

Contemporary Teacher Education in Scotland

Introduction

Readers will no doubt be aware of developments in Scottish schools stemming from Curriculum for Excellence but may be less aware of very significant parallel developments in teacher education which have been happening over recent years.

The following brief list of areas will give some of the background to these developments and suggest what they may mean for Scottish education.

A list of websites which have relevant documents and information on aspects of contemporary teacher education in Scotland is provided in the Appendix.

Background

Teaching Scotland's Future (2011) (see Appendix) recognised the established strength of the teaching profession in Scotland and also that the breadth of commitment across Scottish education to professional development was impressive - but then made various recommendations about how to build on these strong foundations.

The Scottish Government, the Local Authorities, the Initial Teacher Education universities (ITE) and the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) have been taking forward these recommendations since then.

Changes made or in progress

Teacher Education Standards

All of the teacher education standards in Scotland have been revised and republished by the GTCS. They attempt to provide a reconceptualised form of professionalism for all teachers. They are more coherent and have shared values across all of them, from being a student to being a head teacher. The Standards for Registration comprise of two closely linked elements, Provisional Registration for students completing ITE and Full Registration for probationer teachers.

The Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning provides an aspirational standard which unpromoted teachers will be encouraged to use throughout their careers, helping to support their own learning so that they in turn support the learning of their pupils. The Standards for Leadership and Management are designed to support the learning and development of those following a promoted post career pathway so that they can in turn support teachers to support learners. With respect to those with specific learning needs, all of the Standards state that teachers must show a commitment to motivating and inspiring learners, acknowledging their social and economic context,

individuality and specific learning needs and taking into consideration barriers to learning.

Professional Update

GTC Scotland is working to develop a system called Professional Update which is intended to maintain and improve the quality of teachers as outlined in the relevant Professional Standards and to enhance the impact that they have on pupils' learning. Teachers already have a contractual commitment to complete 35 hours of professional development each year and also take part in a professional review and development process. Professional Update will require that every fifth year each teacher confirms to the GTCs that they are maintaining the high standards required of a teacher in Scotland's educational establishments.

The Primary BEd (Degrees variously renamed by universities, e.g. BA Hons Education)

Teaching Scotland's Future recommended that the 'traditional' BEd (the main undergraduate route into Primary teaching) should be phased out and replaced with degrees which combine academic study beyond education with professional studies. All of the ITE universities have subsequently been working towards this recommendation. While the model of the Primary teacher as a generalist covering all the areas of the curriculum is maintained, the revised undergraduate programmes will offer opportunities to students to gain expertise and a degree of specialism in particular subjects. However, there remains an expectation that all students and teachers must address the learning needs of all pupils and hence the universities continue to use and develop the Scottish Teacher Education Committee Framework for Inclusion.

Partnership

Teaching Scotland's Future further recommended that there should be strengthened partnership between the ITE universities and the Local Authorities where students and then new teachers are placed so that the early phase of teacher education would be seen as one coherent entity. At a national level work has been completed to move forward with this recommendation and the Scottish Government has been supportive of local developments. In the Greater Glasgow area for instance both Glasgow and Strathclyde universities have been working on ensuring there are closer and ongoing links between university staff and school staff to support ITE students when they are on placement in schools.

Literacy and Numeracy

Through Curriculum for Excellence **all** teachers have responsibility for literacy and numeracy across learning. Therefore, Initial Teacher Education students need to have good literacy and numeracy skills. To help support applicants Education Scotland has developed self-evaluation and support materials for people considering entry to ITE. These cover various aspects of language and numeracy. (See Appendix)

Masters level learning

There has been a move towards awarding Masters level credit within the one year ITE PGDE programmes, whether for Primary or for Secondary teaching. The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) suggests that people who have completed education at this level should, amongst other things, show, 'A critical awareness of current issues in a subject/discipline/sector and one or more specialisms'. While this type of achievement is welcome for teachers, there remain issues of parity of esteem between such Post Graduate routes and undergraduate routes. Therefore, universities are exploring how best to support Masters level learning for a broader range of teachers, from recent graduates to those further on through their careers. Work has been going on at a national level to develop a Scottish Masters Framework to support such teacher learning.

General Teaching Council for Scotland Publications

GTCS has reviewed and republished the Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education Programmes in Scotland and the Memorandum on Entry Requirements to Programmes of Initial Teacher Education in Scotland. The former sets the parameters for all ITE programmes and the latter sets the minimum level of entry qualifications for students wishing to enter ITE programmes. In addressing barriers to learning, the Guidelines state that to gain GTCS accreditation:

'Programmes must prepare teachers to be responsive to the range and diversity of the needs of all pupils including those with additional support needs. ITE programmes will therefore develop in student teachers broad knowledge of the nature and range of additional support needs, effective ways of supporting those with such needs and knowledge of inclusion and equalities legislation.'

How addressing barriers to learning including dyslexia fits into these developments

Teaching Scotland's Future suggested that all new teachers should be confident in their ability to teach the essential skills of literacy and numeracy and to address additional support needs, particularly dyslexia and autism spectrum disorders. The report further suggests that there needs to be a marrying together of both theory and practice in these areas so that new teachers have a sound understanding of the relevant research and have experience of its practical application in schools.

The report also stresses that as part of the career-long professional learning for all teachers there should be an ongoing emphasis on how to support learners, including giving consideration to the latest legislative and research-based advice on additional support needs such as dyslexia.

As noted above, this approach has been built into the revised Teacher Education Standards and into the revised Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education Programmes in Scotland. The Standards are at the heart of the early phase of teacher professional learning, both in ITE and the teacher induction scheme. They are also central to the Professional Review and Development process which all teachers in Scotland have a contractual obligation to complete on an annual basis. There is an expectation therefore that such matters will have a clear focus within the ongoing professional development of all teachers.

The ongoing review of ITE programmes across the university sector is allowing each university to give careful consideration to how it is addressing the needs of students in this important area. The matter is also featuring in the development of more effective partnerships with local authorities and schools. Having a deeper, more fully developed approach to partnership will encourage a more coherent approach from both the university and schools to issues such as Dyslexia, including how best to make use of resources such as the STEC Framework for Inclusion and the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit developed through Dyslexia Scotland.

Tom Hamilton
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Appendix: Relevant websites and documents

Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit: <http://www.addressingdyslexia.org>

Dyslexia Scotland: <http://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk>

Framework for Inclusion: <http://www.frameworkforinclusion.org/>

General Teaching Council for Scotland

<http://www.gtcs.org.uk/home/home.aspx>

General Teaching Council for Scotland Standards

<http://www.gtcs.org.uk/standards/standards.aspx>

General Teaching Council for Scotland Memorandum on Entry Requirements to Programmes of Initial Teacher Education in Scotland

<http://www.gtcs.org.uk/education-in-scotland/universities.aspx>

General Teaching Council for Scotland Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education Programmes in Scotland <http://www.gtcs.org.uk/education-in-scotland/universities.aspx>

General Teaching Council for Scotland Professional Recognition and GTCS Professional Update: <http://www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-development/professional-development.aspx>

Literacy and Numeracy for Aspiring Teachers:

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/aspiringteachers/>

National Implementation Board

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/Teaching/CPD/NationalImplementationBoard>

National Partnership Group

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/11/7834>

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework:

[http://www.scaqf.org.uk/Teaching Scotland's Future \(2011\)](http://www.scaqf.org.uk/Teaching%20Scotland's%20Future%20(2011))

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/01/13092132/0>