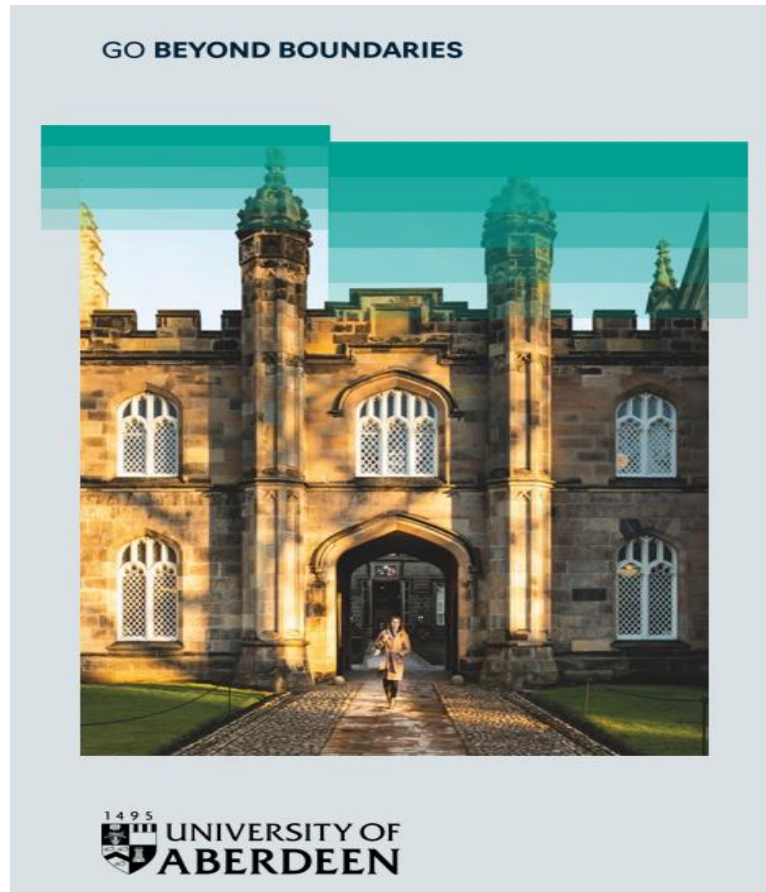




SERA is a charity registered in Scotland SC003928



Scottish Educational Research Association Annual Conference

19-21 November 2025

Education: Open to all?

University of Aberdeen

Welcome from the SERA President

On behalf of the SERA Executive and the Conference sub-committee, I extend a very warm welcome to the SERA Conference 2025 hosted by the School of Education at the University of Aberdeen on the theme of **'Education: Open to all?'**

On the Wednesday morning, we will open the conference with our first keynote from Antti Saari, an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Education and Culture, Tampere University, Finland. His keynote lecture titled, 'Accidental miracle? Genealogical remarks on governing teacher expertise in Finland' will offer us a genealogical perspective on the formation of teacher expertise and professionalism. His framing of the narrative will allow for a more complex understanding of how the 'Finnish miracle' has been constructed, negotiated and governed over time.

To end the first day of the conference our SERA Networks will come together to present on their work and share examples from over the past year. In terms of social events, we will close the first day by inviting all delegates to join us at Aberdeen's magnificent Town House for a civic reception. We look forward to thanking our city hosts, socialising and celebrating our many achievements over the year.

On Thursday, our second keynote, Professor Mhairi Beaton, Professor of Social and Educational Inclusion at Carnegie School of Education at Leeds Beckett University will continue to explore our conference theme via her keynote lecture that examines from The Inclusive Pedagogical Approach (IPA). This approach marked a significant shift in education by challenging traditional models that separated learners based on perceived ability, instead promoting teaching strategies designed to be inclusive of all students from the outset. Over the past decade, this approach has evolved, gaining international adoption and broadening its focus beyond special educational needs to emphasize equity and belonging for diverse marginalized groups. Its ongoing implementation is increasingly connected to navigating political pushback against Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives.

Thursday proceedings will end with our AGM, where we will reflect on the year, discuss our constitutional review and elect our new executive committee. The evening will end with our conference dinner which will be held at Gate 63 Restaurant, North-East Scotland College (NESCol), Aberdeen City Campus, Gallowgate, Aberdeen, AB 25 1BN. Dinner will be hosted by NESCol students studying Hospitality, and we are delighted to be working in partnership with them to provide delegates with an enjoyable SERA dining experience.

On Friday we will close the conference with a panel that brings together the presidents of our sister associations (ESAI, BERA and NERA) to join with SERA representatives to consider our next steps as an academic community.

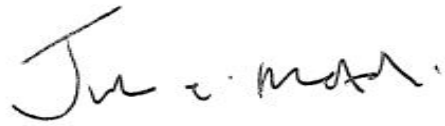
Our annual conference is only possible through the dedication of a committed team. Special thanks go to Dr Paul McMillan for chairing our Conference Sub Committee, to Doctors Stephanie Thompson and Charlene Simpson for organising the event at Dundee. Special thanks always go to Caroline Dickson, Terry Dickson, Ian Matheson and John Queen for their invaluable behind-the-scenes work before and during the conference.

The conversations and the work of SERA continue well beyond the conference. Stay connected with us on social media, using the hashtag #seraconf25. Follow us on LinkedIn and

Facebook. If you are not yet a member of SERA, consider joining us through our website (<https://www.sera.ac.uk/about/joining-sera/>) or speak to us at our conference desk.

All in all, a very exciting set of keynote presentations and papers await us in Aberdeen! Whether this is your first SERA conference, or you are returning, we look forward to your contribution across the three days.

Yours with academic kindness which we need to inhabit this complex world.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julie E. McAdam'.

Dr Julie E McAdam
SERA President

Keynote 1

Wednesday 19th November 2025, 1045-1200

Antti Saari



Antti Saari is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Education and Culture, Tampere University, Finland. His primary research interests include the history and philosophy of education as well as the sociology of knowledge. Saari has investigated the history of learning psychology, instructional technology, and the use of statistics in educational research, focusing on how these domains have been translated into practices of evaluation and classroom management in Finland, Europe, and the United States.

More recently, he has examined the role of expert knowledge in the design and use of new classroom spaces in the Nordic countries. His work has been published in leading journals in the philosophy and sociology of education, including *Journal of Education Policy*, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, and *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*. In addition, Saari serves as co-editor of the Routledge *Flashpoints* book series.

Accidental miracle? Genealogical remarks on governing teacher expertise in Finland

Since the turn of the millennium, Finland has emerged as a global reference point in education policy. The so-called “Finnish miracle” has been widely admired for its commitment to universal and equitable education—providing high-quality schooling for all, regardless of socioeconomic status or geographic location. Central to this narrative are Finland’s rigorous teacher education system, the autonomy afforded to educators, and the deep societal respect for the teaching profession. These elements have not only shaped domestic policy but have also become exportable assets in global education discourse.

This keynote offers a genealogical perspective on the formation of teacher expertise and professional respect in Finland. Rather than treating these as fixed achievements, the presentation traces their historical development through broader cultural and political trajectories. Teachers are examined as “guardians of plenty,” figures entrusted with the stewardship of national wellbeing and social cohesion. This framing allows for a more complex understanding of how teacher professionalism has been constructed, negotiated, and governed over time.

The analysis spans from the late 19th century to the apex of the Finnish welfare state, highlighting key moments such as the elevation of teacher education to the Master’s level and the implementation of the comprehensive school reform. These milestones are situated within the context of nation-building, modernization, and the institutionalization of scientific expertise. By unpacking these developments, the presentation challenges simplified narratives of Finnish educational success and invites reflection on the cultural and political conditions that have enabled—and complicated—the autonomy and respect afforded to teachers and their expertise.

<https://poisedresearch.com/people/antti-saari/>

Professor Mhairi C Beaton



Originally from the north-west Highlands of Scotland, Mhairi is currently Professor of Social and Educational Inclusion at the Carnegie School of Education at Leeds Beckett University in the north of England. Prior to taking up her appointment at the Carnegie School of Education, Mhairi worked at the University of Aberdeen. Mhairi's research focus lies at the intersection of teacher education, inclusion and student voice and she has led and participated in a number of international research projects for the Carnegie School of Education since joining Leeds Beckett University. Mhairi currently leads the University of the Arctic Thematic Network for Teacher Education for Social Justice and Diversity and its sister network the UNESCO UNITWIN network of the same name. Mhairi was recently elected President of the British Educational Research Association and will take up her appointment as Vice-President in January 2026, taking over as President in January 2027.

When first proposed as a key finding from the Inclusive Pedagogical Project hosted by University of Aberdeen, the Inclusive Pedagogical Approach (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Florian & Spratt, 2013; Florian, 2014) represented a significant shift in educational thinking. The approach challenged traditional models that separated learners based on perceived ability or need and instead promoted teaching strategies that aim to be inclusive of all learners from the outset. These principles were expanded within the Inclusive Pedagogical Approach in Action (IPAA) Framework (Florian, 2015) to support teachers and other educational practitioners to reflect on their practice, encouraging them to believe that they can teach all children, recognise and respond to learner differences without further marginalisation and work collaboratively with others to develop inclusive strategies.

Over the past decade, as a theoretical and practical approach to ensuring effective educational provision for all, the Inclusive Pedagogical Approach has been adopted by both national and international policy groups including the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE). Over the same decade, the concept of Inclusive Pedagogy has undergone significant transformation, shaped by evolving educational priorities, global policy frameworks and a growing body of interdisciplinary research. For example, further research studies have expanded the notion of Inclusive Pedagogy beyond special educational needs with a renewed emphasis on equity and belonging for many marginalised groups including race, socio-economic status, language and ability. Underpinned by the principles of Inclusive Pedagogy, the development of further frameworks and articulation of teacher competences have explored improved teaching practices including curriculum design and pedagogical strategies across multiple educational sectors. Advances in technology and the rise of digital learning environments, particularly post-pandemic, have challenged academics and practitioners to consider the use of online and hybrid settings for learning, assistive technologies and digitally accessible content. Adopting a different approach to classroom practice, the development of Universal Design for Learning has gained in popularity as a means of aiming to provide effective education for all.

Despite these many developments, the last few years have seen political pushback against Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives in some regions, making inclusive pedagogy now both a pedagogical and political act. A decade on from the Inclusive Practice Project provides an opportunity to reflect on the influence of the Inclusive Pedagogical Approach and consider what its role for the future of education might be.

Outline Programme

Wednesday

1000–1045	Registration
1045–1200	Keynote: Antti Saari
1200–1250	Lunch
1255–1355	Session 1
1400–1500	Session 2
1500–1520	Afternoon break
1525–1625	Session 3
1630–1800	Networks meet together
1900	Civic Reception, Aberdeen Town House

Thursday

0900–0950	Registration
0950–1050	Session 4
1100–1200	Session 5
1200–1250	Lunch
1255–1400	Keynote: Mhairi Beaton
1410–1510	Session 6
1515–1530	Afternoon break
1530–1700	AGM
1800	Conference Dinner, Gate 63 Restaurant
1930 onwards	Social Event

Friday

0900–0950	Registration
0950–1050	Session 7
1100–1200	Session 8
1200–1250	Lunch
1300–1400	Session 9
1410–1510	Panel
1510	Close

Content of Abstracts

Paper Name	Authors/Presenters	Paper No	Page
Papers			
Accessibility for Autistic Students at University of Aberdeen: A Visual Ethnographic Pilot Study	Shannon Babbie Melanie Whitter	001	18
Complexifying teacher education (and education) in England: an agrarian reconfiguration	Huw Humphreys	002	19
A mixed-methods exploration of school staffs' experiences of multi-sensory environment use with neurodivergent students	Kyleigh Melville Karri Gillespie-Smith Catherine Manning Katie Cebula	003	20
Reciprocal Reading to improve reading in low socio-economic families	Jo Holland Allen Thurston Maria Cockerill	005	21
Beyond the Classroom: Strengthening Pupil Engagement, Attendance, and Belonging through Alternative Education and Community Partnerships	Mark Breslin Jesse Mitchell	007	22
Decolonising Education through Garden-Based Pedagogy: Experiences in Togo	Donald Gray Laura Colucci-Gray Peter Mtika	008	23
Fostering Creative Writing through Outdoor Pedagogies: A School–Artist Partnership in Primary Education	Maria Gregoriou	009	24
Say Yes to Languages? Irish Primary Teachers' Beliefs on Modern Foreign Language Integration	Julia Collins Craig Neville T.J. O-Ceallaigh	010	25
"We can all fit" – using Universal Design Guidelines for Early Learning and Care Settings for the inclusion of all children	Mai Burke-Hayes	011	26
Using insight from teachers' stories of Professional Update to enhance policy and practice	Kathryn Brack Debbie McLeod Aileen Kennedy	012	27
" <i>They just get it</i> : Head Teachers' Narratives of Teachers Who Champion Children in Distress"	Nova Lauder-Scott	013	28

<i>"I was overwhelmed by the idea of perfect": Student teachers on revisiting their self-portraits after a period of study</i>	Heather Earnshaw	015	29
Understanding Physical Education in Northern Ireland: A complex socio-political landscape	Shirley Gray Julie Stirrup Paul McFlynn	016	30
Entangling with our more-than-human partners: Taking an Appreciative Approach to professional learning	Carolyn Cooke	017	31
'Lifting the ropes' for all children: exploring the role of place-responsive pedagogy in retuning education beyond logics of progress	Ruth Unsworth Lucy Sors	019	32
Schools in Paradise - An examination of the unique nature of resort rural schools	Robert Mitchell Stephanie Crow Lindsay Hansen Leah Matoka	020	33
Supporting culturally responsive practice in Scottish Initial Teacher Education: Reflections upon a transdisciplinary Social Studies approach	William Quirke Kathryn McCrorie	021	34
'Reasons to stay and reasons to go': Factors influencing recruitment and retention in the Scottish Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) workforce	Hannah Murison	022	35
Creating Community through Nonviolence Education: impact of international scholarly collaboration in our professional practice	Gaston Bacquet Ricardo Montelongo Paul W. Eaton	024	36
Poor things: Interrogating the ethics of desire inherent in fostering 'high' aspirations and expectations	Ruth Unsworth Matthew Clark Dion Rüsselbæk Hansen	025	38
Decolonising digital spaces for knowledge production	Sadia Ali	027	39
When Silence Speaks: Rethinking Chinese Students' Classroom Silence	Sadia Ali	028	40
The OECD's influence on Scottish education policy: A view from the archives	Louise Campbell	029	41

Co-constructing Accessible Teaching Materials in Higher Education	Faye Hendry Alyson Young Aygul Baghirova Abby Carnan	030	42
How might education reach out to all? A historical perspective on visions of equity within education	Helen C. J. Lowe	031	43
Developing an Evaluative Tool for Sustainability Resources: A Collaborative Approach between EAUC and the University of Strathclyde	Kirsty Miller Robert Collins Natasha McMillan Kathrin Mobius	032	44
Are we doing enough to support our first-year undergraduate students in ITE? Reflections from two new course leaders...	Eilidh Soussi Lindsay Gibson	033	45
(Re)-imagining health and wellbeing curriculum: transforming physical education through an Activist Approach for girls	Cara Lamb Kimberly Oliver Dillon Landi David Kirk	034	46
Listening to children: Embedding Child Voice in the Primary <i>Wellbeing</i> Specification	Ciara Blennerhassett	035	47
Generative AI Consultation Focus Groups	Maggie Mroczkowski Jamie Lawson Jake Green Rachel Whitford	036	48
Use of AI in Unit Writing – Esports Higher National Certificate, SQA	Jake Green Jamie Lawson	037	49
When Home Hurts: Schools as a place of safety for children affected by domestic abuse. <i>A systematic review of school-based interventions for children who have experienced domestic abuse and how children experience them</i>	Gillian Francis-McNeil	038	50
Trauma is everyone's business: Embedding trauma-responsive practice in the School of Education	Christine McKee Jo Gallagher Mary Lappin Joyce Nicholson Alison Phipps Marie McQuade	039	51

Experiences of first-generation immigrant parents accessing early services for their autistic children in the UK	Gamze Kaplan	040	52
Peer Relationships of Individuals on the Autism Spectrum: A Meta-Synthesis	Dilara Dali	041	53
Making the Hidden Labour Visible: Mapping Leadership, Collegiality and Support Networks underpinning Research Culture Funding Success	Zain Ul Abidin Charlotte Bonner-Evans Kay Guccione	042	54
In the Crossfire? Principals and Decision-Making within the Swedish School System	Anna Jobér Jakob Billmayer	044	55
Reflections on Piloting Film and Screen Education in Primary PGDE	Jo Gallagher	045	56
Is moral education the vehicle or brick wall to equitable education?	Chantelle Boyle	046	57
Higher Education and Colonial Continuity: The Nigerian Experience	Ebenezer Ishola	047	58
Mapping pedagogies of education for sustainable development in Scottish higher education institutions	Michael Malt-Cullen Alexander Vániev	048	59
Are you tough enough? Exploring education students' conceptualisation of resilience on a school placement	Kathryn McCrorie Felicity Carlyle-Davies Neil Cochrane	053	60
Young Carers Shaping Change: A Participation Action Research Project	Lorna Douglas	054	61
Histories and Legacies: Adam Smith, 'Enthusiasm' and the Justification of the State as Provider of Compulsory Education	Robert A. Davis James C. Conroy	055	62
A culture of optionality in Scottish (language) education?	David Vescio	056	63
Flexible Pedagogy in Practice: How University Teachers Shape International Students' Classroom Participation	Sihui Wang	057	64

Spatial Reasoning: An Accessible Gateway to Scottish STEM Success in Schools	Jack Parkinson Quintin Cutts	059	65
Using Generative AI to teach introductory programming to student teachers	Stavros A. Nikou	060	66
Educational Equity and Access Involvement Strategies in STEM Tutoring of Young People with Low-Socioeconomic Status - a Sociolinguistic Analysis	Alison Hennessy Angela Creese	061	67
Performance and Success of Veterinary Students who Accessed Higher Education through the Reach Programme	Alison Browitt Karen MacEachern	062	68
Poverty Experienced by First-Year Students in Initial Teacher Education in Scotland	Lindsay Gibson Evelyn McLaren Stephen McKinney	063	69
My reflections on, 'The art and artistry of teaching – looking beyond the quantifiable in Initial Teacher Education'	Lorna Hamilton	064	70
Early Language and cognition – a longitudinal observation across socio-economic status backgrounds	Conny Gollek Lynne Duncan Catherine Sayer Martin Doherty	065	71
Teachers' perspectives on teacher-student relationships: creating a normative order and navigating an uncertain terrain	Paul McMillan Charles Anderson Mike Jess	066	72
Challenging Simplistic Storylines: Diversity, Complexity Commonalities and the Artistry of Teaching	Paul McMillan Mike Jess	067	73
Governance V governmentality: Educational leadership in polarizing times	Lace Marie Brogden	068	74
From Policy to Practice: insights from principals of second level Gaeltacht (immersion education) schools in Ireland	Toirdealbhach Ó Lionáird	069	75
"I feel vulnerable": Exploring the dyadic experience of navigating an LGBTQ+ identity as an early career teacher in Scotland	Connor Caller	070	76

Access to Education in Migration: spaces, opportunities and rights	Pinar Aksu	071	77
GenAI in Teacher Education: A Critical Review of Readiness, Risk, and Responsibility	Stephen Murphy T.J. Ó Ceallaigh	072	78
Harnessing Teacher Knowledge for Integrated Content and Language Learning in Diverse Classrooms	T.J. Ó Ceallaigh Gabrielle Nig Uidhir	073	79
'Social Theory Walks': The city of Edinburgh as a teaching tool for social theory applied to Education	Aliandra Barlete Lindsey Horner Priyambada Seal	074	80
Young children's participation in research: spatial and relational	Jana Chandler	077	81
Exploring Rural School Leadership: Perspectives from the USA and Scotland	Romina Madrid	078	82
The Landscape of System Leadership in Scotland: From Policy to Practice	Romina Madrid	079	83
Why is tolerance not enough? Preliminary results of research on the attitudes and experiences of secondary school educators in Croatia on LGBT+ inclusivity	Marija Bartulović	081	84
<i>Go back in the closet!</i> Preliminary insights into students' attitudes toward LGBT+ inclusivity of secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia	Ana Širanović	082	85
Engaging with students as partners in schools in India: A step towards co-developing inclusive school contexts	Chinmaya Potnis	083	86
Quality education for sustainable development: Human capital and Right to Development perspective	Martha Matashu	084	87
Education for All? Exploring Leadership of Inclusion through Multiple Ethical Paradigms (MEP)	Alison Mitchell Celine McGuire Allan Lynn	085	88
Understanding the Use of Real-Time AI Translation Tools by International Postgraduate Students in English-Medium Classrooms	Chang Liu Ziyi Guo Yao Li Yinshu Zhu Sadiah Ali	087	89

Framing Equitable Teacher Engagement and Authentic Participation for Education Policy Development	Charlaine Simpson Anna Beck	088	90
From Innovation to Scale: Systemic Adaptation of an Open-Source Classroom Observation Tool in India	Siddesh Sarma Sagarika Unnikrishnan	091	91
Researcher, Practitioner and Children's Perspectives on Reading Together: A multilayered and intergenerational analysis of a picturebook reading session with young children	Nicole Smith Elizabeth Nelson Jane Stanley Soumi Dey	092	92
Educators' Sense-Making of the Evolving Mathematics Curriculum in Scotland	Sinem Hizli Alkan Corinne Angier Andy Brown	093	93
Playfulness: Transforming Teaching and Learning in Schools	Elizabeth McClure John Mynott Vicky Simpson	094	94
Intersectionality of students' affordability, technological competencies and access to educational technologies in Higher Education and implications on capability and human capital: Empirical evidence from a South African University	Benedict M Mofosi Martha Matashu	095	95
Sustaining Relationality Through the Art and Practice of Shambling	Jennifer Markides Beth Cross	097	96
Integrating Film and Screen Education into the Expressive Arts	Marie McQuade Angela Jaap Jo Gallagher	098	97
The tensions of researching immersive 3D narratives for Children	Julie E McAdam Lavinia Hirsu	099	98
Beyond the Score: Exam-Driven Inequality and the Struggle for Educational Equity in Chinese Secondary Schools	Guiping Yang	100	99
Exploring the Potential of IWBs to Support Dialogic Interactions and Communicative Language Skills in Saudi EFL Classrooms	Mohsen Jabali	102	100

Lecturers as Innovators, Survivors, or Sceptics? Reframing Blended Learning Implementation in Nigerian STEM Higher Education	Tomisin Fadamoro	103	101
Short Presentations			
Stepping outside of yourself: Exploring teacher emotions and emotion labour in Scottish FE ESOL classrooms	Orsolya Dunn	Short002	103
A Course feedback Evaluation: achievement of intended learning outcomes, clarity of assessment instructions and grading processes in <u>Work-Based Learning</u> (ACE:WBL)	Heather May Morgan Emily Cleland Toni Gibson	Short003	104
Negotiating Professional Identity in the Internationalisation of Higher Education: Malaysian Academics' Perspectives	Nur Izham	Short009	105
The Potential of Artificial Intelligence in Providing Educational Feedback in Higher Education Assessment: The Case of ChatGPT	Hasim Turkoglu	Short011	106
Posters			
Guiding Schools To Improved Performance Using A Data Envelopment Analysis Approach	Claire Andersen	P001	108
A space for listening differently: Creative approaches to gathering the perspectives of autistic young people on school quality improvement	Becky (Rebecca) McGinney	P002	109
Leadership of Physical Education in Irish Primary Schools	Ciara Blennerhassett Nicola Carse Mike Jess	P003	110
Agitating to Survive: How Black girls resist racial inequity in schooling through social justice projects	Natasha Boyce	P004	111
Navigating Policy Shifts: Self-Formation Among Chinese Master's Students in Scotland	Huiyang Lyu	P010	112

Roundtable			
Connecting practitioners through science education research: what are the challenges, where are the opportunities?	Heather Earnshaw Julie Isdale Clare Smith	RT001	114
Academic Publishing – a ceilidh open to all?	Helen Martin Claire Molloy Jakob Billmayer Anna Jobér Graham Connelly Geetha Marcus Shirley Steinberg	RT002	115
Health and Wellbeing and the Curriculum Improvement Cycle	Nicola Carse Shirley Gray Tracy Johnston	RT003	116
Professional Learning for Educational Change: Self-study	Nicola Carse Dawn Garbett Svanborg R. Jónsdóttir Edda Óskarsdóttir Alison Adams Paul McMillan Zoe Robertson Mike Jess,	RT005	117
Participative Policy Making: Democratic Legitimacy of Teacher Participation in the Curriculum Improvement Cycle in Scotland	Charlaine Simpson Anna Beck	RT006	118
In an era of 1140, how can family participation and practitioner wellbeing be supported?	Susan Henderson-Bone Conny Gollek Kirsten Moore Hannah Murison Joanne Todd Zaahira Tabassum	RT007	119
Symposia			
Postgraduate Journeys: Identities, transitions and learning experiences of international students in UK Higher Education	Emma Towers, Meg Maguire, Elizabeth Rushton, Mili Mili, Xiaojing (Chelsey) Chen, Clare Coburn, Erum Hamid, Tara Connolly	S001	122

Emotional Winds and Institutional Clouds: Human Stories from the Policy Space	Nicola Carse, Khadija Mohammed, Anna Beck, Aileen Kennedy, Melina Valdelievre, Dawn Garbett Alison Adams, Elisabeth Davies	S002	125
Brilliant Yet Shadowed - Shining a light on lesser-known thinkers of Education	Nicola Robertson, Vijayita Prajapati, Tinni Goswami, Shone Surendran	S003	129
Exploring equity in National Qualifications: Perspectives of SQA stakeholders Scottish Qualification Authority	Rachel Whitford, Laura Wilson, Maggie Mroczkowski, Colin Moore, Nevil Hopley	S004	131
Problematising Inclusion in Scottish Schools: Discourse, Voice and Participation	Marie McQuade, Alison Mitchell, Ruth McConachie, Madelaine Baker, Lindsay Lobo, Katie Fisher, Paula Dudgeon	S005	134
Curriculum Matters: Leadership, Participation and Innovation in a Changing Educational Landscape	Alison Mitchell, Madelaine Baker, Julie Harvie, Jane Arthur, Jonathan Graham, Claire Hamilton, William Corral	S006	137
Leadership, Self-Evaluation and Professional Growth in Scottish Education: Reflective Practices for Systemic Improvement	Julie Harvie, Marie McQuade, Patricia Mills, Barry Mochan, Ali Preston	S007	140
Re-thinking mathematics education through a social-justice lens in the context of the Scottish Curriculum Improvement Cycle	Cristina Mio, Sinem Hizli Alkan, Corinne Angier, Susie Marshall, Cristina Mio, Pete Wright	S008	143
Collaborating for Change: Reimagining Computing Science Education in Scotland	Stephen McKinney, Angela Jaap, Quintin Cutts, Clare Smith, Brendan McCart, Toni Scullion	S009	146
What knowledges for what sort of geography education in Scotland?	Angela Curley, Lauren Hammond, William Quirke, Steve McLeister, Kathryn McCrorie	S010	149
The pervasive presence of ideology in education: A European perspective	Stephanie Thomson, Matthew Clarke, Antti Saari, Tuomas Tervasmaki, Ruth Unsworth	S011	152
Poverty and Education Network Symposium 1: Research into Higher Education	Stephen McKinney, Jakob Billmayer, Patricia Anderson, Jill Christie, Stephen McKinney, Stuart Hall, Kevin Lowden, Peter Mtika, Archie Graham, Dean Robson, Kirsten Darling-Mcquistan, Lindsay MacDougall, Evelyn McLaren, Lindsay Gibson, Stephen McKinney	S013	156

Embedding Research-Informed Professional Learning Through Regional Hubs: Insights from the Centre for Teaching Excellence (CfTE) in Scotland	Anne Thirkell , Claire Ramjan, Angela Jaap, Margery McMahon	S014	160
Poverty and Education Network Symposium 2: Research into School Education	Stephen McKinney, Jakob Billmayer, Alastair Wilson, Katie Hunter, Edward M. Sosu, Peter Mtika, Sofia M. Pimenta, Nana Yaa Nyarko, Diane Fleischer-Djoleto, Claire Wilson, Felix Maulidi Isaac Mepenedo, Rachel Shanks, Joyce Nicholson	S015	162
Rapid Thesis			
Highlands or the World? Place-Oriented Identity Constructions of Scottish Teachers and Their Pedagogical Implications in the Classroom	Valeriia Hulkovych	Rapid002	166
Global citizenship education in secondary mathematics classrooms, affordances and constraints.	Corinne Angier	Rapid003	167
Workshops			
A framework for Learning for Sustainability in Initial Teacher Education: Next steps	Rushton, E.A.C., Aldous, S., Christie, B., King, B., Leask, K., Ramjan, C.,	W002	169
Reflecting on the opportunities and challenges of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in Higher Education	Mark Peart Leon Robinson	W003	170
Inclusive Practices for Supporting Student Writing in ITE	Rebekah Sims Sharon Hunter	W004	171
Building Research Communities Brick by Brick	Claire Andersen, Chantelle Boyle, Jana Chandler, David Vescio,	W006	173
Restorative Practice: Promoting equity for all in education	Gerard Farrelly	W008	175

Papers

Accessibility for Autistic Students at University of Aberdeen: A Visual Ethnographic Pilot Study

Shannon Babbie & Melanie Whitter, University of Aberdeen

Keywords: Autism; Education Policy; SDG 4: Quality education; SDG 10: Reduced inequalities

Strand: Inclusive Education and/or Educational Equity and Access

Background

Autism is a life-long developmental condition that affects communication, social interaction, and behaviour. University landscapes are often unpredictable for autistic adults and can present with aversive auditory and visual characteristics. On a university campus, public spaces, including teaching spaces, cafés and shops are a fundamental aspect of daily life for many people, and it is important to ensure that they are accessible to everyone.

Aims

This study was conducted to determine if the University of Aberdeen is an accessible campus for autistic adults and focuses on the Old Aberdeen and Foresterhill locations. Of interest were all building entry points, legible signage, visual and auditory characteristics, safety and security, and predictability.

Methods

This pilot study utilised a visual ethnographic (photographic) approach to document each of the publicly accessible buildings on each campus.

Main Findings

The data indicate Old Aberdeen Campus and Foresterhill Campus have made much progress in providing accessibility supports but can make yet further improvements to improve the experience of autistic adults.

Conclusions

The University of Aberdeen has a responsibility to fulfil its [Aberdeen 2040](#) goal of being an inclusive institution Open to All and its Sustainability goals of reducing inequality (SDG 10). Additionally, the university has a remit to be welcoming, navigable, user-friendly, and supportive of the diverse needs of its student body, as well as its staff and faculty.

Complexifying teacher education (and education) in England: an agrarian reconfiguration

Huw Humphreys, University of East London

Email: h.humphreys@uel.ac.uk

Keywords: agrarian; teacher education; complexity; curriculum

Strand: Curriculum and Transformation/Education for Sustainability

Teacher education in England faces curricular-pedagogical constriction, resulting from mandated conformity through a Core Content Framework (2019) and enforced reaccreditation (2021) narrowing the meaning of teaching. The effect has been to simplify, standardise and mechanise the ITE curriculum. This exploratory, theoretical work aims to use the holistic, communal thinking of the ‘new agrarians,’ (advocating for health and vitality of lands, people and creatures together), to reconfigure teacher education and the actors within it as a complexifying construct centred on affection, local community, responsibility and health.

The educational thinking of a range of agrarian writers (Berry, Shiva, hooks, Freyfogle, Bilbro, Wirzba, and others) has been analysed to establish a teleology of education governed by yardsticks of community and ecological health. This analysis is theorised within the English ITE context to critique its simplifying, standardising, and instrumentalising policies, reimagining a shared enterprise enabling children to be in the world/earth, respond to it and create meaning and future commitments from that interaction.

Emerging from this analysis are configurations of education as local, embodied and responsible, with (often) religious anthropologies speaking to issues of sustainability, community, ecology and creativity. These together have serious implications for curriculum, pedagogy, parental-communal authority and the place of affection and inclusivity in schools – and thus in ITE. English ITE’s curricular compliance with market-driven expectations has gone too far to replace it fully with a curriculum of health and responsibility, but I propose ways in which ITE might remodel and re-complexify practice, using agrarian configurations of those who work in and alongside schools, impacting how and what they teach.

A mixed-methods exploration of school staffs' experiences of multi-sensory environment use with neurodivergent students

Kyleigh Melville & Karri Gillespie-Smith, University of Edinburgh; Catherine Manning, University of Birmingham; Katie Cebula, University of Edinburgh
Email: k.m.k.melville@sms.ed.ac.uk

Strand: Inclusive Education

Multi-sensory environments (MSEs) are widely used in schools to support neurodivergent students. Little is known about how staff use them, why they are used, or students' involvement in decision-making around their use. Time and resource-scarcity has contributed to schools mainly relying on the views of staff and information from equipment suppliers on decisions to install MSEs; although the views of staff are undoubtedly important, research surrounding MSEs and their impact on student learning, wellbeing and engagement is rarely considered in the decision-making process. Exploring different staff experiences with MSEs can identify common practices and support needs. Using a mixed-methods online survey, with a minimum projected sample of 90 UK-based staff, the study aims to answer:

- 1) How does type of MSE use vary across school provision and staff role type?
- 2) Is there a significant difference between educator, support, and therapy staff in
 - a. How frequently the MSE is used and
 - b. What purpose is the MSE being used for?
- 3) Are there significant correlations between
 - a. MSE use, time since staff qualification, and self-efficacy and
 - b. MSE use, confidence and training level?
- 4) To what extent are neurodivergent students being consulted on how MSEs are designed and used in their schools?

Findings can inform the design of a pilot staff training program on how to use MSEs effectively and safely with neurodivergent students. Findings will further inform the methodology and design considerations on subsequent studies to create co-produced resources for schools on MSE design and use.

Reciprocal Reading to improve reading in low socio-economic families

Jo Holland, Allen Thurston & Maria Cockerill, Queen's University Belfast

Email: jholland08@qub.ac.uk, a.thurston@qub.ac.uk, maria.cockerill@qub.ac.uk

Keywords: Reciprocal Reading; parent engagement in learning; reading development and poverty

Strand: Educational Equity and Access

Reciprocal Reading has been widely used internationally and has been shown to be effective in raising reading comprehension skills (Thurston, Cockerill, & Craig, 2019). This paper will report results on the impact of Reciprocal Reading used by parents at home. Embedded within Vygotsky's theories of the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978), Bruner's work on scaffolding (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976) and Social Interdependence Theory (Johnson & Johnson, 2009) the project used Reciprocal Reading techniques during a design experiment in a high-poverty community in Belfast. Children and parents were recruited through three Primary Schools. The study identified 40 children who met these eligibility criteria. Fifteen parent/child dyads consented to participating in the treatment group, and were matched with 15 parent/child dyads from a control group using propensity score matching (NGRT reading pre-test and gender as matching criteria). Parents and children undertook Reciprocal Reading for 45 minutes/week for 12 weeks. Sessions were supervised by a researcher who coached reading progression via video-conferencing. The NGRT was administered pre- and post-test to all children. Results showed promising evidence that parents can improve their children's reading comprehension scores. Gains favoured the intervention group over the control group by +15.00 marks ($ES\ d=+0.25$) on the NGRT Sentence Completion sub-scale, and +5.0 on the Overall Reading Score ($ES\ d=+0.09$). Note that gains are expressed as Cohen's d , as the sample size was low and not appropriate for statistical analysis. Findings suggest that by involving the parents, parents can improve their children's reading. This information has educational significance for schools aiming to support families and surmount the barriers of capability, opportunity, and motivation, often referred to as the barriers to parental engagement. Further work is now needed with a larger-scale trial of the technique, as a limitation of the study is the small sample size.

References

- Johnson, D.W and Johnson, R.T. (2009) "An educational psychology success story: Social interdependence theory and cooperative learning", *Educational Researcher*, 38(5), pp.365-379.
- Marsh, H.W and Martin, A.J. (2011) Academic self-concept and academic achievement: Relations and causal ordering, *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 81, pp. 59-77.
- Thurston, A., Cockerill, M. and Craig, N. (2019) "Using cooperative learning to close the reading attainment gap for students with low literacy levels for Grade 8/Year 9 students", *International Journal of Educational Research*, 94 pp. 1-10.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes* (Vol. 86). Harvard university press.
- Wood, D., Bruner, J. S., & Ross, G. (1976). The role of tutoring in problem solving. *Journal of child psychology and psychiatry*, 17(2), 89-100.

Beyond the Classroom: Strengthening Pupil Engagement, Attendance, and Belonging through Alternative Education and Community Partnerships

Mark Breslin, University of Glasgow; Jesse Mitchell, St Lukes High School

Email: mark.breslin@glasgow.ac.uk, MitchellJ7@st-lukes.e-renfrew.sch.uk

Strand: Curriculum and Transformation

This paper contributes to the *Curriculum and Transformation* strand by exploring how place-based, relational curriculum approaches can support re-engagement among pupils marginalised by mainstream education. It speaks to current questions of how diverse learner needs, particularly those impacted by trauma, poverty, and exclusion can be met through inclusive, non-traditional educational paradigms (Allen et al., 2018; Perry & Winfrey, 2021).

Aims

This study aimed to evaluate how a community-based intervention, rooted in trauma-informed education (Perry & Winfrey, 2021) and relational pedagogy (Bergin & Bergin, 2009), could re-engage persistently absent pupils by fostering belonging, identity, and emotional regulation.

Methods

An illuminative evaluation (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972) was conducted to explore a 10-week, community-based intervention co-designed with a local boxing and fitness club. The programme was informed by curriculum theories of identity, belonging, and inclusion (Finn & Voelkl, 1993; Law et al., 2024), integrating physical activity, mentoring, and psychoeducational tools. The study used semi-structured interviews with pupils, school staff, and community professionals, and a focus group with parents, to examine participants' lived experiences. Participants included seven pupils (aged 11–13), three parents, eight teachers, one campus police officer and one community development officer. All qualitative data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Descriptive school attendance data were collected at four time points to contextualise engagement trends.

