

REFORMING SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SCOTLAND: THE CHANGING NATURE OF GOVERNANCE, POLICY AND CURRICULUM

Anna Beck

INTRODUCTION

This is an exciting time in Scottish education. An ambitious programme of change has been proposed for multiple areas of the education system, and as such, the policy context is changing rapidly. However the sheer number and perceived direction of these changes have created feelings of uncertainty amongst the teaching profession. If successful, this reform will fundamentally change the way that secondary schools operate and the context within which teachers do their job.

For over 300 years, since the United Kingdom was formed, Scotland has developed and governed its own education system, which is separate and, at times quite different, to the education systems of Wales, Northern Ireland and England. The Scotland Act of 1998 provided formal distinction from the UK, removing it from the control of Westminster, situating it as a devolved matter within the Scottish Government. Although similarities can be drawn between the Scottish education system and other systems across the world, it is still promoted as one of the three key Scottish institutions that mark it as distinct from the rest of the United Kingdom, alongside the church and legal system. This unit aims to identify some of these distinguishing structures and characteristics, while also considering the extent to which they can still be referred to as ‘distinct’.

The chapter begins by outlining some of the core features of the Scottish education system, and describes the government’s overarching ambition to achieve ‘excellence’ and ‘equity’ in Scottish education. It then illustrates the systems of governance by first describing the nature of policy processes and then introducing important stakeholders that play a role in the formation of policy. Key legislation is then discussed, including the new Education (Scotland) Bill 2018.

This chapter then examines the structure and nature of the curriculum in Scotland, Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), and describes assessment in the secondary sector. Finally, it discusses the changing nature of secondary teaching in Scotland, by signposting key policies that are driving reform in the Scottish education system, including teacher professional learning.

[Start Box]

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Describe the distinctive features of the structures of governance in Scottish schools and identify key legislation that drives teaching practice
- Understand the nature of policy-making processes and identify key policies in Scottish education
- Describe the structure and features of the Scottish secondary school curriculum
- Have a clear understanding of the standards for ITE and a basic understanding of the standards for full registration of teachers in Scotland.
- Understand the nature of professional learning undertaken by Scottish teachers

Check the requirements for your course to see which relate to this unit.

[End box]

KEY FEATURES OF THE SCOTTISH EDUCATION SYSTEM

Before considering what it is that makes Scottish education ‘distinct’ from the rest of the UK, it might be helpful to outline some of its key features, which will be discussed throughout this chapter.

In Scotland, children begin Primary School between the ages of four and five, where they move from Primary 1 through to Primary 7. They then transfer to Secondary School between the ages of eleven and twelve. Secondary school is compulsory up to the age of sixteen, which means that some pupils will leave school at the end of fourth year or half way through fifth year. Secondary school in Scotland is comprised of six distinct years: S1 through to S6, with S5 and S6 acting as ‘optional’ for those over the age of sixteen. S1 to S3 is known as the ‘broad general education’.

Primary and Secondary Schools follows *A Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE), which was developed at the beginning of post-devolution. It is interesting to note that CfE is not legislated, instead consisting of a set of curriculum guidelines, constructed in partnership between schools, local authorities, government and other stakeholders, thereby prescribing to the Scottish tradition of democratic policy-making. It was designed to support children and young people to become: ‘successful learners’, ‘confident individuals’, ‘effective contributors’ and ‘responsible citizens’; the ‘four capacities’. CfE places the learner at the centre and promotes learner-centred pedagogy focussed on children’s interests, promoting individual choice and flexibility in what is taught. The policy discourse that surrounded early forms of CfE positioned teachers as ‘co-creators’ of the curriculum, suggesting that there should be an element of agency and choice in how the curriculum is taught. However, a number of issues with its implementation restricted the extent to which this could be achieved in practice.

As part of CfE, a new set of national qualifications were developed to support its implementation: National Qualifications 1 to 5, Higher (new) and Advanced Higher (new). National Qualifications 1 to 4 are comprised of a number of units that are assessed throughout the year, with a pass or fail awarded at the end. National Qualification 5, Higher and Advanced Higher are assessed through a written exam and coursework, and are graded A-D or ‘no award’.

Finally, the way in which teachers are prepared and supported is often portrayed as a distinctive feature of the Scottish education system. Initial teacher education (ITE) has remained the responsibility of universities. While alternative forms of teacher education have been developed to address teacher shortages and issues around teacher retention, fast-tracked school-based programmes such as Schools Direct and Teach First have been resisted. The teaching profession is regulated and supported by the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) using a suite of professional standards and through the promotion of collaborative professional learning. While similar teaching councils across the world have been abolished, the GTCS has retained a strong position, reinforcing the idea of teaching as a ‘profession’ within Scotland.

THE ‘DISTINCTIVE’ NATURE OF SCOTTISH EDUCATION

The Scottish education system has always been developed and governed separately from the rest of the UK and, as a result, it is said to have taken an increasingly divergent path from the education systems of Wales, Northern Ireland and England. Following political devolution, the establishment of the Scottish parliament in 1999 and the referendum on independence in 2014, a strong political identity has been created for Scotland. One of the central pillars of this identity is the Scottish education system (Paterson, 2003), which is increasingly used in political discourse to position Scotland as distinct from the rest of the UK.

