

Consultation *and* engagement? The reshaping of teacher professionalism through curriculum reform in 21st Century Scotland¹

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ABSTRACT

Currently schools in Scotland are engaged in major curriculum and assessment reform entitled Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). In common with other areas of education policy pre- and post-devolution, the CfE development process has been characterised by consultation, but additionally 'engagement' has been sought with stakeholders. This paper offers an account of the development of the engagement process and reports key findings to emerge from within the profession. Drawing mainly from data derived from teachers who participated in the process, the paper considers the re-professionalising claims attached to the new flexibilities within the revised curriculum. The paper initially addresses the challenges faced by the profession in working with looser curriculum structures that afford a higher degree of professional judgement to teachers and greater autonomy to school leaders to build the curriculum to meet local needs. In the discussion that follows, it emerges that those teachers who experienced fuller 'engagement' with the draft curriculum materials, through piloting them, tended to be more wholehearted in their disposition towards the new curriculum and its associated pedagogy, than those who had only been 'consulted', through completing questionnaires, for example.

INTRODUCTION

The school curriculum in Scotland is currently subject to a major process of review and development. Following the National Debate on Education (2002), a consultation exercise on school education, the then Scottish Executive (now the Scottish Government) convened a Curriculum Review Group (2003) to consider the aims and purposes of education for the 3-18 age range. The work of the Review Group culminated in the publication in November 2004 of a proposed Curriculum for Excellence.

¹ Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the annual conferences of the British, American and European Educational Research Associations in 2009, 2010 and 2010 respectively. We are grateful to our colleagues in the UK-wide research group on Curriculum, Assessment and Pedagogy Reform (CAPeR-UK) for helpful discussions on these matters: Louise Hayward (University of Glasgow); Dominic Wyse (University of Cambridge), David Egan (University of Wales Institute, Cardiff) and Carmel Gallagher (Queen's University, Belfast).

A Curriculum Review Programme Board subsequently embarked on a three-year development programme (2004-07) to map the overall architecture of the revised curriculum, a process that included small-scale practitioner engagement (2005-06). Draft experiences and outcomes (indicating evidence that might be observed to evaluate pupil progress and achievement) for each curriculum area were released in stages from November 2007 until May 2008, accompanied by an engagement strategy to afford opportunities for feedback from the main stakeholder groups – teachers, parents, employers and representatives from local authorities, colleges and universities (November 2007-December 2008). A research team from the University of Glasgow² was commissioned to collect, analyse and report data gathered through the engagement process via online questionnaires, school trialling feedback and stakeholder focus groups (January-December 2008).

This paper draws on one strand of the engagement strategy and focuses on teachers' responses to the publication of the draft experiences and outcomes as expressed in a series of focus group discussions. A key element underlying the account is the conceptions of teacher professionalism that have influenced teachers' responses and interventions. The views of teachers are considered under three main headings: professional discretion and collaboration; pedagogy and assessment; learning across the curriculum. The discussion that follows considers the processes of change and the significance of the distinction between 'consultation' and 'engagement'. However, before presenting our findings and discussion we consider recent developments in curriculum reform and describe the methods used in this study.

CURRICULUM REFORM

An emphasis on goal-orientation, content integration and the development of transferable skills is a recurrent theme in curriculum reform internationally. The traditional 'grammars of schooling' (Tyack and Tobin, 1994) – linear progression by age and stage, fixed conceptions of knowledge, primary emphasis on outcomes measurement – are challenged by the emergence of the new discourses of the 'learning society'. Making the case for a future-oriented curriculum, Kress (2000: 141) has argued for 'a re-alignment from a curriculum focused on knowledge as a stable, even if complex, 'entity', to a curriculum focused on uses of knowledge-as-information in relation to specific domains of application'. A future-oriented curriculum addresses 'learning for understanding' and involves the reconceptualisation of 'assessment careers' as 'learning careers' (Ecclestone and Pryor, 2003) The identification of inter-disciplinary themes is an important strategy in reducing fragmentation and promoting higher levels of integration. Reid (2005:66) has described, "a switch from 'teaching for subjects' to teaching through subjects for capabilities". This is evident in Australia in the New Basics programme, Queensland (Lingard *et al*, 2003) and the Essential Learnings

2 In addition to the authors of this paper, the project team included our colleagues Alison Devlin, Dely Elliot, Kevin Lowden, John Hall and Stuart Hall. Numerous colleagues in the Departments of Curriculum Studies and Religious Education within the Faculty of Education at the University of Glasgow, also assisted in the analysis.

curriculum framework, Tasmania (Melville, 2008) and Canadian provinces and territories in the Common Essential Learnings framework (Saskatchewan Department of Learning, 1991). Similar reforms have been undertaken in Finland (Hautamäki *et al*, 2002) and New Zealand (Hipkins *et al*, 2005).

