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Article title:

Analysing attempts to support outdoor learning in Scottish schools

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Analysing attempts to support outdoor learning in Scottish schools

Abstract

The new 'Curriculum for Excellence' in Scotland outlines a policy vision of a more integrated and holistic form of education; a commitment which offers considerable prospects for increased levels of outdoor learning in schools (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010). With reference to Fullan's theorizing on achieving educational change, we investigated four main implementation areas, namely: policy aims, partnerships arrangements and associated professionalism and sustainability issues. We collected evidence through a series of sixteen semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders at national, local authority and school level. Despite increased agreement on aims, we found that improving the frequency and quality of outdoor learning in schools was adversely influenced by the patchwork nature of partnership support at national and local authority levels. This has curtailed the prioritizing of outdoor learning in schools and of teachers being supported when trying to make use of their increased curriculum decision-making responsibilities. Thus, we found only limited evidence of policy-related innovation and considerable evidence of policy stasis. As such, building national capacity is proving difficult. We conclude that further research on how some atypical schools have managed to develop their programmes offers the best prospects for understanding the complexities of achieving greater levels of outdoor learning.

Key words: curriculum enrichment; policy formation; partnership in education; change strategies; outdoor learning

Introduction

The new overarching ‘Curriculum for Excellence’ (CfE) guidelines encourage teachers to make full use of their increased professional autonomy and decision-making responsibilities to review the curriculum planning and pedagogical possibilities of implementing high quality teaching interventions which can inspire learners (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2008). Specific CfE through Outdoor Learning (CfEtOL) guidelines provide a rationale and support advice for increasing schools involvement in outdoor learning (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010). At face value, the prospects for learning outdoors have rarely been better. However, achieving change in education is rarely straightforward and implementing CfEtOL will be dependent upon various stakeholders’ management of their professional remits. Adding to the difficulty of achieving change is noting that a recent report of career long teacher education in Scotland makes no mention whatsoever of outdoor learning as might have been expected, for example, when identifying the core themes of professional development (Scottish Government, 2011). As all fifty report recommendations have been accepted by the Scottish Government there is unease about how the specific aspirations of CfEtOL can be realized without becoming overshadowed by more generic recommendations to do with raising standards (particularly in Mathematics and Science) and improving basic skills. In brief, quite how policy goals can be realized in outdoor learning raises a number of broad challenges. The paper intends to review these challenges by analysing the change process associated with CfEtOL by interpreting data from stakeholder interviews at each of the main levels of reform and through reviewing national and international developments in outdoor learning.

Achieving change in schools

Increasingly nation states position curriculum reform within a broader societal context, where education systems are considered to have the capacity to bring about change (McKernan, 2008). In this context, we believe there is a need to investigate how outdoor learning might be recognized for

its educational contribution and for its wider value to the development of civic society. In studies of achieving change in education in recent decades the work of Michael Fullan (see, for example, Fullan, 1993; 1999; 2003) has been particularly influential. Fullan's step-by-step focus is often on understanding stakeholders' views on why fundamentally good ideas have such difficulty in becoming established practice (Datnow, 2006). Fullan's concern is that theories of educational change, to date, are incomplete as they often lack an adequate focus on pedagogical change and of the positive benefits of reform across schools (Fullan, 2006a). At this stage, Fullan's premises for change are considered helpful in providing our research with 'a sense of the importance of linkages in systematic reform' (Datnow, 2006, p. 134). This is an important consideration given the potential of CfEtOL to help stakeholders plan integrated learning experiences which '...can be enjoyable, creative, challenging and adventurous and help children and young people learn by experience and grow as confident and responsible citizens who value and appreciate the spectacular landscapes, natural heritage and culture of Scotland' (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010, p. 5). Such learning opportunities offer pupils the chance to 'deepen and contextualise their understanding within curriculum areas, and for linking learning across the curriculum in different contexts' (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010, p. 9). In short, CfEtOL documentation conveys an approach to learning which is consistent with developing an integrated curriculum and helping to enable those involved in education to see connections between what have often been treated as discreet subjects.

The seven core premises which underpin Fullan's change theory (Fullan, 2006a; 2006b) are: a focus on motivation; potential for capacity building; tri-level engagement; learning in context; changing context; a bias for reflective action and persistence and flexibility. Briefly, it is longer term motivation for deep and permanent meaning and not shorter superficial motivation i.e. partial enthusiasm for the latest educational 'fad' which is desirable. Potential for capacity building refers to the internal accountability benefits gained when teachers collectively strive for the positive

‘pressure’ of improving effectiveness rather than responding more negatively to external accountability pressures e.g. school inspection visits. The third premise is on the benefits of tri-level reform, where the role and strategies of school/community, local authority and national government stakeholders are all connected in terms of how support and negotiation between change agents can occur. The fourth premise (learning in context) is that reform interventions must be authentically developed and modelled on familiar school learning contexts. Little sustained change will be gained if learning and exemplification is detached and unfamiliar to teachers. The focus of changing context is that ideas will flow better and teachers will be more highly motivated when operating collectively within a large infrastructure e.g. in a community of local authority schools, especially if negative influences on changing context such as burdensome bureaucracy can be avoided. The essence of a bias for reflective action is that it is ‘thinking about doing’ which is most important and that less change will occur when the focus for reflection is on ‘the size and prettiness of the planning document’ (Fullan, 2006a, p.10). The final premise is that persistence and flexibility is required to cope with the inevitable highs and lows of implementing change. In this respect, displaying adequate flexibility to refine ideas in light of reflections on practice is necessary.

