

Institution: University of Stirling
Unit of Assessment: C25 Education
Title of case study: School based Curriculum Development
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Our research on curriculum and teacher agency has shaped curriculum policy and teacher development in two Scottish local authorities and a third had embarked on this route at the end of the period. Secondly, the research is informing the national curriculum review being undertaken by Education Scotland. Consequently, it is being used in teacher development programmes that are promoting improvements in the classroom. It has also informed scrutiny of policy among a wider professional audience and raised awareness of complex processes of curriculum reform within the broader public discussion in Scotland.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The research offers new insights into the ways in which teachers are able to achieve agency in their day to day work and the importance of addressing contextual factors in school when implementing new policy. This especially relates to difficulties raised in the implementation of policy when teachers are subject to conflicting pressures (for example tensions between a role of curriculum developer and demands for teacher accountability through high-stakes assessment). The research identifies factors that hinder policy aspirations to raise teacher agency in curricular innovation, and develops a model of curriculum change that rests on teachers as agents of change.</p> <p>The research focuses on school-based curriculum development and teacher professional learning. Initially based on earlier work by Sally Brown and Donald McIntyre on teachers' understandings of classroom practice, the new work has been led since 2003 by Professor Mark Priestley. The research has been iterative, conducted in tandem with teacher professional development work, and it is innovative, both in applying existing curriculum theory to new policy landscapes, and in the development of new theory. Central to this activity has been a long-standing partnership (since 2003) with Scotland's second largest education authority, The Highland Council.</p> <p>The research is both conceptual and empirical. It draws upon the realist social theory of Margaret Archer, pragmatist theories of agency, and curriculum theory from an earlier era of school-based curriculum development. It also draws on Priestley's association with the work of Hayward, Gardner and others on assessment reform, which was widely influential in shaping practice, and is specifically cited as an influence on the Scottish Government's assessment framework for the Curriculum for Excellence (http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/341834/0113711.pdf). Empirical study was conducted in three broad phases, in tandem with programmes of teacher professional learning.</p> <p>. 2002-2005: <i>a primary focus on improving assessment practices, especially formative assessment.</i> This phase included involvement in a national pilot project and teacher professional development programmes, as well as parallel doctoral study in schools. Research was funded by the then Scottish Executive, involving analysis of national data and empirical work in schools. Outputs included five journal articles, a report, and subsequently Priestley's doctoral dissertation.</p> <p>. 2006-2009: <i>teacher development.</i> Researchers worked directly with teachers in dedicated teacher learning communities to support the implementation of curriculum and assessment policy in The Highland Council. Research was funded by the Scottish Government, developing case studies of teachers' work, and theory development. Outputs include two working papers, a report, and five journal articles.</p> <p>. 2010-present: <i>local authority-wide support for curriculum development.</i> This phase focused on developing case studies of teachers' work in developing the curriculum, as well as a survey of</p>

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teachers' views on issues relating to the new curriculum. It was supported by a further research grant from the Scottish government, and two ESRC awards (a research project on *Teacher Agency and Curriculum Change* (<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-000-22-4208/read>), and a seminar series on *Curriculum for the 21st Century* (<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-451-26-0837/read>)). Outputs include two reports, a book chapter, a book about the school curriculum and two journal articles.

3. References to the research

Hayward, L., Priestley*, M., & Young, M. (2004). Ruffling the calm of the ocean floor: Merging practice, policy and research in assessment in Scotland. *Oxford Review of Education*, 30(3), 397-415 [Impact factor 0.446]

Priestley, M. & Humes, W. (2010) The Development of Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: amnesia and déjà vu. *Oxford Review of Education*, 36(3), 345-361. <http://hdl.handle.net/1893/2110> [Impact Factor 0.791]

Wallace, C. & Priestley M. (2011) Teacher beliefs and the mediation of curriculum innovation in Scotland: A socio-cultural perspective on professional development and change, *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 43(3), 357-81 <http://hdl.handle.net/1893/3367> [Impact Factor 0.973]

Priestley, M., Miller, K., Barrett, L. & Wallace, C. (2011) Teacher learning communities and educational change in Scotland: the Highland experience. *British Educational Research Journal*, 37(2), 265-284. <http://hdl.handle.net/1893/2123> [Impact Factor 1.14]

Priestley, M., Edwards, R., Miller, K. & Priestley, A. (2012) Teacher agency in curriculum making: agents of change and spaces for manoeuvre, *Curriculum Inquiry* 42(2), 191-214. <https://dspace.stir.ac.uk/handle/1893/3119> [Impact Factor: 0.373]

Priestley, M. and Biesta, G. (eds) (2013) *Reinventing the curriculum: new trends in curriculum policy and practice*, Bloomsbury, London <http://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/reinventing-the-curriculum-9781441134813/>

The 2004 publication by Hayward, Priestley and Young, listed above, was the most popular download for the *Oxford Review of Education* in 2004 and 2005. Priestley & Humes (2010, listed above) was most popular download for the *Oxford Review of Education* in 2010, was listed in the Routledge Education Class of 2011, and is widely used as recommended reading by Initial Teacher Education programmes in Scotland.

