

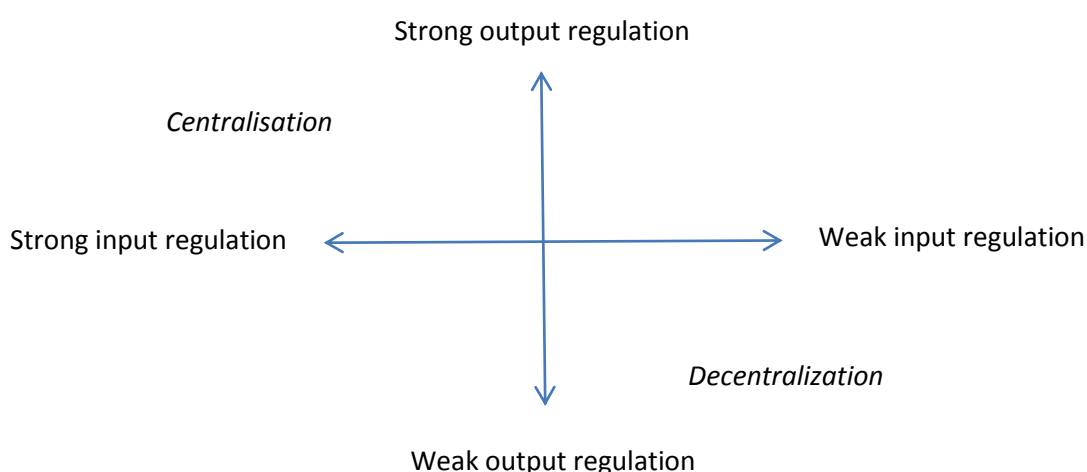
Curriculum deregulation in England and Scotland: Different directions of travel?

David Leat¹, Kay Livingston² and Mark Priestley³

Introduction

England and Scotland provide interesting and in some ways contrasting case studies for studying the balance between curriculum freedom and regulation. In common with the pendulum swings between these two positions, identified across different curricular jurisdictions by Nieveen and Kuiper (2012), teachers in both countries have experienced shifting terrain, the general trend being an apparent move from more extreme versions of prescription (especially in England) to greater degrees of freedom for schools to develop the curriculum (particularly in the case of Scotland). However, such trends need to be viewed cautiously. Questions remain about the extent to which school autonomy in curriculum making is actually happening; as noted (*ibid.*), the worldwide development of accountability systems (output regulation), the phenomenon termed GERM⁴ (Sahlberg, 2011), has superseded and counter-balanced the input regulation formerly seen in many cases. Such mechanisms, according to Wilkins (2011), produce cultures of performativity, with three distinctive features: the evaluative use of statistical attainment data; external inspections; and increasingly marketised education systems, driven by publicly available data collated into league tables. This in turn is said to have created a worldwide phenomenon of performativity in schools, comprising perverse incentives, game playing and even cheating (Ball, 2003; Keddle, Mills & Pendergast, 2011). Thus, one might ask, in the specific cases of England and Scotland, against the backdrop of these global trends, whether claimed deregulation is genuine, or illusory and rhetorical. Indeed, it has been argued that outputs-driven methods have done more to erode teacher agency (Biesta, 2004,) than has any recourse to prescriptive inputs. Linked to this, there is the further question of whether, as is often claimed, Scotland's *Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE) offers hitherto unknown levels of autonomy in curriculum-making, in contrast to England, which is widely seen as highly prescriptive.

