature on teacher professionalism, both globally and within the United Kingdom, particularly from the early 1980s till the present, is dominated by commentaries and analysis of the impact of new managerialism (Whitty 2006; Livingston and Robertson 2001; Sachs 1999; Bottery 1998; Fairley and Paterson 1995; Hoyle and John 1995). Particular themes repeat themselves, in particular those of marketisation (improving consumer choice, improved performance, effective schools, business-



facing education, competence-based education) and centralisation (increased accountability, audit frameworks, national curriculum guidelines).

The focus on 'new managerialism' and 'new professionalism' has moved discussions away from the more traditional attempts to define the concept of professionalism. Traditional attempts refer largely to functionalist sociological approaches such as those proposed by Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1933), who listed at least seventeen different traits which are deemed important for a professional. These include having expertise in the subject area of the profession, possessing altruism and concern for those the profession services, and having professional autonomy to exercise control on who can and who cannot be part of the profession (Bottery 1998:3). The contemporary and critical approach is one which analyses the status and role of the professional and professionalism as a whole in relation to the contracting welfare state. Hextall et al (2007:32) suggest, that in this latter grouping, two directions of study have emerged. The first adopted what Hextall et al termed the 'interpretive/interactionist' approach which concentrated on studying the lives and work of individual teachers (Schon 1983; Hargreaves and Fullan 1992; Goodson 1992; Goodson and Hargreaves 1996) and the process of schooling (Hextall et al 2007, citing Woods 1979). The second grouping were those who located their analysis within a socio-political framework often drawing from a neo-Marxist and/or feminist perspective (Ozga and Lawn 1981; Aronowitz and Giroux 1986; Ball 1987; Ozga 1988; Apple 1989; Gewirtz et al 1995; Davies 1996; Menter et al 1997; Apple 2006). This latter group located their discussions about professionalism within an analysis of power in its various forms, for example, as a tool for domination and

control as well as one of influence and transformation. The discussions are also located very explicitly within a recognition of the diversity of contemporary society, particularly in terms of race, class and gender, and demonstrate how the links between economy and education are constantly being tightened (Ozga 2005:208).

Before continuing further, it is useful to consider two notes of caution from Ozga and Lawn. Firstly, there is the need to be mindful of uncritical acceptance of ‘the positive concept of professionalism’ (1981:11). Ozga and Lawn suggest that the concept of ‘professionalism’ has not been sufficiently unpacked and problematised. They suggest that many writers often make or give a simplistic dichotomous interpretation of the term, for example, pitching professionalism against unionism or taking a single perspective of the concept without recognising the ‘contradictions and ambivalences’ (ibid). For example, the term can be used by management as a form of control but equally by members of the profession as part of an occupational strategy to preserve occupational power. Secondly, they caution against a simplistic definition that associates being professional with being neutral and devoid of militancy. For this study, this second point is particularly significant. The dominant paradigm in state bureaucracies, educational institutions and caring professions in the UK is that ‘being political is synonymous with being unprofessional’ (Husband 1991:66). Practised detachment is valued, supposed neutrality and an apolitical practice desirable and seen as professional (Arshad 1996:164). Hargreaves and Fullan (1998:47) suggest that teachers on the whole avoid politics, seeing their work as a ‘virtuous calling, untainted by politics’. They claim that, like many other people, teachers, in general, view politics as the domain of those who are self-seeking and

opportunistic. Teachers would prefer to value balance and to be able to offer young people different points of view to consider. Neutrality is desired and engaging with politics is often perceived as engaging in partisanship.

That this thinking has become part of professional hegemony can be evidenced in MacDonald's study of ten classroom teachers in one school in Scotland. MacDonald studies the reaction of the ten teachers to the notion of pro-action and being presented with opportunities to resist. MacDonald reports that the teachers responded by 'typically claiming to be "not that kind of person"' (2004:431). Given that addressing issues of inequity and discrimination is distinctly political in nature and requires the ability to challenge and possibly disrupt, an adherence to detachment and neutrality as prerequisites of 'professionalism' seriously limits the opportunities for teachers who wish to educate for enlightenment, emancipation and empowerment.

### **3.1 Professionalism: a context of change**

Hoyle and John (1995:37) suggest that by the early 1970s, the consensus that had governed the education service for almost five decades had broken down. As the decade ended, terms such as accountability and standards were beginning to reverberate around the corridors of educational establishments. There was an increasing trend towards making teachers more accountable to the consumer (parent, pupil), the state (government) and the public. The rationale was that all this would assist in ensuring that education was delivering value for money. Hoyle and John argue that this 'powerful cocktail' (ibid:38) flew in the face of the 'teacher traditional

strategy of collective bargaining and rational negotiation'. It marked the end of what was termed '“the golden age” of teacher control' where teachers enjoyed de facto autonomy to regulate their own affairs (Whitty 2006 citing Le Grand 1997).

Fairley and Paterson (1995:14) point out that the concept of performance management is not new. Citing Wilson (1983:93), they indicated that 'an early and crude version was imposed on Scotland's schools by the Scotch Code 1873'. They point out that it is the zeal and speed with which new managerialist approaches have been introduced coupled with the priority of decentralising management operation within a stronger audit and financial framework that is now making the difference.

Fairley and Paterson (1995) attribute the new managerialism affecting schools and education authorities to the thinking of Frederick Taylor, who developed the theory of management premised on scientific management. Taylor believed that productivity could be improved by having standards which are uniformly applied, applying competence-based training to ensure that workers had appropriate abilities for each job, providing wage increases to incentivise workers and minimising interruption to the flow of labour. The competencies, outputs and outcomes are determined by management who follow standardised rules and procedures to deliver those targets. Fairley and Paterson suggest that such an approach deskills teaching staff as the process of imparting knowledge and developing a conducive learning environment cannot be broken down into discrete and measurable tasks which require certain competencies which are then tightly managed and audited. The

teacher is left with no significant decision-making powers other than to decide how to prioritise pre-set tasks.

Taylorism could also be said to be counter-productive within a diverse world. It deskills teachers by failing to equip them to respond to pupils' individual learning needs. It takes no account of different teaching or learning styles with management structures and processes that are hierarchal and non-fluid and which prioritise efficiency above relevance.

Following Hoyle and John's rationale, the language of professionalism appears to have changed from a traditional conception where the primary objective is to focus on the 'mastery of a complex body of knowledge and skills' to ensure that members of that profession 'are governed by codes of ethics which would profess commitment to competence, integrity and morality, altruism and the promotion of public good within their domain' (Cruess et al 2004:74). The primary focus now is one that is associated with issues like 'performativity, accountability and marketisation, communicated through a discourse of managerialism' (Ollin 2005:152). Ozga, problematising the concept of professionalism, suggests that moves towards standardisation contributed to the erosion of the capacity of teachers to define their own work identities and has resulted in delivering for a more 'restricted and homogeneous form of professionalism' (2000:23).

Dainton (2005) suggests that a way of addressing the onslaught of new managerialism is for teachers and teaching unions to reclaim the discourse. She

suggests that such a professional identity might be ‘an activist professional identity’ as offered by Sachs (1999; 2003a; 2003b). The concept of the ‘activist professional’ is discussed later in this chapter.

Sachs, presenting at an Australian Association of Research in Education conference in 1999 and drawing from the work of Preston (1996), suggests that within Australia there are two competing discourses, ‘democratic professionalism and managerial professionalism’. Democratic professionalism is developed by the teaching profession and is more akin to a bottom-up approach. It is open, inclusive, collaborative and consultative with pupils, parents and others with the intention of balancing responsibility and accountability within the overall aim of improving education for all. Utilising social capital concepts, democratic professionalism would develop mutuality and reciprocity between the teacher and the ‘consumer’, ‘employer’ and wider community. Managerial professionalism on the other hand emanates from the employers and is top-down. Often management is perceived as a neutral good and synonymous with terms like efficiency, targets, impact, regulation and value for money. Sachs suggests that the reality is that with decentralisation ‘teachers are placed in a long line of authority in terms of their accountability for reaching measurable outcomes’ (Sachs 1999:3). The impact of obtaining professionalism through a management structure is the erosion of teacher autonomy leading to an erosion of professional identity and esteem. Sachs captures this by citing Menter et al (1997:57) who state that ‘judgement about priorities, appropriateness and efficacy, once the preserve of the expert, guided by rules and precedent, is ignored and excluded’. Sachs warns that, ironically while those who

espouse managerial professionalism might view this as a route to greater efficiency and responsiveness to the 'consumer', what it might achieve in reality is to drive teachers to lose a sense of collective identity and move in ever decreasing circles into individualism.

D. H. Hargreaves's (1990:8) lecture to the Scottish Educational Research Association (SERA) stated that teachers were more likely to respond with enthusiasm if any moves for improvement did not challenge their autonomy. He provides two examples that democratic professionalism might achieve greater steps towards improvement and effectiveness than imposed managerial professionalism. The first was the 'broadening of the conception of educational achievement within the comprehensive school far beyond that based solely on the academic and on public examinations' and the second was the teacher-led initiative of creative pupil profiles and records of achievement. Both of these were teacher-initiated ideas for improving school effectiveness and the latter in particular was so successful across the country that the government (Department of Education and Science) 'felt compelled to step in and take some overall charge of this incredibly important grassroots development' (op cit:8).

In addition to a democratic professionalism discourse, Bottery (1998:172) offers what he terms five radical but essential values for professions in the twenty-first century.

Professional values	Citizenship education
Appreciation of provisionality	Awareness of limits of individual judgements; tolerance
Truth searching	Solving problems rationally, ecological awareness, political involvement
Reflective integrity	Awareness of personal limitations, and of others' contributions
Humility	Respect for others' viewpoints, acceptance of one's own limitations
Humanistic education	Empowerment of clients

He suggests that these values are essential to enable professionals to better defend themselves against rapid changes. It is also appropriate for the teaching profession to locate itself within a citizenship agenda taking into account the local, national and global societal context. For Bottery, the twenty-first-century professional is one who has 'an ecological appreciation of practice' and an 'acute understanding of the political, social and ethical implications of the impact of their practice, and of changes to it' (op cit:171).

It could be said that New Labour, under whose watch new managerialism has continued to flourish, also has aspirations for the twenty-first-century teacher. In 're-professionalising' (Whitty 2006:11) teachers, there are aspects from what New Labour espouses which appear to chime with Bottery's five values, in particular the move towards more working across sectors with social work, health and community learning professionals, the push on partnership working, the focus on the needs and rights of pupils and parents (clients), the need to be seen to promote fairness and



equality (tolerance) and the need to be mindful of different perspectives in an increasingly diverse Britain.

### **3.2 Scotland and professionalism**

*New* managerialism, it is claimed, has placed increased demands on teachers who, in addition to delivering pedagogy, are now ‘expected to translate national aspirations into curricular activities’ (Kirk 1995:15). According to Kirk, teachers are becoming technicians for implementing a curriculum whose parameters are largely determined by political and economic aspirations (external influences) rather than through considered dialogue between interested parties, that is teachers, pupils and parents/carers.

Kirk, as principal of what was then Moray House Institute of Education, a Scottish monotechnic for teacher education, identified four features which he states would frustrate teacher professionalism in Scotland. These features are ‘the explicit attack on teacher education; the centralist curriculum development; the persistence of restricted professionalism; and the managerialist trend in education’ (1988:14). Interestingly, when Kirk talks about the explicit attack on teacher education, he is not always referring to central government intervention but to the hostility of other academics within faculties of education to teacher education institutions. He berates such individuals for holding what he terms to be misconceptions of teacher education work as being limited to ‘producing tips for teachers’ (ibid:16) and pursuing narrow vocationalism with little analysis or due regard to educational policy. Kirk is referring in this instance to criticism by Humes (1986) of teacher education

institutions, teacher organisations and the General Teaching Council. Humes's concern was that instead of confronting the ambiguities of the concept of professionalism, these bodies had allowed themselves to become 'colonialised' by the various 'propaganda purposes' (1986:154) of the term.

In particular, Humes was concerned with the unquestioning acceptance of professionalism as being the right way forward coupled with the attitude held by those in power that any questioning of the concept 'runs the risk of social ostracism and limited career opportunities' (ibid). Citing Patrick Corbett (1965), Humes (ibid:155) suggests that this type of unquestioning acceptance helps 'to condition men intellectually to obedience'. His concerns also lay in the overly self-regulatory and self-interested nature of the profession which he claims had led to a preoccupation with status (credentialism), salaries and self-satisfaction rather than the continued development of a critical thinking profession, the enrichment of teachers as professionals and the educational needs of Scotland as a whole.

What is characterised over time appears to be a range of sectional responses to the concept of professionalism with teacher associations (unions) on one hand organising and responding to protect their professional autonomy against what they perceive as increasing demands from government via policy and legislation, members of the public, parents and business with the result of appearing highly defensive as a profession; and on the other hand, teacher education institutions trying to survive within a context of declining student numbers moving into competence-based education focussing more on the acquisition of skills and methods of teaching and

education policy makers pushing in initiatives such as greater accountability mechanisms and more methods for testing pupils for attainment. This potentially allowed ‘new managerialism’ to enter by default rather than by design and could have consequences for whether Sachs’s vision of democratic professionalism and the activist profession can be realised within Scotland.

Livingston and Robertson (2001:185) identified a series of government priorities for Scottish education, namely, enhancing quality, securing greater value for money, meeting the needs of industry and commerce, raising pupil attainment and improving the general effectiveness of schools. They indicate that these changes are not limited to Scotland but form a general pattern over Europe for a greater public accountability and structured view of education which places emphasis on outcomes and national standards of performance. Livingston and Robertson add that with the internet and technological changes, teacher work practices are also having to change, from imparting the knowledge to providing information and facilitating and assisting pupils to access, acquire and process information and to be self-sufficient, self-confident learners (Livingston and Robertson 2001:186).

However, Teelken (2000:30), comparing market forces in England and Scotland, suggests that the diversification of the types of schools available for choice that has impacted on England is not evident in Scotland despite the fact that in Scotland, as in England, schools have become more autonomous as a result of devolved school management. She attributes the minimal impact of marketisation in Scotland because of the Scottish system having ‘stronger support for equality of opportunity

and comprehensive education' (ibid:31). Menter et al (2004:196) concur with Teelken, adding that a possible reason might be the close partnerships between the key education stakeholders such as the teaching unions, education authorities (the main employers of teachers in Scotland), the principal audit body, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE), the teacher education institutions and the General Teaching Council for Scotland. Another view might be that Scotland has traditionally tended to reject any policy initiatives perceived as being imposed from south of the border and yet another view might be that the conservatism of Scottish education might have protected it from the worst excesses of marketisation. It has however led Scotland to pursue the new managerialist agenda within its own terms.

Ozga, discussing modernising the education workforce in Scotland, proposes that there may be a distinct Scottish approach to teacher professionalism emerging based on 'revived partnership that does not include dominant business interests' (2005:211). Such a model, according to Ozga, does not ignore global trends of performance measurement or improving school effectiveness, but its aspirations for a partnership model are premised on taking excellence forward in discussion with teachers and their employers as well as with other professional partners (for example, from health and social work) and with the communities the schools serve. Ozga suggests that there is a 'collective narrative' (2005:212) about the purpose of Scottish education. This purpose draws largely on Scotland's image of itself as egalitarian, its passion for maintaining the democratic intellect, its tendency for conservative (cautious) approaches to change and its belief in the integrity and worth of ordinary people and public services. This 'collective narrative' is a powerful force tempering

the drastic modernisation agenda by ensuring that Scottish education remains focussed on being inclusive as well as meeting the needs of the twenty-first-century market. Ozga is probably right in her analysis and this can be evidenced through the development of self-evaluation audits by HMIE in Scotland, via the How Good Is Our School (HGIOS) publications as a gentler and more collegiate way of managing the performativity culture. The work of HMIE in Scotland, particularly the approach of using self-evaluation audits and proportional inspection (only engaging in in-depth inspection where there is evidence of need), is one that many other countries in the world now aspire to emulate (see Doherty and McMahon 2007:255).

Reeves (2007), discussing the onset of Chartered Teacher status in Scotland, states that the issue of ‘professionalism’ has become flavour of the decade as successive UK governments have set about reforming public services. She cites three models of professionalism which are useful to consider to provide some idea of the context within which the teachers in this study and indeed Scottish teachers in general have to work.

The first model Reeves (2007:56) cites is bureaucratic professionalism, where teachers will be granted a measure of autonomy within limits set by the management of their school and local education authority. Reeves, drawing from Hoyle (1974:15), suggested that the autonomy of the teacher lay largely within their classroom and teaching was seen as intuitive practice developed through classroom experience. Teachers’ influence rarely extended beyond the classroom to school ethos and

management. Some of the teachers in this study, mainly the older teachers, are familiar and comfortable with this form of professionalism.

When I started I had a very strict interview, my boss traced me back to Town X where I grew up and judged me to be OK. Once he had employed me, I was left to my own devices. He provided me with everything I needed and then I got on with it in my class. (Teacher A, female)

The second form of professionalism is 'educational operationalism'. Teachers, in this model, are educational operatives who meet standards required of them by their paymasters. These standards, in Scotland, are set by government through the offices of HMIE through audit frameworks such as HGIOS. Within this model, teachers, as in the previous model, do not have influence beyond the classroom, but because these standards use the phrase 'self-evaluation', teachers are expected to work in a collegiate way with their employers to enhance quality. These standards were seen as levels teachers aspired to reach as genuine professionals rather than as a set of regulatory guidelines that they had to follow.

While this was happening, devolution occurred in Scotland and one of the early wins that the teaching unions and the education sector wanted was a reappraisal of teacher status and workloads. Alongside the official discourse of professionalism, Scottish teachers, their associations and unions were demanding that with greater accountability via audit frameworks to improve standards and quality, teachers should also be able to develop their professional competencies and to upskill. This

was a political move on the part of Scottish teachers who did not wish to go down the route of performance-related pay which was dominating the discourses on professionalism in England and Wales. The McCrone Inquiry<sup>1</sup> was thus seen as a vital tool in the revitalisation of the teacher as professional alongside improved pay and reduced workloads.

Reeves calls the third model 'new professionalism'. If the previous model was associated with improvement, it stands to reason that this would be occurring with a 'learning organisation'. Reeves suggests that learning organisations offer 'the pursuit of shared objectives and projects of individual self-actualisation on the part of organisational members' (2007: 59). Through sharing objectives, a collegiate relationship develops between the teacher and the school where employer, school managers and class teachers work together to improve education for all. The class teacher thus wins back some of the autonomy previously lost or compromised in the first two models. Within this model, teachers are encouraged to be pro-active and to lead some of the improvement required in the school. MacDonald (2004) concludes that the aspirational intentions of McCrone for heightened collegiality may not in fact be developed as hoped.

Commentary about teacher professionalism in Scotland has tended to focus on the impact of government policy, economic, social or political change on teacher status, salaries, pedagogy and continuing professional development (Kennedy 2007;

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<sup>1</sup> The McCrone inquiry was chaired by Professor Gavin McCrone. It was an independent inquiry set up to look into the salary and working conditions of teachers in Scotland. See <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2001/01/7959/File-1>

Christie 2003; Kirk 1995; Cameron 1990); on the maintenance of a professional trajectory that continues to uphold what Doherty and McMahon call ‘the public service beliefs associated with collectivist welfare arrangements’ (Doherty and McMahon 2007:253); on how global patterns and interpretations of teacher professionalism are being played out at a local level here in Scotland (see e.g. Ozga 2005; Ozga and Lingard 2007); and on how professionalism appears to have developed differently to England, particularly on how ‘accountability’ has been rolled out into the profession and on the upholding of the importance of maintaining trust among key education stakeholders in Scotland (Menter et al 2004).

Writings and discussions about teacher professionalism in Scotland have largely not examined the concept from a diversity perspective, particularly in relation to race and ethnicity, nor have their discussions recognised schools as sites of struggle. There is little discussion about whose perspectives are being accorded status and whose are being excluded, particularly through the lens of race, gender and class, or about what Scottish teacher professionalism might look like in order to be fit for purpose for a heterogeneous pupil population. Discussions about teacher identity have focussed on the status of teachers compared to other professionals (particularly doctors and lawyers) and to the impact of government policies such as greater assessment and accountability but little on how teacher identities, attitudes and values might impact on a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-faith classroom. The exception has been the work of Menter et al (2006) calling for a Scottish ‘teaching profession that is demographically representative of the wider population’. Avis (2005:216) warns that discourses around transformation and redefinitions of



professionalism that adopt an approach which does not acknowledge the need for dissent and opposition, and that ditch the activism of the 1960s and 1970s, run the risk of falling into the trap of sanitised discussions. Avis suggests that any discussion about transformational professionalism needs to be located not just within societal issues and politics but within an understanding of how labour processes are eroding worker rights, identity and autonomy and consequently workers' abilities to become activists. He also reminds us that it is important to be mindful of the ever changing forms of new managerialism which, in his view, has transmogrified from a focus on performativity of teachers to language discussing innovatory practices to meet the needs of learners (2005:218) – and which committed professional can argue with that?

In summary, the concept of teacher professionalism is contested, its meaning defined by the ideological imperatives of the user of the term. Teacher professionalism is no longer debated and defined solely by teachers or their associations, rather under new managerialism, teacher professionalism is increasingly defined by external forces both local and global, for example, across Europe, teachers are expected to deliver successful learners (outputs) for the knowledge economy and the knowledge society. Small countries like Scotland which do not have the labour power to compete with super countries like China or India are even more dependent on developing a citizenry with higher order knowledge and skills.

The study of teachers as professionals and teacher professionalism has followed two directions, those who have studied the lives and work of individual teachers (the

‘interpretive/interactionist’ approach) and those who have analysed teachers’ work within a socio-political framework. The work of those in this latter group are particularly pertinent in the contemporary context as teacher professionalism debates are now at a cusp. Ozga (forthcoming) states that while teachers are currently expected to ‘extract performance from learners’ (ibid), they are at the same time being given more freedom to develop packages that would deliver the four capacities of A Curriculum of Excellence which are providing for successful learners, responsible citizens, confident individuals and effective contributors. However, such a framework without due regard to issues of equity and anti-discrimination (see Appendix 2) is unlikely to deliver for the higher order knowledge that Scotland is aiming for. Ozga suggests that teachers have the opportunity to revive teacher professionalism by going beyond ‘ the technical tasks of producing acceptable test results’ to becoming educators for change and resurrecting what she calls the ‘ghosts of other core human experiences and relations that have played their part in promoting social solidarity and cohesion.’(ibid)

This study argues that to take up Ozga’s aspiration for teacher professionalism of tomorrow, issues of diversity and discrimination need to become central to teacher professionalism discourse.

### **3.3 Teacher activism in Scotland**

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines activism as ‘the policy or action of using vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change’. Paterson (1998:280) reminds us that there is a diversity of types of activism. He cites Parry et

al's (1992) definition which is more akin to the OED description, 'taking part in the process of formulation, passage and implementation of public policies', and also Lynn and Davis Smith (1991) who suggest that activism is 'any activity which involves spending time, unpaid, doing something which aims to benefit someone ... other than or in addition to close relatives'. This definition is still used by the Institute for Volunteering Research (1997) with the addition of the phrase 'or to benefit the environment' after 'close relatives'. Activism therefore can cover a range of forms from voluntary activism as described by Paterson to economic activism, to political campaigning. It can be political, non-political, overt and covert.

Sachs (2003b:3) in her plenary address to the British Educational Research Association (BERA) in Edinburgh acknowledges that 'the words activism and activist have a checkered history and in some people's minds these words evoke images of chaotic demonstrations and rabbleroxing' but she insists that the development of an activist teaching profession is vital to 're-instate trust in the teaching profession by the community at large and to counter the de-skilling of teachers by governments who want to control teachers and the teaching profession' (ibid:4). Sachs (2003a:16) offers some characteristics that define what an activist teaching profession might include (and these could be extended to define activist teachers):

- inclusive membership
- public ethical code of practice

- collaborative and collegial
- activist orientation
- flexible and progressive
- responsive to change
- self-regulating
- policy-active
- enquiry-oriented
- knowledge-building.

However, it is the characteristics she identifies in her address to BERA later that year that are of particular interest to this study. In particular, she suggests that an activist teaching profession should be politically astute and not risk averse or risk anxious, that it should value social relations and solidarity work, be dependent on collective action, move from individualistic identities to a 'pluralistic or a "we" mentality' (2003b:10), and be prepared to take part in 'disruptive' work and to engage in strategic positioning on issues which have for too long been taken for granted or which lead to the disempowerment of teachers, schools, and the teaching profession as a whole. She further locates this within a transformation discourse that requires change not just on the outside but also on the inside. Therefore transformational activism in the teaching profession would require not just being involved in social or political change but also in changing how one teaches and how a school operates. Sachs suggests that both internal and external change is needed if meaningful change is to be achieved. This transformational process would require an examination of

‘dominant systems of meanings, values and actions which are *lived*’ (Apple 1990:5) and the development of new ways of thinking and working. Apple is referring here to the development of a counter-hegemonic method of operating and the need for educational establishments and practitioners to critically examine how education may assist in the process of promoting dominant hegemony, and on how transformational activism would counter such ‘saturation’ (ibid). Apple is particularly concerned that, in the context of the West areas such as race and gender in particular should be explicitly addressed as part of transformational activity.

Apple does not use the term activism as Sachs does. Instead, the forms of activism he refers to are actions of resistance, both formal and informal. He suggests in relation to new managerialism that ‘teachers have not stood by and accepted all this’ (Apple 1989:48) but that the manner in which teachers have responded has been at times less obvious and taken the form of informal rather than formal resistance. This has been achieved by subversion (hidden disruption) such as refusal to take on more work (e.g. joining working parties), reacting less than enthusiastically to perceived imposition of policies, and indulging in partial engagement rather than wholesale absorption of a prescribed curriculum, producing thereby ‘creative responses to dominant ideologies’ (Apple 1995:142). However, Apple cautions that these informal cultural workplace resistances are often shaped and established by the agendas of others, whether that be as a result of political or capitalistic interventions, and ultimately these resistance efforts or the ‘process of contestation’ may result in perpetuating the dominant hegemony rather than disrupting it. Moreover, such informal resistances tend to be individual or isolated examples with limited prospects

for sustainability. However Apple does add that 'if resistance contestation were real, then they could be employed for serious structural change as well' (1995:23).

With the exception of the work of Paterson (1998) which investigates why teachers engage in voluntary activities and the types of activities they engage in, there is very little that records teacher activism in Scotland. There are examples of teacher engagement on social issues such as campaigning against Trident (Herald, 2007) or against apartheid, being involved in campaigns such as the Snowdrop campaign for tighter gun control following the Dunblane tragedy and in pressure groups addressing global injustices. There will no doubt be other examples of teachers working through organisations such as trade unions or as members of organisations such as Oxfam, Peace and Justice centres, churches and other similar groups to address issues of injustice either locally or globally. Other than the teaching unions, there have been other organisations that Scottish teachers have been able to join to work with others to place issues such as anti-racist education on the agenda, through organisations like the Scottish Anti-Racist Teacher Education Network (SARTEN) and the Minority Ethnic Teachers Association (META) formed through the efforts of a group of black and visible minority ethnic teachers in Glasgow in the mid 1980s, and the Scottish Socialist Teachers Federation (often seen as composed of the activist rank and file of the teacher unions). However, none of the above organisations, many of which mobilised during the late 1970s to mid 1990s, are now active and most no longer exist.

It would appear that though there is evidence of civic activism among Scottish teachers, they report that they lack the confidence to engage with issues which may assist young people to consider global issues or difficult issues of racism, homophobia or Islamophobia (Blee and McCloskey 2003; Arshad et al 2005; LGBT Youth Scotland 2006). Paterson (1998:297) also found that women, particularly those with school-age children, were less involved in activism and those that were involved in political and membership organisations tended to be teachers in promoted posts or those who were more mature or pursuing postgraduate qualifications.

The only substantive examples of teacher-organised activity lie largely within trade union activity and in Scotland in the largest teaching union in Scotland, the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS). The EIS has approximately 59,000 members representing over 80% of teachers in Scotland working in nursery, primary, secondary, special, to further and higher education. It sees its primary role as a professional organisation working to promote sound learning. This was its objective when it was created by royal charter in 1851 (founded in 1847). Interestingly, Forrester (2003:1012) points out that the EIS is unusual within education trade unions across the world in that many trade unions often represent either primary or secondary teachers as separate groups but this separatist format is one that has been robustly rejected by the EIS. Forrester suggests that this position follows ‘the inclusivist tradition that informs much of Scottish public life’ (ibid). The EIS has always had a dominant role within Scottish education, its structures and Scottish educational policy working groups. For example, until 2001, the EIS held the

majority of places for teaching unions in the General Teaching Council of Scotland. The EIS has been strategic in engaging in what Lawn (1996:139, cited by Menter et al 2004:208) has described as ‘professional unionism’. This was a form of unionism that adopted a more negotiative and partnership approach with government and one which Lawn suggests is preferred by New Labour. In Scotland, this approach has enabled the EIS to remain a force to be reckoned with as a trade union as can be evidenced in their central location within the McCrone Inquiry deliberations as well as in the shaping of current curriculum initiatives as in ‘A Curriculum for Excellence’.

Scotland’s General Teaching Council (GTCS) formed in 1966 is another key stakeholder and potential place for activism consisting of a majority of practising teachers, elected by their peers, with statutory responsibilities (Kirk 1995:17). To teach in a school in Scotland, a teacher would need to be registered with the GTCS. In addition, the GTCS had four statutory powers:

- to approve initial teacher education (ITE) programmes
- to visit Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) to evaluate for satisfactory provision
- to be the Secretary of State’s principal advisory body on teacher education
- to administrate the provision of supply teachers.



The GTCS represented the teaching profession and acted as a gatekeeper to the profession. Through it, the teaching profession had control over teacher education institutions and the way teachers were trained and supported.

The dominance of the EIS as the body representing teachers' voices was diminished, but not entirely lost in 2001, following an Act of the Scottish Parliament that created separate seats for primary and secondary sectors within the GTCS. The secondary sector seats were taken by a much smaller professional association called the Headteachers' Association Scotland (renamed School Leaders Scotland from August 2008). Humes and Paterson (1983, cited in Gatherer 2003:1025) suggest that the EIS, despite rigorous lobbying, was never as influential as it could have been because of changes within the teaching occupation itself. However, Gatherer suggests that the teaching unions were in fact effective and powerful, able to influence governments within Scotland and to gain better conditions and recognition of their professional status since the turn of the twentieth century.