Main Findings

Attendance rose by **16%–55%**, with sustained gains over 12 months. Pupils reported stronger school connectedness, increased emotional literacy (Gross & Jazaieri, 2014), and reduced antisocial behaviours. The Chimp Paradox model (Peters, 2012) and Five-Point Regulation Scales supported cross-setting emotional regulation and identity reframing (Camiré et al., 2012).

Conclusions

This study highlights how curriculum beyond the classroom, anchored in emotional safety, trust, and connection can transform engagement for diverse learners. Findings align with Scotland's National Improvement Framework, *The Promise*, and the CIRCLE Framework, and advocate for systemic integration of community-rooted, trauma-sensitive approaches to educational inclusion.

References

- Allen, K., et al. (2018). *What schools need to know about fostering school belonging: A meta-analysis*. Educational Psychology Review.
- Bergin, C., & Bergin, D. (2009). *Attachment in the classroom*. Educational Psychology Review.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). *Conceptual and design thinking for thematic analysis*. Qualitative Psychology.
- Camiré, M., Trudel, P., & Forneris, T. (2012). *Coaching and transferring life skills*. The Sport Psychologist.
- Finn, J. D., & Voelkl, K. E. (1993). *School characteristics related to student engagement*. The Journal of Negro Education.
- Gross, J. J., & Jazaieri, H. (2014). *Emotion regulation and psychopathology*. Clinical Psychological Science.
- Law, N., et al. (2024). *Mindframes for Belonging, Identities, and Equity*. Corwin Press.
- Parlett, M., & Hamilton, D. (1972). *Evaluation as illumination: A new approach to the study of innovatory programmes*.
- Perry, B. D., & Winfrey, O. (2021). *What happened to you? Conversations on trauma, resilience, and healing*.
- Peters, S. (2012). *The Chimp Paradox*. Ebury Publishing.

Decolonising Education through Garden-Based Pedagogy: Experiences in Togo

Donald Gray, University of Aberdeen; Laura Colucci-Gray, University of Edinburgh; Peter Mtika, University of Strathclyde

Email: donald.gray@abdn.ac.uk, laura.colucci-gray@ed.ac.uk, peter.mtika@strath.ac.uk

Keywords. Decolonisation; sustainability; postcolonial theory; garden pedagogy

Strand: Curriculum and Transformation and Education for Sustainability

This paper critically examines the implementation of garden-based pedagogy in postcolonial Togo in Africa. As McVittie et al. (2019, p93) noted, “garden- and place-based education must grapple with the troubled histories of place and work towards decolonisation,” raising questions of how gardens’ socio-materiality can support reclaiming of cultural, linguistic, and intellectual identities marginalized during colonialism.

The project is an international collaboration involving Slow Food Togo, the University of Lomé, headteachers from local primary schools, and Scottish partners (authors), who were involved in co-designing a garden-based teacher education programme.

The project was initiated by a local Slow Food partner in Togo and began with translating an existing Scottish-based, garden education guide. This was followed by field visits to five primary schools in Lomé, Togo, and two workshops. Qualitative ethnographic and participatory methods were used to collect data through observations, participant dialogues, visual responses, and reflective discussions.

Findings revealed both practical and epistemic challenges. Physical limitations included poor access to water and gardening tools. More profoundly, colonial legacies had eroded indigenous knowledge systems rooted in local languages, which have been displaced by French in formal education. Despite this, garden pedagogy offered opportunities to share a range of different ideas about education; engage children in practical learning and discuss questions of cultural relevance of garden-based materials. Yet, tensions persisted around Western aesthetic ideals of gardens, and how various educational stakeholders could reimagine gardens as educative and emancipatory decolonial spaces.

References

McVittie, J., Datta, R., Kayira, J., & Anderson, V. (2019). Relationality and decolonisation in children and youth garden spaces. *Australian Journal of Environmental Education*, 93–109. <https://doi.org/10.1017/aee.2019.7>

Fostering Creative Writing through Outdoor Pedagogies: A School–Artist Partnership in Primary Education**Maria Gregoriou, University of Aberdeen****Email: maria.gregoriou@abdn.ac.uk****Keywords:** Creative writing; Primary education; Outdoor learning; Collaborative pedagogy**Strand:** Curriculum and Transformation

This study explores the potential of integrating creative practice into primary education to enhance children's writing by fostering both technical skills and creative expression. The primary aim of this research was to investigate the impact of a collaborative partnership between a professional artist and primary school educators, focusing on outdoor-themed pedagogies to enrich children's creative writing. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study employed observational field notes from both indoor and outdoor teaching environments, alongside children's writing samples collected at three key intervals: the start, middle, and end of the project. The findings reveal that integrating creative practices into writing instruction not only deepened students' engagement with their writing but also facilitated the development of their authorial voice and individual creativity. Teachers reported significant shifts in their teaching practices, with many cultivating a more creative and open classroom culture. The study highlights the importance of co-constructed learning experiences in promoting creativity, underlining the potential of such pedagogies to transform educational practices. By positioning creativity at the heart of writing instruction, the project contributes to the ongoing discourse on inclusive, collaborative, and transformative pedagogies within Scottish education, offering insights for broader educational reform.

Say Yes to Languages? Irish Primary Teachers' Beliefs on Modern Foreign Language Integration

Julia Collins, Craig Neville & T.J. O-Ceallaigh, University College Cork

Keywords: early years education (EYE); modern foreign languages (MFL); teachers' beliefs; teacher knowledge; curriculum reform; plurilingualism

The integration of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) at primary level invites schools to foster intercultural and plurilingual competencies from an early age. Aligned with the broader aims of the Primary Language Curriculum (PLC), the Languages Connect 'Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026' (DES, 2017) intends to introduce young learners (aged 8-12 years) to the personal, cultural and cognitive benefits of language learning while cultivating a greater appreciation for linguistic diversity and communication. As MFLs continue to embed within the Primary Curriculum Framework, understanding teachers' beliefs and perceptions becomes critical for sustainable curricular implementation. However, despite increased attention to plurilingualism and language policy in Ireland, empirical research into Irish primary teachers' beliefs related to MFL education remains limited. This study sought to investigate the beliefs, experiences, and professional reflections of 257 primary school teachers nationwide, with a view to exploring their perceptions of the value of MFL learning in the classroom, and whether its integration complements or detracts from the existing curriculum. Data were generated through a national questionnaire and analysed by variables such as school contexts and years of teaching experience. The findings revealed broad endorsement of MFL provision, though important distinctions emerged regarding teachers' professional backgrounds, perceived preparedness, and systemic support. While most participants acknowledged the pedagogical and cultural benefits of early MFL exposure, concerns were raised around implementation feasibility. This study underscores the significance of supporting teacher agency and competence in the rollout of MFL initiatives. It concludes by considering implications for national programmes such as the Say Yes to Languages Programme and Primary Curriculum Framework, highlighting opportunities to more effectively align teacher education, policy, and practice in fostering a linguistically inclusive and future-ready primary education landscape.

“We can all fit” – using Universal Design Guidelines for Early Learning and Care Settings for the inclusion of all children**Mai Burke-Hayes****Keywords:** inclusion; learning-environment; self-regulation; early-childhood-education**Strand:** Educational Equity and Access/Inclusive Education

This research strives to explore how educators can ensure the physical early learning environment is inclusive of all children and how this may support the development of the competencies associated with self-regulation. Self-regulation encompasses both behavioural and emotional processes and is often defined as developing control over one’s own responses in order to reach a desired goal (Robson and Zachariou 2022). Universal Design Guidelines for Early Learning and Care Settings were published by the Government of Ireland in 2019, to support both new build and retro fit projects in Early Learning and Care settings to incorporate key principles of Universal Design. This Universal Design framework provides flexible guidelines so that all users of the Early Learning and Care setting are considered and included, and the setting is accessible to all. Self-regulatory skills develop rapidly in early childhood, where many children spend significant amounts of time in Early Learning and Care settings. Therefore, the pedagogy of the environment is a key consideration. Using a pragmatic case study approach, this study ethically observes children’s interaction with their environment, explores the educators’ perceptions and gathers children’s insights into their early learning and care environment. Pilot data suggests that children value a predictable environment where they can make choices about their own play and learning.

Using insight from teachers' stories of Professional Update to enhance policy and practice

Kathryn Brack, Penicuik High School; Debbie McLeod, University of Strathclyde; Aileen Kennedy, University of Glasgow

Email: mskbrack@gmail.com, debbie.mcleod@strath.ac.uk, aileen.kennedy@glasgow.ac.uk

Keywords: professional update; professional review & development; teacher professional learning; appraisal

Strand: Professional, Community and Vocational Learning

This paper presents findings from a SCEL Legacy Funded study exploring teachers' experiences of Scotland's *Professional Update* (PU) policy—a statutory requirement introduced in 2014 mandating ongoing professional learning for all registered teachers, with formal sign-off by a line manager every five years. PU engagement is monitored by the General Teaching Council for Scotland through annual surveys, and there are a few policy-focused studies (Adams & Mann, 2021; Watson & Fox, 2015), but existing research offers limited insight into the lived realities of those engaging with the process. The first phase of the project reported here investigates: (1) how reviewees and reviewers describe their engagement with PU; and (2) how they perceive its role in supporting professional learning and leadership development.

Adopting a qualitative approach informed by a social constructionist paradigm (Burr, 2015), the study involved narrative interviews with 14 reviewees and 6 reviewers. Data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

Findings reveal wide variation in how PU is experienced, strongly influenced by school culture and leadership. Rather than fostering professional growth, PU was often perceived as a bureaucratic, 'tick-box' exercise, with its core purpose unclear. Some found it useful for promotion, but most expressed frustration—particularly around the opaque submission process and a clunky digital platform. Participants proposed a range of improvements, including more regular and collaborative review conversations, cross-authority professional learning, and greater access to diverse opportunities such as sabbaticals.

Collectively, the findings point to a strong appetite for a more relational, developmental approach—one grounded in trust, professional agency, and meaningful engagement rather than compliance.

References

- Adams, P. & Mann, K. (2021). Teacher professional learning and professional update in Scotland. *Education 3-13*, 49(5), 592-605.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 589–597. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>
- Burr, V. (2015). *Social constructionism*. Routledge.
- Watson, C. & Fox, A. (2015). Professional re-accreditation: constructing educational policy for career-long teacher professional learning. *Journal of Education Policy*, 30(1), 132-144.

"*They just get it*: Head Teachers' Narratives of Teachers Who Champion Children in Distress"

Nova Lauder-Scott, University of Strathclyde

Email: nova.scott@strath.ac.uk

Keywords: head teachers; stories; distressed behaviour; adept teachers

Strand: Inclusive Education

Introduction

My doctoral research explores the perspectives and stories of primary head teachers in Scotland about teachers who are adept at supporting children who display distressed behaviour. I am curious to learn what head teachers believe these teachers do, understand, believe, or value that makes them adept with this exceptional group of children. I will position my professional interest in this area within the context of the academic and policy literature.

Aims

- ☐ To justify the relevance of this topic within the context of inclusive education in Scotland.
- ☐ To amplify the perspective, stories and wisdom of head teachers, giving them a space to share their voice.
- ☐ To share initial findings from data analysis and consider how these findings intersect with themes found in the literature.

Methods

The study is underpinned by Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis methodology and is concerned with how individuals (in this case, primary head teachers) experience the phenomenon that is teachers who are adept at supporting children who display distressed behaviour. Data collection was undertaken using what I called a "story sharing" approach which takes elements from narrative inquiry and semi-structured interview approaches.

Main Findings

I am currently undertaking data collection and analysis and by the time of presentation at Conference in November 2025, I will be in a position to share initial findings.

Conclusions

By November, although not able to conclude the research, I will be able to draw some conclusions and to indicate next steps, which I will share in the presentation.

***“I was overwhelmed by the idea of perfect”*: Student teachers on revisiting their self-portraits after a period of study**

Heather Earnshaw, Edinburgh Napier University

Email: H.Earnshaw@napier.ac.uk

Keywords: portraiture; ITE; student; becoming

Strand: Professional, Community and Vocational Learning

Student teachers often embark on their studies with a clear moral vision of their reasons for becoming a teacher, clarity on the kind of teacher they wish to become, and a sense of the personal qualities they will bring. Fast forward a semester and the realities of a complex, busy profession with multiple competing demands at any one time are, as is well documented, often felt as a shock. The student needs to reconceptualise the nature of the job, but also find space to reflect on their bruised sense of self in relation to this new understanding. Part of the role of the teacher educator is to provide the opportunities and stimuli to allow students to do this reflection with intentionality and purpose as well as enabling students to recognise that professional identities are necessarily fluid, multifaceted and situated.

In this study, pre-service teachers created annotated self-portraits at the beginning of their 1-year ITE programme. The activity allowed them to reflect on, crystallise and capture their expectations of *“What kind of teacher do I want to be?”* The portraits were revisited after one semester of study which included university-based academic study and practice based in school. Students were asked to respond to their earlier artefact. What would they keep and what would they now change? This is a short interval, but a highly intensive one and a critical period for student teachers in their journey. The initial portraits were, as expected, highly idealistic. On revisiting, the students largely communicated a sense of wanting to hold onto those ideals, but of now recognising the overwhelm of *“the idea of perfect”*.

Understanding Physical Education in Northern Ireland: A complex socio-political landscape

Shirley Gray, University of Edinburgh; Julie Stirrup, Loughborough University; Paul McFlynn, Ulster University

Email: shirley.gray@ed.ac.uk, j.l.stirrup@lboro.ac.uk, p.mcflynn@ulster.ac.uk

Keywords: Northern Ireland; curriculum; physical education; teachers

Strand: Curriculum and transformation

Limited research has explored physical education (PE) within Northern Ireland (NI) and so we know little about policy or practice in this unique socio-political context. Addressing this gap, the current research explores teachers' knowledge and experiences of PE in NI and the opportunities and challenges they face.

This presentation focuses on data collected with eight PE teachers working across a range of schools (selective, non-selective, Catholic Maintained and Controlled) within NI. Data were generated through semi-structured interviews and analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Findings reveal a complex socio-political landscape shaping teachers' discourses and approaches to curriculum - in both similar and varied ways. All teachers engaged with official curriculum discourses, but this differed across school type. Teachers in non-selective schools worked more closely with the curriculum, offering cross-curricular learning to meet students' needs. In contrast, teachers in selective schools were more constrained by the role of sport, often conflating 'PE as sport'. Sport played a significant role for all teachers and was implicitly linked to gender and religion - potentially reinforcing difference/division across groups. Furthermore, curriculum structures and discourses centred around sport may contribute to the perceived 'low status' of PE within schools, reflected in limited curricular time and resources.

These findings highlight the need for advocacy around what PE is or might be within NI (beyond sport) recognising the progressive, holistic curriculum that PE sits within. In thinking how PE might look in practice, there needs to be greater time given to the subject and professional development opportunities for teachers delivering it.

Entangling with our more-than-human partners: Taking an Appreciative Approach to professional learning

Carolyn Cooke, The Open University, Scotland

Email: carolyn.cooke@open.ac.uk

Keywords: Appreciative Inquiry; Creative Writing; Imagining; Professional Learning

Strand: Professional learning

This paper shares learning from a number of professional learning experiences, including working with over 100 Early Years practitioners (Scotland), a group of mid-career teachers (Scotland) and a group of tutors at the Open University (cross-UK). All of these experiences were framed around Appreciative Approaches to Inquiry (Cooke and Saunders 2023, Saunders and Cooke 2025) which trouble dominant narratives of inquiry as problem finding and problem solving, starting instead from what is working well and what could be generative of difference (Bushe 2013, Zandee 2013, Cooperrider 2008). All the workshops have used creative writing and thinking methods to ‘story otherwise’ (Haraway in Terranova, 2016), as an experimental space for ‘making difference’. Underpinning these creative experimentations to think and do differently in professional learning, are ideas around ‘imagining’, ‘speculative play’ and the role of ‘antenarrative’ fragments (Boje 2001) to open up dominant narratives and doings, and create momentum around different stories, voices and practices. Woven throughout these creative acts has been the deliberate act of entangling with more-than-human relationships, as integral to creating differences in practices. Diffractively playing with and across the experiences of facilitating these workshops, the paper shares findings about the challenges and possibilities of creating different types of engagement as part of professional learning, and the (sometimes hidden) role of our material relationships within that.

'Lifting the ropes' for all children: exploring the role of place-responsive pedagogy in retuning education beyond logics of progress

Ruth Unsworth, University of Glasgow; Lucy Sors, York St John University

Email: ruth.unsworth@glasgow.ac.uk, l.sors@yorks.ac.uk

Keywords: place-responsive pedagogy; beyond logics of progress; educational theory and practice; philosophy of education

Strand: Education for Sustainability

"The task of education is to lift the ropes and invite children in so that they might experience and study these wonderful things of the common world." (Korsgaard, 2024)

In his recent (2024) work *Retuning Education: Bildung and Exemplarity Beyond the Logic of Progress*, Korsgaard invites re-examination of education's aims and forms in a world dominated by desires for growth and a polycrisis threatening existence on earth. In this important work, Korsgaard invites educators to form practices that forge relationships to a world in common; education that takes students beyond themselves, through others and world connection. In this paper, we critically examine opportunities for education for sustainability within Korsgaard's notions of Bildung, alienation, outrospection and commonality, and challenges surrounding inclusion and socio-economic inequality existent in a 'common world' concept. To address these challenges, we explore the significance of *place* in how students access and engage with education, arguing the value of 'situative' practices in enabling world-others-self relationships. Reading place as dynamic interconnectedness (between people, space-time, ideas and materiality), we explore place-responsiveness as encompassing and engendering plurality in the forms and outcomes of these relationships. Educators, we argue, can fruitfully plan their 'pearl diving' (Korsgaard, 2024) by first discovering students' connection to (or disconnection from) place(s) of education. To exemplify our argument, we draw on examples from a collection of anthropological studies of place-responsive pedagogy collated in our recent book *The BERA Guide to Outdoor Learning: Place-Responsive Pedagogy in Educational Research and Practice* (Sors and Unsworth, 2025). From these studies, we make specific reference to two examples. Firstly, from a 4-month immersive anthropological study of teachers' practices in a primary school in England that included time each week in the school's 'forest'. Data from the project was analysed using a new materialist lens to trace patterns in place connection and influences upon pedagogy/student engagement. Secondly, from a year-long narrative enquiry project focused on a Learning Outside the Classroom teacher training module. Data was gathered through student teacher interviews and narrative accounts from facilitators of the module and analysed using a Bordieuan-based framework expanded upon by Sors and Unsworth (2025). Place-responsive pedagogy, we argue, may help 'lift the ropes' for all children, in a world whose commonality is striated with diversity and inequality.

References

- Korsgaard, M.T. (2024). *Retuning Education: Bildung and Exemplarity Beyond the Logic of Progress*. Routledge.
- Sors, L. and Unsworth, R. (Eds). (2025). *The BERA Guide to Outdoor Learning: Place-Responsive Pedagogy in Educational Research and Practice*. Emerald.

Schools in Paradise - An examination of the unique nature of resort rural schools

Robert Mitchell, Stephanie Crow, Lindsay Hansen & Leah Matoka, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs

Research related to rural education continues to develop. Throughout the last thirty years, various new directions related to rural school operations, rural labor studies, and numerous evolutions of ongoing research on rural student achievement have been both developed and publicized throughout the world. Building upon this continual evolution, this project seeks to provide insight into the unique environments and places where rural schools operate – specifically those schools located in areas where tourism is the primary economic driver. Commonly termed “resort rural” schools by local and state education agencies throughout the United States, these schools are worthy of study as they provide another unique perspective on the operations and experiences of students in locations where there commonly exist significant disparities of wealth, a highly transient and seasonal population, and challenges in locating and securing housing.

This presentation melds two different studies (one qualitative, one quantitative) that focus on defining and highlighting the unique characteristics of "resort rural" school districts. The quantitative analysis examines common data sets related to life in these resort districts throughout the United States, while the qualitative study expands on the thoughts and perceptions of resort rural school district leadership. Using a comparative base of 16 different locations throughout the United States where tourism is the primary economic activity, analysis of school enrollment, home values, and percentages of students living in poverty were examined for commonalities and variances. Qualitative findings were derived from in-depth interviews with school and district leaders and these findings demonstrate that, while leaders in these schools do perceive that their schools are exceptionally unique, those differences may not be as pronounced as articulated by these school leaders. Findings from both these studies help define the elements of resort rural schools, and how these districts provide outstanding learning opportunities to their students – many of which are the children of service-industry workers in these vacation-destination locations.

Supporting culturally responsive practice in Scottish Initial Teacher Education: Reflections upon a transdisciplinary Social Studies approach

William Quirke & Kathryn McCrorie
Email: Kathryn.mccrorie@strath.ac.uk

Keywords: critical action research; global perspective; authentic voice; culturally responsive

Strand: Globalisation and Education

The landscape of Social Studies in Scottish secondary schools has changed significantly since the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence. A movement away from subject specific departments towards amalgamated Social Studies faculties in many settings has resulted in changes to how the subjects of geography, history and modern studies are taught with multidisciplinary approaches becoming increasingly commonplace.

In order to prepare geography, history, and modern studies student teachers for a multidisciplinary practicum experience, a new initiative known as ‘Social Studies Immersion Days’ was introduced to their Initial Teacher Education programme. This paper describes the evolution of this initiative over a three-year period.

A critical action research approach (adopting Kramis et al., 2014 model) was used by the researchers as a framework to support a continued cycle of planning, action, observation, and reflection that charted and informed the evolution of the initiative over time. Data collected via student questionnaire surveys, tutor peer observations, tutor self-reflections and tutor team discussions across the duration of the enquiry facilitated this approach.

This process resulted in changes in how tutors perceived ‘what the Immersion Days were for’, with an original specific focus on subject specific knowledge and skills giving way to a more competency-based approach over time. In turn, perceptions of Social Studies as a discipline changed, with an initial deficit view grounded in amalgamation and compromise transforming into a subject where opportunities for culturally responsive pedagogies, sustainable competencies, and global citizenship find a home and where epistemic injustice and subalternity is challenged. This paper explores this journey.

References

Kramis, S., McTaggart, R., & Nixon, R. (2014). *The action research planner: Doing critical participatory action research*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-4560-67-2>

‘Reasons to stay and reasons to go’: Factors influencing recruitment and retention in the Scottish Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) workforce

Hannah Murison, University of the West of Scotland

Email: Hannah.murison@outlook.com

Keywords: ELC; recruitment; retention; intra-sectional comparisons

Strand: Policy and Politics of Education

The expansion of subsidised childcare in Scotland (from 600 to 1140 hours per annum) (Scottish Government, 2017) means that a significant majority of children spend thirty hours per week in ELC (Audit Scotland, 2023; Scottish Government, 2023). This has implications for the workforce, in a policy and research environment where it is recognised that the quality of the ELC workforce contributes to achieving positive outcomes for children.

The seminal work of Sylva *et al.* (2004) and Taggart *et al.* (2015) indicates persistent positive effects of high-quality ELC. Supporting the ELC workforce is thus a priority, given that high staff turnover negatively impacts both children and parents/guardians. Children display more challenging behaviour when faced with uncertainty in staffing; high staff turnover leads to a reluctance on the part of parents to leave their children in the care of people with whom they have not been able to build relationships (Kwon *et al.*, 2020).

This presentation draws upon analysis of (n=98) responses to a survey of ELC staff from across Scotland, which explored the factors influencing workforce retention and recruitment within the ELC workforce. The findings suggest that the workforce lacks the resources to ensure that children with ASN are adequately supported. Other findings indicate that political agendas hinder quality, as the workforce struggles to support all children under an overwhelming workload. Additionally, systemic factors prevent staff from pursuing their vocation according to their values. Is education *really* open to *all* when the systems and politics hinder quality ELC?

References

- Audit Scotland (2023) *Early learning and childcare Progress on delivery of the 1,140 hours expansion*. Available at: <https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/publications/early-learning-and-childcare-progress-on-delivery-of-the-1140-hours-expansion> (Accessed: 20 October 2023).
- Kwon, K.A., Malek, A., Horm, D. and Castle, S. (2020) ‘Turnover and retention of infant-toddler teachers: Reasons, consequences, and implications for practice and policy’, *Children and Youth Services Review*, 115. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105061>.
- Scottish Government (2017) *A blueprint for 2020: The expansion of early learning and childcare in Scotland 2017-18 Action plan*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/448yHeO> (Accessed: 29 September 2024).
- Scottish Government (2023) *Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Progress Report*. Available at https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/43462/ELC-Delivery-Progress-Report-June-23.pdf (Accessed 24 April 2025).
- Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I. and Taggart, B. (2004) *The effective provision of pre-school education (EPPE) project: Findings from pre-school to end of key stage 1*. Nottingham, United Kingdom: Department for Education and Skills. Available at: <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/18189/2/SSU-SF-2004-01.pdf> (Accessed: 6 July 2024).
- Taggart, B., Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P. and Siraj, I. (2015) *Effective pre-school, primary and secondary education project (EPPSE 3-16+)*. London, United Kingdom: Department for Education. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a803cb240f0b62305b89fbf/RB455_Effective_pre-school_primary_and_secondary_education_project.pdf.pdf (Accessed: 1 November 2024).

Creating Community through Nonviolence Education: impact of international scholarly collaboration in our professional practice

Gaston Bacquet, University of Glasgow; Ricardo Montelongo, Sam Houston State University; Paul W. Eaton, University of Alabama

Email: gaston.bacquet@glasgow.ac.uk, rxm059@shsu.edu, pweaton@gmail.com

Keywords: trioethnography; nonviolence education; professional learning; higher education

Strand: Professional, Community and Vocational Learning

Over the past twenty years, nonviolence philosophy education has gained a foothold in curriculum studies through the work of Wang on developing personhood (2019, 2024). Its pedagogical implications have been explored by Bollinger and Wang (2013) and Zembylas (2018), while nonviolent practices in education have been examined by a range of philosophers and scholars (Chatman et al., 2025), all of which aligns with SDG 4.7 and its aim of promoting a culture of peace and nonviolence through education. In this paper, we reflect precisely on the enactment of nonviolent practices in our work as academics in postsecondary educational settings. Our paper details the work we have engaged in since March 2024 to foster and promote nonviolence education by centering on the questions: “how can we cultivate nonviolence as teachers and scholars through human relationality?” and “What are the possibilities for creating more holistic postsecondary institutions centered in nonviolent practices that honor the humanity of our communities, and our interconnected nature?”

This paper harnesses trioethnographic methodology (Lozano et al., 2023), a form of qualitative inquiry centered in dialogic exchange, analysis of artifacts, and open questioning. Like its predecessor, duoethnography (Norris & Sawyer, 2016), trioethnography centers the researchers as participants. We use as data sources a range of different artifacts excavated from our ongoing conversations in WhatsApp, a digital encrypted application that allows the sharing of text, audio, video, and other materials. Qualitative researchers are exploring the use of WhatsApp for a range of various data collection approaches (Colom, 2022; Mavhandu-Mudzusi et al., 2022; Bueno-Roldán & Röder, 2022). In alignment with trioethnography, we analyze key critical conversations to answer our guiding research questions, and through our ongoing dialogues, then put these questions and emergent understandings into conversation with nonviolent philosophy and theory.

Our paper presents liminal findings – findings in the threshold. Through our trioethnography, we have shared resources and dialogued in ways that extend beyond us to relational capacities with each other, our students and colleagues. We have inquired about ways to improve our work with our students, and asked for insights on creating spaces for loving-kindness and contemplation in our classrooms. Our paper details findings made in connection to an enacted practice of nonviolent practice and how this counteracts the individualizing logics of scholars as isolated or fully formed beings, and humanizes us through relationality and inclusion.

This collaboration has allowed us to share our resources, and perspectives on nonviolence in ways that positively impacts ourselves, our professional practice, our relationships with colleagues, and especially our students. Our collaboration has also opened spaces for creativity in our teaching and scholarship, as well the theoretical engagements we undertake. A key finding emerging from this trioethnography is how our collaboration has opened space for creativity in our teaching and scholarship (Nagler, 2013). Through the above, this paper brings missing elements to nonviolence education by focusing on how the interpersonal cultivation of nonviolence impacts educational settings in a transnational context, in line with SDG 4.7.

References

Bueno-Roldán, R., & Röder, A. (2022). WhatsApp? Opportunities and challenges in the use of a messaging app as a qualitative research tool. *The Qualitative Report*, 27(12), 2961-2976.

- Chatman, M. C., Costa, L., & Robinson-Morris, D. W. (2025). *Contemplative practices and acts of resistance in higher education: Narratives toward wholeness*. Routledge.
- Colom, A. (2022). Using WhatsApp for focus group discussions: Ecological validity, inclusion, and deliberation. *Qualitative Research*, 22(3), 452-467.
- Lozano, A. et al. (2023). Constructing meaning of the term Latinx: A trioethnography through pláticas. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 36(7), 1338-1355.
- Mavhandu-Mudzusi, A. H. et al. (2022). WhatsApp as a qualitative data collection method in descriptive phenomenological studies. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 21.
- Nagler, M. (2013). *The search for a nonviolent future*. New World Library.
- Norris, J. & Sawyer, R.D. (2016). Toward a dialogic methodology. In Norris, J., Sawyer, R. D., & Lund, D. (Eds). *Duoethnography: Dialogic methods for social, health, and educational research* (Vol. 7). Left Coast Press.
- Sawyer, R. D., & Norris, J. (2012). *Duoethnography*. Oxford University Press.
- Wang, H. (2014). A nonviolent approach to social justice education. *Educational Studies*, 49(6), 485-503.
- Wang, H. (2018). Nonviolence as teacher education: A qualitative study in challenges and possibilities. *Journal of Peace Education*, 15(2), 216-237.
- Zembylas, M. (2020). Butler on (Non)violence, affect and ethics: Renewing pedagogies for nonviolence in social justice education. *Educational Studies*, 56(6), 636 – 651.

Poor things: Interrogating the ethics of desire inherent in fostering 'high' aspirations and expectations

Ruth Unsworth, University of Glasgow; Matthew Clark, University of Aberdeen; Dion Rüsselbæk Hansen, University of Southern Denmark

Email: ruth.unsworth@glasgow.ac.uk, matthew.clarke@abdn.ac.uk, dion@sdu.dk

Keywords: politics of education; inclusion; Lacan; philosophy of education

Strand: Policy and Politics of Education

"I want to be the person at the supermarket who collects trolleys because they're outside all day and help people." Michael, 11, lives in one of the UK's most deprived areas (WMCAA, 2020). None of Michael's family has employment, many relatives are imprisoned. The school inspectorate criticised teachers' encouraging response to Michael, reporting a lack of 'high expectations'.

We often discuss the ethics and politics of education through inclusion, with political drives towards 'high' aspirations and expectations for all. In this paper, we argue that we must first consider *what* is being made inclusive; what is desired of education? We examine the ethical problem presented above through Lacan's (1960) work on ethics, interrogating the "space of productive tension" between the subject's "ideal ego" and the prescribed "ego ideal" of education policy/ inspection (Clarke et al., 2017, p.218). This is, we argue, a potentially exclusive space, subverting and colonising subjects (Lacan, 1960). We critique a trend of 'poornography' (Davis, 2024) in education policy, in which desires of those with social 'standing' seek to define the desires of those without. We posit that this undermines plurality in what is seen as beautiful or desired in education arguing that the politics of inclusion must confront desire, engaging in 'painful thinking' that comes of considering what we ordinarily choose not to desire (Salecl, 2020). Education, we conclude, must be free to explore the contradictions and discomforts brought into classrooms by different ideals of goodness, beauty, and the desires to which these ideals give expression, resisting unification or totality.

References

- Davis, L.J. (2024). *Poor Things: How Those With Money Depict Those Without It*. Duke University Press
- Lacan, J. (1960, 2013). *Seminar VII: The ethics of psychoanalysis 1959-1960*. Routledge.
- Salecl, R. (2020). *A Passion for Ignorance: What We Choose Not to Know and Why*. Princeton University Press.
- WMCAA (2020). *State of the Region Full Report*. WMCAA

Decolonising digital spaces for knowledge production

Sadia Ali, University of Glasgow
Email: sadia.ali@glasgow.ac.uk

Keywords: Decolonising Knowledge; Informal Education; Social Media Activism; Technology-assisted Education

Strand: Globalisation and Education; Education and Technology Integration; and Inclusive Education

Although some studies have explored Muslim feminists' digital activism in response to both intra-community and external critiques of Muslim women (Piela, 2012; Echchaibi, 2013; Riley, 2016; Carland, 2017), it remains significantly under-researched. Framed around theories of power, intersectionality, and feminism (Hartsock, 1990; Hooks, 2015; Foucault, 1994; Butler, 1990; Dhamoon, 2011; Nash, 2008) this research paper shows how Muslim feminists use digital spaces to confront power, reclaim interpretive authority, and construct counter-narratives for decolonised informal education. This activity forms their online collective action (Melucci, 1996), which challenges dominant epistemologies and disrupts traditional power structures in religio-cultural discourse (Mir-Hosseini, 2006; Barlas, 2002). The study employs a Constructivist Grounded Theory methodology (Charmaz, 2006), triangulating data from three primary sources: asynchronous email interviews with feminists; feminist blogs; and discussions within feminist Facebook groups. Data analysis identified four core categories that demonstrate how feminists: 1) challenge 'patriarchal interpretations' of scripture through the collective action's ideology; 2) critique power embedded in religious discourse; 3) resist community control over women's bodies; and 4) critique intersectional vectors of power that act simultaneously on a Muslim woman. This research offers a novel exploration of how Muslim feminist digital activism operates at the intersection of knowledge production for informal education, gender studies and decoloniality. The research offers valuable practical implications for educators, particularly those working in multicultural, digital and religiously diverse learning environments.

References

- Barlas, A., 2002. *"Believing Women" in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Quran: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Butler, J., 1990. *Gender Trouble, Feminist Theory, and Psychoanalytic Discourse*. In L. Nicholson, ed. In *Feminism/Postmodernism*. New York: Routledge.
- Carland, S., 2017. *Fighting Hislam*. Victoria: Melbourne University Press.
- Charmaz, K., 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. London: Sage.
- Dhamoon, R. K. 2010. Considerations on Mainstreaming Intersectionality. *Political Research Quarterly*, 64(1), 230-243.
- Echchaibi, N., 2013. Muslimah Media Watch: Media activism and Muslim choreographies of social change. *Journalism*, 14 (7), pp.852–67.
- Foucault, M. 1994. *Two lectures*. In M. Kelly, ed. *Critique and power: recasting the Foucault/Habermas debate*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. pp.17-46.
- Hartsock, N., 1990. Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women? In L.J. Nicholson, ed. *Feminism/Postmodernism*. New York: Routledge. pp.157-75.
- Hooks, B., 2015. *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. New York: Routledge.
- Melucci, A., 1996. *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mir-Hosseini, Z., 2006. Muslim Women's Quest for Equality: Between Islamic Law and Feminism. *Critical Inquiry*, 32(4), pp.629-45.
- Nash, J.C., 2008. Re-thinking intersectionality. *Feminist Review*, 89, pp.1-15.
- Piela, A., 2012. *Muslim Women Online: Faith and Identity in Virtual World*. New York: Routledge.
- Riley, K.M., 2016. *'You Don't Need a Fatwa': Muslim Feminist Blogging as Religious Interpretation*. PhD Thesis. Montreal : Concordia University.

When Silence Speaks: Rethinking Chinese Students' Classroom Silence**Sadia Ali, University of Glasgow****Email: sadia.ali@glasgow.ac.uk****Keywords:** Chinese Students; Classroom Silence; Culturally Responsive Pedagogy; Decolonising Education**Strand:** Globalisation and Education

This is a systematic literature review that re-examines classroom silence among Chinese students, with a focus on its causes, interpretations, and pedagogical implications in multicultural educational settings. While often perceived as disengagement or lack of comprehension, silence among Chinese learners can reflect a range of culturally and contextually shaped behaviours, including respect for teachers and peers, deep reflection, and caution. Drawing on empirical studies published over the past decade, this systematic review identifies key factors contributing to classroom silence, that include Confucian heritage values, different understanding of classroom participation, familiarity with exam-oriented pedagogy, and psychological factors such as anxiety and fear of losing face. The study also investigates how silence is interpreted by Western teachers. Findings reveal a persistent disconnect between Chinese students' intended use of silence and teachers' perceptions, often resulting in miscommunication and missed learning opportunities. The paper synthesises pedagogical strategies suggested by educators to address or use silence constructively, including culturally responsive teaching, multimodal participation formats, and peer support structures. This research argues for a paradigm shift in how educators and institutions understand and respond to student silence - not as a problem to be eliminated, but as a communicative and potentially productive behaviour. By reframing silence within a culturally aware framework, educators can foster more inclusive, supportive and decolonised classroom environments. The paper concludes with practical recommendations for teaching practices and institutional policies that honour diverse communication styles while promoting equitable participation that is necessary for decolonising higher education.

The OECD's influence on Scottish education policy: A view from the archives

Louise Campbell, University of Dundee

Email: mcampbell003@dundee.ac.uk

Keywords: OECD; education policy; Scotland; reform

Strand: Globalisation and Education, Policy and Politics of Education

This paper presents elements of the history of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD's) influence on education policy in Scotland based on archival research funded by the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Focusing on the themes of equity and quality, examination of relevant publications from the OECD archive enables foregrounding of the discourses, conceptions and advice that have had an impact on Scottish policy and its associated outcomes for teachers and learners alike. The central objective of this work is to better understand the extent to which Scotland's education system has been influenced by OECD policy directions and 'soft' governance over time.

Through a critical discourse analysis (Lester, et al., 2017) of found documents from the OECD's Education Committee and Centre for Educational Research and Innovation between the 1970s to the 1990s, this paper offers a policy problematisation (Webb, 2014) that explores the multiplicity and change over time in discourses relating to educational equity and quality.

Notable findings include a significant shift in discourse about the instrumental role of the teacher in matters of educational equity and quality, alongside a parallel movement towards increasingly learner-centric visions of education articulated as a simultaneously social and economic good.

This analysis raises important questions about the role of the OECD as a provider of research data and articulator of governance priorities (Tröhler & Maricic, 2021), suggesting an ethos of social engineering through globalisation that extends beyond the boundaries of economic co-operation and development.