Datnow (2006) supports the idea of tri-level investigations as most prior theorizing has focused on school level factors to the detriment of adequately considering the influence of infrastructure improvements at local authority and national levels as well. We concur with this view, but also consider in our study that distinguishing between central government representatives e.g. Learning and Teaching Scotland and the Scottish Government viz. associated partners at national level e.g. the Forestry Commission, the Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) award scheme, the John Muir Trust and the Outward Bound Trust who are governed by a variety of charitable trust arrangements is necessary. By separately defining two levels of national level stakeholder, there is a recognition that in particular areas of the curriculum such as CfEtOL, schools and their existing management

structures can no longer do it all by themselves and that improved multi-partnership working is required (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010).

Through researching the connections between change theory and school outdoor learning interventions which are planned or underway, we contend that our research offers the prospect of contributing to theory generation in an area of outdoor education where there are few comparable studies. In taking forward our main aim we are buoyed by noting that many of Fullan's studies involve analysis of countries with similar population sizes and topography to Scotland e.g. Finland with approximately five million inhabitants which has as Fullan asserts been able to 'turn itself around through a combination of vision and society-wide commitment' (Fullan, 2009, p. 107). Lingard (2008, p. 975) concurs that 'Finland has become a reference society in terms of educational performance for most nations on the planet' and acknowledges that Scotland in many ways aspires towards a Scandinavian model of public policy where there is an on-going small nation commitment to comprehensive schooling and a rejection of market approaches in education. However, Lingard (2008) also recognizes that marked differences in social welfare and educational provision in Scotland continue to lead to inequalities in ways which might make delivering on a CfE vision of education problematic to provide.

Models of curriculum planning

The origins of the partnership model of curriculum planning reflect concerns that neither the 'top down' model with its emphasis on limiting teachers direct influence on the selection of aims, content knowledge and assessment instruments and the opposite 'bottom up' model with its heavy emphasis on teacher as change agent have been entirely successful (Macdonald, 2003; Seikkula-Leino, 2011). In the infancy of CfE it was expected that the new curriculum guidelines offered the chance for greater curriculum flexibility and teacher experimentation. However, more recent critical

analysis has led to concerns that such aspirations might not be achieved and that learning could become ‘predictable, limited and uncreative’ (Priestley & Humes, 2010, p. 358).

Given these circumstances, there appears much to be gained from analysing how new partnership approaches might enhance greater cross-boundary collaborations between stakeholders (Fullan, 1999). Certainly such intentions are planned under CfEtOL, where policy ambitions aim to provide greater school-based learning which is socially constructed and experiential in nature as well as endorsing the contrasting benefits of residential experiences where ‘different sets of learning outcomes’ (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010, p. 16) might be aspired towards. Despite these expectations, Seikkula-Leino (2011, p. 74) advise that to date ‘there are no studies about how partnership is realized on a wider scale, for example, about interactive cooperation within a municipality or about the relationships between a municipality and the central government.’ Therefore, understanding more about how partnerships develop is an important area to research, for as Seikkula-Leino (2011) notes, trying to understand partnerships models from the perspective of a range of educational partners is crucial in informing reviews of progress.

Curriculum for Excellence and Outdoor Learning in Scotland

New devolutionary governmental powers for Scotland in 1999 were used by the Scottish legislature to consult on the national state of school education in 2002. The debate confirmed that teaching was professionally conducted and provided a clear endorsement for a comprehensive rather than a more specialist model of schooling. Nevertheless, there were demands for a de-cluttering of curriculum and for a more personalized, holistic and better connected range of experiences to support pupils learning. Against this backdrop, Education Ministers established a Curriculum Group in 2003 to review the findings of the national debate as well as considering the global factors which might impact on education aims and purposes in future years. This led to the policy launch of CfE (Scottish Executive, 2004) and the emphasis thereafter on achieving greater coherence across the 3-

18 age range with learning goals framed by four defining capacities; namely for pupils to become ‘successful learners’, ‘confident individuals’, ‘effective contributors’ and ‘responsible citizens’.

Humes (2008, p. 74) notes that the ‘narrative privilege’ afforded to the patronage based policy making community helped ensure that CfE became widely accepted and endorsed in its entirety by the Scottish Executive. As such, it was never ‘subject to systematic debate by parliament, public, or the education community in Scotland’ (Gillies, 2006, p. 25) as might have been expected in terms of good governance and academic scrutiny.

Even though CfE is viewed ‘as a landmark development in Scottish education’ (Priestley & Humes, 2010, p. 345), the very title ‘CfE’ is not without its difficulties, as it potentially misled many teachers into expecting that many of the features they could expect of a curriculum e.g. definitions over content knowledge and of how more holistic approaches to learning could operate in practice would be available. However, this was rarely the case with the outlining of policy aims being more of a broad declaration of ambition set within a flexible curriculum framework (Priestley, 2010).

Furthermore, the term ‘excellence’ can also be problematic, as the emphasis on achieving excellence contains the possibility that a narrow focus on assessment will dominate teaching time at the expense of more innovative approaches to learning (Gillies, 2007). Therefore, while CfE is an example of decentralised planning where schools, headteachers and teachers have increased control for designing holistically-inclined **learning experiences** it is also a curriculum where set age and stage outcomes in subject areas are expected to be achieved.