The only record of sustained formal teacher activism was the prolonged teachers' dispute of the mid 1980s (see Pickard 2003:231-233) which was a response to repeated rejection by the UK Government of an independent pay review for teachers in Scotland, England and Wales. Since then, any overt organised activity has been limited with the exception of a hiatus when the Scottish Executive in early 2001 agreed a deal with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to improve the professional conditions of service and pay for Scottish teachers. The McCrone inquiry that followed is a landmark in the journey for the Scottish teaching

profession and has been referred to by some as ‘the harbinger of a new era for Scottish teachers’ (MacDonald, 2004:414). While there was no activity related to a dispute as in the mid 1980s, the McCrone Inquiry did spur teachers to talk within schools and collectively as a group about issues of pay, promotion structures, conditions of service, the status of the profession and the valuing of teachers in particular. Humes (2001:8) citing Bloomer (2001) highlighted that McCrone provided an opportunity for Scottish teachers to engage in some strategic repositioning by casting ‘aside the straitjacket which they mistook for a suit of armour and welcome the greater professional autonomy which is now being offered to them’. Humes suggests that this might also be the dawn of a new ‘professional activism’ within the Scottish teaching profession.

The McCrone Agreement identified collegiality within the profession as an important way for the profession to present itself. However, MacDonald in studying the reaction of ten classroom teachers in her school to the McCrone and post-McCrone agreement, worryingly concludes that in the main, teachers find it difficult to work within a collegiate culture, operating often unquestioningly in the default position of a pyramid with the headteacher in authority. She suggests that ‘obedience’ and ‘deferential behaviour’ to the headteacher is the normative position, where such a situation is believed by teachers to be ‘simultaneously imposed on and chosen by them’ and she refers to teachers perceiving themselves as ‘agents of the hierarchy’ (2004:431). Secondly, MacDonald states that there is a reluctance to engage in pro-action and drawing from her research suggests that ‘when presented with opportunities to be consulted, or when challenged with opportunities to resist, they

were disinclined to take action, typically claiming to be “not that kind of person” (ibid). MacDonald also reports that at points, teachers appeared to be colluding with the compliant culture. MacDonald draws from Humes’s seminal work *The Leadership Class in Scottish Education* (1986) which provided a critical explanation of the way Scottish education is managed and contained. MacDonald uses the term ‘compliant’ when describing the Scottish teaching workforce; Humes uses the term ‘conformity’. Both describe characteristics that are quite distant from the ones Sachs identifies as necessary for evolving an activist profession and by extension a transformative education agenda.

#### **3.4 Is there an absence of an activist teaching profession in Scotland?**

Scotland is not devoid of activism. The history of the labour movement in Scotland throws up a range of famous names such as Helen Crawford, James Maxton, John Wheatly and the famous Scottish dominie John Maclean, whose activism in challenging class oppression and poverty was captured in ‘The Ballad of John Maclean’ by Matt McGinn. Maclean lost his job as a teacher but continued to use education as a platform for taking forward socialist ideas, being the founder of the Scottish Labour College in 1916. Scotland has produced educators who would welcome developments in radical democratic schooling. Humes and Bryce (2003:114) cite people such as Patrick Geddes, A. S. Neill and R. F. Mackenzie as examples of Scots who have questioned the relationship between schooling, society and values. Geddes described schools as ‘prisons for body and mind’, Neill prioritised the centrality of the pupil over the teacher and developed a school where

pupils and staff have voting rights, and Mackenzie lobbied hard to ensure curriculum content was relevant to the lives of the pupils it aimed to serve rather than pupils adopting the conventions laid down by education bureaucrats or individual teachers. Neill left Scotland in frustration with Scotland's inability to move away from its focus on discipline and authority, Mackenzie failed in his project to transform curriculum content, and Neill's school in Summerhill, England still survives despite encountering criticisms from school inspectors for its particular brand of education. The image of the 'fighting Dominie' is one that does not appear to be obviously present in the twenty-first-century teaching profession. Why?

The reasons are probably multiple and complex. However, one possible reason might relate to the wide range of people who join teacher organisations. Humes posits that teacher organisations in Scotland are varied with a range of purpose 'which can be regarded as lying on a continuum from "unionism" to "professionalism" ' (Humes 1986:137). There are those that are clearly a trade union and there are teacher associations which have pledged never to take strike or disruptive action. The largest organisation, the EIS, with its primary objective of the promotion of sound learning, appeals, as Humes suggests, to 'people of very different political persuasions' (ibid:138). However, to maintain such a broad appeal would necessarily involve conceptual fudging. He suggests that the twin aims of the advancement of sound learning and the promotion of the interests and welfare of the teaching profession are not necessarily reconcilable. Citing Bloomer (1980), Humes highlights that unions, including the EIS, have therefore had to prioritise between an inward focus, lobbying on salaries and working conditions and aiming to improve the status of teachers, and

an outward focus on educational policies and wider educational matters. Therefore, in respect of the focus of this study, it can be assumed that addressing societal forms of discrimination and injustice and campaigning to ensure more equitable experiences for pupils in schools may be somewhat secondary in the organisation's priorities. Bloomer suggests that, given that even teacher activists are largely indifferent to matters related to educational policy or progressive issues, even though the union's leadership may appear to be advocating the need to consider progressive policies around equity and anti-discrimination they do not reflect the 'typical teacher's views or priorities'. Thus, though on the surface it might appear that the unions are engaged with issues of equity, inclusion and anti-discrimination, the momentum to create an activist teaching profession is not realised as the majority membership have not subscribed to those ideas. Silence from the membership could stem from apathy rather than consent.

However, Humes has not fully taken into account what Apple would suggest are some of the contradictions in the processes of contestation. For example, while teachers may be reacting to work overload by ignoring legislation and policies (for example, equality legislation and anti-racist and anti-homophobic policies), in so resisting they are inadvertently contributing to the maintenance of the status quo of a patriarchal, heterosexual and white framework. Therefore a lack of activism on the part of teachers may not be due to apathy or complacency but to a difficulty in mediating and progressing activism given the contradictions. A need to retain some identity and autonomy by resisting an intensification of work may result in important issues not being addressed. Apple suggests that it is critical for educators to develop

a politicised understanding of how ‘powerful features within and outside the productive process ... militate against a sense of collectivity’ and how such processes might ‘exacerbate a sense of isolation and passivity’ (1995:76).

Secondly, there is the ‘deintellectualisation’ of the profession. Humes suggests that the move away from theory within teacher education curricula, as advocated by Kirk, to a focus on the art of teaching or ‘pedagogical analysis’ (Humes 1986:144) has resulted in shifting the focus from intellectual rigour to functionalism. Rather than enabling teachers to think about ‘prevailing orthodoxies’, what is offered as part of teacher training is ‘an initiation into unimaginative, conformist thinking, a preparation for a career as pliant functionaries, not as creative and stimulating teachers’ (ibid:147). While this is somewhat harsh, if it is anything like an accurate analysis of the current content and methodology of teacher education courses, then it is unlikely that the pedagogic and curricular models within such institutions are likely to assist future teachers consider counter-hegemonic or transformative strategies. Giroux (2001:62) suggests that reducing schooling to forms of technocratic rationality while ignoring ‘the central concerns of social change, power relations, and conflicts both within and outside of schools’ is unlikely to enable teachers to develop alternative pedagogical practices. Both Apple’s and Giroux’s writings advocate the need for schools and teachers to understand relationships between the educator and what is taught. In particular, they focus on the need for schools to understand that they are social sites where societal inequalities are consistently being reproduced unless explicitly addressed. The vehicle that reproduces these relationships and power differentials is the curriculum, both formal

and informal. Given diversities in a school with different policies, 'stakeholder' priorities, ideologies and value bases there will be tensions, for example balance between conformity and change, between passivity and activism and between ideological approaches (inclusion or anti-discrimination). What needs to be understood is that there will be a network of power relations within which teachers and schools are operating, and what is required is a critical analysis and understanding of whose voices, perspectives, cultures and priorities are being endorsed and subscribed to and whose are being marginalised, denigrated and made invisible. This is the internal transformation that Sachs suggests is required to achieve meaningful change.

Scottish teacher professionalism that draws from a historical perception of itself as automatically egalitarian and supportive of meritocracy runs the risk of a 'blind approach' to the realities of the contradictions and power differentials resulting from ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation and ability. The potentially uncritical focus on the curriculum rather than creating space for student teachers and teachers to grapple with the heterogeneous pupil populations they teach is problematic.

Taking the one area of 'race' as an example, a study of the views of Scottish teachers (from 247 returned questionnaires and 82 interviews) by Arshad et al (2005: see in particular section 5 and 6 of the report) found that ethnic majority (white) teachers in Scottish schools were more likely to not 'see difference' in terms of colour, religion or ethnicity, while the very few minority ethnic teachers interviewed all talked about the importance of affirming diversity, particularly in relation to faith, language and culture which they saw as part of identity formation. Teachers had a great deal of

anxiety about placing race equality issues firmly on the learning and teaching agenda. The majority of teachers saw the promotion of race equality as working with minority ethnic pupils, and very few identified what the benefits of race equality work could be for majority ethnic pupils or for themselves and their colleagues as teachers. Minority ethnic pupils (94) and parents (38) who took part in this same study called for teachers to be more practised about addressing difference. Parents spoke of their children's identities in the face of the overwhelming ethnocentricity of society and questioned the extent to which teachers considered the messages they were sending out, sometimes inadvertently (Scottish Executive, 2005). Another study on the experiences of minority ethnic pupils in Glasgow by Hill et al (2007:276) reported that 'many had little faith in teachers' abilities to prevent or respond effectively' to racism.

However, it would be too simplistic to place blame on teachers for not being more aware of the 'fundamentally political nature of education in general and curriculum in particular' (Sachs 2001:1) and consequently to be more politically active or involved in social movements, particularly those that engage with issues of discrimination. If opportunities are not presented for student teachers and teachers in Scotland to

- grapple with how different characteristics such as social class, gender and sexual orientation interrelate and can influence educational achievement and attainment
- engage in dialogue with individuals from different groups, backgrounds and



communities

- experience placements/work shadowing with agencies and organisations that actively counter discrimination

then it is no surprise that teachers whose lives may be unaffected by issues such as everyday racism, sexism or homophobia are unlikely to see the importance of engaging with the issues or agencies that address such issues. (Arshad and Mitchell 2007:6).

For those who engage in activism, Paterson (1998:297) found that teachers ‘reported many directly beneficial effects of activism on their professional competence, both in the sense of their access to curricular materials and their general effectiveness as a teacher’. For these teachers, having wider networks and developing trust with practitioners outwith the teaching profession have clearly developed their social, cultural and intellectual capacities. It would therefore stand to reason that those teachers who can be persuaded to engage with individuals and agencies that address issues of equity and discrimination will develop more empirical reasoning and practical purpose for these issues thereby increasing the likelihood that they will alter their pedagogical practice.

### **3.5 Summary**

Professionalism is contested. It has meant different things in different historical contexts and in different locations. The concept is both a resource and a constraint. Exploring the discourse around professionalism has allowed me to place this study in

a wider framework of academic contributions on the shifting nature of professionalism. It also provides a framework that illustrates change, modernisation, restructuring and performance as key terms in current professional work. Professionalism and activism are not oppositional concepts in that professionalism is not an explanation of the lack of activism. It does not inhibit activist orientations, particularly in Scotland where there is a strong relationship between professional status (as with the GTC) and organised unionism (as within the EIS). However, as in the previous chapter, tensions exist. There are tensions between the ‘positive’ aspects of Scottish education, (that is, the collective narrative, collaborative partnerships between teachers and education policy makers) and the ‘negative’ aspects (that is their tendency to believe in naïve and weak egalitarianism and to believe that all is well). In chapters four and five, I explore in greater detail through teachers’ lives and work how teachers negotiate such tensions and contradictions.

On a more global scale, Giroux (2005) suggests that in this post-9/11 world of increasing tensions and conflicts, the ‘borders’ between people have not been collapsing, but are being vigorously rebuilt. He argues that in order to have a truly ‘critically engaged citizenry’ the challenges of these new ‘borders – such as the rise of neo-liberalism, the war in Iraq and social tensions around religious beliefs – must play a vital role in any debate on school and pedagogy.’ However, the crowded curricula in teacher education institutions and in schools do not often offer such ‘border-crossing’ opportunities to teachers. Teachers in this study have begun their own border crossings and a key purpose of this study is to find out what has spurred them to do so.

## CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

In the pressured world of teachers, there is often little time to reflect upon why they engage in certain pieces of work or to share such thoughts with others. These conversations are important to have if teachers are to be reflective practitioners and confident professionals and not mere educational technicians or ‘educational operatives’ as described by Reeves (2007:56), as discussed in the previous chapter.

Trauth suggests that ‘the choice of research method is the theoretical lens that is used to frame the investigation’ (Trauth 2001:6). In identifying a range of theoretical lenses, Trauth draws from the work of Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991) and in particular Chua’s (1986) classification of research epistemologies which lists three lenses: positivist, interpretive and critical. Chua defined these as follows

**Positivist** studies are premised on the existence of a priori fixed relationships within phenomena which are typically investigated with structured instrumentation. Such studies are primarily to test theory ...

**Interpretive** studies assume that people create and associate their own subjective and intersubjective meanings as they interact with the world around them ... [T]he intent is to understand the deeper structure of a phenomenon ... to increase understanding of the phenomenon within cultural and contextual situations ...

**Critical** studies aims to critique the status quo, through the exposure of what are believed to be deep-seated, structural contradictions within social systems, and thereby to transform these alienating and restrictive social conditions.

(cited in Trauth 2001:6)

This study sees teaching as a political act. Tackling discrimination and educating for justice and against injustice are distinctly politicised acts. Talking about racism, homophobia, sexism, class inequality and other forms of prejudice, discrimination or bigotry involves value judgements. These issues cannot be settled by facts, evidence or experiment alone (Wellington 1986:3). Teaching for social justice or for emancipation requires a teacher to take sides, for example, to be explicitly on the side of challenging racism (anti-racist) as opposed to adopting a neutral stance (non-racist). The study recognises that a significant number of teachers do find it problematic and uncomfortable to address issues which may be viewed as controversial, particularly if they are working within a context where they are unlikely to receive support for the inclusion of social and political issues within the curriculum (formal or hidden).

One of the ways I have been able to learn about issues of prejudice, discrimination and injustice is through having the opportunity to reflect on my personal experiences from growing up to adulthood and then subsequently articulating the lessons of such reflection to other learners. The recall and reflective process enabled me to make sense of my own values, and attitudes and to convert feelings into useful knowledge. The method chosen for this study, using recall and reflection, enables teachers to explore their own personal experience and the way their values have been shaped and to discuss how these impact on their current practice in taking forward equity and challenging discrimination. It aims to explore how the personal has intersected with the professional and how these teachers have (or have not) moved from what Herb Kohl, the Director of

the Centre for Teaching Excellence and Social Justice at the University of San Francisco, described as the need to move from being a ‘good’ teacher to being a teacher of ‘good citizens’.

Another area this study wishes to avoid is the exploitation of research respondents. My view on this matter emerged after observing research upon research in Scotland about the ‘needs’ of black and minority ethnic groups which has achieved very little in terms of outcomes. Instead such research has generated a great deal of frustration among black/minority ethnic communities and has left many individuals feeling over-researched and used by academia and government alike. This resulted in my becoming a founding member of the Scottish Association of Black Researchers in Scotland (SABRE) which drew up an ethical code for promoting anti-racist research in 2001.<sup>1</sup> This code has been used by the Scottish Executive and other agencies engaged in research as a guiding source for ethical practice when working on race-related matters and with black and minority ethnic groups. SABRE is no longer operational as most of its members have left Scotland but engaging with fellow black academics in SABRE taught me that issues of power and power-relations are inherent within social research and have to be acknowledged from the outset. Therefore the methodology for this thesis discusses issues of power and rejects the notion that research is neutral.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.sabreuk.org/pages/ethical\\_code/pdf/code.pdf](http://www.sabreuk.org/pages/ethical_code/pdf/code.pdf)

Challenging discrimination involves problematising the status quo. This study would question what is the received hegemony and adopts a stance that neutrality or being value neutral are not positions which can be adopted.

When sociologists do research, they inevitably take sides for or against particular values, political bodies and society at large. That is, they act as agents of the state, for interest groups or for themselves. In so doing, they take sides, for it is impossible to do value neutral research. (Denzin 1989(b):248, cited in Carmody 2001:169)

The struggle for equality and anti-discrimination cannot be considered without looking at the issue of power and how it operates to maintain divisions, subordinate certain groups or individuals and create divisions of superiority and inferiority. Recognising what Thompson (1998:42) calls the ‘paradigmatic’ nature of power, this study does not adopt the popular one-sided view that power is generally used to dominate. Lukes, in updating his seminal book *Power: A Radical View* (2004), acknowledged that defining power in a one-dimensional way, as those with power affecting those without, is simplistic. It is equally important to consider the effects of power and indeed to consider how power can be used positively by individuals, groups of people and countries to make positive changes. The analysis of the stories and narratives derived from this study would engage with the concept of power both at agency and structural levels to consider how these teachers might have used their power, whether knowingly or unknowingly, to influence for better equity and fairness. It would also recognise that power would weave in and out of the lives of these teachers, shaping experiences and also outcomes. It is important that the material that emerged and will inform the study is grounded in the lived experiences of the teachers.

Complexities of life and the topics being explored within this study would suggest that a mono approach whether in relation to theory or method is rather simplistic. This view is not new; it is adopted, for example, by feminist researchers such as Maguire (1987:14 cited in Brayton 1997:accessed online) who states that ‘Feminist research ... consists of no single set of agreed upon research guidelines or methods. Nor have feminists agreed upon one definition of feminist research.’

The mixing and matching of methods, theories and perspectives, known as bricolage, is a useful concept to inform this study. Bricolage derives from the verb ‘bricoler’ which essentially means to create or do something yourself. The concept of bricolage, a multi-perspectival approach, has been used by a range of researchers in a range of disciplines including the arts, educational research, technology and economics (Ereaut and Imms 2002; Kincheloe and Berry 2004; Sood and Pattinson 2005). Kincheloe (2005:324) suggests that the researcher-as-bricoleur ‘abandons the quest for some naïve concept of realism, focusing instead on the clarification of his or her position in the web of reality and the social locations of other researchers and the ways they shape the production and interpretation of knowledge’. Bricoleurs would also construct ‘research methods from the tools at hand rather than passively receiving the ‘correct’, universally applicable methodologies.’ (ibid). Researchers then enter into the research act as methodological negotiators rather than methodological automatons. Bricoleurs appreciate the complexity of the research process and the need to contextualise and avoid any form of reductionism. Kincheloe argues that research methods within bricolage need a high

degree of critical consciousness on the part of the researcher. Kincheloe (2005:327), drawing from the work of Denzin and Lincoln (2000), adds that research is required to be intellectually informed, widely read and cognisant of diverse paradigms of interpretation. There is an acknowledgement that there might be multiple epistemologies depending on history, cultural locale, power dynamics and context. In fact, Kincheloe (2005:335), with the help of Denzin and Lincoln, identifies five dimensions of the bricolage: methodological bricolage, theoretical bricolage, interpretive bricolage, political bricolage and narrative bricolage. Methodological bricolage refers to the use of a range of data-gathering strategies to gain data and information. Theoretical bricolage draws from a range of social theoretical positions (e.g. Marxism, feminism, anti-racism, and critical theory), while interpretive bricolage enables a range of interpretations as result of a good understanding of hermeneutics (perspectives), based on ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, faith and beliefs and so on. Political bricolage rejects the neutrality of the research process and, like the post-positivist, critical and interpretivist paradigms, understands that research processes are subject to manifestations of power. Therefore research processes require to document the effects and impact of such power and even to provide counter-hegemonic possibilities. Finally, narrative bricolage accepts that stories are not told within a vacuum and that stories are shaped by what Kincheloe (2005:336) describes as ‘narratological traditions: comedy, tragedy, and irony’.

Accepting bricolage as a useful lens, this study draws from both the critical and interpretive traditions.



## 4.1 Interpretivism

Interpretivism starts from the position that knowledge of reality is a social construction and that people socially and symbolically construct their own realities (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). Interpretive researchers are interested in understanding a particular situation or context rather than discovery of universal laws or rules (Willis 2007:99). The aim is to understand singular situations, extracting meaning and providing rational accounts of them.

Interpretivism draws from two philosophical traditions, that of phenomenological ontology and hermeneutics. The first tradition is influenced by Alfred Schutz's critique of positivism, and the second by the work of Georg W. F. Hegel, Martin Heidegger and Paul Ricoeur. (Lee 1991, cited in Stahl 2005). Hermeneutics is often associated with two words, *verstehen* (to understand) and *erklaren* (to explain). However, in social science tradition, it is the former that is prioritised rather than the latter, the need to explain. The interpretive views of knowledge then could be given the metaphor of stepping into the shoes of the person(s) that we are gaining knowledge from.

‘Social process is not captured in hypothetical deductions, covariances and degrees of freedom. Instead, understanding social process involves getting inside the world of those generating it.’ Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991:15 citing Rosen, 1991)

Willis (2007:110) states that ‘the thoughtful reflections of experienced practitioners are a prized source of knowledge and understanding for interpretivists. So are the stories of people with relevant experiences.’

Hermeneutics seeks to understand by making meaning. The adoption of a hermeneutic stance to help comprehend why teachers who explicitly take forward equity and anti-discriminatory practice do so sits well within the framework of this study. To achieve meaning would require sensitivity to the teacher’s own social construction of reality and an appreciation of the context which each teacher occupies.

The concept of ‘self’ within hermeneutic thought also has relevance to this study. One of the key discussants of ‘self’ in the hermeneutic tradition is Paul Ricoeur, a French philosopher who was interested in the relationship of phenomenology and hermeneutics. Ricoeur talks about ‘soi-même comme un autre’ which translates approximately as ‘oneself as another’ (Ricoeur 1990, cited in Stahl 2005).

‘What we call our data are really our own constructions of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to’ (Geertz 1973:9).

Ricoeur’s discussions about the self as not being independent but co-existing with and influenced by the ‘other’ implies within research situations, as in this study, certain moral obligations between researcher and those being researched. Some of these considerations are covered in the section on ethics later in this chapter.

I was interested in finding out if there were ‘turning point moments’ (Denzin 1989a:7) (or ‘epiphanies’ as Denzin also calls them) that these teachers have had in their lives that spurred them into active engagement with equity and anti-discrimination issues, or, even if there were not quite such transformational events, whether there were individuals, pieces of literature, or episodes in the lives of these teachers that contributed to such a process.

Denzin suggests that there are four types of epiphany (ibid :17) ‘ the major, the cumulation, the minor and the illuminative, and the relived’. Major epiphanies are dramatic and immediately life-transforming, an example being the death of a loved one; cumulation refers to a series of events that impacts on a person’s life, an example being experiencing repeated racial discrimination over time; the minor or illuminative refers to situations or instances which expose the underlying reasons or tensions, for example, vigilante actions against perceived racists by Person A caused by the cumulative effects of racism on Person A; and the relived epiphany is when the person who has suffered cumulative racism relives the ‘turning point’ in their lives which made them alter their life course on certain issues, e.g. on ‘race’ .

Denzin’s work with alcoholics found that to understand the ‘why’ of the present in terms of alcoholism, he had to work backwards to uncover the personal lives and stories of alcoholics. In the same way, I believe that to understand the ‘now’ of these teachers, there is a need to go back to find out about previous experiences and triggers.

My assumption is that teachers do not become interested in equity and anti-discrimination issues unaided. Life opportunities such as the presence of particular individuals, books read, or participation in social movements are some possible contributory factors that enabled these teachers to develop that interest. I wanted to find out what triggers existed for the nine teachers and whether these could in any way be replicated within a teacher education course. I was also interested in whether there were particular ‘types’ of teachers that initial teacher education institutions should be looking for as part of selection. This interest has come from frustration over decades of working with teacher education students in Scotland where there appears to be high levels of naïvety and disinterest around the issues of addressing discrimination and this level of disinterest or naïvety appears to exist for many at the point of graduation.

In Scotland, where there are few opportunities to gain ‘natural’ knowledge of diversity or discrimination issues (for example, racial discrimination), exploring how teachers develop a commitment to anti-racism, for example, is important. Literature examining and analysing teacher attitudes on matters of diversity, equity and social justice, predominantly from the United States, suggests that for teachers to be effective with a diverse range of pupils, the teachers need to have been exposed to a degree of diversity. Johnson (2002:163), in her life history study of six white teachers’ readiness for teaching in racially diverse classrooms, suggests that ‘with the increasing racial and cultural diversity of the student population, criteria could also be incorporated into entry interviews that solicit potential candidates’ lived experiences in communities of colour

and their willingness to rethink their conceptions of race'. Johnson's views are not isolated and many who have conducted studies mainly in the area of race and colour have concluded that disposition itself is not enough; for teachers to be effective with a diverse range of pupils, they need to be comfortable and practically engaged with diversity as opposed to merely possessing abstract and theoretical notions of diversity (Ladson-Billings 2005; Sleeter 1993; Grant and Gillette 1987).

In Scotland, adopting the principle that teachers should have accredited prior experience on diversity matters before they can become competent to work with a range of pupils is a non-starter. The reality for most people entering Scottish initial teacher education courses or who are now teaching within Scottish schools is one where they are unlikely to have had easily identifiable opportunities to gain much experience on a range of diversity matters. Furthermore, it remains a common fallacy that equity and anti-discrimination issues are only of relevance where there is a diverse pupil population. Few teachers fully comprehend that adopting anti-discriminatory practice is an approach that needs to be embedded into all aspects of learning and teaching regardless of the make-up of the pupil population.

In engaging in this small-scale study of teacher activists, I wanted to consider whether there was anything meaningful that I could learn that would assist me as a teacher educator in shaping the content of the taught curriculum for student teachers to assist their own understanding of equity and anti-discrimination issues or would assist me as a selector for teacher education courses. This study therefore will go beyond describing or

understanding the phenomena of the lives of the nine teachers, and will seek to identify what needs to be considered by those involved in Scottish education, particularly those involved in initial and continuous professional development of teachers.

## **4.2 Critical paradigm**

Critical research assumes the necessity of critique of the current ideology, seeking to expose dominating or oppressive relationships in society. It illuminates power relationships between individuals and groups of individuals, enabling the researcher and participants to critique commonly-held values and assumptions. (Kilgore (1998), cited in Willis (2007:81–82))

This study is political in that it seeks teachers who are comfortable with using terms like discrimination, racism, class inequalities, sexism, and homophobia. Too often, such terms are seen as complex or too radical with many teachers preferring to adopt more sanitised terminology when discussing issues of equity, preferring terms such as tolerance, inclusion and diversity. This study is interested in teachers who explicitly engage with challenging discrimination and who are prepared to address difficult issues.

Critical theorists seek to expose structures, relationships and processes that involve the perpetuation of inequities and power in order to redress power imbalances. Like post-positivists (though coming from quite different paradigms), they believe there is an external reality; unlike post-positivists, critical theorists would not concentrate on how to objectively capture and record that reality, rather they would analyse the relationships and power differentials related to that reality.

A critical paradigm is an ideal theoretical lens from which to situate a study that wishes to explicitly discuss ways in which teachers have operated to place controversial issues on the school agenda or even educated in a way that might be considered by the conservative Scottish educational establishment as counter-hegemonic. The study is not interested in ‘proving’ whether a teacher has experienced discrimination or in verifying whether what they are claiming to do in schools and classrooms is objective and real. What the study wishes to explore is what has motivated these teachers and prompted them to take on issues explicitly, and how they have attempted to make a difference whether at a personal, cultural or institutional level.

The majority of the nine teachers have managed to engage pupils, parents and fellow teachers in open inquiry into often sensitive and controversial issues. They would appear to be quite comfortable as teachers to engage with topics that others might suggest were politically contentious. Such an approach must be demanding; as Rudduck (1986:17) suggests, it would need to be ‘ethically and intellectually justifiable’. Were there theories, concepts or philosophies that these teachers drew from to assist them to develop their professional practice in these areas?

To find this out would require an understanding and an exploration of these teachers’ lives beyond their work. It would require interaction with the whole person and exploration of how their different experiences and circumstances (life and home) might intersect and connect to shape present practice. Drawing from the work of Mills (1959),

Denzin suggests that this represents the joining of ‘the study of biography and society’ (1989a:34). This approach also chimes with how feminist researchers have sought to create feminist epistemology where the totality of a woman’s life, not just one aspect of it, is entered into the knowledge production.

This study also recognises that the teachers selected are professionally equal to or indeed, in hierarchical terms, possibly senior to the researcher in terms of status. This reality is juxtaposed against the positional power that researchers have over their subjects.

Consideration needs to be given that the method selected would limit as far as possible an asymmetrical positional power in favour of a more symmetrical model while trying to understand the subject matter in question. I was keen to offer teachers a degree of bilateral control of the research process. In terms of analysing the conversations with the teachers, Foucault’s discussions about how discourse engages with power and knowledge is relevant. How the information from the conversations is elicited, arranged, prioritised, given meaning, consumed and transmitted will influence the final comments in the study and potentially the discursive context of this area of work over time.

Given that as the researcher I am also seen by the teachers as being an ‘expert’ within the field of equity and anti-discrimination, this recognition may well affect the content of any forthcoming conversation. Therefore a more discursive style of engagement is required where I locate myself (partially) within the research, becoming engaged with



the issues, a conversant rather than just a listener, and, as feminist researchers would say, ‘painting [my]self into the picture’ (Harding 1987; Brayton 1997). I used the term ‘partially’ earlier, a concept borrowed from Mies (1993:68) who refers to the need at the very least to have ‘conscious partiality’ which is achieved through partial identification with those being researched. For Mies, conscious partiality would assist the researcher in retaining a degree of distance from the research participants thereby enabling empathy without corrupting the data with subjectivism. A further important aspect to this study is one suggested by Ralph (1988:139, quoted in Brayton 1997), reminding us that the researcher and participants are ‘often actively working to change the conditions of their oppression’. This is certainly the case for the researcher in this study but also for some of the teachers who have experienced or are experiencing discrimination as a result of an aspect of who they are.