References

- Lester, J. N., Lochmiller, C. R. & Gabriel, R., (2017) Exploring the intersection of education policy and discourse analysis: An introduction. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 25(25), pp. 1-13.
- Tröhler, D. & Maricic, V., (2021) Data, trust and faith: the unheeded religious roots of modern education policy. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 19(2), pp. 138-153.
- Webb, P. T., (2014) Policy Problematization. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 27(3), pp. 364-376.

Co-constructing Accessible Teaching Materials in Higher Education

Faye Hendry, Alyson Young, Aygul Baghirova & Abby Carnan, University of Aberdeen

Email: faye.hendry@abdn.ac.uk, alyson.young@abdn.ac.uk, a.baghirova.22@abdn.ac.uk, a.carnan1.24@abdn.ac.uk

Keywords: Accessibility, co-construction, Higher Education, teaching materials

Strand: Inclusive Education

Discourse around ‘accessibility’ in relation to Higher Education contexts often centres around digital (Bong and Chen, 2021) and/or physical (Fossey et. al., 2017) accessibility. Whilst important, our research aimed to problematise and theorise the concept of accessibility further by engaging with students’ perceptions of what accessible teaching materials look like. Using a qualitative, grounded theoretical methodology and a participatory action research approach, we used surveys, focus groups and co-construction of exemplar teaching materials to surface understandings of what ‘accessibility’ means to Higher Education students within an Initial Teacher Education context in Scotland. The process resulted in the co-construction of guidance and exemplar materials for academic staff in Higher Education, which can be considered across the sector when designing and making use of teaching resources across a range of disciplines. Findings also enabled us to conceptualise accessibility in relation to teaching materials as a multi-faceted construct, incorporating not only the design, layout and content of teaching materials, but their temporal and spatial availability, and the andragogical uses to which they are put. This research has implications for any academic staff teaching in Higher Education, and anyone interested in fostering inclusive education through informed, intentional design and use of teaching materials.

References

- Bong, W. K., & Chen, W. (2021). Increasing faculty’s competence in digital accessibility for inclusive education: a systematic literature review. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 28(2), 197–213. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2021.1937344>
- Fossey, E., Chaffey, L., Venville, A., Ennals, P., Douglas, J., & Bigby, C. (2017). Navigating the complexity of disability support in tertiary education: perspectives of students and disability service staff. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 21(8), 822–832. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2017.1278798>

How might education reach out to all?' A historical perspective on visions of equity within education

Helen C. J. Lowe, University of Edinburgh

Email: hcj.lowe@outlook.com

Keywords: Educational Democracy; Vocational; Equity; Pathways

Strand: Educational Equity and Access

This paper will utilise the case study of the 1992 Howie Report to show how historical research can support arguments for educational change. It will explore Howie's conception of education for the upper secondary school which involved the creation of two distinct educational pathways. After the publication of the Howie Report, the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) expressed concerns that the proposed reforms would not ensure parity of esteem between academic and vocational education. An alternative 'consensus' approach was advanced by bodies such as EIS and SCOTVEC which sought to utilise existing parts of the education system. I will argue that such views were more aligned with a trajectory in Scottish education that valued equality of opportunity for pupils of all aptitudes and talents.

Overall, I will contend that the Howie Report was rejected because it clashed with conceptions of educational democracy. It was seen by educationalists to be posing a threat to the educational equity which had been secured by the introduction of comprehensive education. The rejection of the Howie proposals led to the introduction of the Higher Still Programme which saw the unification of academic and vocational awards within the same system. Such reform forms part of a solid historical trajectory of support for the inclusion of a range of types of learning within the secondary curriculum. Several Scottish education policy documents evidence such a commitment. One example is the 1977 Munn Report which supported the idea that education should not be solely focused on the development of cognitive abilities and gave legitimacy to the growth of social and vocational education. This holistic approach to education partially stemmed from the encouragement of liberal values after WWII. For example, a 1947 Advisory Council Report had holistic impulses including the idea that education was about teaching pupils to operate in a broader community.

Hayward's proposed Scottish Diploma of Achievement aligns with the ambition to offer diversity regarding types of learning given its ambitious offer of programmes of learning, which would span academic, vocational and professional education. I believe that such reform could help advance educational equity in Scotland.

Developing an Evaluative Tool for Sustainability Resources: A Collaborative Approach between EAUC and the University of Strathclyde

Kirsty Miller, City of Glasgow College; Robert Collins & Natasha McMillan, University of Strathclyde; Kathrin Mobius, EAUC

Email: kirsty.miller@cityofglasgowcollege.ac.uk, r.collins@strath.ac.uk, natasha.mcmillan@strath.ac.uk, kmobius@eauc.org.uk

Keywords: Digital Learning Resources; Inclusive Design; Evaluative Tool; Sustainable Pedagogy

Strand: Education for Sustainability

Aim

This paper responds to the research question: *How can a robust evaluative tool enhance the curation and quality assurance of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) resources within Further and Higher Education (FE/HE)?*

The paper will present the design and development of a practical, research-informed evaluative tool to support the selection and improvement of digital Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) resources held primarily on the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC)'s website. The tool was co-developed by a team from the University of Strathclyde, City of Glasgow College and the EAUC. This was done in response to research indicating the need for assured pedagogical quality, accessibility, and contextual relevance to Further and Higher Education when navigating growing and inconsistent banks of teaching resources.

Using a design-based research methodology (McKenney and Reeves, 2020), this project began with an audit of over 100 ESD resources hosted by the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC). Initial evaluative criteria were informed by recent work on inclusive digital design and sustainability education (UNESCO, 2020) and were refined in collaboration with FE and HE educators. The tool was piloted using the Fusion Skills and ESD Toolkit, then applied to three further resources to test validity, usability, and generalisability.

Findings showed wide disparities in accessibility, rigour, and relevance across resources. The final tool includes eight core criteria, a 5-point rating scale, and an open-comment field, enabling consistent and scalable evaluation. While initially applied to EAUC-hosted materials, the tool was designed around widely accepted principles of digital pedagogy (Bozkurt, 2023) and inclusive sustainability education (e.g. UNESCO, 2020), ensuring adaptability to similar resource repositories. Its structure allows for application across platforms with minimal contextual adjustment, making it a transferable model beyond its original setting.

Conclusion

The final version of the evaluative tool offers an adaptable framework for evaluating and enhancing the quality of resources that support educators and organisations committed to sustainable teaching. It enables more consistent resource curation, supports reflective teaching practice, and contributes to sector-wide improvements in ESD content design. The tool's development illustrates the power of research-led collaboration in advancing digital pedagogy and sustainability goals.

References

- McKenney, S. and Reeves, T.C., 2020. Educational design research: Portraying, conducting, and enhancing productive scholarship. *Medical Education*, 55(1), pp.82–92.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/medu.14280>
- UNESCO, 2020. *Education for Sustainable Development: A roadmap*. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Available at:
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374802>[Accessed 23 Jul. 2025].
- Bozkurt, A., 2023. Postdigital artificial intelligence. In: P. Jandrić, ed. *Encyclopedia of Postdigital Science and Education*. Cham: Springer, pp. 1–5. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-35469-4_2-2

Are we doing enough to support our first-year undergraduate students in ITE? Reflections from two new course leaders...

Eilidh Soussi & Lindsay Gibson, University of Glasgow

Email: Eilidh.Soussi@glasgow.ac.uk

Keywords: Undergraduate; equitable; transition; belonging

Strand: Educational Equity and Access

Aims

This paper aims to identify strategies which lead to positive inclusion and support for students. We critically examine the support provided to the students and look for ways to strengthen feelings of being, belonging and becoming (Meehan and Howells, 2019). As part of our commitment to support the transition of students into higher education, we consider how to develop academic behavioural confidence and ensure that expectations are appropriate and support is equitable.

Methods

A literature review and autoethnographic account from reflective journals and minutes from focussed discussions are used to identify strengths and challenges of current practice. This is structured through the conceptual framework of being, belonging and becoming (Meehan and Howells, 2019).

Main findings

Although support is already in place, more could be done to support the transition of students. The demographic make-up of the undergraduate programme has changed, and it is crucial to ensure that staff are providing supportive learning and teaching that is sympathetic to the social realities of higher education. We acknowledge the lack of cultural capital some students have when entering the University and reflect on ways to support these students.

Conclusions

We identified that sense of 'place' (Baker, 2020) needs strengthened. It is important for academic staff to create an environment that is inclusive, nurturing and consistent. By sharing our learning and teaching insights, we hope to inspire colleagues to support transitions across all stages at the University.

References

- Baker, Z. 2020, "The vocational/academic divide in widening participation: the higher education decision making of further education students", *Journal of further and higher education*, vol. 44, no. 6, pp. 766-780.
- Meehan, C. & Howells, K. 2019, "In search of the feeling of 'belonging' in higher education: undergraduate students transition into higher education", *Journal of further and higher education*, vol. 43, no. 10, pp. 1376-1390.
- Nicholson, L., Putwain, D., Connors, L. & Hornby-Atkinson, P. 2013, "The key to successful achievement as an undergraduate student: confidence and realistic expectations?", *Studies in higher education (Dorchester-on-Thames)*, vol. 38, no. 2, pp. 285-298.

(Re)-imagining health and wellbeing curriculum: transforming physical education through an Activist Approach for girls

Cara Lamb, University of Strathclyde; Kimberly Oliver, New Mexico State University; Dillon Landi, University of Queensland; David Kirk, University of Strathclyde
Email: cara.lamb@strath.ac.uk

Keywords: activist approach; health and wellbeing; physical education; transformative practice

Strand: Curriculum and Transformation

Multiple studies highlight barriers to girls' participation in physical education, where they are often framed as the 'problem' and perceived as disengaged (Oliver & Kirk, 2015). While initiatives have sought to create more equitable experiences by rethinking pedagogical approaches, performance-driven models that focus on physical competence, improvement, and competition continue to dominate in Scottish schools (Gray et al., 2022). These approaches often disadvantage girls. Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) presents an opportunity to challenge this by allowing schools to tailor the curriculum to local needs, yet its transformative potential appears limited by the persistence of performance-oriented practices. This qualitative study explores how two secondary school teachers used an Activist Approach to re-imagine physical education within CfE. This approach was developed by Kim Oliver (Oliver & Kirk, 2015) as a student-centred pedagogy for working with girls. Data generation involved semi-structured interviews with both teachers and pupils, lesson observations, and field notes, analysed through dialectical thinking. The findings show that shifting away from traditional lesson structures required a change in teachers' mindsets. They encountered difficulties co-constructing curricula with pupils, particularly in meeting the needs of diverse groups, where dominant voices often overshadowed more reserved girls and peer dynamics complicated enactment. Additionally, entrenched physical education practices shaped how teachers enacted the Activist Approach, as they struggled to move beyond biomedical perspectives that prioritise physical activity levels over pupils' individual needs. Nonetheless, we argue that an Activist Approach can transform physical education, especially for marginalised groups, if teachers are willing to challenge traditional practices.

References

- Gray, S., Sandford, R., Stirrup, J., Aldous, D., Hardley, S., Carse, N. R., Hooper, O., & Bryant, A. S. (2022). A comparative analysis of discourses shaping physical education provision within and across the UK. *European Physical Education Review*, 28(3), 575–593. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356336X211059440>
- Oliver, K.L., & Kirk, D. (2015). *Girls, gender and physical education: An activist approach*. Routledge.

Listening to children: Embedding Child Voice in the Primary *Wellbeing* Specification

Ciara Blennerhassett, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)

Email: ciara.blennerhassett@ncca.ie

Keywords: child voice; curriculum development; Wellbeing; participatory methods

Strand: Policy and Politics of Education

Later this year, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in Ireland will publish the redeveloped primary school curriculum, following Ministerial approval. This includes a new Wellbeing specification for primary and special schools. NCCA's work is grounded in four pillars; research, networks, deliberation and consultation. Central to this work is the recognition of children as key stakeholders – making their voices essential to the redevelopment process.

This presentation outlines how children's views informed the Wellbeing specification, based on consultations in 2021 and 2023, alongside a longitudinal study which has been ongoing since 2018. It highlights the aims, development process, key findings, and conclusions.

Aims

The primary aim was to respect and actively promote the right of children to have their voices heard and included in shaping the curriculum and assessment advice we develop.

Methods

Participatory approaches were employed, including whole-school consultations, a longitudinal study, and multiple child-focused methods such as interviews, drawings, learning stories, and photographs – based on feedback from pilot study.

Main Findings

Children expressed high levels of satisfaction with Physical Education (PE) and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). They expressed a desire for more active learning, conversation and outdoor learning. Conversely, they disliked prolonged periods of sitting and reliance on workbooks. Importantly, the consultations also revealed that children often saw "choice" differently from adults referring to just not activity options, but also how activities are chosen.

Conclusions

Findings from the consultation with children were considered throughout the development of the new Wellbeing specification and provided valuable insights as to what children are saying about their learning now and what they hope to learn in the years to come. NCCA remain committed to strengthening this dimension of their work and identifying new avenues for meaningful and ongoing engagement with child voice.

Generative AI Consultation Focus Groups

Maggie Mroczkowski, Jamie Lawson, Jake Green & Rachel Whitford, SQA

Email: maggie.mroczkowski@sqa.org.uk, jamie.lawson@sqa.org.uk, jake.green@sqa.org.uk, rachel.whitford@sqa.org.uk

Keywords: practitioners; AI; education; qualitative

Strand: Education and Technology Integration

We present findings from Phase 2 of the Scottish Qualification Authority's (SQA) ongoing consultation with Scottish education practitioners on their use of and attitudes towards artificial intelligence (AI) in Scottish education. The work aims to inform development of SQA's position on AI use in assessment and learning.

Building on Phase 1 survey findings (Mroczkowski & Lawson, 2023), Phase 2 involved a series of 11 online focus groups with 33 practitioners from across sectors and subject areas. Sessions were semi-structured and explored perceived benefits and challenges of AI in Scottish education, implications for assessment, governance, and support needs. The data were thematically analysed.

Practitioners raised concerns about the potential for AI to de-skill learners, the difficulty of verifying authenticity of learner work and a general lack of knowledge and/or awareness of the AI tools available and their capabilities. However, participants also highlighted opportunities for AI to enhance critical thinking and digital literacy. Participants also highlighted the potential for AI to support inclusive learning, particularly for learners with additional support needs (see also Whitford, 2025). Concerns were also raised regarding the appropriateness of current assessment methods given the rapid advancement and proliferation of AI tools, as well as the lack of subject-specific guidance.

These findings contribute to the growing literature on AI use in education (eg Samson & Pothong, 2025), offering practitioner perspectives from the Scottish context and builds on work previously presented at SERA (Mroczkowski & Lawson, 2024).

This research has also informed the development of a learner-focused strand of our wider AI consultation, the findings of which will be available for preview.

References

- Mroczkowski, M. & Lawson, J. (2023). *Generative AI Consultation Survey*. Scottish Qualifications Authority. <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/110688.html>
- Mroczkowski, M. & Lawson, J. (2024, November 27-29). *Generative AI in Scottish Education Consultation: Phase 1*. [Conference presentation]. SERA 2024 Conference, Dundee, United Kingdom.
- Samson, R. and Pothong, K. (2025). *A learning curve? A landscape review of AI and education in the UK*. Ada Lovelace Institute. A learning curve? - A Landscape review of AI and education in the UK.
- Whitford, R. (2025). *Generative Artificial Intelligence and Learners with Additional Support Needs: Literature Review*. Scottish Qualifications Authority. <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/113007.html>

Use of AI in Unit Writing – Esports Higher National Certificate, SQA

Jake Green & Jamie Lawson, Scottish Qualifications Authority

Email: jake.green@sqa.org.uk, jamie.lawson@sqa.org.uk

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Technology; Qualifications Development; Unit Writing

This project evaluated a pilot exploring the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in unit writing for the development of a Higher National Certificate in Esports (SQA), focusing on the quality of work produced and the time taken. Ten units were written with AI assistance, applying different approaches to AI interaction. The SQA internal writing team used various AI tools to draft the mandatory parts of the unit specification (Purpose, Outcomes, Knowledge & Skills, and Evidence Requirements), and their effectiveness was evaluated. The external writing team, which did not use AI, wrote the Guidance sections after the internal team completed their writing.

A Theory of Change was developed as a method of evaluation (Funnel, S. & Rogers, P., 2011). Mid-point evaluation interviews were conducted with the SQA internal writing team, and focus groups were held with both writing teams after the qualification had been validated.

Findings suggest that both writing teams considered the unit quality exceptionally high, with development completed in a notably shorter timeframe than conventional methods. The study includes reflections on the subject knowledge and qualifications expertise needed to effectively use AI tools and assess their outputs. It also considers implications for quality assurance processes should AI use become more widespread.

In conclusion, this research aligns with the Education and Technology Integration strand, highlighting the potential of technology to streamline qualification development. Whilst further work is required, this approach could support more frequent updates to qualifications, ensuring learners access relevant, up-to-date qualifications that reflect evolving educational needs.

References

Funnel, S., & Rogers, P. (2011). *Purposeful Program Theory: Effective Use of Theories of Change and Logic Models*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

When Home Hurts: Schools as a place of safety for children affected by domestic abuse. *A systematic review of school-based interventions for children who have experienced domestic abuse and how children experience them*

Gillian Francis-McNeil, University of Strathclyde
Email: Gillian.mcneil@strath.ac.uk

Keywords: domestic abuse; school-based interventions; child participation; trauma-informed practice

Strand: Inclusive Education

Introduction

This paper shares the findings of a systematic review exploring how children affected by domestic abuse experience school-based interventions. The review is grounded in the belief that schools can be protective, transformative spaces – yet this potential is not always fully realised. With domestic abuse affecting over 60,000 families annually in Scotland, the educational response to affected children is both urgent and under-explored.

Aims

- To synthesise current evidence on the impact of domestic abuse on children
- To explore the nature and effectiveness of school-based interventions
- To amplify the experiences of children as recipients of these interventions

Methods

Following Boland et al.'s (2017) 10-step process, five peer-reviewed studies were included. A hermeneutic phenomenological stance underpinned the interpretive analysis, supported by reflexive thematic analysis. A bespoke ethical framework was created and applied to assess study quality.

Main Findings

Four dominant themes emerged: emotional and educational impacts; the nature of support offered by schools; child participation in interventions; and the importance of peer, adult and multi-agency support networks. While the teacher-child relationship emerged as central, tensions remain around professional readiness, early intervention, and children's right to choice.

Conclusions

Findings highlight the importance of trauma-informed, relational and participatory approaches. At the conference, I will present the full findings and discuss implications for Scottish education policy and practice, including professional learning and multi-agency collaboration.

Trauma is everyone's business: Embedding trauma-responsive practice in the School of Education

Christine McKee, Jo Gallagher, Mary Lappin, Joyce Nicholson, Alison Phipps & Marie McQuade,
University of Glasgow

Email: Marie.Mcquade@glasgow.ac.uk

Keywords: Higher education; trauma-informed practice; pedagogical approaches; leadership of change

Strand: Inclusive Education

In the evolving landscape of higher education, the role of teachers and educators extends beyond knowledge dissemination to fostering inclusive, supportive learning environments for students and staff. This paper presents a new project at University of Glasgow's School of Education to develop principles for trauma-informed practice in a higher education institute, equipping educators and professional services staff with the competencies, abilities, and attitudes necessary to support diverse learners and, also importantly colleagues.

The project adopts a participatory and collaborative methodology, integrating reflective practice and co-creation as core strategies. Reflective practice is used to engage educators and professional services staff in critical reflection on institutional structures and policies that may perpetuate harm or exclusion, particularly for those affected by trauma. Freire's lens of dialogue and praxis informs this process, encouraging participants to interrogate their own positionality and institutional norms encouraging us to question power dynamics and institutional policies that may harm marginalised or trauma-affected staff and students and viewing education as a tool for social justice, advocating for policies and practices that reduce harm and promote equity.

Through curriculum analysis, focus groups, and policy analysis with diverse stakeholders, the project seeks to embed trauma-responsive competencies and attitudes across the institution, ensuring that educators are equipped to navigate new challenges in higher education. The findings will contribute to broader discussions on educator competencies in contemporary learning environments, reinforcing the importance of adaptability, empathy, and continuous professional learning in a higher education environment rooted in care, equity, and social justice.

References

Thomson, P. and Carello, J. (2022) *Trauma-Informed Pedagogies: A Guide for Responding to Crisis and Inequality in Higher Education*. USA: Palgrave MacMillan.

Experiences of first-generation immigrant parents accessing early services for their autistic children in the UK

Gamze Kaplan, University of Manchester

Email: gamze.kaplan@manchester.ac.uk

Keywords. cultural diversity; minority; intersectionality; autism

Strand: Educational Equity and Access

While parents of autistic children often experience stress, delays, and inconsistent support (Li et al., 2022; Marsack-Topolewski & Weisz, 2020), immigrant families face additional challenges (Souralova, 2020). Turkish-speaking families, remain underrepresented in UK autism research, despite evidence of poor academic outcomes and confusion between second-language acquisition and developmental conditions, which can lead to delayed or inappropriate referrals (Baykusoglu, 2014; Essex County Council, 2011). This study explores how first-generation immigrant parents from Türkiye navigated early support services for their autistic children in the UK.

Eight parents were recruited via Turkish social media groups and snowball sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, supported by reflective journals and documents such as medical records and Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). Sensitive documents were included with explicit written and verbal consent, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw data, in addition to ethical approval. Data were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), drawing on a hermeneutic approach that recognised the researcher's shared cultural and linguistic background as an interpretive lens that shaped and enriched meaning-making in the analysis.

Findings highlighted limited support before formal identification, and communication challenges during key processes. Cultural interpretations ranged from viewing autism as a spiritual test to a deviation from normality, shaping families' adaptation. Some also described cultural mismatches in how professionals delivered information, perceiving it as overly casual or emotionally detached. These findings underline the need for early intervention services that are not only linguistically accessible but also culturally attuned in tone, timing, and delivery.

Peer Relationships of Individuals on the Autism Spectrum: A Meta-Synthesis

Dilara Dali, University of Glasgow

Email: 3060221d@student.gla.ac.uk

Keywords: autism; peer relationships; inclusive education; school settings

Aim

School environments are one of the settings where individuals can have opportunities for forming relationships; however, reasons such as limitations in social relationships and communication difficulties characteristic of the autism spectrum (AS) can make it challenging for individuals on the AS to develop friendships and relationships. This Meta-synthesis aims to synthesise qualitative research findings that address the positive and negative peer relationships experienced by individuals on the AS in inclusive education settings, both from the perspectives of individuals on the AS themselves and from parent and teacher reports.

Method

The meta-synthesis followed PRISMA guidelines and employed a social constructivist ontology and interpretive epistemology approaches. Studies published between 2012 and 2022 addressing peer relations of individuals on the AS in inclusive education settings were included. Accordingly, 89 studies met the eligibility for full text. As a result, 25 articles met the inclusion criteria.

Results

As a result of the synthesis of the articles, two main themes (Negative Peer Relationships and Positive Peer Relationships) and seven sub-themes emerged: "Bullying", "Difficulties in Friendships", "Isolation, Exclusion and Loneliness", "Friendships", "Common Interests", "The Outcomes of Positive Peer Relationships", "Facilitators". In addition, Bullying and Friendships sub-themes have sub-categories.

Conclusion

Individuals on the AS have experienced negative experiences such as bullying, peer and peer group rejection, loneliness, and exclusion in inclusive education settings despite their desire for friendship. The social characteristics associated with AS may make these individuals the target of negative experiences, leading to negative consequences such as depression, stress, and suicidal thoughts. On the other hand, some individuals on the AS developed long-term and committed friendships, and shared interests played an important role in developing friendships. However, considering the negative peer relations of individuals on the AS in inclusive education environments, teachers and school administrators should develop sensitivity to this issue and include prevention and intervention studies.

Making the Hidden Labour Visible: Mapping Leadership, Collegiality and Support Networks underpinning Research Culture Funding Success

Zain Ul Abidin, Charlotte Bonner-Evans & Kay Guccione, University of Glasgow
Email: Zain.UlAbidin@glasgow.ac.uk, Charlotte.Bonner-Evans@glasgow.ac.uk,
Kay.Guccione@glasgow.ac.uk

Keywords: Research culture; Inclusive research leadership; Social Network Analysis; Equity in Higher Education

Strand: Educational Equity and Access

This paper explores how access to research leadership and funding is shaped not only by institutional processes but also by informal, often invisible support networks. In the context of ongoing equity challenges within higher education, the Culture Catalyst Fund (CCF) a key strand of InFrame, a Wellcome-funded, £3M collaborative project between the Universities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, and St Andrews, offers a timely case for examining how care, trust, and collegiality influence who leads, who participates, and who progresses. The study responds to calls for more inclusive education systems by examining how leadership is enacted across job roles and institutional hierarchies.

Using Social Network Analysis (SNA), we analyse both operational and self-reported data from CCF participants across two funding rounds. We examine who is named as project lead, how they emerge, and who helps them take shape. Participants identify up to five individuals who supported them, including details of role, type of support, frequency, and impact. We then map collaboration patterns across three stages— 164 Expressions of Interest, 118 full Applications, and 27 Awarded projects—to identify central actors, bridging roles, and patterns of inclusion and clustering.

Our findings challenge the myth of the ‘sole hero’ model by highlighting the unseen labour of encouragement, mentorship, and peer support that underpins research success, much of which is unrecognised in current academic reward structures. This has significant implications for leadership development, pre-award support, and the design of inclusive funding environments. By surfacing the value of collegiality and informal mentorship particularly for marginalised staff, this study calls for institutions to recognise such contributions as vital forms of academic citizenship. In doing so, they contribute not only to fairer access to research opportunities but also to more inclusive systems of professional learning and advancement in higher education.

In the Crossfire? Principals and Decision-Making within the Swedish School System

Anna Jobér & Jakob Billmayer, Malmö University
Email: anna.jober@mau.se, jakob.billmayer@mau.se

Keywords: democracy; decision-making; lobbying; principals

Strand: Policy and Politics of Education

This project explores lobbying within the Swedish school system, with a particular focus on principals operating in compulsory education (K–9). It forms part of a broader, ongoing research initiative examining lobbying and influence in the education sector. The study centres on principals as key decision-makers situated at the cross-roads of state and municipal governance, and between political and professional interests.

The primary aim of this study is to develop a deeper understanding of how influence is exerted and characterised within the role and function of school principals. Drawing on a definition of lobbying developed through previous research and analysis; the study conceptualises lobbying as both a pedagogical and communicative practice.

Empirical data will be collected in early autumn 2025, involving approximately 20 principals. The data set will include reports on decision-making from a one-week period, followed by in-depth interviews designed to explore who influences these decisions, how this influence is exerted, and what forms it takes.

The findings and conclusions are expected to shed light on the cross-pressures principals face and the often-hidden mechanisms of influence embedded in their daily work governing education, an education that should be open to all.

Although lobbying within the European Union is relatively well-researched and regulated, the study of lobbying in education—particularly in Sweden—remains underdeveloped. Citizens frequently lack insight into who shapes school policy and how such influence is exercised, raising broader concerns about democratic accountability in the welfare state. This study therefore contributes to the growing body of knowledge on educational governance, transparency, and democratic practice, with relevance extending beyond Sweden to international contexts.

Reflections on Piloting Film and Screen Education in Primary PGDE

Jo Gallagher, University of Glasgow

Email: jo.gallagher@glasgow.ac.uk

Keywords: film and screen education; screen literacy; digital learning; Initial Teacher Education

Strand: Curriculum & Transformation

Background and Aims

In 2025, Film and Screen education will be embedded in Scotland's Expressive Arts curriculum, enhancing the arts offering in schools and supporting Scotland's film industry. In partnership with Screen Scotland, the University of Glasgow piloted a Film and Screen module for PGDE Primary students, focusing on film literacy and practical filmmaking. This initiative aligns with Screen Scotland's strategy to integrate Film and Screen education across Scottish schools, from early years to senior phase, and engages with the wider European context of Screen Literacy (Burn & Reid, 2012; Soto-Sanfiel et al., 2018), promoting visual literacy and critical media engagement. This paper presents findings from the pilot, exploring lessons learned and its potential for broader application within teacher education.

Methodology

Data were collected through pre- and post-seminar online questionnaires. The pre questionnaire captured students' initial thoughts, concerns, and questions about incorporating Film and Screen into the primary curriculum, while the post questionnaire gathered reflections on the seminar itself and how the learning might influence their practice. (c.70 students responded). Both sets of data are being analysed using descriptive thematic analysis to identify patterns and emerging themes.

Findings

Preliminary findings indicate the pilot positively impacted students' practical skills, confidence, and readiness to engage with Film and Screen education both as an art form and pedagogical tool. Students also expressed strong interest in further exploring Film and Screen education, indicating a readiness to integrate it into their practice. This aligns with Scotland's Programme for Government 2025-26, which emphasises fostering creative education and developing inclusive curricula.

References

- Burn, A. and Reid, M., 2012. Screening Literacy: Reflecting on Models of Film Education in Europe. *Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy*, 7(4), pp.314-323. <https://doi.org/10.18261/ISSN1891-943X-2012-04-07>
- Soto-Sanfiel, M.T., Villegas-Simón, I. and Angulo-Brunet, A., 2018. Film literacy in secondary schools across Europe: A comparison of five countries' responses to an educational project on cinema. *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics*, 14(2), pp.187–213.
- Scottish Government, 2025. *Programme for Government 2025-2026*. [pdf] Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2025/05/programme-government-2025-26/documents/programme-government-2025-26/programme-government-2025-26/govscot%3Adocument/programme-government-2025-26.pdf> [Accessed 22 Apr. 2025].

Is moral education the vehicle or brick wall to equitable education?

Chantelle Boyle, University of Glasgow

Email: chantelle.boyle@glasgow.ac.uk

Keywords: Moral Education; Curriculum for Excellence; Qualitative Research; Religious and Moral Education

Strand: Globalisation and Education

Aims

Globalisation has had a significant impact on the contemporary Scottish education system in terms of the pupil population, with Priestley and Humes (2021) stating that ‘there is... considerable cultural diversity within the country... most evident in the major cities of Glasgow and Edinburgh’ (p. 176). The curricular area of Religious and Moral Education can be a fantastic vehicle to include a wide range of religious and non-religious beliefs and perspectives (Conroy et al., 2013; Colby, 2002). Yet, there are concerns that lessons could be ‘othering those who are not from... the majority’ (Education Scotland, 2021: 21). This paper is based on a doctoral project which aimed to explore how moral education was implemented within a case study primary school.

Methods

Three qualitative data collection tools were used in the current research project: semi-structured interviews, researcher observations, and document analysis. All three strands were thematically analysed to further understand how moral education was being implemented implicitly and explicitly within the case study primary school.

Main Findings

Three main findings will be discussed related to how moral education can include diverse perspectives within Scottish classrooms. Firstly, there was a significant focus placed on teaching about religious festivals. Holt (2019) and Matemba (2023) warn that a focus on the ‘big six’ religions may marginalise minority and non-religious beliefs. Secondly, participants stated that a lack of time meant moral education lessons were squeezed from their practice. Finally, there are glimmers of hope as classroom teachers shared that they believe moral education ‘underpins everything’ and that more priority should be placed on this subject.

References

- Colby, A. 2002. Whose values anyway? *Journal of College and Character*, 3(5).
- Conroy, J. C., Lundie, D., Davis, R. A., Baumfield, V., Barnes, P., Gallagher, T., Lowden, K., Bourque, N. and Wenell, K. 2013. *Does religious education work? A multi-dimensional investigation*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Education Scotland. 2021. *Promoting and developing race equality and anti-racist education: an overview*. [Online]. [Accessed 9th July 2024]. Available at: <https://education.gov.scot/media/e1ykcihd/promoting-and-developing-race-equality-and-anti-racist-education.pdf>. Accessed 9th July 2024.
- Holt, J. D. 2019. *Beyond the big six religions: expanding the boundaries in the teaching of religion and worldviews*. Chester: University of Chester Press.
- Matemba, Y. H. 2023. Multi-faith religious education. In: Barnes, P. L. (eds.) *Debates in Religious Education*. 2nd edn. London: Routledge.
- Priestley, M. and Humes, W. 2021. Curriculum reform in Scottish education: discourse, narrative and enactment. In: Priestley, M., Alvunger, D., Philippou, S. and Soini, T. (eds.) *Curriculum making in Europe: policy and practice within and across diverse contexts*. Bingley: Emerald Publishing Limited.

Higher Education and Colonial Continuity: The Nigerian Experience**Ebenezer Ishola, University of Dundee****Email: 2657963@dundee.ac.uk****Keywords: Higher Education; Decolonization; Nigeria; Development****Strand: Policy and Politics of Education**

Higher education holds enormous value for the individual and the society at large. This importance of higher education is evident in the skills individuals gain and workforce produced to contribute to a country's national development. This paper examines these assumptions about higher education with reference to Nigeria. This is done through a narrative review of academic and grey literature on higher education in Nigeria. The guiding question for this review include – what is the nature of higher education in Nigeria? To what extent is the higher education system in Nigeria oriented to facilitate individual and national development? In understanding the nature of higher education in Nigeria, the paper will examine key themes including the objectives of higher education, the national higher education curricula and the orientation guiding the higher education system. These aspects will be analysed in historical terms based on the link between the origin and contemporary state of higher education in Nigeria.

Mapping pedagogies of education for sustainable development in Scottish higher education institutions

Michael Malt-Cullen & Alexander Vániev, University of Glasgow

Email: Michael.Malt@glasgow.ac.uk, a.vaniev.1@research.gla.ac.uk

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals; Education for sustainable development; Scottish higher education; Actor-network theory

Strand: Education for Sustainability

This presentation explores the findings we published in the following article:
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/14779714241260528>

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 4.7 promotes education for sustainable development (ESD), urging higher education institutions (HEIs) to prepare students to address global sustainability challenges. Currently, the target indicators do not assess how ESD is enacted in HEIs, making ESD provision a black box in achieving SDG 4.7. We developed and used an analytical tool based on actor–network theory (ANT) to ‘unpack’ the black box of ESD pedagogies in HEIs. ANT allows a closer look at the web of human and non-human actors and their interrelations, visually mapping how ESD pedagogical practices are enacted. Drawing on public sustainability reports and ESD-related web pages of eight Scottish HEIs, we employed a hybrid data analysis approach to produce such a map. The aggregated actor–network map reveals clusters such as university sustainability bodies, ESD-related programs, curriculum elements, co-curricular training, and sustainability awards. Also, Scottish HEI reports and web pages tend to emphasise and quantify what is taught regarding sustainability issues and not elaborate on how ESD is taught. This way, ESD pedagogical practices, connecting students, educators, and curriculum to produce transformative learning, are missing in university reporting. Making those practices visible would provide further solid evidence of Scottish HEIs’ contribution to SDG 4.7.

Are you tough enough? Exploring education students' conceptualisation of resilience on a school placement

Kathryn McCrorie, Felicity Carlyle-Davies & Neil Cochrane

Email: kathryn.mccrorie@strath.ac.uk

Keywords: Resilience; Initial teacher Education; Vocational Placement; Ecological Perspective

Strand: Professional, Community and Vocational Learning

This paper explores how students enrolled in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) at a Scottish university conceptualise resilience, with a particular focus on changes in understanding before and after a school placement. The study represents the second phase of a broader research project examining student perspectives on resilience during vocational placements across education, engineering, and forensic chemistry.

While resilience has frequently been framed as an individual trait, increasingly the literature advocates for a shift toward an ecological perspective, emphasising the role of external structures and social support (ahmed Shafi & Templeton, 2020). This study builds on the DiMOR model developed by ahmed Shafi & Templeton in conjunction with a recent literature review (McCool et al, 2024).

Using a deductive approach, the research investigates the perspectives of students undertaking a Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE). Data were initially collected via an online questionnaire administered before students began their second school placement. Participants who consented to follow-up were later invited to participate in focus groups post-placement.

Students initially conceptualized resilience primarily as a personal capacity to 'bounce back' from adversity. Prior to placement, concerns centred on working with unfamiliar mentors in new settings. While individualistic understandings of resilience persisted post-placement, many students also recognized its context-dependent nature and highlighted the importance of peer support networks within school environments. Phase three of the project will build on these insights, working collaboratively with students to develop strategies that foster a community-based model of resilience.

References

- Ahmed Shafi, A., Templeton, S. (2020). Towards a Dynamic Interactive Model of Resilience. In: ahmed Shafi, A., Middleton, T., Millican, R., Templeton, S. (eds) *Reconsidering Resilience in Education*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-49236-6_2
- McCool, S., Carlyle-Davies, F., Cochrane, N. & McCrorie, K. (2024) How are the dynamic and interactive elements of resilience reflected in higher education literature? A critical narrative review. *Useful Pedagogies*, available at: <https://www.strath.ac.uk/workwithus/trainingconsultancy/professionaldevelopmentservices/our-services/usefulpedagogiessharingteachingandlearningpractice/>

Young Carers Shaping Change: A Participation Action Research Project**Lorna Douglas, University of Dundee****Email: Lornajanedouglas@yahoo.co.uk**

Keywords: Young carers; participatory action research; barriers to learning; educational support needs

Strand: Inclusive Education

Despite growing recognition of young carers (YCs) in Scottish education policy, many continue to face systemic barriers that hinder their equitable participation in school. YCs - children and young people providing or intending to provide unpaid care due to illness, disability, mental health conditions, or substance misuse - are frequently overlooked in educational systems. Their lived experiences remain underrepresented in shaping inclusive practices.

This participatory action research (PAR) project explored how educational professionals can better identify and respond to the needs of YCs to promote systemic change. In partnership with Carers of West Lothian, the study engaged a peer support group of YCs aged 12 to 18. The group selected and trialled visual and narrative-based activities to determine the most effective methods for engaging with their experiences in school.

Data were gathered through participant evaluation forms and structured researcher observations using an implementation science-informed framework. This provided insight into how the participatory methods functioned in practice and supported the ethical, inclusive involvement of YCs.

Findings informed the creation of a practitioner resource to help educational professionals engage more meaningfully with YCs in decision-making processes. The presentation will reflect on the implications for systemic and participatory work with underrepresented student groups and highlight the use of creative methodologies as tools for amplifying voice and fostering professional learning. The study concludes with recommendations for EP practice and wider educational systems seeking to become more inclusive, relational and responsive to the needs of YCs and all learners.

