

The Scottish Context: Making History in an **‘understated nation’¹**

In 1999, parliament convened in Scotland for the first time since it was dissolved in favour of a single UK parliament by the 1706 and 1707 Acts of Union. Although Education in Scotland had long been distinct from the rest of the UK, the new parliament provided an opportunity for Scotland to assert its newfound autonomy in a meaningful way. In 2002, the then Scottish Education Minister, Cathy Jamieson, called for a ‘National Debate on Education’ which would ‘sharpen the focus of what Scotland wants from its schools in the 21st century’ so that the government might ‘carefully plan how to realise that vision from where we are today’ (Scottish Executive 2002, 5). Although focused on education, these debates can be seen as proxies for larger questions about the Scottish nation as a whole: How did a devolved Scotland see itself? What kind of future did Scotland want? What was Scotland’s place in the world? As Green reminds us, education is ‘both parent and child to the nation state’ (Green 1997, 1).

This debate gave rise to the publication of ‘*A Curriculum for Excellence*’ (Scottish Executive 2004) which differed markedly from the non-statutory *5-14 Guidelines* (SOED 1993) on curriculum that had preceded it. This chapter looks closely at the framing of history in the two curricula, explores the nature of these differences and offers an explanation for them. It is argued that *Curriculum for Excellence* was conceived at a historic moment where two powerful (and seemingly antagonistic) discourses converged. The first of these was the flowering of national self-belief that came with the re-creation of the Scottish parliament. The second was a supranational trend for education systems in the west to homogenise and coalesce around an instrumental business-friendly approach to education (Avis, et al. 1996, Ozga and Lingard 2007, Priestley 2002). While Green (1997) has argued that the processes of globalisation inevitably diminished nationalism in the school curricula of advanced economies, Scotland stood apart from this: as an emerging nation, its nationalism fused with its globalism.

Following Arnott and Ozga (2010; 2016), it is suggested that these pressures created a form of civic nationalism consisting of an *inward* discourse which emphasises national ‘flourishing’ and an *outward*

¹ The epithet ‘understated nation’ was first used by David McCrone in a 2005 paper in the *British Journal of Sociology* and is a reference to Jacques Leruez’s famous description of Scotland as a ‘stateless nation’ (1993). McCrone had previously used Leruez’s phrase approvingly (McCrone, *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Stateless Nation* 1992), before later deciding that the term was ‘less than accurate’.

discourse which ‘foregrounds economic growth and references skills, smartness and success’ and ‘competitiveness’ (2010, 344). Although Arnott and Ozga associate these discourses with the Scottish National Party, it is argued that the same national self-image is evident in *Curriculum for Excellence* which aspires to the creation of successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors (Scottish Executive 2004). These discourses are, in turn, manifested in the changing shape of history in the Scottish curriculum. In the shift from *5-14* to *Curriculum for Excellence*, Scottish history and identity has been given greater prominence but so too have employability skills and citizenship.

The chapter will begin with a brief summary of the history of history teaching in Scotland before concentrating on a comparison of Scotland’s two National Curricula (*5-14 Guidelines* and *Curriculum for Excellence*). The chapter then explores three emergent themes (heritage, employability and citizenship) in more forensic detail. The chapter concludes with some preliminary empirical research around the kinds of history syllabuses that are emerging in Scottish schools under the aegis of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

History Teaching in Scotland before 1993

Scotland ceased to be an independent country in 1707 when its parliament passed the ‘Union with England Act’; the English parliament, for its part, had passed the ‘Union with Scotland Act’ in the previous year. The two acts united the countries (and by extension Wales and Ireland) into one kingdom with a single parliament in London. The circumstances of the union remain controversial, but the parlous state of Scotland’s finances was an important consideration for many among Scotland’s elite, leading to Robert Burns’ complaint that Scotland was ‘bought and sold for English gold’¹. However, the union must be understood in its historical context: as McCrone has argued neither Scotland nor England were, at this time, what we might call ‘modern’ nation states and it is doubtful that Scots would have agreed to submerge their institutional autonomy into the British state if either had been (The Sociology of Nationalism 1998, 131). The merger of these two nations occurred, then, before much of the architecture of the so-called modern state was in place. The major institutions of civil society – schooling, the church and the law - had already developed differently from those of England before 1707, and continued to do so after the Union. In the words of Paterson (1991, cited in McCrone 1998, 131), ‘the union left intact all that really mattered in daily life in Scotland.’

¹ This line is from Burns’ 1791 poem ‘Such a parcel of rogues in a nation’ which excoriates the Scottish elite who supported the union. Robert Burns (1759-96) is Scotland’s National Poet; the anniversary of his birth (25th January) is used as an occasion to host ‘Burns’ Suppers’, celebrations of Scottish culture.

Although education has evolved differently in Scotland, landmark changes to education policy - such as universal elementary education in the 1870s or the abolition of high school selection by academic ability in the 1960s – closely aligned with those of England. The distinctiveness of the schooling is, therefore, most apparent in the structure of qualifications, curriculum and administration that emerged. Together with mandating universal elementary education, the Education (Scotland) Act of 1872 also established 1000 local school boards and Scotch (later Scottish) Education Department (SED) to oversee them. In its early years, the SED was based in London before moving its headquarters to Scotland in 1939.