Throughout history, a particular set of values has come to be associated with Scottish education. These are widely cited as: *egalitarianism*, *democracy* and *meritocracy*; and attached to these are a number of claims about the purpose and importance of education in Scotland:

- Education should be a public good and available to all at no personal expense
- Education systems should be democratic and self-governing, encouraging a culture of democratic debate
- Academic success comes to those who work hard, regardless of social class

These values and claims are often used to describe the education system and to heighten the differences between Scotland and the rest of the UK in political discourse. Whether real or imagined, these beliefs do influence the way that those working within education perceive the system and their role within it (Menter & Hulme, 2008). They also shape the content of education policies and the processes by which they are made. For example, the Scottish education policy process is often described as ‘democratic’ as it is common for the government to invite affected stakeholders (e.g. parents, school pupils and teachers) to participate in consultation about intended reform. Historically, these values have acted as gatekeepers,

protecting Scottish education from the traction of neoliberal agendas that can be seen elsewhere in the UK, such as the creation of ‘fast-track’ teacher education, the emergence of academy chains and the increased accountability measures placed on schools and teachers. However, recently the landscape has started to shift and this is something that this chapter will return to.

In relation to the content of policies, it is important to be aware of the forces particular to Scotland that are driving and shaping the nature of reform. Research has revealed (Sosu & Ellis, 2014) a continuing and intractable gap in attainment and achievement between children and young people from low-income and high-income households. This ‘attainment gap’ begins before children start school, and widens as children progress through the system. By the age of 5, this gap is already 10 to 13 months. Closing this gap, while also raising attainment, has become a key priority for Scotland’s current government.

The ‘National Improvement Framework’ (Scottish Government, 2018) sets out the government’s ‘single definitive plan’ to close the attainment gap in Scottish education by achieving ‘excellence’ and ‘equity’. In order to do this, the government has planned to collect data on six key drivers:

1. School leadership
2. Teacher professionalism and overall ‘quality’ of the workforce, including the ‘impact’ of professional learning
3. Parental, carer and family engagement
4. Assessment of children’s progress
5. School improvement through school inspection data
6. Performance information

At the centre of this policy is a strong drive for data on pupil learning. A suite of standardised assessments have been developed for this purpose. These assessments are carried out at the following stages of a child’s education: Primary Year 1, Primary Year 4, Primary Year 7 and Secondary Year 3. Concerns have been raised about the impact of increased assessment on young children, as well as those in secondary schools where assessment is already a significant feature. However, the government states that this data is “essential for achieving excellence and equity” (Scottish Government, 2018, p. 16). The measurement of teacher and school performance, as well as the ‘effectiveness’ of professional learning, have raised concerns amongst Secondary school teachers and signals a remarkable shift in policy direction from recent years (see Kennedy and Beck, 2018).

Although local forces and traditional values continue to play a significant role in shaping the nature of reform, Scotland is not immune to the traction of travelling neoliberal policy promoted by global organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). For example, the OECD has become a prominent actor in policy discourse, and is often invited by the Scottish Government to conduct reviews and evaluations of our education system, directly influencing the direction of reform (for example, they recently conducted a review of the school curriculum, which has been

recognised as a key driver of the National Improvement Framework; OECD, 2015). The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Scotland's performance within it is increasingly used as a political tool to justify the need for wide-scale reform. Given the homogenising effect of global forces, this has implications for the extent to which we can refer to Scotland as 'distinct'.

THE STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE OF EDUCATION IN SCOTLAND

Policy Processes in Scottish Education

Although the direction of policy is set at the centre by the government, the education system is maintained by a small number of key institutions, three of which will be discussed in this chapter in more detail. Representatives from these key institutions are invited to participate in policy-making through the form of 'consultation' or 'implementation boards'. The policy-making process is therefore strongly influenced by a distinct group of powerful institutions and individuals chosen to represent them. Key organisations include:

- General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) (regulates the teaching profession)
- Scottish Qualifications Agency (SQA) (develops school assessment and examinations)
- Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (represents leaders and managers from education services based in local authorities)
- Scottish Council of Deans of Education (represents every School of Education based in a Scottish Higher Education Institution).
- Education Scotland (develops school curriculum, supports pupils and teachers, and inspects education systems (e.g. schools, educational psychological services))
- Teacher Associations or Teacher Unions (the Education Institute of Scotland (EIS) is Scotland's biggest teacher union)
- Universities Scotland (represents every university in Scotland)
- Association of Scottish Principal Educational psychologists (ASPEP)

Because of its collaborative nature, the policy process is often said to be highly consultative and democratic (Menter & Hulme, 2008). It is rare, if not unheard of, for policy to be made and implemented without each of the main stakeholders being involved or consulted beforehand. Although this has its advantages, some concerns have been raised about the length of time that it takes for decisions to be taken and changes to be made (Reform Scotland, 2013). Concerns have also been raised about the notion of the 'usual suspects' being drawn on to inform policy development (Humes & Bryce, 2014) and the implications that this has for inviting new voices into the process.

The establishment of the Scottish parliament in 1999 and subsequent development of the national debate on schools in 2002 were regarded as expressions of government commitment to collaborative, open and inclusive forms of policy-making. Indeed, some efforts were made to engage teachers, parents and pupils in the formation of policy in the years that followed.