Figure 1: The balance between input and output regulation



¹ University of Newcastle

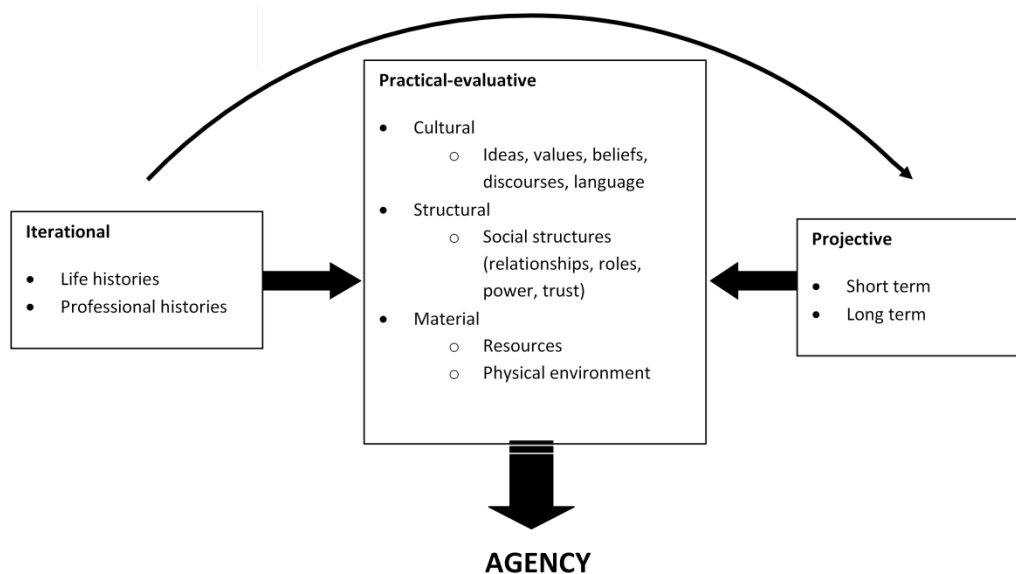
² University of Glasgow

³ University of Stirling

⁴ The Global Educational Reform Movement

These questions are best explored through an analysis of the interplay of input and output regulation. In this chapter, we explore the nature and extent of these types of regulation in England and Scotland, where there has been a considerable divergence in policy (Grek & Ozga, 2010). In doing so, we extend the centralised/decentralised continuum proposed by Nieveen and Kuipers (2012), providing an analysis framed as a quadrant rather than as a linear continuum (figure 1, above). Additionally, as we are primarily concerned with the effects of regulatory systems on the autonomy granted to teachers making the curriculum, we employ an ecological approach to teacher agency in our analysis (for a fuller account of this approach, see: Priestley, Biesta and Robinson, 2013). This approach, depicted in figure 2 (below), construes agency as an emergent phenomenon, combining the personal capacity of teachers to act (for example in developing the curriculum) with the context (social and material) by means of which they act. In this view, agency is something that people achieve rather than something that resides within them; it thus varies from place to place and over time. This approach allows us to make judgements about the ways in which regulatory frameworks facilitate or inhibit the achievement of agency by teachers, or in other words, the extent to which teachers experience freedom as they develop the curriculum. The key area for analysis here lies in the practical-evaluative dimension of agency. Regulatory frameworks, relating to both inputs and outputs, concern the cultural realm (in terms of ideas, dispositions and values that shape agency) as well as the structural realm (for example in terms of coercive power structures and relational resources). These aspects are practical, in terms of how social structures and cultural forms constitute the social conditions, which render agency possible (or not). They are also evaluative, insofar as teachers will form judgments (for example evaluations of risk) as they enact the curriculum.

Figure 2: The ecological approach to teacher agency



(source: Priestley, Biesta & Robinson, 2013)

In the sections that follow, we present brief descriptive case studies of the current frameworks for curriculum regulation in both England and Scotland, identifying the current balance in each country between input and output regulation. We conclude the chapter with an analysis of how these contexts for curriculum enactment might enable the emergence of teacher agency, drawing conclusions about the extent to which England and Scotland are centralised or decentralised systems, and the relative freedom of teachers in each case to engage in school-based curriculum development.