Under CfE no major structural changes are planned. School education will continue to be dominated by primary schools for pupils between 5-12 years and secondary schools which last for all pupils until 16 years old with 60% of pupils opting to stay in secondary schools until 18 years old (Thorburn, et al., 2009). Since the announcement of the CfE policy aims, emphasis and attention has been primarily on articulating how the four capacities can be developed through

learning in specific curriculum areas. These include the relatively familiar areas of language, mathematics, science, expressive arts, social studies, technologies, religious and moral education along with the new disciplinary area of health and wellbeing. Furthermore, in three particular areas (literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing) the interdisciplinary nature of learning is one where the policy aspiration is that every teacher has a responsibility in these areas (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2009b).

Within outdoor learning, in particular, during the early years of CfE an ‘Outdoor Connections’ initiative (Learning & Teaching Scotland, 2005) aimed to provide a national point of reference for raising awareness as well as proposing through the ‘Taking Learning Outdoors’ report (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2007) that development officer and steering group support could help advise teachers on how outdoor learning opportunities could be increased. Later in August 2008, the Scottish Executive set up the Outdoor Learning Strategic Advisory Group (OLSAG) to provide implementation advice and leadership on learning beyond the classroom which was consistent with the experiences and outcomes of the new 3-18 curriculum. One of the main achievements of OLSAG (which met for the last time in March 2010) was the production of the CfEtOL advice and guidance which was subsequently distributed to every school in Scotland. Therefore, the policy intention is to ‘signpost ways for teachers, educators and their partners to plan and use the outdoor environment to provide imaginative learning and teaching which is relevant, lively and interesting’ (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010, pp. 5-6). To help in this respect, a new online resource centre and self-evaluation guide has been developed by the national agency for curriculum development (Learning and Teaching Scotland) to support CfEtOL. Coinciding with these later initiatives has been the appointment of two outdoor learning development officers between April 2010 and March 2011 (with one of the posts being extended to August 2011). The officers had responsibility for organizing a series of awareness raising presentations and workshops for key

stakeholders in each of Scotland's thirty-two local authorities as well as exemplifying best practice by showcasing new interventions via the online support centre.

Under these arrangements outdoor learning is designed to support the new holistic curriculum intentions in a variety of ways e.g. through making greater connections with literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Early studies report that such challenges should not be underestimated. For example, Cowan and McMurty (2009) found that general CfE policy making developments have had to recognize the limited ways in which cross curriculum initiatives have permeated curriculum in recent years, particularly in secondary schools, where there has often been the retention of learning 'in' specific subjects rather than 'through' more integrated approaches with an emphasis on experiential and problem based learning. **In addition, the limited availability of professional development and access to suitable support materials has often been considered unsatisfactory (Priestley, 2010).** Thus, despite support documentation trying to highlight how outcomes might be achieved in various interdisciplinary curriculum contexts (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2009a) CfEtOL could well be subject to similar curriculum integration problems unless the added momentum created by raising awareness of outdoor learning possibilities is aided by support materials and training opportunities. In this respect, how effective stakeholders consider the twenty-six page CfEtOL report to be in informing change agendas and in supporting professional development and new pedagogical practices is essential to review.

Outdoor Learning: National and International Comparisons

In England two recent reports by the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (**King's College London**, 2010; 2011) have reviewed the benefits and barriers to greater learning outdoors. Report findings mention a plethora of concerns on young people's dwindling connections with the natural environment. These include the often cited difficulties of safety, cost and curriculum pressures but also the identification of further challenges at local, school and personal levels. These include

teachers' 'confidence, self-efficacy and their access to training in using natural environments close to the school and further afield' (King's College London, 2010, p. 2). The sum of these multi-various concerns is highlighted in further recommendations for greater collaboration between providers (partners), additional staff support in schools and the advancement of a 'compelling rationale' which sets out evidence of impact for schools and pupils (King's College London, 2010, p. 2). These actions could lessen the current chance nature of whether particular schools and teachers include learning outdoors in their curriculum.

Outdoor education has also been a formal part of the curriculum in New Zealand since 1999. It is one of seven specific learning areas within 'Health and Physical Education' as well being included in curriculum statements in Science, Social Studies, Environmental Education and Technology (Zink and Boyes, 2006). Collectively the policy message and language emphasis (as in England) is on enriching learning by getting 'outside the classroom' more often. In their evaluation of teachers' beliefs and practices Zink and Boyes (2006) found that **the majority of learning taking place outside of the classroom in primary schools occurred close or inside school grounds whereas just under half (45%) of secondary school learning took place in outdoor centres and national parks**. The four most identified barriers to teaching outdoors were safety, cost and curriculum pressures along with demands on teachers' time. Evidence indicated that only some teachers were enthusiastic enough to commit to teaching outdoors at a time when there was a limited training provided on teacher education programmes and a diminishing support network for teachers in schools (Zink and Boyes, 2006). These findings match Australian evidence of teacher enthusiasm being a key factor in increasing levels of outdoor learning (Lugg and Martin, 2001; Polley and Pickett, 2003) and more recent New Zealand reporting (Hill, 2010).