Histories and Legacies: Adam Smith, ‘Enthusiasm’ and the Justification of the State as Provider of Compulsory Education

Robert A. Davis & James C. Conroy, University of Glasgow

Email: Robert.Davis@glasgow.ac.uk, James.Conroy@glasgow.ac.uk

Strand: Educational Equity and Access

Aims

This paper aims to reconnect current discussions of the role of the (Scottish) state as the near-exclusive provider of mass compulsory education to questions and solutions first tabled by Adam Smith at the height of the Scottish Enlightenment. In particular, by reassessing the reflections of Smith and David Hume on the role of free nationwide schooling in combating perceived religious extremism (‘enthusiasm’), and their understanding of the likely ruinous effects of such extremism on civil society, the paper asks if combatting recognised social evils and divisions can genuinely constitute a convincing justification for state schooling, and a defence of equity and access, even at the present time.

Methods

The paper draws upon the analytical practices of philosophy of education and the documentary hermeneutics of the history of education.

Main Findings

Briefly historicising Smith’s motivations through the deeply destructive national experience of early modern ecclesial and dynastic strife (1640-1746)—the paper argues that in formulating and defending concepts of equity and access in the maintenance of public schooling today we ought to recognise that Smith’s essentially negative rationalisations for the interventions of the state have had a lasting, if unduly recognised, impact on the relationship of the state to both key principles. Negative accounts of educational *equity* have been rooted in the protection of the citizenry from forces that reproduce social conflict, hierarchy and demagoguery. Admonitory accounts of *access*, assuming the form of state-sanctioned legislative compulsion, have endeavoured to represent the school as the locus available to the whole populous for rational deliberation—where the multiple and dangerous forces of ‘enthusiasm’ can be met and neutralised.

Conclusions

The paper concludes that while the several potent discourses of equity and access underpinning modern democratic schooling originate in, and vigorously project, determinedly affirmative visions of the participatory society, there are specific conditions under which the older identification and address of egregious social threats of the tenor identified by Smith and Hume can indeed be maintained as key responsibility of free and compulsory state education. This is especially salient where toxic forms of cultural polarisation, radical othering and civic fragmentation threaten the very foundations of equity and access in a plural society.

A culture of optionality in Scottish (language) education?

David Vescio, University of Stirling

Email: dgv1@stir.ac.uk

Keywords: Language; 1+2; Equity; Policy

Strand: Educational Equity and Access

Aims

Positionality and politics affect decision-making within and outwith academia. Through my research, as a teacher and subsequently as an academic, I have discovered the differing expectations of teachers, academics and policy makers regarding learners' fundamental right to (language) education. The following paper has two aims: to explore the unintended, yet inherent, inequity in learners' access to language education across Scotland in national language policy, and to identify the potential solutions which could be implemented in future to ensure equitable opportunities for learners in broad general education and senior phase, regardless of their background.

Methods

The paper explores these issues through policy analysis of Scotland's 1+2 language policy and a review of available academic literature on the impact of the policy as an *entitlement*, rather than a *requirement*. Scotland's 1+2 initiative, which was first implemented in part to mirror its European counterparts, is then compared to the 1+2 language models across Europe (Scottish Government, 2012: 4).

Findings & conclusions

Education Scotland avoids prescription within language policy, offering schools and Local Authorities the flexibility to make their own decisions regarding curriculum choice to meet local needs. The findings suggest that the lack of policy prescription has led to a *culture of optionality* in some schools whereby learning is no longer viewed as compulsory. The freedom to choose whether language, or any other subject for that matter, is mandatory thus results in "discrepancies in provision" in learner experiences of language learning & teaching, bringing into question the unintended consequences of policy decisions on learner accessibility to the same educational experiences and outcomes across Scotland (Scottish Government, 2022: 13).

References

- Scottish Government (2012). *Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 Approach: The Scottish Government's Response to the Report of the Languages Working Group*. Online at: <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/corporate-report/2012/05/language-learning-scotland-12-approach/documents/00393435-pdf/00393435-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00393435.pdf>
- Scottish Government (2022). *1+2 languages policy- local authority survey 2021: findings*. Online at: <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/research-and-analysis/2022/04/12-languages-policy-findings-2021-survey-local-authorities/documents/12-languages-policy-findings-2021-survey-local-authorities/12-languages-policy-findings-2021-survey-local-authorities/govscot%3Adocument/12-languages-policy-findings-2021-survey-local-authorities.pdf>

Flexible Pedagogy in Practice: How University Teachers Shape International Students' Classroom Participation

Sihui Wang, University of Glasgow

Email: sihui.wang@glasgow.ac.uk

Keywords: flexible pedagogy; internationalisation of higher education; international students; classroom participation

Strand: Globalisation and Education

The internationalisation of higher education has made university classrooms culturally and linguistically more diverse, which brings both opportunities and challenges for teaching and learning practices (Wang et al., 2020). The paper investigates how university teachers' pedagogical practices affect and shape second language (L2) international students' classroom participation. Grounded in the theoretical framework of flexible pedagogy (Ryan & Tilbury, 2013), this study examines how participation is perceived, facilitated and hindered in UK university classrooms.

Drawing on a broader qualitative study on L2 international students' participation in intercultural classrooms at a UK university, this paper centres specifically on a subset of the data on the teaching practices and perspectives of 12 university teachers as the focal cases (Yin, 2017) involving 11-week classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. Teachers' observed teaching practices and perspectives are foregrounded, while insights from home and international students' interviews are also drawn upon to contextualise and triangulate the findings. Data were analysed using thematic analysis approach.

All participating university teachers valued student participation but most of them equated it with verbal contributions. University teachers' perceptions had a big impact on their teaching practices and student engagement. Some teachers demonstrated a commitment to pedagogical flexibility through scaffolded group activities, allocated thinking time and diverse teaching material, while others reserved a rigid and lecture-driven format.

The paper argues that pedagogical flexibility is not only a strategy, but also the recognition of whose voices are heard, and which modes of participation are legitimised. It calls for a more reflexive approach to teaching in internationalised classrooms to redefine participation beyond verbal expression and challenges normative expectations embedded in higher education practices.

Spatial Reasoning: An Accessible Gateway to Scottish STEM Success in Schools

Jack Parkinson & Quintin Cutts, University of Glasgow

Email: jack.parkinson@glasgow.ac.uk, quintin.cutts@glasgow.ac.uk

Keywords: spatial; primary; attainment; maths

Strand: Educational Equity and Access

Spatial reasoning – the ability to reason about space, shape and spatial relations, like doing 3D rotation or mentally navigating a space – is essential to success in STEM learning. While sometimes encouraged in Early Years, provision is not universal and rarely extends beyond this, so many children develop spatial reasoning primarily through extra-curricular activities.

These are often expensive and targeted at boys, resulting in an early attainment gap emerging for girls and those from poorer backgrounds, which grows wider over time.

We believe that spatial reasoning should be trained in school and accessible to all pupils. To support this, we are using partial Australian maths curriculum called MathsBURST, adapted for use in Scottish classrooms. The curriculum, consisting of 16 lessons in each of P4-P7, teaches maths concepts which Scottish teachers would be expected to teach anyway, but adds spatial learning to the typical maths activities.

Over the past two years we have been working with teachers in 100 classrooms to deliver MathsBURST with exceptionally positive results. Compared to “business-as-usual” control groups, MathsBURST classes have seen substantially larger gains in maths, spatial and computational thinking assessments (on average 20% based on pre- and post-tests, compared with only 5% in control groups). Additionally, teacher feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

The success of the MathsBURST programme demonstrates the cross-cutting benefits of improving spatial reasoning in schools in an accessible format to practitioners. The University of Glasgow, in partnership with the Scottish Government, are continuing to expand the delivery to more teachers across Scotland.

Using Generative AI to teach introductory programming to student teachers**Stavros A. Nikou, University of Strathclyde****Email: stavros.nikou@strath.ac.uk****Keywords:** programming; generative AI; student teachers; computational thinking**Strand:** Education and Technology Integration

Programming can be a new and challenging skill for student teachers. Recent developments in Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) have positioned it as a promising tool for teaching programming. However, research evidence on its impact on learners' experiences is rather limited. The current study explores the impact of Generative AI support on the experiences of student teachers in learning introductory programming. Sixty student teachers with no or limited previous programming experience have been introduced to basic algorithmic structures (sequence, conditionals and loops) using Scratch. Students were split into two groups. The control group received guidance primarily from human tutors. The experimental group received guidance primarily from generative AI systems (Copilot and ChatGPT). The study compares students' perceptions and motivation in learning programming. Surveys with closed and open-ended questions were used to explore how each method influenced student perceptions and experiences. This is a work-in-progress study aiming to provide insights on how Generative AI may complement or reshape existing models in teacher programming education. Findings are expected to inform future design of teaching programming especially to learners with no prior coding experience.

Educational Equity and Access**Involvement Strategies in STEM Tutoring of Young People with Low-Socioeconomic Status - a Sociolinguistic Analysis****Alison Hennessy, University of Stirling; Angela Creese, University of Warwick****Email: alison.hennessy@stir.ac.uk, angela.creese@warwick.ac.uk****Keywords:** involvement; relational ethics; chronotope; relationships

This paper describes an ethnographic exploration of one-to-one tuition in STEM. Four young people, aged 12-14 and with low financial resources, were recruited through their school and offered free, high-quality tuition from Church of Scotland volunteers. Data were collected via observation, session recordings, interview, and focus groups.

Our approach draws on Levinasian ethics, Bakhtin's 'chronotope', which describes unique social responses in a given space and time, and 'involvement', where conversing pairs unconsciously use strategies to obtain and show engagement. These framings informed both the design and interpretation of the study. For example, interview prompts encouraged reflection on relational dynamics and changes over time. We used these ideas to build on existing research, which shows that one-to-one tuition improves educational outcomes, to understand why this is the case.

Within the tutoring relationship, we observed Levinasian relational ethics and the development of trust through the pair's use of involvement strategies including redundancy, embodied communication and topic switching. We found that key to the success of the tutoring was the permanence and stability of the partnership; there was strong commitment from both parties to being present each week. In later sessions, there were multiple references to the past, present, and future, giving a sense of history and permanence—therefore, stability.

Performance and Success of Veterinary Students who Accessed Higher Education through the Reach Programme

Alison Browitt & Karen MacEachern, University of Glasgow

Email: alison.browitt@glasgow.ac.uk, karen.maceachern@glasgow.ac.uk

Keywords: Widening participation; fair access; educational equity; student success

Strand: Educational Equity and Access

Aims

Reach (Access to the High Demand Professions) is part of the Scottish Funding Council-National Schools Programme and, at the University of Glasgow, is delivered by widening participation¹ practitioners in partnership with academic areas to promote widening access and student success in Medicine, Law, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine degrees. This presentation details the approach and demonstrates outcomes for students in the Veterinary programme at the University of Glasgow.

Senior school pupils from backgrounds under-represented in the degrees and professions are engaged in a 3-year widening participation programme including summer school, academic work and interview workshops. Contextual admissions compensate for recognised educational inequalities, increasing the number of Reach students since 2012.

To further address challenges of student retention and attainment², throughout the Veterinary degree Reach students are provided extra mentoring and financial support. Engagement with their mentor starts during the Reach summer school and is sustained across the degree.

Methods

Our research employs quantitative methods to examine student performance and success through comparative analysis of academic data for widening participation students and their peers, spanning 10 years, across all 5 years of the veterinary course and encompassing the full student population of 125-150 students per year. Additionally, contribution of student voice, through focus groups and staff-student meetings, is important to understand the diverse learners' experiences behind the data.

Main findings

The Reach students in Veterinary Medicine had a 100% retention rate, demonstrating success through to graduation. Analysis across the ten cohorts shows their academic performance is comparable to their peers.

Conclusions

Equity and diversity in Veterinary Medicine have been increased by early engagement with students, contextualised admissions and sustained support throughout the course leading to student success.

References

¹ O'Toole, M., Dunnett, S., Brennan, M., Calvard, T. & Fakeyeva, L. (2024). Widening Participation in Scotland 1997–2021: A semi-systematic literature review and avenues for further research. *British Educational Research Journal*, 00, 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3991>

² Jackson, E. L. and E. Armitage-Chan (2017). The Challenges and Issues of Undergraduate Student Retention and Attainment in UK Veterinary Medical Education. *Journal of Veterinary Medical Education*, 44(2): 247. <https://doi.org/10.3138/jvme.1215-202R1>

Poverty Experienced by First-Year Students in Initial Teacher Education in Scotland

Lindsay Gibson, Evelyn McLaren & Stephen McKinney, University of Glasgow
Email: lindsay.gibson@glasgow.ac.uk

Keywords: Student poverty; retention; widening participation; higher education

Strand: Educational Equity and Access

Aims

This paper explores the experiences of poverty among first-year undergraduate students on an Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programme in one Scottish university. Building on previous research, and with over 80% of our current first year ITE students accessing the programme through widening participation routes, the study focuses on identifying challenges faced by financial hardship that may influence student retention and success in higher education.

Methods

A literature review on poverty and student retention informed a two-phase mixed-methods approach. An online survey was distributed to all first-year ITE students (n=130) in November 2024, yielding 39 responses (30% response rate). Follow-up interviews provided qualitative insight into student experiences.

Main Findings

A significant proportion of first-year students commute long distances to university, with 38% travelling 60–90 minutes each way. This commuting burden, combined with employment during term time—81% of students work, with 63% doing 8–20 hours weekly—contributes to time and financial pressures. One student expressed the emotional toll, stating a desire to leave university “not because of the course, but just because the income.”

Conclusions

The findings suggest that first-year ITE students face a combination of travel, work, and financial challenges that may impact their academic engagement and retention. Addressing these pressures through sector-specific policy interventions with targeted financial support tailored to ITE students’ distinct needs could play a crucial role in improving retention and supporting student success in teacher education.

My reflections on, 'The art and artistry of teaching – looking beyond the quantifiable in Initial Teacher Education'

Lorna Hamilton, University of Edinburgh

Email: Lorna.Hamilton@ed.ac.uk

Keywords: Teaching as an art; Initial Teacher Education as a performance art

Strand: Professional and Vocational Learning

Popular views of education today are often shaped by behaviouristic understandings of teaching, education policy emphasises on the need for measurement of student outcomes and the reductionist tendencies in defining and supposedly capturing teaching as a combination of competencies. International league tables also continue to encourage such views of teaching and learning, with the result that any teaching artistry is overlooked or ignored as it cannot be evaluated by rigid and limited accounts of competency. A more relational-humanistic approach to teaching and learning is likely to take us into the realms of fusions or syntheses of diverse qualities, relationships and purposes infused by personal-professional uniqueness. -where the teacher is both conductor, crafting, shaping rhythms, influencing pace and modulating tones (Ivie, 2020) and co-participant, focused on the building of relationships and trust. It is argued here that when unique syntheses of the above occur in classrooms and in such spaces, artistry is manifested. The challenge, however, is to explore how such uniqueness can be understood and developed during the early years of teacher development. Drawing on work from Hamilton (2025), this paper will argue that although we may draw on key skills and attitudes to shape Teacher education experiences, we also need to acknowledge that the fusion of such qualities, the nature of contexts and the ambience of classroom spaces and people, creates something original and new, a form of artistry, which models and resonates for those learning to teach. I will explore the ways in which we might build a more holistic model of teaching where preservice teachers may see, experience and manifest artistry while challenging language orthodoxies and embracing teaching as a performance art.

References

- Hamilton, L. (2025, forthcoming) The art and artistry of teaching – looking beyond the quantifiable in Initial Teacher Education in Biesta, G. & Affifi, R. (eds) *Reclaiming the Artistry of Teaching*.
 Ivie, S. (2020) The Artistry of Teaching. *Excellence in Education Journal*, 9 (2), 121-138.

Early Language and cognition – a longitudinal observation across socio-economic status backgrounds

Conny Gollek, University of the West of Scotland; Lynne Duncan, University of Dundee; Catherine Sayer & Martin Doherty, University of East Anglia
Email: conny.gollek@uws.ac.uk

Keywords: Early language & cognition; attainment gap; poverty; transition

Strand: Educational Equity and Access

Aims

Research into child development consistently highlights a poverty-related difference in early language, theory of mind and executive function (for example, Hackman & Farah, 2009; Scott et al., 2024; Woodburn Cavadel & Frye, 2017). Trajectory and relationship of these developments have been predominantly explored with western middle-class, assuming the interaction of skills applies to all children equally. The discussions about how language and cognition influence one another have not been sufficiently extended to include lower socio-economic backgrounds. This study aims to address this and presents an investigation for a group of children growing up in an area of high socioeconomic deprivation in Scotland.

Methods

We followed 77 children across four transition points: T1 entry into early years, T2 end of year 1, T3 end of year 2, T4 end of primary 1. At each point children undertook a standardised language assessment (CELF), as well as False Belief and Executive Function tasks. Postcode data was collected to identify SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation).

Main Findings

Initial growth curve analysis for language and False Belief show children in SIMD 1 and 2 start preschool with lower scores compared to 3 and 4. For language, the same rate of improvement across time was found for both groups. For False Belief, SIMD 3&4 had a slower rate of improvement than the lower SIMD group. At T3 the upper SIMD group had an unexpected decline in growth, but the difference between groups persists across timepoints, which will be discussed in line with existing theory.

References

- Hackman, D. A., & Farah, M. J. (2009). Socioeconomic status and the developing brain. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 13(2), 65-73. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2008.11.003>
- Scott, R. M., Nguyentran, G., & Sullivan, J. Z. (2024). The COVID-19 pandemic and social cognitive outcomes in early childhood. *Scientific Reports*, 14(1), 28939. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-80532-w>
- Woodburn Cavadel, E., & Frye, D. A. (2017). Not Just Numeracy and Literacy: Theory of Mind Development and School Readiness Among Low-Income Children. *Developmental psychology*, 53(12), 2290-2303. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0000409>

Teachers' perspectives on teacher-student relationships: creating a normative order and navigating an uncertain terrain

Paul McMillan, Charles Anderson & Mike Jess, University of Edinburgh

Keywords: Teacher-student relationships; relational pedagogy; moral uncertainty; professional judgment

Strand: Professional, Community & Vocational Learning

Background

Teacher-student relationships are foundational to effective teaching and learning (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). In considering whether education is *open to all*, we suggest a deeper focus on relationships is increasingly central to that aspiration. However, in policy and research, relationships are often framed narrowly. A focus on outcomes — such as attainment and behaviour — marginalises the lived, co-constructed process of relationship building, and how it is negotiated within the shifting dynamics of classrooms (Hickey & Riddle, 2022).

Methods

This grounded theory study (Charmaz, 2014) involved in-depth interviews with six experienced secondary school teachers known for their commitment to relationship building with students (12-18-years-old). Interview data were analysed inductively to develop a conceptual account of how these teachers understood and enacted their relationships with students in their distinct school contexts.

Findings

Findings indicate that relational work in classrooms is co-constructed, shifting, and enmeshed with broader institutional expectations. Teachers described relationships as integral to student learning journeys and as requiring dialogic engagement with students. At the conference, we will present how the teachers navigated the dilemmas and moral uncertainty associated with the fluid and situated nature of relationship building.

Conclusion

This research contributes to literature by foregrounding the relational, situated, and morally challenging dimensions of teacher-student relationships. Rather than treating uncertainty as a problem, we argue for its normalisation as an inherent condition of relational teaching. In doing so, we align with Fagiano's (2019) call to think with — not against — uncertainty, and deploy his concept of 'relational empathy' as a device for supporting teachers in making situated, reciprocal, and ethically responsive judgments in their everyday practice.

References

- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE.
- Fagiano, M. (2019). **Relational empathy**. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 27(2), 162–179.
- Hickey, C., & Riddle, S. (2022). **Relational pedagogy and the role of informality in renegotiating learning and teaching encounters**. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 30(5), 787–799.
- Sabol, T. J., & Pianta, R. C. (2012). **Recent trends in research on teacher-child relationships**. *Attachment & Human Development*, 14(3), 213–231.

Challenging Simplistic Storylines: Diversity, Complexity Commonalities and the Artistry of Teaching

Paul McMillan & Mike Jess, University of Edinburgh

Keywords: Artistry; diversity; complexity commonalities; adaptive teaching; complexity leadership; Professional Learning

Strand: Professional, Community & Vocational Learning

Background & Rationale

Global education policies continue to frame teaching as a technical act: predictable, controlled, and measurable (Biesta, 2015). Following Biesta (2023), we challenge this by reclaiming teaching, and teachers' situated judgements, as a form of artistry. This reframing not only offers a new way to understand teaching but also serves as a critical response to dominant policy narratives.

Theoretical Framework

Drawing on complexity thinking, we introduce four interconnected complexity commonalities – becoming, lived time, self-organisation, and boundaries – developed in our previous work (Authors, 2023; Authors, *in press*). These concepts position teaching as a complex, dynamic, and contextually responsive process, foregrounding classrooms as fluid, adaptive, and shaped by constraints and possibilities.

Data Sources

We illustrate the framework through three empirical vignettes drawn from qualitative data sets comprising classroom observations, semi-structured interviews and reflective journals. The research underpinning these vignettes was conducted in Scottish secondary schools between 2019 and 2024. Each vignette illustrates how teachers enact artistry in complex professional contexts:

1. Adaptive teaching in diverse classroom contexts
2. Collaborative, on-site, on-going professional learning initiatives
3. Complexity-informed leadership within school systems

Key Insights & Implications

At the conference, we will share how teachers engage in adaptive, relational practice – negotiating boundaries, managing temporal demands, and self-organising in real time. One vignette shows teachers responding to shifting student needs; another highlights how senior leaders have a role in creating collaborative spaces where artistry can emerge and evolve. These insights suggest artistry is not abstract or aspirational, but an embodied, everyday dimension of teaching. We invite delegates to consider how the commonalities framework can support the reclaiming of artistry in teaching and the supportive role of educational leadership.

Governance V governmentality: Educational leadership in polarizing times

Lace Marie Brogden, St. Francis Xavier University

Email: lbrogden@stfx.ca

Keywords: educational leadership, governance, citizenship, ethic of care

Strand: Policy and Politics of Education

Aims

This paper examines academic governance of initial teacher education (ITE) and in-service, graduate programming within the context of increasing government overreach. The key research question is: how might philosophical underpinnings of responsibility and human-being inform and uplift educational leaders as they navigate pressures placed on ITE governance, in particular, and Faculties of Education more broadly?

Methods

A theoretical contribution, this paper adopts an ethical framework informed by Hannah Arendt's (2003) philosophical imperatives of responsibility and the "status of being human" (p. 48) to examine intersecting tensions between the academic autonomy of collegial governance and politicized government policy/polemics. The method of bifurcation, inspired by Davis's (2004) contributions to curriculum theory, is used to examine increasingly gravitational dichotomies of academy V government and governance V governmentality.

Main Findings

The analysis, informed by leadership theory, offers provocations for pursuing an inclusive approach to educational leadership that, through Arendt's (cf. Young-Bruehl, 2004) philosophical imperatives, sets aside the evangelical underpinnings of service leadership in favour of fostering a care-driven approach (Coutinho, 2023) to educational leadership that places support for faculty and staff at the centre of building inclusive spaces for preservice and in-service students/teachers.

Conclusions: Enacting service (rather than Service) leadership opens spaces for educational leaders to navigate uncertain and encroaching political times, offering possibilities for improving resilience and increasing inclusivity within Faculties of Education. By sitting with convergences of governance and governmentality, this work offers a theoretical contribution advocating for educational leadership that centres both responsibility and academic citizenship.

References

- Arendt, H. (2003). *Responsibility and judgement*, J. Kohn (Ed.). Schocken.
- Coutinho, A. M. J. (2023). *Love in the post-reconceptualist era of curriculum work: Deliberations on the meanings of care*. Routledge.
- Davis, B. (2004). *Inventions of teaching: A genealogy*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Young-Bruehl, E. (2004). *Hannah Arendt: For love of the world* (2nd ed.). Yale University Press.

From Policy to Practice: insights from principals of second level Gaeltacht (immersion education) schools in Ireland

Toirdealbhach Ó Lionáird, University College Cork

Keywords: Language policy and planning; school leadership; school management; immersion education

Strand: Policy and Politics of Education

Aims

It is acknowledged that minority language – Gaeltacht – contexts in Ireland face on-going challenges in addressing the needs of young people living in Gaeltacht areas (DE 2016); These include the provision of a high quality and relevant Irish-medium educational experience for all, along with the macro challenge of seeking to preserve the uniqueness of the Gaeltacht as an area of significant linguistic, cultural and economic importance. The introduction of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education in 2016, presented an opportunity to address these challenges by way of a Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme in which schools could achieve official Gaeltacht status by demonstrating adherence to 11 qualifying criteria. The aim of this paper is to present the findings from doctoral research investigating the influence of this policy on the role, experience and identity of the principals of Gaeltacht schools.

Methods

The researcher adopted an Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods (Cresswell and Plano Clark (2018)) approach to gathering data. This incorporated a survey of all 29 principals, along with semi-structured interviews with a sample. These were then analysed using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach.

Main Findings

The analysis is on-going, but to date, principals have indicated a degree of success with the implementation of the policy, along with some misgivings around the level of overall support for this work. Principals' experiences have ranged from taking direct responsibility for the policy to widely distributing the work. Challenges have also been noted with pathways and preparation for the role, along with the recruitment and retention of teachers.

Conclusions

The conclusion will offer practical recommendations for principals, guiding them in bridging the gap from policy to practice. The discussion will also explore critical questions, such as how policy at the macro level (global, national, and local) can shape education and lifelong learning; the role of principals as 'brokers' in language policy implementation and policy directions (Walsh 2022, 2023; Shohamy 2006; Ricento and Hornberger 1996; Hornberger and Johnson 2007); and the role of the political in shaping language in education policy.

“I feel vulnerable”: Exploring the dyadic experience of navigating an LGBTQ+ identity as an early career teacher in Scotland

Connor Caller, University of Dundee

Email: cfmcaller@gmail.com

Keywords: LGBTQ+; teacher education; professional identity; lived experiences

Strand: Inclusive Education

In 2019, Scotland became the first country to incorporate an LGBT-inclusive curriculum, positioning itself as a leader in LGBTQ+ representation in education. This policy aims to enhance representation and support diversity within Scottish schools. Six years on, limited empirical research has explored the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ teachers within this system. Addressing this paucity of research is vital for recruiting, retaining and supporting LGBTQ+ individuals to be authentic, diverse representation within Scottish schools.

This study investigates a subset of Stage 2 participants within a larger two-stage project. Stage 1 utilised a quantitative survey to establish baseline data on the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ adults working in Scottish education. Stage 2 involved semi-structured interviews to explore these lived experiences. This paper details interviews of three early career educators, self-identifying as LGBTQ+, to build exploratory narratives of professional identity development.

Analysed through reflexive thematic analysis, commonalities between early career educators within transient roles were explored. Feelings of vulnerability, whilst under assessment, led participants to conceal their LGBTQ+ identities to meet perceived expectations. Intersectional factors, particularly perceived gender and heteronormative norms, shaped placement experiences. Participants found the reflective research process supportive of their professional development, highlighting the value of peer dialogue grounded in shared liminality.

These findings have implications for professional training and schools, underscoring the need for identity-affirming environments and inclusive practices. This small-scale study highlights the need for further investigation; research involving a broader and more experienced cohort could deepen understanding of how LGBTQ+ and professional identities evolve across career lifespans.

Access to Education in Migration: spaces, opportunities and rights

Pinar Aksu, University of Glasgow and community organisation

Email: p.aksu.1@research.gla.ac.uk

Keywords: Migration; Education; Community Learning and Accessibility

Strands: Globalisation and Education, Policy and Politics of Education, Inclusive Education

Accessing higher education for people seeking asylum and refuge is one of the barriers to rebuild a future while navigating the immigration system. Although Article 26 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights indicates, 'Everyone has the right to education', reality for many asylum seeking and migrant students differs significantly. Young people who are currently in the asylum system and migrant students could not access home tuition fees in Scotland, leading to being excluded from education. Those who completed their secondary school education cannot continue to further education and left in isolation while their peers start university degrees. 'Borders' within education institutions show the further discrimination students experience while they apply to higher education. The recent legal action with the 'Jasim vs Scottish Ministers' [2022] case and campaigning in Scotland, 'Our Grades Not Visas', led to significant legislative changes within the education system. From August 2023, the children of people seeking asylum, unaccompanied asylum seekers and migrant students can have access to home tuition fee in Scotland. These changes highlight the possibilities of creating an alternative environment within education institutions and creative responses from community learning spaces.

This paper examines the connection between the changing policies for people seeking asylum, unaccompanied asylum seekers and migrant students in Scotland. Highlighting the impact of being denied to higher education while navigating the immigration system and how institutions/communities can create possibilities. With a focus on recent policies on immigration, reimagining the education system to be more inclusive, accessible and just for those seeking asylum and refuge.

GenAI in Teacher Education: A Critical Review of Readiness, Risk, and Responsibility

Stephen Murphy & T.J. Ó Ceallaigh, University College Cork

Email: stephenmurphy@ucc.ie, tjoceallaigh@ucc.ie

Keywords: GenAI; teacher educator; technological pedagogical knowledge; policy

Strand: Education and Technology Integration

As Generative AI (GenAI) tools like ChatGPT gain traction in education, their integration into teacher education raises urgent questions about inclusivity, ethics, and digital readiness (Celik, 2023; Ouyang & Jiao, 2021). While such tools offer the potential to enhance access to personalised instruction and flexible learning environments, their use also risks reinforcing inequities if teacher educators (TEs) are not adequately equipped to use them critically and ethically (Ding et al., 2024; Nazaretsky et al., 2022; Nyabaa & Zhai, 2024). This study addresses the research question: What Technological Pedagogical Knowledge (TPK) do teacher educators require to integrate GenAI meaningfully into their practice, particularly in ways that promote inclusive and equitable education? To investigate this, a systematic review was conducted, drawing on peer-reviewed literature published in English and retrieved from major academic databases. The review followed PRISMA guidelines, with inclusion criteria focused specifically on teacher education and GenAI-related knowledge and practice. Studies unrelated to TEs or lacking explicit reference to GenAI were excluded to maintain analytical clarity and relevance. Findings reveal a consistent gap in TPK among TEs, especially regarding ethical decision-making, AI-informed instructional design, and critical awareness of data-driven technologies. While enthusiasm for GenAI is evident, support structures within higher education institutions (HEIs) remain uneven. The review underscores the importance of institutional policies, professional development, and ethical frameworks to ensure TEs are prepared not only to use GenAI, but to interrogate its implications for equity, access, and inclusion. Without such foundations, the transformative potential of GenAI may remain out of reach or be realised in ways that unintentionally exacerbate existing disparities.

References

- Celik, I. 2023. Towards Intelligent-TPACK: An Empirical Study on Teachers' Professional Knowledge to Ethically Integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based Tools into Education." *Computers in Human Behavior*, 138, 107468. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2022.107468>
- Ding, A. C. E., Shi, L., Yang, H., and Choi, I. 2024. "Enhancing Teacher AI Literacy and Integration through Different Types of Cases in Teacher Professional Development." *Computers and Education Open*, 6, 100178.
- Lim, W. M., Gunasekara, A., Pallant, J. L., Pallant, J. I., and Pechenkina, E. 2023. "Generative AI and the Future of Education: Ragnarök or Reformation? A Paradoxical Perspective from Management Educators." *The International Journal of Management Education*, 21(2): 100790.
- Nazaretsky, T., Ariely, M., Cukurova, M., and Alexandron, G. 2022. "Teachers' Trust in AI-Powered Educational Technology and a Professional Development Program to Improve it." *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 53(4):914-931.
- Nyaaba Akanzire, B., Nyaaba, M., and Nabang, M. 2023. Perceptions and Preparedness: Exploring Teacher Educators' Views on Integrating Generative AI in Colleges of Education. Accessed August 05 2024. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4628153>
- Ouyang, F. and Jiao, P. 2021. "Artificial Intelligence in Education: The Three Paradigms." *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence*, 2, 100020. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2021.100020>

Harnessing Teacher Knowledge for Integrated Content and Language Learning in Diverse Classrooms

T.J. Ó Ceallaigh, University College Cork; Gabrielle Nig Uidhir, St Marys University College

Email: tjoceallaigh@ucc.ie, g.maguire@stmarys-belfast.ac.uk

Keywords: immersion; content and language integration; teacher knowledge

Strand: Inclusive Education

In a world where over 40% of learners lack access to education in a language they fully understand, the demand for equitable, multilingual education is increasingly critical. This paper explores the essential role of teacher knowledge in enabling inclusive content and language integration, with a specific focus on Irish-medium education (IME) as a form of bilingual immersion. The study aims to identify the ideal knowledge base for immersion educators and examine how these distinctive professional competences support equitable learning experiences. Drawing on sociocultural theory and Shulman's Domains of Teacher Knowledge, the study employed a mixed-methods approach. Data were gathered from a broad spectrum of IME stakeholders, including student teachers, practising teachers, principals, and initial teacher education providers, via semi-structured interviews, focus groups, a student teacher symposium, and an online questionnaire. The findings highlight the complexity of immersion pedagogy, emphasizing the need for teachers to navigate cultural, linguistic, and ideological dimensions while delivering content. Teachers' beliefs about language and content play a critical role in shaping instruction, pointing to the importance of bridging theory and practice in teacher education. Disciplinary literacy and a sociolinguistic perspective are essential, enabling teachers to integrate language and content effectively while addressing issues of identity, power, and culture. The paper concludes by advocating for sustainable partnerships and targeted policy actions to re-conceptualize teacher education in ways that honour linguistic diversity and ensure meaningful access to education for all learners. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of teacher knowledge as a cornerstone of inclusive, research-informed practice in bilingual and multilingual contexts.

‘Social Theory Walks’: The city of Edinburgh as a teaching tool for social theory applied to Education

Aliandra Barlete, Lindsey Horner & Priyambada Seal, University of Edinburgh

How can we teach (and learn) about social theory from the city of Edinburgh? This proposal aims to share the results of an innovative teaching project using the unique historical development of Edinburgh to teach social theory applied to education. The project, named ‘Social Theory Walks’ consists of a series of concept-motivated guided walks in key concepts in social theory (ie. Modernity, post/decolonialism, surveillance, borders etc). As a walking project, the tutor plans stops to discuss how complex ideas can be materialized in line local historical events. The ideas for this project have been developed since May 2022 with master’s students at Moray House School of Education. The presentation will discuss the analysis of students’ feedback on their learning path after taking part in the walks. Three focus groups have happened between July 2024 and June 2025 (the last walks will take place now in Spring).

While the data from the focus groups has been analysed using thematic analysis, the framework leading the evaluation of the whole project will be Realist Evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). The ideas that emerge from the students’ perceptions will guide the project leaders to look to understand why a programme (such as ST Walks) works for whom and in what circumstances and context. Thinking in realist language, we are interested in what ways the different elements of the Walk, i.e. information selected, the discourse we prepare, the use microphones, the walking paths as well as the stops, seen as mechanisms, can help students to realise their own learning about social theory. The context of an outdoor learning project designed for UoE MSc students in the city of Edinburgh is the context that enables that learning to happen. Learning is the expected outcome; therefore any changes in either mechanisms or context are expected to also influence on students’ learning. Ultimately, we are interested in analysing how students are able to identify and recognise the theoretical concepts as per the lived experience of seeing them across the city of Edinburgh, and feel confident to apply this skill into other work, such as their dissertations.

Young children's participation in research: spatial and relational

Jana Chandler, UWS

Email: jana.chandler@uws.ac.uk

Keywords: methodology; equitable place; young children; research

Strand: Educational Equity and Access

This paper will draw on my PhD research, which applies a critical lens to the adult researcher to explore possibilities for novel practices when conducting research *with* young children. Acknowledging barriers to realising children's participation (i.e. Lundy et al., 2024; Tisdall et al., 2024), many adults grapple to realise children's rights in practice. While there has been a shift in involving children and young persons in research, young children's perspectives are often limited (e.g. Kauhanen et al., 2022; Eurochild, 2023), with parental views obtained on their behalf. Yet, children's perspectives can offer valuable insights in improving practice (Wright, 2023) and should have a rights-based place in society.

Drawing on the childhood studies perspective of children as social actors and agentic (James and Prout, 2014), my research is also orientated within space and place theory to problematise the understandings of spatial social relations, practices and power dynamics (Massey, 2005). Adopting ethnography-informed approach (Shah, 2017; Pink, 2015) and drawing inspiration from the Mosaic approach (Clark, 2017), multi-method approach was used to engage with children in research. Data collection took place within two early years settings over the period of eight weeks, with children's ongoing assent obtained (Unicef, online). With the reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2022) and creative methods analysis being currently undertaken, the findings are forthcoming. This research intends to contribute to the rhetoric associated with realising a child's human right to participation while ensuring and creating equitable space and place for young children, in research.

Exploring Rural School Leadership: Perspectives from the USA and Scotland

Romina Madrid

Keywords: Rural settings; school leadership; equity; professional learning and preparation; curriculum

Strand: Educational Equity and Access

This comparative study investigates how school leaders in rural Scotland and Massachusetts (USA) enhance teaching quality through professional learning. It focuses on headteachers' and principals' decision-making processes, and the development and mobilisation of professional capital in communities where access to networks and resources is often limited.

The study adopts a qualitative, comparative case study approach, informed by interpretivist and practice-based perspectives. These methodological choices reflect a commitment to understanding how leadership practices are shaped by the specific social and geographic contexts of rural schools (Bray et al., 2014; Barlett and Vavrus, 2017). Rural leadership is understood not as a uniform concept but as a practice deeply embedded in local culture, relationships, and histories (Budge, 2006; Corbett, 2007).

The research draws from comparative education traditions (Bray, et al., 2014) and applies a vertical case study strategy (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2009) to explore how leadership and professional learning are shaped by both local and systemic factors in each country.

Approximately 10–15 semi-structured interviews are being conducted with rural headteachers and local authority staff in Scotland, following a similar process completed in Massachusetts. Data analysis is thematic and iterative, identifying patterns across local and national contexts.

By foregrounding the voices of rural educators and local authority staff, the study provides insights into context-sensitive leadership development. Preliminary findings from the U.S. phase emphasise the importance of collective learning, trust, and professional relationships in supporting instructional improvement. These findings inform the study's broader aim: to learn how schools and their leaders approach professional learning, identifying transferable practices that can strengthen professional learning and leadership in rural Scottish schools.

