



SCOTLAND by Charles L. Glenn

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Overview

Scotland has a very long tradition of popular schooling, near-universal in the Lowlands, and – though until very recently its education legislation was enacted by the United Kingdom Parliament – of a distinctively different approach to the provision of education. Although these laws have commonly been enacted soon after and in parallel with laws applying to education in England and Wales, the different cultural north of the border has produced rather different results.

Attempts by the former Conservative government of the United Kingdom to introduce, as in England, such changes as parent decision-making for individual schools, accountability through testing based upon a national curriculum and allowing schools to become independent of local education authorities and respond to 'market' forces were generally and successfully resisted in Scotland.²

From the Scottish perspective one of the most significant differences between the two leading parties in the UK lay in their attitude to devolved government. The Conservatives were deeply and fundamentally opposed to any kind of partitioning of the UK and saw its future as one strong unified body. Labour on the other hand was prepared to acknowledge that in Scotland at least there was a growing interest in

devolution of power and in having control over its own affairs. In 1999 Labour honoured its pledge to the people of Scotland and a new Scottish Parliament was ceremonially opened by the Queen in early July. This is not just of academic interest, for control of education is one of the functions which has been totally devolved from Westminster to the new Parliament at Holyrood in Edinburgh. Politically speaking, Scottish education is going to be under the microscope as never before and there is undoubtedly an agenda for change.

The Tory government did encourage schools to 'opt-out' of local government control, privatising certain aspects of the education service, publishing league tables of school performance, giving more power to parents and so on were all designed to generate a market-place culture, to create an ethos of competition between schools and thereby, it was hoped, to enhance pupil achievement. The Labour government has adopted more or less the same educational policies which appear to include a commitment to the belief that school improvement knows no bounds.

In May 1999 a Scottish Labour manifesto announced inter alia that "Education will be our highest priority with the stated intention of earning a world- class reputation for the Scottish education system." True to its word, the new government issued a consultation paper in the course of the summer (closing date 31 October 1999) which heralded major and far-reaching changes in the way in which the system was to be managed.

At present local authorities in Scotland (which currently number 32) are under a duty to secure "for their area adequate and sufficient provision of school education" (Education (Scotland) Act 1980). The new proposals go far beyond this and are intended to supplement this general duty which has never been defined. Local authorities are now to be asked to seek "improvement in education services and standards." They are to be given targets and improvement objectives with associated performance indicators over a range of areas which include:

- numbers of pupils in pre-school education;
- · rates of school occupancy;
- pupil-teacher ratios;
- pupil attainment;
- rates of attendance and exclusion; and
- per pupil expenditure.

Local authorities will also be required to ensure that every school has a development

plan and to establish schemes of financial and management devolution to schools. Each authority will be required to publish both its improvement objectives and at a later date its performance in response to these objectives. Perhaps the most controversial change is a proposal that Her Majesty's Inspectorate be empowered to inspect local authorities (hitherto the role of HMI has been restricted to inspection of schools and more recently of Faculties of Education concerned with initial teacher education):

- inspections at least once every 5 years on a regular basis;
- thematic inspections, e.g., on a particular aspect such as pre-school education; and
- special inspections where there are serious concerns about the management of the education service in a particular authority.

The structure of schooling

The Scottish educational system is different in a variety of ways from that in England and Wales, both because it is legally and structurally independent under the terms of the Union of 1707 and also because Scotland entered the 19th century with a much stronger tradition of popular schooling. Under the influence of the Calvinist Reformation, and urged on by John Knox in his *Book of Discipline* (1560); universal schooling became a priority and a source of pride (though schooling in the Highlands remained limited well into the nineteenth century). Indeed, some trace this tradition to James IV's pre-Reformation Act of 1496, calling upon men of property to have their sons schooled in order to prepare them for leadership positions.³

Knox insisted not only that each parish should support a schoolmaster, but also that provision be made for the schooling of the poor at parish expense. The goal, he wrote, was that "the youths and tender children shall be nourished and brought up in virtue, in presence of their friends, by whose good care may be avoided those many inconveniences into which youth commonly falls."