Given this, the analysis of transcribed text or the shaping of any emerging themes should as far as possible be arrived at through a combination of how the researcher and the teachers (in collaboration) become meaning makers in trying to answer this study’s research questions. The study therefore cannot conclude with ‘truths’; rather it offers ideas for future consideration for those keen on seeing equity and anti-discrimination issues embedded into teacher education, educational policy and research as well as learning and teaching.

This study therefore is not located within one theoretical lens, rather within a hybrid where critical hermeneutics within interpretivism combines with a critical theory

paradigm. These two theoretical traditions sit well together as they argue that subjective realities are shaped by other factors such as the dominant hegemonies of the day, operation of censorship, dynamics of oppression, systemic distortion (bias), silencing, normativism and so on. The ‘self’ interacts with the culture and politics of the surroundings and time and it is this intersection/interdependency of self and context that is complex and needs to be understood. Critical hermeneutics is also concerned to ensure that the subjects of research are given genuine voice, do not become ‘objects’ within the research but are part of the research process.

Sceptics of the critical paradigm often accuse this approach of being too heavily theoretical and political as well as being averse to quantitative methodologies. The critical paradigm is ‘interested in carrying out its own research, but only with those methods which give access to the key concepts of the critical paradigm’ (Jupp and Norris 1993:45).

However, engaging with equity and anti-discrimination issues requires a method that is underpinned by anti-discrimination theory. Failure to do this would result in conceptual and functional ambiguity. This study is a small-scale study and therefore did not warrant quantitative methodologies; however, a future larger study might use questionnaires and the coding frameworks and question areas from this study.

### **4.3 Choosing the method**

There is a body of work using auto/biographies, life histories, case studies and narratives in the study of teachers' attitudes, work and culture in educational research (Ball and Goodson 1985; Connell 1985; Goodson 1992; Pohan 1996; Garmon 1998, 2004; Kehily 2002; Alsup 2006). These different methods of collecting stories and accounts of lives have been used as a way of trying to understand the relationship teachers have with their work and their workplace, and also in the shaping of their identities as pedagogues.

Altrichter et al (1993:48) suggest that one method of making such 'knowledge accessible' is through the 'activation of tacit knowledge by conversations and by being interviewed'. They state that to develop meaningful conversation those being interviewed would need to order their experiences and thoughts to make sense to the listener. The interviewer by posing questions and prompting assists this process along.

I have chosen to use the interview as the main source of obtaining information for this study. The interview is probably the most widely employed method in qualitative research, particularly 'as a way of uncovering and exploring the meanings that underpin people's lives' (Arksey and Knight 1999:32). The key questions identified within the introductory chapter and repeated later in this chapter were used as the basis for shaping up a framework of question areas for the interviews. Recognising that a snapshot approach would not be appropriate, a series of interviews was arranged for each teacher being interviewed.

Elliot (2005), drawing from the work of Gubrium and Holstein (1997), discusses two differing approaches to interviewing: the naturalist approach which would be concerned with ‘what’-type questions such as ‘what experiences have people had?’, ‘what are people doing’, and ‘what does it mean to them?’, and the constructivist approach which would focus on ‘how’ questions. A constructivist approach would emphasise how things are said and how people are participating, and would study these aspects in order to make sense of the social world of the interviewees. Others, like Byrne-Armstrong et al (2001:5), find divisions between two such distinct approaches unclear and question if the one methodology or ‘never mix conflicting methodologies’ orthodoxy of researching conventions is helpful given that life, experiences and contexts are temporal and multiple. Byrne-Armstrong et al argue that trying to fit the lived experiences of researching to single methods and conventions may be difficult if not confusing. For them, methodologies often shift, merge, and change as knowledge is produced. For example, though interviews utilising a question framework would be a primary method of obtaining information from the teachers, interview interactions between a teacher and the researcher are likely to produce other outcomes which might influence the direction of a conversation. For example, a few teachers commented on how the interactions over the interviews helped them to reflect upon their experiences in a way they have never thought of doing before and one teacher wrote at the end of the process to say ‘I like to thank you. I’ve enjoyed your visits. I’m fascinated by the memories and feeling they have evoked for me. I now know that caring did matter after all.’

If, as Potter and Mulkay (1985), Harris (2003) and others argue, the interaction between interviewer and interviewee is important, the identity of the interviewer and their relationship with the interviewee must form part of the research evidence for analysis and therefore the interview is itself a topic of study; but this does not overshadow or replace the core content of the interview as the primary research focus (Elliot 2005:20).

Given the critical and interpretive paradigms of power sharing, I was keen that teachers who participated were able to provide their critical comment on emerging findings. Harris (2003) described the 'interaction between interviewer and interviewee' as being important, particularly if the study is not to objectify the interviewee. I wanted the teachers to work with me to create meaning from the data and that emergent themes were not explained without such involvement. Teachers interviewed were not viewed as epistemologically passive, but their interpretive capacities were stimulated through prompts and interjections throughout so that they helped became more active in narrative production.

**Teacher :** I got dragged in from the playground one day, he told me he [the headteacher] had been looking out the window and said he was surprised to see me playing with 'C' pupils, did I realise I was an 'A' pupil. What a dilemma to put on a 12 year old, he told me they weren't suitable and I should be mixing with the 'A' stream pupils.

**Interviewer:** How did you feel about that because those people were your friends?

**Teacher:** Greatly upset. I couldn't come to terms with this and I also had friends that were in 'E' as well. These kids I'd first gone to in with the 'B' stream had become my friends so I had friends all over the place.

**Interviewer:** How did you think the other children in the 'A' and 'B' classes felt about these issues?

**Teacher:** I don't know if anybody else felt the same. I didn't know if they had come across that dilemma I had. The ones from the second school had grown up with that kind of streaming so I guess they were used to it.

The process of interviewing and hearing the story is a heuristic device for both the researcher and the narrator. Czarniawska (2004:47), drawing from the work of Kvale (1996), proposes that 'conversations are the main mode of knowledge production in our societies ... especially its version known as philosophical dialogue' and Czaniawska suggests that this approach should become the model for interviews. Therefore in this study, the sessions with the teachers started as interviews but often ended as conversations akin to the coming together of two parties interested in common matters, a common conversational endeavour. The teachers were aware that their involvement with the study was for my doctorate thesis and it is my belief that some of them only took part as they were supportive of my personal endeavours. I am less certain they would have taken part if this study was part of a government or research council funded piece of work. It was therefore all the more important that as the 'researcher', I was careful with the information shared with me particularly in relation to accuracy. Coles (1989) suggests that in any such journey we need to respect each other and each other's stories as they unfold and reciprocity was a definite feature in these journeys.

By listening to teachers speak in several interviews over a period of months, I drew insights as the teachers remembered, made sense, connected with the questions being asked and reconstructed their memories and experiences. These personal narratives were

both descriptive and explanatory. Polkinghorne (1988, as cited in Clandinin and Connelly 2000:16) explains that descriptive narratives ‘produce an accurate description of the interpretive narrative accounts individuals or groups use to make sequences of events in their lives or organisations meaningful.’ Explanatory narratives, are when a range of accounts of events supplied are examined to provide connection and meaning to the series of events’.

Teachers would recount experiences and events which contributed to how they then thought about issues in later life, examples being the teacher already cited who was told not to mix with children ‘beneath her level of intelligence’ and the teacher who as a five-year-old remembered another child saying to her that they could not play together unless they belonged to the ‘green, white and gold’ – referring to religious differences between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland. Both grew up into adulthood questioning social class injustices and religious prejudices. Both drew lessons from those childhood memories and episodes which then influenced their future teaching practice. Both spoke in subsequent interviews of how these moments and memories have impacted on their practice.

However, the interview as a method is not without its drawbacks. For example, the power of the interviewer in relation to the interviewee needs to be considered. Then there is the ability of the interviewer to interrupt conversations, to be selective and give importance to aspects of the conversation which may or may not coincide with how the interviewee might have weighted those same aspects. Another main criticism of

interviews is that what is said in interviews is often not necessarily what those interviewed do in practice (Webb and Stimson 1976; Gilbert and Mulkey 1983). Those who favour ethnographic methods have used this argument to problematise the interview method (Becker and Geer 1957, quoted in Seale 1998). Denzin (1970:133–138) also lists a number of other ‘problems’ which he suggests can distort interviewees’ responses. These include the issue of self-presentation for the interviewee in the early stages of interview, the difficulty of penetrating private worlds of experience, and the volatile, fleeting nature of one-off interviews which can lead interviewees to ‘fabricate tales of self that belie the actual facts’.

#### **4.4 Narrative and stories: a way of knowing**

There are numerous expectations on teachers in Scotland to meet a range of legislation (such as equality law, child protection law, Additional Support for Learning Act 2004) as well as a range of policy targets (for example, Curriculum for Excellence, Enterprise Education). In addition teachers are expected to engage in continuous improvement often via self-funded study (Chartered Teacher courses, Qualification for Headship). Despite the rhetoric of teacher development, collaboration, co-operation and talks of co-construction of the curriculum and teaching agenda, the situation in Scotland is not hugely different to other parts of the world in that the daily laboured world of teachers is dominated by assessment, attainment targets, measuring up to meet the future skill needs of business, evaluation and record-keeping. These tasks are intensifying and are creating a loss of time for teachers to interact and to engage in peer thinking and teaching. Apple



captures the hurdles facing teachers across the world very well in his chapter ‘Whose Curriculum Is This Anyway?’ (Apple 1993, particularly 118–125) where he suggests there are few opportunities for teachers to describe the possibilities and tensions of working in a context of rapid change. In an area such as that of equity and anti-discrimination where issues are complex and sensitive, such time for sharing is essential, or the topics will be marginalised or simply avoided. This study in taking a narrative approach hopes to offer teachers an opportunity to engage in an inquiry into the nature of their professional commitment to issues of equity and anti-discrimination. I also wanted to give place to the voices of teachers who work openly to challenge discrimination. Rudduck (1993:19) reminds us that certain voices (women teachers, black teachers) remain marginalised and that case study research (or in the case of this study, narrative research) is one way of redressing that imbalance. In Scotland, the voices of teachers who challenge the status quo and who are prepared to break rank with conservatism to address institutional inequity are often voices that are trivialised by parents, employers and policy makers. This study wishes to go some way towards recognising these voices.

In their study of the experiences of pre-service teachers Huber and Garcia (1993:140) wanted to move away from merely capturing isolated aspects of a teacher’s experience. They wanted to gain access to ‘teachers’ subjective conceptions of their own education and its significance for day-to-day teaching’. This study agrees with Huber and Garcia’s adoption of the Gestalt principle that the whole is more than an addition of its parts and, in its analysis of teacher stories, would look not just for the public (professional) voice

but also for the private (personal) voice of teachers in shaping their current professional self and practice. In fact, Luckmann (1978, cited Czarniawska 2004:39) would argue that the ‘lifeworld of modern people is divided into segments or subuniverses. One such small lifeworld of a modern person is a world of work, the other two being family and ecological community (the list should now be extended to include virtual communities).’

Narratives, however, are not just about remembering, for that alone would not be sufficient. To become meaningful, past experiences need to be given coherence, often through a combination of hindsight and what Scott (1998:32) refers to as the ‘epistemological mores of the present’. Scott cautions however that narratives being so focused on individual stories relies on phenomenological perspectives which Scott suggests might weaken such endeavours. Locating the study within an interpretive and critical paradigm brings in Giddens’s structuration theory (1984) which attempts to understand individual and social factors in relation to each other. The internal world of the teacher (personal and subjective) needs to be understood and located within the external world of social reality. Thompson (1998:34) suggests that it is not helpful to see the personal world as subjective or objective, rather both internal and external influence each other and there is perpetual interaction which is socially constructed. This contextualising of lives and stories within broader socio-political issues of power, discrimination and oppression is the core of this study.

The importance of narratives is not just about giving voice but also about how it can become a meaningful process to aid praxis. Teachers in conversation in this study were

asked to plot the journey from the personal narratives into their professional narratives. The job then was of identifying the different stories of how commitment moves from experience to theory to practice. These journeys, if identifiable, can be powerful educational tools.

#### **4.5 Validity, reliability and generalisability**

This study does not propose a hypothesis to be solved. The goal of this study is to understand rather than to prove and therefore triangulation has not been a dominant priority as might have been the case with studies that require supported conclusions of the data.

Willis (2007:220) suggests that there are alternative methods of triangulation such as the use of 'member checks' where emerging conclusions are checked with the participants in the study. He also suggests that another method might be to become sufficiently immersed in the area of study so as to be able to provide contextual and supportive evidence.

This study takes account of both the above alternative methods. The final set of interviews with each teacher provided space to establish that themes identified from their individual stories were indeed accurately recorded by the researcher. This enabled some themes which were missed out by the researcher to be identified. The final interview was also used to present emergent themes from the nine sets of interviews.

These themes were discussed with each participant and opportunity was provided for each teacher to take the discussions further.

In terms of extended experience, these teachers are known by their peers as being ‘champions’ of equity issues. There is external verification of their authenticity in this area of work. All of the teachers interviewed have received some form of public endorsement of their commitment to equity and anti-discrimination issues: they may have been commended via an inspection report, or had their practice cited as an example of sector-leading in local authority or national websites such as that of Learning and Teaching Scotland; they may have contributed to national seminars or in-services on the issues, or have written about the issues in educational publications. Some were also involved in parent/community initiatives where the value of their work on equity issues was being recognised not just by peers and pupils but by parents and the wider school communities.

There remains, however, the possibility that what the teachers said might contradict what their pupils have actually experienced. It might therefore have added further validity to this work had there been an opportunity to engage in classroom observation or to collect pupil responses. However, there are sufficient examples of actual work in the public domain, from lesson plans to policies, that these teachers have written, for this study to be assured of evidence of anti-discriminatory practice. In addition, it would be naïve, as Woods (1977:17) suggests, ‘to assume a common reality between interview and teaching event’.

Critics of using ‘soft’ methods like narratives may question the robustness of acquiring data for this study. This study does not make the claim that using interviews and narratives makes the data more accurate or authentic than using other methods such as standardised questionnaires. Higgs and McAllister (2001:33–34) argue that what is important is the conceptual framework and paradigms that guide the study as this will help decide on the methodology required. The narratives from the nine teachers in this study are hindsight accounts where teachers looking back selected what they considered to be salient chunks of experiences, piecing together information from their lives and making sense of these in relation to the area I am studying. There is bound to be distortion of experience as teachers choose what it is they wish to share. Czarniawska (2004:5, quoting Davies and Harré 1991) reminds us that there is no such thing as an unadulterated narrative. What is more important is to ensure that those who provide the stories are not excluded from the shaping of the narrative.

As part of gaining access and consent to taking part in this study, each teacher was provided with a rationale for the study (Appendix 3) which also included a suggested framework of the types of question areas that the study would focus on. This guide will have influenced the types of experiences teachers chose to include in interviews. So, in a sense, while the narratives are drawn from experience, they do not, as suggested by Ferber (2000, cited in Elliot 2005), transparently reflect all of actual experience, rather they give meaning to some experiences.

It is my belief that the information and data generated for this study would not have been elicited in ordinary everyday conversations. The subject of what influences teachers in Scotland to become committed to equity and anti-discrimination issues is unlikely to be ubiquitous or to come up naturally in conversations within social settings. Some of the information gained might arise out of brief anecdotes that the teacher might provide to a listener interested in equity and education issues, but not extended accounts of the type gained through research interviews.

Critics of the validity of interview data have stated that interviews are unnatural situations where interviewees use the opportunity to ‘let off steam’ on an issue (Halford et al 1997) particularly where they perceive the interview to be taking place within a safe environment. In this study, it could be argued that the teachers (who knew they were chosen for their positive contributions to this area of work) might have tried to present a far more positive picture of themselves, given the desire to impress. However, given that these teachers had already received recognition for their efforts in promoting and sustaining equity and anti-discrimination work, some within national and international contexts, it is hard to see why they would feel the need to ‘gild the lily’ or to prove a point.

Small-scale qualitative studies of this kind are naturally limited in that it is difficult to generalise the findings. Critics such as Williams (1998, cited Elliot 2005:27) question the basis on which generalisations can take place and argue that ‘Almost every classic interpretivist study, while acknowledging the subjectivity of the researcher and the

uniqueness of the repertoire of interactions studies, nevertheless wishes to persuade us that there is something to be learned from that situation that has a wider currency' (1998:8).

Williams, as well as those who have written substantially on the interpretivist paradigm such as Denzin (1983). stress the problems of generalising on the basis of qualitative research. This study does not generalise but does build from other studies, mainly in the United States, which have considered existing theory about what assists teachers to teach in a way that is anti-discriminatory and inclusive (Pohan 1996; Smith, Moallem and Sherill 1997; Garmon 1998 and 2004).

Some might suggest that this study is weakened by not interviewing teachers who choose not to engage explicitly with equity and anti-discrimination issues. It could be argued that such teachers may also demonstrate characteristics of openness, self-reflection and an ability to be self-critical. However, the key question I wanted to respond to was 'Why do some teachers explicitly engage with equity and anti-discrimination issues?' rather than about proving a hypothesis about whether teachers did or did not engage in these issues, there would have not been any gain from interviewing teachers who did not engage with the issues. Practically, it would have been difficult to have found any teacher willing to come forward from that category as all teachers probably regard themselves as fair minded and would be affronted at being categorised otherwise.

#### **4.6 Ethics and confidentiality**

Any research that involves the participation of human subjects opens up issues of moral obligations, responsibility and prudence on the part of the researcher and requires consideration of the impact on those involved.

The key issue of concern is one of exploitation. Too often researchers are perceived as ‘taking’ from their subjects, utilising ideas and interpreting the data to suit their own agenda. Those who support the use of narratives and collaborative methods have suggested that research structures that ‘enable informants to participate as subjects as objects in the construction of sociological knowledge’ (Graham 1984:118) could minimise issues of intrusion and exploitation.

In this study, care was taken to fully inform the teachers of what the study was about and their role within the study. They were reminded from the outset of their right to withdraw at any point of the process. There was also discipline in the amount of time taken with each interview; I ensured that each interview kept to the negotiated time which was agreed at the outset of each interview.

Though the interview had a question framework, teachers could choose the events that mattered to them to share within those question areas. Permission was sought from each participant to delay the final interview till I had had an opportunity to analyse the transcripts of the other interviews, so that I could come back to each teacher with final



questions to ensure coherence and, more importantly, to enable me to seek their views about emerging themes.

This study celebrates the lives and achievements of the teachers being interviewed. The teachers knew they had been selected as ‘examples of good practice’ and therefore were pleased to have been asked and engaged with the process with positive emotions.

Nevertheless as the topic under investigation touched on negative aspects of the social world, namely prejudice and discrimination, there was a possibility that asking teachers to think about why they became interested or involved in equity and anti-discrimination work could throw up experiences of past discrimination which they had encountered, witnessed or felt whether directly or indirectly. In addition, teachers might be reflecting on areas they had not actively thought about that might provoke reactions that were less positive. Some teachers, particularly older teachers (some of whom had over thirty years of teaching experience) used the initial interview session as an opportunity to go down ‘memory lane’. There were times when most teachers spoke of their own personal experiences of either being discriminated against or witnessing discrimination. However, while some of these memories might have been unpleasant or sad to recount, what was clear was that the teachers had taken from those experiences, made meaning of them and taken action to learn from them and progress such learning into their lives so that discussing them was not a distressing experience. Therefore while the potential was there, I do not think this study ‘opened up Pandora’s box’. In fact, where there was feedback, teachers talked about how they valued being able to reflect and have time to make sense of how past experiences have made them who they are today and to have the

opportunity to discuss aspects of their lives and personality in relation to the context of this study.

Another aspect for consideration is the way in which researchers interpret and analyse the data collected (Elliot 2005:141). This study stated from the outset that the purpose of the interview was to gather information from teachers about what had enabled them to become interested in equity and anti-discrimination issues. Therefore in my analyses, it is the content of the narratives that was focussed on rather than the structure or form of the narratives. Too often front-loading issues are considered to ensure procedural robustness by taking all the right steps about providing information, obtaining informed consent, and developing a framework that enables the interviewee to share in the shaping the interview session, only to stumble at the analysis stages. Elliot (ibid) warns that if the process of interpretation and analysis is not sensitive to the original aims of the interview/study, then the result could be an undermining of the contribution and ontological security of the interviewee. This, Elliot suggests, would be to engage in duplicity. Therefore this study has been careful during the analysis stages to not read into the data more than what is presented and to check back with each teacher that the interpretation of certain information is not misguided.

It was also important in this research to ensure confidentiality and teacher anonymity was maintained. Some of the teachers know each other or of each other and some are very prominent within Scottish education and therefore it was particularly important that their anonymity was preserved. This has meant some of the information provided within

the interview discussions could not be used as this would have assisted identification of the individuals. Additionally, much of the good work of these teachers that can be evidenced through publications, published lesson plans, school policies, and school initiatives is evidence that would strengthen the validity of this research. However, I knew from the outset it would not be possible to share these in the thesis or the identity of each teacher would be revealed. While all the teachers would be happy for their work to be shared, some of the information shared within interviews is private and that privacy needs to be respected.

Finally, there is a need to once again acknowledge that this study is political in nature in that it takes sides. It values teachers who explicitly engage with equity and anti-discrimination issue and seeks evidence that can be used to persuade teacher education selectors and curriculum developers of the importance of selecting and recruiting teachers who are able to engage similarly. This bias has affected all aspects of this study's research process from the construction of the topic to be studied (equity as well as anti-discrimination), research question areas (for example, discrimination issues are explicitly mentioned), and choice of teachers (those who have demonstrated they are prepared to confront difficult issues) to how the data is interpreted. It could be argued that I have asserted my power as the researcher in the kind of knowledge production and direction this study is taking though much of that production has also been through a process of negotiation with the teachers. Researcher and teachers shared a common purpose which is to progress the case for more equity and anti-discrimination work within Scottish schools.

#### **4.7 Selecting the teachers**

Purposive sampling (non-random sampling) was used to select up to ten teachers known by their peers or senior managers as teachers who championed equity issues. In Scotland, the numbers of teachers who are easily identified for explicit and sustained quality practice in equity and anti-discrimination work remains relatively small. The potential reasons are likely to be varied but may include the reality that many teachers do not evidence in any robust way how they have taken equity and anti-discrimination issues forward as part of their conceptualisation and practice to a as well as more structural reasons such as the failure of Scottish education to acknowledge such practice as worthy of recording. For example, neither equity nor anti-discrimination is an identifiable category for which Scottish teachers can gain recognition by the General Teaching Council Scotland in 2008. It would also probably be true to suggest that many teachers in the field who do engage with equity and anti-discrimination issues have not been properly recognised or rewarded either by their employers or by inspection audit frameworks.

Therefore the teachers selected were largely known to the researcher either by reputation or by previous contact. Purposive sampling enabled this study to target a particular group of teachers who are recognised by their peers and management as key contributors in the field of equity and anti-discrimination. Purposive sampling also enabled the identification of teachers who had sustained and developed practice in this area for several years. This was a critical feature as this study wanted to not just to explore what

factors enabled the teachers to become explicitly committed to equity and social justice issues but to discuss how they have managed to sustain such practice.

In selecting teachers, care was given to ensure a diverse representation in relation to geography, sector, ethnicity, age and gender. In addition, the teachers had to be able to fulfil the following criteria:

- be recognised by their peers or senior managers as someone who champions issues of equity and fairness
- have shown they were prepared to engage with challenging discrimination rather than just adopt an inclusive or ‘tolerance’ agenda
- show tangible evidence of their practice in this area, either through publications, inspection reports, or examples of curriculum development resulting from their work in this area. This was particularly important given there was to be no classroom observation of their practice.

An original list of eighteen teachers meeting the above criteria was drawn up. I drew up that list by identifying teachers whom I had worked with or heard of and who were known for their enthusiasm and commitment to equity and, more importantly, to anti-discrimination issues. I am privileged in knowing many teachers across Scotland due to having worked closely with teachers, schools and local authorities in Scotland in the area of equity for the past two decades. Teachers identified had to fulfil the criteria discussed in the preceding paragraph. As confidentiality was an issue, it was difficult to

have an entirely open selection method. My preference would have been to ask the 32 local authority officers I worked closely with on equity and anti-discrimination issues to provide me with some names from their authority that they felt would fulfil the criteria. I would have also sought names from my own union, the Educational Institute of Scotland, and finally to approach key voluntary sector organisations working with schools in the area of challenging discrimination for names of teachers they have found particularly helpful and active in this area of work. However, while this open method of arriving at a set of potential respondents is inclusive and transparent, my concern would have been that names would have been offered particularly by local authority officers of teachers who may be 'doing their best' in the area of inclusion and fairness but were not necessarily active educators in challenging discrimination. I could also have approached colleagues involved in school education who had an excellent understanding of anti-discrimination issues to offer names of potential teachers but that ran a risk of compromising issues of confidentiality. I therefore reverted to my own intelligence in selecting teachers to contact. I considered teachers whose work I had read about or whom I had had the opportunity to become aware of through my work for CERES in identifying and writing up good practice in the area of equity. There were also teachers whose work I had come across as a judge in the annual Scottish Education Awards and a few teachers who had previously written material for me for websites I have developed for the government on issues of race, gender and challenging sectarianism and religious intolerance. It is therefore important for me to acknowledge that the teachers in this study are drawn from my own networks and contacts though the majority are not teachers I work with regularly or know on a personal basis.

In identifying names, I consciously drew up a list which provided diversity in terms of gender, age, geography, sector (early years/primary/secondary) and ethnicity.

Pragmatics also determined the composition of the list. Having decided that using interviews rather than structured questionnaires was a method that this study was going to adopt, being able to travel to their locations fairly easily for interviews was an important consideration when selecting teachers. Most had to be easily reached within public transport routes either within urban or rural Scotland. Cost was also a factor in that one or two teachers within the Scottish islands were excluded though known to me for excellent practice in equity and anti-discrimination work as it would have cost too much to consider visiting them for one face-to-face interview let alone four interviews. Therefore the final ten selected were not necessarily all my first choices but were people who met a range of specifications, in terms both of competency and pragmatics.

Teachers were sent a letter or e-mail explaining why I was approaching them. A study rationale (Appendix 3) was sent to provide background information as well as outlining the time commitment that I would require from each teacher. The teachers were asked to commit to five interviews, each lasting between sixty and ninety minutes, over a period of six months. If they agreed, participating teachers were then asked to provide me with a letter or e-mail giving me their consent to be part of the study. The briefing sheet also provided the question areas that the interview sessions would cover. Two of the first ten approached did not respond. I then went on to numbers eleven and twelve on my list who agreed. The ten teachers who agreed are known to myself as colleagues I have collaborated on equity-related educational projects with or teachers I have come across

in previous research on good practice on equity or teachers who became known to me as Chartered Teacher students or teachers whose reputation and work I had become familiar with during one of the many equity in-services I conducted across Scotland between the period 2000 and 2005. I could have selected a different set of ten teachers but the combination that I did end up with was sufficiently diverse to enable me to proceed with the study. There was always the option of selecting more teachers but the issue of numbers needed to be balanced against my ability to have a manageable scale of study while working full-time.

Of the ten teachers who agreed, one teacher had to withdraw a couple of days before her first interview due to the bereavement of a close relative. Though the teacher would have been prepared to take part and commence interviews at a later stage to honour her commitment to me, given the distressing nature of the situation, I decided it was more considerate to thank her for her willingness to be involved but to remove the obligation to take part. The teacher chose to withdraw. Another teacher, after two interviews, also faced a very close family bereavement that was particularly traumatic. However, as this teacher was half way through the interviews, it was mutually agreed to pick up interviews when the teacher was physically ready to do so. After a gap of five months, the third and fourth interviews were held.

After the first interview with two different teachers, I realised that the material could be covered in four interview sessions rather than five. I also realised that there would be benefit in keeping the fourth interview till after I had an opportunity to conduct the first



three interviews with all nine teachers as well as having time to draw emerging themes out of the data. A final (and for most the fourth) interview for each teacher was held following the initial analysis of findings. For most of the teachers this was almost six months after the initial set of interviews. Having agreement from all teacher participants to hold back one final interview till I had completed my initial analysis proved to be invaluable. The fourth interview enabled me to cover gaps in discussions following analysis and to delve deeper into issues that had been mentioned but sometimes superficially. The final interview was also a means of checking back with the teachers the accuracy of my analysis of their data as well as enabling me to discuss and seek opinions from the teachers about emerging findings. The final interview was also a way of providing a degree of reciprocity as it provided me with the opportunity to discuss what I had learnt from each of them. Sharing emerging findings with the teachers enabled swift feedback before the thesis was finalised. This enabled teachers to feel they were still contributing to the shaping of the thesis rather than being faced with a fait accompli.

Three sessions, each lasting between sixty and ninety minutes, were held with the majority of the nine teachers. For two teachers, due to work pressure, they requested three extended interviews rather than four interviews. So their third interview was often held several months after the first two interviews. For these two teachers, interviews were generally between ninety minutes and two hours long. One teacher in a senior post only gave two interviews and was unable due to work pressure to provide further interviews. All teachers gave permission for the interviews to be taped.

There are differing views over what constitutes a reasonable and appropriate length for interviews. Elliot (2005:32) states that some authors suggest that ninety minutes is optimum for a single qualitative research interview and that, if the quantity of material to be covered needs longer than that, additional interviews should be organised. I believe by being clear with the teachers in this study that the expected length of time that would be required for each interview session would be no more than an hour and a half helped to obtain their consent to participate and it gave each teacher a sense of how much detail to provide in each session.