The study contributes to scholarship on professional capital and collaborative professionalism (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018), emphasising how rural leaders mobilise time, trust, and material support to enhance teaching quality. Findings are relevant for policymakers and local authorities seeking to design equitable, sustainable strategies for professional learning and leadership in rural education.

References

- Bray, M., Adamson, B., & Mason, M. (Eds.). (2014). *Comparative education research: Approaches and methods* (Vol. 19). Springer.
- Budge, K. (2006). Rural leaders, rural places: Problem, privilege, and possibility. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 21(13), 1-10.
- Corbett, M. (2007). *Learning to leave: The irony of schooling in a coastal community*. Fernwood.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2018). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed.). SAGE.
- Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (2012). *Professional capital: Transforming teaching in every school*. Teachers College Press.
- Hargreaves, A., & O'Connor, M. T. (2018). *Collaborative professionalism: When teaching together means learning for all*. Corwin.
- Bartlett, L., & Vavrus, F. (2017). Comparative case studies: An innovative approach. *Nordic journal of comparative and international education (NJCIE)*, 1(1).
- Vavrus, F., & Bartlett, L. (2009). Critical approaches to comparative education: Vertical case studies and the origins of the vertical case study. *Comparative Education Review*, 53(4), 493–514.

The Landscape of System Leadership in Scotland: From Policy to Practice

Romina Madrid

Keywords: system leadership; networked learning system; professional agency; improvement and change

This presentation shares emerging findings from a three-nation comparative study on system leadership in education across Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. System leadership is defined as a collaborative approach extending beyond individual schools, fostering innovation and improvement through partnerships and networks, mobilizing leaders at all levels for sustainable change.

The study utilized a mixed-methods design, combining documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups with 40 key stakeholders in Scotland (119 total). The primary aim was to understand how system leadership is defined, enacted, and supported in education policy and practice, and to explore its implications for system-wide reform.

Findings indicate that while the term "system leadership" is rarely used explicitly in Scottish education policy documents, its core principles—collaboration, equity, distributed leadership, and professional agency—are clearly articulated in the national rhetoric. This rhetoric emphasizes cross-boundary collaboration, inquiry, evidence-based approaches to improvement, and systemic thinking, implicitly embedding system leadership within Scotland's evolving policy priorities.

However, despite visible examples of system leadership in practice, its enactment remains fragmented. Efforts are often hindered by the discontinuation of key initiatives and a lack of coherence across national, regional, and local levels. Stakeholders described both the promise and fragility of these efforts, noting an over-reliance on individual actors, inconsistent support structures, and tensions between national accountability frameworks and local empowerment.

The presentation argues for a clearer and more coherent national strategy that balances subsidiarity with alignment. It also reflects on the conditions required to scale and sustain collaborative approaches to educational leadership.

Why is tolerance not enough? Preliminary results of research on the attitudes and experiences of secondary school educators in Croatia on LGBT+ inclusivity

Marija Bartulović, University of Zagreb

Email: mbartulo@m.ffzg.hr

Keywords: LGBT+ inclusivity; secondary schools; social justice in education; educators' perspective

Strand: Educational Equity and Access

This presentation is based on data collected in the pilot phase of the quantitative part of the research project *LGBT+ inclusivity of secondary schools: attitudes, experiences and needs of different actors of the educational process*, which is being implemented in secondary schools in Croatia with the support of the Croatian Science Foundation. The subject of LGBT+ inclusivity in the Croatian context is still taboo, which is also evident in the small number of studies that address it in the educational context (Bartulović & Kušević, 2024; Huić & Matković, 2020; Štambuk, 2022). This research project is therefore focused on the collection of pioneering, nationally representative data usable across multiple domains of the educational system (education policy, teachers' initial education and professional development, school curriculum design, cooperation with parents, etc.), as well as practically usable guidelines and materials for teachers to question and transform their pedagogical practices concerning LGBT+ inclusivity continuously.

After a brief description of the context in Croatia in the domain of LGBT+ inclusiveness, the presentation will focus on presenting the perspective of secondary school educators, in whose attitudes and experiences related to the topic of LGBT+ inclusiveness it is possible to recognize the tendency to advocate a liberal discourse celebrating tolerance and diversity on a general level, without explicitly mentioning LGBT+ topics (Gorski, 2016); favoring the discourse of protectionism that views (LGBT+) sexuality through the lens of danger/victimhood as well as a strong insistence on the existence of a formal framework, i.e. a decision from above when it comes to their inclusion in the curriculum. The described position of the educators, also present in earlier research on this topic in Croatia (Bartulović & Kušević, 2022, 2024), opens numerous questions related to possible developments in the domain of LGBT+ inclusivity in a heteronormative context in which the political will to address this topic in the context of education does not exist. In context as such, questions of the relationship between bottom-up and top-down strategies for introducing LGBT+ topics into the curriculum and (informal) teacher education for teaching about sexual and gender diversity are of critical importance.

References

- Bartulović, M., & Kušević, B. (2024). When does "too early" become "too late"? Reflections of Croatian secondary school educators on the persistence of LGBT taboos in the education system. *CEPS Journal*, 14(2), 39-61.
- Bartulović, M., & Kušević, B. (2022). Is It Time (Yet) to Shelve LGBTIQ Topics? The Contextual Adequacy of (De-) Essentialism as an Educational Strategy. *Acta Iadertina*, 19(2), 169-186.
- Gorski, P. C. (2016). Rethinking the Role of "Culture" in Educational Equity: From Cultural Competence to Equity Literacy. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 18(4), 221-226.
- Huić, A., & Matković, H. G. (2020). High school students' knowledge about homosexual orientation and tendency to discriminate against homosexual persons. *Kriminologija & socijalna integracija: časopis za kriminologiju, penologiju i poremećaje u ponašanju*, 28(2), 198-235. <https://doi.org/10.31299/ksi.28.2.3>
- Štambuk, M. (2022). *Iskustva i potrebe mladih LGBTIQ osoba u Hrvatskoj. Izvještaj o rezultatima istraživanja. [Experiences and needs of young LGBTIQ people in Croatia. Report on the results of the research.]* Lezbijska organizacija Rijeka "LORI".

Go back in the closet! Preliminary insights into students' attitudes toward LGBT+ inclusivity of secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia

Ana Širanović, University of Zagreb

Email: amarkovi@m.ffzg.hr

Keywords: inclusive education; sexuality and gender; secondary schools; students' perspective; heteronormativity

Strand: Inclusive Education

This presentation focuses on the preliminary analysis of Croatian secondary students' attitudes toward different aspects (norms, values, relationships, and practices) of LGBT+ inclusivity of their schools. The data was collected as part of the piloting of the instrument constructed for the purposes of the project "LGBT+ inclusivity of secondary schools: attitudes, experiences and needs of different actors of the educational process", funded by the Croatian Science Foundation. The conducted preliminary analysis points to a largely negative (from homophobic to quasi-tolerant) attitudes toward LGBT+ visibility in school spaces, curricula, textbooks and other teaching materials, student behaviours and relationships, and at the same time also to a tentative support for the freedom to one's own sexual and gender identity. The surveyed students express the greatest support for implementing sexual education into schools, and for the protection of LGBT+ students from verbal abuse and other types of violence, although there is no clear agreement on these points either. The results open up critical questions regarding hetero- and cisnormativity as a powerful norm in the Croatian schools but also questions regarding a potential conservative turn of the young people in Croatia within the broader framework of global anti-LGBT and anti-gender trends and movements.

Engaging with students as partners in schools in India: A step towards co-developing inclusive school contexts

Chinmaya Potnis, University of Southampton

Email: chinmaya.potnis@soton.ac.uk

Keywords: inclusion; intergenerational partnerships; students as researchers; India

Strand: Inclusive education

The overarching aim is to explore – How can schools engage with students as partners to promote inclusion? The focus is to deepen insights about contextual opportunities, barriers and pathways to intergenerational partnerships, promoting inclusive school contexts, wherein inclusion is understood as a broad concept concerned with *all* children.

Data generation was carried out with and by a team of 6 students and 2 teachers as co-researchers, in secondary grades (ages 13-16) of two government schools in western India, over 9 months. Underpinned by the principle of 'researching inclusively' (Nind, 2014), Participatory Action Research approaches (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2007) including visual methods like diamond ranking (Clark 2012) and guided walks with photovoice (Rose, 2023), were used in conjunction with interviews, observations and focus group discussions. Data analysis was interwoven with data generation, alongside the co-researchers, followed by inductive thematic analysis.

Findings suggest that contextual barriers and opportunities that promote intergenerational partnerships, can be understood as paradoxes, which are illustrative of the practices, perceptions and systemic factors that shape the schools' contexts. To foster and sustain inclusive school contexts, it is vital and viable to embed purposeful, dialogic and reciprocal processes, wherein students are agentic and active partners.

Transcending the approaches of consulting with students (Fielding, 2001) and promoting students' voices through student-teacher dialogues (Messiou *et al.*, 2025), I argue for students' increased agency through intergenerational partnerships and pathways to legitimise students' role as partners, not as an additional initiative, but as a pervasive and principled approach to how schools are designed.

References

- Clark, J. (2012) 'Using diamond ranking as visual cues to engage young people in the research process.' *Qualitative Research Journal*, 12(2), pp. 222–237.
- Fielding, M. (2001) 'Students as Radical Agents of Change', *Journal of Educational Change*, 2(2), pp. 123–141.
- Kemmis, S. and McTaggart, R. (2007) 'Participatory Action Research: Communicative action and the public sphere', *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*, 3, pp. 559–603.
- Messiou, K. *et al.* (2025) 'Student voice: bringing about change in primary schools', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 38(3), pp. 374–389.
- Nind, M. (2014) *What is inclusive research? 'What is?' research methods series*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Rose, G. (2023) *Visual methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials*. 5th edition. London: Sage.

Quality education for sustainable development: Human capital and Right to Development perspective

Martha Matashu, Faculty of Education, South Africa

Email: Martha.Matashu@nwu.ac.za

Keywords: Quality Education; Sustainable Development; Rights to Development; Human capital; Sub-Saharan Africa

This conceptual paper aims to explore whether quality education for sustainable development could be improved through integrating human capital theory and rights to development perspectives within the context of Sub-Saharan Africa's least developed countries. Despite significant increases in education expenditure, these least-developed economies continue to face rising poverty, social injustice, and economic decline. These poor social and economic conditions raise questions about whether the theoretical perspectives of the Right to Development and Human Capital could be combined to enhance the effectiveness of education in achieving sustainable development in less developed economies. Deliberate investment in human capital formation comprising the collective acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies through education and training could be instrumental in boosting economic productivity, which could then be redistributed to address socio-economic issues. The Right to Development, as proclaimed by the United Nations Declaration, necessitates recognising inalienable human rights for all individuals to participate in and contribute to their social and economic development, ensuring the realisation of all their rights and fundamental freedoms. The integration of human capital and the Right to Development perspectives to promote education for sustainable development remains underexplored in existing literature. This study adopts a theory synthesis research design to examine whether constructs such as collective skills, knowledge, and competencies acquired through education foster individuals' entitlement to participate in social, economic, and environmental development with intergenerational benefits. The results of this conceptual analysis will determine whether constructs such as rights, responsibilities, and freedoms from the Right to Education could be synthesised to enhance human agency and the human capital necessary for education focused on human capital development. A conceptual framework illustrating the relationship between education for sustainable development, human capital, and the right to development will be developed. Conclusions and further recommendations will be made for consideration by policymakers involved in education for sustainable development.

Education for All? Exploring Leadership of Inclusion through Multiple Ethical Paradigms (MEP)

Alison Mitchell, University of Glasgow; Celine McGuire, St Thomas' Primary School; Allan Lynn, Anderston Primary School

Email: Alison.Mitchell@glasgow.ac.uk, cmcguire@st-thomas-pri.glasgow.sch.uk, JLYnn@anderston-pri.glasgow.sch.uk

Keywords: inclusion; ethics; leadership; justice

Strand: Inclusive Education

Aims

In this paper we explore the concept and practice of leading inclusion in schools, to extend knowledge and understanding of the dilemmas headteachers face in their work to ensure *Education for All* in increasingly complex environments. Such dilemmas require ethical responses, manifested in recent constructions of school leadership (Gencer & Batirlik, 2023; Söderström & Seiser, 2024). Further, ethical leading and its impact is determined by contextual factors such as governance structures, competing priorities, political agendas and dominant/damaging media narratives. As such, we propose Shapiro and Gross's (2013) Multiple Ethical Paradigms (MEP) as a framework to support practising leaders through ethical decision-making processes during turbulence and complexity.

Methods

A Narrative Inquiry approach was employed to make sense of the ethical dilemmas faced by two headteachers in their aspiration to include *all children* in education. Both headteachers drew on the MEP framework to interrogate their dilemmas through an *ethic of care*, *ethic of the profession*, *ethic of justice* and *ethic of critique*, to arrive at the most ethical decisions for children and their school communities.

Findings

Narrative inquiry was an effective means of understanding the phenomenon of ethical leadership, given the focus on the personal journey, identity, emotions and conceptions of wisdom and justice. The MEP framework was a valuable iterative tool to support ethical leading in context. However, both headteachers supplemented the MEP framework with alternative models of ethical leadership that aligned with their values and identity to further support practical application of ethical leadership through complex dilemmas.

Conclusions

We conclude with implications for leadership development programmes, to prepare aspirant and serving headteachers to manage ethical leadership dilemmas that can undermine *education for all*. Finally, we call for deeper understanding at macro level (Priestley et al., 2021) of the complexities of contemporary headship, through greater attention to the voices and narratives of serving headteachers.

Understanding the Use of Real-Time AI Translation Tools by International Postgraduate Students in English-Medium Classrooms

Chang Liu, Ziyi Guo, Yao Li, Yinshu Zhu & Sadia Ali, University of Glasgow

Email: 2961378L@student.gla.ac.uk, 2966823G@student.gla.ac.uk,
2960800L@student.gla.ac.uk, yinshu.zhu@glasgow.ac.uk, sadia.ali@glasgow.ac.uk

Keywords: Translation Tools; English-Medium Instruction (EMI); International Students; Language Support; Higher Education

Strand: Education and Technology Integration

This paper investigates why international postgraduate students, those for whom English is an additional language, use AI translation tools during lectures and seminars/tutorials at a Scottish university. Conducted by two lecturers and three student partners, the study focuses specifically on AI translation use in class. Unlike generative AI tools, which dominate current university discussions, translation tools such as Youdao and iTranslate are increasingly adopted to overcome language barriers. However, this reliance carries risks, including inaccuracies, reduced opportunities for language development, and data privacy concerns, especially with cloud-based platforms that may not comply with GDPR. The research therefore also addresses data security concerns, offering recommendations for GDPR-compliant alternatives in the absence of a university policy on AI translation tool use during class. Using a qualitative, exploratory design, data were gathered via a survey and semi-structured interviews to explore students' motivations, usage patterns, and their perceptions of the impact of AI on learning and engagement. Key questions examined when, how, and why these tools are used, and how their use influences classroom participation and academic confidence. Findings reveal that students frequently feel self-conscious about using translation tools, driven by concerns about being judged. Many expressed uncertainty regarding the university's policy on their use in class and reported relying on a combination of AI tools when completing assignments. Some observed that regular use of translation tools has begun to shape their writing style, making it resemble AI generated text. Most students primarily use free tools, which often pose privacy risks, have difficulty recognising diverse accents, and produce inaccurate translations.

Framing Equitable Teacher Engagement and Authentic Participation for Education Policy Development

Charlaine Simpson, University of Aberdeen & Anna Beck, University of Glasgow

Email: charlaine.simpson@abdn.ac.uk, anna.beck@glasgow.ac.uk

Keywords: Policy making; democratic anchors; curriculum; teacher voice

Strand: Policy and Politics of Education

Numerous studies explore the place of teachers in curriculum making (see Almeida & Viana, 2023; Finnanger & Prøitz, 2024; Kneen, et al., 2023), with the desire for teacher engagement recognising that participatory processes have the capacity to contribute to building public support for policy in action (Parkinson, 2006). However, there is a lack of research on teachers' participation that focuses on how and to what extent teachers are engaged in policy making.

Where democratic governance is conceptualised through the lens of participatory policy making, engagement in policy consultation events is becoming the norm, for example, within the current Curriculum Improvement Cycle (CIC) led by Education Scotland. Yet, how the data gathered is used is unclear (Beck, 2024; Campbell, 2023), and raises questions around democratic legitimacy.

We argue that a sequence of questions tied to Sørensen & Torfing's (2005) democratic anchorage points may help assess the quality of participation in the CIC, resulting in policy-making becoming more transparent, accountable and responsive to the needs and priorities of the community (Sørensen and Torfing, 2018). This shifts policy making from making *for*, to making *with*, positioning teachers as agents rather than consumers (Holmes, 2011), who have responsibility for policy making, alongside policy 'elites'.

This paper shares the framework that integrates dissent and marginal views into participatory processes, emphasising a bottom-up approach that centres teachers' voices and supports equitable, authentic engagement by providing a lens through which the CIC can be analysed to understand whether it supports its espoused democratic stance.

From Innovation to Scale: Systemic Adaptation of an Open-Source Classroom Observation Tool in India

Siddesh Sarma & Sagarika Unnikrishnan, Leadership for Equity

Email: siddesh@leadershipforequity.org, sagarika.u@leadershipforequity.org

Keywords: Collaboration; Localisation; Standardisation; Sustainability

Strand: Policy and Politics of Education

Education systems operate within complex policy environments, where fragmented efforts by diverse actors often hinder the scale and sustainability of effective practices. This paper examines the implementation of *Teach*, a structured, data-driven classroom observation tool developed by the World Bank, within India's public education system. Designed as a system diagnostic, *Teach* provides insight into policy implementation, teaching practices, and, ultimately, student learning outcomes. As the World Bank's implementation partner in India, our nonprofit supported four state governments in adapting and integrating the tool into their education systems. Andhra Pradesh and Nagaland adopted *Teach* under direct World Bank funding, while Maharashtra and Haryana incorporated it independently, reflecting varied entry points into policymaking. Localisation involved contextualising content, modifying metrics to reflect state priorities, and strengthening institutional monitoring and evaluation capacity.

Evidence from two years of implementation includes longitudinal data and qualitative insights into classroom instruction. In Andhra Pradesh alone, over 250,000 observations were conducted across 23,000 schools, covering 83,000 teachers. Observations were conducted in person by certified government officials who had qualified through inter-rater reliability testing. Student learning outcomes were assessed by an external provider, showing a moderate positive correlation with improved classroom practices.

Our experience suggests that effective, multi-stakeholder reform efforts are grounded in trust, contextual adaptation, and system-embedded implementation; all of which are principles aligned with Donella Meadows' systems change framework. Governments are more likely to institutionalise reforms when they set the agenda, co-design interventions, and lead execution. This paper offers insights for education practitioners and policymakers on building sustainable, government-owned collaborations.

Researcher, Practitioner and Children's Perspectives on Reading Together: A multilayered and intergenerational analysis of a picturebook reading session with young children

Nicole Smith, Elizabeth Nelson, Jane Stanley & Soumi Dey, University of Glasgow

Email: Nicole.Smith@glasgow.ac.uk, Elizabeth.Nelson@glasgow.ac.uk,

Jane.Stanley@glasgow.ac.uk, Soumi.Dey@glasgow.ac.uk

Keywords: Early years literacies; Intergenerational reading; Child-led analysis; Practitioner understandings

Strand: Curriculum and Transformation

Abstract

This paper draws from the longitudinal study *Reading and Music: Composition and Digital Picturebook Play in a Multiliteracies Framework* (PIs: Nelson and Stanley), which explores intergenerational literacy engagement. Conducted since 2021, the study involves weekly library sessions where children (aged 3-5) participate in shared reading and creative response activities, including drawing, crafting, music, and digital engagement.

Our research investigates the interactions between children, researchers, and nursery staff, applying a multi-layered analysis of literacy events, as an exploration into including multivocality within literacies across learning. The project playfully examines the democratic possibilities of the action of intergenerational shared book reading.

Each session consists of: (1) child-selected shared book reading, (2) a group read-aloud, and (3) creative reader-response activities. We employ Jackson and Mazzei's *thinking with theory* approach to analyse literacy as a relational and dynamic process.

This paper presents a methodologically innovative co-authored analysis involving researchers, practitioners, and children, offering a nuanced exploration of literacy-as-event (Burnett & Merchant, 2020).

Through the examination of interviews with children and nursery practitioners, as well as personal reflections from the student researchers carrying out the reading, we engage in an interrogation of experiences of reading together. Our approach intends to overcome the current restrictive mode of understanding reading as a one-way activity, instead considering the experience of, and impact of, reading for all agents involved, including the books themselves. By integrating multiple viewpoints, we aim to rethink literacy interactions across disciplines and generations, contributing to broader conversations on inclusive and participatory literacy practices. This includes ideas for reading with children in early years settings as well as outwith these spaces and into new places for reading to occur, including playparks and museums. We will discuss how multimodal literacies are enacted within these diverse settings and explore how to make connections between place and space through bodily experiences of storytelling.

Findings highlight the significance of movement, choice, and multimodal expression in fostering literacy engagement. In our findings, we see that practitioners assess how children's literacy aligns with curriculum outcomes, while children's perspectives offer insight into their own learning experiences. This interdisciplinary approach challenges conventional literacy frameworks by incorporating perspectives from education, childhood studies, museum education, and musical composition.

References

- Burnett, C., & Merchant, G. (2020). Literacy-as-event: Accounting for relationality in literacy research. *Discourse: Studies in the cultural politics of education*, 41(1), 45-56.
- Jackson, A. Y., & Mazzei, L. A. (2022). *Thinking with theory in qualitative research*. Routledge.

Educators' Sense-Making of the Evolving Mathematics Curriculum in Scotland

Sinem Hizli Alkan, Anglia Ruskin University; Corinne Angier, University of Stirling; Andy Brown, Scottish Government

Email: sinem.hizli-alkan@aru.ac.uk, corinne.angier@stir.ac.uk, Andrew.Brown@gov.scot

Keywords: mathematics curriculum; curriculum improvement cycle; big ideas; sense-making

Strand: Policy and Politics of Education & Curriculum and Transformation

Aims

This research addresses the Policy and Politics of Education strand, while also connecting with Curriculum and Transformation, by examining how Scotland's current Curriculum Improvement Cycle - specifically the proposed 'Big Ideas' approach in the mathematics curriculum - is interpreted by educators. The aim is to explore how these actors make sense of curriculum reform and how their perspectives and practices can inform next stages of curriculum making practices in Scotland.

Methods

Drawing on a policy and research partnership, we are currently conducting focus group interviews with a range of stakeholders, including teachers and practitioners across school phases and a range of education stakeholders. Insights from these discussions will inform the design of a large-scale survey to further investigate how the 'Big Ideas' approach is perceived and enacted in practice.

Main Findings

We will present emerging findings from the initial phase of the project, focusing on how educators interpret the proposed 'Big Ideas' curriculum design and reflect on its potential enactment across varied educational contexts.

Conclusions

This presentation will outline the policy and research partnership background, describe our research activities, and share early findings. We aim to continue the conversation with educators around the proposed 'Big Ideas' approach, contributing to a more inclusive and responsive curriculum making process that reflects the diverse perspectives of a range of curriculum making actors.

Playfulness: Transforming Teaching and Learning in Schools

Elizabeth McClure, John Mynott & Vicky Simpson, University of Aberdeen

Email: elizabeth.mclure@abdn.ac.uk, john.mynott@abdn.ac.uk, vicky.simpson@abdn.ac.uk

Keywords: Playfulness; Pedagogy; Scottish Education; Sustainable Development

This study explores the integration of playfulness as a pedagogical approach in Scottish schools, aiming to enhance learning outcomes. Despite its emphasis in Scottish educational policy for children under seven (Scottish Government, 2020), a gap exists between policy and classroom practice (Burns, 2022; Mynott & Simpson, forthcoming). Although policies articulate a vision for playful learning, they often fall short in offering concrete guidance for implementation. As a result, this vision has been adapted to fit traditional school structures, leading to a disconnect between the intended approach and its actual practice, generating this gap. Collaborating with nine schools in one Local Authority cluster, the research examines the impact of playfulness on teaching and learning.

Over three years, the project investigates how playfulness can be embedded in school curriculum, focusing on its benefits, barriers, and impacts on pupils and staff. Key research questions include:

1. What influences teachers' understanding of playfulness?
2. What is the sustainability of playful approaches?
3. What systems and structures are needed to support these initiatives?

Using a mixed-methods approach, the study involves practitioner enquiry, whole-school strategies, and professional learning pathways. Data collection includes structured reflections, playfulness rubrics, and case studies, analyzed with Kager et al.'s (2023) conceptual model to capture diverse elements of playfulness in education.

Preliminary results show that playfulness enhances joy, meaningfulness, active engagement, iteration, and social interaction among pupils (Zosh et al., 2018). The study identifies critical barriers and enablers for implementing playful pedagogies and provides insights into effective practices and policy recommendations for each school.

The research highlights the importance of playfulness in fostering positive educational outcomes. A framework for sustainable implementation has emerged, contributing to the broader discourse on play-based learning and informing future research, educational policies, and professional development programs.

Intersectionality of students' affordability, technological competencies and access to educational technologies in Higher Education and implications on capability and human capital: Empirical evidence from a South African University

Benedict M Mofosi, Mahikeng Campus; Martha Matashu, Faculty of Education

Email: Benedict.Mofosi@nwu.ac.za, Martha.Matashu@nwu.ac.za

Keywords: Affordability; Technological competencies, Access, Educational technologies, capabilities, human capital, Higher Education Institution

Strand: Education and Technology Integration

Students are key stakeholders in the successful implementation of educational technologies in higher education institutions. One significant gap in the literature is the lack of context-specific empirical evidence regarding the affordability, access, and technical competencies of first-year students. Therefore, context studies that examine affordability and access are necessary not only for establishing affordability and access to educational technology by the students but also for the implications of the intersectionality between factors on capability and human capital development. Understanding these factors may assist individual higher education institutions in fostering the successful implementation of their institutional educational technology /digitalization strategy. This study is grounded in a multi-theoretical framework, including the Unified Theory of Technology Acceptance and Use 2(UTAUT2), Human Capital Theory, and the Capability Approach. A quantitative research design was employed, using a census method with an online questionnaire administered. A total of 400 first-year students responded. The findings revealed that the students have a high appreciation for the use of educational technology, however, they lack the financial freedom and means to afford expenses associated it educational technologies. Additionally, the empirical evidence that all students had access to educational technology while on campus, but most students residing off-campus faced challenges accessing these resources when not at university facilities. Moreover, the finding revealed that most respondents came from a schooling background where educational technology was not utilised. This suggests that students from contexts where they cannot afford a computer or data services outside of campus, as well as those from schools with minimal technological exposure, are likely to lag in their technological skills resulting in limited capabilities in attaining academic success. This empirical evidence indicates that the students who come from a context where they cannot afford a computer, or data to use when they are not on campus as well as students who come from schooling backgrounds where there was no use of technologies are likely lagging in their technology. Drawing from the principles underlying the UTAUT2 model, capability approach and human capital theories this study concludes that the interplay of affordability, access and technical competencies is integral towards promoting a successful implementation of educational technology/digitalisation strategy that promotes capability and human capital development. The study thus recommends that higher education context-specific affordability, technological competencies, and access factors must be incorporated within the implementation of their educational technologies' strategies. This consideration is necessary because it has implications that either bridge or deepen disparities in capability and human capital development.

Sustaining Relationality Through the Art and Practice of Shambling

Jennifer Markides, University of Calgary; Beth Cross, University of the West of Scotland
Email: jmmarkid@ucalgary.ca, Beth.Cross@uws.ac.uk

Keywords: relationality; shambling; kinship; sustainability

Strand: Education for Sustainability

Over the past five years, we, the authors, have collaborated on several academic and service projects to explore ways to live differently in the scholarship. Together we have cultivated and introduced a shambling method (2024) that incorporates grounding in place, emptying our academic pockets, storytelling, and strengthening connections to others, including our more-than-human relatives (Abram, 1996). Through iterative and generative practices, we have shambled with colleagues, students, and practitioners in places around the world. The participants have engaged fully and beyond anticipation, often baring their souls in truly vulnerable and human ways. Our findings have compelled us to continue leaning into the work in support of increased relationality in scholarship towards creating kinship ties and communities that support one another, holistically. The connection and care are evident, even after brief engagements. Being together out on the land and attuning to the places, pushes the boundaries of what scholarship can be. We “presence” ourselves (Simpson, 2017; Bouvier & MacDonald, 2019) and attend to the offerings around and within us. Shambling allows us to centre spiritual, mental, physical, and emotional aspects of individual and collective wellbeing *as work*. No one is asked to partition off who they are or what they are feeling from what they bring to their scholarship and story. The land provides the cues, materials, space, and memory for the artistic unfolding. In doing so, we believe that we are moving towards more sustainable forms of scholarship and research that recognizes and values the interrelatedness of all things.

Integrating Film and Screen Education into the Expressive Arts

Marie McQuade, Angela Jaap & Jo Gallagher, University of Glasgow

Email: marie.mcquade@glasgow.ac.uk, angela.jaap@glasgow.ac.uk, jo.gallagher@glasgow.ac.uk

Keywords: film and screen education; creation; communication; visual literacy

The incorporation of Film and Screen within the Expressive Arts curriculum in 2025 marks a significant step towards inclusivity in arts education in Scotland. While film literacy has long been championed, mainly through disciplines like Media Studies, the inclusion of Film and Screen within the Expressive Arts curriculum signals its role in content creation, critical literacy, and fostering creativity in children and young people (Burn and Reid, 2012). Its rich form of verbal, written and physical communication can engage learners of different abilities and positively impact attainment.

This paper aims to explore the value and potential of Film and Screen education within the Expressive Arts curriculum, with a specific focus on its ability to foster social justice and equity in education. It examines how Film and Screen can act as a vehicle for addressing socio-economic disparities, particularly for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, offering an inclusive pathway to academic and personal success. This aligns with the Programme for Government 2025-26, which emphasises the importance of creative education in bridging opportunity gaps.

The paper will also draw on the practical applications of Film and Screen education in disadvantaged areas in Scotland, including its role in initiatives such as the Transforming Care Programme. It will demonstrate how Film and Screen education can enhance academic outcomes and foster social and emotional development, providing pathways for success for learners facing economic challenges. By showcasing the transformative impact of Film and Screen education on diverse groups of learners, this paper seeks to demonstrate the subject's reach for empowering all learners.

References

- Burn, A. and Reid, M., 2012. Screening Literacy: Reflecting on Models of Film Education in Europe. *Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy*, 7(4), pp.314-323. <https://doi.org/10.18261/ISSN1891-943X-2012-04-07>
- Scottish Government, 2025. *Programme for Government 2025-2026*. [pdf] Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2025/05/programme-government-2025-26/documents/programme-government-2025-26/programme-government-2025-26/govscot%3Adocument/programme-government-2025-26.pdf> [Accessed 22 Apr. 2025].

The tensions of researching immersive 3D narratives for Children

Julie E McAdam & Lavinia Hirsu, University of Glasgow

Email: Julie.e.mcadam@glasgow.ac.uk, Lavinia.hirsu@glasgow.ac.uk

Keywords: 3D immersive narratives; virtual reality; interdisciplinary design

Strand: Education and Technology Integration

This paper discusses work emerging from a small-scale innovative project that explored the decisions made by a group of interdisciplinary designers who worked collaboratively to create an immersive 3D narrative. The initial impetus for the project arose from our aim to know more about the potential of 3D narratives to provide an immersive experience for young users. The implications of this work can illuminate the ways in which immersive spaces can draw children into narratives and enhance how they make meaning from the text.

Research Process and methods

To capture the decision-making process of the designers we set up a 48-hour hackathon experience and assisted interdisciplinary groups of storytellers and 3D design artists to make a 3D narrative suitable for children who would experience the story in an educational setting. We set up zoom sessions to record the groups as they met and captured multimodal data in the form of the transcripts, video, and the end products. We also carried out follow up interviews to ask further questions about design decisions.

Analysis

This paper discusses the complexity of analysing the data. We began by acknowledging our different traditions of understanding what constitutes a text, since these influenced our understanding of mode, media and narrative process. We soon developed an awareness of how traditional frameworks of text analysis fell short when addressing the unique characteristics of 3D texts.

Findings

We can present findings that relate to the decisions made by the design teams connected to how they imagined a user would interface with the text. They relied heavily on knowledge of how traditional 2D picturebooks make meaning and used 3D aspects to build layers of visual and sound meaning for the user.

Our conclusion is that to take this work forward and come to clearer understands of the potential for using 3D immersive narratives in pedagogical contexts we need further work on the terms, concepts and frameworks used to understand the boundaries between user and designer. We conclude that Karen Barad's work on agential realism may offer us a potential way forward for analysing the entangled work of the designers.

Beyond the Score: Exam-Driven Inequality and the Struggle for Educational Equity in Chinese Secondary Schools

Guiping Yang, University of Glasgow

Email: 2701092y@student.gla.ac.uk

Keywords: Educational Inequality; High-Stakes Exams; Parental Expectations; Cultural-Historical Activity Theory

Strand: Educational Equity and Access

Educational inequality is a growing concern in exam-driven education systems worldwide, where the emphasis on test performance often overshadows student well-being and equitable learning opportunities. This paper explores how high-stakes exams (Zhong Kao) and parental expectations create pressures that drive educational inequality in Chinese secondary schools. Grounded in Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), this study analyzes how these pressures shape teacher pedagogy and practice, parent-teacher relationships, and student outcomes, revealing a cycle of inequality that disproportionately impacts lower-performing students.

Based on a larger qualitative study conducted in Harbin, China, this research draws on semi-structured interviews with nine teachers and classroom observations to capture the lived experiences of educators. The CHAT framework provides a lens to examine the complex interplay between teachers (subjects), their goals (objects), and the mediating artifacts that shape their work, including textbooks, social media, and school policies. It also reveals how hidden societal rules, such as the cultural emphasis on academic achievement, intensify parental expectations and drive teachers toward test-oriented practices. The findings highlight three critical themes: 1) The Exam-Driven Curriculum and Inequality; 2) Parental Expectations and Teacher Stress; 3) Teacher Coping Strategies and Student Marginalization.

By using CHAT, the study reveals that these inequalities are not just a result of individual teacher or parent behaviors but are embedded in the systemic structure of high-stakes exam-driven education. The paper argues for a fundamental shift in how success is defined in education, moving away from test scores as the primary measure of achievement. These findings contribute to international discussions on educational equity, offering insights that extend beyond China to other exam-driven education systems globally.

Exploring the Potential of IWBs to Support Dialogic Interactions and Communicative Language Skills in Saudi EFL Classrooms

Mohsen Jabali, University of Aberdeen

Email: m.jabali.23@abdn.ac.uk

Keywords: Interactive Whiteboards (IWBs); Dialogic Interactions; Communicative Language Skills; EFL Classrooms

Strand: Education and Technology Integration

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms in Saudi Arabia still face challenges when it comes to promoting student talk and meaningful communication. Aligning with the global trend of digital transformation under Saudi Vision 2030, the new generation of Interactive Whiteboards (IWBs) has been introduced across public schools. These modern technologies are intended to update instruction and create more interactive, student-centred learning environments. However, it remains unclear how IWBs are being used in real classrooms and whether they are being used in ways that support dialogic interactions for language development.

This study explores the potential of IWBs to support dialogic interactions and communicative skills in Saudi primary EFL classrooms. A qualitative multiple case study was carried out in three public boys' schools, using classroom observations, focus group discussions with students, and semi-structured interviews with EFL teachers. Braun and Clarke's approach of Reflexive Thematic Analysis is being used to analyse the data, with the assistance of NVivo software in the coding and theme development process.

Initial findings from the first case show that while IWBs are regularly used to structure lessons and present language content, students are often limited to short, teacher-led responses. However, if interactive features are used by the teacher, then students are more likely to engage in peer discussion, take initiative, and use English in more meaningful ways.

This presentation will share new insights arising from the analysis and discuss the contribution of IWBs to language learning. The research enhances the understanding of how classroom technologies, such as IWBs, can be implemented in Saudi public schools and what are the factors that can facilitate greater student-centred and dialogic approaches to language teaching.

References

- Braun, V. and Clarke, V., (2022). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. London: Sage.
- Saudi Vision 2030, (2020). *Vision 2030: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*. Available: vision2030.gov.sa/en/overview

Lecturers as Innovators, Survivors, or Sceptics? Reframing Blended Learning Implementation in Nigerian STEM Higher Education

Tomisin Fadamoro, University of Aberdeen

Email address: t.fadamoro.22@abdn.ac.uk

Keywords: Blended learning; STEM education; technology integration; Global South higher education

Strand: Education and Technology Integration

Aims

This presentation explores how STEM lecturers in Nigerian universities engage with blended learning amid infrastructural challenges and institutional ambiguity. It aims to provide a detailed typology of lecturer engagement highlighting the varied motivations, constraints, and identities that influence technology integration in under-resourced higher education systems.

Methods

The study draws on qualitative data from in-depth interviews with 31 STEM lecturers across federal, state, and private Nigerian universities. Thematic analysis was used to code and categorise lecturers into three engagement profiles; Enthusiastic Adopters, Cautious Supporters, and Sceptical/Resistant Lecturers, mapped onto Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation theory (Roger's, 2003).

Main Findings

The typology reveals a spectrum of engagement shaped by career stage, institutional support, pedagogical beliefs, and personal motivation. Enthusiastic Adopters embrace innovation despite constraints; Cautious Supporters are open but held back by systemic barriers; Sceptical Lecturers resist due to infrastructural gaps and entrenched teaching cultures. The findings challenge assumptions in Connectivism that educators are equally prepared to navigate digital networks.

Conclusions

Effective blended learning implementation requires context-sensitive, differentiated support strategies. This typology provides a practical framework for institutions to design more inclusive professional development and policy interventions. The study contributes a Global South perspective to digital pedagogy by centring the lived realities of educators, not just technological access.

Short Presentations

Stepping outside of yourself: Exploring teacher emotions and emotion labour in Scottish FE ESOL classrooms

Orsolya Dunn, Ayrshire College

Email: orsolya.dunn@ayrshire.ac.uk

Keywords: emotion labour; teacher emotions; teacher well-being; ESOL

This qualitative research project aims to contribute to the understanding of the real-life experiences of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) practitioners in Scotland working with refugees and asylum seekers in Further Education ESOL classrooms in terms of emotion labour and well-being.