In summary, the paper aims to critically discuss the main challenges associated with implementing CfEtOL through interpreting interview data collected from key stakeholders at each of the main

levels of reform. Four central research questions will form the focus of interviews. These are to what extent is there:

- consensus on outdoor learning aims
- agreement on the effectiveness of new partnership arrangements
- examples of innovative learning and teaching programmes in schools
- evidence of how outdoor learning experiences can become self-sustaining

Methodology

Procedure

The research was informed by the interpretive research paradigm and semi-structured interviews were used as the research method and methodology. The interpretive paradigm examines experiences and perceptions of reality by asking individuals to make sense of their world and their occupational contexts. In order to generate the kinds of data we considered necessary for addressing our four central research questions, an analytical framework was designed (Table 1) to ensure there was a coherent link between Fullan's (2006a) change theory premises and the aims, partnerships, professionalism and sustainability issues considered as pivotal to researching stakeholders views of CfEtOL. Steps were taken to ensure that each level of stakeholder was asked lead questions which were appropriate to their role and which articulated with each premise (Table 1). The lead author conducted all interviews on a one-to-one basis. Interviews took place during the first half of 2011 with the aim of engaging interviewees in open conversations (Rapley, 2004). As each interview progressed there was flexibility available for a range of follow up questions to be asked after lead questions (Table 1). Supplementary questions aimed to build on points associated with earlier theorizing and which articulated with interviewees emerging responses to lead questions. As many stakeholders have held teaching remits in their careers, questions often asked interviewees for practical examples of outdoor learning in action in order to illustrate explanations and provide further insight into personal perspectives on outdoor learning. Interviews were recorded

with the interviewees' permission and lasted approximately 60 minutes. Each interviewee was provided with a guarantee that they would not be named in subsequent analysis and reporting.

Enter Table 1 close to here

Participants

In making sampling decisions we applied the data saturation principles advocated by Francis et al., (2010) when completing theory-based interview studies. The authors specify that detailing a minimum sample size for initial analysis and a stopping criterion for when it becomes apparent that no new ideas are emerging is necessary. We specified that three initial interviews with teachers and local authority employees who were their authorities' representative on the Scottish Advisory Panel of Outdoor Education (SAPOE) and with national level representatives from both central government and from associated partners were needed. The interviewees at national level recommended themselves as beneficial to interview on a case selected (quality vs. volume) basis as they were involved as either a member of the Outdoor Connections programme, a member of OLSAG, directly involved in the writing of CfEtOL advice and guidance when working for Learning and Teaching Scotland or key informants of established national organisations such as the Outward Bound Trust. No requests for an interview were declined. We also specified that one further interview would be conducted with each of the four levels of stakeholder if it became apparent during initial interviews that familiar issues were reappearing. This procedure was followed, and in total, sixteen interviews were completed. One difficulty in the selection process was in identifying teachers to interview. We relied on recommendations from others interviewees, as proceeding with this method was considered better than selecting from a general sample of teacher interviewees. However, it is recognized, in advance, that this strategy was not a random one and might well not be reflective of the scale of the challenges which many schools face. Given the aforementioned implementation difficulties of building capacity in CfE in secondary schools

(Cowan and McMurty, 2009; Priestley, 2010), our four teacher interviewees were all based in secondary schools and included two head teachers, one depute head teacher and one class teacher.

Data analysis

In completing a comprehensive analysis of interviews, transcripts were carefully transcribed and listened to in order to familiarise ourselves with the data and to ensure accuracy of meaning (Silverman, 2006). Thereafter, multiple readings enabled patterns and relationships relevant to the literature and the analytical framework for discussion to be recognized. This initial or open coding ensured that we were open to the nuanced details of the various issues which emerged (Charmaz, 2006). Later, focused coding enabled us to develop relevant categories for framing discussions. Adopting this approach meant that key issues were not accepted as static but problematized in order that probing and reviewing key issues was ongoing as data collection and analysis occurred concurrently. This approach also enabled conflicting views to be represented as categories were emergent rather than pre-conceived (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). In later discussion national level stakeholders and national level partners are distinguished in order to provide a finer grained analysis of interview evidence.

Discussion

Aims (Motivation / Capacity building)

There was across interviewees a strong motivation and appreciation of the holistic intentions underpinning CfE and CfEtOL. This was often reflected in highly personalised accounts of earlier outdoor experiences and the impressions these had made on educational values, especially in terms of the new opportunities they afforded. One head teacher described how they would not have become a teacher had it not been from the transformative benefits of a month long outdoor centre residential experience in their final year of schooling ‘as it built the confidence necessary to make teaching a career choice’ (interview 20/05/11). Among many national and local authority

stakeholders their personal motivation and interest in outdoor learning was closely linked to their current professional responsibilities.

National level stakeholders and partners often reported on the CfEtOL potential for contextualizing knowledge outdoors through, for example, making connections between the environmental and the personal and social and with new CfE literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing agendas. In some cases, elaboration on aims linked to wider society goals. Thus, as knowledge becomes more complex e.g. in terms of sustaining economic growth as global citizens, greater levels of outdoor learning can become a productive space and context for reviewing and changing approaches to learning. The views of Patrick Geddes, who was at the forefront of scientific thinking about town planning, ecology and nature conservation and of how these could impact on sustainability and use of space, were occasionally invoked (Stephen, 2004). Overall, it was considered, that outdoor learning was a holistic process which was capable of engaging with pupils' deeper motivations and as something which was more profound than mastering the basic skills of a few adventurous activities. As such, it was thought that every teacher should have the opportunity and capacity to teach outdoors. In this respect, CfEtOL was, as one national stakeholder described it, 'quite radical and revolutionary' with the additional 'beauty of it being that it is quite succinct' (interview 20/06/11). Yet, brief as CfEtOL is, it provided the endorsement necessary as 'I know for a fact there are schools, primary schools especially, where the head teacher has got this and said this is the green light for what we need to do as part of our school development plan'(interview 20/06/11). As such, it was not generally considered disadvantageous that outdoor learning was not a set curriculum requirement 'as we got as far as we could to say that it is almost an entitlement' (interview 06/04/11).