The SED principally administered Scottish education by way of ‘Codes’ which covered everything from school inspection regime to the curriculum. Schools had considerable autonomy about what to teach and guidance about subject content was rather minimal. In terms of History, for example, the 1876 code says that by the end of First Year, students should be taught ‘The History of Scotland from Robert the Bruce to the Union of the Kingdoms¹’ while Second Years studied ‘Outlines of British History from the Union to George I’ (Gibbs and Edwards 1876, 126-7).

However, even in these early years of compulsory education, the history curriculum was a contentious field. As Robert Anderson (1995) has demonstrated, as early as the 1880s complaints could be heard from local school boards that school history was predominately English in its orientation. To an extent, this can be explained by the fact that History was not taught in Scottish Universities until the 1890s and so what academic history existed was largely English in both focus and origin. However, by the early years of the twentieth century, organisations such as the Scottish Patriotic Society of Glasgow had organised sophisticated campaigns for increased recognition of Scottish history in schools and had even succeeded in having questions about this posed in parliament. By 1907, the SED was advocating a ‘concentric’ model of history teaching which began with Scottish History and then moved outwards in later years to cover Scotland’s contribution to the British Empire. To Anderson, this emphasis on a combined Scots-British identity remained a feature of the school curriculum with Scottish children celebrating both Empire Day and the 600th Anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn. In the years before World War One, there was, Anderson surmises, ‘no suggestion that British and Scottish patriotism were incompatible’ (Anderson 1995, 218-9).

In the post-war period, major reforms to English education had broadly simultaneous analogues in Scotland. Thus, the 1960s saw both the ‘Plowden Report’ on child-centred education in England and the ‘Primary Memorandum’ Scotland; while the expansion of comprehensive (all-ability) schools

¹ After Elizabeth I died childless in 1603, the throne of England passed to her nearest relative, James of Scotland who ruled thereafter as James VI of Scotland and I of England.

heralded by Circular 10/65 in England was mirrored by the Scotland Office's Circular 600. However, despite the impact of UK government policy on Scottish education, these and similar reforms were necessarily mediated by stakeholder in Scotland and adapted to the Scottish context, a process that Paterson describes as 'pragmatic nationalism' (Paterson 1997).

In both Scotland and England, schools possessed considerable curricular autonomy in the primary and 'junior secondary' phases (ages 5-14) for much of the post-war period. In some cases, schools collaborated at a local level to ensure that there was some commonality about what was taught, but schools were also encouraged to devise curricula that suited their pupils and their particular contexts. This freedom came under attack early in Margaret Thatcher's third period in office as Prime Minister. For some years, 'New Right' organisations and periodicals (such as the *Salisbury Review* and the *Hillgate Group*) had argued that schools and Labour local councils were abusing their curricular freedom to foist leftist ideology onto unsuspecting children¹. To prevent this, the Conservatives proposed '*National Curriculum*' for England and Wales; following suit, the SED published a consultation paper entitled '*Curriculum and Assessment in Scotland: A Policy for the 1990s*' (SED 1987). This document proposed the introduction of national testing and a common national set of guidelines on what should be taught. While the proposal for standardised testing was defeated by a combination of teacher resistance and parental opposition, the guidelines themselves were greeted with little fuss (Paterson 2003, 120).

History in the 5-14 National Guidelines (1993-2008)

Kirk and Glaister (1994) characterise the *5-14 Guidelines* (SOED, 1993) as 'Scotland's National curriculum', but unlike the prescriptive English *National Curriculum* that was conceived at the same time, the Guidelines had no statutory force. In terms of history, the curriculum formalised an emerging preference for a 'social subjects' approach (McGonigle 1999): in the guidelines, historical learning was covered by a strand within social subjects termed, 'understanding people in the past'. The social subjects were, in turn, considered a subset of a larger curriculum area called Environmental Studies.

Although the nested position of history implied that it had been accorded a lowly status, the content and framing of the curriculum suggested a sophisticated discipline-oriented approach. As well as the need for 'adopting methods of historical enquiry' (SOED, 1993, p. 34), the aims of 'understanding people in the past' were stated as,

¹ The influence of the 'New Right' on British education is summarised in Chapter Four of Ken Jones' '*Education in Britain*' (Jones 2003). Its impact on the History curriculum specifically is chronicled in Rob Phillips' '*History Teaching, Nationhood and the State*' (R. Phillips 1998).

<p>Table One</p> <p>Aims of 'Understanding People in the Past</p> <p>(SOED, 1993, p. 34)</p>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Studying people, events and societies of significance in the past in a variety of local, national, European and world contexts.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Developing an understanding of change and continuity over time, and of cause and effect in historical contexts.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Developing an understanding of time and historical sequence.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Developing an understanding of the nature of historical evidence by using a range of types of evidence to develop and extend knowledge about the past.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Considering the meaning of heritage and the influence of the past upon the present.

