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**THE SCOTTISH CONTEXT FOR THE CURRICULUM**

**Sue Ellis**

**INTRODUCTION**

The curriculum in Scotland seeks to define and frame the core ideas and experiences that are most important for learning and teaching. The challenges involved in any such task are threefold.  First, reaching a common agreement about what is important and fundamental can be problematic.  Researchers, politicians, local authorities, teachers, head teachers, children, parents and employers may all have different views.  The second challenge is to find a curriculum framework that provides support and direction but also allows flexibility.  Allowing for flexibility is important so that the curriculum can respond to changes, both in the social context of education and to new research understandings of how children learn and how best to develop learning. The third challenge is to ensure that the curriculum intentions are not lost during implementation. This final challenge is perhaps the hardest to meet.

**OBJECTIVES**

4.4 The Scottish Context for the Curriculum

This unit describes how curriculum policy is made in Scotland and outlines some of the key implications and implementation issues of *Curriculum for Excellence*. By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the process of curriculum development in Scotland, who shapes the curriculum and how this is done.
- Explain how this system came about and some of the advantages and disadvantages it offers.
- Describe *Curriculum for Excellence*, why it was formed, how it is structured and how it is intended to shape practice and pedagogy in local authorities and primary schools.
- Consider which aspects of the context of implementation may impede or facilitate change.

**Curriculum Policy in Scotland**

Scotland has its own legislative framework for education. National Policy is framed by the Scottish Government and education is the formal responsibility of the First Minister, who is answerable to the Scottish Parliament.

There is no legally enforceable 'National Curriculum' in Scotland and any curriculum and assessment guidelines are non-statutory. This means that the curriculum is not a rigid, centrally-determined programme of study. What *is* statutory, is that the Minister for Education and Young People, local authorities and schools work together to improve the quality of school education, and that they report on their progress to the people of Scotland. The *Education (National Priorities) (Scotland) Order 2000* places a duty on Scottish Ministers to set, from time to time, National Priorities in education. Local authorities must use these to frame their own objectives, which form the context for the schools' development plans, interpretations and delivery of the curriculum. The National Priorities give a general sense of direction for educational policy and curriculum development (see figure 4.3.1). There are agreed quantitative measures and qualitative

indicators to gauge how local authorities are progressing the national priorities, and progress is reported to the Scottish Government by Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education (HMIE).

**Figure 1: Scotland's National Priorities for Education.**
**Source: https://www.ltscotland.org.uk/cpdscotland/fivenationalpriorities.asp**

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**THE CURRENT NATIONAL PRIORITIES IN SCOTLAND**

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

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

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

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

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

4.4 The Scottish Context for the Curriculum

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There are other mechanisms for finding out whether the curriculum in Scotland is working effectively. The Scottish Survey of Achievement  (SSA) provides sample-based information about overall levels of attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy. This enables politicians to monitor the efficacy of their education policy and identify areas that need further investment or attention.   Scotland also participates in several international studies of achievement, which allow education policies and practices to be examined against globally-defined benchmarks.  The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) studies the attainment of 15 year old students in maths, literacy and science in OECD countries, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) provides data on how nine and ten-year-olds perform in reading and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) does this for mathematics and science. Analyses of these, and of Scottish examination results, are published by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).

Curriculum policy and development is shaped by several bodies.  HMIE publish school and local authority inspection reports, but also *Portrait of Current Practice* reports to promote improvements and stimulate reflection in Scottish Education.   Each report focuses on a specific curricular area and draws on the findings of inspections and examples of effective practice that have been showcased at HMIE conferences (HMIE, 2006).   They also publish an online digital resource for professional development, *Journey to Excellence,* which exemplifies excellent practice and draws together professional knowledge and research.  Schools and local authorities use these reports to help them identify and address emerging issues about curriculum organisation, teaching content and pedagogy.

