

# THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN SCOTTISH EDUCATION POLICY

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## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the relevance of social capital to the construction of education policies. In particular, it examines the four central social capital concepts of trust, norms, reciprocity and values and how these could be more explicitly employed in the construction of Scottish educational policy to enhance relevance and accountability. We draw on work from the Schools and Social Capital (SSC) research network of the Scottish Applied Educational Research Scheme (AERS<sup>1</sup>), and particularly from the work of the SSC policy review group. This and other reviews are published in the digital repository of the AERS web site. This paper also incorporates elements from other reviews conducted by the SSC network. The paper concludes that for policy to promote the kinds of social capital that will improve the lives of the most marginalised people a more inclusive and well resourced policy process is needed.

## DEFINING SOCIAL CAPITAL IN THE SCHOOL CONTEXT

The definition of *social capital* has been plagued by conceptual murkiness (Horvat *et al*, 2003: 321). However, the concept offers a potentially fruitful way of 'conceptualising the intangible resources of community, shared values and trust' (Field, 2003). The development and use of such resources is critical to the sustainability and success of current Scottish educational policy and practice, particularly initiatives that aim to reform the types and qualities of connections between schools and other agencies, between staff, and between school and communities, and, critically, the uptake and use of those resources by children and families. Fukuyama (1999) contends that

the area where governments probably have the greatest direct ability to generate social capital is education. Educational institutions do not simply transmit human capital; they also pass on social capital in the form of social rules and norms (1999: 7) .

Within a school context, we suggest that social capital contains four central concepts that operate across five important social networks. The concepts are *trust*, *norms*, *reciprocity* and *values*. The five networks of interest are those evident within the families of the children attending the school, those shared among the staff, networks of students, networks between students and staff, and networks between staff and parents or other carers. The form of each of these networks has implications for their potential impact on the outcomes of schooling, and the compatibility of perceptions of trust, norms and values within and between these networks will impact on the opportunities of young people to benefit from schooling.

### *How does the policy/social capital relation currently operate?*

Overt attempts in education policy making to engage with the four key social capital concepts are not common but an exception is found in some policies that have specifically targeted first nation communities (White *et al*, 2005). Such explicit statements in policy concerning norms, values, trust and reciprocity acknowledge that within first nation communities there is a tradition towards collective ownership and decision-making and that networks and their norms are important aspects of

life in these communities.

In contrast, in western societies the focus of government policy is on actions that enable individuals to obtain employment, education and economic independence. Such a policy focus on individual outcomes may conflict with the concept of reciprocal social capital, a tension that is explored in Bruegel and Warren (2003) and by Field (2003) in his discussion of Coleman's analysis of human (individual) and social (collective) capital. Accepting that a tension between the collective good and individual benefit is inherent to social democracy and in all social institutions, the challenge is to achieve a balance within diverse communities, for example, in relation to faith/belief and ethnicity. In addition, the hierarchical structure of schools where those in authority may shape the agenda is potentially in conflict with the notion of reciprocal networks, which Putnam (1993) argues is the most productive form of social capital.

These issues may explain the previous lack of explicit focus on social capital as a vehicle for improvements in educational policies. However, since devolution, Scottish educational policy has sought to promote active citizenship and to achieve social justice and social inclusion (see, for example, HMIE, 2002; Scottish Executive, 1999; 2001a; 2001b; 2002a; 2002b). As will be suggested below, it would seem that in the current moment what Lindblad and Popkewitz (2004) call a new system of reason may be emerging that seeks, albeit implicitly, to build social capital, in schools and communities.

