BEMIS Scotland are the national Ethnic and Cultural Minorities led umbrella body supporting the development of the Ethnic Minorities Voluntary Sector in Scotland and the communities that this sector represents.

Our vision is of a Scotland that is equal, inclusive and responsive: A society where:

- people from the diverse communities are valued, treated with dignity and respect,
- have equal citizenship, opportunities and equality of life,
- and who actively participate in civic society.

Introduction:

BEMIS Scotland welcome the Education Scotland (Bill) and its general objective to create an environment in which all of Scotland’s young people can work towards achieving their diverse potentials.

As Scotland becomes more diverse and we develop our objective to respond equitably to the needs of our citizens it is welcomed that the Education Scotland (Bill) acknowledges in principle the value of the voluntary sector amongst others in increasing the flexibility and capacity of service provision.

In addition socio-economic intervention in the strategic development and dissemination of education services is a progressive step. This reflects the Scottish interpretation of Equal Opportunities which includes the unique caveat of ‘social origins’ within the Scotland Act (1998).¹

Furthermore, the recognition set in principle through the ‘Part 2 Gaelic Medium Education’ sets a progressive precedent in relation to the recognition and provision of minority languages. The demographics of some of Scotland’s communities would meet the evidenced based test for the necessity of minority language provision.

From an equalities perspective we would advise that the broadening of evidenced based ‘minority language’ provision set in the Gaelic principle would need to be extended in time to others. In this regard as evidenced via BEMIS submissions to the ‘Education and Culture Committee – Raising Attainment Review’ the role of the

Ethnic Minority voluntary sector could play a principle role reflecting the ethos of the Education Scotland (Bill)

PART 1 – INEQUALITIES OF OUTCOME:

1.1 BEMIS welcomes the bill's recommendation that inequality in part is tackled by providing greater focus to socio-economic disadvantage. Ethnic Minority communities reside disproportionally not only in areas of multiple deprivation\(^2\) but in general poverty across demographics considered to be more affluent or in less need of inequality focus.\(^3\)

1.2. The Bills provision to implement a socio-economic duty in relation to increasing achievement/attainment in education should recognise diversity of our demographics. Alongside socio-economic inequality for many in Ethnic Minority communities this is reinforced by traditional barriers such as but not confined to language, prejudice, asylum or immigration status. Sections 3(a) (b) of the bill have the potential to allow us to develop flexible and equitable localised responses.

Part 2 – GAELIC MEDIUM EDUCATION:

2.1. We welcome the precedent set by the Gaelic Medium Education aspect of the bill. The evidence base for diverse language provision also exists in other minority languages.

2.2 Community languages should be supported within the education system with the specific purpose of developing them in all four skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) as heritage languages and shouldn't be treated just as an interesting addition to the suite of languages offered as L3 within the “1+2 strategy” (cf. also the 486/EEC Directive of 1977*).

2.3 The Pupil Census Supplementary Data for 2014 published by the Scottish Government in February 2015 revealed that the children in Scottish publically funded schools speak between them 139 languages, the top five being Polish (11,582), Urdu (5,400), Gaelic (4,610), Punjabi (4,105) and Arabic (2,374).

2.4 Scotland is a truly multilingual and multicultural country. This variety is often considered to be a challenge but it is also a fantastic resource and part of Scotland’s common heritage. When trying to lay down the route to the integration of the people of Scotland and enhancing the educational capacity of diverse citizens we should consider both perspectives.


\(^3\) [http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/blog/equality](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/blog/equality)
2.5 The linguistic abilities of children who speak more than one language are often not recognised and celebrated within the school. We welcome the recent “Mother Tongue, other tongue” poetry competition in Glasgow for the work it has done to recognise children’s linguistic abilities but feel there needs to be greater awareness of the gift that speaking more than one language is and recognition of children’s attainment in this area. The focus on learning English to enable children to access the curriculum can mean that children do not learn the value of being bilingual and the different ways they can express themselves. A provision in the bill recognising the diverse languages of Scotland would be welcomed.

**Part 3 – Additional Support for Learning**

3.1 At a time of significant budget restrictions as evidenced by Glasgow City Councils decision to cut 7.5 EAL (English as an Additional Language)⁴ the need to make full use of community school language teachers is significantly enhanced. In addition to the need for this engagement ambiguity surrounds the steps taken to ensure the statutory obligations of the local authority – this would be further enhanced by the SOCIO-ECONOMIC provision within the Education Scotland (Bill) as many of our diverse communities reside in circumstances of socio-economic disadvantage.⁵

BEMIS Scotland would be happy to provide oral evidence if required.

For further Information please contact;

Danny Boyle
Parliamentary and Equality Officer
BEMIS Scotland
Danny.boyle@bemis.org.uk