**Task 1**

Find some recent HMIE '*Portrait of current practice'* reports on the Scottish Government website http://www.hmie.gov.uk/Publications.  Choose a subject area in the

## 4.4 The Scottish Context for the Curriculum

Primary Curriculum that interests you.  Read its Portrait of current practice report and consider

a)  how far the description of current practice matches your experience in schools

b) how far the description matches the insights into the curriculum and pedagogy that you have gained from your reading about research and practice in this subject area.

Then, list three specific implications of the report for your own teaching in this area.

Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) provides national advice on curriculum policy and practice.  It has responsibility for national research and development work and for delivering national initiatives such as *Curriculum for Excellence,* and GLOW, the Scottish schools digital network.

The management of school education rests with the 32 local authorities in Scotland. Local authorities must interpret and deliver National Priorities and curriculum guidelines to meet local needs, whilst taking account of advice from HMIE, SQA and LTS.  Most local authorities offer support in the form of local development plans, courses for professional development, guidance on planning and assessment, and, occasionally, coordinating working parties to create curriculum resources.

The curriculum in schools is the formal responsibility of the head teacher, who prepares development plans to show how the school will develop its curriculum to meet local and national priorities.  The head teacher must ensure that teachers deliver a suitable curriculum and that appropriate frameworks for teaching, assessment, monitoring and reporting are in place.

4.4 The Scottish Context for the Curriculum

**Policy on Testing and Assessment**

Recent experience in Scotland shows an assessment policy can have unintended consequences. In 1991, the government introduced Scotland's first national assessment policy. It highlighted the importance of considering evidence from a variety of sources (including evidence from self and peer assessments) to make informed decisions about a child's progress and 'next steps'. National tests in reading, writing and mathematics were to moderate teachers' professional judgements. They were to be sat only when the teacher judged a child to have attained a level and, if the national test result conflicted with the teacher's professional judgement, the latter took priority (SOEID, 1991).

Yet, this did not happen. Local authorities used test results to set targets for improving attainment in individual schools; there were numerous reports of children being rehearsed for tests and taking and re-taking tests. In 2001, the *Assessment is for Learning* (AifL) programme was established to try to ensure that assessment improved the quality of teaching and learning in schools. Its first national initiative focused on embedding research findings about formative assessment into school practices (Black and Wiliam 1998; Black et al., 2002). It was based on the principles of large-scale organisational change (Ellis and Hayward, 2009) and had a noticeable impact on practice.

Local authorities generally have baseline assessments in place for literacy and numeracy which help track pupil progress and inform personal learning plans. Schools and local authorities use internally- and externally-devised summative assessments for literacy and numeracy, attainment in which will continue to be a focus of all HMIE inspections.

Website Activity

List four ways that FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT might influence the primary school curriculum you provide when you are teaching.

Why is it important to have SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT information also available? How might this influence your curriculum?

What might happen to the curriculum if a primary teacher was over-reliant on one or the other?

What else might a teacher have to know about the children in a class and how might this inform the curriculum content and pedagogy?

**Task 2**

Using all the information given so far, draw a diagram to show how the curriculum is shaped and developed in Scotland.

Compare your diagram with that of a colleague on the course.

**The Primary Curriculum**

In Scotland, pupils enter school in the year of their fifth birthday. There is one intake per year, in August, and the ages of children at the start of Primary 1 range from four years six months to five years six months. Children leave primary school when they have completed Primary 7.

The past half-century has seen three distinct curriculum policy phases in Scotland. In the 1960s, curriculum advice was developed by COPE (the Committee on Primary Education) and its sub-committees, subject to final approval by the Consultative Council on the Curriculum. However, primary teachers had complete choice about what they taught and the mechanisms to ensure that curriculum recommendations were discussed and adopted by schools were weak. A report for the Scottish Education Department concluded that six years after one key curriculum initiative, the *Primary Memorandum*, "Few head teachers had done anything to formulate a policy for the planned implementation of the approaches suggested" *SED, 1971, p.16.