Mechanisms for this wider participation included online consultations, consultation events or the development of implementation boards. Indeed, this collaborative style was reflected within policy discourse, for example with CfE documentation positioning teachers as ‘co-creators’ of the curriculum. This is often cited as one of the distinctive characteristics of modern Scottish education. However, it is important to bare in mind that concerns are often raised about the authenticity of such approaches.

Local authorities

At the time of writing, there are a total of 32 local authorities in Scotland. Each local authority has a committee with responsibility for education that oversees and approves all matters relating to education policy and related budgets. The Committee is made up by a number of elected members and teacher representatives and is chaired by a Convener, who is a member of the ruling political administration. Each Scottish Council has an education authority, within which a number of key officers have responsibility for delivering and managing an education system that meets all statutory requirements and has due regard to the implementation of any guidance issued by the Scottish Parliament. In this regard, education officers report regularly to their respective Education Committees who ultimately have full responsibility for meeting all the statutory requirements placed on local authorities in terms of the range and delivery of their education services.

Although obliged to follow government policy, each local authority has a degree of autonomy over the implementation of policies at school level. In 2007, a Concordat Agreement was made between the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), which created further distance between centrally constructed government policies and the implementation of these policies in schools. Essentially the Concordat Agreement guaranteed the allocation of grant-aided expenditure and allowed a degree of autonomy to prioritise budget spend.

Leaders and managers from local authority education services are members of the Association for Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES). This is an independent professional network that works in partnership with local and national government to inform, develop and implement education policy. They can therefore be considered as an important actor within the Scottish educational system.

The recent economic recession has had an enormous impact on the operation of Scottish local authorities. Education budgets have experienced significant reductions and it has been predicted that local authority budgets will not return to normal until 2027 (Ledingham, 2013). In Scotland, Educational Psychological Services are the direct responsibility of local authorities, and are therefore vulnerable to these budget cuts. The number of educational psychologists has been reduced, and the Scottish Government no longer provides financial support for individuals training to be educational psychologists in Scotland. This poses a significant problem for the future wellbeing of Scottish children and young people.

In addition to economic vulnerability, local authorities are under threat from recent government proposals to change the nature of school governance. As is discussed later in this chapter, the Education (Scotland) Bill 2018 proposes to introduce six ‘Regional Improvement Collaboratives’, which will replace much of the educational function of the existing thirty-two local authorities, who now face a very uncertain future.

Education Scotland

In 2011, the Scottish Government created ‘Education Scotland’, an agency which merges together two previously distinct organisations: Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) and Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS), as well as some small sections of the education department within the Scottish Government. It therefore has full responsibility for developing and implementing the curriculum, as well as evaluating and inspecting provision at school, local and national level. Education Scotland should be considered as an increasingly powerful actor in shaping education policy and also in the governance of the Scottish education system. Recent publications from this organisation suggest that they will play an even more powerful role in years to come. Perhaps of most significance for secondary schools in Scotland is the threat of increased school inspection and greater accountability measures for teachers.

General Teaching Council for Scotland

In order to teach in a Scottish state sector schoolteachers are expected to maintain a current valid registration with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS). The GTCS was established in 1965 and was one of the first teaching councils to be established worldwide. It can be considered as one of the most important organisations in the Scottish education system, and is responsible for shaping and maintaining the quality of the teaching profession. The main activities of the GTCS include: maintaining the register of teachers in Scotland; setting the Professional Standards expected of all teachers; and investigating and adjudicating on the Fitness to Teach of registrants.

In April 2012, under the Public Services Reform (General Teaching Council for Scotland) order 2011, the GTCS changed from being an advisory Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) to an independent self-regulatory body, which made it the first independent regulatory body for teaching internationally. It is interesting to note that this legislation was passed at around the same time that the General Teaching Council for England (GTCE) was abolished, highlighting another distinction between the educational systems north and south of the border.

In 2011, the GTCS embarked on an ambitious revision of their existing Professional Standards in order to ensure that they align more closely with changing contexts within

Scottish education. The revision was driven by the belief that “teachers in the 21st century need to be critically informed with professional values knowledge and actions that ensure positive impact on learners and learning” (GTCS, 2015). Furthermore, these standards are not just for student teachers entering into the profession, but for teachers to work with at all stages of their career. This suite of Professional Standards provided a framework for teachers to examine, inform and develop their practice and thinking, and consisted of:

- The Standard for Provisional Registration (SPR) and the Standard for Full Registration (SFR): The SPR details what is expected of a student teacher at the end of their initial teacher education programme; having gained this, all provisionally registered teachers move towards the attainment of SFR.
- Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning
- Standards for Leadership and Management

Professional values are at the core of each of the Professional Standards. Within the SPR and SFR, the GTCS list the following Professional Values and Personal Commitment as central to the role of being a teacher in Scotland:

1. Social Justice

- Embracing locally and globally the educational and social values of sustainability, equality and justice and recognising the rights and responsibilities of future as well as current generations.
- Committing to the principles of democracy and social justice through fair, transparent, inclusive and sustainable policies and practices in relation to: age, disability, gender and gender identity, race, ethnicity, religion and belief and sexual orientation.
- Valuing as well as respecting social, cultural and ecological diversity and promoting the principles and practices of local and global citizenship for all learners.
- Demonstrating a commitment to engaging learners in real world issues to enhance learning experiences and outcomes, and to encourage learning our way to a better future.
- Respecting the rights of all learners as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and their entitlement to be included in decisions regarding their learning experiences and have all aspects of their well-being developed and supported.