These aims outlined a procedural definition of the subject: that the purpose of a historical education was not simply to develop a knowledge of the past, but also an understanding of how historians make sense of the past. In this respect, history in 5-14 shared a common intellectual ancestry in the Schools Council History Project (Schools History Project 1976; Rogers 1979) with the contemporaneous English *National Curriculum*. This can best be seen in the way the 5-14 *Guidelines* conceived progression in history: in keeping with the approach outlined by Coltham and Fines (1971) 5-14 assumed progression in conceptual understanding across the whole age range. Thus, a focus on 'change and continuity' is emphasised throughout school, but whereas a child of 7 is expected to understand 'changes affecting their own and other people's lives', at 11 this has become 'changes which have taken place over a period of time and comparison... with the present'. At fourteen, the child is expected to explain 'why some features change while others show continuity' (SOED 1993, 34).

5-14 also avoided prescribing which periods should be taught. Instead students were required to 'experience a broad range of historical study' in 'five main historical eras' (i.e. Ancient, Medieval, Early Modern, 1700-1900 and the Twentieth Century). Students were also explicitly expected to encounter 'some studies which trace particular developments across time' (SOED 1993, 34). The result was a curriculum which afforded considerable autonomy to teachers (although this autonomy was not always recognised (MacDonald 1994; Priestley & Minty 2013)). It was also a curriculum which differed markedly from elsewhere in the UK – in their comparison the history curricula in the four nations of the UK, Phillips, *et al.* (1999) suggested that the 'organising principles' of the Scottish curriculum were 'Autonomy, choice, flexibility' in contrast to the English emphasis on 'citizenship' and 'central control'.

Several writers have proposed that interdisciplinary teaching of social studies militates against effective disciplinary history teaching. Osborne (2004) argues that social studies inevitably foregrounds social cohesion, while Levesque (2008) suggests that the existence of a social studies tradition in North America prevented the adoption of a disciplinary approach there until the late 1990s. The framing of history within 5-14 would seem to stand in opposition to this: combining a sharp disciplinary definition and a social-subjects context.

History in Curriculum for Excellence (2008-present)

The *5-14 Guidelines* underwent review between 1998 and 2000 (LTS 2000), but no substantive change was made to either the status or content of the history curriculum. The review did contain nods towards greater independence for each subject, including the suggestion that strands (of which 'Understanding People in the Past' was one) 'should be the main organizational features for planning' and that 'pupil attainment should be reported on in a way that aids progression in each of the social subjects' (1). Despite these suggestions, historical education in Scotland remained under the umbrella of both Social Studies and Environmental Studies, and interdisciplinary planning and teaching was encouraged.

However, the modesty of these changes masked the more fundamental constitutional change arising from Scottish devolution. In 1999, the first Scottish Parliament since 1707 was formed and in March 2002, a 'National Debate on Education' was announced by the then Education Minister, Cathy Jamieson. The consultation process attracted some 1,500 responses (Munn, et al. 2004) and in 2004 the outline document of '*A Curriculum for Excellence*' (Scottish Executive 2004) was published. The National Debate had shown the Scottish public to be fairly conservative in their aspirations for the new curriculum (Munn, et al. 2004), but there was a shared view among policy makers that curriculum review had to mean more than a simple updating of 5-14.

CfE was based around four 'capacities' or aims: the development of successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors (Scottish Executive, 2004). Initially, policy makers gave the impression that this approach was incompatible with traditional subject disciplines with Minister for Education, Peter Peacock, saying of history 'perhaps we will not be teaching it in the same way in a timetabled slot marked history, but as a contributor to broader forms of learning' (Munro 2005). However, History's place in the curriculum (albeit under the title 'People, past events and societies') was assured after a campaign by the Scottish Association of Teachers of History (Henry 2006). History remained a 'social subject' and would be expected to contribute to the four capacities. A 2006 document, *Principles and Practice*, defined exactly what this contribution would be in terms of

the 'experiences and outcomes' to which a child was entitled. In this way, history was permitted to retain its unique identity but placed in the service of broader educational aims.

New Nationalism and Curriculum for Excellence

Given the narrow defeat for independence (45%-55%) in the 2015 referendum, it is tempting to conflate Scottish nationalism with Scottish separatism. However, although the terms are not mutually exclusive, they are most definitely not interchangeable. In the pre-devolution era, Nairn clarified this when he wrote that politics in Scotland has turned into an orthographic battle between [nationalism in] the upper and the lower cases' (Nairn 1995). While upper-case Nationalism called for 'Scots to abandon their silent way and recover voice and presence as a nation-state', lower case nationalism proposes that culture and identity are sufficient to sustain nationality. As Nairn reminds us, when defined in these terms 'almost everyone is some sort of nationalist'.

Despite rising support for Scottish independence and electoral victory for the separatist SNP in the 2011 and 2015 Scottish elections, it is this 'lower case' nationalism which has seen the biggest gains. Research by Paterson *et al.* (2001, 105) indicated that the 1999 referendum which re-created the Scottish parliament caused a surge in people self-identifying as 'Scottish' as opposed to 'British'. The most recent surveys concluded that that 52% view their identity as primarily Scottish, 29% as equally Scottish and British and just 8% as primarily British (Scotcen 2016). This weaker form of nationalism pervades *Curriculum for Excellence* and represents a consensus view of nationhood which crosses party-political divisions: this was, after all, a curriculum written under a unionist Labour/ Liberal Democrat coalition which was adopted wholesale by the separatist SNP following their 2007 election victory.