The National Curriculum in England

Input Regulation

The introduction of the first national curriculum in England in 1988 marked a major turning point in the history of curriculum policies in the UK⁵, with international ramifications, as other countries copied and adapted the model. This curriculum was highly prescriptive in relation to inputs, specifying in often minute detail the content to be taught in schools; it was heavily criticised by academic writers in relation to its uncritical stance towards questions of knowledge/content and its lack of coherence (see, for example: Kelly, 1990). Since then there has been a general trend towards less prescription, with reviews of the National Curriculum leading to a paring down of content in 1995, 1999 and 2008. Part of the driving force for deregulation has been continual complaints from teachers and school leaders that the curriculum is overcrowded. Moreover, in the background has been an important tenet of Conservative party philosophy which favours the marketisation of education in order that parental choice might motivate school improvement. This short account might lead one to believe that schools and teachers have been granted greater licence to engage in localised curriculum development. However, this is misleading for a number of reasons, two of which are worthy of note here. First, the national curriculum in England remains comparatively prescriptive in comparison with national curricula in many other countries, despite a gradual move towards deregulation in this respect. Since 2010, when the election of a conservative government marked a distinct curriculum turn, there has been an increasing re-emphasis on input regulation, inspired by notions of essentialist canons of knowledge and cultural literacy (for example, see: Coles, 2013). Thus, the curriculum in England retains high levels of input regulation. A second point worthy of note, which we develop further in the next section, concerns output regulation, which exerts high levels of control over teaching in England's schools⁶.

Output Regulation through surveillance

A major part of the problem in achieving curriculum deregulation has been that policy makers have not been able, or perhaps not willing, to move beyond relatively simple measures of educational outcomes, specifically performance in timed examinations, with particular importance given to mathematics and English. In the marketisation of schooling, these outputs or *standards* become the primary currency, and it is political power that has given these measures such legitimacy. As Ball *et al.* (2012, p.514) explain,

As a policy, *standards* 'works' through a very simple but effective and very public technology of performance – made up of league tables, national averages, comparative and progress indicators, Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) assessments and benchmarks. These together are intended to instil into schools what is called a 'performance culture'.

Because of this performance culture, it is argued that teachers in England are the most accountable in the world. There is a specific accountability for pupil performance in public examinations, which is periodically increased. For example in 2012, primary schools were

⁵ The 1988 curriculum applied to England, Northern Ireland and Wales. Scotland, with its tradition of independent policy making in education, resisted moves to introduce a similar model, eventually developing the less prescriptive and non-statutory 5-14 curriculum guidance (see Priestley, 2013).

⁶ We note here that large numbers of schools in England – for example academies – are exempt from the strictures of the National Curriculum, a point which is developed later in this chapter.

expected to get 60% of their pupils to the 'expected level' in English and mathematics. In 2014 this will be raised to 65%. If schools consistently fail, regardless of the social background of pupils, they will be forced to become 'academies', a significant change of governance. In secondary schools, in 2012, a basic target was that 40% of students should gain 5 GCSE⁷ passes (including English and mathematics) at Grade C or above (the grades run from A*, A, B etc through to G). In the face of previous targets (which did not include English and mathematics) many schools developed ingenious means for reaching targets, including searching for the exam boards and subjects that seemed to have the best pass rates and using particular vocational courses which provided four GCSE passes. Grades in all GCSE subjects are predicted from pupil scores in tests at age 11 and it is common for pupils to have a test in most subjects every six weeks, from age 11, to see if they are maintaining progress. If pupils' grades are seen to be dropping, some form of support or intervention is likely to be implemented.

Schools are periodically inspected by Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education). There is strong pressure for observed lessons to be graded as *Good* or *Outstanding*. There are very significant rewards for schools if they are judged outstanding in all categories of inspection, including going onto a longer cycle of re-inspection. The criteria for *Outstanding* lessons are used for internal school monitoring and often for departmental and individual teacher self-evaluation. Ball (2003) has adapted the concept of performativity to this context, to denote the micro-management of public services through numerical targets. More recently he has coined the term *deliverology* (Ball et al., 2012), for the instrumental mindset that can pervade many schools to achieve targets, generated by a 'common-sense political rationality'. For many teachers this is experienced as anxiety-inducing pressure, which pervades the school culture. As one primary teacher interviewee in Webb *et al.* (2009, p.417) expressed it:

The head is under pressure to perform, she puts pressure on us, we put pressure on the children and then everyone is just under immense pressure and stress.