#### RECENT SCOTTISH EDUCATION POLICY INITIATIVES

Since the publication of *New Community Schools: The Prospectus* (Scottish Office, 1998), a series of policy statements has promoted the rationale of improving access for all of Scotland's children to universal children's services (see, for example, *Social Justice – A Scotland Where Everyone Matters* [Scottish Executive, 1999], *For Scotland's Children: Better Integrated Children's Services* [Scottish Executive, 2001a], and *Count us In: Achieving Inclusion in Scottish Schools* [HMIE, 2002]). It would seem that, at least implicitly, a new system of reason is currently being used in the redesign of children's services in Scotland. Such policy thinking is underpinned by the formation of new connections among professionals that require trust and reciprocity in Integrated Community Schools (ICSs) at individual, school and national agency levels. In relation to the Integrated Community Schools policy and the totality of the children's services policy in Scotland, an implicit underlying aim is to build the social capital of all Scotland's children, young people and families.

Social capital is central to efforts to change and develop inter-professional and inter-agency ties through the formation of new relations between children's services practitioners, families, schools and communities at all levels. The present authors take the view that the current overarching concern in Scottish public policy is with the creation of new social structures, ties and patterns of individual, school and community relations within a Scotland that recognises and promotes diversity. We suggest that this is demonstrably a concern with 'the areas that are denoted by the concept of social capital' (Field, 2003: 6). Consequently, we argue that it is timely that the use of social capital concepts in policy is explicitly identified and analysed. This task is attempted in this review of Scottish policy.

#### *The method used in this review*

Policies adopted in Scotland were identified for consideration and additional relevant documents were included that provided background. A template for analysis was developed that considered the overall goals of Scottish Education, and the wider societal goals of inclusion and social justice. The policy template provided a broad framework for the review. We sought to identify how the four concepts of *trust*,

*norms, reciprocity and values* were addressed within each policy. Given the Scottish Government's commitment to evidence-based policy making, we also sought to identify whether research is cited in policy documents, and if so, the nature of the research evidence and how it is used.

The review template identified the professional focus of each policy, such as education, child welfare, or community development. The age range of people addressed by each policy and the relation to the major stages of schooling were identified, as was the question of the transition between stages of education. The types of educational outcome that the policy sought to address were noted, whether related to participation or attainment in curriculum areas, or to wider concerns in social policy such as the promotion of inclusion, anti-bullying, addressing boys' underachievement, enterprise, citizenship, the eco-school, or attitudes towards future learning (lifelong learning).

A further dimension, which the template addressed, was the scope of the policy in terms of addressing the different needs of target groups defined by geographic region (including rural/urban), economic circumstance, ethnicity, disabilities or gender. The review template also focused on the level and source of resourcing for dissemination, application and implementation of policies, and the implications for the roles of various professions and the skills they required to implement the policies. Finally, we asked if there are issues peculiar to specific policies that are relevant to its overall impact on schools and on forms of social capital.

*What do the selected Scottish education policies say about social capital?*

The aspirations of the Scottish Government for education seem distinct from those in other nations in that the Government seek simultaneously to raise overall standards and to reduce the gap between the most deprived people in the Scottish community and the mean outcomes for young people in Scottish society. These goals are given meaning by the adoption of specific government targets. For instance, in the Budget Statement *Closing the Opportunity Gap* (Scottish Executive, 2002a) the undertakings include to reduce absenteeism in schools serving deprived communities and to reduce the proportion of pupils failing to achieve minimum levels of attainment at the end of primary schooling and at the end of the period of compulsory schooling. It is to be expected, therefore, that specific statements about practice which give effect to these goals will be found within educational policies. For the purposes of this paper, our analysis is focused on three documents, namely:

- *A Curriculum for Excellence (ACE)* (Scottish Executive, 2004)
- *It's Everyone's Job to Make Sure that I'm Alright* (Scottish Executive, 2002)
- *Poverty and Social Inclusion in Rural Scotland* (Scottish Executive, 2001)

The first two documents were selected due to their contemporary and future currency. The document on rural issues were selected specifically as the SSC policy review group had found a lack of policy discourse on rural issues and social capital. Although the focus was on rurality this was viewed as one dimension of the importance of place and space in implementation of policy. In addition to the above three documents, the report *The Sum Of Its Parts? The Development of Integrated Community Schools in Scotland* (HMIe, 2004) was also reviewed and has contributed to the shaping of this paper. The HMIe report found that effective social capital connections among professionals, parents and learners are central to the concept of an integrated service and improvement of services for children. The following is a summary of issues identified from an analysis of all these reports.