## 4.4 The Scottish Context for the Curriculum

There are many reasons why schools can be slow to adopt new initiatives. Eisner identifies a passive resistance, in which "experienced teachers tend to ... ride out the wave of enthusiasm, and then just float until the next wave comes" (1992, p. 616). There can also be a tendency for teachers to embrace aspects that concur with current practice but overlook or dismiss ideas that require change and for them to focus on activities, materials and classroom organisation rather than on the deeper pedagogical principles (Spillane 2000).  Certainly when the next curriculum policy phase, the *5–14 Guidelines* was launched in 1989, the emphasis on talking and listening in the *English Language Guidelines* was greeted with genuine surprise, despite several policy documents since 1965 advocating the importance of planned contexts for talk for both language development and for learning.

The *5-14 Guidelines* sought to ensure continuity, breadth and progression in the primary and early secondary curriculum by outlining key content that should be taught and that would be inspected by HMIE. Scotland had always had a history of consensual curriculum development and there was disquiet about this new concept of a centrally determined and imposed curriculum framework. It was described as "a shift in policy-making style in Scotland, from debate followed by consensus to consultation followed by imposition (Rodger, quoted in Adams, 2003, p.371).  The model used for developing the *5-14 Guidelines* offered both advantages and disadvantages:  They were based on a consensual understanding of "existing good practice" rather than on more theoretical or research-based understandings.  This ensured a reasonably good fit with many existing school practices but did not challenge or ask fundamental questions of them. For example, changes in the teaching of reading came not from the *5-14 Guidelines*, but from the Early Intervention initiative sponsored by Scottish Executive Education Department (Ellis & Friel, 2008).  Another problem was that each curricular area was developed by a separate working party of specialist teachers who paid scant regard to cross-curricular themes or connections. This effectively promoted a compartmentalised curriculum at the expense of the previous, integrated, approaches epitomised by methodologies such as *Scottish Storyline* (Bell, 2003; Bell and Harkness, 2006).  Also, because nobody took an overview of the whole curriculum, there was serious curriculum overload.

The pressure for accountability created in the wake of the *5-14 Guidelines* meant that curriculum policy was taken seriously. Variability between schools decreased and there was a stronger emphasis on equity and attainment. Because schemes and worksheets provided easy evidence of coverage and progression, active learning and the *Scottish Storyline Method* (which migrated to Scandinavia, where it thrived), were abandoned at this time, although it is now being re-introduced to Scotland.

Dividing every subject area into discrete outcomes, each split into strands and then further into tiny slivers of attainment targets, fragmented the curriculum in a way that was never envisaged. Forward planning focused on mapping activities onto attainment targets and strands rather than on identifying the most appropriate learning priorities and contexts for the class. The framework discouraged integration and did not prompt teachers to contextualise work or help pupils to see connections and links. The sheer quantity of content created time pressures, stress and squeezed out opportunities for play, self-directed learning, extended writing and problem-based learning. Teachers had little time to re-visit, consolidate or explore ideas in depth.

In short, the 5-14 Guidelines encouraged teachers to focus on curriculum content and on attainment. These are good things. However, they also created some learning environments that were dysfunctional; environments which de-skilled teachers and did not foster creativity or intellectual and emotional engagement. The National Debate on Education initiated in 2002 showed that the people of Scotland did not want a centralised, uniform curriculum. They wanted curriculum flexibility, breadth and depth, with quality teaching and quality materials to support teaching but most of all they wanted a less crowded curriculum, one that would make learning more enjoyable and with better connections between the pre-five, primary, secondary and post-secondary stages.

**The Current Curriculum: A Curriculum for Excellence**

In 2004, Peter Peacock, the Minister for Education and Young People, wrote:

4.4 The Scottish Context for the Curriculum

> "The curriculum in Scotland has many strengths. … However, the various parts were developed separately and, taken together, they do not now provide the best basis for an excellent education for every child. The National Debate showed that people want a curriculum that will fully prepare today's children for adult life in the 21st century, be less crowded and better connected, and offer more choice and enjoyment."   (SEED, 2004)

This is an extraordinarily brave and frank statement for any government Minister to make. It indicates a genuine desire to make the education system work for children and reflects confidence in the willingness and ability of the Scottish educational community to deliver effective change.

