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Paul A. Singh Ghuman

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Foreword

This book is about Asian teachers. It describes their professional hopes, fears, sentiments, aspirations and frustrations at working in British schools. The narrative of this monograph is different to that of many books on education in that the method used for collecting data here is essentially qualitative. A lot of space has been given to the remarks, comments and analysis of the teachers who took part in the study. In a way there are several authors of this monograph all the teachers and head teachers who were interviewed for this research.

The Commission for Racial Equality (Ranger, 1988) published a research report on the position of ethnic minority teachers. The researcher found that the ethnic minority teachers, as compared to the whites, were less likely to be promoted and were concentrated in the teaching of the shortage subjects of maths, science, and special needs. They generally felt that their career development had been affected by racism in schools and by racial prejudice from their white colleagues. It is a large scale study with an emphasis on quantitative reporting of the data, though there were some comments of teachers on various aspects of their professional roles. Whilst the findings of the inquiry were useful as first stage 'spade-work', more fine-grain analysis of ethnic minority teachers' perceptions and their backgrounds is imperative in understanding the dynamics of inter-cultural encounters in schools.

From my personal experience, it appears to me that the first-generation Asian teachers think that they have not fully realised their professional potential, particularly in securing positions of authority, mainly due to racism in schools. They feel that they have worked hard with the children, acquired the necessary academic and professional skills and contributed generously to the cause of multicultural education. Despite all this, they have not been successful in obtaining posts which are cognate with their qualifications and experience. Ranger (1988: 56-57) illustrated their frustration by relevant extracts from the interview data:

I have never seen a coloured person in a position of responsibility in my four schools. (white teacher)

Ethnic minority teachers are only given jobs when they cannot find no better teachers all promotions go to others while we do all the donkey work and are nowhere today. (Indian origin teacher)

On the other hand, most white teachers and some ethnic minority teachers think that there is an equality of opportunity for all. Ranger (1988: 517) quotes a white teacher: 'I find that Asian teachers with whom I have worked often think they are discriminated against because they don't get rapid promotion, when in fact it's due to lack of ability'.

In view of these conflicting perceptions I planned this investigation to illuminate these areas of professional concern. The study is confined to Asian teachers mainly because of the constraints of resources and time. Also I wanted to get to grips with the inner feelings and thoughts of my respondents and felt it might help if I were to choose teachers of my own ethnic group with whom I will have shared similar experiences. I am well aware of the limitations of this stance e.g. subjectivity, projection and self-interest, but as the main plank of the research is ethnographic, personal knowledge of and long standing involvement with, Asian teachers were considered to be advantageous.

I am one of those teachers who migrated to Britain in 1959 and after a spell of bus conducting in Maidenhead got a teaching job in Birmingham. I taught for seven years in secondary modern and grammar schools and read for a Master's degree in education before becoming a lecturer in education. I now teach multicultural education and educational psychology in a university department of education. I am in full agreement with the sentiments of Isaiah Berlin who wrote (1990: 38):

To judge one culture by the standards of another argues a failure of imagination and understanding. Every culture has its own attributes, which must be grasped in and for themselves. In order to understand a culture, one must employ the same faculties of sympathetic insights with which we understand one another, without which there is neither love nor friendship, nor true human relationships.

A group of 25 Asian teachers (referred to as 'first-generation'), who mostly migrated to the UK in the sixties and seventies, were interviewed in-depth (mainly non-directive) to find out their motives for migration, their problems of obtaining teaching jobs in Britain, their subsequent experience of teaching, difficulties they encountered in career advancement, attitudes to their white colleagues and their analysis and comments on a range of multicultural

matters.

Another group of 25 Asian teachers who had their qualifications from the British universities and polytechnics (referred to as 'second-generation')

were also interviewed to compare their perceptions with that of the first-generation. These groups were not chosen randomly, and they are not a representative sample of the Asian teachers in British schools. The majority were contacted through an Asian teachers' Association in the Midlands and the rest were known to me during my 30 years of professional work in schools and teacher training establishments. To give a broader base to the data a number of white classroom and senior teachers and a few Afro-Caribbean teachers were also included in the inquiry. The interview data is supplemented with my personal impressions and informal discussions with teachers, head teachers, multicultural advisors, colleagues in the department of education and Asian parents and pupils. In my view, the approach adopted here is very close to an ethnographic perspective in which emphasis is placed on the qualitative aspects of the data. Ethnography is particularly associated with ideas such as *the importance of understanding the perspectives of the people being studied* and of observing ordinary everyday activities (Hammersely & Aitkinson, 1983). Some ethnographers even think that it is a form of story-telling (see Walker, 1981).