In building capacity, there was general agreement that making greater use of outdoor spaces locally available would be helpful. As one national partner noted 'over 90% of all Scottish schools are

within one kilometre of a forest space' (interview 05/04/11). Experiencing the outdoors regularly in the pre-school (3-5) and primary (5-11) years was seen as making learning outdoors more clearly connected with later 'more exotic' (interview 05/04/11) residential centre visits and participation on DofE schemes which were often available in the middle and upper secondary school years (14-18 years). Crucial to establishing such connectivity was, in the view of one national stakeholder, 'the curriculum, for unless outdoor learning becomes embedded in the curriculum it will be no better than all the other past initiatives' (interview 06/04/11). Thus, what was expected is that there would be articulation and progression between CfEtOL and the main ideas which underpin CfE where educational contexts should recognize the 'ethos and life of the school as a community, curriculum areas and subjects, interdisciplinary learning and opportunities for personal achievement' (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2008, p. 20). These views were not always endorsed by local authority interviewees, where aims of outdoor learning were more polarised with some championing much more prominently the benefits of outdoor activities and residential school trips. As one SAPOE member pointed out 'there is something in the terminology and if you mention outdoor education to most people they would think of climbing, skiing and whatever' (interview 18/04/11). Such diverse views were considered by some national level stakeholders as hindering implementation of CfEtOL.

Zink and Boyes (2006) found when ranking teachers responses to fifteen values statements on beliefs and values underpinning outdoor education practice in New Zealand that the highest endorsement was for the statement ‘outdoor education can enrich all curriculum areas’ and the lowest endorsement was for ‘outdoor education is mainly focused on outdoor pursuits’. Even though the survey response rate was a modest 14% (210 from 1500 surveys returned) **there is some evidence of shared aims in New Zealand helping to build capacity. In this respect, the advocacy in England by various charitable organizations (e.g. King’s College London, 2011) of the need for greater learning in natural environments in order to foster the development of pupils’ knowledge, skills and personal development may prove similarly helpful.**

At school level, in Scotland, one long serving head teacher considered that his time in post was helpful in communicating his educational values. He welcomed CfE ‘as a wonderful opportunity to reshape the curriculum’ (interview 27/04/11) and to emphasise how increasing levels of outdoor learning would benefit pupils. Much of his efforts are currently on ‘laying in the language of education to support pupils’ experiences ... not to justify it, but to demonstrate in words the benefits’(interview 27/04/11). This has involved planning outdoor learning programmes which try to closely reflect the schools values and mission statement, plus exploring ways which pupils can weave their experiences into the culture of the school. These messages can then become displayed throughout the school e.g. on noticeboard displays and through featuring prominently in school newsletters, so that the wider school community and parents can gain insights as well into school values and the range of outdoor learning opportunities pupils experience. Such reporting can also encourage teachers to become more widely involved in integrated teaching. Another head teacher emphasized similar intentions when describing their use of cooperative and distributive leadership, which recognized that changes takes time and as ‘implementation dips you need to challenge staff and then support them when they suggest ideas’ (interview 20/05/11).

In summary, despite some evidence of polarised views, in general interview evidence reflects agreement with Fullan's premises on the importance of professionals being motivated to build capacity and of sharing a broad consensus on aims and purposes. CfEtOL was predominantly considered to offer the best prospect for achieving sustained change for outdoor learning in many years. Nevertheless, as many interviewees outlined, we are still some way from thinking through how outdoor learning can become 'regular, frequent, enjoyable and challenging' (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010, p. 7). Despite minority evidence of policy ambitions 'lacking presence' ... and of still being ... 'relatively unknown about by many teachers' (interview 22/3/11), there was general optimism that the endorsement of outdoor learning was as strong a policy lead as could be expected, especially as Scotland has a long history of preferring to raise awareness through 'partnership, consensus and consultation' rather than by specifying set entitlements in education (Humes, 2008, p. 71). This coupled with a sense that discussions on aims and purposes were becoming less feisty than in the past, as 'we are all for getting the kids outdoors one way or another' (interview 05/04/11) as one national level partner described it, provides some encouragement that stakeholders are committed to accepting increased responsibility in their professional role for improving levels and quality of outdoor learning.

Partnership (Levels of engagement)

Most interviewees agreed that gaining devolved Scottish Government powers for education in 2000 was beneficial in building new partnerships e.g. as exemplified by the new outdoor learning website between organizations such as the Forestry Commission and Learning and Teaching Scotland. This has helped new partners in the policy process to be seen as a key component of government and not as separate organizations. The general strategy for building partnership was as one national stakeholder described it to 'appeal to both the intellect and the emotions through raising awareness events such as the national conference in 2009' (interview 06/04/11) and six follow up regional conferences in 2010. National stakeholders attending these events recognized concerns over

professional development and this led to fifty-one regional based events being offered between October 2010 and March 2011. As the evaluations of these events were very positive there was disappointment that no further funding for professional development training was available.

Furthermore, in April 2011, the Scottish Government created 'Education Scotland' through merging Learning and Teaching Scotland (primarily a curriculum agency) with the Inspectorate organization (primarily a monitoring agency). The merger led to 130 employees from Learning and Teaching Scotland (a third of the workforce) leaving their posts. Against this backdrop, one national stakeholder commented that the CfEtOL policy vision was one which was simply 'a good idea but at the wrong time' (interview 06/04/11) in terms of the greater reorganization and support for stakeholders which is taking place in Scottish education.