#### **4.8 The interview process**

Interviews were held in different locations, some at workplaces (e.g. classrooms or education authority offices), some in their homes in the evenings; others were at my office at the University; there were also some phone interviews. Phone interviews were popular with those who had caring commitments, as interviews could be held in the evenings or at weekends, and also with those living a considerable distance away. Phone interviews were only held as a last resort and only with teachers who I had already met either in previous work or at a first face-to-face interview. Overall for each teacher, interviews were generally two or three weeks apart, apart from the one teacher where there was a gap of nearly five months between the second and third interview. The first three interviews spanned two months on average for each interviewee. The fourth and final interview was held some six months later. For most interviewees their participation in this study spanned a period of nine months. The fourth and final interview became

both a ‘mop-up’ interview and a time to check out emerging findings with the teachers and was more intense, precise and lengthier, on average at least two hours with each teacher.

Each session started with an open question asking each teacher for some background: ‘Can you tell me when you were first aware of issues of diversity, equity or discrimination?’ While this was an open question, it did focus the interviewee on the areas that I wanted responses on. For many of the teachers, this enabled them to go back to a point of their life from which to begin the conversation. Teachers began to identify their ‘epiphany’ moments. For many, there were several such moments.

From that starting question, the interview was flexible and relaxed. At times, we paused and spent time on childhood memories, the importance of parents and families; at other times, the conversation might move on to a more contemporary example that the teacher wanted to contribute as part of their response to the initial question. I started this study with a crude framework of what I wanted to cover for each interview session. I found out very swiftly that if I wanted a more participatory research format I had to come and go with the flow of the teacher. It was my task as the researcher to find ways and appropriate moments within that ebb and flow of conversation to seek answers for questions that might still need to be answered in order for me to complete the study.

Hollway and Jefferson (2000) suggest that focussed-style questioning is a form of interviewing that trains the interviewee to respond with appropriate information that the interviewee assumes the interviewer wants rather than to engage in genuine free-flow narrative. While I would not define my style as focussed interviewing a balance was needed between free-flow narratives and guided conversations. Teachers were encouraged to speak but if they strayed too far away and for too long from the study framework, as some people do when they tell stories, I did bring them back to focus through prompts and gentle interruptions, repeating the purpose of the study. In a free-flow narrative, as the researcher I would not have interrupted, but though flexibility was encouraged, straying widely out of the study boundaries was not, unless such a journey was required to bring the conversation back to issues of equity and anti-discrimination. For example, one teacher wanted to describe the death of an uncle during World War 2 as this precipitated in her a desire to achieve for her grandmother who had just lost her son. The achievement was to be a successful teacher and to go further than the work that women in her community traditionally aspired to. So the stories about the war eventually brought the conversation back to her awareness of gender issues.

All interviews (face-to-face and phone interviews) were transcribed and analysed.

Transcription was straight recording of the words spoken rather than any other verbal material such as pauses, 'umms' and 'errs'. It was a clean transcript as the focus of this study was on the content of what was said rather than a study of the function of narratives or conversation.

## 4.9 Analysing the data

Mautner and Doucet (1998) suggest that the latter stages of qualitative analysis, that is, the examining of each transcript in turn and drawing up themes and concepts, have become routinised and are fairly straightforward. However, they urge for more careful attention to what Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) suggest are the intuitive aspects of analysis where the researcher decides what needs to be reflected on and illuminated, discussed, theorised and analysed.

The analytical framework for this study is influenced by Hollway and Jefferson's (2000) four-question framework cited in Elliot (2005:159) where they suggest reading the transcripts with these questions in mind:

- What do we notice?
- Why do we notice what we notice?
- How can we interpret what we notice?
- How can we know that our interpretation is the right one?

The first question draws out the intuitive self in analysis. While reading the transcripts, what leaps out and what is embedded into the mind will largely draw from the researcher's own understanding of issues of equity and anti-discrimination. The second question is about reflexivity within analysis. So, for example, as I have experienced verbal and physical abuse because of my colour, when teachers in this study described actual examples of discrimination that they had experienced, these episodes resonated and I found that I would remember these examples more clearly. Hollway and Jefferson

argue that researchers need to be explicit that their own emotional responses to qualitative material will affect analysis. My first reading of all the transcripts proved exactly these points as I found myself highlighting particular paragraphs or phrases that particularly stuck out for me as potential quotes. I then had to reflect on why I had selected these. Erben (1998:10) suggests that imagination is thus required to ‘aid recognition of significant moments in the data, to relate these to each other and the overall lives of the subjects under study’.

In order to ensure that I was not selecting merely what was important for me, I was able to use the final interview with each teacher to check out whether what I had picked up was as significant for them.

In addition to Hollway and Jefferson’s four-question framework, questions posed by Jupp and Norris (1993:46) within the critical paradigm are worth considering for this study. While their questions are aimed at those engaged in documentary or text analysis, their rationale is helpful. They suggest that the critical paradigm brings distinctiveness to analysis by having

- a concern with analysis at a societal and social structural level
- an emphasis upon conflict between social groupings and on the dynamics of struggles between them
- an emphasis on power and control in the relation between social groupings

- an interest in ideology as a means by which existing structures and social arrangements are legitimated and maintained
- a commitment to not taking for granted what is said
- a commitment to changing the existing state of things.

(Jupp and Norris, op cit)

#### **4.10 Making sense of the data**

Having read the range of literature from the United States and Australia (Gay 2000; Levine-Rasky 2001; Ladson-Billings 2001 and 2005; Aveling 2002; Johnson 2002; Cooper 2003; Brown 2004) and also the more limited literature about teacher attitudes and dispositions in relation to diversity and equity issues from the UK (Menter 1989; Gaine 2001; Kehily 2002; Pearce 2003; Arshad et al 2005) I found the coding frameworks (see Table 1 below) offered by Pohan (1996), Smith et al (1997) and Garmon (2004) particularly useful and relevant. I decided to amalgamate Pohan, Smith et al and Garmon's frameworks and added four further themes which would appear to be significant in Scottish terms, those of religion, activism, the preparedness to take risks and national identity. I added (E), (G) and (H) and (I).

**Table 1: Coding framework**

**incorporating Pohan (1996), Smith et al (1997), Garmon (2004)**

- A. **Exposure to diversity** (e.g. friendships, sports, dating, politics)
- B. **Experience of discrimination either personally or as a witness** as a child or an adult
- C. **Travel** (e.g. moving, holidays, work experience abroad)
- D. **Education** (e.g. influence of teachers, lecturers, peers)
- E. **Religion** (influence of faith/belief connections)
- F. **Personal dispositions** (ability to gaze inwards, reflexivity, openness, critical thinking skills)
- G. **Preparedness to take risks** in relation to equity, social justice and anti-discrimination issues
- H. **Evidence of activism/collective working**
- I. **National identity** (national cultural values impacting on personal ability to engage or otherwise with equity issues)

The coding framework above enabled me to consider the text from the various interviews and to attempt to see if they could be matched against the coding framework. This was partly to enable me to see if the journeys that the Scottish teachers were making in any way differed from those of the teachers in the United States that had been studied by Pohan, Garmon and Smith et al. Though their work was in the main about finding out how white teachers could work more effectively with black and other visible



minority ethnic students, I was curious to see if the areas that triggered American teachers to become interested in equity and discrimination issues were similar to those that did so for Scottish teachers.

Data that would not comfortably sit within categories A–I was then put into a ‘residual’ category and sense made of those parts of the interviews later. The type of data that did not fit into the coding framework of Table 2 was related to the curriculum changes or policy demands currently facing Scotland, namely the Curriculum for Excellence and matters related to assessment.

In placing material into the various codes, I also had to consider how such material was going to assist me to answer the initial four questions I had posed in Chapter 1. These are listed again as follows:

1. How do teachers who are known to be promoting equity, diversity and anti-discrimination as part of their professional practice develop their interest in these issues?
2. To what extent do these teachers have a theoretical analysis of equity and discrimination issues?

3. In what ways does their commitment to equity issues impact on their practice?
4. Are there common characteristics and experiences that shape the attitudes and values of such teachers?

I went back to my data and began noting points made within the transcripts which enabled me to begin to populate data within these question areas and to begin answering the questions. These are discussed in more depth in the concluding chapter of this study.

Emerging themes were then discussed with the teachers who took part in the study, the purpose of this being to acknowledge that the teachers were the primary sources of information in this study and that their voices should shape the conclusions or any new epistemology on the matter. This ‘checking’ interview enabled teachers to prioritise issues which they had mentioned to me which I had not given as much importance to or to challenge my interpretation of some of the data they had provided.

## CHAPTER 5: PRIVATE LIVES

We can educate the next generation to solve many of our problems if we are courageous enough to free them from our own prejudices and anxieties.  
(Charlotte Epstein, teacher, 1972)

Retrieving and representing voices accurately is difficult and, despite the numerous quotations used in this chapter, there is no way that I will be able to truly reflect the voices of each teacher. The challenge is how to move from what Boje (1991) calls ‘story collecting’ to ‘story making’. In addition, I want to present these stories as a living narrative which may be of use to those who are not directly involved in this study’s research process.

Czarniawska (2004:55) states that there are basically two ways to deal with interview transcripts. The first is to ‘concoct a researcher’s own narrative out of them, that is, to write up, or to rewrite, or to interpret them’ and the second is to analyse them as narratives of interviews, involving conversational analysis. To make sense for others, it is the former approach that this study adopts.

This chapter records some of the emerging themes from the stories that teachers shared with me over the months that I worked with them. The conversations with teachers did not always produce neat answers to the study questions (see Chapter 1: page 12) as teacher reflections did not always follow organised patterns that fitted the study question framework. At times the narrative mode moved into areas triggered by memories and

which moved the conversation off the study topic. I read the transcripts of the narratives I had gathered, some representing what appeared to be shapeless and chaotic conversations, and I sought out coherent themes which could provide some unity among these nine personal stories. I shared these themes with eight of the nine teachers before writing it up to ensure that collectively they were happy with my interpretation and selection of the emerging themes. I was unable to check the emerging themes with one teacher as I was not able to gain a final interview due to their workload. This chapter is about the teachers' personal stories rather than their professional stories or 'stories of practice' (Jalongo et al 1995:9).

## 5.1 Profile of teachers in this study

Teachers were each given a monitoring form (see Appendix 4) and were asked to voluntarily self-classify in terms of ethnicity, disability, gender and so on. The table below provides a mini-profile of each teacher.

<b>Teacher A</b>	Female, aged 60–69. Describes herself as Scottish. Does not consider herself to have a disability. Primary classteacher. Straight. Describes her belief as 'ethical'. Trade union member and active. 23 years of teaching. Qualified with a 3-year Primary Diploma.
<b>Teacher B</b>	Female, aged 50–59. Describes herself as African. Does not consider herself to have a disability. Secondary teacher in a promoted post. Straight. Practising Christian. Trade union member and active. 24 years of teaching. Qualified with a BEd (Secondary).
<b>Teacher C</b>	Male, aged 50–59. Describes himself as White British. Does not consider himself to have a disability. Secondary teacher in a promoted post. Straight. Practising Christian (RC). Trade union member but not active. 30 years teaching. Qualified with a PGCE (Secondary) Distance Learning.
<b>Teacher D</b>	Female, aged 41–50. Describes herself as White Scottish. Considers herself to have a disability. Primary and now in senior management. Straight. Describes her belief as Christian based but not active. Trade union member but not active. 30 years teaching. Qualified with a 3-year college diploma in education, also post-graduate certificate in education and Scottish Qualification for Headship.

<b>Teacher E</b>	Female, aged 30 – 39. Ethnicity is not declared. Does not consider herself to have a disability. Primary class teacher (part-time) but also works as a developmental officer on government education projects. Lesbian. Does not consider herself as having a faith or belief. Trade union member, was active but no longer so, disillusioned with trade union as not sure if trade union is genuine about anti-homophobic work. 10 years teaching. Qualified with a post-graduate certificate in primary education.
<b>Teacher F</b>	Female, aged 21–29. Describes herself as White Scottish/British. Considers herself to have a disability. Straight. Christian but does not attend church. Trade union member but not active. 7 years teaching. Qualified with a BEd (Hons).
<b>Teacher G</b>	Male, aged 40–49. Describes himself as White Scottish. Does not consider himself to have a disability. Primary now in senior management. Straight. Does not consider himself to have a faith/belief. Trade union member but not active. 21 years teaching. Qualified with a BEd (Hons) Primary/Secondary.
<b>Teacher H</b>	Female, aged 30–39. Describes herself as British Pakistani. Does not consider herself to have a disability. Primary teacher, now in promoted post. Straight. Muslim. Trade union member but now less active. 17 years teaching. Qualified with a BEd.
<b>Teacher I</b>	Did not fill in the form. However, based on my knowledge: male, secondary in a senior management post, straight, Muslim. Trade union member and was very active.

## 5.2 The importance of family and home

All the teachers interviewed found family to be an important learning source. Stone (1988:7, cited by Clandinin and Connelly 2000:113) suggests that ‘the particular human chain we’re part of is central to our individual identity’. The family as a concept has been recognised as a powerful term engendering emotions of belonging, collegiality and loyalty. Casey, in her analysis of work, self and society (1995), refers to how the ‘family’ theme has been colonised by the world of business and is now part of everyday organisational discourse with terms like ‘team/family’ being used with the explicit aim of inculcating employee loyalty and identity with the corporate family.

Knowles (1992) discussing his research on what shapes teachers, notes that early childhood experiences, along with early teacher role models and previous teaching

experiences, are most important in the formation of an ‘image of self’ as a teacher.

Weber and Mitchell (1996:109) provide a list of academics who concur, reminding us that children consciously or unconsciously observe and absorb the images and experiences of their childhood which linger and shape their orientations and identities as people of the future.

An opening question to all nine teachers was ‘Can you tell me when you were first aware of issues of diversity, equity or discrimination?’ The majority of teachers went back to their growing-up years (childhood to mid teens) as a starting point to begin their stories. The family unit, particularly mother and father, were viewed by teachers as important early educators and socialising agents.

My mum and dad when in Town X [in England] had a greengrocer’s which was beside the hospital. There was a lot of people there – even from other parts of Europe. My dad went out of his way to order, what was then classed as exotic fruits and veg because people had come in and asked him. It was just wee things like that I picked up on. (Teacher C, male)

My dad ... when he was at university in the fifties was very involved with the union, in a political group with people like Donald Dewar. He was involved with the debates over homosexuality when it was still illegal at Glasgow Uni, promoting it. One of his best friends was gay. My mum says people thought he was also gay because his best friend was. (Teacher E, female)

He [father] had a job which had him travelling around the Highlands. In those days you used to get lots of hitchhikers and he used to give them lifts. At weekends when I was out with him we would pick up hitchhikers. You would learn about other people’s backgrounds from that. Later on they converted their house into a guesthouse and there was a wide-ranging clientele. (Teacher G, male)

Later Teacher G explained that his father's views were very much shaped by being Scottish and from the Highlands.

...my father, he is very proud to be a Scot but he is not nationalist with a capital 'N' and one of his ways of demonstrating it, contextualising himself and his origin, was to try and make visitors to the country very welcome.

Here there is a glimpse of what Craig (2003:230–231) means when she speaks of the tacit inherent belief of many Scots in egalitarianism. Craig also suggests that for many Scots there is no real awareness of what forces in Scottish culture are shaping that mindset. It is one of those unquestionable givens. Teacher G was someone who had reflected much on his upbringing and, over the three interviews, told different stories to exemplify how his family values had shaped him. He also demonstrated how people can change and that prejudices, even those which are held with a reason, can be shifted. For example, he told the story of how his father was prepared to change his attitude to Japanese people who were still being perceived negatively as a result of World War Two.

I remember in the early 70s we used to have a Morris Traveller, he was looking to replace this car because that's when he changed jobs to rent collecting. He did a year in that car and it had taken its toll. So asked him what kind of car he was going to get and I suggested he get a Toyota and he said 'oh no, never buy a Japanese car, not after what they did in the war.' Strangely enough when they opened the guesthouse (I was 11 or 12 – an impressionable age) a lot of their clientele were Japanese. He saw a different side to Japan and Japanese culture. Very quickly entered into correspondence with these people and saw that the vast majority of Japanese are really kind people, always presented presents before they left the guesthouse. He didn't suddenly come out and say that the Japanese weren't so bad after all but by his actions you'd catch him.

Others learnt about difference and diversity from other members of their immediate or extended family.

Sexual orientation has been an interesting one because my brother-in-law is gay and for ten years didn't speak to his family. He came out when everyone was at uni and then cut off all ties. My husband who is ten years younger didn't know what had happened and hunted him down and made him accept his little brother at least. So our social life getting to know his brother was going out on the gay scene... I don't see why it should be an issue. When does sexuality matter unless you want to have sex with them. If someone is not a potential partner then I don't really mind who they are interested in.

(Teacher F, female)

Alsup (2006:107) talks about the connectivity between family and professional embodiment suggesting that 'the family and community into which individuals are born determine their social class, ethnicity, race and ideological frameworks or foundational beliefs'. While Alsup is largely correct in that early experiences may well remain with us for all our lives, some of the teachers interviewed used their early experiences to move away from the frameworks that they were born into.

For example, Teacher D (female) was born into a household that did not always engage with issues of gender and ethnicity in a positive way: 'I was brought up in probably quite a racist family, a very white Scottish male-dominated traditional family...?'

However, loyalty to family is strong and Teacher D within the same few minutes was keen to point out some characteristics within her family, particularly from her father,



that had been positive in her identity formation as she moved into her teens and into adulthood.

I know I said my father was a traditional Scottish man, but he was quirky and he does pride himself in thinking apart a little bit. I always liked that about my dad and I have become myself like that...

Interestingly, Craig's (2003:230-31) comparison of Scottish and English cultures, the 'hard man' image of Scotland is not one which Craig addresses, rather she concentrates on characteristics that demonstrate how Scotland as a nation and as a people have been unfairly treated by their more powerful neighbours south of the border. This self-perception of Scotland as a 'hard done by the English nation' has been another factor as to why it has been difficult to place anti-discrimination issues, particularly issues of racism, sexism and homophobia, firmly on the table. It is a case of those who see themselves as oppressed being reluctant or unable to see themselves as engaging in any acts of discrimination or oppression. If this is then tied in with the self-belief of egalitarianism as discussed in Chapter 2, the reluctance to engage in national critical self-reflection as potential perpetrators of discrimination is understandable.

Teacher D is now in a senior position within the world of education and has become one of the most prominent people in her education authority for taking forward anti-racist and international education. The home discourses or 'ecological niches' described by Hocking et al (2001:227) and cited by Alsup (2006:107) have created different kinds of outcome for Teacher D. She has taken from the positive aspects of her upbringing while

adopting oppositional ideological positions to some of the more negative home discourses.

Other teachers recalled family situations where being the ‘other’ incurred hostility.

My mum who is Catholic married my dad who was Protestant. People have referred to her as the black sheep of the family.... Then when I was about 18, my gran died and it was the first time he [father] had ever been in my gran’s house. So the reason we never went as a family was because there were people who would know that two of my gran’s daughters had married paratroopers. And there was uncertainty which daughter had married a paratrooper so it made it not very safe for my dad to be in Omagh with his family. Which was very shocking to me to realise that was why he was never with us. Other people in her family did marry Protestants who became Catholics to marry into the family but my mum didn’t feel it was something she should have to ask my dad to do... (Teacher F, female)

Teacher F’s family grew up in a context where sectarian divides were a reality. However, Teacher F’s parents shielded their children from those realities. These memories have played their part in fuelling Teacher F’s commitment to tackling injustice and discrimination. While there was no overt home discussion on matters related to sectarianism, Teacher F’s mother, who she names as an influential character in her life, had taught Teacher F to stand up for herself and for what was right regardless of the context. This message of standing up for self has been interpreted by Teacher F at different stages of her life as standing up for those less powerful, for others who cannot speak up for themselves and for human rights and justice.

I’ve come to realise since a teenager I’ve been quite in people’s faces and I know I have got people’s backs up. Becoming a teacher I tried not to upset people as much as I typically have done. But if I hear someone say

something that is unjust or unfair or things that aren't politically correct, I will speak up.

Positive family outlooks coupled with politicised conversations about issues of diversity and difference can play a part in compensating for the lack of actual diversity. Teacher E, for example, grew up in an area that was largely homogeneous, certainly in terms of colour.

There were very few children whose skin wasn't white in my schools. There were one or two children. So I don't think as a child or at university my friendship groups were very diverse, there were very few non-white faces.... My family is a political family. So the discussions are political. My parents are Labour Party activists for all of my childhood and up till now. So I can't remember when in that way, I became aware of class and difference but I did.

Four out of nine teachers came from families who were engaged in political activism which helped to ignite their interest in engaging with contemporary political issues.

... we were politicised as a family. My father was and still is staunchly Labour. He was very much a product of the post-war, national health service, the drive for a better future, he fought in the second world war. They had been quite economically poor pre-war ... In terms of whether we are a political family, not actively campaigning but very aware and politics was always discussed around the dinner table... My brother, he is five years older and yes he is still involved. The fortunes of his favourite party have had lots of ups and downs, mainly downs but he has never wavered in his beliefs. He is a pragmatist in terms of he is not a firebrand, he hold certain principles from a left-wing perspective. He is very left-wing on the SNP [Scottish National Party]. (Teacher G, male)

My dad was very active in the community, he ran a welfare association in City X [England] and he was also a councillor in the Labour Party. My mum studied at University X as well. She was very pro-active in women's issues and very pro-active in community work... Politics has been a feature of our family life. I think it gave me a big background on how community groups operate.... I used to attend immigration tribunals because my father

works in immigration. In the holidays I worked in the Pakistan welfare association and gained an insight into community and people who would come to father for advice and support. (Teacher H, female, visible minority ethnic)

Hargreaves and Fullan (1998:47) suggest that teachers on the whole avoid politics, seeing their work as teachers as a ‘virtuous calling, untainted by politics’. They claim that like many other people, teachers in general view politics as the domain of those who are self-seeking and opportunistic. Teachers would prefer to value balance and to be able to offer young people different points of view to consider. Neutrality is desired and engaging with politics is often perceived to be partisan. This valuing of practised detachment as a mark of professionalism has been discussed in more depth in Chapter 3. That discussion concluded that to engage in anti-discrimination work requires stances and risks to be taken and therefore neutrality is not an option. Ginsburg et al suggest that we should debunk the assumption that ‘professional, intellectual and technical activity’, on the one hand, and political activity, on the other, are mutually exclusive phenomena’. (1995:3).

Coming from homes where politics and social issues are discussed would appear to be quite a significant contributory factor to developing teacher interest in social issues. This is not to suggest that such interests cannot develop in the absence of such discussion, but if it is not found in the home, then it needs to come from another source such as schools, peer groups, or involvement with other organisations, or through college, university and work-based education and training.

### 5.3 Personal experiences of discrimination

Six of the nine teachers brought up in their first interview examples of how they felt they had either been discriminated against or had witnessed discrimination as they grew up.

Teachers offered these examples as part explanation of why they had become conscious of issues of equity and anti-discrimination. These experiences acted like bridges helping these teachers to make connection with other types of injustices.

It's probably due to me coming up here to Scotland when I was 7 years of age. So I was English, with an English accent – ... I still have family down there. So despite the accent [now Scottish], I still count myself as English when it comes to football and things like that. I think that's me wanting to be different. I tended to get picked on for my English accent.... Yeah and I and remember my mum telling me how quickly I was trying to get rid of it, in order to merge. (Teacher C, male)

My first experience of social injustice was when I was visiting my gran in Northern Ireland (Omagh). There was a girl a couple of years younger than me. She told me I couldn't play with her unless I was green, white and gold. I didn't have a clue what she was talking about. So I asked my mum who tried to explain to me and it was about which church she went to and I remember at 5 being very upset by that. (Teacher F, female)

I remember my mum would come into school quite a lot because I was being bullied at school. In my school report in 1979, the teacher had wrote that I needed to think about my attitude to other children in the class. That stuck, I knew it wasn't me though but the teacher was thinking I was a problem. (Teacher H, female, visible minority ethnic)

I think I always knew. It's hard to look back and make markers. I was aware that people weren't all equal. I grew up and some people have this idyllic picture of living in a rural part of Scotland, well you knew the pecking order where you fitted in... According to the society I lived in, I wasn't at the top, I wasn't one of the folk that paid for education but I wasn't at the bottom because I was well dressed. (Teacher A, female)

John Dewey advocates that experience is a key factor in effective education. However, it is not just having the experience that counts but the attaching of meaning to that experience that produces really useful knowledge. Only when the experience connects to and positively influences the future does it become learning and of use. The conversations that help connect between past and present are what Alsop (2006:77) describes as ‘borderland discourse’. Borderland discourse ‘connects personal ideologies and subjectivities to professional ones’. Alsop advocates that borderland discourse is part of transformative identity formation which needs to be explored by those who educate teachers. She sees borderland discourse as ‘holistic- inclusive of the intellectual, the corporeal, and the affective aspects of human selfhood.’ (2006:6). Giroux, cited by Wyer et al (1997), talks of ‘border crossing’ opportunities. In using this phrase, Giroux was referring to the importance of border pedagogies ‘whereby students from variously marginalised backgrounds could be equipped to move confidently back and forth between their own groups and the “mainstream society”’. The concept is nevertheless a potentially useful one when talking about groups of teachers who are largely homogeneous with few natural experiences of crossing cultural and other boundaries needing to develop that same confidence to move back and forth between different cultural terrains.

The experience of having undergone some form of discrimination appears to have enabled some of the teachers in this study to become more aware of issues of difference. Noticing difference without viewing such difference as being strange or a deficit is important within a Scottish context. In Scotland, the discourse has largely situated itself

around the concept of 'sameness'. In research exploring the views of 81 Scottish teachers on minority ethnic pupils' experiences of school in Scotland, one of the main issues to arise was teacher confusion about whether to 'see difference' or not (Arshad et al 2005). The question of 'visibility' and 'invisibility' recurred within teacher responses in that study. Comments about 'not seeing difference' came from both teachers in schools with higher intakes of minority ethnic pupils and from those in schools with very small numbers of minority ethnic pupils. Many of these teachers felt that colour differences should be ignored as part of challenging discrimination, preferring discourses around 'sameness', as colour had been used as such a divisive category in the past; a few named the apartheid categorisations as an example. Scottish white teachers' uneasiness about engaging with colour differences is also found among white teachers in England (Jones 1999; Pearce 2005). In England as in Scotland, the overwhelming finding is that teachers who do not have experience of working in culturally or otherwise diverse settings fail to engage with these issues in any meaningful way, and this led Pearce to ask if 'the teacher is the problem' (Pearce 2005). In England there are far more visible minority ethnic people, activists and organisations and by dint of sheer numbers these issues are often catapulted onto the educational agenda. In Scotland, this is not the case. With fewer people from visible minorities in Scotland, cultural diversity issues are often ignored, addressed in a superficial way or, at worst, treated in an exoticising and patronising manner.

The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry and the MacPherson Report (1999) found that the colour-blind approach remains largely the favoured approach in the belief that such

blindness will foster more inclusiveness. The fact that some of the teachers in this study had experienced discrimination appears to have enabled them to discuss matters around colour and other differences more openly when the more common response would have been to avoid such discussions, pretending that differences do not exist or are of no material consequence. Many teachers in Scotland sadly continue to hold the mistaken view that discussing differences could increase the prospect of discrimination.

Some teachers in this study did not experience direct discrimination as children. Some became affected as they left the cocoon of their families and childhood. One teacher while at university began to encounter direct discrimination related to her gender.

I was in a drama department studying drama and all of the lecturers were male, two-thirds of the students were female. There were elements of performance in the course and the opportunity for performance for women were absolutely limited. The opportunities for men were not limited in terms of what decisions were made. There was also a case of sexual harassment which I had to deal with and just got blocked by the hierarchy. So there were things and we watched a new female lecturer driven out the department by the men. (Teacher E, female)

Another saw it as her friend, a young German woman, experienced post-war anti-German sentiments.

I was there with the children and my German friend and her children. She used to stay down Easter Road and it was 1961 so she still got a bad reception in shops. Once she came over the road and she ran over to the corner shop to buy a half pound of boiled ham for sandwiches. We didn't have any money – both of us. We had four young children all within a two-year range. So she came in with the boiled ham and there was a huge bluebottle in it. She couldn't go back. There was always comments about Germans. It wasn't because she was a coward, there



was no way she could go back. We had to throw the ham away, other people could have gone back. (Teacher A, female)

Others began to be affected by discrimination as they attempted to progress into employment:

I work in university in the northern part of Country X [abroad] which is not where I originally come from. I'm from the south... Promotion as well, if you are not from the catchment area, it is very difficult to rise beyond maybe senior lecturer level. (Teacher B, female, visible minority ethnic)

The memories of childhood and growing up, the importance of family, exposure to diversity, witnessing or feeling discrimination all played a part in sharpening these teachers' perspective of life. Teacher E put it succinctly when she said:

I feel my story has significant learning in it about discrimination. Without having my story to tell, it would maybe make it harder for me to empathise with other people, engage with them and I feel like I can.

Teachers in this study developed some idea of difference, fairness and injustice in the formative stages of their lives. These were arrived at from learning that took place from parents and other members of the family and through friendship rather than from any concrete theoretical consideration of the issues.

#### **5.4 The influence of religion**

While neither Pohan's (1996), Smith et al's (1997), nor Garmon's (1998) research identified religion as an influencing force, religious issues mattered for at least six teachers in this study in various ways. In the main these influences were positive and the

church played a part in shaping some teachers' identity and attitudes to issues of fairness and justice:

I didn't really have aspirations. I was brought up with that Protestant work ethic, pride was a sin etc... I was brought up in the church in a good way.... (Teacher A, female)

We then went to the Catholic primary school. It's basically that, the values of the Catholic church of fairness and so on... I think it engrained in me ... a sense of fairness and one of the things I really hate is bullying of any kind. So it's not really just racism but discrimination of any kind. I don't like people being treated unfairly. (Teacher C, male)

I wouldn't say I hold strong religious beliefs but I went to Sunday school as a teacher and not really with any conviction, just for working with the children. This was before university. I think some of it does rub off, more egalitarian beliefs. (Teacher G, male)

...being a practising Christian ...it gives the check and balances of what you do or how you're going to do it. (Teacher B, female, visible minority ethnic)

...at about 14/15 and I had become involved with the Baptist church which had a youth group, full of all sorts who all had some faith. Through that I became a Sunday school teacher, and through becoming a Sunday school teacher with the Baptist church. I was the teacher for a group of children from X children's home. Most the children were between 5 and 7 and were in care, living with a family group home and the houseparents had some sort of Christian affiliation and used to bring them all to church. I became their teacher and got really involved with them and do things like take them out on Saturdays for trips, take them to my mum and dad's house for tea and I did that over a period of about two years. I think that has been one of the most formative experiences of my life. I was 14 at the time, unbelievable, can you imagine being allowed to do that now! They were about 7 but there were some that were about 11/10 and they would sometimes come too. ... I saw there were people in society that didn't have the same opportunities as other people had, they were people I was very fond of and attached too, so my Christian faith has always been important to me, even though my family weren't religious.... Then as a Christian I found I was drawn to the type of Christianity where people saw Jesus

as coming to help the common people, the liberation theology and all that Jesus and the bible says about liberating the poor. That became the rationale that formed me. (Teacher D, female)

Interestingly, the two teachers who did belong to another religion (Islam) made no mention of whether their religion impacted on their perception of life. This was an aspect of their personal life they chose not to share or comment on. For both, the issue of being visibly different (colour, language, cultural dress) appeared to matter more. Nevertheless, for me the question remained about whether these two teachers, particularly post 9/11, had simply learnt to be silent about their faith.