As a result of efforts by church officials, local landowners, and municipal officials, Lowland Scotland (like New England, Prussia, the northern Netherlands, Geneva, where Calvinism had a similar influence) developed an extensive coverage of local parish schools. In 1702 the Scottish Parliament ordered that every community support a school, with the teacher approved by the local minister of the Church of Scotland.⁴

In the Scottish system of curricular control, facilities and staffing are education

authority responsibilities [the number of LEAs was reduced in 1975 from 35 to 12] and are therefore decentralized to the regional level; what is taught and how it is taught are usually left to schools and individual teachers, but with advice from central and local sources. At middle and upper secondary levels, the Examination Board is a force towards conformity *within* subjects, but . . . there is variation between schools in regard to what subjects are on offer as well as in teaching methods.⁵

In 1885, a Scotch (later, Scottish) Education Department was established in 1885, in London, and subsequently moved to Edinburgh. Responsibility for schooling has continued to rest at the local level, however, exercised since 1996 by 29 councils (and three island councils). As of that year, the great majority of schools were under the jurisdiction of these councils and funded by a mix of central and local taxation. There were also two self-governing schools funded directly by central government in parallel with grant-maintained schools in England.⁶

The current education law defines 'school age' as between the ages of 5 and 16. Some younger children voluntarily attend schools before beginning primary school. Pupils transfer to secondary school at around 12 and many stay on after the age of 16 for one or two additional years before proceeding to additional training and education in colleges of further education or higher education institutions. Pupils may also leave at 16 to take up employment (This and the following paragraphs are from the Scottish Government website, www.scotland.gov.uk/library/documents/educat.htm, somewhat edited.

Most children attend schools which are comprehensive, co-educational and provided free-of-charge by education authorities.

In addition to the public system of free education, there are fee-paying schools of two kinds: independent schools (which receive no government grants towards their maintenance) and grant-aided special schools, which provide for a wide range of special educational needs. In 1994, 4% of the school population in Scotland attended fee-paying schools of one kind or another. The 1989 Act also provides for a further category of independent school B the technology academy. These are intended to be secondary schools providing free education with a strong scientific and industrial orientation, jointly funded by government and private sponsors.

The Secretary of State for Scotland is responsible to Parliament for the overall supervision and development of the service. The Secretary of State for Scotland exercises his responsibility for education through The Scottish Office Education Department, which has national oversight of education, advises on national policy and co-ordinates the activities of education authorities and others. It also provides information and guidance on the design of educational buildings and on health and safety matters affecting schools and colleges; issues guidance on such matters as curricula and teaching methods; pays grants to the grant-aided special schools and

grants-in aid to the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, funds further education colleges and the careers services; operates the assisted places scheme for fee-paying schools; operates a students' allowances scheme; supports educational research through a number of agencies; and together with the General Teaching Council, oversees teacher training and supply.

The provision of education is the responsibility of the 32 education authorities, which have a statutory duty to provide adequate and efficient school and further education, to make provision for special educational needs and to provide the teaching of Gaelic in schools in Gaelic speaking areas. They are responsible for the construction of buildings, the employment of teachers and other staff and the provision of equipment and materials. They exercise responsibility for the curriculum taught in schools taking account of national guidance. Along with most other local services, the cost of the education services is met from resources raised by the council tax, non-domestic rates and from an annual grant payable from the national Exchequer.

The legal framework

The *Education (Scotland) Act* 1945 was modeled on the AButler' Act adopted the previous year for schooling in England and Wales. It provides the basic framework for schooling, with the primary responsibility placed upon local education authorities (LEAs) to "secure that adequate and efficient provision is made throughout their area of all forms of primary, secondary and further education."

The *Education (Scotland) Act* of 1981, modeled but in a rather stronger form upon the *Education Act* 1980 for England and Wales, extended the right of parents to choose among schools rather than to accept the school assigned on the basis of residence or other administrative criteria. Despite the relative lack of demand for parent choice of schools in Scotland compared with England, the 1981 law provided stronger rights of appeal against a negative admission decision, and did not require as in England - the parent requesting a transfer to give any justification; "the absence of any reference to reasons in the Scottish legislation suggests that the fact of choice is really all that matters."