Even though no further professional development events are planned, a new National Network for Outdoor Learning strategy group has been set up. A major aim of the group is 'to find a champion for outdoor learning in each local authority' (interview 18/03/11) and to encourage them to take forward their action plans. However, it was recognized in advance that there will probably be considerable variations in how this happens, for as one national government stakeholder described it 'the marrow of local authorities is being sucked out and there is less time for such people to make a difference'(interview 18/03/11). As such, there will be situations, where as one local authority stakeholder commented 'someone in a local authority will have a clear remit for outdoor learning and have the ear of more senior directorate level staff, and elsewhere where outdoor learning is a minor responsibility of others and is not necessarily being covered' (interview 22/03/11). Links between national and local authority stakeholders were also influenced by how outdoor education was managed in local authorities. Considerable diversity existed e.g. in some local authorities staff had worked tirelessly to 'remain part of education' (interview 13/05/11) while others thought it preferable to be outside of education and part of Community and wellbeing services, primarily so

that outdoor education might remain apart from the sizeable cutbacks planned for education departments.

In recognition of variable local authority support, there was widespread agreement among interviewees that teachers needed to make the most of their increased curriculum autonomy and try and cultivate links with national partners, even though many of these partners had difficulties of their own to cope with. Thus, even though offering support to schools articulated with their mission statements and contributed towards social impact evidence, the need to make profit which then subsidized various initiatives is proving problematic for some charitable trusts to manage. For example, one organization offered for the first time low cost professional development opportunities for teachers. However, those attending tended to be ‘the already converted’ (interview 03/06/11) rather than a cross section of teachers. Therefore, it was not expected that the initiative would lead to many new bookings, as identifying and cultivating good relations with a new school contact person had not been established. For another national partner the problem was how to support a growth in interest by schools for their awards, as increases in uptake have not been matched by increases in staffing. This led to unease about whether the award could be rolled out on a more national basis, even though one local authority interviewee recognized the awards usefulness in bridging the gap between their junior achievement award for upper primary age pupils and the start of DofE awards. As a result, it was pointed out by one national partner that ‘it does not help when central government stakeholders say that voluntary organizations and charitable trusts should be able to build capacity’ (interview 20/06/11).

For some national stakeholders the main partnership issue was as much to do with monitoring quality as building new capacity. They commented that ‘some of the partners need to be realistic about what they can deliver. A lot of them came in at the outset when it was just the four capacities and they expect that they can deliver CfE’ (interview 20/06/11). Viewing matters in this way was

not considered sufficiently detailed relative to the range of experiences and outcomes now required as CfE has progressed to full implementation. By contrast, from many national partners perspective, concerns were more focussed on how reductions in education expenditure might impact on professional development budgets, and thereafter on teachers' enthusiasm for volunteering their time. Thus, while it was seen as constructive that some schools were increasing links with partners, in many others schools provision has continued as in years past. This has typically involved either little learning outdoors taking place, or only modest evidence of teachers' increasing school-based programmes in line with CfEtOL expectations. There was also frequently reported evidence of schools continuing to schedule annual visits to residential centres as a curriculum add-on with little acknowledgement of changed policy circumstance. Such inactivity indicates that many teachers do not immediately recognise their outdoor learning responsibilities and view outdoor learning as a curriculum addition which might well be delivered by other teachers and/or instructors. As one national partner summarized it 'change in many schools will take a generation to occur' (interview 19/5/11).

Fullan's main concerns regarding multi-level partnerships were that stakeholders need to support and negotiate with each other for change to occur. The main Scottish findings are that the mixed nature of leadership and support at national and local authority levels has made it difficult to build sustained capacity as yet, despite the new raised awareness and policy prominence of CfEtOL. New national partners are keen to negotiate spaces for themselves in the changed policy circumstance but are often constrained by the scale and scope of their organizations. These limitations have made it difficult to assist schools at times. As such, schools were reported as making variable progress with the self-start leadership skills and enthusiasm of particular teachers being highlighted as the key determinants of greater engagement with learning outdoors. These findings are consistent with evidence from Victoria, Australia and New Zealand on how when faced with limited partnership

support, progress will be largely determined by the enthusiasm and ability of particular teachers (Lugg and Martin, 2001; Hill, 2010).

Professionalism (Learning in context /Changing context)

The variable uptake on enhancing curriculum enrichment through greater outdoor learning was reflected by national level interviewees who often had difficulty in recommending schools to visit with the same few schools and teachers being repeatedly mentioned. At local authority level, only a few interviewees could provide examples of relatively low cost and close to school rich experiential learning which was happening. For primary schools, most reporting was on the pragmatics of how limited funding was being used to map school grounds, meet training costs, produce newsletters and purchase equipment in the expectation that this could create the potential for increased outdoor learning in due course. In secondary schools creating the conditions for professional change was even more acute (especially across the 11-14 age range). One local authority stakeholder tried to indicate to teachers how pupils' outdoor learning in school and residential contexts could be mapped alongside selected CfE experiences and outcomes. 'I had expected that teachers would be biting my arm off for this information but this has not been the case. I was quite shocked' (interview 17/06/11).