2) Integrity

- Demonstrating openness, honesty, courage and wisdom.
- Critically examining personal and professional attitudes and beliefs and challenging assumptions and professional practice.

- Critically examining the connections between personal and professional attitudes and beliefs, values and practices to effect improvement and, when appropriate, bring about transformative change in practice.

3) Trust and Respect

- Acting and behaving in ways that develop a culture of trust and respect through, for example, being trusting and respectful of others within the school, and with all those involved in influencing the lives of learners in and beyond the learning community.
- Providing and ensuring a safe and secure environment for all learners within a caring and compassionate ethos and with an understanding of wellbeing.
- Demonstrating a commitment to motivating and inspiring learners, acknowledging their social and economic context, individuality and specific learning needs and taking into consideration barriers to learning.

4) Professional Commitment

- Engaging with all aspects of professional practice and working collegiately with all members of our educational communities with enthusiasm, adaptability and constructive criticality.
- Committing to lifelong enquiry, learning, professional development and leadership as core aspects of professionalism and collaborative practice.

(GTCS, 2012, Standard for Registration)

Task 7.5.4 sets you the task of providing evidence that you are meeting the standards required of teachers in Scotland.

[Start box]

Task 7.5.4 ACHIEVING THE STANDARD FOR REGISTRATION (SCOTLAND)

Look at the list of Professional Values and Professional Commitment above. (The full Standards for Provision and Full Registration can be accessed here: <http://www.gtcs.org.uk/>)

Drawing on your initial teacher education and school experience, can you evidence development in these areas? Pick two and write a short explanation of how you meet these requirements, drawing on your experience.

[End Box]

Another requirement for registration with the GTCS is to engage in Professional Update. The purpose of this scheme is to maintain and improve teacher quality, and to support and enhance teachers' continued professionalism. All teachers in Scotland are required to:

- Take responsibility for their own professional development needs
- Participate in a system of supportive professional review and development (PRD)
- Be able to confirm and evidence that they are maintaining the higher standards required of a teacher in Scotland

Essentially this means that all teachers have to maintain a reflective record of professional learning and provide evidence of the impact of this on their thinking and actions, by referring to the values outlined in the new Professional Standards. To maintain registration with the GTCS, teachers are required to update their registration details online every year, and sign off with their line manager to confirm engagement in the process every five years. Examples of professional learning from the GTCS website include:

- Self-evaluation and critical reflection processes
- Experiential, action or enquiry-based learning
- Professional dialogue with colleagues, other professionals, parents, and learners
- Focused professional reading and research
- Leading or engaging in practitioner enquiry/action research
- Critical analysis of reading, learning and impact on professional practice

(GTCS, 2015)

At the time of writing, the GTCS are once again reviewing their suite of professional standards to better align with the current education reform agenda. The structure and content of these are yet to be decided, but it is likely that elements will reflect their recently developed framework for professional learning. This framework is intended to inform the learning of student as well as practicing teachers and focuses heavily on the relationship between teacher learning and pupil learning. At its core are three key components that the GTCS believe are central to the development of professional capital:

- 1) Human capital: high-quality professional learning that develops knowledge and understanding about learning, teaching and education
- 2) Social capital: collaborative practice that helps to develop relationships and partnerships
- 3) Decisional capital: professional values and the ability to use professional judgment informed by enquiry

More information about the suite of Professional Standards, Professional Update and Professional Standards Review, can be found here: <http://www.gtcs.org.uk/>

Acts and Legislation

Education is provided at three different levels: pre-school, primary and secondary and occurs across mainstream and special schools. The Scottish Government frames legislation for education with formal responsibility for the system as a whole residing with the Scottish Ministers, who are informed and advised by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE), now part of Education Scotland, and a range of advisors with specialist knowledge in specific areas of education. However, formal responsibility for the *provision* of education is the responsibility of Scotland's 32 local authorities, also referred to as education authorities.

While policy is set at the centre and further developed through networks, responsibility for its implementation is delegated to local authorities and schools. Ultimately Scottish Ministers have the power to pass regulations concerning education, however, where possible, the Scottish Government prefers to issue *guidance* about education instead of legislation. This provides schools and local authorities with a significant degree of freedom; however, in the main, schools and local authorities tend to follow guidance closely. In contrast to England, there is no formally prescribed national curriculum in Scotland. The majority of schools follow the recommendations of national documents closely, however, there is no legislation that requires them to follow it completely. The fact that the Scottish Curriculum is not prescribed in law is often cited as one of the Scottish education system's most distinctive features.

However, there is of course some legislation that schools have to engage with by law. Four key acts are discussed below.

To a large extent the provision of education in Scotland is still governed by the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, which emphasised:

- the right of pupils to be educated as far as is reasonable in accordance with the wishes of their parents
- the duty of parents to provide efficient education by ensuring their children regularly attend school or receive efficient education by other means
- the duty of education authorities to secure adequate and efficient provision of school education.