### *The role of social capital in policies for schools*

Our review revealed that engagement with the key concepts of social capital was not explicit in the selected policies, and that while values and norms are mentioned, these concepts are not fully examined and addressed. For example, the global term *community* is used as a normative term when the term refers to multiple diverse communities with differing norms, values and networks. In another instance, the subject-discipline-based model of curriculum development, especially in secondary education, is not questioned in *A Curriculum for Excellence* (2004), despite evidence that many people are alienated from schools. In this example, additional curriculum options are proposed rather than the social causes of alienation from schooling being robustly addressed. Thus, the lack of questioning of norms and values by the policy writers underlies the current curriculum model, without any recognition that many young people do not share these assumptions and so feel alienated and are excluded.

### *Focus on individual or community outcomes*

A distinction between specifically educational policies and social care policies is evident in the focus on individual compared to community outcomes. For example, the aspirational policy document *A Curriculum for Excellence* (Scottish Executive, 2004) aims to promote equality of opportunity, as is evidenced in several of its sub-sections including 'Successful Learners' and 'The Purposes of Curriculum 3–18', but how children with inadequate access to social capital will be afforded equality of opportunity is not explicitly addressed. *A Curriculum for Excellence* is intended to be an aspirational statement and refers to other policy statements, but evidence of how the lack of social access will be addressed is not evident in the policy documents referred to in *A Curriculum for Excellence*.

In contrast, social care policies such as *It's Everyone's Job to Make Sure that I'm Alright* (Scottish Executive, 2002b) recognise the need for all involved (adults, children and young people) to be enabled to participate. It also recognises that, for effective services, there is a need to ensure that professionals, including school teachers, engage and network with each other. Policies on social care and education would appear to complement each other, but in practice social policy is better contextualised. While education policies address the pupil-teacher relation and questions of individual learners' abilities and needs in a decontextualised way, social care policies explicitly address family, community, society and institutional structures. It could be argued that social care policies by their nature focus on family, community and society, but we suggest that, for maximum impact, educational policy too needs to recognise the importance of social capital in creating an environment in which individual learners and the relevant professionals are connected in optimum ways.

### *Approaches to deprivation and disadvantage*

As outlined above, the Scottish Government has set dual goals for educational policy. It seeks to raise the average attainment levels of school leavers, and to reduce the gap between the attainment levels for young people from the most deprived backgrounds and the whole school leaver cohort. The identification and setting of broad government goals for target populations is evidence of aspiration. However, educational policies are presented in a form that addresses educational opportunities for all, and lack explicit statements in relation to target groups. The Executive are therefore committed to an equal opportunities approach in policy and legislative documents and so national policy should consider what this means in practice for all people who are members of the diverse Scottish society. Leaving any such critical interpretations concerning national policy and practice aspirations to the individual

education authority, school or teacher is neither fair nor a realistic option.

For example, in *A Curriculum for Excellence* (Scottish Executive, 2004), the need to recognise diversity, to engage with diverse communities and to be 'tolerant' is acknowledged. On one hand, it could therefore be said that the report, by mentioning values, dispositions and attitudes, recognises issues of equity, fairness and justice, and that by defining outcomes in general terms it provides for diversity. However, the failure of the report to explicitly mention the importance of countering stereotypes or to name and actively contest discrimination in a robust manner permits a non-discriminatory rather than an anti-discriminatory stance to be adopted (see, for example, Thompson, 1993). By not advocating proactive inclusive practice, the policy does not require a preventive approach to discrimination. This is a passive approach, best described as 'do as I say, not as I do'.