The *School Boards (Scotland) Act* 1988 gives every public school in Scotland the opportunity of forming a School Board consisting of elected parent and staff members and members co-opted from the local community; "Scotland is one of the last European territories to have adopted such a system."

The *Self-Governing Schools etc* (*Scotland*) *Act* 1989 creates the possibility for schools to "opt out" of control by the local educational authority and to be funded directly by

the national government.; this option, parallel to the "grant-maintained" (now "foundation") schools in England, has elicited little response in Scotland.

Freedom to establish non-state schools

Section 24 of the *Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act* 2000 states that "no independent school shall be registered if the Registrar has been given notice by the Scottish Ministers that they are satisfied, on such grounds as they shall specify in the notice, that the proprietor is not a proper person to be the proprietor of any school, that a teacher to be employed in the school is not a proper person to be a teacher in any school or that the school premises, or any parts of those premises, are unsuitable for a school." There is an appeals process after which, if the appeal fails, "the tribunal may disqualify the proprietor from being the proprietor of any independent school, disqualify the teacher from being a teacher in any school or disqualify the premises, or parts of premises, from being used as a school or as part of a school."

Homeschooling

In Scotland parents or guardians are legally responsible for ensuring their children of school age are educated, but schooling is not compulsory. This requirement was spelled out in the *Education (Scotland) Act* 1945 which required the parent of every child of "compulsory school age" to ensure that the child received "efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude," either by sending him or her to a school or by some other means. Parents normally fulfil this duty by sending their child to school; although other means such as education at home can be used.¹⁰

Section 14 of the *Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act* 2000 provides that "The Scottish Ministers may issue guidance as to the circumstances in which parents may choose to educate their children at home; and education authorities shall have regard to any such guidance." ¹¹

School choice not limited by family income

The *Education (Scotland) Act* 1945 required education authorities to "have regard to the general principle that, so far as is compatible with the provision of suitable instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure, pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents." This furthered the process of bringing confessional schools into the public system, with parents having a right to select such schools unless it would create significant difficulties for the school authorities. Since no procedures for assignments were suggested, local government was free to decide that

efficient use of its facilities required that children attend particular schools on the basis of residential zones.

The 1945 Act also (in contrast with the 1944 Act for England and Wales) permitted LEAs under some circumstances to charge fees "in a limited number of primary and secondary schools, provided it could be done . . . without prejudice to the adequate provision of free education" at the LEAs other schools. Such fees were charged only "at a handful of selective schools," all of which have since become comprehensive.

Education authorities normally offer school places to children on the basis of designated catchment areas. Children living within a particular area are provided with a place at the school serving that area. The authority also decides which secondary school pupils from a particular primary school should attend when they finish their primary education. It appears that, in general, school choice has not been as much of an issue in Scotland as in England and the United States.

The 1981 Act, however, provided for a major element of parental choice in education by allowing parents to submit 'placing requests' asking that their child should attend a different school. Placing requests are currently made in respect of about 14 percent of children entering the first year of primary schools and about 11 percent of children entering the first year of secondary schools.

Researchers in the mid-1980s found that requests for out-of-district schools were made by all social classes, but that it was above all upwardly-mobile working-class families which sought a school for their children away from a rough neighborhood or a school climate that depressed achievement and aspiration. The educational program offered was to some extent a secondary consideration.¹²

The Scottish research suggests that an unrestricted system of choice (unlike, for example, that under certain desegregation plans in the United States) provides advantages to those who exercise choice, and disadvantages to those who fail to do so. Scottish Education Minister Alex Fletcher pointed out as he launched the choice program, twenty years ago, that mandatory assignments based upon residence "effectively confines disadvantaged children to the deprived areas in which they live." Of course, capacity limitations (except at times of sharp enrolment declines, as in the 1980s) have the effect of confining to the schools in those deprived areas the great majority of the children who live there. This is the dilemma of choice plans without a strong supply-side component of new options: allow some children access to better schools while denying it to other children, or deny that access to all in the name of equal treatment.