For a few interviewees depth of understanding was cited as a problematic professional issue due to concerns about Scotland's poor education performance in comparison with many other similar countries, especially in Mathematics and Science (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Survey, 2007). **One local authority stakeholder commented on how the methodologies adopted when learning outside of the classroom were often lacking in underpinning content knowledge.** They illustrated their comments by referencing a beach-based science lesson which initially came across to them 'as more of an arts and crafts session' ... as the pupils were ... 'making rock pools and playing about with paper mache' (interview 13/05/11). However, the

openness of the class teacher was encouraging and together they mapped out plans which were much more obviously on understanding seaweed and salination and which involved listing evidence, measuring the tides, completing a transect of the beach and discovering that the shoreline was zoned and not random. The conclusion the local authority stakeholder drew from this episode was that supporting teachers by taking time to work collaboratively with them would often be necessary in developing pedagogical expertise and in providing teachers with the confidence to continue teaching outdoors. Stan (2009) researched the detail of group interaction in outdoor learning and contrasted the relative merits of different approaches to facilitation. A detached approach was criticised for its lack of focus on outcomes and support and empathy with learners, while a contrasting controlling approach was also considered ineffective due to its lack of flexibility and an overemphasis on achieving outcomes. These differences highlight some of the in-action dilemmas teachers' face. **Thorburn and Marshall (2011) proposed in such circumstances that Dewey's mapping out of a possible middle way for recognizing the role of the teacher and the importance of curriculum goals alongside consideration of pupils' diverse lives and experiences when learning outdoors merits further scrutiny.**

Despite general uptake and knowledge concerns two secondary school examples did provide evidence of teachers making greater use of the curriculum flexibility inherent in CfE to design new outdoor learning opportunities. In the first school, the John Muir Award was used as the basis for blending environmental and practical activity learning. As such, pupils became alert to habitats and conservation issues as they journeyed by kayak on local rivers with further connections drawn with other school experiences as best possible. Whole day programmes ran for all pupils in the first two years of secondary schooling (for pupils of 11-14 years) for five days each year. The teacher in charge considered that the programme was aided by having suitable equipment available and by her own postgraduate training in outdoor education which helped add to her skill-set, and which was reflected in her confidence in integrating knowledge with practical learning. In further supporting

outdoor learning and its links across the curriculum, the head teacher organized a school professional development day with a workshop focus on outdoor learning links to literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.

In the second example, the head teacher wanted to recognize diversity of achievement across the four CfE capacities and not only for 'successful learning'. This type of challenge was identified by Hayward (2007) as being crucial in gaining the new alignment between curriculum, pedagogies and assessment which is aspired towards in Scotland. The head teacher encouraged teachers to use learning outdoors as the context for developing narrative storylines where pupils could describe their own instances of having been challenged, having to show resilience, leadership and such like. As the head teacher described it, it would be 'a horror of horror' (interview 27/04/11) if a more systems led approach to outdoor learning existed 'where everyone gained the same award or had their progress ticked off against the same checklist' (interview 27/04/11). The entire cohort of year 1 pupils (n=125) for one double period each week (80 minutes) took part in a 'fluid programme which is mostly outdoor related and culminates in the end of year three day residential visit' (interview 27/04/11). Eight teachers from across the five curriculum faculties in the school volunteered to be in control of planning, teaching and evaluating the new initiative.

Wallace and Priestley (2011) found, when investigating teachers beliefs on formative assessment benefits for learning in Scottish schools, that it requires a mix of teachers beliefs and empowerment to create the conditions for change. It might well be, that both of these examples contain such capacity and also endorse the context premises developed by Fullan (2006a) in that learning is taking place predominantly in local environments and in areas which reflect teachers' own areas of expertise and confidence. Furthermore, in both schools the head teachers have tried to ensure that time is available for teachers to meet and discuss new ideas and evaluate progress, as well as trying to keep bureaucracy (especially that associated with safety) to the minimum required. Both

examples are also consistent with the advocacy of holistic learning which is central to CfE (Thorburn and Allison, 2010). However, from a national perspective, more coherent progress is still beset by teachers' safety concerns and the bureaucracy of completing risk assessments. Thus, it was frequently reported by many interviewees that teachers could continue to cite lack of confidence and expertise as reasons for not teaching outdoors, irrespective of whether these were a 'red herring' or not.

In summary, what characterizes learning developments so far is a model of professionalism where many teachers' remits have remained largely unchanged and where some teachers have engaged with new outdoor learning possibilities. What appears largely missing, so far, are examples of learner centred curriculum models where the main stages in 3-18 schooling are clearly linked together and merged with on-going professional development opportunities and to the experiences and outcomes scheduled in many areas of CfE, particularly those in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing for which all teachers have a responsibility. Thus, while CfEtOL might be considered in one respect a relative policy success in that 'it does at least keep open the possibilities of greater outdoor learning' (interview 22/3/11), the downside is that its vagueness on strategies for implementation and pedagogical advice means that many teachers might not make use of the curriculum opportunities available for learning outdoors. As such, CfEtOL might be considered as reflective of CfE more generally, in that it provides a set of aspirational statements rather than a curriculum which comes with greater methodological assumptions and expectations about how policy guidelines are to be fulfilled (Priestley and Humes, 2010).

Sustainability (Persistence /Reflective action)

The varied ways in which teachers, schools and local authorities have responded to CfEtOL raises questions about how greater levels of outdoor learning can become more self-sustaining in the future. The main issue which emerged in interviews, in this respect, was the extent to which

teachers should be relatively autonomous in making curriculum and pedagogical decision-making or whether greater scrutiny of aims and teaching was required. The four teachers interviewed wanted to lead by encouragement and example, and to make outdoor learning more prominent in schools through praising and acknowledging teachers who, through commitment and professional flexibility had made gains in implementing CfEtOL. At national level however this was often considered a slow and problematic route to progress and a difficult model for charitable organizations to commit funding towards in difficult economic times. Many considered that external accountability measures were a necessary part of effective policy implementation. Some mentioned that it would be helpful if outdoor learning was treated in a similar way to the Eco-Schools initiative where compliance with the achievement of certain targets is acknowledged by the award of different flag colours. Since Eco schools began in 2001, interest and involvement has increased, so that currently just over 95% of Scottish schools participate in the programme and are subject to regular reviews by an amalgam of HMIE, local authorities and Keep Scotland Beautiful' the organization managing the programme. Many national stakeholders also considered that the new 'Education Scotland' body could be utilized to good effect as future schools inspections are designed to be more constructive affairs in terms of linking more closely with school actions plans for improvements.