This current passive policy approach to discrimination potentially results in those who are not included remaining excluded. Structures and processes, that currently exclude, remain intact and normativism prevails until and unless a traumatic incident occurs that demands recognition of the inherent problems. Negative attitudes, norms and values such as homophobia, sectarianism, Islamophobia and racism, that disable bridging or linking social capital connections, can either be marginalised in a systematic manner or addressed in an 'ad hoc' way. In particular, in Scottish communities that are largely homogeneous, the risk is that teachers and others will assume that the exclusionary practices in Scotland can be ignored because they are not recognised and legitimised in policy as of national importance or concern for all schools and all communities. Where discrimination in the community contributes to homogeneity, there is a risk that isolated people from different backgrounds will be ignored in a mass education system that addresses the needs of the majority. Without explicit direction to identify and address discrimination of the isolated marginalised individual, well-meaning staff are likely not to see the effects of actions taken for the 'common good'. While *A Curriculum for Excellence* seeks to address the needs of all young people, it does not recognise that specific action will be required to enable all young people to have equitable experiences as learners.

Experienced practitioners are aware that to achieve the goals of *A Curriculum of Excellence* to enable confident, successful, responsible and effective learners to emerge, it is necessary to take account of the differing cultural capital of families and of Scottish communities. As reported by Elliot *et al*, the New Community Schools (NCS) programme,

provides an example of an area-based approach to combating disadvantage with the pilot projects focusing on areas of greatest disadvantage within each local authority (2002: 138).

It was the intention of the Scottish Government to roll out the policy once pilots were undertaken. Scottish Ministers have reaffirmed their commitment to the Integrated (formerly New) Community School approach and have committed that by 2007, every school in Scotland will deliver Integrated Children's Services (Scottish Executive, 2006). While this is to be welcomed as part of continuous improvement of services for children, given the early evidence of benefits from the NCS programme in schools serving deprived communities, questions need to be asked if the approach for Integrated Services now being applied in all schools will detract from overt attention on those suffering most disadvantage.

The NCS policy was a key part of the Scottish Government's wider social inclusion strategy. We note that statistical evidence supports the view that economic deprivation is widespread in Scotland (Palmer *et al*, 2002) and that in most statistical areas there is at least a minority of young people whose family circumstances are economically deprived. On this basis, rolling out the programme to all schools could be justified if the focus was on addressing the needs of all children who are socially

deprived. However, the absence of explicit attention to the needs of such children leads to a risk that the demands of the middle-class groups may command most of the available resources. The principal driver for the integration of children's services is to improve outcomes for children and families. Yet a review of the evidence base for Integrated Children's Services (Brown & White, 2006) has found that the focus has been largely on overcoming the barriers to integration between professional groups, thereby improving inter-professional collaboration. Less attention has been paid to the potential role and contributions of parents, families and communities as co-partners within this integrated process. There is also a caution that focusing financial resources into integrating services for all children should not detract from the need to ensure adequate resourcing to maintain the focus of integration for more vulnerable children and families.

This review would suggest that it is important that all education policy acknowledge that individual access to social capital can be constrained or enabled by the social capital resources available to the community in which individuals reside. Education policy has to consider explicitly how to build linking networks and to develop trust and shared understandings as well as providing access to well-coordinated integrated services.

#### *The influence of place and space*

Infrastructure affects access and amenity and hence values and norms. It is important to consider how different spaces may impact on policy implementation and the development of social capital. The widespread implementation of public-private partnerships (PPI) to re-build schools in Scotland has implications for the spaces in which people will operate in schools. For instance, social capital among staff will be altered either if there is for the first time sufficient space for all staff to gather in a common room, or on the other hand if there is no common room in which to meet and exchange ideas informally. Likewise, decisions about spaces where pupils can gather and do so safely will determine opportunities for cross-age linkages and for minority groups. Scottish policy does not explicitly identify these social capital perspectives, even though many practitioners recognise the issues.