One of the first Acts developed by the Scottish parliament was the 'Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000'. This Act set out five national priorities for education, which local authorities and schools are required to take forward by law:

(1) Achievement and Attainment: to raise standards of educational attainment for all in schools, especially in the core skills of literacy and numeracy, and to achieve better levels in national measures of achievement including examination results;

(2) Framework for Learning: to support and develop the skills of teachers, the self-discipline of pupils and to enhance school environments so that they are conducive to teaching and learning;

(3) Inclusion and Equality: to promote equality and help every pupil benefit from education, with particular regard paid to pupils with disabilities and special educational needs, and to Gaelic and other lesser used languages;

(4) Values and Citizenship: to work with parents to teach pupils respect for self and one another and their interdependence with other members of their neighbourhood and society and to teach them the duties and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society; and

(5) Learning for Life: to equip pupils with the foundation skills, attitudes and expectations necessary to prosper in a changing society and to encourage creativity and ambition.

Task 7.5.1 asks you to consider how to integrate the national priorities from the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000, into your professional practice.

[Start box]

Task 7.5.1 INTEGRATING THE NATIONAL PRIORITIES INTO PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE (SCOTLAND)

Examine the National Priorities above. Choose one to think about in more detail. How could you integrate the aims of this National Priority into your professional practice? What critical factors would need to be taken into account?

[End Box]

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 is another important act for Scottish secondary school teachers. It provides the legal framework for identifying and addressing the additional support needs (ASN) of children and young people who face a barrier or barriers to learning.

This act was amended in March 2016 by the Education (Scotland) Act 2016, which extended the rights of children aged 12 and over. This Act, in line with the current government agenda to close the 'attainment gap', affirmed that strategic planning in education must consider socio-economic barriers to learning. It also placed a duty on local authorities to promote and support Gaelic Medium Education within schools.

More recently, the Scottish Government has introduced a number of proposals that will fundamentally change the way in which schools operate. These proposals will be legislated by the Education (Scotland) Bill 2018. Key proposals include:

- 1) Increased flexibility for schools to make decisions about the curriculum, improvement and funding
- 2) The introduction of a 'Head teachers' Charter' to 'empower' head teachers to make decisions about their schools that were originally the responsibility of local authorities
- 3) A stronger voices for parents, pupils and communities
- 4) The development of six 'Regional Improvement Collaboratives' to provide sector and curriculum support instead of thirty-two local authorities
- 5) The establishment of an 'Education Workforce Council', which may replace the function of the GTCS

It is stated that this new Bill will help to create a 'school and teacher-led education system'; and indeed, the term 'empowering schools' has been used by the government to title various policy documents that communicate key aspects of this reform. However, concerns have been raised about the reality of increased 'flexibility' and decision-making powers, and the responsibility that this places on individual head and classroom teachers. Furthermore, with plans to increase school inspection, gather detailed information about pupil attainment through the National Improvement Framework (Scottish Government, 2018), measure teacher judgment and develop clear 'accountability structures', it is likely that school teachers will begin to experience increasing pressure in their roles. There is a lack of clarity around the development of new institutional bodies ('Regional Improvement Collaboratives' and the 'Education Workforce Council') and the impact that these will have on existing structures. It is important to note that both local authorities and the GTCS have democratically elected members, who represent the wider teaching profession. It is clear that there is a tension between the governments' ambition to 'empower' schools, while removing the democratic structures that have traditionally supported them.

SCHOOL CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

Curriculum for Excellence

In 2002 a National Debate on Education was conducted to determine the future of Scottish education. Following this, a Curriculum Review Group was established in 2003, which identified the key principles to be applied in any curriculum re-design. A Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) was published in 2004 and was first implemented in Scottish primary and secondary schools in 2010, after a lengthy period of review and consultation with teachers, and the wider education community.

CfE claims to provide a coherent, more flexible and enriched curriculum to enable each child and young person to become a 'successful learner', a 'confident individual', a 'responsible citizen' and an 'effective contributor'. These four 'capacities' are at the heart of the curriculum. As well as focusing on traditional academic subjects, it has been designed to help each child

and young person develop a host of attributes and skills essential for life in an increasingly globalized world. Emphasis is therefore placed on inter-disciplinary learning, skill development and personal achievement.

The curriculum is based on a set of learning experiences and outcomes, which are planned for children and young people throughout their education. They can be sectioned into four categories:

- Curriculum areas and subjects: these set out the experiences and outcomes and each area contributes to the four capacities
- Interdisciplinary learning: the curriculum should include space for learning beyond subject boundaries
- Ethos and life of the school: these highlights the importance of a positive ethos and climate of respect and trust based upon shared values across the school community
- Opportunities for personal achievement: this stresses the importance for pupils to experience achievement inside and outside of the classroom, which allows them to develop a sense of satisfaction and build motivation, resilience and confidence.