However as this extract indicates, teachers are not alone in internalising expectations of performance, it is also evident in students, many of whom become very instrumental in their approach to education, as indicated by this 15 year old pupil who indicates no desire to continue with a more enquiry based approach to the curriculum:

We're still all in the middle of our GCSEs and we just want you to give us the right answers so we can learn it and I think that's what is stressful for a lot of people. We just want the correct answers so we can go and learn them instead of having to go and find it. (Leat, Thomas & Reid, 2012, p.408)

Foucault's (1977) writings on disciplining, surveillance and the development of the technology of the self might indeed have been inspired by the English education system. This is high stakes accountability, as teachers whose students do not meet targets or whose lessons only reach satisfactory grades are likely to be given *support*, which can ultimately lead to dismissal if improvement is not forthcoming. Output regulation is thus an effective, albeit contentious, means of curriculum control in England.

Mixed messages

Thus although politicians make commitments to more freedom to teachers and schools (Department for Education, 2010), this is not the lived experience of teachers, who feel constrained by the output regulation. In primary schools, the focus on exam results at age 11

⁷ GCSEs (General Certificate of Secondary Education) are qualifications undertaken by school students at the age of 16 in England, Northern Ireland and Wales.

has historically encouraged schools to focus on English and mathematics and, to a lesser degree, science. One of the key findings of an independent review of the primary curriculum *The Cambridge Primary Review* (Alexander *et al.*, 2009) concerned the narrowing of the curriculum as the result of the effects of high-stakes testing. Alexander (2012), the lead author of the review, has repeatedly criticised government for abandoning any commitment to a broad and balanced curriculum, this concept being a marker for pupil entitlement to an equitable medium for education.

More recently the ideas of E.D. Hirsch, the American cultural commentator, on cultural capital embedded in traditional subjects, have captured the imagination of the present Secretary of State for Education, disposing him towards a subject-based curriculum and the teaching of knowledge. Where, as in England, the curriculum is permeable to the ideas of individual politicians, it is very difficult to have faith in a deregulated curriculum. Therefore the prospects are not good for teacher professionalism in England. In an era of government involvement in education, one can detect signs of the crossroads described in Hargreaves's (2000) fourth age of professionalism, in which teaching either may assume a postmodern identity where the profession has a broader, more inclusive stance or a diminished post-professional status characterised by simplistic apprenticeship models, constraining competence frameworks and detailed measurement of outcomes.

Paradoxically the government control of the curriculum by means of input or output manipulation has been partially contradicted by encouragement to schools to innovate, as an acknowledgement of changing societal demands on schools. These conflicting principles partly explain the ongoing tussle between the forces of regulation and deregulation and the confusion that results. Thus although the latest national curriculum proposals in 2013 have attracted considerable criticism for returning to greater specification of subject content, some schools are virtually free of the national curriculum specifications. The previous Labour government had introduced the concept of academies, sponsored by businesses or other organisations. The current government has maintained and extended the concept of academies and introduced further diversity through the establishment of Free Schools. Such schools now account for more than 50% of secondary schools in England. Although only a few academies and free schools have used their greater curriculum (input) freedom, greater curriculum diversity is beginning to appear, but for the present anchored to the common high stakes exams at 16.

Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: A different direction of travel?

Divergence

The re-establishment of a Scottish Parliament, following devolution in 1999, has accelerated a process of divergence of the already distinctive Scottish education policy from that in the rest of the UK. This divergence plays out in a number of areas that are relevant to our analysis of the school curricula in the two countries, including:

- The development of the new Curriculum for Excellence. This explicitly positions curriculum-making as the preserve of teachers and schools, reducing prescription in terms of content, and establishing a number of underpinning common approaches as desirable: for example, inter-disciplinary provision, active learning, and personalisation and choice. This new curriculum thus represents a considerable relaxation in the nature of input regulation, at least at the macro-level of curriculum contextualisation⁸.