*A Curriculum For Excellence* (SEED, 2004*)* represents the third curriculum policy phase in Scotland. It aims to provide a single curriculum for 3-18 year olds, supported by a simple and effective structure for assessment. It seeks to de-clutter the primary curriculum, to free up more time for young people to achieve and to allow teachers the freedom to exercise judgement on appropriate learning.

The starting point for *A Curriculum for Excellence* is that the curriculum cannot focus solely on narrow definitions of attainment and progression or on detailed sets of teaching content and tasks. The four capacities that define the purposes of the curriculum (see figure 4.3.2) focus attention on building social, emotional and intellectual capacity. *Curriculum for Excellence* extends the influence of curriculum policy beyond subject areas, giving explicit recognition to the importance of interdisciplinary links, to the ethos and life of the school as a community within wider society and to to the importance of providing opportunities for wider achievement.

**FIGURE 2:  *The Purposes of the Curriculum from 3-18*: The Four Capacities.**
**Source:**
**http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence/curriculumoverview/aims/fou rcapacities.asp**

| successful learners | confident individuals |
|---|---|
| **with** | **with** |
| › enthusiasm and motivation for learning | › self respect |
| › determination to reach high standards of achievement | › a sense of physical, mental and emotional wellbeing |
| › openness to new thinking and ideas | › secure values and beliefs |
| | › ambition |
| **and able to** | **and able to** |
| › use literacy, communication and numeracy skills | › relate to others and manage themselves |
| › use technology for learning | › pursue a healthy and active lifestyle |
| › think creatively and independently | › be self aware |
| › learn independently and as part of a group | › develop and communicate their own beliefs and view of the world |
| › make reasoned evaluations | › live as independently as they can |
| › link and apply different kinds of learning in new situations | › assess risk and take informed decisions |
| | › achieve success in different areas of activity |

**To enable all young people to become**

| responsible citizens | effective contributors |
|---|---|
| **with** | **with** |
| › respect for others | › an enterprising attitude |
| › commitment to participate responsibly in political, economic, social and cultural life | › resilience |
| | › self-reliance |
| **and able to** | **and able to** |
| › develop knowledge and understanding of the world and Scotland's place in it | › communicate in different ways and in different settings |
| › understand different beliefs and cultures | › work in partnership and in teams |
| › make informed choices and decisions | › take the initiative and lead |
| › evaluate environmental, scientific and technological issues | › apply critical thinking in new contexts |
| › develop informed, ethical views of complex issues | › create and develop |
| | › solve problems |

**Task 3**

Look carefully at Figure 2: *Purposes of the curriculum from 3-18*.

Think about one curricular area that you have seen taught in schools. To what extent do you think the teaching delivered these purposes? How would you change or adapt the teaching to enable it to better meet the purposes outlined in *A Curriculum for Excellence*.

In each subject area, *Curriculum for Excellence* details five levels of experiences and outcomes, covering the age range 3-18:  Early (Pre-school and P1); First (by the end of P4 or earlier); Second (by the end of P7 or earlier); Third (S1-3) and Fourth (S4-6).  The design, by defining the curriculum in terms of experiences as well as outcomes, seeks to promote smoother transitions between the nursery, primary and secondary sectors, focusing on coherent progression in both content <u>and</u> the types of learning experiences that children will meet.

The framework generally seeks to provide focus but not be so content-laden as to leave little space for innovative teaching or responding to children's interests and needs. The planning principles detailed by *Curriculum for Excellence*  (challenge and enjoyment, breadth, progression, depth, personalisation and choice, coherence, and relevance) emphasise the importance of analysing what is most appropriate for the pupils and the school context.  This, it is hoped, will result in better progression, more purposeful learning activities, more choice, and more enjoyment of learning, all of which are necessary to raise achievement.   (Note the use of, 'achievement', a wider term than the 'attainment' focus which characterised discussion of the *5-14 Guidelines*).