Rural communities are a particular example of the importance of space and place in access to social capital. Rural communities can have strong social networks and evidence in the report to the Scottish Executive (2001b) confirms that norms can operate to exclude people and lead to services not being accessed. This report describes a 'culture of self reliance' prevalent in rural communities, especially with regard to older people, which militates against their seeking assistance and access to appropriate welfare benefits. There is also evidence of the exclusion of people who are 'different' or have developed a 'bad reputation'. This implies that norms exist and are influential in rural communities. The report claims that in rural contexts, people can be more visible, more likely to be stigmatised, and less likely to seek help due to the difficulty of remaining anonymous. It is claimed that it takes very little for young people to find themselves on the 'outside' of a community.

In this context, it is therefore appropriate to ask what are the benefits and risks associated with the commitment to devolved implementation of policies to local places in Scotland. There are examples where this has led to innovative and appropriate policy implementation, but it is likely also that the intent of some policies may have been misconstrued or even ignored, and that local actions have led to unsuccessful outcomes. Even when local policy implementation is undertaken, questions remain about the speed with which this makes a difference on the ground.

Social capital may therefore have some distinctive elements in rural and remote communities. In their study of the experiences of young people in rural communities Pavis *et al* found that access (or lack thereof) to social capital may lead to both greater inclusion and more comprehensive exclusion from opportunities:

Although most respondents' social networks were a key bridge into employment, for a small minority a 'bad' reputation within the tight-knit communities made finding employment difficult, if not impossible (2000: 9).

'Bad' reputations were the result of personal difficulties (for example, experiencing learning or mental health difficulties) or past behaviour (for example, illicit drug use or involvement in criminal activity).

The small numbers adversely affected within already small communities make it unlikely that national quantitative studies will identify the diversity of experiences for young people in rural communities. Education policy should therefore be rural proofed and be sensitive to how social capital manifests itself within these contexts.

#### *Power in policy formation*

The Scottish Government holds the power to initiate and confer authority and legitimisation in the way it shapes its interventionist role in policy development. The Executive takes forward its governance responsibility for Scottish education by using its power to decide the processes and participants that will assist in policy formulation. A critical question is whether the form and content of final policy reports would be different if the membership of policy advice groups comprised fewer people from the leadership class and more from Scotland's excluded or under-represented communities. Would a new configuration of individuals develop more enabling policies? In developing discourses about social capital in all its forms, these are areas that merit further exploration in future policy study and research.

The role of the leadership class was most explicit in the recent review of poverty and social exclusion in Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2001b). The authors acknowledge the support of personnel drawn from the Scottish Government, peak lobby groups, universities and local authorities, but it would appear no input was sought from the people who were the focus of and potential users of the report. The report provides a detailed descriptive summary of statistical collections. As such it may be a basis for asking questions. However, by largely ignoring issues of diversity in its compilation of statistics, it can be seen to take a one size fits all approach, rather than addressing the need to ask uncomfortable questions about the experiences of minority groups and the relevance of policy actions for the diverse groups.

A characteristic of the development of policy in Scotland is the process of consultation. For instance, the *Curriculum for Excellence* document (2004) draws its vision from the National Debate consultations in 2003. There is an assumption that the National Debate produced sufficiently robust and representative views to inform the shape of 21st-century Scottish education. However, the scope, tone and content of the consultation document, the consultation process and the information from the consultation responses selectively inserted into the post-consultation summary were largely determined by the education polity. While dozens of consultative sessions were held, were the voices of the disenfranchised represented, heard or given place? As a consequence, although premised on the need for wellbeing of all young people, and of promoting school participation, attainment and wider achievements, the report may not have prioritised what practitioners and disenfranchised people may consider important, such as examining whether the school system operates to reproduce advantage and disadvantage or promotes or denies social justice or equality of opportunity.