The Scottish response to this challenge is found in the articulation of the 'four capacities' (and associated attributes) in Curriculum for Excellence i.e. that the school curriculum should enable all children and young people to become successful learners, responsible citizens, effective contributors and confident individuals. The curriculum review process is underpinned by a set of design principles - to extend breadth and depth, enable progression, enhance personalisation and choice and support the provision of learning opportunities that are relevant, coherent, challenging and enjoyable (SEED, 2004a, 2004b, 2006).

It is important to locate the curriculum review process within the wider 'modernising agenda' (Arnott, 2005) initiated by the New Labour administration and continued by the minority Scottish National Party government (following the May 2007 election). The policy document *Ambitious, Excellent Schools* (SEED, 2004c) set out the modernisation agenda for Scotland's non-selective comprehensive schools. Teachers and schools were afforded greater freedom to tailor learning to the needs of their pupils. Within a framework of national guidance, schools were encouraged to explore flexible, creative and innovative approaches to school improvement. Following *Educating for Excellence: Choice and Opportunity* (SEED, 2003) the Curriculum Review Group identified the following strategic priorities:

- De-cluttering the curriculum to reduce overload
- Improving transition between stages of schooling
- Tackling disaffection and disengagement in the middle years (11-14 years)
- Increased flexibility in age and stage progression routes (vertical and/or lateral)
- Recognising achievement through accreditation of wider learning
- Tackling the 'opportunity gap' (equity issues) and promoting inclusion
- Improving opportunities for vocational education (14-16 age group) to suit individual students needs.

Operationalising curriculum reform in this direction requires expanded opportunities for teacher co-operation and collaboration and an extended view of teacher professionalism, beyond narrow conceptions of teachers as pedagogical technicians. Approaches to curriculum reform that have endeavoured to 'engineer' change through top-down policy prescription and the production of 'teacher proof' materials and resources have tended to overstate the degree of control that is attainable within school settings (Ball and Cohen, 1996; Hammersley, 2002). As Cuban (1998:453) reminds us, 'schools change reforms as much as reforms change schools'.

Practitioners are key change agents with the capacity to embrace, accommodate or resist policy direction. For example, during the introduction of the English National Curriculum, *Bowe et al.* (1992:120) commented that programmes of study were “not so much being ‘implemented’ in schools as being re-created’, not so much ‘reproduced’ as ‘produced’”. Braun et al (2010) use the term ‘policy enactment’ to draw attention both to agency and to continuing changes that are an inherent part of the policy process. An awareness of teachers’ agency is particularly significant when considering curriculum reform that challenges deeply embedded professional identities associated with subject expertise, especially within the secondary school.

METHODS AND SOURCES OF DATA

This next section of this paper draws on analysis of transcripts from 20 focus group discussions involving 237 teachers. Focus groups of about 90 minutes duration were convened for each of the 14 curriculum areas in Curriculum for Excellence (including four regional groups for numeracy and literacy) (April-May 2008). Participants were selected from the Curriculum for Excellence online ‘register of interest’ established by Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) for practitioners. This database was supplemented by contacts drawn from the teacher education network of the University of Glasgow to ensure adequate representation of teachers from early years, primary, secondary and special education settings, as well as subject association representatives and Local Authority advisors. Cross-sectoral groups were convened to accommodate discussion in the context of transition across the 3-18 age range. Initial invitations were issued via email, followed by telephone/email prompts to increase participation. On average the ratio of invitees to participants was 3:1.