*Curriculum for Excellence* divides the curriculum into the following areas:
- Health and well-being
- Mathematics and numeracy
- Languages and literacy
- Religious and moral education
- Sciences
- Social Subjects
- Technologies
- Expressive Arts

4.4 The Scottish Context for the Curriculum

Health and wellbeing, literacy and numeracy must be developed across learning, by every teacher, at every level, regardless of curriculum area or the formal exam focus of secondary school teachers.

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**Task 3**

Find some reasonably experienced Primary teachers to interview. Ask them about the curriculum developments they have experienced during their career. How did the changes affect their work with the pupils? Their planning or thinking about teaching? What did they think of them at the time? How do they feel about them now?

What are the current curriculum issues? How do these teachers feel about them?

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**Research Perspectives**

At its heart, *Curriculum for Excellence* recognises that learning is socially and culturally mediated. It has the potential to promote a school system and curriculum that draws explicitly on socio-cultural and ethnographic research in addition to the cognitive research that has traditionally informed teaching content and pedagogy. This could create a new dialogue about education. For example, we know that literacy is not just cognitively but socially and culturally determined (Bearne and Marsh, 2007; Moss 2007). Yet despite clear evidence of this (gender and socio-economic status remain the strongest predictors of literacy attainment), the debates about the content of the literacy curriculum are almost exclusively focused on cognitive issues; the best way to teach phonics, comprehension or writing, for example. There are few arguments about the most effective specific curriculum adaptations that will address children's social and cultural needs as readers and writers.

## 4.4 The Scottish Context for the Curriculum

By offering this broader base for the curriculum, *Curriculum for Excellence* also has the potential to deal more fluently with emerging policy concerns, which can rarely be framed solely in terms of cognition, pedagogy and teaching content. Certainly *Curriculum for Excellence* accords with recent policy and research studies that highlight the impact of engagement on learning and attainment (Guthrie and Humenick, 2004).

*Curriculum for Excellence* demonstrates educational integrity by focusing on the issues that are central to the quality of children's lives. For example, research tells us that poor literacy skills are a major barrier to learning, contributing to increased absence from school, poor attitudes to learning, limited opportunities for employment and, for some, increased involvement with the criminal justice system. The loss to the economy from low literacy is estimated at over one and a half billion pounds (KPMG Foundation, 2006). It is in direct response to such studies, that *Curriculum for Excellence* makes literacy, along with health and well-being and numeracy, the responsibility of every teacher, in every sector, at every level.

**M Level Challenge**

Curriculum for Excellence gives great scope for teachers, schools and local authorities to create a curriculum that works for them. It contrasts with the more centralised, top-down curriculum approaches in England or the USA. Top-down models can be seen negatively as ignoring the teaching capacity that exists in schools, positioning teachers as passive conduits for the curriculum and making curricular decisions highly vulnerable to single-issue pressure groups. They can also be seen positively as building capacity by compelling teachers to engage with new pedagogies, providing clear frameworks that focus decisions on evidence and mitigating the worst effects of a weak teacher.

Devolved curriculum models, such as *Curriculum for Excellence*, offer more potential to engage teachers and to capitalise on the good practice and emotional investment that already exists in schools. However, they may leave teachers unsupported in making evidence-based decisions or analysing curriculum changes, forcing them to rely on their

own, unexplored and possibly limited past experiences.  Critics argue that the dream of teachers making clear judgements based on research and on robust analyses of evidence is simply that; a dream.  Research studies on rolling-out educational reforms, however, show that the contexts in which programmes are implemented are at least as important to their effectiveness as the design features of the programme (Datnow et al., 2002);  Eisner comments, "Educators know experientially that context matters most in the "chemistry" that makes for educational effectiveness" (Eisner 2004, p.616).

What do you think are the important things to bear in mind when considering the pros and cons of each model for a specific context?