⁸ We note that CfE, in common with its predecessor (the 5-14 curriculum framework), is considered to be 'guidance' rather than a statutory and compulsory curriculum. There remains, nevertheless, the

- A concomitant positioning of teachers as key agents of change, evident in both curriculum policy statements (e.g. Scottish Executive, 2006) and in subsequent policy developments, for example the new Standards produced by the General Teaching Council for Scotland and the agenda established by the report *Teaching Scotland's Future* (Donaldson, 2011). These developments suggest an aspiration to reduce prescription in general, and a commitment to raising levels of teacher professionalism.
- The establishment of a national education agency, Education Scotland, following the bringing together of the Inspectorate (HMIe) and Learning and Teaching Scotland (the curriculum, assessment and technology agency) in 2011. This development occurred at a time when similar agencies were being abolished in England. Education Scotland is primarily concerned with meso-level contextualisation (potentially involving input regulation) of the curriculum and quality improvement (including support for the process of curriculum development and output regulation)
- Continued attachment to the principle of education as a 'national system locally administered' (Livingston and Hulme, 2013). The Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 specified that 'it shall be the duty of the [local education] authority to secure that the education is directed to the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the child or young person to their fullest potential' (Scottish Parliament, 2000). A Concordat agreed between the Scottish Government and the 32 local authorities of Scotland in 2007 emphasised subsidiarity as an organising principle in Scotland – the Scottish Government sets the direction of policy and expected national outcomes and the local authorities are responsible for shaping and improving service delivery in response to local needs and circumstances (Scottish Government, 2007).
- While evaluative use of attainment data and external inspections have remained as a key part of the government's drive to raise standards in schools, the third aspect of Wilkins's (2011) typology of performativity - a market environment, where parental choice is facilitated by the publicly available data from inspections and attainment statistics – has been far less evident in Scotland (see Menter & Hulme, 2012). The support for socially inclusive comprehensive schools remains a feature of the education system in Scotland which has not seen the diversification to academies, free schools etc so prominent currently in England.

These aspects of the Scottish policy landscape would appear to position Scotland quite differently to England in terms of the degree and nature of curriculum regulation.

Input regulation

The rhetoric of macro-level Curriculum for Excellence documents suggests that the intention was not to produce a top-down prescriptive curriculum for teachers to deliver. Rather it was up to teachers themselves to engage with the reform process and reflect on changes to content and pedagogy. Within the framework of curriculum outcomes and experiences, published at a national level, the role of teachers as curriculum developers was emphasised. The framework of guidance was intended to allow '... teachers the freedom to exercise judgement on appropriate learning for young people, ...' (Scottish Executive, 2004, p.4).

Within a clear framework of national expectations, teachers will have greater scope and space for professional decisions about what and how they should teach,

question of whether this position is rhetoric; it might be argued that, as far as schools are concerned, a combination of different forms of regulation means that CfE is to all intents and purposes the national curriculum.

enabling them to plan creatively within broader parameters. (Scottish Executive Education Department, 2006, p.1)

The messages about the involvement of practitioners in decision-making about the most appropriate way to support their pupils in achieving outcomes have continued to be emphasised throughout subsequent documents, which put flesh on the original bones of the curriculum (e.g. the 'Building the Curriculum' series⁹) published during the curriculum reform process. The text of the documents indicated the importance of an ongoing collaborative approach to curriculum reform. The intention expressed in the documents was that the curriculum should be developed and shaped through a partnership model with practitioners. The commitment and quality of teachers in Scotland was also consistently highlighted.

Scottish Ministers have increasingly emphasised the value they place on the professionalism and commitment of teachers in Scotland. We have a motivated and well-trained workforce which is being asked to embrace a shift away from prescription about the detail of the curriculum and towards more responsibility for professional judgement and creativity within broader parameters. If we are to be successful in our aim of preparing young people for the challenges of the future, we will rely even more on individual teachers' commitment to refreshing and updating their own professional skills and knowledge.(Scottish Executive, 2006:21)