The experiences and outcomes are a core feature of CfE and are used by teachers to assess progress in learning and to plan the next steps for their pupils. They are intended to provide professional space for teachers to meet the varied needs of their pupils. In secondary schools they are generally used until the end of S3. Secondary teachers use them to work out where they can make contributions to experiences and outcomes from more than one curriculum area, allowing for a more coherent curriculum before the senior phase. They are organized in to eight curriculum areas:

- Expressive arts
- Health and wellbeing
- Languages
- Mathematics
- Religious and moral education
- Sciences
- Social studies
- Technologies

CfE has gradually replaced the longstanding 5-14 curriculum, within which pupils could study at the following levels: Access 1 and 2; Standard Grade Foundation, General and Credit; Intermediate 1 and 2; Higher; and, Advanced Higher. The Scottish secondary school curriculum consists of the concluding phase of a young person's compulsory education up to the age of 16 (S1-S4), including an optional two-year phase (S5-S6). New National Qualifications have been developed and secondary school pupils now study for awards at the following levels:

- National 1 and 2 > (replaces Access 1 and Access 2)
- National 3 > (replaces Access 3 and Standard Grade Foundation Level)

- National 4 > (replaces Standard Grade General Level and Intermediate 1)
- National 5 > (replaces Standard Grade Credit Level and Intermediate 2)
- Higher (new) > (replaces Higher)
- Advanced Higher (new) > (replaces Advanced Higher)

Although ‘Curriculum for Excellence’ (CfE) was officially introduced to schools in 2010, its implementation has not been straightforward and continues to be a source of contention for secondary schools. At the core of CfE, was the concept of teachers as ‘co-creators’ of the curriculum as it suggested that teachers should play an active role in developing the curriculum, rather than just enacting top-down prescription. This provided teachers with the opportunity to translate the key principles from CfE into practice, using their professional knowledge and experience. This was generally received as a positive move as it signaled a significant degree of trust between government and the teaching profession. However, as implementation began, many teachers found themselves requesting further guidance and support as the curriculum was felt to be too vague (Priestley, 2010). Furthermore, with teachers now responsible for the development of curriculum content and assessment, CfE became further criticised for increasing teacher workload.

In 2014, the Scottish Government commissioned the OECD to review the continued implementation of CfE. Their report, ‘Improving Scottish Schools in Scotland: an OECD perspective’ (OECD, 2015), contained a number of recommendations to improve and strengthen the school curriculum, such as:

- Increased evaluation of teaching practice
- Measurement of individual pupil learning
- Enforcement of CfE guidelines, thereby restricting teacher autonomy and the concept of teachers as ‘co-constructors’, as originally intended by early CfE discourse.

It is clear that these recommendations, if implemented, will hold specific implications for secondary school teachers and the context within which they work.

Task 7.5.2 asks you to audit your knowledge of the content of the curriculum as part of your preparation to teach.

[Start box]

Task 7.5.2 AUDITING CURRICULUM CONTENT KNOWLEDGE IN PREPARATION TO TEACH

Are you ready to teach? Look at the information for the area you teach on the following website: <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/45625.3728.html>

Identify your subject and examine the course assessment specifications and unit specifications at Higher level. Do you have the subject knowledge necessary to teach all the subject matter? Conduct a brief audit and identify any areas that are a development need for you.

[End Box]

In Scotland there is only one national examination body, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), which offers a number of national qualifications for entry into higher education or the workplace. Nationals 1 to 5 were introduced in August 2013, the new Higher was introduced in August 2014 and the new Advanced Higher was introduced in August 2015. Highers are ordinarily required to allow entry to a university or college course that leads to a degree or Higher National Diploma. Advanced Highers are generally for those pupils who have passed Highers, and wish to continue studying a particular subject at school level in sixth year.

Task 7.5.3 asks you to review the requirements for national assessments and consider how you could prepare pupils for these.

[Start box]

Task 7.5.3 PREPARING PUPILS FOR NATIONAL ASSESSMENTS (SCOTLAND)

Visit the same website from Task 7.5.2 above (<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/45625.3728.html>), select the subject that you teach and look for a specimen or exemplar question paper. Look at the nature and structure of the examination papers. How could you ensure pupils are prepared for undertaking examinations of this nature?

[End Box]

THE TEACHING PROFESSION IN SCOTLAND

Another distinctive feature of Scottish education is that initial teacher education (ITE) is still provided solely by universities. Although the nature of school experience has changed slightly, with new partnership approaches developed between university staff and teachers to support student teacher learning (see Conroy, Hulme & Menter, 2013), the provision of ITE has remained firmly within higher education and involves an equal blend of academic and practical learning, shared between university and schools. There are eight universities in total offering ITE, and a number of these have created additional campuses in rural parts of Scotland to ensure that anyone who wants to become a teacher in Scotland is not restricted by geographical location.

In 2010, Professor Graham Donaldson was invited by the Scottish Government to conduct a large-scale review of teacher education in Scotland. The review looked at teacher education provision in its entirety, with key areas including: selection for entry to initial teacher education (ITE); content and structure of ITE; career-long professional learning (CLPL) and leadership. The report of the review, 'Teaching Scotland's Future' (Donaldson, 2011), contained fifty recommendations to improve and modernise the Scottish teacher education system. These recommendations were underpinned by the importance of re-shaping teacher professionalism in line with the changing nature of society and the need to develop partnerships between local authorities and universities. Related to this was the promotion of teaching as an 'intellectual profession' as opposed to a technical 'craft' (as has been adopted elsewhere in the UK) and a call for teachers to take responsibility for their own professional learning (i.e. identifying a gap in learning and locating the solution).

Donaldson painted a particular vision of the teacher within his Report, and this can be taken as a statement of the kind of teaching qualities required by the current education system. He highlighted the need for teachers to be 'reflective' and 'enquiring', engaged in and with educational research; to have the capacity to shape and lead educational change; and, to be 'agents of change', not 'receivers of top-down prescription'.