The research has attracted £212,289 in external funding:

- Teacher agency and curriculum change, ESRC, £79,095, 2011-12, RES-000-22-4208
- Curriculum for the 21st Century: Theory, Policy and Practice, ESRC (seminar series), £9,494, 2011, ES/I001646/1
- Building upon success: extending and sustaining curriculum change in partnership with the Highland Council, Scottish Government, £93,000, 2010-11
- Teacher Assessment, Scottish Qualifications Authority, £8,200, 2010
- Assessment is for Learning, Scottish Government Schools Directorate (formerly Scottish Executive Education Department), £22,500, 2002-8 (grants in 2002, 2003, 2004, 2007 & 2008)

4. Details of the impact

Highland Council policy

Our research is embedded in Highland Council's CPD Strategy for teachers. The Director of Schools described the research as having a 'significant impact'. The model of curriculum engagement developed in the research (sense-making opportunities; fitness for purpose; identification of barriers/drivers; cycles of curriculum development) is significant in that it is now a

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priority for Highland, reflected in council policy documentation. Policy and practice have been directly influenced by two working papers and a research report. The research informed the 2012-13 CfE Strategic Plan, and the guidance for primary and secondary schools on curriculum implementation.

In 2012, Calum MacSween, the Council's Director of Schools, stated that:

The strength of the University of Stirling research is that it bridges theory and practice. For example, in addition to the papers written for – and about – developments in Highland, recent work on Teacher Agency has been discussed by a sub-group of our CfE Strategic Group and will be discussed further in 2013 as we absorb the implications of the research. [...] We plan to embed the University of Stirling approach to Professional Enquiry Skills in a developing CPD Strategy.

Highland Council schools

The research has particularly influenced the Council's professional development programme. In December 2012, the 110 participants were awarded Professional Recognition Certificates by the General Teaching Council for Scotland.

In December 2012, Mr MacSween wrote that: *Priestley and his team have provided significant levels of CPD which have invariably been praised as 'making sense' by practitioners...The commitment to smaller scale events and encouraging class / school based research have provided us with a legacy of a small but committed group of staff committed to professional research and reflection and who will be agents of change when we get through this 'busy phase' of CfE implementation. The team's willingness to work at micro level – in schools, in ASGs, with small groups of subject or primary specialists – has left us with the seed corn for future expansion into school based curriculum research which will go deeper than the popular TLCs.*

East Lothian Council

Since 2012, the curriculum development model has been adopted by East Lothian Council. The Council's Quality Improvement Officer wrote that it has enabled teachers *'to question [their] approach to teaching and learning, [...] promoted professional discussion about [their] different approaches'*, and *'made teachers more aware of the original purpose of CfE'*. Darrin Nightingale, Head of Education at East Lothian Council, has said that *Several papers by Professor Priestley have been important in influencing key strategic decisions for the education service in East Lothian.* In particular, he described them as *pivotal in our decision to invest in a partnership with Stirling University to support the authority's approach to curriculum development and enhancing teachers' professionalism. This marked a change in the way we as an education service were prioritising staff development opportunities so as to offer more collaborative, sustainable models* (October 2013). More recently, Perth and Kinross Council decided to use the research to inform teacher development.

National policy

The research has influenced national policy, mainly through Education Scotland. Graham Norris, Assistant Director for School Years at Education Scotland, said in October 2013 that the research *helped to inform actions now being taken at a national level by Education Scotland. A new team of Senior Education Officers is using collaborative enquiry to promote improvements in the classroom, working with groups of practitioners in schools. Education Scotland is also in the process of establishing a new national process of curriculum review which will be on-going and will involve all of those who have a stake in the curriculum. The context and planning for both of these important work streams was informed by research carried out by Stirling University, notably in Highlands and in East Lothian education authorities.* In addition SQA, as well as two councils, were partners in our ESRC seminar series. The research has been showcased in seminars delivered to the Scottish Government (June 2012; February 2013) and Education Scotland (December 2012).

Finally, a 2011 paper by Priestley based on the research is reproduced in an Open University text for undergraduate and masters' students (C. Wise, P. Bradshaw & M. Cartwright (Eds.) (2013) *Leading professional practice in education*, Sage), with impact on initial teacher education and continuing professional development in the UK and beyond.

Public engagement and debate

Priestley has developed a role as a public scholar, with the aim of improving public understanding of the complexities involved in curriculum change. Particularly since the publication of *Developing Curriculum for Excellence: Summary of findings from research undertaken in a Scottish local authority* in 2012, he has been in wide demand as a speaker and commentator. Details of the research were widely published (including *Times*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Scotsman*, *Herald*), on radio (Radio Scotland, 11/04/12) and TV (BBC Newsnight, 12/04/12). References continue to appear (e.g. *Times*, 17/09/12 and an interview with Priestley in the online US news site, *Education Week*, 24/4/12). This wider public engagement has helped improve the quality of public scrutiny and debate and contributed to improving public understanding of educational research.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. Highland Council CPD materials (2006) -
<http://www.highland.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/2636FE02-71B9-4D2D-84C5-E957E6CAEEE3/0/Frameworkpaperpdf.pdf> and http://www.hvlc.org.uk/ace/aifl/Unit_A2.htm
2. Education Scotland research bulletin, June 2012
http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/RR_June2012_tcm4-725658.pdf
3. BBC Newsnight broadcast, 12/04/12.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzVI2HE4vz4>
4. Media coverage – The Scotsman, 11/04/12.
<http://www.scotsman.com/news/education/curriculum-for-excellence-failure-at-the-heart-of-school-reform-1-2225705>
5. Media Coverage – Daily Telegraph, 11/04/12
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/9198231/Scottish-teachers-floundering-over-Curriculum-for-Excellence.html>
6. Education Week interview.
http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/finding_common_ground/2012/04/curriculum_for_excellence_scotlands_common_core.html
7. Kenneth Allan (GTCS Council member) blog
<http://kennethsthoughts.blogspot.co.uk/2012/07/further-education-and-senior-phase-of.html>
8. Glasgow Campaign for Human Rights blog
<http://glasgowunihumanrights.blogspot.co.uk/2012/04/trouble-bubbles-on-horizon-as.html>