The influence of the church or religion was not always positive. Two teachers in particular questioned whether the church as an establishment or religions in general could reconcile their own interpretation of issues. One questioned how religious interpretation of morality sat alongside general principles of human rights and anti-discrimination.

When I decided to marry my boyfriend, I went to my minister, who had been my minister when I was growing up. He knew I wanted to be a missionary and I had just finished my teacher training. I had decided not to go abroad to do this as a full-time career. I had gone along the teaching side, it had become about morality not just religion. Going to another country to teach them about a religion, that's not really that helpful. By the time when I chose to do teaching, part of it was about having a skill which is very, very useful to support other countries not just ramming religion down their throats. So when I went to talk to the minister about getting married, he realised I was living with my boyfriend and said he wouldn't marry me. This was about six years ago and I was still attending church and ran youth groups. If this was such a condemnable sin, living with someone who really loves me and who I really love, I think Jesus would forgive this.... I think there has always been something about organised religion that isn't quite right, my

mother even by her own family, one who is a priest named her as a black sheep. I think that's not loving and accepting. (Teacher F, female)

The other teacher was very sceptical about religion and the place of religion within anti-discrimination work, particularly in relation to sexual orientation.

I think the stereotype of the Islamic communities or black communities being homophobic makes it hard for me to feel safe and valued and not to feel defensive or aggressive. I do understand that those are stereotypes of what I might encounter but they feel like a barrier ... Quite probably the hardest for me would be fundamentalist Christians because I have less sympathy for them as an oppressed group. Maybe rightly or wrongly. (Teacher E, female)

Whether it was positive or negative, church and faith played a part in shaping some of these teachers' values and views on fairness, justice and difference. Some of the teachers are still active and practising their faith but none of them have presented their faith as the norm. The teachers who are practising Christians have gone on to be pro-active in their practice on teaching about other faiths and on tackling Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. One of the teachers, now in a senior position, has worked hard to ensure that assemblies in her non-denominational school provide times for reflection from a range of views rather than adopt, by default, the Church of Scotland view.

Scottish education has always had a curious relationship with religion, as has already been discussed in greater depth in Chapter 2. Menter et al (2006:276), drawing on the work of Gatherer (2003:1022–1023), reminds us that Scottish teachers as an occupational group have had long connections with the Kirk. Gatherer even suggests that at times, school teachers were 'virtually second-hand clergymen'. Churches in

Scotland (of whichever denomination) were central in the provision of universal education in Scotland, developing the idea of Christian welfarism, and these historical aspects have gone on to influence generations of Scottish families. Scotland as a nation has of course suffered its own brand of religious divide and intolerances with sectarianism. However, these divides have until recently not been discussed or formally acknowledged (MacMillan 2000; Devine 2000; Shedden 2003; Finn 2003).

### **5.5 The tapestry of self**

Alsup (2006:88–89) talks about the concept of ‘embodiment narratives’. She relates embodiment narratives to experiential narratives, the process of how experiences and material conditions link with identity construction. She suggests (ibid:92) that it is important ‘to develop a critical pedagogy for teacher education that takes into consideration professional identity development processes’ and, to do this, ‘teacher educators must address the difficulties of the embodiment of a teacher identity’. She suggests that if we are able to facilitate for borderland discourses that can connect personal beliefs and experiences to professional expectations and responsibilities of being a teacher, then teachers might be better prepared to recognise complex relationships within the classroom and the school, and to be more aware of multifaceted or contradictory ideologies. Consequently, they may be better prepared to have a satisfying and successful life as a teacher (Alsup 2006:126–127).

Teachers' stories in this study demonstrate how their respective past has shaped who they are now. These experiences have played a part in shaping their professional identity as teachers and also their professional orientation and practice.

For example, Teacher A grew up in a small rural town where, as she put it, 'you knew the pecking order of where you fitted in'. The first in her family to move into tertiary education, it is clear she has never forgotten her roots, so to speak. As a child, Teacher A was clever and was streamed into the top classes.

Teacher A was very upset about being told to stop mixing with children she had grown up with and who she regarded as her friends. She never forgot this and this transferred into her role as a teacher many years on. She saw herself as being on the side of the pupils, particularly those who came from backgrounds which were viewed as working-class. Teacher A's identity is related to the need for her pupils to perceive her as 'being one of them'. She talks about meeting her pupils who are now adults in the shopping mall or streets and enjoying these reuniting moments.

There was this girl called L who had it tough at home. Her father had left and her mother had almost made her take her dad's place, looking after the wee ones. Many years later, she gave the nicest compliment I've ever had. She said to me 'Do you know what I liked about you Ms X, you're common like us.'

Teacher A's life became consumed with class politics and in her interviews she displayed a fair degree of intolerance for those she perceived as being on the up side of any power imbalance.

I didn't like people coming in and sniffing up their noses. There was too much of 'his father has such and such a job'. One of my worst parents was a woman who lectured in Glasgow. Her kids never came to school with dinner money and they were always late but she got great respect. It was because of her profession.

All women teachers (across ethnic, age and social class groups) interviewed had stories about the impact of being a girl or woman in a boys' and men's world. Some knew from the outset that they did not wish to have their choices limited because of their gender and while all grew up in loving homes there were tensions which they had to grapple with. Quite a few talked about the traditionality of home life within the communities they grew up in.

Very traditional, lots of girls I went to school with got married very young and didn't work.... I couldn't do after-school things, I remember going out to a school concert once and I was so frightened that my dad might find out and this was only a Gilbert and Sullivan school concert. I once took part in a school concert and I was singing and the backlash from that – dad was really annoyed about that. (Teacher E)

Girls just left school and went off to produce children... I had to do that but inside myself I wasn't fulfilled, I had a need to learn. (Teacher A)

While others were not affected by gender stereotypes they were acutely conscious that these issues existed. This consciousness has carried through into their adult lives. For example, in the case of Teacher F:

I guess in terms of when I had my daughter because I try not to dress her always in pink, she always gets pink stuff, and just because she is a girl doesn't mean she has to wear pink.... I sometimes think if I had a boy next how much harder it would be for people if I dressed him in pink. People take it fairly well if I dress her in boys' clothes but how bothered people are if I say I'll put it away for the next baby. They always say 'but you don't know what you're having next'. Well no I don't but I know it will be this size at some point so they can wear it. I wonder if people think that by dressing a boy in pink if it will make him gay.

Here Teacher F is also beginning to explore the interlinking dimensions of gender and sexual orientation. Some teachers had experiences as adult women that impacted on their future personal and professional identities.

When I went through divorce it was a big sting and I felt that the only way to cope with divorce was if I move away from my family and established things on my own... I visit the family every holiday but be away from them, as a girl living in the community would be hard to do with the life style I have now. (Teacher H, visible minority ethnic)

It doesn't matter talking about it now because it's like talking about someone else but he [husband] tried to stop me going. He worked shifts at the airport, if he was in, he would lock me in and if he was in before me he would lock me out. He was trying to stop me doing it. I wasn't out with men. I wasn't doing anything wild. I had discovered there was a world out there and I was studying geography and I loved it. (Teacher A)

These experiences gave Teachers H and A a lasting sense of the injustices that women can face in a patriarchal world. These experiences propelled Teacher A as she grew older to become involved in activities that supported women's rights and women's



issues, such as breast cancer awareness campaigns. Teacher H has set up a support group for visible minority ethnic mothers, which she is still very actively involved in.

Only one of the three male teachers in this study commented directly on how gender issues impacted on their personal lives. Teacher C found that his awareness of sexism and sexual discrimination issues rose as he discussed these issues with his wife.

Being married has helped, being with X, she sees things differently as a woman and you realise things aren't fair. I think you carry on learning all the time.

Gender is one dimension of the tapestry of self. Other aspects that emerged from the conversations were those of ethnicity and nationality. In my final interview with Teacher G, as I went through my summation of emerging themes from his interviews, Teacher G pointed out that I had not fully captured how he felt about being Scottish. It was not just about being Scottish but being from the Scottish Highlands that mattered. Teacher G felt that being a Highlander defined his approach to people: he felt he was more open to difference.

Robert Burns – a big influence on my views. Highland hospitality, positive aspects of Highland culture... the Scottish psyche of egalitarianism... I think they are all influencers in my life.

## 5.6 Being part of the 'other'

Teacher E, in coming out as a lesbian in her late teenage years, found that this newly declared identity has opened up for her a range of ways in which her identity as an adult, a teacher, and a mother has been able to flourish.

It rose up in my teenage years but it didn't manifest in terms of an experience, so I was aware of it at university but until you fall in lust with someone, not love, you can't join that group of people. To me you can see it and be interested but until it happens and you feel it, I felt I couldn't join the group I call queer until I felt it. As a living experience rather than something that had be buried, it's different from gender.

I don't think it changed me immediately, I think it was something personal in terms of right I can engage with people and put a label tentatively. I always played with labels, which are scary. I don't really like them but I could take the label of lesbianism and say ok you can pencil that in next to my name. Before I didn't feel able to do that, so it was like permission to engage in that aspect of politics but I had always engaged in sort of feminist things. The two things are not the same but I don't think that's what startled me – permission to acknowledge who you are. I feel like being one of the few lesbian and out mothers and teachers it's a place where you can be seen as the expert even if you're not. So it is an opportunity to have a voice.

The comments from Teacher E chime with other teachers in this study who found a particular aspect of who they were, for example, their colour, nationality, accent, gender, or language, resulted in others taking these characteristics into consideration and responding to them differently. Their stories differed from those of people who had not themselves faced systemic discrimination. For these teachers who were on the receiving end of discrimination, addressing injustice took on a personal resonance. For example, if racism was present in a classroom, in the corridor or in the staffroom, it affected the visible minority ethnic teachers in a very personal sense as that racism could just as easily have been directed at them. For example, Teacher H found she had to confront a

teacher in her school who was speaking negatively about some children speaking Punjabi. Teacher H speaks Punjabi herself.

They will say ‘oh they are speaking Punjabi and I find it rude’ or ‘I’ve told them it’s for the playground’, or another teacher said to me ‘oh I don’t know why they aren’t taken to another school and educated separately, it must be so frustrating for them to be in a school where they don’t understand the language’.... a few weeks later I thought how should I raise this, so I took some literature into the staff room on the positives of bilingualism and this teacher again said ‘well I find it rude’, then another said the parents don’t want them to speak their first language and all the teachers joined in this conversation. So I just thought I’d mention it to the Head then keep a low profile for a while.

When Teacher H’s colleagues were talking about ‘those’ pupils, she clearly saw herself as part of ‘those’ people. If her colleagues had persisted in being negative about pupils who do not speak English as their first language, it would have had a direct impact on Teacher H’s identity and self-esteem. This created an uncomfortable position for these teachers who knew they could well be being perceived as part of the ‘other’. For other teachers who are not Punjabi speakers or whose culture and identity were not wrapped in the Punjabi language, it is easier to challenge a comment and walk away, potentially merging into the status quo.

Similarly, Teacher E, who is a lesbian, while hearing about a potential homophobic incident involving some Primary 2 pupils, felt she had to keep an eye on what happened next.

What happened was a child in Primary 2 told her peers that she was a lesbian. Then the peers and then the child responded as seeing that it was something bad but I don't know why the child said that in the first place. When I first heard it, I couldn't tell if it was a homophobic incident or not ... the teacher responded that they don't know what it means. Yes, they are seeing it as something bad or distasteful but I don't know how it has been dealt with and this teacher was a bit perplexed as she doesn't know what I'm up to or my history. She is a long-term supply teacher and when I started offering her some advice and commented on it she was a bit bemused. The rest of the staff were all sitting there really quiet going like X (referring to me) is here so perhaps we don't need to or won't say anything. The school doesn't have a clear line. If something racist was said teachers would think 'I have to do or say something about this' and they don't have that with the homophobia. I'm at the point where I want to talk about this, not as staff but I think we need to have a line on it. We need to be good at it and have an agreement on it. I am doing it on my own in my classroom but I think we need to have an agreement on it.

This idea of 'personal cost' is alluded to several times over the interviews with teachers who have the label 'minority'. These teachers are conscious that their stories are not part of mainstream teacher professional discourses but at the same time they are reluctant to engage too overtly with the issues, recognising the danger of being labelled 'the one who will always go on about these issues'.

I feel I've had to work harder to prove myself and even when I was in Town X [in England] trying to do extra things. Trying harder with the parents and the staff, always have to prove yourself to show you are that bit better. (Teacher H, female, visible minority ethnic)

Whenever I have been appointed at a job, I have asked if it was because of my colour or ability. I've asked everyone because I worry about being a token. (Teacher I, male)

Teacher B who is from abroad but now lives in Scotland recalls attending an interview for a project co-ordinator post:

... before I left, I told the lady that I knew I wasn't going to get the job and I talked and they wanted to know why. I said 'you see your body language has given it away', number one – they are looking at me like a strange person...

Teacher B, a teacher of secondary English, also gave accounts of constantly being asked 'where she came from' and the shock displayed by some school staff when she arrived as a relief teacher for the English department. She provided accounts of how her colour triggered in her colleagues the label 'foreign' and this impacted on people's reactions to her. As a result of these experiences, Teacher B became actively involved in addressing equity and anti-discrimination issues within learning and teaching and as a trade unionist.

What really made me go into equality was because when I first came and I looked around jobs and who occupies what job, I found that the foreigners don't occupy prestigious jobs. To me I felt that something was wrong.

As well as being under pressure to be equity champions at work, they were often also held to account by the communities they were seen to represent. Teacher I illustrated this when he remarked that as he rose higher in the profession, his credentials were questioned by members of his own ethnic and community group. Teacher I found he had to justify his actions.

... people would often get at me for 'joining the establishment' but what I said is now I can do all those things we talked about from the inside not the outside.

While communities may be questioning the minority teacher's motivations, they are often simultaneously making demands. This is particularly acute in Scotland in relation to ethnicity or sexual orientation where minority ethnic and gay teachers are often pioneers from their communities in entering the Scottish teaching profession. Teacher I's story once again illustrates this:

When I was teaching in School A, so occasionally you would get people coming up and talking to you. At that time a lot of [minority ethnic] youngster did not want to be singled out and would only come to you. In School B it was very similar.

Teacher I talked about the tensions of keeping his credentials intact while trying simultaneously to meet professional as well as community demands as the two did not always sit comfortably alongside each other.

## **5.7 Shaping times**

Previous studies of teachers' personal and professional beliefs (Connell 1985; Pohan 1996; Smith et al 1997; Garmon 1998 and 2004; Gaine 2001; Pearce 2003) have found a correlation between teachers' personal beliefs and their professional beliefs. Some, like Lortie (1975), suggest that personal beliefs formed prior to entering teacher education courses have greater significance in shaping professional beliefs than what is being taught on teacher education courses. Lortie's view is that predispositions gained prior to teacher education training, that is the attitudes and values brought into teacher education courses, are much more powerful than any diversity courses pre or post service

including any workplace experiences the teacher will subsequently encounter. Lortie's view is supported by research into in-service approaches on the impact of diversity or equality courses which have shown that overall such programmes appear to have had little influence on changing deep-seated views and/or prejudices (Hennington 1981; Sleeter 1992; Gaine 2001). Feiman-Nemser (1983, cited in Johnson 2002:166–167) noted that 'Learning to teach begins long before formal programs of teacher preparation. Its roots are personal experiences with parents and teachers and images and patterns of teaching shaped by culture.' Wideen et al (1998:168, cited in Fecho 2000). reviewing a large body of research on various aspects of teacher education, concur with Feiman-Nemser and found that 'beginning teachers enter pre-service teacher education with firmly held views about teaching and that beginning teachers are little influenced by the interventions that occur in pre-service education'. Causey et al (1999:34) describe this prior knowledge as the 'filters' or 'intuitive screens' from which teachers build their thinking on issues.

Those that write about teacher identity construction (Knowles 1992; Cooper and Olson 1996; Franzak 2002) identify several factors such as personal experience (family, childhood), previous experiences of learning (positive and negative), and positive role models as being strong influences.

Fecho (2000:196) also found that a homogeneous teaching population was largely very unprepared for teaching diverse pupil populations. This has led to calls from academics and equality activists that student teachers and teachers with little experience of seeing

the world from the perspectives of others need to develop a better knowledge of difference and diversity (Ladson-Billings 2001; Osler and Vincent 2003). Pohan's (1996) study of 492 prospective teachers found that those who had had more cross-cultural experiences were more likely to develop favourable personal and professional beliefs about diverse learners. Smith et al (1997) identified four factors that appeared to be prerequisites for enabling positive change in teacher attitudes to diversity matters:

- exposure to different cultural backgrounds (e.g. friendships, dating, sports)
- education (e.g. influences of teachers and colleges)
- travel (e.g. moving, vacationing, and military experience) and
- personal experience with discrimination as a child or as an adult.

Garmon in both his studies (1998 and 2004) suggests that in addition to the above factors personal dispositions (or character traits) were also important. Garmon identified the following dispositions as being of particular importance:

- openness
- self-awareness/ self-reflectiveness
- a strong sense of social justice.

Openness was defined as receptiveness to others' ideas or arguments, self-awareness and self-reflectiveness as the awareness of one's own beliefs and attitudes as well as being willing and/or able to think critically about them; and a strong sense of social justice was about having an explicit commitment to equity and equality for all people in society.



Gain (2001:97), studying a group of 17 women teacher education students in England, supports the need for dispositions of open-mindedness and self-criticality but he added that there would also need to be a willingness to accept challenges.

Dewey (1933:34) identified open-mindedness, wholeheartedness and responsibility as 'essential constituents of the general readiness' for reflective thinking. So important are issues of virtue and moral dispositions that Dewey talks about the need to weave personal attitudes with logical processes into a state of 'unity' to enable effective reflective thinking. He also suggests that, if we had to choose between personal attitudes and knowledge with the ability to reason logically, it was more important to select the former. Dewey does not, however, see a tension between the two, believing that within the aims of education, both are possible, and that is the challenge. Birmingham (2004) suggests that another virtue that is required if we are to be constructively reflective is to have phronesis. Citing Aristotle, phronesis is defined as 'a state of grasping the truth, involving reason, concerned with action about things that are good or bad for a human being' (2004:314). It is the ability to have some form of practical wisdom, the right reasoning to apply general principles in particular situations. This type of wisdom might be important to possess when working within the area of equity and anti-discrimination where there are likely to be clashes of values and where principles of relativity need to apply with due regard to the context and the issues. My colleague Alan Bell, who has worked in the field of anti-discrimination practice in Scotland for over thirty years, often refers to having an 'internal governor' that helps you critically consider situations in a logical, emotionally intelligent manner when there are value clashes. Such an 'internal

governor' is often called upon to shape the next course of action. Bell suggests that anti-discriminatory training is about honing that internal governor so that it becomes more informed and confident on matters related to equity, diversity, inclusion and discrimination. Phronesis is a useful concept given that teachers in Scotland are unlikely to gain much first-hand experience of diversity issues on matters of race, culture or linguistic diversity and would have to be able to engage in transferable skills and conceptual analysis.

Cooper (2003:415), studying specific bodies of literature on teachers and teaching black children in the United States, found that regardless of whether a teacher was black or white or whether from a denominational or non-denominational school, it was the teacher's belief in what is possible that mattered most. In his study, the teachers' refusal to accept black children's scholastic underachievement, their commitment to educational opportunity and their deep respect for black parents and the black community was what mattered in whether they were being effective teachers. These characteristics helped the teachers to develop 'cultural synchronisation' and enabled them to develop empathy with their pupils.

Allard (2006:324) suggests that there will be different ways that issues might be presented that 'resonate or appeal to the individual at different times and in different contexts, positions within different discourses may be enacted through unconscious appeals to the emotions'. She then cites an idea that Hollway (1984) raises, that of 'investment'. Hollway's rationale is that for members of dominant cultures to become

interested in minority cultures or alternative discourses, these members need to develop a reason to become conscious or curious about these other cultures or discourses, that is, they need to find a reason to ‘invest’ time and intellect into these matters. Personal reward as a result of such investments becomes a highly motivating factor for engagement. Finding these personal rewards becomes the challenge. This challenge exists as the journey in search of such reasons will involve interrogation of personal values and attitudes which can destabilise security and comfort zones. This study, by asking teachers what made them become aware or interested in issues of equity and challenging discrimination, hopes to identify some reasons for investment.

## **5.8 Summary**

The first question this study addressed was

- How do teachers who are known to be promoting equity, diversity and anti-discrimination as part of their professional practice develop their interest in these issues?

It would appear that, as other researchers have found, teachers draw their learning from the experiences they gain first and foremost from their family but also from experiences they encounter on life’s journey. Dewey’s belief that experience is the prime source of education would appear to be well evidenced from the stories of these teachers. He suggests that past experiences are useful in that they give us the details of the processes involved that help shape character and self. Through the interviews, I have learnt that

discussions and analysis of how this ‘architecture of self’ (Goodson 1992:60; Pinar 1988) is built, scaffolded and shaped is important and teacher education courses need to provide time for students to explore this. Giroux, who has long argued for border crossings between ideologies, experiences, contexts and practice, suggests (1982:124) that teachers (and he talks particularly of student teachers) must be given the opportunity to use and interpret their own experiences in a manner that reveals how the former have shaped the latter.

Writers like Knowles (1992), Kehily (2002) and Alsup (2006) have advocated that biographies have a significant bearing on the classroom behaviours and practices of teachers. In particular, early biographies appear to have a significant role in influencing teachers’ behaviour. If we accept that teachers’ thinking is largely shaped by their prior experiences – and certainly the nine stories from this small study add weight to that – then we need to consider what the implications are for those who select for teacher education programmes and for those who shape the content of the first semester of teacher education courses. It is, however, not just the content of the first semesters but also the confidence of those taking sessions that engage in border crossings and borderland discourse that matter. If those teacher educators have not been through the same process, it could be a case of the blind leading the blind.

For teachers who have life experiences of difference and discrimination to draw from, opportunities need to be provided to harness such experience and the role of equity courses in part could be to assist the individual to make sense of that experience, to

theorise and to make connections with other forms of discrimination. Bridge-building of this kind will assist teachers who may not have much experience of a range of diversities to border-cross starting from their own experience.

For teachers whose life experience has not really engaged them to think of diversity, difference or discrimination, structured experiences will be needed to enable that thinking to develop. Under the Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED) project funded by the Schott Foundation for Public Education, the report *Peer-led Professional Development for Equity and Diversity* found that

Many of the teachers participating in the SEED initiative particularly benefited from being given opportunities for self-reflection and identity exploration. SEED seminar participants reported experiencing a raised awareness around their own biases, an increased sense of belonging to a community of teachers who offer each other support, and a shared desire for an equitable and safe school environment. (Deshmukh Towery et al 2007:6)

The idea of planning for structured experiences is important within a Scottish context for several reasons. Firstly, as discussed in Chapter 2, Scotland the nation, and the Scottish people on the whole, buy into a fairly unquestioning belief in their commitment to equity and fairness. Such a belief can be harnessed positively to explore the implications (strengths and tensions) for educational research, policy and practice of the growing diversity within contemporary Scotland. However, such a belief can also lead to smug complacency and inaction. It can lead to a reluctance to consider the concept of 'otherness'. Secondly, the concept of 'the other' needs to be engaged with, deconstructed and discussed if normativism and homogeneity are to be disrupted. Such

engagement is also necessary to dispel ignorance, irrational fears or resentment.

Initial teacher education courses committed to developing in their students critical literacy on issues of equity and anti-discrimination must formalise opportunities for their students to move beyond naïve egalitarianism to a more analytical understanding of the ways in which inequity and injustice are perpetuated through the vehicle of school education. Such learning cannot be left to chance or to superficial, critical and sanitised discussions about inclusion. Explicit discussions about issues of discrimination and injustice are required if future teachers are to become more confident practitioners in the face of increasing diversity.

The next chapter explores professional stories and considers the lessons that can be learnt from them.

## CHAPTER 6: PROFESSIONAL STORIES AND ACTIVISM

In the previous chapter, five themes emerged that contributed to developing these nine teachers' interest in issues of equity and anti-discrimination:

- the influence of family and home
- personal experiences of discrimination
- the influence of religion
- the tapestry of self (multiple identities)
- being part of the 'other'.

### **The contribution of the experience of initial teacher education**

As I teach in a teacher education institution, I was interested to find out if the nine teachers' experiences of initial teacher education had played any part in shaping their current interest and commitment to equity and anti-discrimination issues. I started by finding out why each of them had chosen teaching as a route. Alsop (2006:107), in her research exploring teacher identity development with six white female pre-service teachers, was surprised to find that three of the six came from 'teacher families' where close family relatives such as parents, grandparents or siblings were teachers. She suggests that many of these student teachers' beliefs about teaching were powerfully influenced by their personal role models.

Connell (1985) found that people became teachers through three routes. Some became teachers through family encouragement, particularly where teaching was viewed as moving upwards in social class terms. Others came into teaching after

experiencing other employment, and teaching was a conscious career change; and the third group were those that were recruited into the profession through other teachers who thought they would be suitable for the profession.

Only two of the nine teachers in this study had close family members who were teachers. Unlike Alsup's cohort of teachers, teachers in this study did not have multi-generational influences, either positive or negative, leading them to choose to go into teaching. Some were the first in their family to make it to college or university, and Connell's explanation of teaching being seen as a desirable upwardly mobile and respectable profession held true for some teachers in this study.

We were extremely poor, very deprived and remember thinking whether I should be responsible and go and get a job in Woolies and put food on the table. There was such a stigma in these days about single parents that I wanted my children to have a parent who had further education and then I decided to go into teaching. I would be respectable as a teacher and as a single parent. (Teacher A, female)

For others, as with Connell's study, teaching became an option after following other pathways.

I decided I wanted to become a priest, so having been baptised at the age of 7 and by 12, I wanted to be a priest... Then I decided that I didn't want to be a priest. I couldn't see myself going through life not married and having children and stuff. I was too late to apply for university so went to the further education college and did a couple more highers. Then I went to university and studied geography and that because of no careers help or anything. I did best at geography at school so did the geography degree and what could I do with it and at that time it was either join ordnance survey or go and do teacher training which I did. (Teacher C, male)

I was doing millions of different things and I was working women's aid with children and I said if I was to work with children it would be paid and get status, I would need qualifications. And because I'm a natural Blue Peter presenter, the old school, sticky back plastic and I'm very, very



practical. And very theoretical and that's why I think I started doing drama... I think with primary teaching I saw the chance to make a difference. (Teacher E, female)

I was off having a wild time in X (a town in England) ... and I didn't know what I wanted to do, probably wanted to tag along with this church group for a year but I told my mother I wanted to be a teacher to get her off. College X were advertising for students in the evening news and she phoned me up telling me she had enrolled me at College X and to get back home. I told her I didn't want to go to College X and she told me because I had no money I would have to. (Teacher D, female)

Only one teacher, Teacher E, stated that she had chosen teaching as a way of making a difference. Motivations aside, what were teachers' experiences of their time on teacher education programmes in relation to developing knowledge and understanding equity, diversity and anti-discrimination issues?

Teachers in this study span almost three decades in terms of training, with the oldest being trained around the early 1970s and the most recent in the late 1990s. Seven of the nine trained within Scottish establishments. One trained abroad and another in England. The majority of teachers in this study (six out of nine) did not find that their teacher education programmes had given them much, if any, insight into issues of difference, diversity, equity, social justice or anti-discrimination.

Most of our lectures were on methodology and what we would do in those situations. Most of those situations did not include equality, inclusion or discrimination issues. (Teacher I, male, visible minority ethnic, studied in a Scottish post-graduate secondary course in the late 1970s)

Very, very little. I don't specifically remember, other than RME [Religious and Moral Education], anything about cultural diversity, sexual orientation or disability.... RME was one of the subjects that really interested me because there was the ethical aspect and it did get you thinking which a lot of undergrad course work didn't. (Teacher F, female, studied in a Scottish BEd (Hons) course in the mid 1990s)

At teacher training college, sociology helped a bit, at Masters and SQH, don't remember picking up much there at all. (Teacher D, female, studied in a Scottish college of education in the mid 1970s, Masters in Education in the late 1990s and the Scottish Qualification for Headship in the mid 2000s)

However, some teachers did have opportunities to consider issues of diversity but these tended to be on modules which were electives rather than part of core curriculum.

...some of the equality issues in teacher training was an option that I opted into.... It was a module that I did. It wasn't all on race but was one of your assignments. That opened my eyes a little bit. (Teacher H, female, visible minority ethnic, taking up BEd course in England in the late 1980s/early 1990s)

When I was at College X, I did a module for my honours course. I elected to do a module called Education in the Third World with Dr Y and that involved going and speaking with overseas students. They were from Tanzania... (Teacher G, male, on a Scottish BEd (Hons) Primary/Secondary 1981–86)

... on the post-grad course where parents came to talk about having children with disabilities or even about inclusion or exclusion. (Teacher F, female, on a Scottish post-graduate course in early 2000s)

The comments about their initial teacher education experiences were not limited to equity issues. Three teachers took the opportunity to talk about the quality of teaching and how they felt about their peers on the courses.