A member of the university research team acted as the moderator for each of the focus groups. The question guide employed by focus group moderators was constructed in consultation with partners in Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS). The questioning route opened with identification of participants’ current understanding and engagement with the draft experiences and outcomes; and developed to promote discussion of the extent to which the revised guidance was likely to support reflection on current practice, strengthen cross-curricular links and enhance pupil motivation and engagement. Participants were also asked to identify professional development issues arising from the proposed reform of the school curriculum and the implications of these in their current work context. Focus group discussions were digitally recorded to support full verbatim transcription. Analysis of the twenty transcripts was supported through the use of NVivo 8. The coding scheme applied to transcripts of the curriculum area focus groups was based on the four themes specified by LTS, which provided a simple structure: CPD requirement, exemplification, elaboration and re-write/edit. Under each of these lead headings, subheadings emerging from the analysis were added³.

³ More complete details of the project methodology are included in the full report from the project, available at http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/Images/GUfinalreport_tcm4-539659.pdf.

FINDINGS

The following section offers an overview of some of the key findings organised under three themes: Professional discretion and collaboration; pedagogy and assessment; and learning across the curriculum.

Professional discretion and collaboration

Many teachers within the focus groups welcomed what they perceived to be a move away from a prescriptive approach that constrained teacher creativity. 'Freedom' and 'flexibility' within the Draft Experiences and Outcomes were associated with enhanced levels of professional autonomy, especially by teachers working in primary schools. For experienced teachers in primary schools, Curriculum for Excellence was associated with a partial return to more integrated or holistic ways of working. It was suggested that the 5-14 curriculum had been a 'very rigid framework' that encouraged primary schools to adopt the more subject-based orientation of secondary schools with allocations of time to particular 'subjects'.

As a profession I think this is our chance and we have to grasp it.
(Primary headteacher, Literacy and English)

There is an awful lot more freedom for teachers. That's the whole idea behind Curriculum for Excellence; you're going to bring back professionalism so you have a model where you don't have to exactly follow what the Council say in the planning.(Primary headteacher, Numeracy)

Senior managers suggested that the revised curriculum afforded scope for professional discretion and allowed school leaders to become more responsive to particular local circumstances:

I thought there was a great deal of flexibility in them [ie the Draft Experiences and Outcomes], to allow me and my school to really pursue things that we felt were relevant to our area and the kids in our school. Even looking at the Development Outcomes, to me there's not a great deal of nitty gritty, which I think is actually a positive thing. I'm quite confident that we can develop courses that suit our needs at our different stages. (Principal teacher secondary, Social Studies)

It was acknowledged that greater scope for the exercise of professional judgement might present cultural challenges in the early stages of implementation as teachers adjusted to a less prescriptive curriculum model. A recurring theme in the focus groups was the dilemma posed by affording a greater degree of freedom where the parameters of professional responsibility had shifted towards the management of learning resources and environments for learning (curriculum delivery), rather than curriculum design (curriculum building):

A lot of staff have lived through 5-14 and a lot of schools went down programmes of work. It's quite scary for teachers now to think that they have got this freedom to plan. I want to give them that freedom, but I

think we need some kind of skeleton there behind the skills progression. (Primary headteacher, Numeracy focus group)

We're so used to a set of guidelines for everything. We know them inside out and now that safety blanket is being taken away and we've been given this. I can see why. I understand it's about vision. It's about how you're going to challenge youngsters for the future and prepare them. I can understand all that, but we do need some more specific framework. This is very general and it's very vague. It's very good but it isn't as specific as we've been used to and I think it does pose problems for us. (Principal teacher secondary, English and Literacy)

Whilst teachers within the focus groups generally welcomed higher levels of discretion, there was some reluctance to become overly reliant on local judgement and a perceived lack of direction left many teachers unsure of how to proceed. Within the responses there is an implicit acknowledgement of the riskiness of autonomy and a sense of exposure to potential error by removal of the 'safety blanket' of prescription. Concern was expressed about 'getting it wrong' and the dangers of moving too far from the 'comfort' of 'the measure' within a wider framework of accountability:

The key strength is also its key weakness. It's flexibility - or vagueness, however you want to say it - that's its key strength but at the same time we need a bit of reassurance of what we're looking for. (Principal teacher secondary, Modern Languages)