Overall, despite the potential of the new partnership model of policy implementation, many interviewees considered that progress towards meeting the aspirations of CfEtOL would continue to be limited as essentially what is trying to be progressed is a non-school subject with non-subject teachers. Therefore, there was wide agreement about the need for outdoor learning to become a much greater component part of teacher education programmes as opposed to the present situation where only a handful of sessions are typically available. This criticism reflects the views of authors such as Goodson (1987) who, based on geography and environmental studies evidence, argued that unless there is a clear link between subjects in schools and university disciplines then there will be a

struggle for curriculum legitimacy. There was also recognition that CfEtOL might reflect previous patterns of policy development for outdoor education in Scotland, which is often one of ‘bold innovation and subsequent decline’ (Higgins, 2002, p. 165). For example, as recently as the late 1970s and early 1980s in the most urban areas of Scotland there were programmes of outdoor education in schools, as well as on-going collaborations with higher education partners. One national stakeholder reflected that at the start of their career in the mid-1970s each school in their then regional authority (n=35) had an outdoor education teacher as well as there being three full time advisors in post. Only a couple of these posts now remain, as whether teachers were replaced or not often ‘rested on the whim of the head teacher’ (interview 20/6/11).

The current marginalized curriculum presence could be set to continue with the latest review of teacher education in Scotland failing to mention the contribution outdoor learning could make to teaching methodologies and as a context for learning (Scottish Government, 2011). Therefore, the limited connection between schools and higher education is problematic, for while Fullan (2006a, p. 11) notes the importance of individual stakeholders’ enthusiasm, perseverance and flexibility he also notes that ‘if you don’t understand the thinking you are more likely to use even the best strategies superficially or in a piecemeal fashion.’ In this respect, the rationale discussions underway in England (**King’s College London**, 2010) and in Australia where Martin (2010) has conceptualised, in detail, how outdoor education should be part of the national curriculum as it can promote relationships, critical thinking and ecological literacy, might be considered to address necessary underpinning thinking issues more evidently than CfEtOL does. Therefore, it remains a moot point whether the simplicity of CfEtOL will be a helpful form of raising awareness in the longer term or whether its avoidance on elaborating how to build capacity and develop professional learning communities will come to be seen as more of a missed policy opportunity.

Conclusion

This paper has analyzed four central research questions (on, in order, aims, partnership, professionalism and sustainability) and related these to policy and practice attempts to support increased levels of outdoor learning in schools, in ways which articulate with Scotland's wider curriculum ambitions to provide a more holistic and integrated model of education. To support this endeavour, we utilized Fullan's (2006a) theorizing on educational reform, as it provides an ordered account of how change can take place and the reasons why change can be variously productive and/or problematic. At an introductory level, we have benefited from Fullan's theorizing in identifying the broad strengths and weaknesses of the partnership model of development underway for CfEtOL. We found evidence of high levels of a greater consensus on aims and motivation for greater levels of outdoor learning in schools (first research question). We have also found evidence of reforms at school level (albeit at schools we were recommended to visit), where new learning opportunities were being created and developed in familiar local outdoor contexts (third research question). In these schools, teachers were asking questions of themselves (internal accountability) in terms of what they could do to build capacity. However, we also noted that clear and comprehensive implementation strategies between stakeholders rarely existed, most commonly as a consequence of the varied support available in local authorities and among national partners. As a result, there was only occasional evidence reported of CfEtOL policy aspirations being widely met in schools (second research question). This raises concerns about the extent to which new outdoor learning opportunities might be more a matter of chance, as it appears predominantly to be in England (**King's College London**, 2010), than as a consequence of a balanced and connected understanding of partners' roles and policy responsibilities (fourth research question). In such light, quite how the implementation of policy can articulate with the greater societal goals of Scotland is of concern e.g. with regard to increasing pupils' equality of educational opportunities. As Lingard (2008) highlights the main achievement of the public policy model of government in Scandinavian countries is that they have managed to limit the adverse influences of social class in ways which more Anglo-Celtic countries such as Scotland have yet to manage. Thus, 'the question still remains

of how inequality generally and specifically in schooling can be overcome in contemporary Scotland' (Lingard, 2008, p. 979).

In this respect, there is a need to progress beyond our initial research, for as Noguera's (2006, p. 129) notes in his critical response to Fullan's ideas on change in education, Fullan's analysis is rather detached in context and 'overlooks the central problems confronting schools in impoverished areas'. We concur with this view and therefore consider that utilizing complexity theory would be an appropriate framework to further analyse the continuation of change process, for as Morrison (2008, p. 22) notes schools are 'dynamical and unpredictable, non-linear organizations' operating in ever changing environments. Thus, attempting to understand in greater detail the mix of factors which has influenced CfEtOL developments would recognize the complexities inherent in educational structures and practices in a small nation where trusting teachers to bring about change is the preferred policy model (Humes, 2008). Improving understanding in these areas would add to theorizing about how achieving change and supporting learning better could occur when working with new partnership approaches to curriculum planning.

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