The Scottish researchers concluded that "for those who cannot choose [a] school through home purchase or private schooling the legislation does seem to have provided an attainable mode of choice." ¹⁴

The Assisted Places Scheme provided assistance with tuition fees for secondary education for pupils from lower income families who wished their children to attend a school in the private sector, but who could not otherwise afford to send them to such a school. 58 independent schools participated in the scheme and about 2,920 pupils received assistance in session 1989/90. This program has been abolished by the new Labour government.

School distinctiveness protected by law and policy

In arguing for adoption of the 1981 *Education (Scotland) Art* by the British Parliament, over the opposition of many Scottish groups, the Conservative Scottish Education Minister, Alex Fletcher, related it directly to school distinctiveness. "If parents are to have a real choice," he said, "it will also be important that the schools themselves should develop their own individual identity and ethosBand perhaps their own traditions and strengths in particular areas of the curriculum." ¹⁶ The Scottish educational associations urged amendments to preserve attendance zones and to allow authorities to set enrolment limits, in order to reduce the impact of parental choices upon the weaker schools, "artificially keeping such schools open instead of closing them. But the Conservatives then in power were not prepared to accept any such restrictions on market forces and the exercise of choice by parents. ¹⁷

Most public schools have taken advantage of the provision of the *School Boards* (*Scotland*) *Act* of 1988 giving them the opportunity to form a board consisting of elected parent and staff members and member co-opted from the local community. School Boards share with head teachers and local government education authorities in the running of their schools, and thus provide a local focus for school management.

The School Boards (Scotland) Act 1988 provided for boards for individual schools made up of parents, teachers, and others, and the Self-Governing Schools etc (Scotland) Act 1989 potentially broadened the range of schools available by allowing the boards of schools in the public sector of education to seek full responsibility for their own management, independent of control by the education authority and funded directly by central government.¹⁸

A law passed in 2000 by the newly re-established Scottish Parliament, however, greatly restricted the possibility of schools becoming self-governing and gave the government authority to repeal the self-governing status of any school. Section 17 provides that " (1) The Scottish Ministers may by order provide that . . . a self-governing school . . . shall cease to be under the management of its board of management and that it shall, in consequence, cease to be a school which is a self-governing school; and the board shall, on that date, cease to exist. (2) On and after that date, the education authority in whose area the school is situated shall manage the school." ¹⁹

Despite these mechanisms for school-level decision-making, the primary decisions about

curriculum are made centrally. Children attending publicly maintained primary schools study language, mathematics, environmental studies, religious and moral education, and expressive arts. A major development programme for pupils aged 5-14 which includes all the primary stages was launched by the Government in 1988. The main aims are to improve education and equip children for life in the 21st century; to ensure that the best practices and highest standards are spread as widely as possible and to involve parents in a meaningful and supportive alliance with the school. The 5-14 Development Programme includes the establishment of guidelines setting out for each aspect of the curriculum 5-14 the aims of study, the ground to be covered and the way that learning should progress in each curricular area, the provision of national advice on assessment policy and practice and the establishment of a system of national testing in language and mathematics; the provision of statements for parents about the curriculum; and the introduction of a new pupil report card.

Headteachers of secondary schools are advised to design curricula on the basis of guidelines published by the SCCC, which they can adapt to local circumstances with the help of advice from education authorities and other school managers. In the first 2 years of secondary education pupils follow a general curriculum across all the modes, including the provision of a modern foreign language. At the end of their 2nd secondary year they choose subjects to follow in later years, although all the modes are still included (www.scotland.gov.uk/library/documents/educat.htm).