This apparent shift to weaker input regulation at the level of national policy is partly tempered by the local governance arrangements for Scottish schools described above. As stated, local authorities are the bodies responsible for schooling. This function is partly carried out through input regulation and partly through output regulation (to be discussed in the next section of the paper). In the case of the former, the situation varies from local authority to local authority, some being more prescriptive than others. However, a number of general observations can be made. Scottish schooling is extremely hierarchical; local authorities mediate national policy, and such mediation can be significant in shaping curriculum making practices in schools. Many local authorities produce mandatory teaching materials and operate relatively high levels of prescription in terms of teaching methodologies, for example Assessment for Learning techniques and cooperative learning methods (although we note that there is some variation between authorities in the degree of prescription operated). However, notwithstanding these trends, it is fair to describe Curriculum for Excellence as being weak in terms of input regulation, especially so in comparison to England.

Output regulation

Scotland is extremely similar in many respects to England in terms of the first two dimensions of Wilkins's (2011) typology. Since 1997, the so-called Quality Improvement Initiative has established an accountability system, shown to have similar effects to its English counterpart (see Cowie, Croxford & Taylor, 2007; Boyd & Norris, 2004). A strong attainment agenda has developed, driven by statistical use of data derived from external examination results. These generate what are known as Standard Tables and Charts (STACS), which are used extensively in secondary schools to manage teachers, enabling, for example, subject departments to be compared with each other, the performance of individual pupils to be compared across subjects, and the performance of schools and departments to be set against equivalent schools on comparator league tables (Cowie, Croxford & Taylor, 2007). (We note here that league tables do not 'officially' exist in Scotland; national tables are not compiled by the Scottish Government, although comparator

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<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/thecurriculum/howdoyoubuildyourcurriculum/curriculumplanning/whatisbuildingyourcurriculum/btc/index.asp>

tables are used within local authorities, and national newspapers compile their own unofficial tables annually.) In many local authorities, similar use has been made in primary schools of data pertaining to pupils' attainment of the curricular levels of the former 5-14 curriculum. These data have allowed schools to be compared according to attainment levels, associated in many cases with performativity (see Priestley, Robinson & Biesta, 2012). The emphasis on benchmarking continues to prevail in Scotland. The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning in Scotland said recently in a speech presented at the University of Glasgow (27 March 2013), that a new tool would be created to benchmark how pupils perform in terms of literacy and numeracy; how they achieve more broadly in terms of qualifications and wider awards; where they move on to when they leave school; and how their school is closing the attainment gap. It is likely that this tool will be used across all Scottish local authorities; it remains to be seen whether its effects will be different from those documented within existing accountability systems.

Inspections by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of education (HMIE) form a second part of this system of output regulation. Inspections are framed around a set of performance indicators known as HGIOS¹⁰ (HMIE, 2002). HGIOS is ostensibly a self-evaluation tool, but is also used by inspectors to judge the quality of schools. Following the advent of Curriculum for Excellence, HGIOS was revamped in 2006-7 (HMIE, 2006, 2007), signalling a supposed shift from a hard to a softer managerialism. However, according to Reeves (2008:13), revisions to HGIOS are 'cosmetic, since the basic instruments and methodology remain the same'. The inspection model has been further developed subsequently: inspection and review have increasingly placed more emphasis on issues such as the extent to which an establishment or service has developed the ability to self-evaluate and drive its own improvement. However, the inspectorate is quite clear that their aim to provide public assurance and accountability through robust independent evaluations of establishments and services, share effective practice and inform national policy, and thus one might argue that inspection still forms a key component of strong output regulation. A third aspect of output regulation lies in Scotland's local authorities, which are more pervasive in their governance role than in England, and which operate extensively in regulating outputs. A shift in emphasis in many local authorities from a supportive advisory role to a quality improvement role, characterised by audits mirroring the external inspection process, has been documented by several writers (e.g. Cowie, Croxford & Taylor 2007; Boyd & Norris, 2004). The potentially detrimental effects of the role of bureaucracies, notably the local authorities, in maintaining central control was noted by an OECD report (2007).