I love the creativity and the freedom that it brings but I worry that I am not seeing anything that gives me a level to which something is going to be measured. Everything we do is measured all the time. Everything has to be measurable, so I'm wondering what the balance is between active learning, creativity and freedom and 'the measure'. I worry that initially people will go off and do their own thing and we'll end up with a hundred versions and then you're surprised when somebody comes in and measures it and says that's not really what we meant. (Primary headteacher, Numeracy)

Across the range of curriculum areas, varied levels of confidence were expressed in relation to the capacity of the profession to take forward Curriculum for Excellence. Teachers with different levels of experience, and across the range of positions of seniority, were divided on the extent to which the Draft Experience and Outcomes presented sufficient structure to scaffold the required planning, monitoring and assessment. Serious concern was expressed about variability in interpretation between individual teachers, departments/faculties, schools and authorities. There was a strong call for high quality, nationally coordinated CPD delivered locally to promote engagement with the profession and the involvement of the profession in the formulation of local responses. The process of desired change was typified as one of collaboration and partnership working at local level, rather than the 'roll out' of more traditional top-down models of change.

We don't have a national education system in that it is not the responsibility of our national government to deliver education. It is the responsibility of the local authorities to provide education and it has been that way historically. I like the idea that the national Government is setting forward the things that really matter and are important. There are a lot of issues that need to be addressed but they need addressing by authorities and by teachers in schools working together. (Secondary Principal Teacher, Numeracy)

The importance attached to collaboration with external partners at a local level was not always equally evident in descriptions of school level developments and there are clear implications for leadership in the enactment of Curriculum for Excellence. The focus group discussions contained references to a range of different approaches to professional learning and curriculum development in schools. Accounts offered by a small minority of secondary heads of department, suggest that changes to programmes of study and classroom practice may follow a conventional 'cascade' model, rather than develop from a process of school-led collaborative planning. A minority of comments retained the view that curriculum development was the responsibility of senior staff and could be 'delivered through inservices' to the wider teaching staff.

To me it's like driving a car, you know. I drive a car but I don't build an engine. I'm asking teachers in my department to teach lessons. I'm not asking them to write courses at the minute. If that comes, I can write the courses. I can tell them what to teach next. (Secondary Principal Teacher, Maths).

Surely it is up to management and a co-ordinator to train accordingly and then do a presentation to the rest of the staff to make sure they are aware and that they know that within this context that's what you are doing and then marry that off with the resources within the school. (Secondary classteacher, Health and Well Being).

Other teachers described more collaborative forms of development that sprang from opportunities for dialogue with colleagues through a variety of channels and at different levels. These included inter-authority seminars, the activities of associated schools' groups and the formation of in-school collegiate working groups. There was great enthusiasm for enhanced opportunities to participate in such activities in preparation for full implementation. Teachers involved in the formal trialling process appreciated the opportunity to reflect on current practice and experiment and/or plan for change.

Uppermost among teachers' concerns was the need for time and space to support appropriate school-level development opportunities. This was frequently associated with 'buy-in' or 'ownership' of expected revisions to practice. The credibility of proposed changes was associated with the degree of self-determination achieved by experienced teachers engaged in collaborative planning. Joint work was identified as a crucial element in working towards consistency in interpretation across the profession. Opportunities for school-wide planning were identified as a key aspect by respondents across the three sources of data – focus groups, trialling feedback and questionnaires.

Pedagogy and assessment

Focus group participants frequently described a 'methodological shift' required to support Curriculum for Excellence. Several contributors noted the significance of the Assessment is for Learning (AifL) programme (SEED, 2005) to support formative assessment in schools in preparing the ground for the revised curriculum.

It's not just about laying out the syllabus for the teacher. It's more about the stepping stones for the young person...but I think the methodological shift is there if schools are committed to AifL. (Secondary headteacher, Numeracy)

I don't think you could have Curriculum for Excellence without AifL. You can't have a new curriculum and then try to force that into an old form of assessment. I think that this curriculum will need to have a new way to assess - reform of assessment. (Secondary classteacher, Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools)

Some teachers acknowledged that Curriculum for Excellence would challenge teachers to promote higher levels of active engagement through collaborative and cooperative learning, which would require enhanced skills, a commitment to enquiry and a more facilitative style. Colleagues who favoured didactic teaching techniques informed by a transmission model of learning would face particular challenges in extending their repertoire. Whilst promoting more active and experiential learning, teachers welcomed the flexibility to select teaching and learning approaches tailored to specific needs.