Distinctive character

With a heavy Irish immigration to industrial jobs in western Scotland during the second half of the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church mounted a great effort to provide schools, with the result that, by 1910, 220 of the 286 independent ('voluntary') denominational schools were Catholic. In 1918 local education authorities were authorized to take these schools fully into the public system, with the provision that instruction and teaching would continue to be approved by denominational (in most cases, Catholic) authorities. As of 1986, 79 out of some 400 public secondary schools in Scotland were Catholic.²⁰

There are Catholic elementary and secondary public schools in areas where the demand exists, fully assimilated into the public system with attendance zones that may encompass those of two or three secular public schools. As a result of this accommodation, the Catholic Church has not been in the forefront of efforts to expand parental choice; "the nature of the compromise between the Catholic church and the state in Scotland has enabled Catholic schools to attract families of their faith without needing choice of school as the mechanism to opt out of the local state school."²¹

[UPDATE 2012: "On December 24, 2006, a former Labour minister of education in Scotland, Sam Galbraith, was joined by a number of leading figures in Scottish public life . . . in abjuring the continued existence and state funding of religious schools in Scotland. Galbraith's antipathy to religious schooling is grounded in the belief that religious schools are, by virtue of their existence, the root cause of bigotry." ²²]

As a result of the accommodation of religious choices within the public system, the exercise of explicit school choice is generally based upon curricular factors. In order to implement the 1981 legislation, each school was required to develop a handbook for parents, giving basic facts and information about educational goals. To some extent, preparation of these handbooks helped staff to clarify what was distinctive about their approach to education, but researchers who reviewed them were struck by the impersonal tone and sue of wordy jargon designed to keep parents in their place: "if a pupil has special dietary requirements provision can be ensured as long as the school is informed timeously" [sic!].²³

As noted above, much of the school choice exercised was to avoid undesirable schools rather than because of a particular educational offering. Since the primary motivating factor in these cases may be the social class of the pupils in the school selected, there may be little incentive for schools to develop real distinctiveness. "A structured environment, academic emphasis and firm discipline are sought by many parents, especially at secondary level." ²⁴

This is not to say, the researcher concluded, that educators are correct when they assert that parents lack the sophistication to make sound school choices.

Many parents seemed to have quite clear pictures of the working ethos of a school. Parents repeatedly saw both the happiness and the educational success of the child as being related to the stability and atmosphere of the school, though they varied in the extent to which they saw the nature of the school's intake [of students] or the actions taken by staff to be the main determinant of that working environment. In some instances parents had access to information (e.g. about bullying and attitudes of local peer groups) which may have led some parents to have been better informed than some teachers.²⁵

Though some headteachers reported that motivations of class and social snobbery affected parents in requesting to leave their schools, the responses from parents to the researchers does not support this claim. In fact, "it may be that [the school administrators] were articulating reasons which they and their staff hoped were predominant", and possibly "what were believed by staff to be reasons of snobbery were seen by parents as protective, indeed educational reasons." And can we say with confidence that the parents were not making sound educational choices?

Decisions about admitting pupils

Under the 1981 law, if a parent asked that his child attend a specified school under the management of an education authority, that authority had a duty to grant the request, except in specific circumstances – usually when the school was full. Parents were not required to state a reason for the request (as had been the case in the legislation for England and Wales the year before).

Where an education authority refused a parent's request, "the parent has a right to appeal to a statutory appeal committee and, if the latter finds in favour of the parent, its decision is binding on the authority." Grounds for refusing admission were quite narrow: only when approving the request would require employing an additional teacher or making extensive alterations to the school facility, or if it would "be likely to be seriously detrimental to order and discipline at the school or the educational well-being of the pupils there."²⁷

The Labour government in the Edinburgh area had taken a very restrictive position toward parent choice before the 1981 legislation, seeking to require all children to attend their zoned elementary school or the secondary school to which that fed. Under the new legislation the local government decided not to attempt to protect the under-chosen schools, while imposing caps to prevent overcrowding of the most popular ones.²⁸

In fact, there and elsewhere "parents were increasingly prepared to challenge local authority decisions" about school assignments, and their "pursuit of their own preferences [for their children] brought them into conflict with an important element of the collective welfare orientation."²⁹

Decisions about staff

The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTC) is a statutory body with responsibility for maintaining a register of teachers in Scotland. All teachers employed in education authority schools are required to be registered with the GTC; it is illegal for an LEA to employ an unregistered teacher. To be eligible for registration a teacher must hold a teaching qualification awarded by a Scottish teacher education institution or an equivalent qualification approved by the GTC. The Teaching Qualification (Primary Education) entitles the holder to teach across the curriculum in primary schools and may be obtained by taking a 4-year Bachelor of Education Degree course at a teacher education institution or a university degree followed by a one-year teacher education course. The Secondary Teaching Qualification entitles the holder to teach particular subjects and is awarded to

candidates holding a university degree followed by a one-year teacher education course or have completed a degree course combining subject study, study of education and school experience.