The Scottish Government accepted each of Donaldson's fifty recommendations, 'in full, in part or in principle' and established two partnership groups to further develop and implement the core ideas of the report. Almost ten years on from the initial review, a number of changes can be seen within Scottish education, including:

- Restructuring of traditional undergraduate B.Ed. ITE degrees to incorporate a broader spectrum of academic subjects in the development of BA degrees.
- Increase in level of qualifications required for entry to ITE
- Development of partnership agreements between local authorities and universities
- Creation of a Scottish College for Educational Leadership (SCLEL)
- Drive towards Masters level learning and the creation of Masters credits for ITE students
- New models of school experience involving joint assessment of student teachers between classroom teachers and university tutors

It is interesting to note that the revision of GTCS Professional Standards was directly recommended by the Report, while Professional Update might be recognised as a mechanism for supporting teachers to take responsibility for their own professional learning, as envisioned by the Report. A review of its implementation was conducted in 2015 by a market research company, Ipsos Mori, and their report ‘Evaluation of the Impact of the Implementation of Teaching Scotland’s Future’, was published in 2016. The evaluation suggested that there had been a ‘cultural shift’ within schools, with greater engagement in professional learning and a rise in the numbers of teachers willing to try new approaches. In line with this cultural shift, informal teacher-led learning events are becoming an increasingly popular form of professional learning across Scotland. The most obvious examples are ‘TeachMeet’ and ‘Pedagoo’, where teachers come together to lead and participate in short presentations or learning conversations. The most important thing about these events is that they are organised *by teachers for teachers*, which aligns with Donaldson’s vision of teacher professionalism.

Both the GTCS Professional Standards and Professional Update reflect a commitment to practitioner enquiry and engagement in and with research. This has become a strong theme throughout Scottish teacher education and professional learning, with an increasing number of teachers across the country participating in collaborative practitioner enquiry in order to inform their practice.

THE FUTURE OF SCOTTISH EDUCATION

The education system in Scotland faces a number of challenges, the most significant of which is to close the attainment gap between children and young people from low-income and high-income households. Scotland’s ruling political party, the Scottish National Party (SNP) have explicitly stated that achieving ‘excellence’ and ‘equity’ is the main priority of the current government. It is likely that the national push for a more equitable school system will continue to shape the direction of education in Scotland for many years to come.

At the time of writing, little is known about the impact or indeed effectiveness of standardised assessment of pupil learning throughout primary and secondary school. It is difficult to predict what role this form of assessment will continue to play in Scottish education. However, given the focus on the ‘National Improvement Framework’ (Scottish Government, 2018) and its positioning as Scotland’s ‘definitive plan’ for education, it seems likely that standardised assessment will remain a core feature of children’s schooling for some time.

Although until recently there was less of a ‘testing culture’ in Scotland, when compared to England for example, the results from international comparative tests such as PISA are playing an increasing role in the development of policy. There is a growing trend for countries to look across the water for ‘solutions’ to perceived policy problems, and Scotland

is no exception. Many of Scotland's key policy agendas, such as standardized assessment of pupil learning, school-led governance, the collection of school performance data for example, can be found across the globe. With the OECD plying an increasingly prominent advisory role in the formation of policy, it is likely that distinctive features will become diluted by the traction of neoliberal policy ideas.

Until fairly recently, there has been strong resistance to alternative routes into teaching that have proved popular in the rest of the UK, such as Schools Direct. However, faced with a significant teacher shortage in rural schools and STEM subjects, the Scottish Government recently issued a tender for fast-track ITE provision, which allowed non-university providers such as Teach First to submit proposals with partner universities. This neoliberal opening of the market surprised many working in the area of teacher education, as it signaled a distinct shift away from the traditional values upon which our understanding of Scottish education is built. Although at this point it is difficult to say whether non-university providers will be successful in securing ITE contracts, there is no doubt that the position of traditional university-based ITE will become increasingly precarious.

One final point to consider is the current and future challenges that the Scottish teaching profession will encounter in schools. Scottish education has never seen such a large-scale reform and teachers will now be required to perform a number of tasks simultaneously in an increasingly pressurised context. For example, they will have to negotiate the introduction of new guidelines for CfE ; implement and analyse standardised assessment data; be subjected to the measurement of their professional judgement and practice; improve and strengthen their engagement with parents, families and communities (which will be measured by the National Improvement Framework); continue to take responsibility for their own professional learning to ensure that they are keeping up with GTCS Professional Update and engage in Masters level learning. It is important to note that this increase in responsibility occurs alongside significant school reform proposed by the Education (Scotland) Bill 2018. While increased flexibility and decision-making power may advantage individual schools, it will also lead to increased responsibility for head and individual teachers. Although the wider educational reform might help the SNP to be one step closer to realising its vision of 'excellence' and 'equity', we can be fairly certain that it will significantly change what it means to be a teacher in a 21st century Scottish secondary school.

[Start box]

SUMMARY AND KEY POINTS

This unit has sought to identify key features that make the Scottish education system distinctive from that in the rest of the UK. It has also tried to raise awareness of the structure

and balance of the curriculum in Scotland and highlight the preparation that may be required to teach within the secondary sector. Linked to this was a discussion of the teaching profession and the nature of professional learning. An additional aim of this chapter was to show the distinctive model that is used to govern the education system, and the apparent ‘consultative’ nature of policy-making processes. The intention has been to stimulate thinking about some of the issues that are likely to impact upon the professional practice of secondary teachers in Scotland.

