

FROM THE EDITORS

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It is an honour to be invited to be the co-editors of a journal that has had, and continues to have, a leading role in the dissemination of research findings in Scottish and international education. We join an august group of past editors: Colin Holroyd (1978-81); Joyce Watt (1982-84); John Darling (1985-90); Walter Humes (1991-95); Angela Roger (1996-1998); Donald Christie (1999-2002); Gari Donn (2002-06); Mark Priestley (2007-10) and Ian Smith (2011-13).

This is our first edition as co-editors of the *Scottish Educational Review* and we look forward to the challenge of maintaining the high standards and quality of the journal. We have decided to work as co-editors because our research interests complement one another and, importantly, we have both benefited considerably from the many meetings and discussions that have taken place during the process of editing. In taking up this role we would also like to thank our predecessor, Ian Smith, for all his detailed help and guidance. His assistance has proved invaluable in the process of editing our first volume of the *Scottish Educational Review*. We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contribution of Ian Smith to the *Scottish Educational Review*. He has been editor of the journal since 2011 during which time he has discharged the editorial duties with great diligence and academic integrity.

We would like to begin our first editorial with an update on changes in the editorial responsibilities for the journal. This is the final volume that will feature David Millar as Assistant Editor Reviews and we would like to thank him for his contribution to this edition and his contribution to the *Scottish Educational Review* since 2002.

This edition explores education in Scotland from a number of different perspectives: international policy, historical, research and curricular developments. Our intention has been to reflect the dynamic nature of Scottish education and its study in Scotland but also to highlight some of the contemporary and historical challenges and debates. We strongly believe that it is important to place the investigation and study of Scottish education in a wide international frame. International ideas, themes and research findings have become increasingly important in the research, policy and practice of education in national contexts. We would further argue that the debates and examination of Scottish education make a significant contribution to the international thinking

and understanding of education. The first two papers by Bob Lingard and Sam Sellars and by Ian Menter exemplify this by placing developments related to policy and to research in Scottish education into a wider backdrop in which the Scottish perspective is used to illuminate the impact of global policy trends.

We begin with Lingard and Sellar's exploration of PISA. The media takes a great interest in the outcomes of the international assessment programmes such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competences (PIAAC) reveals the influence of global educational policy on individual education systems. Though the term 'PISA' is very much part of the language of education its origins are less well known. Lingard and Sellars provide an informative and insightful account of the OECD, its development and its current work. They then critically examine the workings of international organizations such as the OECD with national, regional and local levels of education, using theories of rescaling. The authors offer an alternative theoretical model based on an understanding of 'typologies of power of reach' to explore the relationship between a supranational organization and the education system within a country. The OECD and other international organizations are often perceived as exercising power 'downwards' on to individual educational systems. However, Lingard and Sellars demonstrate that the relationship between an international body and an individual education system is much more complex. The focus of the investigation is an analysis of the video which was designed to be viewed by Scottish pupils prior to their completion of the PISA tests in 2012. The close reading of this video highlights the way in which engagement in PISA is part of a wider project of promotion for political independence; engagement in PISA becomes a means of defining the independence of Scottish education.

Menter's paper, *Scottish Research in a Global Context – Dependence, Independence or Interdependence*, also reflects the historical moment. This paper is based on the SERA (Scottish Educational Research Association) lecture delivered at the SERA Annual Conference at the University of Glasgow in November 2013. In publishing this paper, we are pleased to follow the tradition of publishing the SERA Lecture in the Scottish Educational Review. Menter continues the discussion on the political control of research that was initiated by Humes (2013) in the previous edition of this journal. Menter provides an historical and comparative perspective, demonstrating the historic distinctiveness and valuable contribution of research within Scottish Education. However there is no room for complacency as Menter highlights the fragility of funding streams. Some of the dangers lie in the historical antipathy towards educational research and also the current focus on 'big data'. Menter examines some of the developments in big data including the launch of randomized trials in England. However it is not just educational research that is under scrutiny but the social sciences *per se* and there are now efforts to underline the importance of the social sciences. The current trends in social science research, particularly the focus on large funded European developments in interdisciplinary research, may mean that the position of educational research is not clear. Nevertheless Menter highlights the possibilities of research in education in the future and the contribution of Scottish educational research and researchers to the wider UK context, Menter asks us to

consider the importance of maintaining these 'cross border' connections and collaborations - whatever the outcome.