...the teaching was uninspiring and lacking in rigour. I was used to using my brain and I don't feel I was challenged. No one would ever ask what you did before, we were told, not shown. (Teacher E, female, did a Scottish post-graduate course in primary teaching in the late 1990s)

This same teacher had this to say about her peers:

I found a couple that were interesting. Most were just so young and so nice in the sense of wearing a cross and going to get married, middle-class, white, Scottish, it didn't have a lot of resonance with me. They were pleasant but...

She was not alone in her views.

... I have to say that I didn't really gel with many people on my course. I think that was because of how bland I felt my year group was. I remember one person, in the first term of first year, saying how bored she was of lectures already, she knew how to teach and just wanted to get on with it. You know you're 17 but she did feel she knew it all and I remember a lot of people agreeing with her. I said if that was really the case I wouldn't be here. (Teacher F, female, on a Scottish BEd (Hons) course in the mid 1990s)

The experiences of these nine teachers of their teacher education programmes in the area of equity and anti-discrimination is disappointing. It is particularly so when teachers who trained within the last decade echo the comments of those who trained almost thirty years ago. It is understandable that teachers who trained in the 1970s and possibly the early 1980s had fewer opportunities to engage with these issues but with equality legislation almost a quarter of a century old by the mid 1990s, there should be no excuse for these issues to remain marginalised within teacher education programmes. It also causes concern that these issues were often offered as electives thus appealing to those who are already interested in the issues. Considering the lack of diversity within the Scottish teaching workforce (Menter et al 2006), this situation is worrying in terms of whether Scottish education can meet the diverse needs of Scotland's heterogeneous pupil population.

Much of the literature looking at the impact of teacher education programmes on changing teacher attitudes has found that impact varies. There has always been a tension about whether explicit addressing of issues will be more effective than incidental embedding within the core curriculum (Allport 1958:452). Some strongly argue that programmes that were prepared to address these issues more explicitly (such as those offered by Gaine (2001) on 'race' and racism) and created a degree of discomfort for the students in terms of challenging their attitudes have a better opportunity for succeeding. The white students in Gaine's study in England who were able to develop intellectual tools for explaining the presence of racism went on to become anti-racist teachers who were both reflective and critical. These students reported that their commitment to anti-racist issues had not diminished on leaving college. Gaine concludes in his article (2001:112) that 'perhaps the Right were right to object to such work in ITE, perhaps, for some, it worked'. Others argue that such direct focussing of attention on an issue can lead to negative reactions resulting in guilt and blame. This study, however, agrees with Allport's argument that indirect methods might enable a child to accept, for example, cultural pluralism but the child is likely to remain 'perplexed by visible differences in skin colour, by the recurrent Jewish holidays, by religious diversity. His education is incomplete unless he understands these matters' (1958:453).

However, narratives also produce unexpected good feeling stories in the tale of Teacher A and Teacher G. Teacher A identified a geography tutor who was inspiring and was an educator prepared to discuss issues such as the impact of colonialism and racism. The geography tutor was not part of the initial teacher education staff group

but a member of the University's Geography Department who offered electives open to teacher education students. Another teacher, Teacher G, who trained almost fifteen years after Teacher A, named this same geography tutor as being inspiring. It is a coincidence that they were both interviewed for this study. Teacher G and Teacher A do not know each other, have never met and are unlikely ever to do so, though both were clearly influenced by this same inspiring tutor. This serves as a positive reminder to each teacher and tutor of the impact they can make in this area of work which has also provided spin-offs in terms of good practice in this area.

### **6.1 Theoretical frameworks and practice**

Prior to engaging in the interviews, I had made the assumption that the teachers were basing their commitment to equity and anti-discrimination on some partial or thought through theoretical framework. Theoretical frameworks are important as they impact on the nature of practice. For example, if my approach to issues of diversity was premised on meritocratic principles then I might perceive pupils who are not making it as simply not having the ability. However, if my approach was to seek equity for all pupils, then I might take into account the individual characteristics of each child so that different needs and requirements could be met.

It would appear that the commitment these nine teachers had was based on a strong sense of fairness rather than on any intellectual consideration of theories. Jalongo et al (1995:13) found that 'outstanding teachers tend to favour aesthetic truth', that is, taking forward practice based on intuitive appraisal of the situation and what needs to be done. Jalongo et al's claim goes some way to explaining why the lack of a

theoretical framework did not prevent evidence of good practice in the area of equity and anti-discrimination.

I'm not sure really – just seemed like the right thing to do. I didn't think about it very hard, was just right to do. (Teacher C, male)

The main thing was that I was on the side of the children not on the side of the adults. (Teacher A, female)

This is not to say that teachers did not have a framework from which to guide their ideas but the majority found it difficult to articulate what these frameworks were. But there were those who had begun to problematise some of the terminology often associated with work about inclusion and diversity, such as Teacher F who found the term 'tolerance' to be problematic.

I think it's a funny word and it's not a word I would use. To say if you tolerate something suggests that it means putting up with, it's tolerating not accepting. Tolerance is not a positive or useful word. Tolerance is better than intolerance but it doesn't go far enough, people need to be accepting not tolerant. (Teacher F, female)

Teacher F had developed her thinking as a result of attending a social justice module within the Chartered Teaching programme. From this course she began to understand that the concepts of inclusion and anti-discrimination are interlinked and that a school could not have an effective inclusion policy without looking at ways people were currently being excluded.

I think the two – inclusion and anti-discrimination – go hand in hand. People are excluded for a whole host of reasons, misconceptions, no tolerance, these are all lined up in various school constituents – parents, pupils. I don't think you can have an inclusion policy without looking at the other issues too. (Teacher F, female)

Teacher E stated that it was important to unpack terms which were potentially ambiguous:

... we have to be able to realise discrimination occurs. The rest if we don't, is wishy washy – equality – diversity. Let's all feel nice about ourselves. Anti-discrimination is not just a political term for me but a personal one, a well-being term. I think my analysis goes from the mental health to personal health to moral dimensions of human beings and their potential for moral action. I believe that comes partly from people's well-being. I'm not discounting the touchy feely because that's where I come from but terms like equality and inclusion, I'm just aware that they don't cover anything. (Teacher E, female)

Teacher D who is now a senior manager felt teachers on the whole were not interested in engaging with theories and concepts.

Ideally it would be great if you could speak to people about the concepts but I just don't think that they think that much, I think they are such a spoon-fed profession... Well I have to say, I think teachers generally tend to be quite lazy intellectually. So the most effective way to approach teachers is not through a conceptual intellectual exposition but through their practice. Through improving their practice and I think that's the way I have gone.

It is difficult to gauge whether Teacher D's views of her colleagues' generally lacking appetite for theorising did in fact reflect the reality or whether the apparent lack of appetite covered up other issues such as a teacher rejection of additional work, teacher avoidance of engaging with frameworks that might cause personal discomfort, or that Scottish teachers are simply less used to engaging in critical thinking.

Teacher E, who was the most articulate about issues of power and discrimination, attributed her growing understanding to three sources: firstly, studying feminism at

university; secondly, volunteering with a women's aid organisation; and thirdly, training to be a counsellor. The time at university helped her theorise about issues.

At university I studied feminism. I engaged in a theoretical level about issues of power and identity...

Her time at women's aid helped her to reflect about her own identity developing the self-actualisation awareness that she has found useful.

I think part of my engagement with women's aid, unconsciously was a way of looking to come out. It's too simplistic to analyse it but it was about skirting around the women's scene and looking in or out of that. It didn't help. Women's aid is full of very closeted people but I did become aware of my homosexual orientation – not being straight and that put me into a slightly different world.

Counselling assisted Teacher E to consider issues of power and empathy.

...I was involved from my early twenties with co-counselling, which is a self-help skill, and set of tools and this is to do with women's aid as well. Lots of things I've been involved with have been peer rather than hierarchical, and co-counselling is founded on a principle of peer self-help, there is no hierarchy, it's quite political with a small 'p', in looking at self-empowerment and it is based on the notion that we all suffer from or experience discrimination. So there are concepts coming in from different areas and that was very personal and I was beginning to see how decisions you make are influenced by discrimination ... (Teacher E, female)

Teacher E attributes much of her teaching approach to knowing about self and feeling good about self. She indicates that in her practice, she engages her pupils to think about 'why' rather than just describing what has happened or providing them with the answers. She provides teaching about the Holocaust as an example:

...what happened in the Holocaust is often described but not why it happened. Questioning could I have done it – not just that these are the bad



people and these are the victims. So my understanding of teaching anti-discrimination means you have to go very deep and wide.

Teacher D started reading and learning about the issues as she began teaching on the social justice module of the chartered teacher programme. She began relating the equity theories with her own area of expertise, that of developing emotional literacy. She has begun to theorise and to come up with new models to assist teachers to draw the connection between these areas. Teacher D also mentioned counselling theories as being helpful in shaping her thinking, particularly the work of Carl Rogers and his three core conditions of counselling, congruence, acceptance and empathy. Teacher D, who is a Christian, found these three conditions also sat comfortably with her faith.

Overall, teachers interviewed were less forthcoming about their own understanding of the issues. They appeared more interested in commenting on the varied (or lack of) understanding of equity issues among their peers. Teacher B provided an example of how uninformed colleagues approach the issue of race equality.

If we talk about race equality, the race equality in there [the school] is not in line with understanding culture or understanding attitude. They look at it like – what does the minority want? It's not about wanting this but should be more about how can we live and share...our common humanity.

Teacher B is concerned that her peers associated race issues with minority groups and that addressing race equality was perceived by her colleagues as purely for the benefit of minority people. Teacher B indicated that her colleagues did not appreciate race equality as an approach which would be beneficial for all pupils. Teacher I

concluded on matters of race, pointing out that in his experience many of his peers found it difficult to provide examples of racial discrimination.

It always been depending on who you talk to, the level to which they understand these terms. Sometimes there is a superficiality, a level which most people can cope with but few will come up with an example of discrimination against someone who was black.

Others were keen to point out the inadequacies of educational frameworks in enabling different types of equity issues to surface. Teacher F who worked in early years was of the view that the 3–5 curriculum framework for early years offered little to deepen young children’s or staff’s understanding about issues of equity and anti-discrimination. She also felt that audit inspections by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education tended to adopt a cursory approach to the issues.

In terms of what is prescribed in the 3–5 curriculum – there isn’t a lot about other cultures or types of people. There is about respect for others in the emotional, personal and social development part and there is a bit about understanding cultural celebrations which I think some people are happy to say ‘I encourage children to share and take turns so I’ve covered respect and I do Christmas and maybe Chinese New Year’. They think they have done the curriculum in terms of other cultures. I think that possibly HMI would agree that they have covered the curriculum by doing that.

Another issue emerging was the different value placed on different equality areas. Teachers talked about peers being more comfortable with some forms of equality areas than others. However, Teacher I felt that once the debate was started in one equality area, many colleagues would be able to see the overlap between issues very quickly.

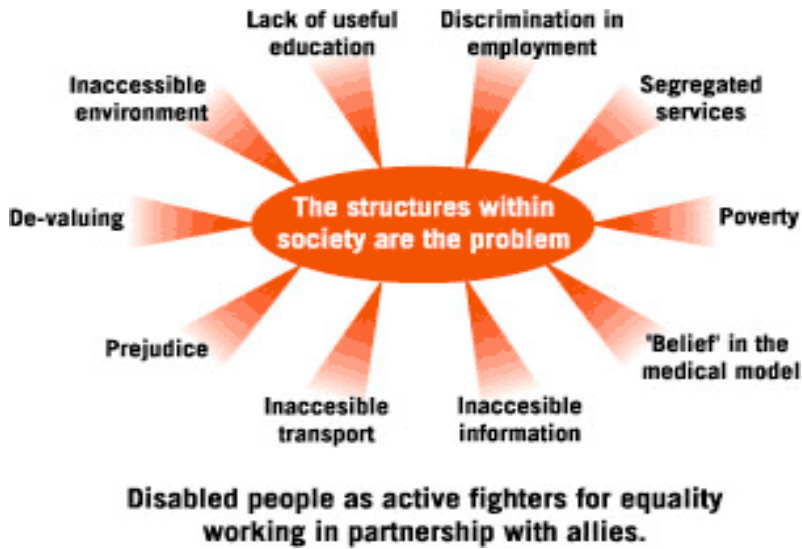
Though teachers may well be able to make the connections, conversations with Teacher A demonstrated that such connectivity cannot be taken for granted. A recurring theme in all of Teacher A's interviews was how much growing up in a class-ridden society had affected her thinking on equity issues. She had also experienced gender discrimination as a young girl and eventually sexual discrimination as a wife and finally as a single female parent in the 1960s. The hurt of being subjected to stereotyping and stigmatisation were areas she had personal negative experience with. She was a keen champion of a range of equity issues yet towards the closing moments of interview three, when she probably had become quite comfortable talking to me, she added:

I just want to say a little thing about race and these issues. I think they have concentrated too much on it. They have picked people out for being different. I spend my time making everyone the same and now it is brought up all the time.

Teacher A was critical: she thought that if difference were accentuated, divisiveness would ensue. Yet on matters of gender, Teacher A would never have advocated that boys and girls were treated the same; in fact, much of Teacher A's conversations revolved around gender inequalities. By probing a little more, it became obvious that Teacher A had not been provided opportunities to discuss race-related issues. She had taken forward multicultural policies for her school as the trade union representative, knowing intrinsically it was the right thing to do, but had never really explored the issue of racism, its historical and current manifestations, and was certainly never offered space either as part of her training or at school to discuss the connections between race and class. This led to minor resentments and indeed confusion about the issue. So while Teacher I might have been generally right, in

suggesting that by exploring one area of equality teachers would start making lateral leaps to other areas of equality, Teacher A's narratives would suggest that this may not happen naturally unless teachers are provided with intellectual tools and conceptual frameworks to engage in such cross-overs.

All nine teachers adopted a social model (see Fig. 1) approach to their understanding of diversity and discrimination. The social model approach was a concept developed and adopted by the disabled people's movement to counter the medical model (see Fig. 2) that was overwhelmingly dominant. The medical model attributes the problems faced by a disabled person to the disability and looks to the professionals to identify solutions. The social model in contrast does not view disabled people or the disability as the problem, rather it identifies whether the disabled person's limitation is caused by social barriers (societal attitudes) or physical barriers (e.g. in accessibility to buildings). It then places the onus on institutions and society to make the necessary adaptations. It is thus an enabling model as opposed to the medical model which is a deficit model. The social and medical models are useful frameworks when considering other equity areas.



**Figure 1: Social Model:** Diagram taken from the 'Because Films Inspire' site <http://www.bfi.org.uk/education/teaching/disability/thinking/medical.html>



**Figure 2: Medical Model:** Diagram taken from the 'Because Films Inspire' site <http://www.bfi.org.uk/education/teaching/disability/thinking/medical.html>

The area where many teachers exemplified their social model approach was in the area of home–school relations. Teachers who worked in areas of multiple deprivation were often the most able to see the detrimental affects of poverty and the impact of such poverty on individuals and their life chances.

...when a nursery dad who was a heroin addict, broke into the nursery while we were there, in the staff room and there were several handbags there. He did eventually get done for that but the child and their mum were still in the nursery every day. The child, it was not his fault but some staff found it very difficult to work appropriately with him after that incident and couldn't bring themselves to talk to the mum. They saw her as every bit as guilty as the dad. To be fair, she probably was in many ways but our job was still there to educate the child. Working with parents has proven again and again to be the most effective way to support a child. So while I was upset about losing my mobile phone numbers and cancelling credit cards, but at the end of the day he must have been really desperate to have done that, the child was so deprived. (Teacher F, female, early years)

Teacher D has taught in several schools and overall she has found many staff felt threatened by parents. In one school she worked at, the headteacher's approach was to keep parents at a distance and in another, the headteacher refused to convene a school board which would have included parent membership.

The headteacher found parents threatening and they had their place. I know of another headteacher who has refused every year to have a school board. Anyhow, she has never had a school board and they feel threatened because of the power that parents have. It's like new teachers, they feel threatened at parents' night.

These headteachers disliked Teacher D's familiarity with parents. The headteachers saw this familiarity as being unprofessional. Now that Teacher D is in a senior

position, she has dedicated some of her school budget to employing a home-link worker (the only one in the whole education authority) and there is an active parent-teacher development group, where parents are treated as co-partners in the education process. Every child entering the school at Primary 1 gets a home visit so that parents or carers are given a clear welcome from the outset.

Some teachers worked pro-actively with parents to boost their self-confidence so that these parents were more empowered to ask the right questions for their children.

I think with parents, I sometimes say to them ‘look you’ll need to speak to your teacher about this because it might be better for your child to be in this group’ and I’ve really battled to get this child in the next group. The parent will go with what the teacher says which is not always right. (Teacher H, female, visible minority ethnic)

Teacher H went on to say that had she not been there to challenge her peers’ decisions on where to place the child, the child would certainly have been placed in a class well below her capability.

Being sensitive to different pupils also requires sensitivity to their various home conditions. Teacher F spoke of a child in the school whose mother never attended parents’ evenings. Her peers were curious though no one did anything. She had noticed that the child’s father had come in on a few occasions but was not comfortable doing so and would appear to prefer his partner to be there with him. Teacher F made a home visit to find out why. Teacher F found out that the child’s mother was bedridden and there was no way she could ever have made it to a parents’ evening. The fact that the parents chose not to disclose this was not

explained. Teacher F took the opportunity to visit the mother who was grateful for the visit. For Teacher F, a school policy that held the view that there are set times for parent consultation (and these times were often planned to suit teachers' schedules) was not an inclusive policy. Teacher F ended that part of the interview wondering what happened to this child as he had moved on to primary school.

Long (2004) found from her research that the one thing that teachers found that provided them confidence in 'negotiating beyond the status quo' (p141) and 'to effect change was directly related to their ability to express understandings of theory and practice' (149). An inadequate understanding of why things needed to be done would propel teachers back into the confines within which they were likely to feel safe, the classroom. This was where the teachers in the study felt most able to provide examples of how they attempted to create changes through the curriculum and learning and teaching in general.

Well, as a class teacher, I always felt there was scope in the curriculum for exploiting opportunities for promoting diversity, in terms of your topic work and language in particular. Explaining to children that language aren't blocks and have links to each other, like word derivations. The origins of words and how languages have changed from coming into contact with others. In terms of things like topic work, as a class teacher I tried to bash stereotypes on the head. (Teacher G, male)

In Primary 1 and 2, I actively encouraged, especially the boys to cry if they were hurt, or I just talked about it. Till I triumphed, when I heard a little boy tell another little boy that it was better to cry when you fall over as you will feel better afterwards. I thought yes, yes. There is programming which is be brave and don't cry and my one is 'No that's nonsense, crying will make you feel better and its not brave to lock it all in'. That's an emotional thing linked with gender. (Teacher E, female)

Children grow up with songs like 'the farmer's in his den' and then they choose who they want to play with and I've heard adults say you can't



choose him because the farmer needs a wife and they have to choose a girl. Children should be able to choose a boy if they want. As a nursery manager I am conscious of these subtleties. (Teacher F, female)

For me, one of the things is when I see people that are different. I do make an effort to make sure they are included in things. For instance, there is this Muslim girl who started two weeks ago and as far as I can see no one talks to her amongst her year group but I see her waiting outside a classroom every morning and I make a point of saying hello. It's making sure people feel included. (Teacher C, male)

Hargreaves (1984:252), quoting from the unpublished doctoral thesis of Martin Hammersley, suggested that the debunking of theory is often 'a cultural strategy for neutralising threats to and criticism of teachers' existing routines'. The teachers in this study, though passionate about injustice, did not find it easy to articulate the theories that might have influenced their thinking. They often acted by instinct. It was also harder to move them into discussing issues of institutional or structural change even though all saw flaws within the system. Much of their discussions revolved around their feelings, personal changes they had contributed to and discussions about how they could affect change for their pupils or their parents. Comments relating to institutional change were rare and were generally made by the teachers who had now reached senior management levels. That structural issues did not come easily to the fore of interviews poses a hurdle if teachers at all levels are to be change agents (Leeman 2006:347).

## **6.2 Teachers, activism and social networks**

Paterson (1998:297) found that teachers reported direct benefits from being active in networks outwith schools. Sachs (2003b) suggests that activism is necessary as an antidote to the onslaught of new managerialism and de-professionalisation facing

teachers and the teaching profession. Activism brings teachers into contact with others thus extending social networks.

I think one of the things you learn is whatever the struggle is that you pick up a lot of good skills and you have to be able to react which you may not pick up on in a normal pathway. You gain a lot of knowledge by networking. (Teacher I, male, visible minority ethnic)

Coburn and Russell (2006:3) outline a list of writers who have over the past decade written about how social networks have assisted teachers to gain expertise on issues, provided opportunities for debate and discussion and developed confidence to risk-take. These were all ingredients which writers like Sachs, Apple and Gaines have indicated are crucial if transformation is to occur. Ginsburg et al (1995) and Albach (1995) remind us that even if teacher and academic activism is low-key, these educators have influenced the discourse on life-impacting topics like the environment and medical research. However, there are also examples of high-profile activism such as teachers aligned with emancipation struggles in former apartheid South Africa, campaigning for girls and womens' rights across the world, and taking public stances against fascist activities. Today, such activism is also evident in Scotland, for example through the RITeS, a project organised by academics and teachers to support refugee teachers in Scotland into teaching.

Teachers in this study have engaged in a range of activities which form aspects of activism. For some these connections were around activities which provided personal fulfilment:

I love singing. I sing with a group of women, we sometimes perform, we sit and gossip, eat, we sing everything – world music, gospel etc...it brings in

the social justice thing. Another group I've been to is about singing political things. It's lovely. (Teacher E, female)

Others engaged in non-governmental groups that campaign for peace and protest against armaments:

In 1980, I joined CND... From CND I got involved with every other part of the peace movement... you get used to doing things and don't realise what you are in. Then I was involved with L [town] Justice and Peace... Most of my fellow teachers weren't interested but N from work came to CND with me... Once in CND, I realised one thing was connected to another. (Teacher A, female)

or as volunteers into local groups raising awareness about issues:

I'm also chair of the X third world centre. I've been a member for 15 years in the management committee. (Teacher C, male)

So when I came to City X is when I became more politically active and with the beginning of the Scottish Parliament – Section 28, I was already involved with a lesbian mothers group as a support group... (Teacher E, female)

Yet others were active in their faith group resulting in them choosing to live among the communities they were working with.

We could have done the conventional thing, which my mum thought we would, get a mortgage, go and live in a nice place, a social worker and a teacher... We wanted to provide an alternative model for the church. It was about Jesus came to live in the world and if he came today he wouldn't be moving into Morningside. It was that kind of thinking. We needed that model as we felt the church alienated people. So living in X and seeing the hopelessness people felt, the discrimination and experiencing it ourselves, living in a damp council house, it had horrible windows, you felt like you were impotent to change anything. Seeing how tragic some people's life became because of the lack of opportunities in their life, that continued to change me as a person. For me the point when we went to live in X, it felt to me like this was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life, work against this kind of discrimination and poverty. (Teacher D, female)

The rewards for that level of acculturation into the community was the development of Teacher D's self-esteem and credibility in the local school.

They knew I had lived in the community for eight years, that I had been in tenant groups with them and had shared their lives. So we had a lot of close, intimate, powerful moments with many, many families and that gave me instant credibility.

Most had engaged in some form of protest action from attendance at a rally(ies) to sit-ins within their college. Teachers in this study were asked if they could remember their first rally or protest action and some did.

We occupied the college when I was there. There were cuts so all the students wouldn't leave the college at night. We had shifts and slept in the college and all that kind of stuff. I wasn't particularly politically radical at college. (Teacher D, female)

I remember going on the Northern Ireland peace march in Edinburgh. That would have been 1975/76. (Teacher C, male)

I first went on rallies against cuts in education, for jobs in the early 1980s. (Teacher G, male)

Paterson (1998:279) refers to the importance of teacher civic activism and the need for teachers to connect with activities and agencies outwith the school:

Voluntary activities have been argued to provide the basis for a pluralist democracy. School teachers are important in this respect for two reasons. Being a well-educated and geographically dispersed profession, they offer a social resource which many voluntary organisations rely on locally as well as nationally. Moreover, being educators, they are in a position to pass on the values of a civic culture to their students and to the wider community.

All teachers in this study are members of a teaching union with five of the nine having been active in the union. Being involved in the union was a route which

enabled some teachers to develop knowledge on employment rights and equality policies. The union was a vehicle that enabled them to network with other like-minded colleagues. Some joined because they saw being active within the union as a way of making a difference.

I just wanted to do other things and also make a difference. I joined the union's anti-racist committee and that really increased my awareness going along to the meetings. (Teacher H, female, minority ethnic)

I am a member of the union. Through the union, I found other people interested in race and equality work. It is a useful network. (Teacher B, female, visible minority ethnic)

Ginsburg et al (1995:20) state that 'educators the world over have formed associations and unions, at least in part as a collective response to their shared experiences as employees involved in the politics of educational workplaces'. While the trade union movement had in the past been guilty of perpetuating discrimination by ignoring issues of gender and colour, it nevertheless was a resource for teachers wishing to be active on social issues. For example, black trade unionists in Scotland up till the mid 1990s had no locus within Scotland to discuss issues affecting them as black workers. After grassroots pressure from black trade unionists and with the support of some individual trade unions, the Scottish Trades Union Congress held the first Black Workers Conference in Scotland in 1995. The Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) was a vocal supporter for such a conference and this landmark conference was chaired by myself, an EIS member.

Of the five teachers in this study who are still active in the trade union movement, three of the five are from visible minority ethnic groups. All three teachers in this

study from visible minority ethnic background found the union to be a place where they could talk about issues of racism and from within which they could organise and contribute to change. However, not all teachers in this study had positive links with trade unions. One teacher who is lesbian had hoped just like the visible minority ethnic teachers that the trade union would be a source of support but found instead that institutional homophobia existed and made it difficult to progress issues.

I found it particularly disturbing the institutional homophobia, the institutional culture. I guess, I thought I was coming into a situation where it was a way forward but found I could have been spending my time trying to raise awareness or change the attitudes of people within the union and for my own sake, I decided to channel my energy outwith. There were positive experiences, particularly when I went elsewhere through the union to meet up with other people who were engaging with the issues. (Teacher E, female)

All the teachers had some connection with agencies externally. Some of these were social networks where they were able to enjoy themselves while taking forward their interest areas, for example, the singing group. Others connected with others over a common cause, such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Peace and Justice or Third World Centres, local racial equality councils or women's groups; others had started issue-based groups such as the Minority Ethnic Teachers Association (META), mentioned in Chapter 3, which sought to bring people such as black teachers together to campaign for change.

Well it all started from a meeting I attended ... for black teachers. As a result of that meeting, a number of us got together to discuss these issues, particularly looking at race equality and how it affected us, pupils and parents. So that happened a long time ago, early eighties and we started an organisation to address race issues in schools. (Teacher I, male, visible minority ethnic)

While teachers gained from such activism, the cost for some teachers was the impact on the home life. Much personal time was often involved and one teacher stated that although being involved with the range of political campaigning issues was beneficial he had to ensure that his career path was still moving ahead while doing this. For this teacher as for others, their activities on the outside did contribute to their work in schools but many indicated that it was not easy to bring issues of social concern into the school framework, particularly if such activity was perceived to be radical and militant.

### **6.3 Thinking global, acting local**

Research on teacher attitudes cites travel (moving, vacationing and military experience) as one of the factors that influence teacher attitudes to diversity (Smith et al 1997:55). In this study, there were teachers who had very limited experience of travel. Teacher D, for example, had moved to England for about a year in the early 1980s but until 2004 (after 27 years of teaching) she had never travelled abroad. Yet while working in an area of severe multiple deprivation she has brought the world to her pupils. For the majority of the pupils Teacher D works with, going on a bus trip into the city (some 3 miles) would be an unusual experience. Teacher D was conscious that her pupils would not naturally have opportunities to travel or to learn about the world. The real world of Teacher D's pupils was one of poverty, homelessness, being in care, living in families where drugs, domestic abuse, alcohol abuse and crime. For many pupils and teachers in Teacher D's school, these experiences were not unusual, more the norm. Teacher D began to make links to schools and children elsewhere in the world facing similar difficulties. She has

twinned her school with a school for refugee children overseas and the message is one of solidarity not charity. Pupils now correspond with each other using e-mails and Teacher D has managed to enthuse fellow teachers to take part in the international exchanges.

Teacher D was not unique in this study cohort as others sought to bring global issues into their work. Some read extensively about global issues, particularly those relating to the Middle East, but also of political struggles related to other parts of the world such as South America, Burma, Russia and South Africa. Many took this forward into their practice at school. One teacher started the Amnesty International club at his secondary school, another raised awareness among staff members, pupils and parents of struggles in different parts of the world, and particularly of the work of courageous women like Rosa Parks and Aung Sang Suu Kyi. Most have tried to internationalise the curriculum by connecting Scottish pupils, Scottish issues and Scottish culture to global issues and cultures. Some of the teachers have been prompted to develop pupil and staff interest in global issues due to the increased diversity within the classroom.

This 'openness', according to Garmon (1998; 2004), is an essential trait if teachers are to be able to take on the concept of 'other' in a critical and inclusive manner. What interested me was that these teachers in engaging with international issues selected countries and geographical areas that have engaged in democratic struggles for change such as Burma, South Africa and South America. One teacher, recognising the impact of September 11th on the world, began to teach about



Islamophobia in his primary school. Teacher G, teaching in a rural school where there was no visible ethnic diversity, realised that many pupils were likely to be misinformed or uninformed about Islam and Muslims.

You're looking for parallels and conceptual comparisons between Islam and other faiths. We tried to combat exoticism. In classes the children had quite negative stereotypes about Islam. The main avenue for combating that was making it a key part of our field work – visiting mosques and next year we will be visiting a synagogue. It is also about raising these issues in explicit ways. (Teacher G, white, male)

Teacher G has now written lesson ideas for upper primary teachers about addressing Islamophobia, the first such lessons within Scotland. He has acted positively and engaged in what Rizvi (2007:33) calls 'thinking past the terror'. Rizvi suggests that educators have a crucial role in developing alternative analyses of terror.