*The Report on the Child Protection Audit and Review* (Scottish Executive, 2002b) provides a contrasting approach. Commissioned and supported by the then Scottish Executive, it was carried out by a multi-disciplinary team with contributions from a number of voluntary organisations. It audited the roles of public service agencies in

188 purposively selected cases, and conducted interviews with hundreds of young people at risk. In addition, it made a systematic review of research, consulted experts, and considered public views about child protection. The research processes used in this study demonstrate how policy development can create linking social capital that can be utilised to carry forward the findings. This report illustrates both the strengths and limitations of linking social capital in public service in Scotland. A limitation is that even with such an inclusive approach, many affected by the report will not have been directly engaged. Among the significant strengths of this report is that it draws on a range of evidence from different types of agencies such as *Childline Scotland* and *Parentline Scotland* and the research appears to be used critically and fairly reported. The outcomes of the research are central to the proposals of the report. There is clear evidence of a cross-disciplinary approach. The report draws on practice in a wide range of professions and its recommendations apply equally to this range of professions. The recommendations impact on a wide range of outcomes for young people, either directly or indirectly.

*How might the concept of social capital be explicitly put to use in future policy?*

If social capital is to become an effective lever within an educational and social policy framework then one of the key features of social capital, namely *trust*, needs to take root among the key players within the education community. The education polity, researchers, practitioners, learners, and communities in their diversity form part of the key players group. Policies are more likely to flourish if they receive widespread support from these groups. Strategic transitions in thinking around education policy formulation are needed. Hence active use of social capital has a place in both the formation and the form of potentially more productive policy. This should include (a) developing trust and reciprocity; (b) mutuality and reciprocity; (c) values and norms.

*Developing trust and reciprocity*

Aspirational policies are more likely to be effectively operationalised if relevant participants in the implementation process are enabled to fully engage, participate and comprehend the need for the policies. Community regeneration and education policies assume that all members of the community will sign up for the suggested means of improving their lives. Education policy assumes that all teachers will take forward the aspirations of policy and share the vision of the policy document and make connections between various education policies, including the intended connection between *A Curriculum of Excellence* and policies on equity. Investment at the policy development stage by involving a wider and more open network will assist in generating trust and in broadening support for policy developments. Part of the essential process of developing reciprocity will require wider involvement in framing policy discourses instead of simply consulting with various stakeholders from different backgrounds to frame discussion papers.

The relationships between the education polity, practitioner, pupil and parent communities need to become more transparent and tangible. An inclusive approach to policy formulation where those who use policy and those who implement policy are viewed as equally knowledgeable partners would develop the reciprocity that is required and help to avoid a deficit approach.

There remains a need for those in educational policy and research communities to consider how classroom teachers and children's services practitioners from health and social care can be enabled to engage with policy development to shape models of professionalism and jointly identify strategies that support the implementation of aspirational policies within local contexts. Equally, learners, and particularly young learners and their parents, need to be included in policy formulation and implementation. The perspectives of children and young people concerning how

social capital connections could be made and used to assist them to improve educational attainment need to be included. There is a need to move away from only involving those who might be termed ‘the usual suspects’, that is, those who are most readily available to consult or who are perceived as tried, tested and trusted. The mechanisms by which this can be realised need to be explored by education policy researchers.

#### *Mutuality and reciprocity*

Policy development marked by mutuality and reciprocity is essential if we are to better understand how attainment for those most deprived can be best achieved. Mutuality and reciprocity constitute two key concepts of social capital, and the challenge is to operationalise them in policy formulation in a systematic way at the personal, organisational and communal levels. We offer the following suggestions:

- Reciprocity should be evident in the nature of policy writers’ relations and involvement with all stakeholders including those from minority and disadvantaged backgrounds whose voices are generally not heard. Reciprocity necessitates a valuing of others in the community, parents and social networks outwith schools as having something worthwhile to contribute;
- Mutuality and trust should be evident in the policy arenas that identify and agree the shared values, goals, and interests which shape policy in Scotland’s schools and communities.

One of the key areas where practices based on mutuality, trust and reciprocity are most important is within the context of the integrated community school (ICS) where a wide range of staff need to work effectively together to meet the needs of children. ICS staff will include teachers, teaching support staff, social workers, health service staff, police, and community workers from the voluntary sector. Integrated community school policy aims to establish and develop inter-professional ties. Integrated community school policy implementation will therefore be supported by research that explicitly considers how inter-professional connections and social capital, nationally and at local level can be developed to achieve the aspirations stated in policy.