The hardest thing for any teacher in Curriculum for Excellence is giving up that power and letting the children discover and learn for themselves in as many different activities as you can provide for them. They will learn more and remember it for longer if they have discovered it themselves. So the day of standing in front of a board and talking at children all the time is gone. (Primary headteacher, Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools)

A small minority of focus group participants voiced some concern about the readiness of the profession to undertake the pedagogical shift required by Curriculum for Excellence. These contributors suggested that sustained support was needed to build 'confidence' and were cautious about the impact of recent developments. These extracts indicate uneven rates of progress and may indicate some divergence between publicly professed commitments ('espoused theories') and formal records of practice and how practice is actually informed (Argyris and Schon, 1978).

I hear a lot of talk about formative assessment but when you go into classrooms it's not really happening. I do a lot of work with observations and it's really not. They're not really sharing learning intentions. They're not really using wait time properly. There's not a lot of discussion going on. It's very much on the surface and it's not deeply embedded yet in practice... It's a long process. I think we kid ourselves if we say we've got it cracked. We're not there yet. We've got a long way to go. (Secondary Principal Teacher, Maths)

A lot of what's going on, especially in our specialist subjects, where they are so unconfident, they'll write it down, it'll look as though the boxes have been ticked. Have the kids actually had that experience? No. I think this document is just going to replace 5-14 with another set of mythology as to what's happening. (Faculty Head secondary, Expressive Arts)

Several teachers in promoted posts, across the curriculum areas, commented that accountability to external bodies might act as a potential inhibitor of change. Frequent references were made to the powerful influence of inspection on school level policy and practice. Despite the revised approach to inspection, with its increased emphasis on school self-evaluation, many participants appeared to continue to question whether there had been a shift away from a 'narrow' 'attainment agenda'.

HMI [i.e. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education] still have the attainment agenda and they will still be looking to see where children as individuals have made progress and I just don't see how that all fits together. We have professional autonomy, we can be creative and innovative in the best sense of all of these words and then you are still going to be measured in a quite narrow way. I still find it quite paradoxical. (Principal Teacher, Literacy and English)

For some teachers there was an assumption that a wider range of methodologies would require an investment in time that was not available within the constraints of the assessment calendar. Whilst willing to engage with more creative methodologies, it was assumed that this would be more time intensive. The demand of 'getting through the syllabus' was seen as limiting opportunities for more active learning. Teachers in secondary schools commented that producing consistently high levels of pupil performance in external examinations was an important source of esteem. The professional identity of the secondary teacher, as subject specialist, is linked to pupil performance in subject-based examinations. High levels of attainment are associated with respect from parents, pupils and colleagues including senior managers. Given the currency attached to attainment, 'successful' teachers needed to be convinced of the value of moving away from 'what works' in terms of producing examination results.

In this department there's great resistance to the idea of this when they're getting the results from the kids and that's what they're paid to do. What this is about, it's about our changing role as a teacher and that [point] isn't made overtly. (Principal teacher secondary, English and Literacy)

Several contributors to focus group discussions raised the issue of communicating with parents. Some participants suggested that many parents were principally concerned with rates of progress and attainment, rather than processes or contexts of learning which they regarded as appropriately devolved to education professionals. It was suggested that parents might experience overload and difficulties deciphering the language used to express

the wider purposes and principles of Curriculum for Excellence. Teachers requested further guidance on policies for reporting to parents:

If you went through this with parents, “Your child is an effective contributor, a responsible citizen, a confident individual.” They’d just say, “Ah, but is he any good? Did he pass? Is he doing okay? Right, that’s fine. Don’t blind me with this”. (Secondary Principal Teacher, Classical Languages)

A minority of participants noted that the transformational change proposed in Curriculum for Excellence would entail adjustment by all partners, including parents. Some contributors acknowledged that parent-school relationships could be consolidated through improvements in communication, particularly information that is exchanged about learning and the new learning context.