**Achieving Success**

In a rather depressing analysis, John MacBeath reminds us that the organisation and curriculum of schools has changed little since Victorian times. (MacBeath, 2008 p.940). Past predictions that schools and schooling would be revolutionised have all come to naught; "The future never happened".  MacBeath holds little hope for radical, bottom-up curriculum change where learner experiences can forge new ways of seeing and learning in the curriculum.  Policy change, he argues, always happens downwards: the design of buildings, school hierarchies, staffing structures, teaching arrangements, pedagogical conventions, planning and monitoring procedures and tests can only produce a certain type of curriculum and particular types of learning experiences.

**M Level Challenge**

To what extent do you agree with MacBeath's analysis?  How far does it concur with what you have read and experienced?

What four things would you change in the structure and organisation of Primary schools that would revolutionise teaching and learning and ensure that *Curriculum for Excellence*

succeeds?    Justify your choices with reference to your own experience, research and theory.


Compare your ideas to those of a colleague.

Yet the existence of *Curriculum for Excellence* is clear evidence of the desire to create a curriculum that learners can influence, and there is plenty of research evidence of the need for such an approach to the curriculum.  Brian Boyd has noted that "Scotland has never been extreme with its educational innovations; [the Scottish approach]... has always been to integrate innovation firmly into traditional approaches" (Humes and Bryce, 2003, p.111). Past curriculum developments in Scotland have tended to be a process of evolution rather than revolution and the experience of implementing the 5-14 guidelines shows that we need to pay as much attention to the context of implementation as to the initial structures and frameworks.   To be successful, *Curriculum for Excellence* has to challenge and change thinking at every level of the system so that the many different influences which determine how it is interpreted, support rather than destroy its spirit.

Scotland has already begun to re-define the nature of accountability in national, local authority and school contexts: HMIE in Scotland have changed the inspection process to focus on the quality of self-evaluation.  Scotland has learnt, partly from the history of OFSTED inspections in England, that a perceived culture of criticism and blame encourages a defensive, mechanistic curriculum as teachers and head teachers seek protection by 'following guidelines to the letter'. It is hoped that the new inspection process will offer a more equal conversation and place real power in the hands of the head teacher.

Possibly the biggest change that *Curriculum for Excellence* requires is in the mindset and knowledge-base of teachers and head teachers.  More freedom and flexibility needs teachers to have secure professional understandings and to take a constructivist, evidenced-based view of pupil learning, of their own pedagogy and of the school curriculum.  The, albeit tacit, understanding in the *Curriculum for Excellence* architecture is that learning, pedagogy and curriculum design must be informed by research and

developed through hard-nosed evaluation, each having a dynamic relationship to the others. To fully change the culture, we need a move towards research-orientated schools, in which significant curriculum innovation and evaluation is part of the job for teachers, head teachers and local authorities. Only this will provide the professional dialogue necessary for serious collaboration between the Scottish Government, local authorities and teachers. For it to work, it is essential that everyone – educators, children, parents, the media, employers and politicians - sees and understands education as a complex process with many outcomes, rather than as a one-dimensional commodity.

If *Curriculum for Excellence* is successful, it may produce less uniform curricula and possibly a more diverse education system. Preventing the politicisation of the curriculum may be difficult. All public bodies now pay careful attention to how they are reported in the press and local authority councillors and schools must account for their actions. The temptation may be for them to promote their own initiatives as 'the best solution', reducing complex analyses to newspaper headlines. This will not help reflection and careful decision-making. Calm analysis based on evaluations that acknowledge limitations and detail the complexity of the issues, will be crucial.

The issue of evaluation raises many ethical questions. The best knowledge networks should analyse and share information about the innovations that don't work as well as those that do. When the Millennium Bridge across the River Thames in London was first built, it wobbled as pedestrians walked across it. After, we learned that 'wobbling bridges' are not uncommon but the design error persists because comparatively little is known about them; no commercial company wishes to be associated with having built a wobbly bridge and they are not written-up as case studies. The extent to which local authorities will be willing to openly discuss evaluations of unsuccessful or negative aspects of innovations will be determined by factors largely outwith the control of educators, including the tone of the education discourse adopted by politicians, parents and the media.