As Billig (1995) has argued, nationality is usually a 'banal' characteristic, taken for granted much of the time and which is only becomes overwhelming in certain circumstances (such as migration or war). However, nationalism, even in Nairn's lower case, is underpinned by a view that there is something unique and valuable about a particular country. In the case of Scotland, a distinctive language, culture, landscape and traditions buttress national identity. Scotland's education system offers a good example of this distinctiveness. Supposedly underpinned by values of inclusivity (Paterson, et al. 2001) and breadth (Davie 1961), it is often contrasted with the narrow elitism of England (McCrone 1992). Like all national myths, it is debateable whether these principles are really present, but they are, nevertheless, part of the narrative which shapes Scottish identity.

However, the nationalism which guides *Curriculum for Excellence* is something more than nostalgia, it is coupled with a belief that Scotland and its people have a unique contribution to make to the world.

The education system, therefore, is both a site of identity construction and the vehicle through which this identity can be mobilised. It is the self-confidence conferred by nationhood and patriotism which enables Scotland to take its place on the global stage. The next section of this chapter will substantiate this argument by analysing the way in which three themes (heritage, employability and citizenship) are treated differently by *5-14* and *Curriculum for Excellence*. A comparison of the two curricula will show a considerable shift in emphasis: heritage moves from something to be critiqued to something which is to be appreciated, while employability skills and citizenship move to eclipse the former emphasis on historical thinking and disciplinary knowledge.

Curriculum Change in Focus – Case Study 1 – Heritage and identity

The presence (or absence) of Scotland's own national history in its curriculum has long been a cause for debate (McLennan 2013; Hillis 2010; SCCC 1998). As in many other countries, young people's perceived ignorance about the historical canon of their nation has been interpreted as *prima facie* evidence of the inadequacy of the curriculum. The only major empirical Scottish work in this area (Wood and Payne 1997) is now some twenty years old, but it revealed misconceptions about Scotland's past which Wood was later to blame on the lack of core content in the *5-14 Guidelines* (1998; 2003). Wood argued that the absence of a coherent core of Scottish history had allowed a narrative of English dominance and Scottish subjugation to develop. Consequently, Wood argued, children's ignorance of the past was not random, but followed a pattern of powerlessness and victimhood, which fostered resentment towards Scotland's southern neighbour. Wood also argued that this identity also pervaded the media and many heritage sites (Wood 2003, 76).

Writing about *5-14*, Wood argued that 'The school curriculum should play a crucial part in enabling future citizens to recognise media images of the past for what they are: at present the evidence suggests that it is failing to do this' (Wood 1998, 214). Wood's proposed solution was a common core of Scottish history which would enable Scots to be more critical of everyday representations of historical events. However, whatever the value of a common core, perhaps this was a cure for a misdiagnosed disease. As McCrone argues, 'being able to show that heritage is not "authentic"... is not the point. If we take the Scottish example of tartanry, the interesting issue is not why much of it is "forgery" but why it continues to have such cultural power' (McCrone 1997, 51).

McCrone here provides a neat summary of the value of a focus on historical interpretations in the school curriculum; that is, the need to teach children how the past is mediated for consumption. Seixas (2000) has been particularly insistent on the need for children to engage with questionable accounts of the past in order to provide a 'resource' from which children can construct multi-layered identities. In the context of the Scottish curriculum, the answer is not to wish away heritage or dismiss

it as frippery, but to induct children into an intellectual community that assesses heritage in its own terms: as a creative industry with frameworks and aspirations very different from academic history.

A brief anecdote might serve to contextualise this. In 2008, the incumbent Scottish Nationalist Education Minister, Fiona Hyslop, turned her attention to the history curriculum, describing *Flower of Scotland* (the unofficial national anthem) as ‘a wonderful combination: a stirring anthem and a history lesson. What a marvellous achievement it would be to arouse the same passion in people about the rest of this proud nation's history’ (Hyslop 2008). While it is not uncommon to hear a politician speak of using the history curriculum ‘to arouse passion’ for ‘this proud nation’s history’, Hyslop’s choice of example is curious. Although *Flower of Scotland* is superficially about the 1314 Battle of Bannockburn¹, it contains no account of the battle itself. The song, in fact, bemoans the loss of the spirit of national resistance which motivated the Scots at Bannockburn – it is not a song *about* Bannockburn, but a song about the *spirit* of Bannockburn. The song is, however, an important historical artefact in another regard: written in the 1960s when Scottish separatism was a minority view, it evokes a Scotland of ‘hill and glen’ and calls on Scots to ‘rise now and be the nation again’. If *Flower of Scotland* is a history lesson as Hyslop claims, it is surely an object lesson in how interpretations of the past can be used to foment ideas of nationhood.

