



THE FUTURE OF SCOTS

Project report on Education Workshop

Introduction

This report addresses the themes that have emerged during a workshop with participants involved in Scots and education. This workshop was part of a series which were conducted for the Future of Scots project, a collaborative research project aiming to understand how a community-driven language policy could be developed in the case of Scots in Scotland.

Before the workshops, the Future of Scots team designed and conducted an online survey addressed at the general public. This was done in order to have an understanding of the views on Scots and its use in various domains such as education, media, culture, and in policies. The workshops were then designed to engage with the survey results. The purpose of this Education workshop was to hear from stakeholders not only their views on Scots as a whole and its place currently within education, but also to discuss issues and how they could be addressed.

In addition to the moderation team, 6 participants joined the discussions for a total of 2 hours. All the participants were teachers currently working in schools across Scotland. To ensure a broad spectrum of views and to gather the necessary nuances of Scots in education at different stages of the school curriculum, the teachers selected were a mix of Primary and Secondary, including a varied mix of school-based positions, and a geographical spread covering much of Scotland. Before the discussions started, participants listened to two brief presentations, one about the survey results obtained thanks to the Future of Scots project, and the other one dealing with language policy. The starting point for the discussion was the use of a prompt (*"There should be more support for use of Scots in education"*) presenting the results that were obtained to it by 1616 self-selecting respondents who were overwhelmingly in favour, across all age groups.

From the discussion with the participants, several themes arose and are summarised in this report: 1) positive effects and educational benefits achieved when including Scots in the



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classroom, 2) teacher training and resources, and 3) policy and human rights in relation to language.

Discussion themes

1) Positive effects and educational benefits achieved when including Scots in the classroom

All of the teachers who participated in this workshop had experience of using Scots in their classrooms. The evidence they shared showed unanimous agreement for the positive effects and educational benefits of using Scots in education. This was very often tied specifically to Literacy skills. Scots was used in teaching for poetry, writing creatively, self-reflective pieces, social studies and more. Teachers noted a sense of relief from their learners when they realise they haven't been getting it wrong all these years – especially those learners who realise they're bilingual in Scots and English. Discussion also took place on the topic of how Scots was used to either encourage or stretch learners to develop their skills: *It's worked well using Scots to stretch the top end of the class – those that are best at English in Secondary school are more challenged by Scots, and those who were challenged by English find themselves more capable in a world they're familiar with. So it equalises things, challenges everybody.*

How Scots raises attainment and engagement, particularly within Literacy, was agreed upon by all. Participants said there's a need to push to management that Scots in education is about developing literacy, inclusion, self-esteem, health & wellbeing, broadening the curriculum, adding attainment. Scots is “bubbling away” and then teaching it liberates pupils. A Doric-speaking girl wrote 6 pages of fiction in Doric – the teacher didn't think she would have if in English, as she's a first language Doric speaker.

Some of the participants spoke about how their school includes Scots within their 1+2 Language Learning plans. Here classes explore language links between Scots, English and other languages being studied. This was often very helpful in addressing how schools are now multilingual spaces.

The question of whether teaching Scots at same time as English was confusing for the children at early Primary level was given attention. Participants said the children love playing with the words and the sound of them – they could see a growth in the use of Scots, happens naturally in class without the children thinking what they're doing. The youngest learners love making comparisons between Scots, Scots dialects, English, French – rhyming words and playing with language. They take great pride in using Scots in their stories. Lots of enthusiasm and there seems to be an increase in use.

2) Teacher training and resources

Teacher training was discussed and the issue of most teachers in Scottish schools today having been given no training at all in Scots language or how to use it in the classroom. Noted that many Universities now include Scots in their teacher training courses – but what about the teachers who weren't able to access that? Further training and more resources



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are necessary. There are a lot of teachers keen on Scots, but feel a barrier about how they then go about it. They need support, training and encouragement and that is a big task across all of Scotland.

The availability of age-appropriate Scots literature makes the job of teachers a lot easier – great resources, [especially those written across different varieties of Scots eg the Gruffalo](#), were extremely beneficial, as was getting an author or experienced Scots reader into the classroom. Participants said it's a confidence thing and depends a lot on what resources you give people – important to build up confidence of teachers to feel they can teach Scots. It was essential to be aware that not all teachers are Scots speakers, and some of those who are, may not be confident Scots speakers.

3) Policy & The Rights of the Child to use their Mother Tongue in education

What about school policy or lack thereof? Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) allows it to be introduced at any opportunity, but schools themselves may have no written policy. A further barrier can be that CfE *allows* Scots, but doesn't state where exactly Scots should sit. There were many pros and cons to this. In fact, the lack of policy was also cited as beneficial as it gave the teacher room to explore how it best supports the learners in their class. The downside of this is it requires enthusiasm and greater efforts from that teacher and time/opportunities may not allow for that. It was agreed that having a keen headteacher was always beneficial.

One participant reported having 37 L1 languages spoken at their school and incoming children are excellent with Scots – switching to Scots wasn't a barrier but an advantage. Scots was often the main language of the peer groups and was being learned there more than it was within classrooms. In a Secondary environment it was the view of one participant that it wasn't correct for Scots to be only taught in English classes – it needs its own place in the curriculum. The Rights of the Child (UNCRC policy) was discussed in reference to this – having your mother tongue respected is a human right and was something schools must all be mindful of. Participants said a lot of [Polish children are excellent at Scots](#) – don't have the same baggage with it. They're naturally multilingual.

Discussion also focussed on a urban vs rural divide across Scotland in terms of perceptions of Scots. Big cities have more stigma attached to Scots, which was seen as a class issue. Was this because in a city it is often the working class who speak Scots? This changes in rural settings and particularly in the north of Scotland where it was common for middle classes to speak Scots a their L1. A generational divide as well as a poverty-related divide was identified which makes policy for a diverse nation such as Scotland quite tricky. There appeared to be similarities between experiences from Glasgow and Dundee vs rural Scotland and the north of Scotland. This was the case for both pupils and parents and their perceptions of Scots, particularly within education.

And a further issue discussed in relation to national policy was how important it is for any national Scots policy to be focussed on each regional variety for that area – i.e. not promotion of Glaswegian Scots in Orkney or Doric Scots in Shetland. All participants agreed

that the Scots used in the classroom had to be a language the learners recognised and either were experienced in speaking or hearing from their community.

Participants agreed Scots is a massive equity issue – if you were looking to produce a policy, you'd want to produce evidence that Scots brings in linguistic and social equity. It was also proposed that Scots policy needs to be about more than just education – a wide ranging and detailed policy on Scots for all aspects of modern life in Scotland was required that linked with sectors outwith education.



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