Teachers will need to see their job differently in other ways, too. The image of the primary teacher as an isolated adult with a class of children has changed. The recommendations in the McCrone Report (2000) promoted a more social and research-

based view of teaching.  It recognised that teachers must discuss their practice with others and that time must be available for this.  However, time is not enough.  If primary teachers are to develop a strong and assertive professional voice, their discussions about learning need to be clearly evidence-based, and they need a sophisticated understanding of the different types of evidence and how it may be used.  As curriculum designers, teachers need to focus on how their analyses of their class and school should interact with the timing, selection and balance of ideas in the curriculum, and accept that sometimes they may not get it right.  As professionals they need to have open and honest dialogue with head teachers and local authority staff about the curriculum and how it is delivered, and identify local implementation policies that are enabling and those that are not.

We all need to recognise that teachers' learning is social and emotional as well as cognitive. Continuing professional development needs to enhance teachers' professional judgement and dialogue, alongside their knowledge, and ensure that head teachers actively support this process.  Good leadership in schools needs to be seen in terms of building capacity at all levels, including the capacity of weak teachers.  As one Scottish head teacher recently explained, "Weak teachers are not made competent by being given work programmes or criticism; they just clam-up and become passive.  They need to talk, talk and talk some more about how they are teaching the children in their own class and get specific, tailored advice and help, including practical support and demonstrations, with explanations linked to that." (Ellis and Hayward, 2009).

**SUMMARY**

The discussion of curriculum guidelines and how they are implemented can seem awfully dry and boring.  There is a great temptation for student teachers to focus on the immediate job of teaching the children without thinking about the big picture.  It is part of every teacher's professional responsibility to think about what matters in education, and to ensure that the curriculum is working to deliver this. The key points from this unit are that curriculum guidelines are only one aspect of a complex, dynamic picture, and that the process of implementation is crucial.

**Annotated Further Reading**

Bryce, T.G.K and Humes, W.M (eds) 2008 *Scottish Education: Third Edition- Beyond Devolution* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
This is the most comprehensive text on Scottish Education. Each chapter is designed to give an explanatory overview of policy and practice and identify key issues for the future.

SEED (2004): *A Curriculum for Excellence* Edinburgh. HMSO
A highly readable document that sets-out the framework for the new curriculum

Moss, G (2007) *Literacy and Gender: Researching Texts, Contexts and Readers*. London: Routledge.
This is an example of the sort of research that is challenging traditional, content focused curriculum frameworks. Moss produces hard evidence of the need for teachers to pay attention to how children network around books, and in doing so, exemplifies just how complex the process of becoming literate actually is.

Ellis, S. and Hayward, L. (2009) 'The Answer's Achievement, but what's the question' in Mills, C., Cox, R., and Moss, G. (Eds) *Language and Literacies in the Primary School* London: Routledge/Taylor and Francis Group
This chapter describes the policy context for the highly successful *Assessment is for Learning* intervention in Scotland and illustrates it with an example of how one school involved in the project raised writing achievement by focusing on teaching and learning.

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## 4.4 The Scottish Context for the Curriculum

**WEBSITE 4.4**

**Questions for the Website:**

1. **Which aspects of Curriculum for Excellence do you think offer the most potential to deliver change in Scottish Primary Schools?**
2. **To what extent do you think that your Teacher Education course is delivering the Four Purposes of the Curriculum for you as a learner?  Does it matter?  What might you change to reflect them more closely?**
3. **Think back to your own primary education.  Can you think of one example of each of the seven principles (Challenge and Enjoyment, Breadth, Progression, Depth, Personalisation And Choice, Coherence, and Relevance) in operation during your primary years?**
4. **What do you think is most likely to impede change in Scottish Primary Schools**

**ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY FOR WEBSITE**

**Work with a colleague on the course.  Pick one curricular subject.  Consider what might be different about the knowledge, skills, beliefs and experiences that individual children bring to school in relation to one aspect of this subject.  How would you find out about their starting points, and how could you use their experiences in your teaching?**