Curriculum for Excellence provided the opportunity to introduce this kind of critical awareness of interpretations. However, there was little popular demand for such a change. Instead, the Scottish Association of History Teachers (SATH) seemed ambivalent about the relationship between history, heritage and national identity. In 2006 its president wrote,

Let me say, unequivocally and unashamedly, that SATH will continue to advocate the central importance of history in the curriculum... because we believe that as Scotland develops as a country with its own Parliament in the twenty-first century, it is essential that its young people have a sense of their heritage and identity” (Henry 2006, 35)

The need to ensure young people had a ‘sense of heritage and identity’ meant that teaching of heritage became *less* critical in the transition from 5-14 to CfE. A comparison of the treatment of heritage in two curricula is summarised in Table 2.

Table 2

¹ The Battle of Bannockburn was a victory by Robert the Bruce, King of Scots, over the army of King Edward II of England. The Battle was a victory for the Scots and so is closely associated with the cause of Scottish independence. The victory was not decisive, though, and war between England and Scotland was to continue for much of the fourteenth century.

5-14 Guidelines (1993-2008)	Curriculum for Excellence (2008 – present)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘the meaning of heritage and ways of preserving selected features of the past’ and ‘the background and issues in preserving an aspect of local or national heritage’ (SOED 1993, 35). • Make informed judgements about the value for themselves and others of respecting and preserving particular aspects of community heritage. (SOED 1993, 44-45) 	<p>‘develop my understanding of the history, heritage and culture of Scotland, and an appreciation of my local and national heritage within the world’ (Scottish Government 2006, 1).</p>

In 5-14, heritage was not assumed to have an intrinsic value. Instead, value was to be judged by the child, not only in terms of its worth to the child him/ herself but its potential worth to other communities or individuals. In other words, children had to engage with questions of what aspects of the past matter to which people and why; the historical concept of significance (Seixas & Peck 2004; Wrenn 2011). While no empirical data survives to recount how this was enacted in the classroom, the notion of exploring ‘the issues in preserving an aspect’ of heritage opens the door to intriguing questions about what it means to preserve something, how heritage ought to be contextualised, the appropriate balance between conservation and restoration. In short, there existed in the 5-14 *Guidelines*, a basis upon which a more sophisticated idea of historical interpretations could have been built.

Instead, in *Curriculum for Excellence* the idea of heritage shifted from one which children were expected to interrogate to one which they were supposed to ‘appreciate’. Furthermore, there is a linguistic slip which implies ‘my’ national heritage is interchangeable with ‘the heritage and culture of Scotland’. In this formulation, heritage is a feature of place, not a feature of identity and leaves confused the position of new arrivals who might find that ‘my national heritage’ is different from that of the country in which they now live.

In one sense, this parallels the view espoused by pro-independence campaigners that Scottish nationality is civically, rather than ethnically determined. However, as Hearn (2000, 194) writes, ‘nationalism’s civicness is culturally determined... This is not to say that it is irrational, but simply that its rationality... is culturally embedded, transmitted and sustained’. Inevitably, this cultural and linguistic capital are more readily accessible to ‘ethnic’ Scots, than to the recently arrived – perhaps undermining the sharp ethnic/ civic distinction’. Paterson et al. (2001, 156-157) make a similar point:

‘cultural transmission is both a means by which incomers are brought into the national community and a way in which that community’s values are sustained... But by the very fact of being associated with Scottish national identity, that community becomes an ethnic fact about Scottishness. And therefore, potentially excluding those who – despite the open invitation to do so – refuse to identify with Scottishness’. In other words, an emphasis on heritage can inadvertently become a kind of assimilationism. To be clear, it is not that the treatment of heritage in *Curriculum for Excellence* is regressive or exclusionary, but simply that it is less critical than in the curriculum it replaced.

Curriculum Change in Focus – Case Study 2 – Employability

Curriculum for Excellence has been subject to considerable academic attention as an archetype of twenty-first century curriculum design (Priestley & Biesta 2013). Of particular interest are the aims of the curriculum, the so-called four capacities, which aspire to develop children as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors (Scottish Executive 2004). These capacities have been criticised variously for their epistemic vacuity (Priestley 2011); their narrow conception of citizenship (Biesta 2013); their individualisation of learning (Biesta 2006); and as social control (Watson 2010). Clearly Scotland is not unique in this respect, competencies have become the dominant model for framing curricula all over the world, and, as Moore and Young (2001) have argued, demonstrate a shift towards a utilitarian instrumentalist conception of knowledge in advanced economies.

It is not the intention to repeat these arguments here, but to consider the case of Scottish children’s historical education in this regard. Just as the shift from 5-14 to *CfE* saw changes in the way national history was presented, so the wider purpose of history in the curriculum changed too. Where 5-14 had emphasised a disciplinary understanding of the subject, in *Curriculum for Excellence* historical learning is conceived as just one of many areas in which children can demonstrate generic skills or competencies which affirm their work-readiness or good citizenship.

The employability discourse has become so hegemonic in Scottish education, even history educators are held in its thrall. In a chapter on the current state of history education in Scotland, the former president of SATH wrote,

Foremost in the minds of History educators is that the study of history develops young people with the essential, skills, knowledge, attributes and personal dispositions to succeed in learning, life and work’ (McLennan 2013).