**At a cultural level,** all ICS staff need to have a sense of belonging and connectivity to their environment and fellow workers and therefore issues that limit a sense of belonging need to be addressed. For example, collaborating practitioners need to understand what excludes, demotivates and disempowers self and others. To help young people to value diversity and to value themselves, they need to experience a healthy and cooperative school environment which operates with a genuine appreciation of diversity and commitment to principles of equity.

**At a structural level,** each individual working within the school should know what their rights and responsibilities are and how to exercise those entitlements in productive linkages. The capacity to use social capital depends upon learning how to act reciprocally in networks at all levels. Informal school and community networks are critical in this learning process and each individual should be enabled to learn how to develop a positive sense of personal agency power. Importantly in the context of achieving school policy goals, it should be noted that the absence or the loss of such personal power and potential for agency by individual learners or staff could lead to disenchantment, territorialism, indifference, mistrust and inertia.

While policies alone cannot achieve all that is advocated above, nevertheless an appreciation by policy writers of the potential consequence of particular policies on inter-professional collaboration is needed if policy is to contribute to improving pupil experiences of school, to contribute to removing barriers to learning (both personal and systemic) and to assist the building of trust, networks and bridges

between practitioners, home and school, and among networks of pupils, teachers and other practitioners.

#### *Values and norms*

Policies have macro or national aims and objectives that frame their scope and purpose. However, ignoring in policy that there will be different individual identifications with group norms, values and diversities such as faith, ethnicity, cultures, language, disabilities, orientations, age, and gender, on the basis that education is for *all*, leaves the practices in relation to such issues within policy implementation to local schools and communities. It also denotes a degree of 'naïve egalitarianism' (Causey *et al*, 1999: 34) where it is assumed that treating people all the same will achieve fairness. Unless specific individual identities and diversities are acknowledged in policy, related issues cannot be identified nor appropriate local solutions developed and resourced. Failure in policy to explicitly recognise and name diversities results in curricula and pedagogy that exclude individuals and so can negate the intention of educational policies to contribute to continuous improvement for all.

The explicit acknowledgement of diversities at policy development and formulation stages needs to be carried through to policy evaluation. Critically, representatives from Scotland's diverse communities need to be involved at all stages so that those who assess the implementation and impact of policy have the requisite knowledge and experience of equity matters to ensure that policy will function to secure social and educational inclusion.

#### CONCLUSIONS

We suggest that for policy to promote the kinds of social capital that will improve the lives of the most marginalised, a more inclusive and well resourced policy process is needed. For any policy to persist and succeed in its aspirations, careful consideration is needed regarding the resources required to take forward specific policy objectives. Unless the necessary financial, staffing and other resources accompany new policy, there may be ad hoc implementation of the policy vision and objectives and a breakdown of trust and regard. Acknowledging the funding, operational, and other issues inherent in our recommendations, we suggest that an adequate resourcing framework needs to accompany all new policy; and this framework needs to be communicated so that those who implement policy feel appropriately equipped and supported in that task.

Social capital offers a potentially fruitful way of conceptualising the resources of networks, norms and values, trust, reciprocity and mutuality, which integrally underpin and critically shape the quality of the learning experiences of children and young people both within and beyond school. It is timely that policy makers identify and analyse the effects of policy in building Scotland's social capital resources, and the effects of social capital on outcomes of schooling. The role of policy statements is to articulate a set of expectations, and to create a vision with which those involved can engage. We conclude that to give effect to the aspirational statements of the Scottish Government, and to improve the lives of those most marginalised, future policy reviews and research should examine if and how the key components of social capital are applied in education policy.

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<sup>1</sup> AERS is the Scottish Applied Educational Research Scheme. Refer to the web site at [www.aers.ac.uk](http://www.aers.ac.uk) for further information.