Much of the international work in Scottish schools is related to twinning and exchanges within the European Union with the objective of fostering a more shared and unified educational culture throughout Europe. Some schools make links with countries abroad as part of a 'charity' type approach of helping those less fortunate such as the links Scotland has developed with places like Malawi or sustaining connections which were previously consolidated as part of the colonial legacy such as with countries of the old Commonwealth of Canada, New Zealand and Australia. The teachers in this study chose global examples of democratic struggles and developing pupil understanding of issues such as the impact of apartheid, democracy and human rights struggles and the need for a common humanity. In so doing, they have demonstrated how they have embedded anti-discrimination work into international education.

#### **6.4 Activists within a labour process**

Avis (2005:217) reminds us that any progressive possibilities must be understood within the overall labour context that the individual is operating within. Schools, departments and staffrooms are all ‘arenas of struggle’ (Sparkes 1987:38) and teachers promoting an agenda for change such as those in this study would need to be creative and constructive in their adaptations to daily tensions. Teachers work within ever changing educational contexts where there is increased accountability and potential loss of professional autonomy (see Chapter 3). Ras (2004:5) suggests that teachers, ‘unlike other less socially intense professions, must deal with their students’ needs, moods and difficulties while satisfying externally defined goals’. As a profession, they are expected to mould the next generation into better citizens, as well as be ‘technicians of education, presented with new curricula or standards and expected to be the tools of outcome production’ (p6).

These tensions exist for the nine teachers in this study. They were fully aware of the contradictory implications of current educational policy which espouses on one hand the aspiration of education for all while continuing to measure via narrow standardised tests (see Appendix 6: an excerpt from Teacher E’s transcript). Others found the increasing bureaucracy and administration detracted from their core task of education.

The administrative work teachers face impedes on their output because they have to fill this form, fill that form. If it is marking or recording, there is still a problem in that these exercises put a lot of pressure, pushing for targets.... and that’s why I’m sorry to say, quite a few people are moving out of full-time teaching to take on relief teaching because relief teaching

means no strings attached. You just go in and go out. (Teacher B, female, visible minority ethnic)

There's no point in it – I really don't want to do it. Form filling, I furiously don't want to do it. Form filling, knitting pattern, oh let's tick this box and let's move on. I'm aware that even when I do my forward plans at Easter time, and I don't have the children in front of me, teaching becomes an idealised theory. (Teacher E, female)

When I first started in nursery there was a push for early intervention but now it's really about childcare and the reason you put a child in nursery is so parents can go back to work rather than it being beneficial for children. (Teacher F, female)

Some teachers in this study have found that the range of expectations of teachers from policy makers, politicians and parents have resulted in professional fatigue.

Some teachers talked about colleagues who no longer go the extra mile in their work or who are just blatant careerists.

At the moment I have professional concerns with staff and the degree of the commitment to the children and to their profession. The 35 hours a week mentality – I think they have signed up for wrong thing – it's not what it is about. That's at a professional level, getting class teachers to buy into a wider role, I'm finding in my school – it's the same people doing the enrichment process. (Teacher G, male)

When I started, the teachers cared about the children and as time went on they cared more about themselves. People used our school as a stepping stone. They looked down on the people that were their bread and butter. Yeah, there were some people who were very poor but they made it out to be a lot worse than it was so it looked better on their CV. I resented those people and never appreciated them. (Teacher A, female)

## **6.5 Summary**

I began this study making several assumptions, namely that the nine teachers

- were reflective practitioners
- engaged in anti-discrimination work as they had some theoretical framework to underpin their practice

- would fairly easily and logically articulate how they became committed and passionate about social justice issues
- would be able to identify how they have managed the mainstreaming of anti-discriminatory issues into their practice and the formal curriculum.

As the interviews progressed and conversations developed, I realised that some, though not all, of my assumptions were misplaced. Though all teachers were highly reflective and able to provide explanations of why they became interested in equity and anti-discrimination issues, only a minority were able to discuss these issues at a conceptual and theoretical level.

Teachers talked passionately about their frustration about injustices at different levels, for example within local (school, communities, local authority) and international levels (global tensions, asylum seekers, human rights) but also in relation to the apathy and ‘four walls mentality’ of their colleagues. There were few, if any, life-changing epiphany moments for any of them. Theobald (1999), exploring teachers’ memories, reminds us that this is the reality of ordinary lives or lives that are affected by the ‘everydayness’ of survival. This chapter and the preceding one attempt to draw out ‘discursive clusters’ of themes from which one could develop a commentary linked to the focus of the study (Kehily 2002:7).

This study has found that these nine teachers would appear to be taking forward anti-discrimination work despite the lack of a clear analysis of concepts of power, equity, discrimination and oppression. However, the absence of such an analysis diminishes

confidence and also potential spheres of influence. Overall, teachers in this study talked most confidently at a personal and classroom level. They had developed a personal vision for a preferred future which was one that was more equitable and just. Consequently, each was able to provide examples of how they took this vision forward in practice. Many of these examples were not high-status or unique acts, they were small acts. This study has learnt from listening to the nine teachers how important it is to be attentive to small actions for change. Too often such small steps are diminished by radical activists who expect more or who only value ‘campaigns’ and ‘causes’. Perhaps if these nine teachers and others like them could share their small steps with others, then change agency might be seen as a more possible and realistic agenda for many classroom teachers.

Though all nine teachers displayed orientation towards critical pedagogy, this was in general at a superficial level. The danger is that surface knowledge can be easily dislodged and challenged. Therefore inquiry needs to be in place to consolidate the personal vision. Teachers who had begun to problematise terms like inclusion and to consider issues of structural power were more able to articulate the tensions, flaws and possibilities within the current educational system. One of the teachers, for example, who had engaged a little more with theoretical issues of power and discrimination, realised that the current Curriculum for Excellence framework was an opportunity to embed anti-discrimination issues. This teacher worked with CERES to develop the framework in Appendix 2. However, in general, it was only the teachers in senior positions who were able to talk most confidently about change at institutional level. The organisational structure of a school is linear and ordinary

classroom teachers continue to find it difficult to step out of place within that hierarchy. This makes it all the more important for those who wish to engage in change agency to develop a knowledge base which can be drawn upon as the socio-political terrain changes. Such a knowledge base requires to be necessarily complex, ongoing and immersive. Teacher education institutions have a part to play in developing such a knowledge base but also to call student beliefs and values into question, not to destabilise these learners but to encourage critical inquiry within a collaborative environment.

Teachers in this study were highly reflective practitioners and all saw their work in equity and anti-discrimination as a career-long approach. Teachers in this study do not have any particular characteristic that would not be evident in teachers in general. However, what is important is their approach to issues of difference. The social model approach they adopt moves them away from a deficit ‘blaming the victim’ mentality. This has enabled them to interrogate causes of injustice and conflict rather than to attribute such occurrences to the ‘one bad apple’ in the class or to ‘problems’ that come naturally with diverse classrooms and communities. They have all attempted to challenge their own ignorance and to move out of their comfort zone, addressing issues which they may not have had to encounter or engage with as part of their growing up. The social model approach has also moved them away from focussing on the individual pupil to examining circumstances and structures that might enable or disable. This has moved them away from the naïve meritocratic egalitarianism model that this study has found problematic.

This study was interested in finding out if teachers based their interest in equity and anti-discrimination on particular theoretical frameworks. Overall, teachers in this study focussed more on their intuition for fairness and operated as Hargreaves (1981:303) describes within the ‘principles of habitual and pragmatically based common sense thought and action’ rather than on any particular theoretical framework. However, all of them developed their work with pupils and families within a social model approach which focusses on removing societal and institutional barriers to equity and participation. Their interpretation of ‘needs’ was often couched in the language of ‘rights’. Some had begun to question common terms used in Scottish education discourse today such as ‘tolerance’, ‘diversity’ and ‘inclusion’, viewing these terms as largely meaningless unless problematised and unpacked. There was an understanding of issues of power and how power could be used to empower as well as disempower though their narratives did not articulate with the language of power or resistance explicitly.

This study was also interested in how commitment to equity impacted on practice. Overall, teachers were more able to discuss how their beliefs and values impact on areas they had control over such as within learning and teaching and the curriculum. There were fewer examples of how their efforts impacted on institutional changes. Teachers in this study were also very effective within their community and other social networks.

Teachers in this study had many social networks which provided them access to a range of cultural resources as well as providing them with support structures (e.g. trade union or church networks) and new platforms for acquiring knowledge. Their ability to access other teachers, workers and community members provided them with different ways of knowing which boosted their knowledge base and confidence in taking issues forward. It could be said that early experiences which shaped these teachers' interest and commitment to equity, diversity and anti-discrimination issues (see Chapter 5) were later refined and strengthened by their professional influences (e.g. working within areas of multiple deprivation) as well as their social networking connections. All these experiences combine making real the links between the personal, the professional and the political.

Ultimately, the scope of how influential teachers can be is dependent on the context they work within. So are there distinct Scottish issues that require to be considered? There are perhaps two aspects for consideration: firstly, those issues which are distinctly Scottish that may impact on the equity and anti-discrimination discourse, and secondly, issues which are not distinctly Scottish but may have distinctly Scottish consequences.

A distinctly Scottish factor might be the intrinsic belief of many Scots that they have a natural belief in issues of equity and fairness. As discussed in previous chapters, this situation offers the possibility that potentially such a belief can propel issues of



equity and anti-discrimination forward but it could quite easily generate smug complacency and curtail discussions about issues of equity and anti-discrimination. This could be argued to be particularly so in a country that still lives in the shadows of an egalitarian myth and in a situation which Craig (2003:129) describes as a controlling force that 'keeps people in their place'. Therefore to complain, to challenge, to disagree may not be seen as traits that are valuable or proper. In the absence of a significant number of organised minority and grassroots voices to counter such a myth, this intrinsic belief becomes more of a liability for those interested in developing radical and active discussions on equity and challenging discrimination rather than an enabler.

Another distinct Scottish factor lies in the shape of the teaching unions in Scotland and also their response to the changing concept of professionalism. Humes (1986) suggests that Scottish teacher unions remain confused about their aims. He suggests that at times these organisations behaved like unions working to protect the professional autonomy of teachers, while at other times they behaved like professional associations attempting to serve a diverse membership from a range of political persuasions and therefore prone to conceptual fudging. On matters of equity and anti-discrimination, the teaching union/association might find it difficult to agree a common stance on a sensitive or controversial matter, particularly if it does not wish to upset sections of its membership. The debates within the Educational Institute of Scotland about the rights and wrongs of state funding for Roman Catholic schools is

one such example where some within the union would suggest that separate schooling based on faith perpetuates religious divisions and sectarianism, while others praise a state system that is prepared to fund different faith schools, seeing such a state system as providing choice for parents and pupils.

Ozga (2005:211) suggests that the distinct Scottish approach to teacher professionalism, based on partnership working with government and educational policy makers, does enable the potential of a 'collective narrative' to emerge which works for the benefit of inclusion and the maintenance of the democratic intellect. Once again, this is a dual-edged situation. On a positive note, Ozga's hopes may well be right. However, given Scotland's track record of denial about issues of racism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination, a more dismal picture could also emerge where the partnership between teaching unions and government acts to muffle voices that want to speak about discrimination, to stifle structural change and to limit progress in promoting anti-discriminatory practice.

For example, Scottish education's rhetoric of fairness and justice, anti-discrimination and equity issues have a low status within Scottish education discourses and it is therefore difficult to persuade fellow teachers to become inquisitive or enthusiastic in an area that is not only marginal but potentially controversial.

Then there are issues which are not distinctly Scottish but may have distinctly Scottish consequences. Teachers' fear of being seen to be 'political' is not a distinctly Scottish reaction but such fear within a society with a potentially flawed view of itself as egalitarian, with a relatively homogeneous population and with the absence of organised networks or organisations that vocally challenge injustice and discrimination, can result in limited transformative practice that will address issues of personal, cultural and institutional discrimination. This is evidenced through the lack of discussion about matters of equity and anti-discrimination within Scottish academic writing about teacher professionalism. There is equally very little written about Scottish teacher identity in relation to issues of diversity. Here it is important to repeat again Avis's warning that discussions about professionalism devoid of dissent and opposition are essentially sterile (2005:216). In other parts of the United Kingdom, particularly England and Wales, teachers' fear of being seen to be political may also result in curtailed transformative practice but the presence of larger numbers of minority groups and vocal voluntary organisations has meant that, particularly in the metropolitan areas, teachers who are prepared to be more radical have been able to speak up and draw support from such voices. In Scotland, teachers who are prepared to be radical and transformative often have to act in relative isolation.

Nevertheless, these teachers' narratives are peppered with examples of how individual teachers can make a difference by disrupting what is normative. It is also

clear that the teachers who are in more senior posts feel more empowered to make those differences. It is therefore a journey with many hopeful stories.

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

There is no such thing as a neutral education process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the 'practice of freedom', the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.

(Richard Shaull (1972), in his foreword to Paulo Freire's book  
*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*)

I began this study expecting to be able to clearly identify particular experiences and theories that the nine teachers were going to share with me as key influences for their engagement with issues of equity and anti-discrimination. However, the data I collected through the conversations were less accommodating. Teachers told stories about their life, their family, their experiences and their work. There were no life-changing epiphany moments for any of them; rather there were cumulative epiphanies, a series of episodes or people met along life's journey that began to influence them as individuals. The stories shared were low-key, gentle, descriptive of how people felt, of people and experiences that were important to them or had impacted on their lives, of moments that made them change direction or which made them laugh, but not the political, hard-edged accounts I thought I might have received. Their collective 'ordinariness' and my assumptions were my epiphany moments in this study.

Teachers identified a range of individuals as well as experiences that have developed their commitment to equity and anti-discrimination. The themes below have been

discussed with eight of the nine teachers and there is collective agreement that these themes are ones that they wish the study to document. These themes are:

- the influence of family and home
- personal experiences of discrimination
- the influence of religion
- the tapestry of self (the presence of multiple identities)
- being part of the 'other'.

Teachers drew their learning first and foremost from their family (immediate and extended) and the more open families were in discussing political and social issues, the more confident the teacher was in engaging with these issues as part of their growing up. The interviews also taught me that teachers did not always need a 'politicised' home environment to nurture interest in equity issues. For example, Teacher D grew up in a home that she called '... quite a racist family, a very white Scottish male-dominated traditional family..' but as she grew up and through her faith, she learnt that these were not sentiments she wanted to adopt. This teacher moved away from her 'ecological niche' (Alsup 2006:107) to develop an oppositional ideological position.

Growing up in a homogeneous community does not need to be a barrier to developing an interest in issues of diversity. Nor does it prevent the development of an understanding of how power relations and power differentials can impact on individuals provided there are opportunities to discuss issues of difference and discrimination. Several of the

teachers in this study grew up in communities where there was little if any colour diversity. However, they also grew up in homes where politics was discussed and where they were offered opportunities to think about difference as a positive feature as in the home of Teacher E:

There were very few children whose skin wasn't white in my schools. There were one or two children. So I don't think as a child or at university my friendship groups were very diverse, there were very few non-white faces.... My family is a political family. So the discussions are political. My parents are Labour Party activists for all of my childhood and up till now, so I can't remember when in that way, I became aware of class and difference.

Other teachers had personal examples of discrimination that have helped them to invest in issues faced by others. As Teacher F said,

I feel my story has significant learning in it about discrimination. Without having my story to tell, it would maybe make it harder for me to empathise with other people, engage with them and I feel like I can.

Being the 'other' also helped develop teacher empathy with others who are different.

One teacher came out as a lesbian and had to cope with reactions from friends and colleagues. Others found that being English in Scotland or being of a different colour marked them out as being 'other'. Engagement in this instance with equity and anti-discrimination issues for this group of teachers were triggered by self-interest and probably self-preservation.

A feature that was interesting in this study which differed from studies in other parts of the world (Pohan 1996; Smith et al 1997; Garmon 1998 and 2004) was the presence of religion (Christianity) as being an influencing factor in developing interest for equity and anti-discrimination work. This study has not made any comment about different denominations of Christianity and the teachers who cited religion as being important came from both Protestant and Catholic backgrounds and, within the Protestant tradition, from different traditions (e.g. Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Methodist). The influence worked in both a positive and negative way. Most indicated positively that their religion has helped them to become pro-active in challenging oppression, discrimination and injustice. Their engagement with religion would appear to draw from the liberation theology tradition which had a more emancipatory approach than traditional organised religion. This resulted in quite a few of these teachers developing an interest or connection with parts of the world where emancipation struggles have taken place (South Africa) or are still continuing (Burma). However, the influence was also negative in that some questioned the ability of organised religion to reconcile itself with human rights and anti-discrimination principles. Teacher F, for example, who was living with her partner, was refused a church wedding by their priest on the grounds that pre-marital sex was sinful. This prompted her to disengage with the church and also to examine in more detail the concepts of morality, fairness and discrimination.

Past experiences were cited as being really useful lessons for the future taking up John Dewey's belief that experience is a key factor in effective education. For example, Teacher A grew up in a rural setting and was taught 'the pecking order of where you



fitted in'. She grew up challenging class discrimination and worked hard in her practice to counter views held by some of her colleagues and the schools she taught in about children from working-class backgrounds. This did not assist her career prospects or her popularity with her colleagues. Then there was Teacher H who grew up knowing she had to cook and clean for the family while her brothers were allowed to have leisure time. She grew up with clear views of gender equality and has now taken that into her adult life in the way she parents her son but also in the way she is vocal about issues of gender and race inequalities within her school.

For others, being Scottish was an important influence to developing commitment to equity issues, as Teacher G illustrates: 'Robert Burns – a big influence on my views. Highland hospitality, positive aspects of Highland culture... the Scottish psyche of egalitarianism... I think they are all influencers in my life.' This belief in internationalism and egalitarianism has marked Teacher G's practice as a teacher. Working in a very rural part of Scotland, he uses a range of methods to open up the world for his pupils. For example, the annual visit to the Edinburgh Science Festival provides opportunity to visit the local mosque or gurdwara, all normally inaccessible given the school's geography. Teacher G consistently seeks opportunities to present different standpoints to his students, addressing explicitly controversial and difficult topics. Teacher G was the first in Scotland post 9/11 (that I know of) to develop and post on the internet lesson ideas for upper primary teachers about addressing Islamophobia.

All nine teachers were able to cite examples of how they took their commitment of equity and anti-discrimination work forward in their practice. The teachers in this study adopted a social model approach to issues of diversity and difference. They placed the onus of change on themselves as professionals but also on the school system as a whole.

This is in sharp contrast with some of the voices of graduating teachers from the institution I lecture in. In May 2007, my colleague and I conducted a small-scale pilot study to explore graduating teacher education students' understanding of equality and diversity issues. We ran two focus groups of final-year students selected randomly from tutorial groups. One student about to qualify as a Physical Education teacher commented, with regard to adapting gym kits, that the idea of 'changing current practice in order to accommodate one or two Muslim girls was ridiculous and pandering to political correctness' (Arshad and Mitchell 2007:5). Another wanted greater engagement with the issues but only if this could be done '*without "disrupting" the curriculum?*'

The teachers in this study by contrast did not view difference as a difficult subject to accommodate, instead they focussed their conversations with me about barriers and values set up by the system that excluded.

The headteacher found parents threatening and they had their place. I know of another headteacher who has refused every year to have a school board. Anyhow, she has never had a school board and they feel threatened because of the power that parents have. It's like new teachers, they feel threatened at parents' night. (Teacher D)

Attitudes being expressed in the staff room, they would see themselves as being very apart from the children and families they are working with. I found that quite patronising but my own attitude would be that if there is something wrong with the state system then you should do your damndest to make the system as good as it can be and for all children. (Teacher F)

Earlier I stated that my epiphany was my coming to terms with the ordinariness of the teachers in this study. When teachers were asked for examples of how they took forward issues into practice, they cited examples of how they embedded issues within the subjects they taught, how they used their external contacts to develop connections for the school, e.g. setting up an Amnesty International Group in the school through having connections with the local Peace and Justice Group, how they developed better links with parents or how they did not give up on pupils or parents who may have earned the label of ‘losers’ and so on. Many of the steps they took to create change were small but tangible examples and these serve as powerful reminders that everyone can make a difference and contribute to the improvement of their immediate learning environment.

Against a backdrop of constant change in terms of educational policy and public and political expectations of what education, schools and teachers can deliver, what is striking about these teachers is that they have kept going. I asked each teacher how they managed to sustain their commitment to equity issues in the face of ever changing demands and without exception, the teachers found my question strange. It was not that they were oblivious to external pressures but it would appear that the teachers did not allow these factors to become obstacles. They appeared to ebb and flow with the pressures.

This study suggests that much might be gained if teacher education programmes enabled sufficient time at the beginning of the programme for student teachers to talk about their key influences in relation to this area of work. This might enable student teachers to engage with issues in a personal way and assist them to identify gaps in knowledge and experience that in time the teacher education course could assist in meeting. Lane et al (2003:66) state that pre-service programmes in general do not provide sufficient attention to teachers as change agents with the result that teachers do not believe that they can really make a difference, particularly at institutional levels. This study suggests that teacher education programmes could actively link the moral purpose of teaching to engagement in productive change (Fullan 1993) and to illustrate that this can be done in small meaningful and effective ways as teachers in this study have demonstrated. Being able to make a difference in small steps will raise the confidence and ultimately the morale (and possibly activism level) of teachers as change agents.

It would be fair to argue that what is not known is whether teachers in this study would have been able to engage in such in-depth reflection within the first semester of a teacher education programme or whether such reflections are only possible further down a teaching career. Therefore, initial discussions about these matters in the first semester will need to be followed up with opportunities to develop thinking on the matter as the course progresses.

## **7.1 Contribution of teacher education institutions**

Of the seven teachers who trained in Scotland, some as recently as the mid 1990s when much equality legislation and policies was least two decades old, only two remembered course content that had engaged them on issues of equity and anti-discrimination. Both had trained in the same institution fifteen years apart. They did not know each other and have never met. However, both named the same tutor who exposed them to studying topics like colonialism. While this is an interesting coincidence it also demonstrates the power each tutor has to make a difference.

On the whole teachers felt that their experiences within teacher education programmes had not sufficiently extended or challenged them to become critical practitioners or to learn much about equity and anti-discrimination issues. Some teachers articulated that in their courses they ‘were told, not shown’ and words like ‘bland’ and ‘uninspiring’ were used.

This study found that teachers had developed their thinking and practice based on a strong sense of fairness rather than on any particular theoretical framework related to equity and anti-discrimination. Jalongo et al (1995:13) suggest that outstanding teachers draw a great deal from intuition. However, relying on intuition is insufficient to take forward effective anti-discriminatory practice. Unless teachers are provided opportunities to interpret things from a range of perspectives, any intuition will be honed by individual teachers’ experiences and cultural understanding of the world. Within a

homogeneous group of teachers such intuition is likely to draw from similar rather than diverse sources.

Therefore a key area where teacher education programmes can make a substantial contribution is in building teacher understanding of the range of theories related to equity and anti-discrimination. Long (2004) found from her research that the one thing that teachers found that provided them confidence in ‘negotiating beyond the status quo’ (p141) and ‘to effect change was directly related to their ability to express understandings of theory and practice’ (149).

Learning about theories of power, identity and discrimination will assist teachers to take new perspectives on social diversity and social justice. Part of that would involve the deconstructing of concepts like meritocracy and egalitarianism. Having an understanding of different conceptual and historical frameworks might provide teacher expertise on matters of diversity and difference, developing intercultural competence, as well as moving teachers away from what Zeichner and Liston (1987:285, cited in Lane et al 2003:67) call ‘technical rather than critical or epistemological aspects of teaching’.

Programmes can offer different opportunities through placements and collaborative projects with community agencies, via visiting speakers, by using international doctoral students within a school of education as tutors – all assisting to broaden experiences for students. Teachers in this study were all involved in external networks and within networks that Paterson (1998) would have defined as ‘strong activism’. These networks

enabled them to see beyond their professional lenses, moving them beyond the four walls mentality' and enabling them to become teachers with open dispositions.

## **7.2 Reviving collective activism**

Activism among Scottish teachers would appear to be selective, reactive and defensive. This is in contrast to England, the United States and Australia where there are examples of teacher activism that are open and pro-active and where teachers and education academics write and research about social issues like racism and homophobia as well as taking more active action against institutional discriminatory policies and practices within the schooling system. This is not to say that individual teachers or schools in Scotland are not adopting radical forms of activism but these are largely ad hoc, isolated and not documented.

This study has not fully reflected upon the reasons for inactivity. However, from the literature review, it would appear that teacher activism in Scotland was most active in the 1980s and early 1990s. The activism coalesced around resisting New Right policies under successive Westminster Conservative governments which threatened comprehensive education with the increased 'privatisation' of education as well as the erosion of teacher autonomy and working conditions. This activism became quieter after the arrival of New Labour in 1997 and became virtually non-existent with the onset of devolution. This could be due to the optimistic and buoyant mood in Scotland after 'the

settled will of the people' in the shape of the new Scottish Parliament where the politics of the possible were expected.

While the managerialist and performativity culture that Fairley and Paterson (1995) and Livingston and Robertson (2001) described and the 'economising of education' (Ozga forthcoming) continued unabated, the discourse was moving away from adversarial management to a more collegiate form of managerialism. Ozga (forthcoming) documents that across Europe, while teachers were still expected to produce results, 'Europe policy texts...are giving more freedom to teachers and school'. The more collegiate approach would appeal to the Scottish teaching profession which has always been more comfortable with a negotiated rather than combative approach. This might provide yet another explanation why there is a lack of collective activism in present times.

A further explanation is purely pragmatic in that collective activism is difficult to revive when the labour context is pressurised with teachers struggling to keep up with the range of demands imposed on them. Teachers are tired of change. A growth in credentialism has also led teachers to upskill by improving their qualifications. However, upskilling courses such as those related to the Additional Support for Learning Act 2004 tend to be technical rather than intellectual. They provide teachers with information on how to include a range of learners such as pupils with autism or visual impairments. These courses do not in the main engage teachers in a critical examination of their own



attitudes and latent prejudices nor do they always help teachers to develop a considered reflection of their roles and responsibilities in relation to equity. Other CPD routes such as the Chartered Teacher programme, while encouraging critical thinking, also adopt an individualistic approach in that teachers are asked to critically reflect on their role as an educator within the classroom rather than on how education policy, school ethos and other labour context issues might impact on the educator's teaching within a classroom (MacDonald 2007:130). This pushes the teacher to focus on themselves rather than the wider context and indeed the experiences of other teachers, hence impacting on the potential for collective activism.

MacDonald (2004:431), studying teacher reaction to McCrone's call for greater collegiality, found that there is a reluctance to engage in pro-action and a penchant for compliance. MacDonald also found that teachers were reluctant to be associated with activism or resistance, viewing such activities as relevant for other people but not for them as they were 'not that kind of person' (ibid:431).

Sachs (2003b:15) suggests that 'the word activist carries with it some negative baggage and stereotypes'. She suggests there is a need to reclaim or even 'recast' the term activism to mean activity that is 'positive and community building' (ibid). Sachs's suggestion of recasting is worth considering. In the field of equity and anti-discrimination, would teacher activism be more forthcoming if the key messages were

more empowering ones such as ‘making a difference’ rather than messages that are critical such as ones that expect people to ‘challenge discrimination and oppression’?

Fullan (1993:12) found in his research that teachers often say the reason they enter teaching is ‘to make a difference in the lives of students’ so perhaps a positive message that empowers might encourage participation in transformative action. Recent research into teacher culture by MacDonald (2007:132) suggests that there may be a need to remind teachers of the potency of personal power.

Stephen Lukes, updating his book *Power: A Radical View* thirty years on in 2004, acknowledged that in his first book he saw power as only being used to ‘dominate’. However, defining power as simply affecting other people or situations can be a simplistic understanding of ‘power’. In his updated book (Lukes 2004) he discusses how power can be used to effect change. Here issues of how one can use personal power to make a difference are explored. This perhaps then is the bridge (real and virtual) that still needs to be built to enable teachers to come together to discuss issues and to recognise their personal power in taking forward equity issues. Teachers similar in their orientations to diversity and equity issues to the nine in this study are key contributors to such an exercise.

However, Williamson and Robinson (2008) in their research with teachers on a Chartered Teacher course postulate that ‘a sense of activism’ is emerging. This provides

them hope that teachers will develop confidence to resist the ‘crippling limitations on effective learning imposed by the managerialist discourse of performativity and accountability’ (ibid). Williamson and Robinson do not share MacDonald’s (2007) fears of a continued inward-looking and compliant teaching profession; they conclude their article by suggesting that ‘from now on things are going to change!’

The nine teachers in this study and others like them certainly give weight to Williamson and Robinson’s optimism. However, Williamson and Robinson do not address the homogeneity of Scottish teachers and though they suggest that Chartered Teachers for example are keen to reflect critically on their professional learning, such learning is still taking place largely within white, middle-class, heterosexual standpoints. How then will such critical reflection move beyond the same framework?

This study suggests that recasting has taken place but those that have engaged in such recasting in Scotland have sanitised the debate. Key concepts of power, discrimination and oppression have become diluted in favour of more palatable terms like inclusion, diversity and equal opportunities. The challenge for teacher activists in Scotland is firstly to reclaim these terms so that a radical discourse can emerge, secondly to locate their activism within an explicit anti-discriminatory practice that will engage with personal, cultural and institutional power. Finally, there will be a need to consider the impact of a homogeneous workforce and to identify both strengths and limitations.

Failure to do so will enable the norm to persist and any hope of a radical and counter-hegemonic discourse emerging will just not materialise.

### **7.3 A different future?**

Allan (2003) suggests that with devolution in 1999 and the setting up of the Scottish Parliament, there are real opportunities for ‘transforming “conservatism and caution” into “innovation and forward thinking”’ (289–90) thereby disrupting the ‘inertia which has characterized the system’ (300). Eisenberg (2006:8), discussing Iris Young’s work, points out that Young argues that social justice ‘requires dismantling structures of oppression and domination’ as well as the recognition of how discrimination impacts differently for individuals. The latter part is particularly important in a Scottish context where certain discrimination may affect only small numbers of the population (for example, transgendered individuals) but in terms of justice is as important as if the discrimination had affected a bigger percentage of the population. The principle that there should be ‘no hierarchy of oppression’ is relevant here.