In this short extract, the key tropes of modern technical-instrumentalist discourse are evident: education is a private good which allows the individual to succeed economically. However, the statement gives no indication of the distinctive and unique contribution that an understanding of the past might confer. Even if one agrees with the stated aims, we might very well ask whether these skills ought to be ‘foremost’ in the mind of history educators. Or why such generic skills must be developed through a specifically historical education?

Curriculum for Excellence proceeds on the basis that education confers competence rather than conceptual understanding; in other words, it focuses on what children should be able to do rather than on what they should know (Biesta & Priestley 2013). In 5-14, teachers were told what children’s ‘studies should involve’; however, in *CfE* this approach was replaced with learner-centred ‘I can’ statements. Priestley and Humes (2010, 353) have described this approach as ‘an artifice devised by the planners, rather than a true reflection of the learning process’ (2010, 353).

The effects of this shift can be seen in the contrasting ways that the two curricula treat ‘evidence’. In 5-14 children were expected to ‘develop an understanding of the nature of *historical* evidence’ (my emphasis); however, in *CfE* evidence is not something that is *understood* but something that children show they can *do*. Consider the following progression that is to take place between the ages of 7 and 13 in *CfE*:

- I can use primary and secondary sources selectively to research events in the past. SOC 2-01a
- I can use my knowledge of a historical period to interpret the evidence and present an informed view. SOC 3-01a
- I can evaluate conflicting sources of evidence to sustain a line of argument. SOC 4-01a

As I have argued elsewhere (Smith 2016), these competencies are in reverse order of historical complexity. Level Four has nothing uniquely historical about it, while Level Two describes the day-to-day work of a researcher in a university history faculty. Indeed, Level Four embodies a common fallacy, that an ability to use evidence is a generic competence to which history can contribute and that what counts as ‘evidence’ – or, by extension, proof - means the same thing in different disciplines. Ashby (2011) is clear that this reconceptualisation of evidence as a ‘skill’ has been detrimental to history’s disciplinary integrity in school curricula,

Treating evidence as a skill, focusing only on the routine interrogation of sources and limiting historical enquiry to the construction of personal opinions have left history justifying its place on the curriculum in ways that underplay its value as knowledge (137).

In the *5-14 Guidelines*, evidence was understood as a concept in relation to history as a discipline, in *CfE* using evidence is a generic skill that history can help improve.

The borrowing of 'I can' statements from vocational education has a further effect: it elevates the demonstration of understanding above the understanding itself. The result is a performative curriculum: one which asks children to show that they can *do* things, rather than showing they can *understand* things. The range of verbs used in *CfE* is impressive: children must present, assess, use, express, describe, explain and investigate. But while understanding can be shown through demonstration, demonstration does not in itself necessarily imply understanding. By reframing understanding as competencies, the continuum of superficial to complex understanding is replaced by the binary can/can't. Consider the following

I can present supported conclusions about the social, political and economic impacts
of a technological change in the past. (SOC 4-05a)

As a fourth level competency, this is considered the highest level that a child aged 13 might achieve, but it contains no suggestion that conclusions might be more or less sophisticated. Furthermore, the emphasis here is not on understanding change as a concept but a specific instance of change in the singular. Ormond (2017) has shown how similar formulations in the New Zealand curriculum have had unintended consequences: encouraging teachers to concentrate on smaller and smaller units of the past so that they can demonstrate that they have 'met the competence' without reference to broader contextual knowledge which, while crucial to understanding, are 'superfluous' in the pursuit of showing what one can *do*.

Curriculum in Focus - Case Study 3 - Citizenship

The employability agenda exerts a distorting influence on the presentation of history, but so too does the emphasis on citizenship which emerged between the *5-14 National Guidelines* and *Curriculum for Excellence*. Citizenship as a curricular aim is often distinguished from with 'civics' or 'political literacy'. While civics education develops a familiarity with the institutions of the state and civil society, citizenship education implies an induction into this society. Citizenship – when framed uncritically – assumes the rationality of existing practices and socialises the student to conform to these. As Osborne (1991) pointed out, it is noticeable how frequently the word 'responsible' occurs in citizenship education discourse as a synonym for obedient.

In *5-14*, civics education was wholly contained in a strand called 'People in Society' which covered topics such as 'social rules, rights and responsibilities' and 'economic organisation and structures' (SOED 1993, 36-37). In *Curriculum for Excellence*, the purview of 'People in Society' was extended as

it was reframed 'People in Society, Economy and Business.' Alongside this, a greater integration of social subjects was pursued – citizenship education would not be siloed in a single curriculum strand, but would be an overarching aim for all social subjects.

The promotion of active citizenship is a central feature of learning in social studies as children and young people develop skills and knowledge to enable and encourage participation. (Scottish Government 2006, 3)

In this example, citizenship is not something that one learns about, but something one embodies – active citizenship is to be promoted and participation is to be encouraged, not just in citizenship lessons, but in all social subjects. This extract exemplifies Watson's (2010, 99), argument that CfE 'is concerned with setting out not what children are expected to know, but how they should be' and that 'CfE is aimed at producing the "good subject", the "entrepreneurial self", for and within the control society'.