I have liberally used extracts from the interviews. All interviews, save two, were tape-recorded. I have tried to quote them verbatim, except where I thought the reader might find it difficult to understand comments in this form. In such cases, I have changed the responses minimally to enhance readability and comprehension. Likewise with those interviewees who preferred to switch codes from, say, English to Punjabi/Urdu/Hindi, I have used my discretion to make small changes. I should say at this point that the selection of comments for quotations is essentially a subjective exercise, but an attempt was made to give voice to differing opinions and perspectives. The overriding aim was to be as comprehensive as possible in coverage.

Recent reports of the Commission for Race Relations (Ranger, 1988; CRE, 1989: 2) have expressed concern over the low number of ethnic minority students entering departments of education and colleges of higher education. The CRE gives statistics to support its claim and concludes:

Not only does this indicate possible racial discrimination but, if it is correct, means that the overall number of ethnic minority applicants is even lower than so far revealed.

In view of the importance of this topic, I thought it would be very useful to include this topic in the investigation.

In Chapter 1, the aims and objectives of the research are stated clearly as are the sample selection, methodology and recording of the data. The chapter contains full discussion on the academic qualifications and school

experiences of the first-generation Asian teachers. Details are also given regarding the number of Asian teachers who obtained qualified teacher's status from the DES.

In Chapter 2, problems relating to the recognition of teachers' qualifications are discussed in detail. Comments from Asian teachers representing two different generations are given extensively to compare their experiences of obtaining their first teaching post.

Chapter 3 is a comprehensive one as it gives teachers' views on a range of multicultural issues. It also includes the perceptions of white and AfroCaribbean teachers. I have attempted to compare the views of first-generation Asians with those from the second.

Chapter 4 is about the promotion and professional development of Asian teachers. A wide variety of opinions and attitudes was expressed by the interviewees and this is given full expression. I have discussed Asian teachers' concerns in the context of the available research literature, which I found to be very paltry.

The fifth chapter explores the views of respondents on the possible reasons for the poor intake of second-generation Asian young people into teacher training institutions. The comments of teachers in the study throw light on salient factors involved in this situation. Racism in schools emerges as one of the factors which deters young people from entering teaching. This and other emerging factors are discussed and put into the context of known research in this field.

The last chapter presents an overview of the situation of Asian teachers in Britain. In the light of the differing perceptions of Asian and white teachers and the findings of previous research on promotion and related issues, I have tried to put forward some constructive suggestions.

There is a paucity of literature in this important field. I hope my attempt has gone some way towards addressing this situation. It is also my fervent hope that the debate on the recruitment, training and promotion of Asian and other ethnic minority teachers will be conducted within broader parameters of known factors, rather than within a narrow framework of linear causality.

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1

Introduction

Background to Migration

The post-Second World War immigration into the UK has mainly consisted of people from the Indian sub-continent and from the West Indies (Caribbean), in addition to an ongoing source from Northern Ireland and some refugees from the eastern European countries (Holmes, 1988). The Commonwealth citizens had the right of entry to the British Isles until 1962 when the first immigration law was passed to restrict entry only to those holding vouchers (work permits) from the Department of Employment. These work permits were issued mainly to those applicants who were deemed useful to the employment market in the UK. In this category came doctors, nurses, scientists, engineers and teachers. Also included were cooks, a few priests of Indian and Pakistani religions and people with vocational qualifications.

For instance, a total of 1,113 vouchers were issued to people with special skills in the period 1965-67 (Rose and associates, 1969: 87). Three types of employment vouchers were introduced by the 1962 Act: A for those with specific jobs to come to; B for those who possessed special skills; and C for unskilled workers. The C-type voucher was discontinued in August, 1965.

Primary immigration to the United Kingdom virtually ceased with the passing of the 1971 Immigration Act, which came into force in 1973. This act restricted the entry of dependants and allowed new entrants to take up specific jobs for a limited period of time only. For instance, the management committee of a Gurudwara could apply for a Bhai (priest) position on the grounds that trained priests are not available in England (Fryer, 1992).