Registration is not a statutory requirement for teaching in independent schools, but most insist upon it as a condition for employment.

The pay and conditions of service of teachers employed in public schools are determined by the statutory Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee for Teaching Staff in School Education. The Committee brings together representatives of the local authorities who employ teachers and the teacher unions.³⁰

The board of governors of an individual school has a right to participate in the process of selecting senior staff for the school. In general, however, the authority of boards is much weaker in Scotland than it is in England and Wales, and indeed in a number of other European countries.³¹

A registered teacher who is found guilty of gross professional misconduct may have his or her name removed from the register. Cases of misconduct are considered by the Disciplinary Committee, with the assistance of a solicitor and a Queen's Counsel, giving priority to the safety and welfare of children and the good name of the teaching profession. It is significant to note that these disciplinary procedures are exercised by the teaching profession itself, as in the case of other professions.

Accountability for school quality

There is no national curriculum in Scotland, but an advisory body, the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum, is active in advising local authorities and schools and suggesting revisions to instructional content and methods.

Accountability is provided in part by about 80 HM Inspectors of Schools, who make up a distinct unit within the Scottish Office Education Department (in contrast with England and Wales, where HMI were replaced by OFSTED, which contracts out inspection). Under the *Education (Scotland) Act* 1980, inspectors have the right to enter schools and other educational establishments for the purpose of inspection. Each year they inspect and publish reports on a wide range of nursery, primary, secondary and special schools. Denominational and non-denominational schools are inspected, as are independent schools and those managed by education authorities.

Endnotes

- ¹ see Anderson; Scotland.
- ² Paterson, 147.
- ³ Paterson, 139; see also Scotland I.
- 4 Murphy, 11.
- ⁵ Macbeth, Strachan, and Macaulay, 5.
- ⁶ Clark, 3-5.
- ⁷ Adler, Petch and Tweedie 1989, 50.
- ⁸ Macbeth, 1.
- 9 www.scotland-legislation. hmso.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2000/00006--b.htm#24
- 10 www.scotland.gov.uk/library /documents/educat.htm.
- ¹¹www.scotland-legislation.hmso.gov.uk /legislation/scotland/acts2000/20000006.htm
- $^{\rm 12}$ Adler, Petch, and Tweedie 1987, 309; Macbeth, Strachan, and Macaulay, 302, 334-35, 299.
- 13 quoted by Macbeth, Strachan, and Macaulay, 32.
- ¹⁴ Macbeth, Strachan, and Macaulay, 334.
- 15 www.scotland.gov.uk/library/documents/educat.htm.
- ¹⁶ quoted by Macbeth, Strachan, and Macaulay, 30.
- ¹⁷ Macbeth, Strachan, and Macaulay, 302.
- 18 www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts1989/Ukpga_19890039_en_1.htm.
- ¹⁹ www.scotland-legislation.hmso.gov.uk/legislation /scotland /acts2000/00006--a.htm.

- ²⁰ Murphy, 103; *The Economist*, May 24, 1986.
- ²¹ Macbeth, Strachan, and Macaulay, 321-22.
- ²² Conroy, 27.
- ²³ Macbeth, Strachan, and Macaulay, 106.
- ²⁴ Macbeth, Strachan, and Macaulay, 306.
- ²⁵ Macbeth, Strachan, and Macaulay, 124.
- ²⁶ Macbeth, Strachan, and Macaulay, 130.
- ²⁷ Adler, Petch, and Tweedie 1987, 303.
- ²⁸ Adler, Petch, and Tweedie 1987, 312-14.
- ²⁹ Adler, Petch, and Tweedie 1989, 12.
- 30 www.scotland .gov.uk/library/documents/educat.htm.
- ³¹ Munn, 127-130; Macbeth, 78-79.

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