Key Points:

- The Scottish education system is currently going through a period of **significant transformation** in a number of areas
- The Scottish education system is often regarded as more ‘**democratic**’ and ‘**meritocratic**’ than the English education system
- The Scottish Government frames legislation for education, however, often only issues guidance to local authorities and schools. Scottish schools are therefore not legally required to follow policies set by government, although tend to follow guidance closely.
- There is no formally prescribed national curriculum in Scotland.
- The development of education policy involves a range of **stakeholders** and attempts are often made to engage teachers at early stages of policy development (e.g. in the development of CfE they were invited to be ‘co-developers of the curriculum’). The policy process in Scottish education is therefore regarded as ‘**consultative**’.
- At the time of writing, the biggest educational priority for the Scottish Government is to reduce inequity in the education system and close the attainment gap between children and young people from low-income and high-income households.
- The National Improvement Framework details the Scottish Government’s overarching strategy for achieving excellence and equity in education, which aims to collect a significant amount of data on various elements of the school system
- The Education (Scotland) Bill 2018 will create significant changes to the way that schools operate. Two new sets of institutions, the ‘Regional Improvement Collaboratives’ and an ‘Education Workforce Council’ are under development. It is likely that they will replace the educational function of local authorities and the GTCS respectively. The new bill also proposes to give more power to schools as it will allow head teachers to make key decisions about curriculum and funding.
- There has been a cultural shift in the nature of teacher professionalism in Scotland, with an increasing number of teachers taking responsibility for their own learning and engaging in organic, teacher-led forms professional learning events.

Check which requirements for your course have been addressed through this unit.

[End Box]

FURTHER READING

- Bryce, T. G. K., Humes, W. M., Gillies, D., & Kennedy, A. (2013) *Scottish Education, 5th Edition: Referendum*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Conroy, J., Hulme, M. & Menter, I. (2013). Developing a ‘clinical’ model for teacher education. *Journal of Education for Teaching, 39*, 557-573.
- Humes, W. M. & Bryce, T. G. K. (2013). The distinctiveness of Scottish Education. In T. G. K. Bryce, W. M. Humes, D. Gillies, & A. Kennedy, (Eds.), *Scottish Education, 4th Edition: Referendum*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Kennedy, A. & Beck, A. (2018). Teacher Professional Learning. In T. G. K. Bryce, W. M. Humes, D. Gillies, & A. Kennedy, (Eds.), *Scottish Education, 5th Edition*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Ledingham, D. (2013). The local governance of education. In T. G. K. Bryce, W. M. Humes, D. Gillies, & A. Kennedy, (Eds.), *Scottish Education, 4th Edition: Referendum*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Menter, I. & Hulme, M. (2008). Is small beautiful? Policy-making in teacher education in Scotland. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice, 14*, 319-330.
- Paterson, L. (2003) *Scottish Education in the Twentieth Century*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Priestley, M. (2010). Curriculum for Excellence: transformational change or business as usual? *Scottish Educational Review, 42*, 23-36.
- Reform Scotland. (2013). By diverse means: improving Scottish Education. The commission on school reform, final report. Retrieved from <http://reformscotland.com/public/publications/bydiversemeans1.pdf>
- Sosu, E., & Ellis, S. (2014). Closing the attainment gap in Scottish education. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Retrieved from: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/migrated/files/education-attainment-scotland-full.pdf>

Scotland, J. (1969). *The History of Scottish Education*. 2nd Edition. London: University of London Press.

RELEVANT WEBSITES

General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS)

The new suite of GTCS Professional Standards can be accessed here:

<http://www.gtcs.org.uk/standards/standards.aspx>

Information about the GTCS Professional Update can be accessed here:

<http://www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-update/professional-update.aspx>

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)

Information about the Scottish curriculum and related assessments and awards can be found here: <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/58062.html>

Further information about the vision behind CfE can be found here:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/curriculum>

Teaching Scotland's Future (2011)

Donaldson, G. (2011). *Teaching Scotland's Future: Report of a review of teacher education in Scotland*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

The PDF version of the report can be accessed here:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/01/13092132/15>

A copy of the evaluation of the implementation of 'Teaching Scotland's Future' can be found here: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/03/5736/downloads>

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004

This Act can be accessed here:

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2004/4/pdfs/asp_20040004_en.pdf

National Improvement Framework (2018)

Scottish Government. (2018). National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

More information and a PDF version of this report can be accessed here:
<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/NationalImprovementFramework>

The Education (Scotland) Bill (2018)

Scottish Government. (2017). Empowering Schools: A Consultation on the Provisions of the Education (Scotland) Bill. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

More information and a PDF version of this report can be accessed here:
<https://beta.gov.scot/news/education-scotland-bill/>

Improving Schools in Scotland: An OECD Perspective (2015)

OECD. (2015). Improving Schools in Scotland: An OECD Perspective. Paris: OECD.

More information and a PDF version of this report can be accessed here:

<http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/improving-schools-in-scotland.htm>

Additional resources for this unit are available on the companion website:
www.routledge.com/textbooks/9780415478724