We have to re-educate parents, so that they don’t think they’re going to get umpteen jotters crammed full of stuff at the end of the term; that it’s much more experiential learning and they won’t necessarily have a bit of paper or a jotter as proof that they’ve learned. (Secondary principal teacher, Literacy and English)

In summary, several teachers noted a tension between the aspirations of Curriculum for Excellence for new learning and perceptions of an outcomes-driven system of assessment. Participants from primary and secondary schools talked of ‘double vision’ and ‘different worlds’ in describing the multiple and competing demands made of them. A primary headteacher commented that the Draft Experiences and Outcomes and the national assessments ‘totally contradicted each other’ (numeracy group). A secondary faculty head described how teachers were caught between ‘different philosophies’ and expected to deliver the agenda of both:

Are we looking for relevance for achieving qualifications or are we looking for relevance to develop these four capacities? To me they don’t lie well together and somebody needs to make up their mind what they want out the other end of the school system...The teachers are going to be the piggies in the middle again, who are being asked to deliver two entirely different philosophies at the same time. (Faculty Head, Expressive Arts)

Learning across the curriculum

One of the stated aspirations of Curriculum for Excellence is the promotion of interdisciplinary learning: “taking learning out of ‘silos’ to establish better connectivity in learning” (Smuga, 2008). The greatest challenges can be anticipated where the boundaries constructed between discrete or specialised ‘subjects’ are strongest.

Accounts offered by teachers in the focus groups frequently made reference to how different sectors/phases were differently placed to make connections across the curriculum. Practitioners in early years settings and special schools reported that the ways of working suggested in the proposed 3-18 curriculum were consistent with current good practice.

One of the strengths within the special [education] sector is that teaching any particular subject in isolation has never made any sense. So we have maths and numeracy embedded in all of the subject areas just now. For instance, when we're teaching maths we have frameworks which show where PSE, where RE, where social studies fit in, and we haven't been able to necessarily wait for all of the outcomes to come out, because that's very much the way that we work. (Special school depute, Numeracy)

Whilst common in the early years, primary headteachers note how integrated approaches have become less common in the later stages of primary education. They suggest that a perceived turn towards 'subjects' has eroded the capacity of some teachers to respond positively to opportunities to develop integrated approaches to planning. More experienced primary school teachers are able to draw on previous experience of thematic approaches to learning; more recent entrants to the profession may require additional support.

When we talked about this as a staff, the infant teacher found it easier to relate to than upper school because she's in the habit of doing cross-curricular plans and looking across the whole of the curriculum at topics, touching on all of the areas. Since this last year, whenever she's doing topics she's building herself plans or curricular webs so that with every topic she does, she knows she's touching lots of bases. Further up the school they're finding it more difficult. (Primary headteacher, Numeracy)

The promotion of interdisciplinary learning within the Draft Experiences and Outcomes, particularly within the core areas of numeracy, literacy and health and well-being, was generally welcomed. Secondary school teachers were quick to identify potential benefits in cross-subject collaboration, including the identification of areas of overlap that might highlight differences in modes of instruction. Shared areas with differences in approach were cited most often by teachers of science and numeracy/mathematics.

In the science department there were three different methods of teaching equations which were not the same as within the maths department. From that, we ended up getting together and agreeing a common methodology. (Principal teacher secondary, Numeracy)

It is not surprising that reservations were most likely to be expressed by teachers in the secondary sector, for whom subject specialist status is an important source of identity and whose daily work is organised according to subject boundaries. Reservations were related to the practical/operational dimensions of promoting cross-subject work, often expressed in terms of workload and coordination issues; or identity issues between school subject communities expressed in terms of the defence of subject status against possible 'dilution'.

Responses offered in the focus groups indicate that there is not a shared understanding of what constitutes 'cross-curricular' or 'interdisciplinary' work in secondary schools. Some teachers associated cross-curricularity with a planned 'project' or 'one-off event'. Others demonstrated an understanding of

cross-curricularity as a sustained commitment to the provision of experiences that connected learning across the curriculum.

They seem to me to be one-off events and the whole aim of Curriculum for Excellence is to have cross-curricular experiential learning going on more or less all the time. (Secondary Depute, Numeracy)

Several of the curriculum area focus groups suggested that promotion of cross-curricular links, as they understood it, would require additional staffing to support inter-disciplinary learning in classes. Examples were offered of teachers from different disciplines engaged in collaborative planning and co-teaching. Resource and timetabling implications within secondary school structures were emphasised as potentially significant inhibitors.