Equally Fraser (2000) suggests that contemporary discourses about justice cannot ignore the presence of identity politics and the clamour for recognition. To counter the increasing fragmentations of solidarity as a result of contemporary identity politics she proposes that both recognitional as well as distributive justice is what is required. Fraser defines recognitional justice as encompassing a status model that does not link the lack of status simply to economic circumstances but also considers how people are being misrecognised. Education has a big role to play in this respect as, through curriculum

content, it can perpetuate misrecognition through omission or commission or it can 'dismantle' existing structures and ways of seeing, replacing them with a curriculum (formal and hidden) that drives teachers and pupils towards self-enlightenment.

If Allan's hopes are to materialise, a shift of thinking is needed within Scottish education from what is 'meritocratic' to what is equitable and while redistributive justice is important so is recognitional justice.

This study concludes that Scottish classroom teachers face one fundamental obstacle in addressing issues of diversity and equity and that is the lack of leadership from the Scottish Government and leaders in Scottish education on issues of equity and anti-discrimination. Those that lead and shape Scottish education policy and discourse must address four challenges if Scottish classroom teachers are to be empowered in this area.

The first challenge lies in pushing Scottish education leaders and policy shapers to disengage from the collective narrative of meritocratic egalitarianism that has enabled the myth to persist that Scottish education educates for all equitably. The second challenge is to recognise and work with the homogeneous nature of the workforce and the limited opportunities teachers and teacher educators have to engage critically with discourses around difference and discrimination. The homogeneity of Scotland's teaching workforce (see Appendix 5) probably contributes to the lack of understanding and activism in the area of equity and anti-discrimination. There is concern that the current teaching workforce, largely homogeneous (white and middle-class, female in the

early years and primary), is becoming increasingly mismatched to the profile of an increasingly diverse pupil population. This concern was voiced by Matt McIver, former Chief Executive and Registrar of the General Teaching Council of Scotland, when he suggested that ‘...the teaching profession needs to be as diverse as the population of the country’ (in Menter et al 2006:272).

Waiting for the composition of the workforce to become more diverse as a way of meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse pupil population is an inadequate and too long-term strategy. If the current homogeneity is not to become a barrier, then action is required to provide the current workforce with the theoretical and practical knowledge to become more effective with working with diverse pupil populations. Such knowledge should also be about meeting the needs of all pupils by raising pupil awareness of issues of prejudice and discrimination as such knowledge will be necessary for pupils growing up in an ever more complex world and into increasingly diverse workplaces.

The third challenge is to raise the status of those teachers who are pro-active and explicitly taking forward equity and anti-discrimination work. The General Teaching Council in Scotland (GTCS) offers a professional recognition scheme which allows teachers to achieve recognition in areas of professional interest. Of the 25 categories listed on their website, none as yet relate specifically to equity and anti-discrimination. This can be easily rectified.

The fourth and possibly the most urgent challenge, is to address the conceptual and practical limitations of the Additional Support for Learning Act 2004. In Scotland, any discussions about progressing equity and anti-discrimination within teachers must address the impact of the Additional Support for Learning Act 2004 (the Act). This Act places a duty on every education authority in Scotland to meet the ‘additional need’ of any pupil in its care. ‘Needs’ as defined by the Act are wide-ranging and cover those who are being bullied and those with different ability or learning needs (gifted, with learning difficulty, those who require English as an Additional Language support) as well as particular categories of pupils such as those from Gypsy/Traveller backgrounds. The Act aspires to be inclusive of all and stigmatising none and in that way builds on the Scottish belief of fairness. It also takes into account the holistic role of the teacher with the focus on the whole child – the emotional and social as well as academic requirements.

While the principles of the Act are laudable, the Act could be said to have muddied the waters in Scotland in progressing the equity and anti-discrimination discourse (Arshad and Mitchell 2007:4–5). The Act has shifted the focus away from discussions about why barriers to participation exist to a focus on how to be inclusive. Yet, to be inclusive requires an understanding of what excludes in the first place. The Act by focussing attention on individual pupil needs has enabled Scottish education to disengage from considering institutional forms of discrimination as suggested by the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry report (Macpherson 1999).

It has also conflated concepts of inclusion, equity, inequality and discrimination.

Delivering effectively for the Act will not necessarily challenge discrimination though it may go some way to providing for equity. The Act, which grew from Scottish legislation, is robustly defended by the Scottish Government education officials as being sufficient to cover the range of equality issues. This study argues that this is not the case and one of the negative impacts of the Act has been to detract from the key tenets of GB-wide equality legislation related to race, gender, disability and sexual orientation. The ASL Act was also an attempt to move teacher thinking away from 'special educational needs (SEN)' to an approach that was more inclusive. In real terms, the language change has not necessarily changed teacher thinking about issues. ASL is now a euphemism for SEN. As Benjamin (2002:310) stated '...changes in language, whilst they can be important, are not sufficient to shift meaning on their own: when material practices remain unchanged, and when relations of subordination and domination are relatively untroubled, then new forms of language can become co-opted into reactionary agendas'. Allan (2008:701) concurs suggesting that 'there is conceptual confusion surrounding what inclusion is, what it is supposed to do and for whom.'

Monies previously available for up-front equity and anti-discrimination work in Scottish school education have largely been re-allocated to taking forward the key aspects of the Act. Funding is now more likely to be available for teachers to go on courses to upskill on how to include a range of learners such as pupils with autism or visual impairments. These courses do not necessarily engage teachers in a critical examination of their own attitudes and latent prejudices nor do they always help teachers to develop a considered



reflection of their roles and responsibilities in relation to equity. Their focus is on upskilling in a technical sense rather than a course about ideologies, conceptual analysis or discussions about power imbalances and differentials. Therefore teachers' capacities to understand why discrimination occur or how to create the changes necessary at classroom or institutional level to promote equity, diversity and inclusion remain under-developed. No evaluation has been conducted since the introduction of the Act to measure whether the Act has assisted teachers to understand and value diversity as a positive force within a school and its community. A recent consultation by the Scottish Government concerning amendments it proposes to make to the Act has drawn a great deal of criticism from parents, education authorities and charities (Buie 2008). The amendments were largely about closing loopholes such as in the area of school placing requests rather than about the ideological base of the Act.

The teachers in this study demonstrate clearly that ordinary teachers can become change agents. Change does not have to be spectacular, small changes can be effective provided such changes are sustained and built upon. Teacher educators like myself can assist future and current teachers to develop confidence and strategies to become anti-discriminatory practitioners by ensuring:

- (a) That student teachers and teachers are offered opportunities within initial teacher education programmes and CPD courses to probe their own experiences, values and beliefs in relation to issues of equity, fairness and anti-discrimination so that

they can begin to understand how their past can assist them to ‘invest’ in the issues of others.

- (b) That teacher education courses do not just focus on methods but are constructed in a way that enables tutors to establish how teachers’ beliefs, attitudes, and dispositions can be interwoven with their knowledge skills and behaviours in the classroom context. (Clarke and Drudy 2006:375). Lane et al (2003:66, citing Cochran-Smith 1991) suggest that overemphasis on the ‘technical rather than the critical epistemological aspects of teaching’ will hinder teachers taking responsibility for being change agents.
  
- (c) That student teachers and teachers engage with theories of equity and anti-discrimination as well as problematising the term ‘inclusion’. Such intellectual engagement will need to assist student teachers to consider how they can make a difference by dismantling personal, cultural and institutional discrimination. Teachers must be assisted to move away from a position of neutrality to an understanding of how power operates within schools as sites of struggle. Failure to engage with such issues will perpetuate the current state of ‘naïve egalitarianism’ where the absence of overt forms of discrimination is taken as an indicator of justice and specific instances of discrimination are reduced to the excuse of ‘the one bad apple in the barrel’. Addressing inclusion issues is not the same as educating and acting against discrimination.

(d) That alternative forms of mentoring and experiential learning are provided.

Linear forms of learning where student teachers are placed in a school and provided a mentor to assist them are insufficient within the Scottish context. A homogeneous teacher group needs to be offered opportunities to discuss issues from different standpoints. For example, discussing issues of racism within a homogeneous ethnic group is unlikely to extend thinking or create the dynamism or complexities that will assist depth restructuring of individual schema. Arshad et al (2005) in their study of minority pupil experiences in Scottish schools found that there was considerable variation in what minority ethnic pupils' and parents' views on racism and race equality were in comparison to those of the teachers. Parents and pupils wanted teachers and schools to pay more attention to issues of race while teachers overall thought they were doing as much as they could.

The nine teachers in this study demonstrate through their passion and commitment a future of democratic possibilities. They have shown that teachers need not become educational operatives but can be effective 'public intellectuals' (Giroux 1992: 242).

Some of them have been pioneers in their family, in their community and in their school as change agents for social justice. In the face of disabling managerial and ideological constraints, they have shown it is possible to continue to push for change and radical pedagogy. If this can be a reality for the nine teachers, why not for others?

## **7.4 My own learning**

I started this thesis with the intention of exploring the factors that assisted the development of teacher interest in issues of equity and anti-discrimination. I wanted information gained from this study to assist me to alter and enhance my own practice as a teacher educator in the area of equity and anti-discrimination. Some of that learning is reflected in the preceding paragraphs as I can now take such learning forward with colleagues to improve practice in the teaching of social justice.

However, two personal learning points that I take away from this study have been a realisation of the importance of valuing small changes and a strong belief that everyone can make a difference. I began the journey with assumptions that worthwhile change had to be political, radical and informed. I came into this study assuming that the teachers would tell me politicised stories of how they became involved, engaged and passionate about challenging injustice. I come from an activist tradition on race issues where most of my thinking and practice was crafted during my work as a youth and community worker in the streets of middle England during the time of the inner-city riots of the early 1980s. I had assumed that teachers actively working for anti-discrimination would be politicised and able to describe radical acts of change. They might also have been active in grassroots organisations campaigning for justice. I have learnt that this is not necessarily the case but more importantly that change can be achieved through different ways, through small private steps such as changing the content of what we teach but also through bold and more public acts of political action such as being part of protest

demonstrations. Different forms of change, provided they share in the objective of reducing discrimination, need to be valued and encouraged. I have also learnt to value that those who engage in small acts of change can be as effective as those who are prepared to stick their necks above the parapet. Teacher educators like myself can assist to empower student teachers' belief in themselves as change agents by improving student teachers' confidence to begin to make those small changes.

While the cohort in this study is small, I am confident of the robustness of the findings as a result of the power-sharing method adopted in arriving at the emerging themes. I found that returning to discuss emerging themes with the teachers and providing space for the co-construction of the conclusions has strengthened the validity of this piece of work. By enabling myself to enter the research exercise rather than establishing a distance with research participants I have enabled conversations to take place which would have been difficult to have if I had not 'painted myself into the picture', a phrase that Harding (1987) and Brayton (1997) use. Since I completed the field-work exercise, a number of respondents have kept in contact, keen on receiving a synopsis of the thesis. They too are keen to find out how their collective stories unfold. I know I will be able to work with all nine respondents again, drawing on them this time to assist me in my role as a teacher educator as a co-lecturer, and possibly as a co-researcher, to progress our joint aims of promoting equity and challenging discrimination.

If you think you are too small to make a difference,  
try to sleep in a closed room with a mosquito....  
African proverb

## **APPENDIX 1: TERMINOLOGY**

There are many words or phrases associated with this area of work, such as equal opportunities, diversity, mainstreaming, social justice and social inclusion. Throughout this study the terms equity and anti-discrimination are used. The term ‘equity’ is used in preference to ‘equality’ as it is a term that this study argues more accurately reflects what is possible.

‘Equality’ is a term that is commonly used to refer to the approach of treating people with fairness. In an education context, this concept might offer learners equal access and rights but does not always take into consideration the additional steps required in order to obtain, as far as possible, equivalent experiences that might allow for equal outcomes.

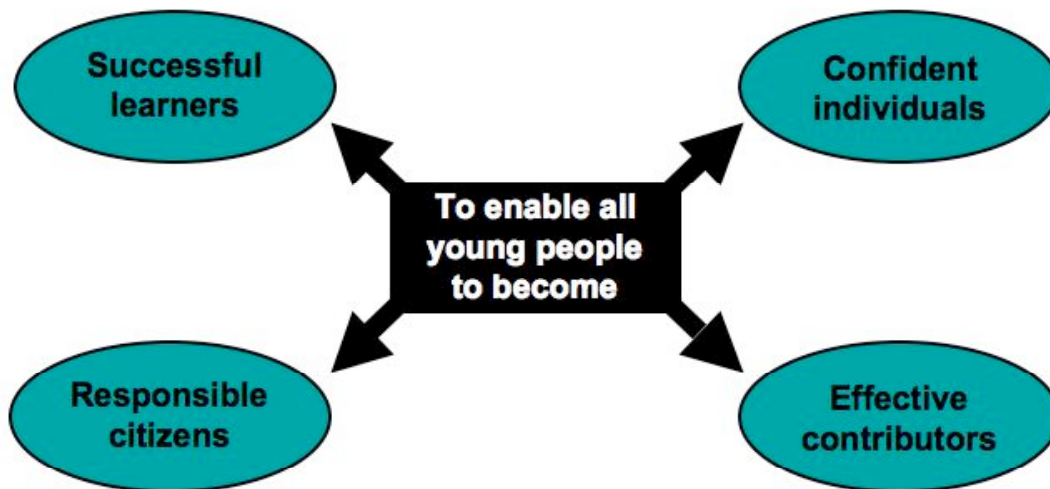
For treatment to be fair, issues of diversity need to be taken into account so that the different needs and requirements of individuals are met. An equitable approach is not about treating people in the same way but about acknowledging that people are diverse and may have different needs and strengths. Therefore the term ‘equity’ is preferred in this study.

The term ‘anti-discrimination’ is used in this study to describe an approach or approaches which challenge unfair treatment of individuals or groups based on a specific characteristic of that group, e.g. colour, age, disability etc.

Anti-discrimination is more than non-discrimination. Non-discrimination is about not taking part in discriminatory action. An anti-discrimination approach is explicitly and pro-actively aimed at reducing the occurrence of discrimination and at redressing the consequences of discrimination.

**APPENDIX 2: THE FOUR CAPACITIES OF A CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE**

## Purposes of Education



The four capacities of A Curriculum for Excellence provide opportunities for teachers to educate pupils about equity and discrimination issues. However, the failure of the framework to name issues of prejudice, discrimination, oppression and human rights as key issues leaves these issues in danger of being marginalised.

The Centre for Education for Racial Equality in Scotland (CERES) took the opportunity to demonstrate how equity and anti-discrimination issues can be embedded into the four capacities (see the framework below).

**A Framework for Mainstreaming Equality into the Curriculum for Excellence:**  
(CERES 2007)

<http://www.education.ed.ac.uk/ceres/Projects/Resources/Framework.pdf>

**Confident Individuals** would include valuing diversity, offering insights into other lives, developing a sense of belonging for all (not making the assumption that there is an

average pupil, that is, white, English speaking, able-bodied, middle class, Christian, boy, living in a house with his biological, heterosexual parents).

**Successful Learners** would include providing learners with an understanding and analysis of discrimination. Learners might be taught to explore what people have in common and where they differ, to look beyond labels and stereotypes, to develop an understanding of complex identity and to consider how discrimination manifests itself at a personal, cultural, institutional and structural level and within different contexts, for example in the world of work.

**Responsible Citizens** would include building learner capacity to challenge discrimination against themselves and others. Learners would be given insight into the experience of being discriminated against, practising standing up for themselves, each other and unknown others and engaging in learning activities directly related to injustice, inequality, prejudice, discrimination and human rights. They would explore how people have resisted injustices locally and globally and how collectively people have shown solidarity with each other and achieved justice.

**Effective Contributors** would include providing learners with opportunities to take action against discrimination. Learners would have a part in decision making processes in school or institutional initiatives related to equity and anti-discrimination e.g. against bullying, welcoming refugees, challenging gender stereotypes. They might become allies against discrimination through developing peer support skills, mentoring skills, and campaigning skills, and they may research to extend their own knowledge and understanding of discrimination and become familiar with legislation and political systems which uphold rights and responsibilities.



## **APPENDIX 3: STUDY RATIONALE**

### **Edd STUDY: AN EQUALITY AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATION APPROACH TO TEACHING**

**This study is being conducted by Rowena Arshad as part of her Educational Doctorate Programme within the School of Education, Moray House, University of Edinburgh. This study will form the basis of Rowena Arshad's thesis for her doctorate. Rowena Arshad is being supervised by Professor Jenny Ozga.**

#### **Aim**

The key aim for this study is the investigation of factors that enable teachers to develop and sustain an approach to teaching that is underpinned by principles of equality and anti-discrimination.

#### **Method**

The study using purposive sampling will select no more than 12 teachers in Scotland who between them will provide information-rich cases. A range of teachers will be selected to reflect some diversity in relation to geography, sector, ethnicity, age and gender. In Scotland, the numbers of teachers who are easily identified for explicit and sustained practice in equality and anti-discrimination work remains small. Purposive sampling enables the study to target a particular group of teachers who are recognised by their peers and management as key contributors in the field of equality and anti-discrimination.

The study will adopt a case study strategy where the factors (processes) that influenced these teachers towards an equality and anti-discrimination approach will be explored. Such a strategy would also enable actions and events relating to the different individuals to be understood in context. It would also enable the experiences of each teacher to be taken into account, retaining issues of uniqueness while providing information to deepen understanding of the topic of study. The emerging data could then be compared, contrasted and used to enable emerging themes to be distilled and eventually to contribute to theory generation.

#### **Interviews**

**It is proposed that there will be five interviews with each teacher**, each session lasting no more than 1.5 hours. **The dates of these five interviews will be negotiated** and some of these may be conducted as telephone interviews if this is a more efficient use of time. All interviews will be taped and need to be concluded by the end of September 2006. At this stage, it is proposed that the interview sessions cover the following themes:

##### **Session 1 Background**

This session finds out about the background of the teacher and

explores any potential key influences that have shaped the teacher's understanding or interest in equality and anti-discrimination issues.

**Session 2      Thoughts about teaching**

This session finds out how the individuals became teachers, what led them into this profession. It will also explore their views on teaching and how they view themselves as teachers.

**Session 3      Understanding of equality and anti-discrimination issues**

This session will explore the teachers' interpretation and understanding of equality and anti-discrimination issues. It will enable teachers to share how they view these issues in contemporary terms (not confined to educational contexts).

**Session 4      Changing context of teaching**

This session will ask teachers to shed light on how they see themselves sustaining equality and anti-discrimination within their practice. What would drive their professionalism and commitment in this area? It would also explore how these teachers perceive the location of these issues amidst educational policy and curriculum changes since devolution and their hopes and aspirations for the future.

**Session 5      Checking out**

This session will enable the researcher to check back key emerging themes of individual case studies for accuracy and completeness.

As the researcher is from an initial teacher education (ITE) institution, there will be some exploration of the role of ITE and the qualities/capacities that should be looked for as part of selection for future teachers in relation to the topic of equality and anti-discrimination.

**Ethical issues**

This study will be conducted within the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Edinburgh Code of Research Ethics. Copies of this will be provided to all respondents prior to the interview.

Before commencing the interviews, written consent will be sought from each teacher and in particular to the right of the researcher to hold and use the data provided with integrity and objectivity.

Teachers engaged in this study will be informed of their legal rights including their rights under the Data Protection Act. The anonymity and privacy of those who participate in the research process will be respected. Personal information concerning research participants will be kept confidential. The purpose of the study is to draw out emerging themes which may be useful for others who have an interest in taking forward equality and anti-discrimination issues in Scottish education to consider, therefore individuals will not be named and appropriate and practicable methods for preserving the privacy of data will be used. These will include the removal of identifiers, the use of pseudonyms and other technical means for breaking the link between data and identifiable individuals.

Individual teachers are also entitled to withdraw from this study at any time.

### **What this study hopes to contribute**

The researcher has worked in the field of equality and anti-discrimination in education for nearly fifteen years. In that time, it is clear that some teachers appear far more willing and able to take on matters of equality, anti-discrimination and social justice than others. There are teachers who are prepared to be critically self-reflective and to attempt to alter or improve practice to best deliver for a diverse student population and within an anti-discriminatory and inclusive ethos. Others will be prepared to make the change if they are provided with an A–Z of how to do it. Others will consistently say that they have no idea how to include or address issues of equality regardless of all the examples or toolkits they may be given and a minority of others react negatively to what they consider to be ‘politically correct’ ideas that should not interfere with good educational practice.

This study wants to recognise the efforts of those in the first grouping, those who are creative, reflexive, self-critical and innovative teachers on matters related to equality, social justice and anti-discrimination. It seeks to learn about what these teachers see as the source of their ‘success’ (life experience, knowledge base, teaching skills, belief systems). Is it possible for some of these characteristics/factors to be better acknowledged by those selecting for teacher education courses, for consideration by those who shape and deliver continuing professional development programmes and ultimately by those who decide and deliver educational policy in Scotland? This study believes that it is important for the efforts of such teachers to be acknowledged and to learn from such efforts as we think about the growing diversity of the learner population and by increasing worldwide mobility.

### **Timescale: March–December 2006**

<b>March–April</b>	Obtain written consent from individual teachers, provide brief aims and structure of study. Begin setting up interview times and schedule
<b>April–September</b>	Conduct interviews
<b>October–December</b>	Analyse information and draw out emerging themes

**December**

Provide summary of themes to all teachers for final comment and input

Alongside the interview processes, there will be literature reviews on related themes such as teacher professionalism, forms of participation (e.g. activist teacher, democratic professionalism), theories of equality and anti-discrimination in education, strategies for mainstreaming equality and anti-discrimination into education.

It is intended to submit the thesis for assessment by May 2007.

Further information about this study can be obtained from [rowena.arshad@ed.ac.uk](mailto:rowena.arshad@ed.ac.uk) or by calling Rowena Arshad on 0131 651 6371

**APPENDIX 4: MONITORING FORM**

**I need a profile of the teachers I have interviewed for my study. It would be most helpful if you could assist me develop your profile. This is a self-declaration form so feel free to define yourself as you wish. If you prefer not to answer any of the sections, you are free to leave them blank.**

**Ethnicity** \_\_\_\_\_

**Gender**

**Male**  **Female**

**Age group:**

**21-29**

**30-39**

**40-49**

**50-59**

**60-69**

**Do you consider yourself to have a disability?**

**Yes**  **No**

**If yes, can you specify** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sexual Orientation**

**Lesbian**

**Gay**

**Bisexual**

**Transgendered**

**Straight**

**Do you have a faith/belief?**

Yes  No

If yes, can you please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**Are you active in your faith/belief e.g. are you a practicing believer**

Yes  No

**What type of ITE course did you attend?**

BEd ( 4 year course)

Bed PE

Bed Technology

PGCE Primary

PGCE Secondary

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**How long have you been teaching?**

\_\_\_\_\_ Years \_\_\_\_\_ Months

**Which sector do you normally work within?**

Early Years

Middle-Upper Primary

Secondary

Other

**Are you a member of a trade union?**

Yes  No

**Are you currently active?**

Yes  No

**Were you ever active as a trade unionist during your career?**

**Yes**  **No**

**If yes, can you say a little more.....**

## APPENDIX 5: SCOTTISH TEACHING PROFILE

The Scottish Government recorded a total of 51,893 teachers based in primary, secondary and special schools in Scotland in 2007 (Scottish Government, 2008). In addition, there are about 1,514 teachers in the pre-school sector. Scotland's teacher profile remains largely female (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Scottish school-based teachers by gender, all sectors, 1991–2007**  
(1)

	Female	Male	Percentage female	Total	Pupils	Pupil : teacher ratio
1991	..	..	..	48,443	746,863	15.4
1992	..	..	..	48,816	751,904	15.4
1993	..	..	..	48,805	759,669	15.6
1994	..	..	..	49,419	763,031	15.4
1995	..	..	..	48,818	765,926	15.7
1996	34,148	14,289	70	48,425	766,398	15.8
1997	34,065	13,695	71	47,761	763,539	16.0
1998	35,302	13,172	73	48,454	758,414	15.7
1999	35,895	13,170	73	49,056	755,081	15.4
2000	35,903	13,025	73	48,928	751,243	15.4
2001	35,941	12,929	74	48,869	745,063	15.2
2002	37,014	13,034	74	50,048	738,597	14.8
2003	36,485	12,744	74	49,230	732,122	14.9
2004	36,969	12,586	75	49,554	723,389	14.6
2005	37,833	12,684	75	50,517	713,240	14.1
2006	38,875	12,784	75	51,658	702,737	13.6
2007	39,122	12,771	75	51,893	692,227	13.3

Further information on the profile of the Scottish teaching workforce can be accessed at <http://cci.scot.nhs.uk/Publications/2008/03/18093809/0>

The percentage of female teachers rises significantly if you disaggregate by sector. For example in primary the percentage of female staff rises to an average of 92% and within the special schools sector to an average of 82%.

<sup>1</sup> Male and female figures from previous years may not add to total, as they were published based on provisional figures.



The teaching profile is overwhelmingly white with only 1.4% of the workforce classifying themselves as visible minorities and of this grouping, only 0.9% are in promoted posts mainly as principal teachers in secondary schools. The 2007 statistics indicate of those that declared that there are no visible minority ethnic teachers at depute or headship level. The average age of Scottish teachers whether in primary, secondary or within special schools is 44. (see Table 2)

**Table 2: Average age of teachers by sector, 2003–2007**

	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Special</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2003</b>	43.8	44.4	46.7	44.2
<b>2004</b>	43.6	44.3	47.2	44.1
<b>2005</b>	43.4	44.0	47.3	43.9
<b>2006</b>	43.1	43.7	47.6	43.6
<b>2007</b>	42.9	43.5	47.5	43.4

The disability profile of teachers is not known and for now, only those from Roman Catholic backgrounds are monitored. In terms of language profile, only those who are able to teach through the Gaelic medium are recorded.

In contrast in 2007, there were 138 different languages reported as being the main home language from pupils attending Scottish schools. 15,411 pupils were identified as having English as an Additional Language (EAL) and about a fifth of these are completely new to English. The figure of EAL pupils was up by over 60% largely due to the influx of A8<sup>2</sup> migrant families. There are a total of 692,213 pupils in Scottish publicly funded schools and of these 8.6% classify themselves as from minority ethnic groups and of this, 6.8% were from visible minority ethnic groups, mainly Asian Pakistani and those of mixed-parentage backgrounds. Though minority ethnic pupils are concentrated in four authorities (Edinburgh, Glasgow, East Renfrewshire and South Lanarkshire), teachers in all 32 local authorities will have linguistic, ethnic and cultural diversities as well as other diversities within their pupil population. There is also the overall principle that equity and anti-discriminatory approaches should form part of all pupils' learning regardless of the presence of diversity. There is a need therefore to have a teaching workforce comfortable with diversity as well as one which is competent to engage with issues of discrimination at all levels.

The profile of the Scottish teaching workforce unlikely to change in any significant way over the next decade so engagement or prioritisation of diversity matters will not emerge

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<sup>2</sup> The 'A8' states acceded to the EU on 1 May 2004. They are the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

as a result of a diverse workforce. It is therefore important to consider if there are experiences that could be offered to jump-start Scottish teachers' interest to 'invest' in issues of equity and anti-discrimination. In a study of only nine teachers, it is not possible to generalise; however, it is hoped that the stories from these teachers open up discussions around what strategies might be identified that could contribute to developing a Scottish workforce that is more comfortable with diversity and confident in challenging different forms of discrimination.

## **APPENDIX 6: EXCERPT FROM TEACHER E'S INTERVIEW ABOUT LABOUR TENSIONS**

Q. What pressures have you found within teaching?

A. I think I can particularly talk about infants because that's where I've been stuck really. I started doing that in 1993, started teaching infants. I taught for a couple of years then had a break for five years. Then I came back and started with infants in Primary 1/2 composite class. I was teaching the alphabet and by the end of the year they were meant to be able to write and know the alphabet. The following year I found Jolly Phonics off my own back so I started using that. By the time I came back into teaching, early intervention was the thing so obviously that affected me in infants. And the children now are reading 40 phonics by October and they are 4 or 5 and that's not about inclusion. It's bizarre to be in something that does teach children to read and write and be better at it but why do we have to do it when they are 4 instead of 6 or nearly 7? To me we have lost the plot and are discriminating against the poorest children because they have the least access to skills which will help them, so they will be hanging on with their fingertips if they are really switched on. I think they are not learners if they are 4 and have never been exposed to learning before. I hate that.

Q. Is that part of the early intervention plan that seems to be hothousing children?

A. I think it is fairly widespread, this rush to formal and academic whole class teaching and lessons. I think it's happening in England too. Although they say differentiate, you try to with 25 Primary 1s and one teacher and you have a lesson to deliver. It's kinda like well it's in the book and you can change this bit but what you're doing is privileging certain parts of learning. The academic, formal, abstract learning really far too, ridiculously young. That's infringed on what space there is and whether children feel that they really are equal... equal as learners and this is before looking at equality of their identities.

Q. This feeling you have, do you think other infant teachers feel the same?

A. Probably to some extent and when people read over the Curriculum of Excellence and it talks about play, people just rip their hair out. Here we go round the mulberry bush thing and how are we going to do that while the government is measuring the statistics to find out when children will jump through certain hoops. I'm all for equal opportunities and children leaving primary school being able to read but I don't think they know how to relate to one another, lots of people are struggling with discipline and that's a cry but perhaps if they felt a bit better about themselves and a bit more positive about learning, there are lots of new initiatives I know coming in but they are flawed.

Q. So early intervention and what is expected on children, this rush and pressure has been for you a major change. Are there any other similar changes that cause stress to teachers in trying to take forward equality issues?

A. Well there are endless initiatives of eco schools and enterprise, citizenship. Each of them has a lot in it, but when are you expected to digest all of this? Perhaps the McCrone agreement has given that opportunity. It's slightly more possible, you can negotiate over the time, instead of just being told. I think there has been points where people have just been told you have to do this and you have to do that. I don't know how much time there is for reflection and thinking ... you could spend all of your non-35-hour contact week, preparing and marking and I know you're not supposed to but I think that's even true for very experienced teachers.

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