The research will be informed by semi-structured interviews with 10 ESOL lecturers teaching in colleges across Scotland. The data will be analysed through Yin's (2016) process of disassembling, interpreting and re-assembling in order to identify themes in response to the research questions of what the emotional impact of working with refugees and asylum seekers on teachers is, what the sources of teachers' emotion labour are and how much teachers are able to engage in wellbeing practices such as self-care.

Mapping out teachers' views, experiences and affordances related to emotional well-being, emotion labour and self-care will enable a deconstruction of how neoliberal educational policies and practices have a tendency to "individualise" and "desocialise" wider social problems (Simons & Maschelién, 2008, p.414) and continually widen the gap between what we consider public and private (Giroux, 2005). An exploration of how teachers' individual feelings are constructed by wider institutional and socio-cultural discourses (Gkonou & Miller, 2021) such as the discourses of caring, professionalism and self-responsibility, might also lead to an exploration of how teachers (and their emotions) can be marginalised and silenced through these dominant discourses.

The research aims contribute towards knowledge production that acknowledges the need to turn Scottish FE into an emotionally hospitable space (Benesch & Prior, 2023) where teachers' emotion labour can be viewed as an indicator of the necessity for change (Benesch & Prior, 2023), as a sign of need for the urgent prioritisation of ESOL lecturers' wellbeing and a need for systemic emotional and material support.

References

- Benesch, S. & Prior, M. T., 2023. Rescuing "emotion labour" from (and for) language teacher emotion research. *System*, Volume 113.
- Giroux, H., 2005. Translating the future. *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 27(3), pp. 213-218.
- Gkonou, C. & Miller, E., 2021. And exploration of language teacher reflection, emotion labor, and emotional capital. *TESOL Quarterly*, 55(1), pp. 134-155.
- Simons, M. & Masschelein, J., 2008. The governmentalisation of learning and the assemblage of a learning apparatus. *Educational Theory*, 58(4), pp. 391-415.
- Yin, R., 2016. *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*. New York: The Guilford Press.

A Course feedback Evaluation: achievement of intended learning outcomes, clarity of assessment instructions and grading processes in Work-Based Learning (ACE:WBL)

Heather May Morgan, Emily Cleland & Toni Gibson, University of Aberdeen

Email: emily.cleland@abdn.ac.uk

Keywords: Work-based learning; employability; higher education; assessment

Strand: Professional, Community and Vocational Learning

Aims

To evaluate the achievement of intended learning outcomes and assess the clarity of assessment instructions and grading processes in seven elective work-based learning courses (both credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing) delivered across higher education levels and disciplines.

To develop evidence-based, actionable recommendations to enhance the design and delivery of work-based learning courses in higher education, with the goal of strengthening the development of students' professional and employability skills in future course offerings.

Methods

Thirteen to twenty qualitative interviews will be conducted with former on campus and online students of seven work-based learning courses at the University of Aberdeen (past five years), recruited via social media and email. Interviews, conducted in person or via MS Teams by a Student Research Assistant, will follow a semi-structured topic guide and be transcribed with identifying details removed. Thematic analysis will be used to explore course strengths and areas for improvement, alongside content analysis of course learning outcomes, assessments, and grading rubrics to complement the qualitative data and provide a comprehensive evaluation.

Main Findings

At the time of submission, data collection and analysis are ongoing. The final presentation will share results from interviews with former students and content analysis of course materials. Key themes will include assessment practices, perceived effectiveness for the development of professional and employability skills, and student informed recommendations to improve the design and delivery of work-based learning courses across diverse academic contexts.

Conclusions

Currently unavailable, but we will present preliminary findings.

Negotiating Professional Identity in the Internationalisation of Higher Education: Malaysian Academics' Perspectives

Nur Izham, University of Glasgow

Email: n.izham.1@researcher.gla.ac.uk

Keywords: Internationalisation; Academic Identity; Higher Education

Strand: Globalisation and Education

The internationalisation of higher education in Malaysia has predominantly been approached as a top-down initiative, with policy directives shaping its practices in universities to achieve global recognition and cross-border collaboration. The implementation of policies is influenced by the institutional, context, working culture, besides postcolonial history. This research explores how Malaysian academics in a local university perceive their professional identity within the context of internationalisation and negotiate the practices in their daily practice. 30 academicians from various academic grades and faculties were interviewed. The theoretical framework combines Bourdieu's (1986) theory of practice and Sanderson's (2006) concept of 'the academic self' to analyse the tension between the institutional structures and the individual agency. Bourdieu's lens allows for an understanding of how economic, cultural and social capital affect the activities of academics in an institution (Naidoo, 2004). Sanderson emphasises the professional identity of academics through the negotiation of personal values, global pressure and institutional objectives. This research challenges the assumption that the policies will be accepted and implemented in a linear manner. The findings reveal the effectiveness of the policy depends on how the actors translate internationalisation. Understanding the perspectives of academics is important, not only in the Malaysian context but also as a contribution to the global discourse on how higher education can be shaped in a more responsive, ethical, and contextual way. This research further raises the need for an inclusive and dialogical internal policy, which recognises the academic agencies as an essential component in realising the internationalisation process.

References

- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. Dalam J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood.
- Naidoo, R. (2004). Fields and institutional strategy: Bourdieu on the relationship between higher education, inequality and society. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 25(4), 457–471.
- Sanderson, G. (2006). Examination of the Academic Self: A Conceptual Framework for Understanding the Academic Identity. *Journal of Higher Education*, 31(2), 75–92.

The Potential of Artificial Intelligence in Providing Educational Feedback in Higher Education Assessment: The Case of ChatGPT

Hasim Turkoglu, University of Strathclyde

Email: hasim.turkoglu.2022@uni.strath.ac.uk

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Educational Feedback; Assessment; ChatGPT

Strand: Education and Technology Integration

This study aims to systematically examine the existing approaches in the literature regarding how generative AI (GenAI) tools, such as ChatGPT, can be utilised in educational feedback processes in university assessments. It is emphasised in many studies that teachers have difficulty in providing quality feedback to students due to time constraints and increased workload in crowded classrooms. In this context, artificial intelligence-based tools, especially ChatGPT, are suggested as a supportive actor in educational processes.

The study is based on a systematic literature review, which is a qualitative research method. This systematic review was conducted using the Scopus database and following the PRISMA 2020 diagram. A search conducted for studies published between 2022 and June 2025, using the keywords 'ChatGPT', 'assessment' and 'University' or 'Higher education', identified 373 academic publications. Non-article types, incomplete or non-finalised publications, and non-English studies were excluded, leaving 166 articles for review. In the ongoing study, the abstracts of these 166 articles are currently being scanned. Studies unrelated to the research question will be excluded. The remaining studies will be read in detail, and content analysis is planned. Initial findings indicate that ChatGPT can save time in providing individual feedback in students' assessments, but remains limited in disciplines requiring critical thinking.

There is no consensus in the literature regarding the 'understanding' capacity of AI. However, the text generation capabilities of ChatGPT offer potential support for teachers. This study aims to provide a systematic and current framework for the role of GenAI tools in educational feedback, with valuable implications for faculty, policymakers, and educational technology developers.

Posters

Guiding Schools To Improved Performance Using A Data Envelopment Analysis Approach

Claire Andersen, University of Dundee

Email: 2469558@dundee.ac.uk

Keywords: Efficiency; Curriculum; Data Improvements

Strand: Curriculum and Transformation

This project aims to improve standards in Scottish primary and secondary education by producing a toolkit that uses data from the National Improvement Framework Interactive Evidence Report to evaluate school performance. While the NIF Interactive Evidence Report generates data on each key driver of improvement, it lacks an aggregated analysis necessary to drive substantive changes in the ways in which the educational system operates.

The study is an interdisciplinary research project that combines education and economics using a mixed-method approach. The quantitative element is an input-output model of efficiency that can aggregate all the key drivers and priorities together to create individualised results for each school and the local education authority. The software model will automatically find areas of best practice and areas for improvement. The qualitative element involves stakeholder perceptions. Interviews with school managers will aim to understand how the Framework is integrated into school practices and use a questionnaire to understand teachers' perceptions of the Framework. Both sources of information gathered will be used to inform an educational improvement index. To prevent cross-comparisons or league table type rankings, our results will be accessible through a Power BI toolkit, which will include a user-friendly individualised and anonymised dashboard for identifying areas of best practice and potential areas for improvement.

A combination of this data and stakeholder engagement will provide policymakers with new evidence to guide schools in improving performance, impacting all local schools and improving attainment and performance outcomes within Scottish education. For policymakers, DEA provides a robust tool for evaluating the impact of educational policies and funding decisions. By understanding which schools use resources most efficiently, policymakers can replicate these models on a broader scale, driving system-wide improvements.

A space for listening differently: Creative approaches to gathering the perspectives of autistic young people on school quality improvement

Becky (Rebecca) McGinney, University of Edinburgh

Email: R.McGinney@sms.ed.ac.uk

Keywords: Autism; Education; Creative Methods; Inclusion

Strand: Inclusive Education

Aims

The aim of this study is to gather the views of autistic young people to support an evaluation of the Autism Practice Framework (APF) that is informed by lived experience. The APF was developed by an autism specialist third-sector organisation and successfully utilised in its social care services. The perspectives of mainstream secondary autistic pupils (n=12) and recent mainstream autistic school leavers (n=12) will be gathered in regards to their school experiences, aspects of school/teaching they consider to be important for a school quality assessment and enhancement programme and their views on the applicability of the existing APF within education.

Methods

A qualitative, multimodal approach will be adopted. A range of methods will be offered, including photovoice/photo elicitation, verbal response both written and spoken, creative methods, sorting activities and walk n talk. The young people will take part in 6 audio-recorded sessions.

Main Findings

The study is underway and findings will be reported. The APF is the centre of the Autism Practice Improvement Programme (APIP) which is a facilitated process of learning. This study's outcomes alongside a second project will inform any adaptations to the framework before a final project where the APIP will be piloted in mainstream education settings utilising the reviewed framework.

Conclusion

The ultimate aim is to contribute to improving educational experiences for autistic pupils in mainstream schools in Scotland by facilitating cross-sector collaboration between social care and education to support the translation of autism knowledge and understanding into day-to-day practice in schools.

Leadership of Physical Education in Irish Primary Schools

Ciara Blennerhassett, Nicola Carse & Mike Jess, University of Edinburgh
Email: C.Blennerhassett@sms.ed.ac.uk

Keywords: physical education; leadership; curriculum; perspective

Strand: Policy and Politics of Education

Background

This poster outlines a proposed PhD study examining the process of curriculum enactment in the area of Health and Wellbeing—specifically Physical Education (PE)—within Irish primary schools. The research is situated within the broader context of ongoing curriculum reform in Ireland, with a new Wellbeing specification set for release in Autumn 2025. Although interest in PE has grown in recent years, significant gaps remain regarding its content and enactment in primary schools. Little is known about what actually occurs in PE lessons, how PE is implemented, or why certain practices dominate. Furthermore, there is limited understanding of who leads PE in primary schools and how they perceive its purpose and value.

Aims

This study aims to explore the perspectives and experiences of school leaders and teachers as they navigate the complexities of leading and delivering PE during a time of curricular change.

Methodology

A qualitative, ethnographic approach will be employed. The researcher will engage with four primary schools in the Dublin area, conducting interviews and observing staff as they plan and deliver PE. This immersive approach aims to uncover how curriculum change is interpreted and enacted at the school level.

Discussion

As the study will be in the early stages of fieldwork at the time of the conference, findings will not yet be available. The poster instead seeks to generate dialogue on how educators respond to curriculum reform and the role they may play in shaping policy through their everyday practices and interpretations.

Agitating to Survive: How Black girls resist racial inequity in schooling through social justice projects

Natasha Boyce, University of Glasgow

Email: 3036956B@student.gla.ac.uk

Keywords: Racism; Racial Justice; Agitation; Misogynoir

Strand: Inclusive Education

Introduction

Awareness of the racialised and gendered violence experienced by Black girls in UK schools has heightened since the case of Child Q (Begum, 2023; John, 2022; Thompson, 2024). The case of Child Q reveals how misogynoir shapes the ways Black girls experience schooling in the UK (Iyere & Akel, 2023, p.18). Unfortunately, for many Black girls, school is not a place of safety, and Black girls are forced to navigate these spaces through agitation, disruption, and taking action.

Aims

This study will aim to illuminate how Black girls demonstrate their acumen as political agitators with the agency to organise and influence school environments. Including their stories in schools is not only relevant but will also be a document of their resistance and counterhegemonic actions.

Methods

Field research hasn't yet been conducted. However, this will be an empirical study, driven by research questions aimed at illuminating how Black girls are experiencing and resisting racism in schools, and, most importantly, how they make sense of racial justice initiatives or strategies. This will be a qualitative research project since the objective is to investigate lived experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Data will be collected through the multimethod use of focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth individual interviews (Morgan, 1997). The participants will be Black African, Black Caribbean, or Black mixed girls aged 16 – 22.

Findings

This study aims to trouble strategies that claim to harnessing the political energy within young people to advance educational reform in a socially just way. Most importantly, through centring the voices of Black girls this study aims to situate Black girls as epistemological producers of knowledge which can be considered active anti-racism, by legitimising Blackness as a respected authority in challenging hegemonic ideologies.

References

- Begum, S (2023). Over-policed and Under-Protected, *Runnymede Trust*. Available at: <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/blog/overpoliced-and-underprotected>
- Iyere, E., & Akel, S. (2023). *See Us, Hear Us. On Girlhood and Growing up Black in Lambeth*. Available at: <https://milkhoneybees.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/PRINT-MAIN-See-Us-Hear-Us-.pdf>
- John, G. (2022) *Child Q- A Defining Moment for Schools*, Institute of Race Relations. Available at: <https://irr.org.uk/article/child-q-a-defining-moment-for-schools/>
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2016). *Designing Qualitative Research (Sixth ed.)*. SAGE. <https://go.exlibris.link/HnkNrS7c>
- Morgan, D. L. (1997). *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research* (2nd ed., Vol. 16;16.). SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412984287>
- Thompson, J. (2024). Interrogating the Experiences of Race, Racism and Misogynoir for Black Girls in Education. *ROTA Community Research Partnership Report: Education and Employment, Race on the Agenda*, pp. 32-46

Navigating Policy Shifts: Self-Formation Among Chinese Master's Students in Scotland

Huiyang Lyu, University of Glasgow

Email: h.lyu.2@research.gla.ac.uk

Keywords: Self-formation; international students; policy shifts; higher education

Strand: Policy and Politics of Education

Aims

This research explores how Chinese Master's students at the University of Glasgow have navigated their self-formation processes during a decade marked by major policy shifts, including Brexit, COVID-19, and changes to UK visa regulations. It asks: How do these students adapt, transform, and reflect on their identities over time in response to shifting political and institutional contexts?

Methods

The study adopts a retrospective cross-cohort qualitative case study design. It will involve semi-structured interviews with Chinese graduates from ten consecutive academic cohorts. The theoretical framework draws on Marginson's Self-Formation Theory and critical policy sociology to analyse how policy environments shape students' experiences, agency, and aspirations.

Main Findings (Preliminary)

Preliminary insights, drawn from earlier pilot interviews with five participants, reveal a mismatch between students' academic expectations and lived experiences, yet also highlight their strong agency in negotiating these tensions. These early findings challenge deficit perspectives on international students and point to the importance of longitudinal perspectives in capturing identity transformation over time.

Conclusions

This ongoing PhD project (currently in the literature review and preparation for data collection stage) aims to provide a deeper understanding of international student experiences, highlighting how they respond to policy shifts with resilience and strategic self-formation. The poster presentation format will allow for early feedback on research design and focus, contributing to the refinement of the study as it progresses.

Roundtable

Connecting practitioners through science education research: what are the challenges, where are the opportunities?

Heather Earnshaw, Edinburgh Napier University; Julie Isdale, University of the West of Scotland; Clare Smith, University of Glasgow

Email: H.Earnshaw@napier.ac.uk, Julie.Isdale@uws.ac.uk, Clare.Smith@glasgow.ac.uk

Keywords: research; practice; Science teaching; professional learning

Strand: Professional, Community and Vocational Learning

Rationale

Science education (as part of STEM) is a key economic driver within Scotland and internationally. It has competing demands: preparing young people and career changers with the skills for established and future careers; addressing existing and predicted skills gaps; creating a scientifically literate population. Science teaching is enormously complex and must contend with pervasive conceptions of who can 'be' a scientist. There is a plethora of science education research focusing on, for example, curriculum, pedagogy, widening participation. Does a busy profession have the time and mechanisms to engage with and generate this knowledge collaboratively, in professional contexts and across professional boundaries?

Aim

This roundtable will give space for HE perspectives across sectors (e.g. early years, primary and secondary schools) to stimulate discussion of approaches and priorities for connecting practitioners through engagement with research.

Key questions will be:

- Where are the barriers and opportunities within and between sectors for connecting busy practitioners with existing research.
- Where are the barriers and opportunities within and between sectors in engaging practitioners in leading and participating in new research?
- How do we envisage the role of Science ITE programmes in establishing expectations of professional engagement with literature?

Method

Co-convenors will provide a short stimulus for discussion and pose key questions. Participants will move into small round table groups for exploration. A short plenary will enable key points to be collated and perhaps suggest ways forward.

Academic Publishing – a ceilidh open to all?

Helen Martin & Claire Molloy, Education in the North; Jakob Billmayer & Anna Jobér ,Pedagogisk forskning i Sverige (Educational Research in Sweden); Graham Connelly, Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care; Geetha Marcus, Scottish Educational Review; Shirley Steinberg, The Journal of Culture and Education

Email: h.martin@abdn.ac.uk, c.a.l.molloy@abdn.ac.uk

Keywords: Open access; inclusion; professional learning; vocational learning; academic publishing; collaborative publishing

This round table is an opportunity to share your experiences of academic publishing and listen to some of the experiences of editorial boards. We will have panellists from [Education in the North](#), and [Pedagogisk forskning i Sverige](#) (Educational Research in Sweden). We would like to share some of the ways that research journals have gone beyond 'open access' to opening-up publishing, reclaiming a view of academia as a collegiate community of scholars from all walks of life, support equitable access and challenge traditional hierarchies of knowledge. How can our perception of academic publication be broadened to value shared knowledges, partnerships, and diverse forms of communicating knowledges be celebrated?

What are the challenges of independent, scientific publishing?

- How is knowledge created and shared?
- How can publishing foster wider inclusion and social cohesion of communities?
- What are the key barriers – social, economic, political, or systemic – that prevent publishing from being open to all?
- How can publishing systems be reimagined to address issues of exclusion, marginalisation, and inequality?
- Are there boundaries around academic quality? Why? By whom?
- What are the pros and cons of a journal owned by an institution that represents the field in contrast to being part of a large publishing company?
- Does the traditional peer review process allow for a constructive dialogue rather than gatekeeping and what other methods are there?

Health and Wellbeing and the Curriculum Improvement Cycle

Nicola Carse & Shirley Gray, University of Edinburgh; Tracy Johnston, Education Scotland
Email: shirleyg@ed.ac.uk

Keywords: Curriculum; health and wellbeing

Strand: Curriculum and Transformation

Rationale/Background

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) is currently undergoing a 'Curriculum Improvement Cycle' (CIC). This process stems from the OECD report *Into the Future: Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence* (2021). While the report was broadly positive about the CfE, it also highlighted the need for review. Among other concerns, the report draws attention to the role of knowledge within the curriculum.

In response to this report, Education Scotland has developed a model for curriculum review, the CIC, comprising four distinct but interconnected stages:

1. Analysis
2. Engagement and co-creation
3. Sharing, learning and adopting
4. Mobilising, monitoring and evaluating

Currently between stage 1 and stage 2 of the CIC, Education Scotland is working collaboratively with teachers and other education stakeholders to review and develop an 'evolving technical framework' that provides greater clarity around knowledge, skills, understanding, progression, cross-curricular expectations, and 3–18 alignment.

Aim and theme to be discussed

This roundtable will focus discussion on the CIC process specifically for the HWB aspect of the curriculum. The aim of the roundtable is to stimulate professional dialogue about the process, current findings and next steps.

Method

In the first part of this roundtable session, Tracy Johnston, Senior Education Officer (HWB curriculum) at Education Scotland, will provide a brief overview of the CIC to date.

There will then be an opportunity to ask questions and engage in dialogue about the CIC to support participants in better understanding the process so far.

References

Scottish Government. (2021). *Into the future: Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence*. https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/scotland-s-curriculum-for-excellence_bf624417-en/full-report.html

Professional Learning for Educational Change: Self-study

Nicola Carse, University of Edinburgh; Dawn Garbett, University of Auckland; Svanborg R. Jónsdóttir, University of Iceland; Edda Óskarsdóttir, University of Iceland; Alison Adams, University of Edinburgh; Paul McMillan, University of Edinburgh; Zoe Robertson, University of Edinburgh; Mike Jess, University of Edinburgh
Email: nicola.carse@ed.ac.uk

Keywords: Self-study; professional learning; educational change; teacher education

Strand: Professional, Community and Vocational Learning

Rationale and Theoretical Background

In an era of accelerating global complexity, teacher education must foster professional learning that not only responds to change but also contributes to educational transformation for social good. Self-study of teaching and teacher education practices (S-STEP) offers a reflective and generative mode of professional learning, enabling educators to critically examine and reshape their practices in contextually responsive ways.

Aims and Methods

This roundtable aims to bring together educationalists interested in self-study to foster networking, dialogue, and future collaboration. It will explore self-study as both a pedagogical approach and a research methodology that is creative, innovative, and grounded in evidence.

Two case examples will be used as a stimulus for discussion, drawn from Masters-level teacher education courses in Scotland and Aotearoa New Zealand. In both cases, practicing teachers engaged in self-study as a form of professional inquiry, allowing them to generate knowledge from their own practice and take agentic action within their schools. One example focuses on a teacher in New Zealand who redesigned assessment tasks to reflect culturally responsive pedagogy, improving equity and student engagement. The other illustrates how a Scottish teacher reframed feedback practices to better align with her professional values, creating space for teacher agency in a policy-driven context. These examples exemplify the catalytic potential of self-study to support professional transformation and systemic educational change. Following this, participants will be invited to share their experiences and insights, leading to a wider discussion on how the approach supports professional learning and educational change for social good across diverse educational settings.

Participative Policy Making: Democratic Legitimacy of Teacher Participation in the Curriculum Improvement Cycle in Scotland

Charlaine Simpson, University of Aberdeen & Anna Beck, University of Glasgow

Keywords: policy making; participation; teachers; teacher voice

Strand: Policy and Politics of Education

Rationale/Theoretical Background

This roundtable considers the impact of participative policymaking on teachers' agency and scope to act as change agents within the education system. Teachers have first-hand experience of translating macro-policy into practice and are best placed to advise on what is possible within the classroom. Including teachers in national curriculum policymaking helps to develop ownership (Salonen-Hakomaki & Soini, 2023; Mikser, Karner & Krull, 2016), legitimises curriculum change (Finnanger, 2024), enhances teacher agency (Varpanen et al., 2022), thereby contributing to greater social justice for learners (Pantic, 2015).

Scotland's ambitious ten-year programme of curriculum reform, the Curriculum Improvement Cycle (CIC; Education Scotland, 2024), is based on the principles of co-design. It presents a significant attempt to disrupt longstanding power hierarchies to prioritise teachers as co-agents in policymaking.

Premised on Sørensen & Torfing's (2005) democratic anchorage points, the framework posited by Campbell, Simpson & Beck (forthcoming) embraces a grassroots methodology that amplifies teachers' perspectives, and welcomes dissenting and underrepresented voices to cultivate inclusive policy engagement.

The roundtable begins with a presentation of this framework and initial findings from a project exploring the CIC. Participants will then be asked to collaboratively reflect on the presentation and respond to the following questions using participative methods:

- To what extent can the CIC support teacher participation in policymaking?
- How can the democratic legitimacy of the CIC be enhanced?
- How could similar structures be used to support teacher participation in other areas of education policymaking?

Responses will be discussed and key considerations for stakeholders will be noted.

In an era of 1140, how can family participation and practitioner wellbeing be supported?

Susan Henderson-Bone, University of the West of Scotland; Conny Gollek, University of the West of Scotland; Kirsten Moore, Glasgow City Council; Hannah Murison, UWS; Joanne Todd, East Renfrewshire Council; Zaahira Tabassum, East Renfrewshire Council
Email: susan.henderson-bone@uws.ac.uk, conny.gollek@uws.ac.uk, Kirsten.Moore@glasgow.gov.uk

Keywords: early learning and childcare; parental and family engagement; educational policy; workforce conditions

Strand: Policy and Education

Since August 2021, Scottish early learning and childcare (ELC) provision has been altered with the implementation of 1140 hours of free childcare for 3- and 4-year-olds, and eligible 2-year-olds (Scottish Government, 2024a; Scottish Government, 2024b). Practitioners have also faced the introduction of new guidance documents (such as *Realising the Ambition* – Education Scotland, 2020) and a new joint inspection framework, set amidst the backdrop of a pandemic which has impacted on child development (Scott, Nguyentran and Sullivan, 2024; Zuniga-Montanez et al., 2024). Whilst practitioners and researchers alike may be well aware of the potential positive effects of quality early education (including aspects such as family learning and professionalisation), the impact of recent sectoral changes in Scotland on practitioners' working lives, family engagement and the quality of provision, is largely under-researched (see Arnott and Teichert, 2022; Allan, 2024).

This roundtable will invite responses to the following:

1. How have persistent sectorial changes such as the expansion of ELC provision affected children, families and the workforce?
2. What can we learn from the perspectives of local authority, third sector and special education provision in response to the changes discussed?
3. What priorities do we need to focus on (in research, policy, practice) to realise a sustainable ELC sector?

Presenting practitioners will share their workplace experiences (KM, HM, JT and ZT) and academic presenters will outline their current research (Henderson-Bone and Gollek, 2024; Gollek, Robertson, Witteveen and Calderwood, 2024). In discussion with the audience, we intend to propose critical next steps for interprofessional research that will address the sustainability of the sector.

References

- Allan, A.H. (2024). *A Foucauldian analysis of the discourses of quality and its relationship to tools of surveillance in early learning and childcare in Scotland*. Ed.D thesis, University of Glasgow.
- Arnott, L. and L. Teichert (2022). Family learning and working in lockdown: Navigating crippling fear and euphoric joy to support children's literacy, *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy* 23 (1), np. Available: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468798422112285>
- Fitzpatrick, A. (2024). *Generations Growing Together: Intergenerational learning as a pedagogical strategy in early childhood education and care services. A handbook for practitioners and trainers*. Leiden: TOY programme.
- Gollek, C., Roberston, A., Witteveen, I., and Calderwood, L. (2024) 'Before lockdown, you could just leave your bag of worries at the door and get going to work' (from the Scottish Educational Research Association conference, Dundee, UK, 27 – 29 November 2024), *Education in a Fragile World: Past, Present and Future*, p.73.
- Henderson-Bone, S. and Gollek, C. (2024) 'We can't get it right for the children until we get the parents sorted': exploring practitioners' perceptions of family learning in Scotland' (from the Scottish

Educational Research Association conference, Dundee, UK, 27 – 29 November 2024), *Education in a Fragile World: Past, Present and Future*, p.x

Scottish Government (2018). *Learning together: national action plan on parental involvement, engagement, family learning and learning at home 2018 – 2021*, Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

Scottish Government (2024a). *Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) provision for 1- and 2-year-olds in Scotland*, Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

Scottish Government (2024b). *Early Learning and Childcare Expansion to 1140 hours: Interim Evaluation Report*, Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

Scott, R.M., Nguyentran, G. and Sullivan, J.Z. (2024) The COVID-19 pandemic and social cognitive outcomes in early childhood. *Sci Rep* **14**, 28939. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-80532-w>

Zuniga-Montanez, C., Davies, C., Ligoxygakis, L., Kaščelan, D. and Gonzalez-Gomez, N. (2025) Annual Research Review: How did COVID-19 affect young children's language environment and language development? A scoping review. *J Child Psychol Psychiatr*, 66: 569-587. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.14102>

Symposia

Postgraduate Journeys: Identities, transitions and learning experiences of international students in UK Higher Education

Symposium Organiser:

Emma Towers, King's College London

Email: emma.towers@kcl.ac.uk

Symposium Chair: Meg Maguire, King's College London

Symposium Discussant: Elizabeth Rushton, Stirling University

This symposium examines a relatively under-researched area in the higher education context - the learning experiences, transitions and identities of postgraduate taught (PGT) students. The three papers comprising this symposium are set in the UK context where there has been a significant increase in PGT students, driven mainly by international student cohorts. The papers reflect on how these students position themselves in a diverse and multicultural postgraduate learning space, how they construct their learning identities and how they transition into and out of a UK university. We explore how students' identities shaped by factors such as cultural background, prior educational experiences and language proficiency inform their sense of belonging within the postgraduate learning environment. In doing so, we critically examine the existing research on international students, which often focusses on problematic deficit narratives, biases, and stereotypes of international students (Mili and Towers, 2024). We believe one way to counter any problematic narratives is to involve students in the production of knowledge related to students' university experiences. Equally, by involving students in this process, we hope to advocate for promoting a sense of belonging which goes beyond the 'integration' (Mittelmeier, 2025) discourse when it comes to thinking about international students.

Paper 1

How postgraduate university students construct their identity as learners in a multicultural classroom

Emma Towers & Mili Mili, King's College London

Email: emma.towers@kcl.ac.uk, mili.mili@kcl.ac.uk

Keywords: student identity, higher education, student agency, critical thinking

This presentation draws from an ongoing research study of postgraduate student learning experiences of their MA degree programmes and considers the ways in which a group of postgraduate students position themselves in a multicultural classroom at one university in the UK. The presentation examines students' constructions of their own identities as learners and explores their changing identities from the perspective of agency. Our data is collected through focus groups and one-to-one interviews, a large proportion of which were conducted with non-UK/EU students amongst whom Chinese students were the single largest constituency. Findings show that students' experience of learning is central to the identification work they do during lectures and group-work to position themselves as participants of HE. In this process, instances of 'othering' of students belonging to non-traditional participants in UK higher education take place. We conclude that postgraduate students must have the opportunity to actively participate in the development of their learner identity throughout their postgraduate studies. This will help cultivate a stronger sense of agency and belonging, as well as inclusive learning environments where diverse identities are recognised and valued.

Paper 2

Exploring the transitions of students from China on a one-year postgraduate taught (PGT) programme in a UK university

Xiaojing (Chelsey) Chen, King's College London

Email: xiaojing.2.chen@kcl.ac.uk

Keywords: Chinese students, transitions, higher education, MA programmes

This presentation draws on my doctoral research study that explores the transitions of students from China on a one-year postgraduate taught (PGT) programme in a UK university that enrolls a high number of Chinese students. Currently, the PGT sector is becoming a 'new frontier' of study in UK higher education (HE) (Macleod et al., 2024). Research into transition experiences is largely focussed at undergraduate and doctoral level while research into students transitioning through PGT programmes is limited (Crisfield, 2020). Drawing on Gale and Parker's (2014) typology of transition to gain insights into the Chinese students' journeys into, through and out of their PGT study, this presentation reports on three sets of qualitative interviews with Chinese students over the course of one postgraduate year. Findings show that Chinese PGT students are a highly heterogeneous group and are active co-creators in an increasingly internationalised and multicultural UK HE context. The students' transition experiences comprise academic, linguistic and sociocultural dimensions that are interrelated, and often overlap. Yet these transitions are complex, dynamic and fluid and are shaped by the interaction between individual, cultural and institutional factors. I conclude with some recommendations to enhance institutional support for the transitions of Chinese PGT students entering into a one year MA programme.

Paper 3

Navigating postgraduate studies and negotiating the values of 'capital'

Clare Coburn, Lancaster University; Erum Hamid & Tara Connolly, King's College London alumna

Email: c.coburn@lancaster.ac.uk, erum.hamid@outlook.com, taraconnolly20@gmail.com

Keywords: Home students, international students, cultural capital, belonging

This paper draws on a research study we carried out as postgraduate students enrolled on education related MA programmes in one UK university. The aim of our study was to explore our peers' reported experiences of their studies with a focus on how their learning shapes their identity, sense of belonging and relationships with others enrolled on their courses. Drawing on 33 semi-structured interviews, we found that students used aspects of their cultural capital to differentiate themselves from their peers and help navigate their studies. They consciously and unconsciously grouped their peers into two main identifier groups - 'home' students who have a strong command over English and a sound knowledge of the UK/Western context, and 'international' students with comparatively limited English language and UK context competence. Our findings show that all students, and particularly international students, deployed different forms of capital in an attempt to 'fit in' and succeed in their studies. This affected the ways in which individual participants experienced a sense of belonging in the postgraduate learning space. We conclude with recommendations of what HE departments and MA programmes can do to support a more inclusive learning dynamic that fosters a culture of belonging for all.

References

Advance HE (2023), *Equality+ higher education Students statistical report 2023*

Choudaha, R. (2017) Three Waves of International Student Mobility (1999–2020). *Studies in Higher Education* 42 (5): 825–832

Crisfield, M. D. (2020). Making the transition to master's dissertation writing: evaluating the impact of a dissertation writing course on PGT students' confidence. *Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education*, 17

Fakunle, O. (2021). Developing a framework for international students' rationales for studying abroad, beyond economic factors. *Policy Futures in Education*, 19(6), 671-690.

- Gale, T., & Parker, S. (2018). Student aspiration and transition as capabilities for navigating education systems. In *Educational Choices, Transitions and Aspirations in Europe* (pp. 32-49). Routledge
- Macleod, G., Dozier, M., Marvell, R., Matthews-Smith, G., Macleod, M. R., & Liao, J. (2024). Identifying a research agenda for postgraduate taught education in the UK: lessons from a machine learning facilitated systematic scoping review. *Oxford Review of Education*, 50(1), 95–112.
- Mittelmeier, J. (2025). Against ‘integration’ in research and practice with international students. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 10283153241308744.
- Macleod, G., Dozier, M., Marvell, R., Matthews-Smith, G., Macleod, M. R., & Liao, J. (2024). Identifying a research agenda for postgraduate taught education in the UK: lessons from a machine learning facilitated systematic scoping review. *Oxford Review of Education*, 50(1), 95–112.
- Mili, & Towers, E. (2024). How postgraduate university students construct their identity as learners in a multicultural classroom. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 29(6), 1621-1637.
- Trower, H., & Lehmann, W. (2017). Strategic escapes: Negotiating motivations of personal growth and instrumental benefits in the decision to study abroad. *British Educational Research Journal*, 43(2), 275-289

Emotional Winds and Institutional Clouds: Human Stories from the Policy Space

Symposium Organisers: Nicola Carse, University of Edinburgh

Email: nicola.carse@ed.ac.uk

Khadija Mohammed, University of West of Scotland

Email: Khadija.Mohammed@uws.ac.uk

Chairperson/Discussant: Anna Beck, University of Glasgow

Strand: Policy and Politics of Education

Outline

This symposium explores the human dimensions of educational policy development and enactment, emphasizing the lived experiences, emotional labour, and relational work that often remain invisible in formal policy narratives. Drawing on theoretical insights from McConnell (2010), Apple (2019), and Lambert and O'Connor (2018), we examine how educators and policy actors at national and local levels experience, respond to, and influence policy directions. Across the symposium papers, we centre human stories as critical forces within the policy process, tracing how vulnerability, reflection, and emotion act as both catalysts for change and points of tension in policy spaces. Rather than viewing policy solely as a rational or technical exercise, this symposium foregrounds the messy, affective, and relational dynamics that shape policy creation and enactment. We ask: how do personal and collective histories influence educational actors' responses to policy? What role does emotional labour play in sustaining or challenging systemic norms? How might more human-centred approaches to policy development create space for deeper, more inclusive transformations in education? By illuminating these questions, the symposium contributes to understanding policy not only as a system to be analysed but as a space to be lived, navigated, and reshaped.

Symposium Presenters

- Paper 1: **Tracing the Human Currents in Policy Development: A Self-Study Approach**
Nicola Carse, University of Edinburgh; Khadija Mohammed, University of the West of Scotland; Aileen Kennedy, University of Glasgow; Melina Valdelievre, Education Scotland; Dawn Garbett; University of Auckland
- Paper 2: **Weathering (and thriving) in the 'Policy Storm': a primary teacher's account of using self-study and WPR to respond to policy**
Alison Adams, University of Edinburgh
- Paper 3: **Researching both sides of the same coin: reflections of a teacher-researcher**
Elisabeth Davies, University of the West of Scotland

References

- Apple, M. W. (2019). *Ideology and curriculum* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- Lambert, K., & O'Connor, J. (2018). Breaking and making curriculum from inside 'policy storms' in an Australian pre-service teacher education course. *The Curriculum Journal*, 29(2), 159-180.
- McConnell, A. (2010). Policy Success, Policy Failure and Grey Areas In-Between. *Journal of Public Policy*, 30(3), 345–362. Cambridge Core. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0143814X10000152>

Paper 1

Tracing the Human Currents in Policy Development: A Self-Study Approach

Nicola Carse, University of Edinburgh; Khadija Mohammed, University of the West of Scotland; Aileen Kennedy, University of Glasgow; Melina Valdelievre, Education Scotland; Dawn Garbett, University of Auckland
Email: nicola.carse@ed.ac.uk

Keywords: Policy Development; Self-Study; Racial Literacy; Lived Experience

Aims

This paper reports on a collaborative self-study designed to capture the complex, multi-layered ways in which we have interacted with, responded to, and influenced policy development to support building racial literacy in teacher education in Scotland. We aim to foreground the human dimension of policy processes, highlighting how emotion, vulnerability, identity, and personal histories shape policy engagement.

Methods

Guided by La Boskey's (2004) features of self-study, the research was self-initiated, focused, interactive, and qualitative. The first four authors, positioned within anti-racism policy spaces, came together with a critical friend to undertake collaborative inquiry. Using a qualitative approach, we wrote three vignettes and engaged in recorded reflective conversations structured around: (1) positioning ourselves within the policy space, (2) mapping the policy landscape, and (3) sharing lived experiences and practices.