To get cross-curricular work really going, you don't want a music teacher in a class, you want a music and an art teacher, or you want a music and dance teacher or you want your drama and dance going together. There has to be flexibility within the schools and we're pared to the bone. (Faculty head secondary, Social Studies)

Some concern was expressed about the willingness and capacity of secondary 'subject hosts' to embrace the cross-curricular foci of numeracy, literacy and aspects of health and well being. A lack of specialist professional training and the need for additional support for non-specialists was frequently noted. Within the focus groups, participants suggested that there is a danger that core curriculum areas may fail to become 'embedded' and remain the responsibility of 'home' subjects, such as maths, English or physical education. From this perspective, cross curricular themes were considered to be an extension of traditional subjects. In managing competing demands on teachers' time, other contributors noted that subject teaching was consistently regarded as a core concern; with cross-curricular work regarded as peripheral:

It has to be embedded in the documents for all the other subjects. If it's to be taken as seriously as I think Learning and Teaching Scotland want it to be taken by teachers of different disciplines it has to be in there from the word go. We've missed the boat already on that one, so we have to get in there as quickly as we can or else it [literacy] will always be viewed as the job for an English teacher. (Principal teacher secondary, English and Literacy)

The promotion of connections across the curriculum through interdisciplinary learning presents challenges for senior managers charged with ensuring coherence; a problem described by Reid and Scott (2005:184) as one of achieving 'a bird's eye view of the curriculum landscape'. School managers and teachers recognised the challenge of translating cross-curricular objectives into everyday systems for monitoring continuity and progression for learners:

As a manager within school I monitor forward plans. We monitor breadth and balance. If they are all crossing over one another, how do you know

how much maths has been done? How do you know how much language has been done? It is the monitoring aspect that concerns me. (Primary depute, Science)

DISCUSSION

Collecting, analysing and reporting the data that were generated in relation to the Draft Experiences and Outcomes, highlighted the wide range of views amongst teachers concerning the development of Curriculum for Excellence. In making sense of the proposed changes teachers drew on personal practical theories, the distinctive histories of their 'subjects', the influence of recent professional development experiences and the professional cultures in which they worked. Teachers in all sectors of education (3-18 age range) welcomed the emphasis on 'methodologies' – referring to enhanced opportunities to encourage 'active' and 'cooperative learning' and a commitment to the development of 'thinking skills' and 'personalised learning'. The relative success of some aspects of the Assessment is for Learning initiative (AifL) in promoting pedagogical change (see Hayward *et al*, 2004, for a critical analysis) was cited as a key factor in preparing teachers to respond to the opportunities presented by Curriculum for Excellence. In the secondary sector, teachers identified mixed policy messages and felt constrained by a school improvement agenda which they felt continued to prioritise performance in national tests. Teachers of students in the public examination years were more risk averse in their orientation to change, particularly in advance of the outcome of a concurrent review of national qualifications. Similarly the promotion of cross-curricular/whole school work, although generally welcomed, was mediated through teachers' strongly held subject/stage identifications and was advanced in the context of the recent (and initially unpopular) introduction of faculty structures in secondary schools. Possibilities for joint planning were influenced by teachers' experience of 'collegiate time' or non-class contact time following the regulation of teachers' working hours as a result of the McCrone Agreement (SEED, 2001).

In reviewing the full range of data that we analysed, it emerged that the process of engagement itself demonstrated how those teachers most closely involved with developing the Draft Experiences and Outcomes were able to learn from each other and to respond to the feedback that was generated. Throughout the process there did appear to have been a growing sense of confidence that the increased flexibility and openness of the approach taken presented an opportunity for increasing professional engagement by all concerned. There was also recognition that pupils themselves can play a part in curriculum development.

This study suggested that as schools moved from trialling to 'full' engagement – or enactment - from 2010 there would be a need for sustained 'across-boundary collaboration' (Fullan, 1999). Teachers' reading of the revised curriculum was heavily influenced by their beliefs about teaching and learning and the institutional contexts and accountability frameworks in which they work. Opportunities offered

by the introduction of a less prescriptive curriculum, with the flexibility to exercise professional judgement, need to be supported by conditions conducive to collaborative planning and critical reflection and review. In this study concern was expressed about the consistency of teachers' interpretations of the draft experiences and outcomes at individual classroom level. In describing the kinds of professional development needed to support systemic curriculum change, teachers emphasised the importance of new and sustainable (face-to-face and electronic) networks to support professional learning within and beyond the school at authority, regional and national levels.