The next two papers explore the common theme of the *Curriculum for Excellence*. Both papers explore aspects of current developments, but raise deeper questions about learning and the conditions in schools which can foster innovative approaches to learning. This means both papers are pertinent to wider issues of policy and practice in educational systems.

The article by Stephen McKinney, Stuart Hall, Kevin Lowden, Marjorie Smith and Paul Beaumont examines the experiences of groups of teachers collaborating on interdisciplinary projects across the subjects of science and religious education. The authors undertake a detailed analysis of the current guidance on interdisciplinary learning and highlight that this is an approach and set of practices still very much in the making in Scottish education. Therefore the project investigated here has much to contribute to understandings of the nature and design of interdisciplinary learning. We are familiar with the controversies in other systems around creationism and the place of faith and science and so developing an interdisciplinary programme combining science and religious education can be seen as the 'hard test' of interdisciplinarity where two subjects maintain their disciplinary integrity but bring together perspectives and learning experiences that are meaningful for learners. This study illustrates how productive it is for teachers to work across subject boundaries. However such working cannot exist in a vacuum but must be actively supported by the school leaders.

Beth Christie and her colleagues, Simon Beams, Peter Higgins, Ross Nicol and Hamish Ross in their paper explore another dimension of the *Curriculum for Excellence*, that of outdoor education in Scotland. The area of outdoor education has been the topic of two previous articles in the *Scottish Educational Review* (Beames *et al.*, 2009; Ross *et al.* 2007) reflecting the growing significance of this area. The article reveals that in the 1960s and 70s the work on physical outdoor education in Scottish curriculum was recognized internationally but from the late 1970s substantial ground was then lost. We are now in the midst of resurgence of interest, but as McKinney *et al.* found in their study, there remain significant questions about design, resourcing and development opportunities which need to be progressed if we are to realize the potential of this area. The study by Christie *et al.* to examine the current developments in outdoor education builds on a previous study conducted in 2006. While the 2006 study focused on specific subject areas, the current study reported in this paper explores outdoor education from the stance that this is now an entitlement for learners and questions the preparedness of all teachers to take forward this area. As Christie *et al.* point out outdoor education is now embedded in the *Standard for Registration* (GTCS, 2013) alongside the issue of 'learning for sustainability' and so outdoor education is now a major component of all learners' experiences across all sectors for learners 3 to 18.

Local community involvement in public services is firmly on the agenda with a commitment by the Scottish Government following the Christie Commission on public service delivery. School education is one area of the public services where the role of the local community and particularly of parents has been an area of

significant policy development. Parental involvement in the learning of their children is now routinely part of the work of schools but debates remain about the role of parents in the governance of schools. The introduction of School Boards in 1988 which provoked considerable debate among teachers, authorities and wider groups, is often regarded as a watershed in Scottish education with regard to a parental role in the governance of schools. Jim O'Brien demonstrates that these debates have a longer history. Following the Wheatley Report (1969) on local government, School Councils were established in early 1970s. O'Brien's paper charts the debates around the consultation process undertaken by the Scottish Office looking at the reform the School Councils. The paper examines the process of consultation which itself received much criticism and then the feedback received from a wide variety of bodies. The paper provides a detailed historical account of this failed attempt to reform School Councils, which were widely acknowledged as being ineffective. It also demonstrates that while effective participation is seen as something to be fostered, contemporary efforts to establish an enhanced form of participation by the community provoke the same degree of debate.