Main Findings

Findings illuminate often unseen, but critical, dimensions of the policy process: the emotional labour, identities, aspirations, and vulnerabilities of those actively enacting and influencing policy. Our analysis provides a counter-narrative to traditional rationalistic accounts of policy-making, showing how self-work can surface systemic barriers and the need for diverse voices within policy spaces.

Conclusions

Drawing on McConnell's (2010) analysis of policy processes and Lambert and O'Connor's (2018) "policy storm" metaphor, we argue that self-study offers a necessary human-centred lens to understand policy work. Recognising emotion, identity, and relationality within policy enactment challenges traditional models of policy as purely procedural, offering new insights for more equitable policy development.

References

- LaBoskey, V. K. (2004). The methodology of self-study and its theoretical underpinnings. In J. J. Loughran, M. L. Hamilton, V. K. LaBoskey & T. Russell (Eds.), *International handbook of self-study of teaching and teacher education practices*. (Vol. 12, pp. 817-869). Springer.
- Lambert, K., & O'Connor, J. (2018). Breaking and making curriculum from inside 'policy storms' in an Australian pre-service teacher education course. *The Curriculum Journal*, 29(2), 159-180.
- McConnell, A. (2010). Policy Success, Policy Failure and Grey Areas In-Between. *Journal of Public Policy*, 30(3), 345–362. Cambridge Core. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0143814X10000152>

Paper 2

Weathering (and thriving) in the 'Policy Storm': a primary teacher's account of using self-study and WPR to respond to policy

Alison Adams, University of Edinburgh

Email: Alison.Adams@ed.ac.uk

Keywords: Self-Study; Education Policy; Teacher Professionalism; Critical Reflection

Aims

This presentation reports on initial findings from my doctoral research, which combines Self-Study with Carol Bacchi's (2009) policy analysis framework, 'What's the Problem Represented to Be?' (WPR), to critically examine my response to policy expectations as a former primary teacher working in Scotland. By exploring the ways in which I am "*simultaneously constrained and inspired*" (Lambert and O'Connor, 2018: 159) by policy, I provide a personal account of the habits, assumptions, and reframed perspectives that emerge from engaging with policy discourse.

Methods

Guided by Ball and Olmedo's (2013: 91) contention that to look critically at policy, we must also look critically at the 'raw material' of our practices and beliefs, data was gathered through the method of reflective journaling and an analysis of six Scottish education policy documents using WPR. Together, these methods helped me to problematise my response to policy.

Main Findings

In line with Moore (2018), initial findings reveal an affective attachment to discourses and practices which validate or legitimise feelings of self-worth; even if there is resistance at the discursive level. Interrogation of these responses through 'cycles of dialogue' (Pinnegar and Hamilton, 2009) revealed further tensions and coping mechanisms, such as a tendency to 'self-intensify' in response to feelings of personal responsibility.

Conclusions

Though formal conclusions are yet to be drawn, problematising my affective attachment to policy through Self-Study and WPR drew attention to my personal capacity for change by working *with* policy, as opposed to against it (Lambert and O'Connor, 2018; Samaras, 2011). This suggests that critical reflection on lived experiences of policy enactment may help educators to question, and even disrupt, the 'revocability' of policy expectations in pursuit of optimistic change (Ball and Olmedo, 2013: 91; Lambert and O'Connor, 2018: 177).

References

- Bacchi, C.L. (2009) *Analysing policy: what's the problem represented to be?* Frenchs Forest, N.S.W. Pearson.
- Ball, S.J., and Olmedo, A. (2013) Care of the self, resistance, and subjectivity under neoliberal governmentalities, *Critical Studies in Education*, 54(1), pp.85-96. <https://doi-org.eux.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/17508487.2013.740678>
- Lambert, K. and O'Connor, J. (2018) Breaking and making curriculum from inside 'policy storms' in an Australian pre-service teacher education course. *The Curriculum Journal*, 29(2), 159-180.
- Moore, A. (2018) *The affected teacher: psychosocial perspectives on professional experience and policy resistance*, Georgetown: Routledge.
- Pinnegar, S.E. and Hamilton, M.L. (2009) *Self-study of practice as a genre of qualitative research theory, methodology and practice*, Dordrecht; London: Springer.
- Samaras, A.P. (2011) *Self-study teacher research: improving your practice through collaborative inquiry*, Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

Paper 3

Researching both sides of the same coin: reflections of a teacher-researcher

Elisabeth Davies, University of the West of Scotland

Email: Elisabeth.Davies@uws.ac.uk

Keywords: Anti-racist practices; insider-outsider research; positionality; education

Aims

Reflecting on the research process of two studies, one undertaken with teaching practitioners and the other collaborating with young people, this discussion aims to provide an insight into the experience of a teacher-researcher working within the anti-racism space in education. As a minority ethnicity myself, it has been recognised that 'insider research' brings with it a set of challenges ethically, however it also brings benefits such as access, trust and 'cultural competence' through mutuality (Hodkinson, 2005).

Methods

While one study employed the use of traditional qualitative semi-structured interviews with teaching practitioners, the other utilised a modified, arts-based photovoice approach to gain insights from young people across Scotland. Co-research featured heavily in the research design with children and young people but was not evident in the practitioner-based study. The differing approaches to research across the two studies is in itself telling of the conflicts when designing and undertaking research within the same space but through differing lenses.

Main Findings

The findings of both studies intersect at the lack of effective policies and consistent racial literacy amongst practitioners in Scotland. Despite the convergence of these findings across both studies, discomfort permeated the role of the researcher throughout each research process creating an, at times, uncomfortable but privileged space in which to work.

Conclusions

Both studies drew their own conclusions from participant's lived experiences of racism, however there were definite similarities in how practitioners respond, or are perceived to respond, to racism in Scottish schools. Grappling with insider/outsider factors identifying with both a minoritised group and policy actors has been a fundamental characteristic of my journey in research. Reflecting on my positionality during the research process, I found my own ethnicity and professional role does not situate me as a more proficient or inferior researcher, just 'a different type of researcher' (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009, p.56) and there is value in recognising this unique positionality.

References

- Dwyer, S.C. and Buckle, J.L. (2009) 'The Space Between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8(1), pp. 54–63. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690900800105>.
- Hodkinson, P. (2005) "'Insider Research' in the Study of Youth Cultures", *Journal of Youth Studies*, 8(2), pp. 131–149. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676260500149238>.

Brilliant Yet Shadowed - Shining a light on lesser-known thinkers of Education**Organiser: Nicola Robertson, University of Strathclyde****Email: n.robertson@strath.ac.uk****Chairperson/Discussant: Vijayita Prajapati, University of Strathclyde****Email: vijayita.prajapati@strath.ac.uk**

This symposium brings together some of the theorists and philosophers written about in the Brilliant Yet Shadowed special issue submitted to the SERA Research Bulletin convened by the Theory and Philosophy Network. An education that is open to all is necessarily underpinned by an openness to philosophy and theory that is as diverse as the cultures in which education permeates; yet, the same theorists, from homogenous contexts, are referred to *ad nauseum* by philosophers and practitioners alike. The contributors of this symposium intend to spotlight the contributions of hitherto unknown theorists both in their own cultures, and towards a global understanding of certain notions of education. Furthermore, the discussant will critique the endeavour and offer insights into any potential application of these theories for understanding education, and furthermore education in Scotland, in the 21st century.

Paper 1**The Teachings of Sanatan Dharma and the Educational Philosophy of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur – Understanding Siddhanta Sarasvati as a Traditional Modernist****Tinni Goswami, St. Xavier's College (Autonomous)****Email: tinni_goswami@sxccal.edu****Keywords:** truth; religion; science; nationalism

Bimala Prasad Datta, later known as Bhakti Siddhanta Sarasvati Thakur was a well-known religious reformer of colonial Bengal who established Gaudiya Math and Mission. He was a follower of Caitanya/modern Vaishnavism and contributed to a great extent for creating a religious and scientific print culture in Bengal. He was also a renowned astronomer and used to publish two astronomical journals in vernacular. In his journals he translated ancient Hindu Sanskrit texts on Astronomy (Jyotisha) and circulated the same amongst the middle-class gentry or Bhadrals with an intention for creating a culture of awareness on national science or in other words, scientific nationalism. He also published almanacs for the Gaudiya Vaishnava community for maintaining the legacy of the festivals and rituals based on the religious tradition. It was his objective behind these almanacs to educate the devotees about the religious gospels/teachings.

I want to examine all of his above-mentioned works in the context of Sanatan Dharma to understand how his educational ideas were influenced by its principles. Sanatan Dharma advocates for pluralism and promotes tolerance. For example, it emphasizes the attainment of truth, which encompasses thirteen forms, including: truthfulness, equality (impartiality), self-control, absence of envious competition, forgiveness, modesty, endurance, absence of jealousy, charity, thoughtfulness, selfless philanthropy, self-possession, and continuous compassionate harmlessness (Sanatan Dharma, 1902). In my conclusion, I will demonstrate how Siddhanta Sarasvati embraced these ideals to promote his vision for the religious and national education of India as a traditional modernist.

References

Sanatan Dharma. (1902). *An Elementary Text Book of Hindu Religion and Ethics*. Benaras.

Paper 2

Motoko Hani and the *Jiyu Gakuen*

Nicola Robertson, University of Strathclyde

Email: n.robertson@strath.ac.uk

Keywords: freedom; feminism; pedagogy; society

Motoko Hani was a Japanese educator with significant influence in both the informal and formal educational spheres. With her husband she established the popular women's magazine *Fujin no Tomo* (Woman's Friend) which has been providing meticulous advice to the women of Japan on efficient running of their households since 1903. However, she is perhaps better known as the founder of the *Jiyu Gakuen* (Freedom School) and its beautiful school building designed by noted architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Initially established as a means of cultivating future *fujin*, the *Jiyu Gakuen* later developed a programme for both young men and women that resulted in it becoming a reputable international school that remains over a century later. To understand Hani's vision requires an understanding of her notion of freedom comprising of liberty, unity, and authority; and how such a freedom was encouraged using pedagogical tools such as time and space. Hani's vision was not of an education that intended towards rote memorisation of fact, but one intended to support the development of self-sufficient adults who were aware of their role in wider society. This paper aims to show that Hani's ideas transcend a cultural and temporal context to remain relevant today not only in Japan, but throughout the world.

Paper 3

Narayana Guru, Vygotsky and Education: From Non-dualism to World Philosophies

Shone Surendran, University College London

Email: s.surendran.14@ucl.ac.uk

Keywords: epistemology; non-dualism; society; diversity

Sri Narayana Guru (1854 – 1928) is a well-renowned social reformer in the South Indian state of Kerala. However, his extensive philosophical work remains neglected within India and World Philosophy. His approach to non-dualist philosophy (Advaita Vedanta) brought traditional Indian epistemology to bear on social justice issues, including education. In this presentation, I argue that there are compelling connections between Narayana Guru and Vygotsky regarding knowledge, mind, and society, with broader implications for philosophy of education and educational research. Recently, there has been increasing attention within Vygotsky scholarship on the influence of philosophers Spinoza and Hegel and his philosophical commitment to the German Idealist tradition. While this emerging scholarship offers an alternative to mainstream Anglo-American interpretations, the role and influence of Eastern and Indian philosophical thought are seldom acknowledged in academic discourse. As a critical point of discussion, I draw on my experience of studying Indian philosophy at a 'gurukula'; an indigenous education system, rooted in the oral tradition. They adopt a global perspective in the study of Western, Eastern, and World philosophers, which highlights neglected historical relations while illustrating inclusive and diverse philosophical discourse, which remains to be reciprocated within Western academia. In discussing Narayana Guru's and Vygotsky's non-dualist philosophies, I examine how these insights respond critically to growing calls to diversify academic philosophy and education. Extending academic dialogues beyond the Western philosophical canon to include global thinkers may better illuminate our understanding of educational issues by engaging with diverse thinking and World philosophies.

Exploring equity in National Qualifications: Perspectives of SQA stakeholders Scottish Qualification Authority

Chairperson: Rachel Whitford

Discussant: Laura Wilson

Outline

Scotland's national awarding body, Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), must ensure that it maintains its integrity and standards in assessment while balancing fairness for learners with diverse needs. Our symposium will present four papers by SQA that focus on the theme of evolving qualifications while maintaining equity and access. The first piece of research will set the scene of current attitudes towards National Qualifications by presenting the findings from the 2024 National Qualifications (NQ) Survey which highlights how learners with protected characteristics have experienced them differently from their peers. Following this will be a presentation of research into learner attitudes towards Artificial Intelligence (AI), which identifies how learners with different characteristics feel about AI. The third paper presented examines how SQA stakeholders experienced the return to course assessment after modifications made as a result of COVID-19 were removed for the first time in 2024. This research highlights a disparity between different learners in how they handled the lack of course modifications. The fourth paper again explores research conducted on changes to practical National Qualifications and focuses on the role of learners in shaping these qualifications to suit their needs, and promote fairness in assessment.

Paper 1

National Qualifications 2023-24 Survey: Experiences

Laura Wilson, Rachel Whitford, Maggie Mroczkowski, Colin Moore and Nevil Hopley

Email: laura.wilson@sqa.org.uk, rachel.whitford@sqa.org.uk

Keywords: Assessment; Equity; Examinations; Qualifications

While Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is undergoing a period of significant reform, it must ensure that its commitment to standards, assessment integrity and equity are maintained. In response to this, SQA launched a national survey in 2024 to track perceptions of National Qualifications (NQs) over time and aimed to examine how learners with protected characteristics experienced NQs differently from their peers.

The survey, conducted in September 2024, was administered online. It collected responses from 2349 learners, 1113 educators, and 111 SQA staff across Scotland by a process of self-selection. The data was analysed using percentage frequency distributions, composite mean scoring, and Kruskal-Wallis tests.

Findings revealed that learners with protected characteristics reported statistically significant lower satisfaction with some aspects of their NQs compared to the rest of the sample. Respondents with a disability or additional support need (ASN), from Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)¹ areas or who are care-experienced had lower levels of satisfaction with communications about grades and assessment. The impact of COVID-19 on learning in 2023–24 was felt to be higher for respondents who identified as women and girls, or were part of the LGBTQIA+ community, or who had a disability or ASN. Respondents who were part of the LGBTQIA+ community and those with a disability or ASN also showed lower levels of satisfaction with assessment and awarding.

The 2024 survey marks the beginning of annual research monitoring Scotland's National Qualifications system. The findings will help guide decisions on National Qualifications, ensuring fairness and adaptability in the evolving educational landscape.

Paper 2

Learners' attitudes toward AI in the Scottish education landscape

Email: jamie.lawson@sqa.org.uk, maggie.mroczkowski@sqa.org.uk, jake.green@sqa.org.uk

Keywords: AI; attitudes; learners; survey

We present work resulting from the Scottish Qualifications Authority's (SQA) consultation of learners in Scotland on their use of and attitudes towards AI in the Scottish education sector. In April 2025, over 2,700 learners took part in an online survey, including over 1,700 respondents from schools. We collected respondent profile data, such as age, access to technology and Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) to explore potential relationships between AI use and certain characteristics.

Analysis of the data from this work is ongoing and we are currently undertaking school learner specific analysis, which will be shared at this symposium. Overall results for all learners show that respondents who identified as boy/man were more likely to have used AI and feel positive about it than other gender groups. Additionally, respondents who identified as nonbinary were less enthused about AI than those who identified as boy/man and girl/woman. While there were no significant differences in AI positivity by SIMD level, the percentage of respondents who never use AI is highest in areas of high deprivation. Free-text responses showed that learners have many concerns regarding the impact of AI on society, the environment and on their own learning and development.

The results of this work represent the initial stage of SQA's consultation with learners in Scotland. The survey has identified potential unequal relationships between different learners in how they use and perceive AI that warrant further, in-depth exploration. Potential implications of the survey findings on Scotland's national qualifications will also be discussed.

Paper 3

Evaluation of the NQ-24 Return to Full Course Assessment

Email: Fiona.Girvan@sqa.org.uk, Marina.Martinolli@sqa.org.uk, Colin.Moore@sqa.org.uk, Maggie.Mroczkowski@sqa.org.uk

Keywords: Assessments; modifications; learning, teaching; focus groups; interviews

This research explored the views and experiences of learners (S5 and S6), school, college and HEI practitioners, and a range of SQA colleagues on the return to full course assessment in 2023-2024, following a period of course modifications put in place as a result of the COVID-19. Included in the research was the impact on fairness and preparedness for learners of different needs.

Qualitative data collection methods were used, namely semi-structured focus groups and interviews with SQA stakeholders. The dialogue obtained from the focus groups and interviews helped to fully understand the range of stakeholder views and experiences and the ways in which course modifications impacted different learners.

The research shows that learners considered the return to full course assessment a more accurate measure of skills and knowledge, as well as providing a more rounded assessment experience. Practitioners thought learners benefited from a broader, more holistic learning experience, something that had not been possible with the course modifications in place.

However, the research demonstrated that school practitioners and learners would have preferred a more staged approach, with concerns across all groups that learners did not fully develop their skills through modified courses and experienced difficulties adjusting to the return to full course assessment, particularly when transitioning from National 5 to Higher. The research highlighted the variety of experiences for learners and the lack of provision for those with additional support needs

when returning to full course assessment. Some learners described feeling overwhelmed and unprepared for the additional independent learning requirement associated with the return to full course assessment.

Paper 4

2025 Research on Assessments in Practical Subjects

Email: ayla.rosales@sqa.org.uk; colin.moore@sqa.org.uk; jake.green@sqa.org.uk

Keywords: Assessment; Equity, Examinations; National Qualifications

In 2024, SQA conducted research with teachers and lecturers across practical subjects to find out if the associated question paper was a suitable and fair method of assessment in the following courses: Fashion and Textile Technology, Practical Cake Craft, Practical Cookery, Practical Electronics, Metalworking, and Woodworking.

An online survey was launched in February 2024; 1,026 practitioners completed the survey. This was followed by five focus groups, with a total of 28 participants.

The survey findings showed that teachers were in favour of removing the question paper from their subjects in Metalworking; Woodworking; and Practical Cake Craft, and in focus groups described how the question paper may not be fair to learners who were more practically skilled. SQA received mixed feedback for Fashion and Textile Technology, and Practical Cookery.

Following the first phase of the research in 2024, the 2025 iteration incorporates learner views on assessments in Practical Cookery and Fashion and Textile Technology, ensuring fairness and openness to learner involvement in qualification development. The findings will be used to determine how to approach assessments in these subjects in 2025/2026. In addition to incorporating learner views, this research expands the work by exploring all types of assessments in these courses (question paper; assignment; and practical activity), and considers other barriers to assessment in practical subjects such as the need for assessment arrangements, in order gain a better understanding of where the question paper sits in relation to the rest of the course.

Problematising Inclusion in Scottish Schools: Discourse, Voice and Participation

Symposium Chair: Marie McQuade

Symposium Discussant: Alison Mitchell

Organiser: Alison Mitchell, University of Glasgow

Email: Alison.Mitchell@glasgow.ac.uk

Purpose of symposium

This symposium problematises the concept and practice of inclusion in Scottish Education through three practitioners' papers, recently published in the journal of Leadership, Scholarship and Praxis in Education (LSPE), a Research Practice partnership between the University of Glasgow's School of Education and Glasgow City Council Education Services. Paper One uses Critical Discourse Analysis to examine how language in policy and media informs headteachers' experiences of leading equity, revealing tensions in constructing a shared narrative on inclusion. The second paper amplifies early secondary school learners' voices post-COVID-19, examining the crucial link between wellbeing, learning and motivation in a changing societal context, while calling for courageous, learner-led curriculum reform. The third paper applies the Framework for Participation (Florian, Black-Hawkins & Rouse, 2017), in a primary school setting, to explore how inclusion and achievement are conceptualised across a diverse school community. Collectively the three papers in this symposium emphasise the need for deeper, shared understandings of language, policy and practice around inclusion, and authentic inclusion of learner and practitioner voices into policy and practice, if we are to achieve an education system that is genuinely *Open to All*.

Symposium Presenters

- Ruth McConachie
- Madelaine Baker
- Lindsay Lobo, Katie Fisher and Paula Dudgeon

Paper 1

The language of inclusion and its impact on the leadership of equity within Scottish secondary schools

Ruth McConachie, Whitehill Secondary School

Email: rmcconachie@whitehill-sec.glasgow.sch.uk

Keywords: inclusion; equity; language; politics

Aims

This research has examined representations of the language of inclusion in:

- Selected Scottish educational policy
- Selected media and professional association representations
- Focus groups with Scottish Headteachers to examine the impact of these representations on their experience of the leadership of equity

The research's aim has been to study and contrast these representations and consider how they impact on headteachers' experience of the leadership of equity within Scottish secondary schools, with consideration given to issues of voice and power.

Methods

This research has used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyse the use of language of selected policies and media representations. Thereafter, Bacchi's (2009) What is the Problem Represented to Be? (WPR) method has been used to consider the aims of the selected policies and any missing voices

or interpretations. The study has drawn on empirical data from focus group discussions with headteachers from a case study local authority to consider how such representations impact on the leadership of equity.

Findings and conclusions

The findings have been used to consider how the varying representations impact on the creation of a shared narrative about inclusion – if such a narrative is possible. From this research, conclusions demonstrate how representations of language about inclusion impact on our collective viewing and understanding of inclusion, and how headteachers experience leading equity within that framing of inclusion. Limitations of the study have also been identified with proposals for further research offered. Finally, recommendations have been proposed for the leadership of equity in secondary schools in Scotland.

Paper 2

Wellbeing and Learning Post-Pandemic: Amplifying the voices of early secondary school students

Madelaine Baker, Drumchapel High School

Email: MBaker@drumchapelhigh.glasgow.sch.uk

Keywords: wellbeing; learning; learner voice; COVID-19

Aims

Education systems have had to rethink their approach in terms of wellbeing and learning in response to COVID 19. Learner voice should be woven through all levels of policy in order to understand the experience of young people, during and since the pandemic. This study sought to amplify the voices of learners to investigate the link between wellbeing and learner progress.

Methods

A small empirical study of learners' experiences was conducted by a headteacher researcher in June 2023, to explore participants' experiences of learning in their first two years directly following school closures. Careful consideration was given to the ethical approval process as well as the impact of the relationship between the researcher and the participants. The Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) approach to the data analysis explicitly acknowledged the positionality of the researcher.

Main Findings

Wellbeing findings centred on socialising and a return to larger social mixing: routines and structures for mental and physical wellbeing and reflections on post-pandemic wellbeing support in school. Learning findings centred on external forces which motivate learning; learning for a changing world and whether change is for the better.

Conclusions

It is essential that we amplify the voices of learners to develop a culturally/socially relevant, learner led and skills driven curriculum. Current social norms which existed pre-pandemic, but which are intensified in a post-pandemic society are having a negative effect on the wellbeing of learners. The author proposes that Scottish education needs to be more courageous and decisive in the actions it takes next.

Paper 3

Learning for All: Exploring the Relationship Between Inclusion and Achievement in a Primary Setting

Lindsay Lobo, Katie Fisher, Paula Dudgeon, Glasgow City Council Educational Psychology Service

Email: lindsay.lobo@glasgow.gov.uk, katie.fisher@glasgow.gov.uk,

paula.dudgeon@glasgow.gov.uk

Keywords: inclusion; achievement; Framework for Participation; diversity

Aims

By utilising the Framework for Participation (Florian, Black-Hawkins & Rouse, 2017), this research aims to understand how the concepts of inclusion and achievement are constructed within a local primary school recognised as being inclusive of its diverse population.

Methods

This single-site case study incorporated multiple methods of data collection, within an iterative process. Observations, focus groups, questionnaires across the whole school community, as well as analysis of key documentation, are some of the methods used. Deductive thematic analysis is utilised to draw key themes, aligned with inclusive pedagogy, around what practitioners and the school community believe, know and do to support participation and achievement.

Main findings

The Framework for Participation allowed for an in-depth socio-cultural exploration of inclusion and achievement. These are presented in subthemes which sit under the core beliefs, knowledge and actions that encapsulate the school community. Tensions and contradictions are highlighted.

Conclusions

All education practitioners have a responsibility to support the participation and achievement of all children within learning communities – particularly within increasingly diverse societies. We believe this research methodology can complement and extend the reflective development of inclusive practices in schools.

Curriculum Matters: Leadership, Participation and Innovation in a Changing Educational Landscape

Symposium Chair: Alison Mitchell

Symposium Discussant: Madelaine Baker

Organiser: Julie Harvie, University of Glasgow

Email: Julie.Harvie@glasgow.ac.uk

Purpose of symposium

This symposium brings together three practitioners' papers published this year in the journal of Leadership Scholarship and Praxis in Education (LSPE), a Research Practice Partnership between the University of Glasgow's School of Education and Glasgow City Council Education Services. The papers critically examine key tensions and possibilities within Scotland's curriculum, with a shared focus on reimagining curriculum to advance system coherence, learner engagement and equity. The first paper explores successful approaches to Interdisciplinary Learning (IDL) in secondary schools, highlighting how protected time, leadership support, and provision for collaboration enable the development of transferrable skills and high levels of pupil motivation and engagement. The second paper investigates the persistent challenges of the Broad General Education (BGE) to Senior Phase transition, identifying how policy ambiguity and competing agendas contribute to inconsistent or inequitable curricular structures, particularly in S3 (aged 14 – 15). The third paper offers a conceptual framework for enhancing learner participation through the Drama curriculum, arguing for participation to be embedded in the curriculum to foster leadership, confidence, agency, and critical engagement with issues of social justice. Together, these papers argue for a more coherent, inclusive, and participatory curriculum, and propose strategies to strengthen alignment between curriculum policy, school practice, and the lived experience of learners in a rapidly changing global landscape.

Symposium Presenters

- Jane Arthur and Julie Harvie
- Jonathan Graham
- Claire Hamilton

Paper 1

Interdisciplinary Learning: A Study of Practice within Secondary Schools in Scotland

Jane Arthur & William Corral, Glasgow City Council Education Services; Julie Harvie, University of Glasgow

Email: jane.arthur@glasgow.gov.uk, william.corral@glasgow.gov.uk, julie.harvie@glasgow.ac.uk

Keywords: interdisciplinary learning; curriculum development; project-based learning; secondary education

Aims

In Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence, Interdisciplinary Learning (IDL) is cited as one of four main contexts for learning. However, some studies suggest that an implementation gap exists and that IDL is not being fully realised in practice, especially in the secondary sector (Graham, 2019; Harvie, 2018, Baumfield et al., 2010). This paper aims to explore the ways IDL can be realised successfully in a secondary school setting.

Methods

Focus group discussions were carried out with senior leaders, teachers and young people from three secondary schools in one local authority in Scotland. These schools had been identified as having good practice in the area of IDL. A theoretical model of IDL (Harvie, 2020) was used to guide the discussions and to analyse the data.

Main Findings

The main findings from this study showed that there were benefits for both teachers and pupils from engaging in interdisciplinary activities, such as improved relationships, development of transferrable skills, leadership capacity building, increased motivation and engagement in learning and teaching. The findings also indicated that protecting time for students and staff to plan and collaborate before, during and after IDL projects was essential for success.

Conclusions

The study concluded that it is possible to structure successful IDL work in secondary schools if there is support from the senior leadership team, flexibility created within timetables and protected time given for staff and pupils to work together.

Paper 2

Exploring the Challenges at the Broad General Education to Senior Phase Transition in Scotland's Curriculum

Jonathan Graham, Eastbank Academy

Email: JGraham@eastbankacademy.glasgow.sch.uk

Keywords: Curriculum for Excellence; Broad General Education (BGE); senior phase (SP); transitions

Since the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) many secondary schools have modified their curricular structure, influenced by the requirement to deliver pupil entitlements and offer a Broad General Education (BGE) to the end of S3. The autonomy afforded to Head Teachers (HTs) offers schools significant flexibility in designing their curriculum, which has resulted in a range of curricular structures across Scotland. However, many schools find it challenging to attain a balance between ensuring learners receive their entitlement to a BGE while also supporting progression to the senior phase.

This empirical research seeks to understand the underlying reasons giving rise to this challenge, and how these impact on curricular structures. It interrogates policy and examines the curricular structures and organisation of learning in a Scottish local authority's (LA) (district) BGE curricula. The researcher employs a Case Study approach using the LA secondary schools as case study sites. The study draws from both an interpretive and a constructivist paradigm.

The findings indicate that the wording and expectations in education policy, in addition to the competing demands of CfE and other educational agendas around equity and excellence, have given rise to the challenges reported by ES. The ways in which schools address such demands has resulted in a range of curricular structures and learning experiences in the LA's secondary schools, particularly in relation to S3. The paper concludes with recommendations for government bodies in relation to practice and policy, to alleviate challenges faces by schools.

Paper 3

A framework to enhance learner participation through the Drama Curriculum

Claire Hamilton, Bearsden Academy

Email: ed010chamilton@glow.sch.uk

Keywords: learner participation; drama curriculum; children's rights; transformation

This review of contemporary empirical evidence synthesises literature in the field of learner participation.

It aims to:

- Identify the principles underpinning effective learner participation.
- Identify how educational leaders can enable learners to participate effectively.
- Investigate the extent to which the Drama curriculum can equip young people with the skills required to participate effectively.

This systematic review is based on the analysis of 24 published journals from 2011 – 2022. **It takes the form of qualitative research synthesis, a rigorous** approach including: a step-by-step methodology, pre-established review protocol, quality assurance checklist and reporting guidelines. The data from the studies was synthesised using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), producing a coherent interpretation of the data and insightful analysis leading to evidence-based recommendations for practice.

To be equitable, learner participation must be experienced through pedagogical approaches in the classroom. Providing opportunities to develop confidence and participatory skills in a low-risk environment prepares learners for more formal shared decision-making out with the classroom. The collaborative nature of Drama is the most emancipatory aspect. It is a powerful tool for enhancing learner participation as it; dilutes hierarchical power dynamics, encourages intergenerational learning, enables learners to explore issues of social justice, inequality, and discrimination through critical inquiry and empowers them to challenge injustice. Drama provides a safe place to engage learners in authentic participation practices that lead to positive change. This paper highlights the importance of the prominence of Drama in the curriculum if we are to fulfil the aspirations of the UNCRC.

Leadership, Self-Evaluation and Professional Growth in Scottish Education: Reflective Practices for Systemic Improvement

Symposium Chair: Julie Harvie

Symposium Discussant: Marie McQuade

Organiser: Marie McQuade, University of Glasgow

Email: Marie.McQuade@glasgow.ac.uk

Purpose of symposium

This symposium explores how educational leadership, professional development, and self-evaluation strategies can be reimagined within Scottish education to support sustainable improvement and professional growth. In the first paper, the author critically examines the Professional Review and Development (PRD) process in Early Years Centres (ELC), highlighting the central role of leadership to promote meaningful professional learning, reflection and growth. Paper two investigates how newly appointed secondary headteachers conceptualised and enacted headship in response to the challenges of Covid-19, emphasising the need for supportive professional networks, purposeful engagement with headteachers in policy discourse at local and national level, and focussed professional learning around professional socialisation for aspirant and new headteachers. The third paper presents the design and implementation of an innovative whole-school self-evaluation strategy aimed at embedding a culture of reflection, continuous improvement, and professional growth, driven by collaboration and stakeholder engagement. Together, these practitioners' papers offer a bi-sectoral lens on how leadership practice, professional learning, and evaluation frameworks can align to drive ELC, school, and system improvement. The symposium invites discussion on building capacity and coherence across early years and secondary education through strategic, reflective, and inclusive approaches to leadership and professional learning. All papers were published this year in the journal of Leadership, Scholarship and Praxis in Education (LSPE), a research practice partnership between the University of Glasgow School of Education and Glasgow City Council Education Services.

Symposium Presenters

- Patricia Mills
- Barry Mochan
- Ali Preston

Paper 1

Professional Reviews (PRDs) in Early Year Settings in Scotland: A Critical Exploration of the PRD Process and Potential

Patricia Mills, Hilltop Nursery

Email: PMills@Hilltop-Nursery.glasgow.sch.uk

Keywords: leadership; Professional Review and Development (PRD); Early Years Centres (ELC); professionalism

This study aimed to investigate the process and potential of professional reviews (PRDs) in early years (EY) settings. PRDs were an area of interest to me as a researcher, because I have been working for over 20 years in early years and had only received two PRD's in that time. Given the rapid changes to policy and practice in EY, it is essential that practitioners have regular access to professional learning and reflection (Siraj-Blatchford and Kingsley, 2015) to effectively deliver the provision and outcomes expected of the service (SSSC, 2015).

This study compared continuous professional development requirements between EY settings and school settings (Primary and Secondary sectors) and explored with EY staff participants' perspectives on PRDs: the purpose, process and impact. The investigation was positioned in the interpretivist

paradigm, as it explored early years practitioners' (EYP) experiences and perceptions. A questionnaire using both open-ended, and closed questions informed indicative questions to explore in more detail through a subsequent focus group with EYPs. The focus groups captured EYPs' thoughts and feelings about their experiences of PRDs through extensive, carefully considered answers. Participants were aware that the intention of the study on the relevance and purpose of PRDs was to inform future practice.

The data indicated that the experience and impact of ELC PRDs was wholly dependent on how the process was led and resourced, highlighting leadership as a main factor to the success or failure of the PRD process, and ultimately the professional development and growth of ELC staff.

Paper 2

How Have New Secondary Headteachers in Scotland Formed and Enacted Role Conceptions of Headship in Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic?

Barry Mochan, Bellahouston Academy

Email: BMochan@bellahoustonacademy.glasgow.sch.uk

Keywords: headteacher; school leadership; role conception; pandemic

For new Headteachers appointed around the time of the Covid-19 Pandemic, many of the newly-required duties associated with school leadership were likely to be incompatible with their pre-appointment role conceptions of Headship. This paper draws on the findings of a study which sought to: consider if - and, if so, in which way(s) - role conceptions of Secondary Headship in Scotland have changed due to the pandemic; and identify, describe and understand any supportive factors which allowed inexperienced Headteachers to effectively enact these modified role conceptions, and thereby navigate associated flux and uncertainty.

The study, the findings of which form the basis of this paper, utilised a case-study design, involving collection and analysis of qualitative data through semi-structured interviews with three Secondary Headteachers appointed to roles within the same local authority area around the time of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The paper's main findings identify the challenges to effective school leadership which arose during the pandemic, and describe the approaches used by participant headteachers to mitigate the specific challenges they experienced within their own contexts. Perceived future risks which may materialise as Headteachers lead school communities through an uncertain post-pandemic landscape of proposed transformative change are also explored.

The paper concludes by making recommendations which may alleviate, for school leaders, the flux and uncertainty arising from these perceived future risks: a greater acknowledgement of the significance of organisational socialisation in pre- and post-appointment professional learning; the establishment of supportive professional networks, particularly for new school leaders; and more purposeful engagement with headteachers in policy discourse at local and national level.

Paper 3

Self-evaluation for self- and school- improvement

(The development of a self-evaluation strategy enabling all staff to engage with consistency and rigour, bringing a genuine basis for self and school improvement)

Ali Preston, King's Park Secondary School

Email: APreston@kingspark-sec.glasgow.sch.uk

Keywords: self-evaluation; school improvement; strategy; professional growth

The *National Improvement Framework* (Scottish Government, 2023) identifies teaching quality and school leadership as key drivers for raising attainment and achieving equity. Drawing on research literature and the author's school leadership experience, this paper highlights the essential role of consistent self-evaluation (SE) in sustaining meaningful professional growth and school improvement. Recognising SE as a fundamental element of school excellence, the author worked with her secondary school staff team to develop a structured, timetabled framework for effective SE, as a basis for meaningful school improvement.

Underpinned by critique of national policy, research around leadership of SE was applied in context through professional dialogue, promoting deeper knowledge and understanding across the school community of the strategic importance of SE for school success. A representative working group was established to collaboratively develop the SE framework, empowering staff to initiate change, and embedding pupil voice in decision-making.

Staff and pupil feedback supported the use of multiple evidence sources to enable rigour in the use of the framework and validity in the results. Embedding reflective practice within the school culture was essential; a structured three-year calendar prioritised time and focus for school-wide SE. To address the challenges of openness in reflection, the process provided an objective, accessible framework that could be used across each department in the school community. Staff feedback led to the creation of the *Collaborative Self-evaluation for Improvement (CSI)* model to validate self-evaluation across departments.

This approach shifted the school community beyond compliance with the *How Good is Our School (HGIOS4) framework* (Scottish Government 2015) and the GTCS (2021) Standards, offering a meaningful strategy embedded in the School Improvement Plan. Designed by staff and pupils, it delivers purposeful, whole-school improvement focused on outcomes for all learners.

Re-thinking mathematics education through a social-justice lens in the context of the Scottish Curriculum Improvement Cycle

Cristina Mio, University of Glasgow
Email: cristina.mio@glasgow.ac.uk

Chairperson/discussant: Sinem Hizli Alkan

Symposium presenters:

Corinne Angier, Susie Marshall, Cristina Mio, Pete Wright

Outline

The symposium aims to draw together some contemporary research threads in mathematics education in Scotland to highlight constraints in realising the aspirations of the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence and enacting social justice in mathematics teaching.

The educational policy environment in Scotland is supportive of wider purposes for mathematics education and recognises both the importance and power of mathematics to make sense of the world and to make informed decisions (Education Scotland, online a). However, there is evidence from the latest thematic inspection (Education Scotland, online b) that the aspirations of CfE are not always achieved in the classroom. In their ongoing work within the Curriculum Improvement Cycle, Education Scotland recognises these issues and there are hopeful signs for the future mathematics curriculum. In this symposium, we will look at possible causes for this policy/practice disconnect: Paper 1 will look at how 'Numeracy' is conceptualised by teachers and how this conception impacts their practice. Paper 2 will consider whether the pursuit of higher attainment forecloses other purposes for mathematics. To conclude, Paper 3 will draw on findings from a research project with teacher educators to offer suggestions to support teachers to overcome these constraints and embrace teaching mathematics for social justice.