History can only be turned towards this kind of socialisation, if its disciplinary integrity is compromised. Consider the following outcome which is specified within the domain of 'People, Past Events and Societies',

I can make reasoned judgements about how the exercise of power affects the rights and responsibilities of citizens by comparing a more democratic and a less democratic society. SOC 4-04c (Scottish Government 2006)

The phrasing here is tortured because of the need to frame historical learning in terms of the genericised 'rights and responsibilities of citizens'. The problem, of course, is that the rights and responsibilities of citizens throughout history have been influenced by factors far larger than the prevailing constitutional arrangements; not least time, wealth and geography. It is difficult to see what children could profitably learn from comparing Athenian democracy with Stalin's Russia. Furthermore, the curriculum assumes that ideas of 'more and less democratic' are settled concepts, but 'democracy' has no fixed definition: was ancient Athens more democratic than Victorian Britain? How democratic were the United States before 1865? Was Britain a democracy during World War Two as elections were suspended, newspapers censored and soldiers conscripted? The overarching curriculum aim to promote active citizenship and encourage participation, overrides the need to ask these difficult, but vital questions. The idea of democracy is treated as an unproblematic universal concept and history is called into service in bolstering societal aims.

What is the picture in schools?

There is some emerging empirical evidence that the re-framing of history within *Curriculum for Excellence* is distorting practice in schools. A recent study of 21 schools (from 13 local councils across Scotland) showed that the curricular autonomy afforded by *CfE* has not been well-used and has resulted in a reduction in the pupils' exposure to the past as more instrumental aims are foregrounded in planning (Smith 2018). The most obvious manifestation of this has been the impact of the almost total removal of guidance about which periods children should study.

The *5-14 Guidelines* had previously taken a minimal approach to the specification of content ensuring that children 'experience a broad range of historical study' in 'five main historical eras' (i.e. Ancient, Medieval, early modern, 1700-1900 and the Twentieth Century) (SOED 1993, 34). The curriculum's intention here was to ensure the development of children's 'chronological reference knowledge' without determining content, an approach which has more recently been implemented in The Netherlands (Wilschut 2009, 2015). In contrast, *CfE* gives no guidance whatsoever about which periods in history children should learn, and during the compulsory phase of high school (11-13) identifies just three areas of substantive knowledge:

- 'the development of the Scottish nation' (SOC 3-02)
- 'migration to and from Scotland' (SOC 3-03).
- 'comparing Scotland with a society in Europe or elsewhere' (SOC 3-04)

Data from the 21 survey schools suggest that these themes are largely taught implicitly. All schools, for example, taught a mixture of Scottish and non-Scottish history which would permit the kinds of comparison demanded by SOC 3-04. Similarly, while only one school taught Scottish migration as an explicit development study, others taught a range of topics that would allow discussion of migration as a theme.

More interesting is the treatment of the 'development of the Scottish nation' which implies a focus on the concept of change over time. Only a minority of schools addressed this directive in this way, instead the dominant model was an intensive depth study of a seminal moment in Scotland's history such as The Jacobite Rebellions¹ (1689-1746) or, in three-quarters of cases, the Scottish Wars of Independence against England (c. 1286-1357)². The emphasis of these studies, it seems, is not so much on the *development* of the Scottish nation over time so much as instances when nationhood was asserted; such assertions are part of the development of the nation, to be sure, but not if they

¹ The Jacobite Rebellions were a series of revolts by supporters of the Catholic Stuart family against the ruling Protestant House of Hannover. The original 'Jacobites' supported the restoration of the Catholic King James after his deposition in 1688 by his Protestant daughter, Mary and her Dutch husband, William. Later Jacobite revolts – most notably in 1745-6 – sought to install James' descendants on the throne.

are studied in isolation. Such depth studies would not have satisfied the demands of the former curriculum which was clearer on the importance of children's conceptual understanding of change, mandating 'some studies which trace particular developments across time' (SOED 1993, 34).

The narrowing of the curriculum which sees 'the development of the Scottish nation' reduced to a single depth study is part of emerging evidence of a narrowing of Scottish children's history curriculum more generally. While the question of precisely which topics children 'ought' to learn will always be fraught, Lee and Howson (2009, 217-218) argue that children need a 'big picture' of the past which is 'based on disciplinary or metahistorical understanding, and... [which...] becomes a usable part of students' mental furniture'. Data from the 21 Scottish schools imply that such considerations are not a dimension of schools' curriculum planning.

Of the 21 schools surveyed, six taught a curriculum which aimed to cover a broad chronological span in order to offer children a 'big picture' framework of the past. However, in the remaining schools the curriculum was episodic with teachers unable to offer justifications for the topics taught in terms of pupils' historical understanding. In many cases, this resulted in distorted curricula with huge chronological gaps. One school, for example, taught only The Scottish Wars of Independence, World War Two, The Holocaust and an independent study during the compulsory 'junior' phase. Another taught just The Black Death, The American West and The Cold War. Although these were the two most extreme examples, there were some periods which were passed-over in many schools. Particularly neglected was the period 1400-1900: just three of the 21 schools taught The Reformation, two taught about European colonial expansion and six explicitly taught the Industrial Revolution. While it is epistemically problematic to assert that any historical event is *a priori* more 'significant' than another, issues such as Colonialism and Industrialisation can be viewed as substantive concepts that historically literate children must grasp as well as instantiations of the concept. It is difficult to conceive of a historically-literate child who is not familiar with these foundational concepts.