Following submission of the University of Glasgow report (April 2009), Development Teams in Learning and Teaching Scotland responded to feedback from the profession. The response process is summarised on the LTS website⁴ as follows:

Groups of curriculum area and subject specialists drawn from all sectors of education and national organisations examined the analysis of responses for each curriculum area and made recommendations for action to refine and supplement the draft experiences and outcomes. Further engagement was then used to test reactions to the proposed changes - those involved included a wide range of practitioners, partners and specialists.

As an outcome of the lengthy development, engagement and review process described above, some sets of Experiences and Outcome were changed more than others, in the document that was published in 2009 (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2009). Curriculum areas that were subject to least revision included languages, numeracy and mathematics and religious education in Roman Catholic schools. It was apparent that influences on the production of the final sets of Experiences and Outcomes, and the extent of the changes made, were not limited to technical issues of clarity (wording) or to the structure of school subject knowledge, but also reflected relative stakeholder power, organisation and expertise⁵.

Indeed, curriculum reform offers an important case for the study of education policy processes. There are some distinctive features of the Scottish policy context, with particular emphasis on partnerships between stakeholders and on the role of agencies, such as LTS. Furthermore, as Looney (2001) argues in the case of Ireland, in order to get a full understanding of curriculum policy it needs to be considered in relation to policy in each of the other 'message systems' – assessment, pedagogy and organisation (Looney draws on the work of Bernstein and on Ball, 1994).

In the Scottish context, Priestley and Humes (2010) argue that lessons from earlier experiences of curriculum reform had not been learned. In particular they draw on 20th century curriculum theory (particularly Lawrence Stenhouse

4 <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/understandingthecurriculum/whatiscurriculumforexcellence/howwasthecurriculumdeveloped/processofchange/index.asp> (accessed 18/08/2010)

5 It was not the aim of this study, nor of this paper, to analyse these matters. However, most of the relevant written material needed to undertake such an analysis remains available.

and Vic Kelly) to critique Curriculum for Excellence as somewhat confused in its conception and therefore unlikely to achieve its stated intentions. It is, they say, an uneasy mixture of content, product and process driven models of curriculum, 'being essentially a mastery curriculum dressed up in the language of the process model' (358). They suggest that 'the operational end of CfE is... arguably inimical to the underlying purposes of the curriculum as expressed in the four capacities' (ibid).

Some of the data that we reviewed revealed a degree of scepticism in some quarters as to whether the invitation to engage with the draft experiences and outcomes was genuine and wholehearted, rather than being a somewhat superficial consultation. Indeed, those teachers who were most actively involved through the opportunity to participate in the trialling were, over time, convinced that their professionalism was respected by the policy community. Thus, our study draws attention to the need for clarity regarding the distinction between 'engagement' and 'consultation' as processes in the implementation of change. In the context of curriculum reform, simply inviting comment without an investment in the resources to enable teachers to engage in curriculum development (ie 'consultation') risks playing into the hands of those cynics who queried whether any real change between the draft and the final Experiences and Outcomes would occur.

These developments highlight the importance of a situated perspective on curriculum reform. From the devolved context of Scotland, we are attentive to the apparent contradictions within a 'governance turn' (Ball, 2009) that 'empowers' school communities at local level whilst maintaining strong central steering of a national reform agenda validated through consultation. In appraising the re-professionalising prospects for CfE, we acknowledge that teachers are positioned in 'contradictory spaces' (Ranson, 2007). This paper opened with a review of the intentions and original vision for CfE. The principles of curriculum reform drew on strong versions of participation. As the reform story has unfolded the significance of the interrelationship between curriculum reform and the context, form and conditions for teachers' professional learning has come to the foreground. As expectations of full engagement in all schools are now in force, the need to sustain the depth and breadth of professional engagement with CfE prioritised in the design and trialling stages of the reform process by teachers as the principal agents of change, is ever more important.

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