The net result of these practices and policies is an accountability system that, while being less pervasive than its English counterpart, still has real teeth. As such, it has had considerable potential to shape the forms of education emerging following the reform of the curriculum, and especially to militate against the new forms of freedom promised by Curriculum for Excellence. In particular, 'improvement with pre-specified level descriptors' (MacKinnon, 2011, p. 91) requires schools to provide evidence of 'quality,' with the attendant dangers of perverse incentives and game playing (Cowie, Croxford & Taylor, 2007). Finding an appropriate balance between teacher freedom to take curriculum decisions and accountability measures to assure the consistency and quality of Scottish education remains a challenge.

Analysis: curriculum regulation and teacher agency

We conclude this chapter with a brief analysis of the differing nature of curriculum regulation in England and Scotland, and some reflections upon its effects on teachers and schools.

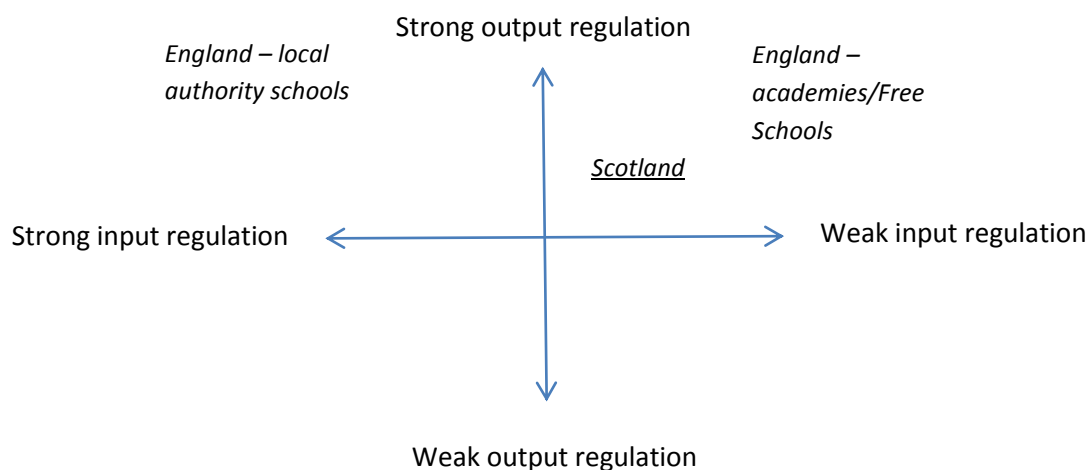
¹⁰ How Good Is Our School?

The nature of curriculum regulation in England and Scotland

Grek and Ozga (2010) have noted the considerable divergence in policy and policy influences between England and Scotland, something often ignored in both media commentary and academic literature. In particular, they note the influence of American models of governance in England (markets, choice etc.) and the greater influence of European policy discourses in Scotland. These differing policy influences may account for the different emphases within the two countries, and in particular the balance between input and output regulation. We note here that Scotland's comprehensive school system can be seen as a homogenous arena for education policy, whereas in England the situation is considerably more confusing; the balance between these forms of regulation will be different, dependent upon whether the school is a local authority school or an academy/Free School.

Thus, in Scotland we see relatively weak input regulation at a macro-level, as Curriculum for Excellence opens up considerable space for school autonomy. However, as we noted, levels of input regulation at a meso-level vary from authority to authority. Moreover, Scotland retains a relatively hard managerialism (Reeves, 2008) through high levels of output regulation. The rhetoric of teacher and school autonomy is therefore not easily realisable in practice. In England, the situation is more complex. Local authority schools are subject to both high levels of input regulation through the National Curriculum and extensive output regulation. However, as we have noted, in academies and Free Schools, largely exempt from the demands of the National Curriculum, we ostensibly see far lower levels of input regulation. However, two points should be made here. First, such schools are still subject to the high levels of output regulation. Second, we additionally note that the content of the curriculum in such schools may be subject to control by stakeholders other than the teachers in the schools (for example, the sponsors who partially fund the schools). Thus, while there may be freedom from the input regulation of the National Curriculum, this may be substituted by potentially more capricious control by other external parties. The balance of input and output regulation in the above cases is depicted in figure 3 (below).