Most teachers from the Indian sub-continent emigrated to the UK for economic and financial reasons. A maths teacher (male, first-generation) recounts:

I was in the Government Service earning 400 rupees which was all right, but not enough to support a family or to save for the future needs. Also I had met uneducated people returning from England loaded with money and saying how wonderful it was in the UK. I also had a

romantic notion of England the land of Shakespeare, Hardy and Bacon. I applied for a voucher and got it straightaway. I said to my parents I would be back in five years for good with higher qualifications and money in my pocket.

Other teachers related similar stories. A primary teacher (female, first-generation) gave the following account:

I was a lecturer in government college earning a good salary. I was quite happy in my job. Then a friend told me they are giving vouchers to teachers and lecturers, because they are short of teachers in England there was an advertisement in the papers that England needs 4,800 teachers. At that time I was single and ambitious. I thought that I can go for few years, gain further qualifications, travel and save some money and come back with all my experience and get a very good job. But all my dreams were shattered in England.

A bus driver, former teacher in India, told me his story:

I was a teacher of Punjabi and history in my village school. My salary was very small. I had five children to look after. As you know everything in India is to be paid for. . . school fees, then college expenses and of course expenses on dowries for girls (he had three daughters). Our headmaster went to England and couldn't settle down there. He did not get a teaching job, and had to work as an unskilled labourer in a foundry. He told me problems of living in the UK. . . But he said: 'There is a dignity of labour in that country. Workers can earn as much, if not more, than teachers. There is free national health service and schools and colleges do not charge fees'. I thought to myself: well, I may not get a teaching job there, but I can provide for my family a lot better if I leave this low-paid job.

A TESL teacher (male, first-generation) had romantic notions of travel and learning:

A lot of reasons for coming. In the 50s I applied to go to America. I thought I would study and support myself by washing dishes. A friend of mine was in England. He said to me: 'Come to England. You will learn a lot'. My friend went back after a short stay; he didn't like it here. . . I came to see the world and study.

I personally know very many teachers who took a calculated risk to emigrate to Britain knowing full well that they would not obtain professional work because of their poor English or the fact that they had passed their degree examinations in the medium of Hindi/Urdu.

Teachers are poorly paid in India and Pakistan and have a very low

status as compared to the other professions. Some thousands of teachers emigrated to Britain to improve their financial situation and thereby hoped to add to their personal standing and social status in the eyes of their peers and local community.

A former lecturer, Jeane Brand, who taught teachers from the Indian sub-continent in Nottingham University wrote: 'The exact number of Asian teachers then residing in Britain who would be eligible for recognition was not known. But one estimate suggested that the number might be as high as 6,000. Of those who had been granted recognition only a very few were employed as teachers and a substantial number were known to be in employment which was in no way commensurate with their qualifications, previous experience and training' (Brand, 1972: 145).

According to Rose *et al.* (1969: 87), during the two years period 1965-67, a total of 3,519 vouchers were issued to teachers from India and Pakistan. A total of 42,440 vouchers were given, mainly to professional people from India and Pakistan, between 1962 and 1967. There is no breakdown of figures relating to teachers as such, but a rough estimate is that around 8,000 vouchers probably went to teachers during this period alone. The primary immigration from the Indian sub-continent practically ceased in 1973 as the provisions of the 1971 Immigration Act came into force in 1973.

There are no precise figures on the number of teachers who entered Britain before 1973, but my own guess is that the great majority did not register with the DES to have their qualifications approved. As I was informed by a foundry worker, a former teacher in Pakistan:

I used to teach history and geography in a high school through Urdu, though I was taught in English and I also wrote my exams in English... But my friends told me that there is no chance of getting a post, even though I can be recognised as a qualified teacher. There were always vacancies for science and maths teachers. So I didn't bother. I do heavy work in the foundry, but I earn a good wage. I think I have done all right.

A detailed picture of Indian and Pakistani teachers who were granted qualified status is given by Jackson (1975: 8-9), and the statistics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Indian and Pakistani teachers given qualified status from 1962-72

1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972
620	630	1628	1725	800	980	418	477	330	300	250