Put simply, many schools are not giving sufficient thought to the importance of substantive knowledge in history with little discussion of which periods children should learn. The result has been episodic curricula in many schools in which periods, topics and events are chosen for their perceived popularity with pupils: an approach which has been characterised as 'the sushi bar of history' (Tosh 2008, cited in Howson 2009 31). Shemilt's analysis of fragmentation in the English school system would seem to hold true for Scotland too:

[at present] the majority of adolescents leave school with bits-and-pieces of knowledge that add up to very little and fail to validly inform, or even connect with, their perceptions of present realities. (Shemilt 2009, 142)

What, then, are the reasons for these episodic curricula? One reason is, of course, the lack of explicit attention paid to historical understanding by curriculum documentation, but another is the organisation of secondary education in Scotland more generally. In Scotland, History (as part of social subjects) is only compulsory in the 'junior phase' (i.e. up to age 13), thereafter children must choose whether or not to study for a national examination in the subject (around 50% do so). During the junior phase, the need to accommodate all social subjects within the timetable has meant that most schools teach each subject (History, Geography and Modern Studies) in turn for six weeks each. Such an episodic approach to curriculum planning militates against the development of 'big picture' history and also lends a certain logic to the teaching of short intensive depth studies.

The division of high school into 'junior' and 'senior' phases exercises another distorting influence on the curriculum – the need for a curriculum which appeals to students in order to increase the numbers electing to study it in the senior phase. One teacher who was interviewed spoke of needing to teach 'sexier' topics, while another highlighted the tension between 'delivering a product' that was 'difficult' and one that was 'enjoyable':

But I think the key thing for me is delivering a product that is enjoyable and rewarding for them and I think to go chronologically - a lot of the topics... it might be quite difficult for them.

However, the reasons for this emphasis on 'consumer preference' are not hard to find: uptake of the subject in the senior phase translates into the number of history teachers that a school employs. The stakes here are enormous: if too few people opt to study history, then the course will not run in the senior phase, having real and dramatic implications on staffing. One teacher said simply, 'If we don't convince them to pick it, where's my job?' Schools are, in many cases, designing their curriculum around the interests and tastes of twelve-year-old children. That is, one that *appeals* to students, rather than one which *benefits* students. Such considerations perhaps explain why as many schools (3) taught the Assassination of JFK or the Great Fire of London as taught The Reformation.

The extent to which these phenomena are consequences of the introduction of *Curriculum for Excellence* is, of course, debateable. However, there is some evidence that the changing curriculum has brought about a change in Scottish teachers' views about what history is for. A 2017 survey ($n=101$) compared the views of teachers who had trained since the introduction of CfE with those who had trained earlier; the results implied that more recently qualified teachers had weaker subject identities and a more instrumental view of the purpose of the subject (Smith 2018). For example, 64% of the CfE-trained teachers agreed that 'history makes children proud of the country they live in', while

only 44% of the more experienced teachers agreed ($p=0.086$). More generally, when offered a list of both intrinsic (e.g. historical method/ sense of period) and extrinsic (e.g. employability skills/ patriotism) aims of a historical education, 58% of the CfE-trained cohort agreed with all seven of the extrinsic aims they were offered, while only 38% of the pre-CfE cohort did likewise ($p=0.052$). This support for more instrumental reasons for teaching history was also reflected in the way that the two groups of teachers spoke about their professional identities, with pre-CfE teachers four times more likely to express a preference for just teaching history (as opposed to social subjects) than the CfE-trained cohort ($p=0.0002$).

Conclusions

This chapter has suggested that changes in Scotland's constitutional relationship with the rest of the UK have been reflected in changes in the way that history has been conceived in the Scottish curriculum. While the use of the history curriculum as a vehicle to define and transmit national identity is nothing new, this has perhaps been more nuanced than elsewhere. *Curriculum for Excellence* is not a narrow celebration of Scotland or Scottishness, it aspires to educate critically-minded global citizens who are confident individuals and successful learners. However, this chapter suggests that such high-minded aspirations may leave unhelpfully ambiguous the question of history's unique contribution to the development of young people.

Initial research suggests that the instrumentalization of history at the policy level is having real impact on classroom practice. Interviews with teachers suggest that questions of historical knowledge are not foregrounded in curriculum planning and that teachers have instead designed curricular which appeal to children's interests. While no one would intentionally plan a curriculum in order to bore children, we are entitled to be disappointed, I think, with schools teaching the Assassination of JFK, yet making no mention of The Reformation. But teachers and schools should not be criticised too harshly for this: *Curriculum for Excellence* framed teachers as curriculum makers but afforded none of the theoretical models or discursive frames that might have assisted teachers in making their curricula coherent. Teachers need access to these debates and time to think about how they might be made to work in their own contexts.

The 2002 'National Debate on Education' asked what Scotland wanted from its schools in the 21st century' (Scottish Executive, 2002, p. 5); this was a necessary and urgent conversation. This chapter,

though, suggests that another debate is now needed: what might these future-oriented schools need to teach Scottish children about the past?

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