Figure 3: The balance between input and output regulation in England and Scotland



The effects of curriculum regulation on teacher agency

Space precludes a deep analysis of the effects of curriculum regulation on teacher agency. However, we offer here a few reflections on how such regulation might be detrimental to teacher agency, and how in turn this might undermine professionalism – surely an issue at a

time when curriculum policy emphasises school autonomy and positions teachers as agents of change. We make here a number of points that draw upon the ecological conception of agency, as something that emerges from the transactions that individuals – with their particular talents, aspirations, values and knowledge – have within their environment.

First, teacher professionalism often tends to be seen as matter of enhancing individual capacity – for example, knowledge, skills and professional ethics – which tends to sideline the structural and cultural context in which the professions develop (Priestley, Biesta & Robinson, 2013). Output regulation comprises both a set of social structures (systems, power relations, roles, etc.) as well as cultural expectations. These social conditions shape what is possible in schools. This is both a practical issue (what is actually possible) and an evaluative issue (how professionals judge aspects such as risk). Thus output regulation potentially impacts radically on the possibilities for agency (by enabling or precluding particular practices), and has, at the same time, undermined professionals' ability to take responsibility for their work, that is to act on the basis of informed and negotiated professional judgement. Accountability practices run the risk of becoming counter productive, for example when they encourage forms of action that are a-responsible and potentially irresponsible, as teachers 'play the game' (Keddie, Mills & Pendergast, 2011).

The above observations apply to the practical-evaluative dimension of the ecological agency model. A related set of reflections concerns the projective and iterational dimensions of agency. Empirical research conducted in Scotland (Priestley, Biesta & Robinson, 2013), suggests that the undermining of teacher agency in a practical-evaluative sense (for example removing the need for, or distorting judgement) potentially has long term effects in terms of teachers' abilities to form expansive aspirations for their teaching. The teachers in this research were relatively unable to articulate long-term aspirations for their teaching, being focused instead on short-term goals such as engaging pupils, maintaining technical efficiency in their teaching, or even just getting through the day. Linked to this, the research found that these teachers tended to articulate their teaching in the language of policy, and seemed to lack an educational language with which they could critically interrogate policy. These issues were at least in part due to their past immersion in the performative cultures of their schools. It is worth noting here that such cultures in today's schools will shape the capacity of teachers in the future, potentially impacting heavily on future teacher agency and professionalism.

We are reluctant to conclude on a negative note. While the landscape for teacher agency in England, and to a lesser extent Scotland, is a little bleak, there are shafts of light. For example, Troman, Jeffrey and Raggi (2007) found that mature entrants to teaching in England, from other occupations, were more tolerant of the performativity culture but were resourceful in resolving tensions and dilemmas within their work. Priestley, Biesta and Robinson (2013) found in their Scottish study of teacher agency that schools with well-developed relational structures – where teachers had extensive relational resources upon which they could draw – manifested enhanced levels of teacher agency. Moreover, decentralisation in England has opened up spaces for grassroots activism in curriculum development. For example, the Creative Partnership Programme¹¹ has been particularly influential in primary schools, and Whole Education¹², Expansive Education¹³, Opening Minds¹⁴ and Open Futures¹⁵ are all examples of networks or projects promoting curriculum innovation at local level (see Williamson, 2012, for a critique of some of these

¹¹ <http://www.creativitycultureeducation.org/creative-partnerships>

¹² <http://www.wholeeducation.org/>

¹³ <http://www.expansiveeducation.net/>

¹⁴ <http://www.rsaopeningminds.org.uk/>

¹⁵ <http://www.openfutures.com/>

developments). The Royal Society of Arts (Facer, 2009) has championed the cause of area-based curriculum, which maps strongly onto the recommendations of the independent Cambridge Primary Review which suggested that 30% of curriculum time should be devoted to developing a community-oriented curriculum. In Scotland, Curriculum for Excellence, despite its teething troubles and despite the tensions with output regulation, offers considerable potential for teacher agency.

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