References

Education Scotland, online a, "Numeracy and Mathematics" <https://education.gov.scot/curriculum-for-excellence/curriculum-areas/numeracy-and-mathematics/> (Published 01/08/2017. Last updated 19/04/2023)

Education Scotland, online b, "Enhancing the quality of mathematics education in Scotland - A national thematic report from His Majesty's Inspectors of Education" (28 November 2024) <https://education.gov.scot/inspection-and-review/hm-chief-inspector-reports-and-guidance/national-thematic-inspections/enhancing-the-quality-of-mathematics-education-in-scotland/>)

Paper 1

Scottish teachers' conceptions of numeracy

Cristina Mio & Susie Marshall, University of Glasgow

Email: cristina.mio@glasgow.ac.uk, Susie.marshall@glasgow.ac.uk

Keywords: numeracy; mathematics; critical, power

Our research and teaching in Mathematics Education suggests that there is a lack of conceptual clarity in how numeracy is defined and understood across Scottish policy.

The aim of the research was to explore teachers' interpretations of numeracy. According to Maclellan (2001), beliefs of what constitutes numeracy influence learning and teaching. We also wanted to consider whether this interpretation of numeracy went beyond the functional application of

mathematics in work and life to include a critical lens, through which mathematics is used to analyse and critique social issues and global challenges (Askew, 2015).

Three focus groups (early years educators, primary and secondary school teachers) with between 5 and 12 participants were held. Participants were invited to write down their thoughts individually prior to sharing with the wider group. These written notes formed part of the data, as well as focus group discussions which were audio recorded and transcribed.

Thematic analysis of the data showed a variety of interpretations of numeracy, with the majority of participants identifying numeracy with number and its manipulation to solve arithmetical calculations. Participants' conceptions of numeracy appeared to be quite fluid, changing during the discussion, with no consensus reached. When presented with definitions of numeracy from research literature, participants accepted numeracy as being the application of mathematics to solve problems in everyday life. The recognition of the power of mathematics to critically analyse and challenge global issues emerged as a novel idea for the participants in one of the focus groups.

References

- Askew, M. (2015). Numeracy for the 21st century: a commentary. *ZDM Mathematics Education* 47, 707–712
- Maclellan, E. (2001). What counts as numeracy. *Scottish Educational Review*, 33(2), 157-168.

Paper 2

What does global citizenship offer to secondary mathematics education in Scotland?

Corinne Angier, University of Stirling

Email: cfa1@stir.ac.uk

Keywords: Mathematics Education; Global Citizenship Education; Social Justice; Care

This paper reports on the affordances that were found when bringing global citizenship education (GCE) into conversation with mathematics education as expected in the Scottish education policy of Learning for Sustainability (LfS) (Scottish Government, 2012). Mathematics teachers must balance a requirement to address LfS, with targets set through the National Improvement Framework to raise attainment and to close the gap between young people from different backgrounds. Both policies might be considered significant contributions to promoting social justice as outlined in the Scottish teachers' professional standards (GTCS, 2021).

A single/collective case study was undertaken of secondary mathematics teachers who chose to engage with professional learning in GCE with a development education centre. Online writing was collected, and a small subset of the group recorded conversations. GCE activity in the classroom included both tasks addressing global themes and pedagogies that aligned with Teaching Mathematics for Social Justice (Cotton, *et.al.* 2024).

Professional learning in GCE provoked engagement with the nature and role of mathematics and the purposes of teaching it. Mathematics Teachers articulated aspects of a care-with-awareness (Bartell, 2011) for the foregrounds (Skovsmose, 2012) of young people. They were initially unsure how to fit GC into mathematics classrooms which are dominated by a *curriculum for assessment* driven by the National Improvement Framework. Those who found, made or gave space for activity that aligned with the values of a GCE 'otherwise' (Andreotti, 2021) noticed a shift in participation practices (Hand, 2012) in their classrooms which challenged deficit and ability discourses.

References

- Andreotti, V. d. O. (2021). Depth education and the possibility of GCE otherwise. *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 19(4): 496-509.

- Bartell, T. (2011). Caring, race, culture, and power: A research synthesis toward supporting mathematics teachers in caring with awareness. *Journal of Urban Mathematics Education* 4(1): 50–74-50–74.
- Cotton, T., et al. (2024). *Towards a Socially Just Mathematics Curriculum: A Theoretical and Practical Approach*, Taylor & Francis.
- Scottish Government (2012). *Learning for Sustainability the report of the One Planet Schools Working Group*.
- Hand, V. (2012). Seeing culture and power in mathematical learning: Toward a model of equitable instruction. *Educational studies in mathematics* 80(1): 233-247.
- General Teaching Council for Scotland (2021). "Professional Standards." from <https://www.gtcs.org.uk/knowledge-base/categories/professional-standards>.
- Skovsmose, O. (2012). Students' foregrounds: Hope, despair, uncertainty. *Pythagoras* 33(2): 1-8.

Paper 3

Promoting socially-just mathematics teaching practices

Pete Wright, University of Dundee; Cristina Mio, University of Glasgow; Corinne Angier, University of Stirling

Email: PWright002@dundee.ac.uk, cristina.mio@glasgow.ac.uk, cfa1@stir.ac.uk

Keywords: Teacher education, social justice, participatory action research, professional development

We will present findings from the recent participatory action research project: *Promoting socially-just mathematics teaching*. The project's aim was to explore how mathematics teacher educators can promote socially-just pedagogies and practices amongst student teachers and experienced practitioners they work with. The research team included 15 teacher educators and postgraduate research students from universities across Scotland and England.

We drew on a framework for teaching mathematics for social justice (TMSJ) consisting of four essential components: 1) Employing collaborative, discursive, problem-solving pedagogies; 2) Promoting mathematical inquiries that resonate with learners' real-life experiences; 3) Facilitating mathematical investigations that develop learners' individual and collective agency; 4) Challenging common myths surrounding school mathematics.

The framework was used to design a series of three professional development workshops (available at www.mathsocialjustice.org/prof-dev), focusing on inclusion, engagement and problem solving (considered to be issues of primary concern to many teachers of mathematics) through a social justice lens. Teacher educators' experiences of participating in the project were captured through reflective discussions during research team meetings. Thematic analyses were carried out on the transcripts. Teacher educators reported how, despite their general enthusiasm for TMSJ, teachers of mathematics found it difficult to enact in schools. Constraints included prescriptive curricula, dominant discourses and narratives, and the predominance of traditional teaching approaches. Where teachers managed to adopt TMSJ, they noticed significant improvements in their students' motivation and engagement, further reinforcing their initial enthusiasm for TMSJ. Feedback from trialling professional development workshops suggested they were successful in helping teachers identify strategies for overcoming these constraints.

Collaborating for Change: Reimagining Computing Science Education in Scotland

Discussant: Stephen McKinney

Chair: Angela Jaap

Keywords: Computing Science education; Teacher Education; communities of practice; professional learning; collaboration and partnership

This symposium investigates the current state of Computing Studies in Scotland. Across the three papers in the symposium, we will explore some of the challenges and obstacles in Computing Science. However, the papers will also share how, through partnership, approaches can be developed to address these pressing issues.

The symposium is solution-focused in outlook and will illustrate how the presenters, through various partnerships and collaborations, have sought to address the challenges which are presented.

The symposium presents three perspectives through the following papers:

1. The challenges for Computing Science in Scottish Schools –Quintin Cutts
2. Computing Science pathways and collaborations for Teacher Education –Angela Jaap and Clare Smith
3. The power of subject networks – STACS approach to Professional Learning for Computing Science teachers – Toni Scullion and Brendan McCart

The symposium will focus on how national policies, research findings, and partnership working can inform a more consistent and sustainable approach to supporting Computing Science in Scotland.

Paper 1

The challenges for Computing Science in Scottish Schools – Quintin Cutts

Scotland aspires to be a digital nation, able to create and use technology for a flourishing 21st Century economy. The Government adopted the Scottish Tech Ecosystem Review (Logan, 2020) and recently announced AI Scotland, a national transformation programme. Both programmes require a workforce that deeply understands technology, yet while industry report 13,000 new tech jobs annually, only 5000 recruits are educated.

Development of this essential workforce must start in Computing Science (CS) classes in schools. While exciting for CS to be so needed, there are many very serious challenges facing the subject.

CS teacher numbers are dropping sharply. In 2008, there were 766; last year there were 550; and a demographic retirement timebomb looms. 20% of Scottish schools have no qualified CS teacher, the majority just one. Government have increased teacher education places and provide bursaries, but with industry burgeoning, the replenishment rate of CS teachers is the lowest of all STEM subjects.

Dwindling teacher numbers mean a highly disconnected community with little time for sharing practice informally or hosting/attending formal PD/CLPL opportunities. Our mandatory BGE CS curriculum is relatively new, as are such curricula world-wide. The 2010 CfE offering was weak; the 2017 update much improved but with insufficient funding to properly train teachers. CS teacher backgrounds are variable, leading to challenges in presenting a coherent pathway for pupils. Education leaders are unlikely to have experienced any CS education themselves. Decisions are therefore made based on faulty understanding of the discipline and have profoundly negative effects on the subject.

References

Logan, M. (2020) *Scottish Ecosystem Technology: Review. A report to Scottish Government*. Available from: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-technology-ecosystem-review/>

Paper 2

Computing Science pathways and collaborations for Teacher Education

Angela Jaap and Clare Smith

The variable access to Computing Science in Scottish schools impacts the quality of education in this field. The University of Glasgow has proposed pathways to address this issue, focusing on recruiting new teachers and supporting existing ones. Recruitment to the secondary PGDE across the STEM subjects has been under target for several years. As such, promoting teaching as a career to new graduates and career changers alike requires a refreshed approach.

The PGDE programme at the University of Glasgow will welcome its first students on a ‘braided career’ Computing Science pathway in autumn 2025. The term ‘braided career’ first appeared in a case study in 2018 by the Royal Society. Initially, this term referred to combining academic and other work, primarily in the sciences, but later came to include teaching.

At the heart of the ‘braid’ is collaboration between multiple partners. In the instance of our ‘Scottish’ braid, these partners include the University, schools, and industry partners, all of which are key to the success of a braided career pathway. The implementation of braided careers presents several practical challenges, not just in establishing effective ways of working between all stakeholders, but also in ensuring that access to the appropriate support is available to all, both during the period of study and the probationary period.

This paper will share the Scotland-focused (re)definition of ‘braided careers’ and share the benefits and lessons learned from this approach. It will also consider other pathways currently being explored by the University to promote high quality professional learning.

References

Royal Society (2018b) Braided Careers in Teaching. Available from: <https://royalsociety.org/-/media/policy/publications/2018/07-09-18-braided-careers-teaching.pdf> (last accessed 14 May 2025).

Paper 3

The power of subject networks - Scottish Teachers Advancing Computing Science (STACS) approach to PL for CS teachers – Brendan McCart and Toni Scullion

Building a peer network for teachers of Computing Science and delivering subject-specific up-skilling were two of several key outcomes stated in the original grant letter awarded by the Scottish Government to Scottish Teachers Advancing Computing Science (STACS) in response to the recommendation of the Scottish Technology Ecosystem Review (STER) report (Logan, 2020). Our approach began with separate initiatives to address the outcomes, for example, a website with classroom-ready materials to quickly attract the attention of many teachers while exploring ways to provide up-skilling.

Over the last three years, an evolving model has emerged for up-skilling teachers, where teams of tutor-teachers engage in reflection and discussion to discern key messages and appropriate interactive online sessions, establishing a nationwide community of practice for Computing Science teachers across Scotland. An essential aspect of this model has been the growth of a team with additional new members and sub-teams, all sharing a consistent methodology and increasing autonomy in self-organisation and content shaping to improve Computing Science across the nation.

This paper aims to provide insight into the STACs community of practice, including the teacher- and research-focused approaches which have been core to our work. It will also share updates on more recent developments, which aim to consolidate the wider professional learning opportunities of STAC, having shown some success following initial experimentation and our work with external partners and agencies in defining Computing Science for Scotland's teachers. Lastly, the paper will outline future pathways for STACs, including building on the interest from a few local authorities and visits to local teacher groups, as well as promoting local upskilling activities in collaboration with councils by leveraging and further developing the teacher network.

References

Logan, M. (2020) *Scottish Ecosystem Technology: Review. A report to Scottish Government*. Available from: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-technology-ecosystem-review/>

What knowledges for what sort of geography education in Scotland?

Symposium organiser:

Angela Curley, University of Glasgow

Email: angela.curley@glasgow.ac.uk

Lauren Hammond, University of Oxford

Email: lauren.hammond@education.ox.ac.uk

William Quirke, University of Strathclyde

Email: w.quirke@strath.ac.uk

Steve McLeister, University of Edinburgh

Email: steve.mcleister@ed.ac.uk

Chairperson/discussant: Kathryn McCrorie, University of Strathclyde

Email: kathryn.mccrorie@strath.ac.uk

Outline

This symposium asks, 'what knowledges for what sort of geography education in Scotland?' Whilst geography is a discrete subject in the Senior Phase, in the Broad General Education (BGE) it is conceptualised primarily as part of Social Studies (Hammond et al., 2024). In a context of debates about the place of knowledge in the Curriculum for Excellence (Priestley & Sinnema, 2014), the positioning of geography raises questions about which geographies that are taught, how and why. Questions arise around whether primary children know they are studying geography in Scottish schools, teacher identity and the nature of geography teacher education.

The symposium begins with a paper from McLeister that asks which 'big ideas' should frame geography curricula, considering the place of concepts and knowledge, and the impacts of social selection on curricula. Hammond examines the relationships between citizenship and geography education, before making a case for (re)engaging with children's knowledges, geographies and citizenship in school geography. Quirke also argues the value of engaging with children's geographies through reflecting on the value of place-based education and knowledges in geography. Finally, Curley examines the importance of pedagogies of enquiry for geography teacher education about sustainability. The symposium concludes with a response from McCrorie.

Symposium Presenters: Steve McLeister, Lauren Hammond, William Quirke and Angela Curley

Paper 1

Big Ideas in Scottish school Geography curriculum

Steve McLeister, University of Edinburgh

Email: steve.mcleister@ed.ac.uk

Keywords: Disciplines; Geography; Curriculum; Concepts

Within the context of the curriculum improvement cycle there has been a move towards understanding the place of knowledge in school subjects and a move to organise curriculum around 'Big Ideas' or as it is referred to in the literature; 'key concepts'. In referring to the geography education literature there are several key issues which arise for curriculum makers which are based on what Geography is as a subject based on disciplinary knowledge. Geography has grown from different epistemological foundations spanning the sciences and the humanities and so how can the variety of knowledges based on this be expressed? The geography education community is not in agreement as to what comprises Geography's key concepts. The dangers of a concept-based

curriculum with generalizations becoming the transmission of a fixed body of knowledge needs to be avoided by integrating ways of testing knowledge claims as integral to the geography curriculum which enables young people to question and apply knowledge in keeping with the Know-Do-Understand framework. The question in Geography about 'who's knowledge' related to decolonisation needs to be considered when building a knowledge-based curriculum. Teachers will further become curriculum makers as they build curriculum using 'Big Ideas' and so further professional development will be required; the continued use of non-specialists in teaching will become more problematic; and the need for exemplification will become essential.

Paper 2

Time to (re)engage with children's geographies and citizenship in geography education?

Lauren Hammond, University of Oxford

Email: lauren.hammond@education.ox.ac.uk

Keywords: Children's Geographies; Citizenship; Geography Education; Childhood

Children encounter citizenship in a range of spaces as part of their everyday lives, including through play, sport, (social) media and discussion with family and friends. Children's citizenship is shaped by geographies, and it has long been argued that school geography has a role in citizenship education. Yet, childhood is not always conceptualised or understood 'as a political stage in life' (Skelton, 2013, p. 130), and children's (lived) citizenship and geographies are not consistently in geography education policy or practice. Drawing on the findings of a scoping review, this paper examines how the relationships between geography education and citizenship have been conceptualised in literature. The review found that literature often conceptualised children as citizens in the making and rarely engaged with their perspectives through research, and the relationships were often framed through five interconnected themes; first, citizenship as informing the purpose of geography education; second, the role of citizenship in engaging with injustices, issues and events in the world through geography education; third, children's citizenship and constructions of 'the child' in geography education; fourth, citizenship's role in supporting political literacy and participation in, and through, geography; and, finally, citizenship and the relationships between identities and place, nation and/or empire in geography. The paper concludes by making a case for (re)engaging with children's citizenship and geographies in, and through, school geography in Scotland.

Paper 3

Local Learning, Global Goals: Unpacking Scottish High School Students' Engagement with Local Open Spaces to Support a Sustainable Geography Education

Will Quirke, University of Strathclyde

Email: w.quirke@strath.ac.uk

Keywords: Learning for Sustainability; Place; Geography Education; Scotland

The Scottish Government's *Learning for Sustainability Action Plan 2023-2030* (2023) sets a target for every 3-18 place of education to become a 'Sustainable Learning Setting' by 2030. This goal is to be achieved by emphasizing the four Cs. One of these, Community, focuses on place and local action. The ideas of local place and placemaking are embedded in the People, Place, and Environment Experiences and Outcomes in Curriculum for Excellence, making this portion of the *Action Plan* naturally align with geography education. Yet one must ask: how well do geography teachers in Scotland understand the local areas in which they teach? Adopting a children's geographies perspective unveils challenges in adults assuming knowledge about children and young people's interactions with their environments. Young people engage with places differently than adults, often constrained by policies, actions, and activities determined by those in authority. A tension exists between teachers' perceptions of local environments, their attempts to use these spaces for learning, and the actual impact on children. This paper reviews our current knowledge of how Scottish high school aged children engage with local open space. In doing so, this literature-based understanding is used to offer recommendations for

how educators can integrate local places more effectively into their teaching to best contribute to *Target 2030*.

Paper 4

Everyday Geography Leading to Active Citizenship

Angela Curley, University of Glasgow

Email: angela.curley@glasgow.ac.uk

Keywords: Curriculum for Excellence; Active Learning; Initial Teacher Education; Self-Efficacy

With 8 Curricular subject areas within a Curriculum for Excellence, and a further 9 subsections to these curricular areas, many undergraduate primary student teachers can become overwhelmed with subject-specific content knowledge. Additionally, students need to also think about the way they teach these circular areas to pupils, refining practices to ensure that the transmission of knowledge is applicable to each setting: a pedagogical outlook. Based on Myers & Rivero's (2020) work on developing a preservice critical knowledge base on globalisation, this research discusses the 'added value' to Year 3 MEd elective Heritage, Citizenship & Sustainability students who engaged in a form of geographical and citizenship based active learning during their 6-week school placement, known as 'concept-based bingo'. This active engagement in the learning process provided a conceptual knowledge base, which was underpinned by geographical and wider civic activities that could be enacted at any point during the placement, incorporating activities such as the inclusion of a UN Sustainable Development Goal into lesson content. The concepts used in the bingo card also provided a medium to exercise effective pedagogical content knowledge, which was accessible for students, and which formulated reflective practices, through the promotion of self-efficacy. In line with an evidence-based practice approach and the relevant curricular context (in this case Curriculum for Excellence, 2010), this form of active learning seeks to empower students to look *inwards* (what they know); *outwards* (who from society can be engaged in the active learning process?) and *forwards* (can this be transformative?) (HIGIOS,2017).

The pervasive presence of ideology in education: A European perspective

Stephanie Thomson & Matthew Clarke, University of Aberdeen; Antti Saari & Tuomas Tervasmaki, Tampere University

Email: stephanie.thomson@abdn.ac.uk, matthew.clarke@abdn.ac.uk, antti.saari@tuni.fi, tuomas.tervasmaki@tuni.fi

Discussant: Ruth Unsworth, University of Glasgow

Email: Ruth.Unsworth@glasgow.ac.uk

Keywords: Ideology; policy; power

Pronouncements about the end of ideology are nothing new and can be traced back to the fall of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, which was infamously heralded by Fukuyama as ushering in ‘the end of history’. Today, emphases in education policy and practice on ‘best practice’ and ‘evidence-based practice’ serve to perpetuate this view that ideology is a thing of the past, a relic from a bygone era. Yet as Slavoj Žižek (1989) notes, claims regarding ‘the end of ideology’, and the accompanying notion that we have moved into a realm of objective truth and common sense, are in themselves *highly ideological*. Furthermore, this stance frequently entails a form of cynicism as a mode of ideology, where individuals are disillusioned with traditional ideologies, but remain trapped within the system they critique, as a way of maintaining the status quo while appearing to challenge it. In this symposium, we present a series of papers examining the pervasive presence of ideology in educational policy and practice today in a number of European contexts, including Scotland, England and Finland.

Paper 1

Ideology: Rehabilitating a disparaged concept

Matthew Clarke

Ideology remains one of the most elusive terms in social science, with the range of uses of the term precluding a single definition (Eagleton, 1991, p.1). In recent years, it has also become an increasingly problematic term in a range of fields, including education policy, dismissed and disparaged by those who proclaim a (purportedly non-ideological) commitment to ‘facts’ and ‘evidence’. This paper briefly explores the history of ideology, going back to the French Revolution and the work of Marx, as well as exploring its relations with kindred notions such as discourse (Mills, 2004), fantasy (Glynos, 2021), and disavowal (Zupančič, 2024), which track the complex links between interests, assertions and actions. The paper examines how ideology references the way dominant ideas, often taken for granted, can obscure the nature of social structures and power relations, thus serving the interests of those in power and maintaining the status quo. The paper also examines how language itself can be a tool of ideology, shaping our perception and understanding of the world through the meanings we assign to words, but also how ideology can be embodied in our actions (Žižek, 1989), which may reveal our true commitments, in *contrast* to our verbal assertions and protestations. The paper argues that ideology remains a crucial critical term in social and education analyses which aim to engage with complex questions of power and power relations.

Paper 2

Crossing Boundaries, Building Firewalls: Political Fantasies of Finnish Classroom Design

Antti Saari

Over the past decade, Finnish compulsory schooling policies have followed global trends in radically reimagining school spaces across social, material, and technological dimensions. Finnish schools and classrooms are undergoing significant transformations, incorporating movable partitions, flexible seating arrangements, and distinct zones designed to accommodate diverse learning styles. These changes aim to enhance movement and communication among students and teachers while challenging conventional education paradigms by redefining their roles and interactions.

Driven by perceived shifts in the labour market and broader societal transformations, these reforms position 'traditional' and 'rigid' school environments as inadequate. However, it is striking that school reform discourses often lack robust empirical support, relying instead on aspirational strategies to inspire imagination and enthusiasm among stakeholders rather than evidence-based validation.

Employing a Lacanian approach to ideology critique, this paper examines the ideological dimensions embedded within classroom design policy documents, with a particular focus on their visual representations of school spaces. By framing these visual elements as manifestations of political fantasies, the study reveals how they generate affective investment in school space reforms while simultaneously obscuring the social and material realities they create and sustain. Furthermore, this paper critically investigates how such representations shape stakeholders' expectations, reinforcing ideological assumptions about the future of education

Paper 3

The ideology of 'work' in British School-To-Work Transitions (STWT)

Stephanie Thomson

Youth unemployment and school-to-work transitions (STWT) are an area of policy focus globally – particularly as transitions have become more complex and less predictable. I discuss here how 'work' is reified and sanctified in the UK's 'liberal' STWT policy sphere (see Blossfeld, et al, 2005). I suggest this positioning leaves many young people in the UK vulnerable to exclusion from better-quality employment opportunities because they are, instead, left to navigate the 'unmarked minefield' (Schoon, 2020) into work created by a STWT regime that prioritises rapid labour-market entry or a 'work-first' (rather than a 'train-first') approach (Hadjivassiliou et al, 2018).

Drawing on Weeks (2011), I argue that we should draw attention to the ideology of work and not automatically accept a conceptualisation of work as a privatised, individualised endeavour. In that framing, young people are responsible for their own economic destiny and the experiences of them, as a group, are viewed as an aggregation of unique experiences – not possible to influence through government intervention. I suggest that a re-orientation away from outdated ideas of 'a foot in the door' and towards mechanisms that help young people to explore the types of work that might align with more long-term life ambitions could produce transitions that are more stable and meaningful – a more 'capabilities' approach to STWT (Sen, 1992, 1999). Finally, I discuss whether Records of Achievement, such as the proposed Scottish Diploma of Achievement (SDA), may be a policy tool that would allow for such a capabilities approach to STWT.

Paper 4

Back to the Visionary Future – The Ideological Reconstitution of Finnish Higher Education Policy Futures

Tuomas Tervasmäki

Anticipation of policy futures – attempts to forecast, influence and govern coming times beforehand – has become increasingly explicit action in education policy-making (Robertson 2022; Kallo & Välimaa 2025; Tervasmäki 2024a). The future appears precarious, and the recent breaks in the international politics and security environment – the Ukrainian war, polarization of societies, the rise of authoritarian, anti-democratic forces and expanding ecological crises – has shoved Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture to reimagine previous Higher Education Vision 2030 -policy (MEC 2017) and define a new vision in a changed environment.

A case study of Vision 2030-reform (Tervasmäki 2024a) showed that Finnish higher education system was represented as being in a state of existential crisis and falling behind its competitors in a high-risk manner. The vision employed ideological fantasies of crisis and salvation as legitimation and anticipated only a feverish struggle for competitiveness: technological futures driven by economic growth, and universities as top-down led corporations (Tervasmäki 2024a). Such ideological determinism ruled out any other policy alternatives and imaginaries of higher education, creating a competition fetish (Naidoo 2018). The ideological, taken-for-granted nature of the economic-competitive policy imaginary and its underpinnings are rarely critically debated – this includes Nordic welfare states like Finland (Sum and Jessop 2013; Poutanen 2022).

This follow-up research inquires the (dis)continuities within the Higher Education Vision 2040 -reform that takes place in 2025–26. As the recent literature has called upon the scrutiny on onto-epistemological bases of anticipation in HE (Kallo & Välimaa 2025), I will investigate the ontological groundings of Vision narratives by exercising ideology-critique (Tervasmäki 2024b) based on the post-marxist discourse theory (e.g. Laclau & Mouffe 2001; Glynos 2021). The question is does the ruptures in the political order also unwind the hegemonic policy structure to alternative imaginaries of Higher Education, or does the grip of ideology hold firm?

References

- Anders J., and Dorsett, R. (2017). What young English people do once they reach school leaving age: A cross-cohort comparison for the last 30 years. *Journal of Longitudinal and Lifecourse Studies*, 8 (1): 75–103.
- Blossfeld Hans-Peter, Klijzing Erik, Mills Melissa, Kurz Karin, eds (2005). *Globalization, uncertainty and youth in society*. London: Routledge
- Eagleton, T. (1991). *Ideology: An introduction*. London: Verso.
- Glynos, J. (2021). Critical fantasy studies. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 20(1), 95-111.
- Harrevel, R., Singh, M., Li, B. (2012). A Capability Approach to Cultural Diversity in School-to-Work Transitions: Amartya Sen and Young Adults' Diversely Different Education and Work Communities. In: Tchibozo, G. (eds) *Cultural and Social Diversity and the Transition from Education to Work. Technical and Vocational Education and Training: Issues, Concerns and Prospects*, vol 17. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Hadjivassiliou, K. P., Tassinari, A., Eichorst, W. and Wozny, F. (2018), 'How Does the Performance of School-to-Work Transition Regimes Vary in the European Union?', in Jacqueline O'Reilly, and others (eds), *Youth Labor in Transition: Inequalities, Mobility, and Policies in Europe*. New York: Oxford Academic.
- Kallo, J., Välimaa, J. (2025). Higher education in Nordic countries: analyzing the construction of policy futures. *Higher Education*, 89: 275–292.
- Laclau, E., and C. Mouffe. [1985] (2001). *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (2nd ed.). London: Verso.
- MEC (2017). Korkeakoulutus ja tutkimus 2030-luvulle. Taustamuistia korkeakoulutuksen ja tutkimuksen 2030 visiolyöle. Ministry of Education and

Culture.<http://minedu.fi/documents/1410845/4177242/visio2030taustamuistio.pdf/b30e5ec-66d3-44cb-acb9-7ac4318c49c7>

Mills, S. (2004). *Discourse* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

Naidoo, R. (2018). The competition fetish in higher education: Shamans, mind snares and consequences. *European Educational Research Journal*, 17(5): 605-620.

Pelikh, A., & Rowe, F. (2024). Increasing diversity, precarity and prolonged periods of education in the transition from school to work in Britain. *Population, Space and Place*, 30, e2771.

Poutanen, M. (2022). Competitive knowledge-economies driving new logics in higher education – reflections from a Finnish university merger. *Critical Policy Studies*, 17 (3): 390–408.

Robertson, Susan L. (2022). Guardians of the Future: International Organisations, Anticipatory Governance and Education. *Global Society*, 36 (2): 188–205.

Sen, A. (1992) *Inequality Re-examined*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Sen, A. (1999) *Development as Freedom*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf

Sum, N.-L., and B. Jessop. 2013. Competitiveness, the Knowledge-Based Economy and Higher Education. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, 4 (1): 24–44

Tervasmäki, T. (2024a). Anticipatory policy rhetoric: exploring ideological fantasies of Finnish higher education. *Critical Policy Studies*, 18(4): 536-555.

Tervasmäki, T. (2024b). *Tracing Ideology in Education – Investigations in Discourse Theory*. Tampere University Dissertations 1119. Tampere: Tampere University. <https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-03-3662-2>

Weeks, K. (2011). *The Problem with work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics and Postwork Imaginaries*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Žižek, S. (1989). *The sublime object of ideology*. London: Verso Books.

Zupančič, A. (2024). *Disavowal*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Poverty and Education Network Symposium 1: Research into Higher Education

Chair: Stephen McKinney, University of Glasgow

Email: Stephen.McKinney@glasgow.ac.uk

Discussant: Jakob Billmayer, Malmö University

Email: jakob.billmayer@mau.se

The Poverty and Education presents new research findings and insights for our annual symposia. We continue to have a special emphasis on the more hidden, or less well-known, aspects of poverty and education. Arguably, one of the responsibilities of academic research is to identify and systematically explore forms of 'hidden' poverty and the short term and long-term impact of poverty on education. For many years we have highlighted hidden poverty in school education, and we continue to address some of these serious issues in Symposium number 2. However, the work of members of the network has now extended into higher education and this symposium is focused on emerging research and insights on aspects of higher education.

The four papers in this symposium address areas of ongoing research. In paper one, members of the Scotland's Community of Access and Participation Practitioners (SCAPP) will provide some research evidence on the efficacy of the Community of Practice, and how this has supported interventions to improve widening participation practice and, ultimately, fair access to higher education. In paper two, the findings from research conducted by students on the Glasgow Medical School Access Programme (GAP) will be discussed. These findings indicate some of the benefits of GAP and some of the educational, social and financial challenges faced by these students while studying medicine. Paper three presents the findings from a systematic review of literature on how existing empirical studies conceptualise the preparation of new teachers for high-poverty school environments. The final paper complements paper three in that it presents findings from research focussed on the poverty experienced by students on an ITE programme in a Scottish university.

Paper 1

SCAPP Evaluation Matters: Collaborating as a Community of Practice

Patricia Anderson & Jill Christie

Scotland's Community of Access and Participation Practitioners (SCAPP)

Email: patricia.anderson@stir.ac.uk

Keywords: SCAPP; CoP; Widening Participation

Aims

One of Scotland's Community of Access and Participation Practitioners (SCAPP) core objectives is evaluation. In 2023, SCAPP established the Widening Participation (WP) Evaluation Matters Community of Practice (CoP) to support WP practitioners to develop evaluation knowledge and skills through social participatory learning.

Methods

The CoP aligns with the principles of Lave and Wenger's Community of Practice, as described by Wenger in 1998 (1), with participants committed to learning – together – by sharing experiences, good practice and supporting each other, to progress their own evaluation projects and produce a collaborative report and individual case studies.

Detailed evaluation of the process and impact of the CoP was undertaken (2). Ethical approval was secured for a mixed methods approach including qualitative research engaging with 18 CoP members or stakeholders through semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis identified research themes,

and all data from monitoring, surveys and interviews were examined to show that intermediate outcome indicators in the evaluation framework from the Theory of Change were met.

Main findings

The CoP was a successful model for supporting practitioner development in WP evaluation knowledge, skills and confidence. The CoP produced a series of case studies of each team's experiences which provided valuable resources for the sector to use to improve WP practice and ultimately fair access to higher education. This session will highlight selected examples of these.

Conclusions

The evaluation found that the CoP was successful in meeting its aims and objectives and the learning has been used to set up a second iteration for 2025 – 2026 with new participants.

References

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press

SCAPP WP Evaluation Matters CoP outputs available at: <https://www.fairaccess.scot/wp-evaluation-matters-community-of-practice/>

Paper 2

Glasgow Medical School Access Programme (GAP)

Stephen McKinney, Stuart Hall & Kevin Lowden, University of Glasgow

Aileen Linn, School of Medicine, Dentistry & Nursing

Email: Stephen.mckinney@glasgow.ac.uk

Keywords: GAP; Widening access; Medical School

Introduction

The Undergraduate Medical School at the University of Glasgow is committed to the development and retention of a community of medical students reflective of the wider society, which they will eventually serve. GAP aims to deliver a bespoke pre-medical programme that provides the necessary skills in basic science, communication and professionalism together with immersive experiential opportunity in a clinical context. The programme has been designed to realise in full the Scottish Government's vision of equitable access to medical school.

GAP aims to:

- equip students with the fundamental knowledge in science and competence in the relevant methods of scientific investigation.
- provide students with a basic introduction to the study of Medicine.
- introduce students to the use of virtual learning environments, on-line scientific research, word processing and presentation skills.
- develop transferable, intellectual, interpersonal and practical skills which may be of advantage for further study or in a wide range of employment.
- develop in students the flexibility to adapt to change throughout their working lives.

Methods and findings

In 2017-18, 2019-20 and 2021-22 medical school staff conducted a number of focus group and individual interviews with students who have experienced entry to medicine at the university via GAP. Colleagues in the School of Education have recently conducted additional in-depth analysis on this qualitative material. The presentation will discuss the findings from this additional analysis in relation to the efficacy of GAP and the wider implications for teaching and learning in medicine. Initial findings point to five key areas:

- GAP as preparation for Medicine.
- Learning and Teaching in Medicine.
- Higher Education.

- Social connections.
- Challenges of studying Medicine.

Paper 3

Understanding the Preparation of Teachers for High-Poverty School Environments: A Systematic Review

Peter Mtika, University of Strathclyde; Archie Graham & Dean Robson, University of Aberdeen; Kirsten Darling-Mcquistan, University of Edinburgh; Lindsay MacDougall, University of Aberdeen
Email: peter.mtika@strath.ac.uk

Keywords: ITE; High Poverty School Environments

Introduction

Globally, the preparation of teachers for high-poverty school environments is a key area of research, policy, and practice. Poverty is widely recognised as a barrier to educational achievement, adversely impacting children and young people's (CYP) engagement with school and their learning outcomes. This negative influence extends beyond the classroom, leading to detrimental consequences for their post-secondary education opportunities and future employment prospects. While a lot of attention has been paid to teacher preparation for inclusive education (e.g. Graham et al, 2025; Florian, 2021), some researchers have noted a general lack of agreement about how to prepare teachers for working in high-poverty school environments (e.g. Lerner et al., 2021; McNamara & McNicholl, 2016). Despite several studies on teacher preparation for high-poverty schools, there is still no consensus on the most beneficial strategies to equip teachers for supporting CYP in these complex environments.

Aims

This study aims to present the findings from a systematic review of literature on how existing empirical studies conceptualise the preparation of new teachers for high-poverty school environments. Additionally, it seeks to generate theoretical insights to better equip new teachers for such complex teaching contexts.

Methods

By synthesising existing empirical research, the study will provide a comprehensive understanding of the salient themes for enhancing teacher preparation for diverse school environments.

Main Findings

The main findings of this study are pending and will be determined through the systematic review of existing empirical research.

Conclusions

Implications for teacher preparation and future research will be discussed.

References

- Florian, L. (2021). The universal value of teacher education for inclusive education. *Handbuch Inklusion international Handbook of Inclusive Education*, 89.
- Graham, A., MacDougall, L., Robson, D., & Mtika, P. (2025). Newly qualified teachers' experiences of implementing an inclusive pedagogy in schools located in high poverty environments. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 1–15.
- Lerner, J., Roberts, G. J., Green, K., & Coleman, J. (2021). Prioritizing Competencies for Beginning Teachers in High-Poverty Schools: A Delphi Study. *Educational Research: Theory and Practice*, 32(2), 17-46.
- McNamara, O., & McNicholl, J. (2016). Poverty discourses in teacher education: Understanding policies, effects and attitudes. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 42(4), 374-377.

Paper 4

Poverty Experienced by Teaching Students in Higher Education in Scotland

Evelyn McLaren, Lindsay Gibson, and Stephen McKinney, University of Glasgow

Email: Evelyn.mclaren@glasgow.ac.uk

Keywords: Poverty, Time, ITE, Educational Outcomes

Aims

This study builds upon previous research investigating poverty among undergraduate Initial Teacher Education (ITE) students at one Scottish university. Our earlier findings revealed distinct forms of poverty among ITE students compared to broader student populations, with high incidences related to clothing (21%), transport (20%), fuel (18%), food (16%), household fuel (15%), and housing costs (12%). The current study explores these themes further to deepen understanding of the socio-economic challenges facing ITE students.

Methods

A two-phase mixed-methods design was employed. In October 2024, a survey was distributed to 532 undergraduate ITE students across all year groups, achieving an 18% response rate (n=97). Currently two respondents participated in follow-up interviews. These findings were compared to data from November 2023 (n=218 survey responses; ten interviews).

Main Findings

Although a smaller sample size, results suggest an upward trend in financial hardship: clothing (30.4%), transport (26.7%), fuel (21.7%), food (19.6%), household fuel (11.1%), and housing (13%). Notably, students reported significant 'time' poverty, with 87% working throughout the year- 71% for 8–20 hours weekly during term-time and 52% working 20–35 hours during holidays. 53% reported borrowing money from family.

Conclusions

The findings reinforce the compounded impact of financial pressures on ITE students, underscoring the uniqueness and intensity of teacher education programmes. Addressing these intersecting forms of poverty is essential to support student well-being and educational outcomes. We argue for sector-specific policy interventions with targeted financial support tailored to ITE students' distinct needs.

Embedding Research-Informed Professional Learning Through Regional Hubs: Insights from the Centre for Teaching Excellence (CfTE) in Scotland

Chair: Angela Jaap, University of Glasgow

Presenters:

Anne Thirkell

Claire Ramjan

This symposium shares emerging insights from the national Centre for Teaching Excellence (CfTE), a university-led, research-driven initiative designed to support teachers across Scotland to actively lead and engage with research-informed professional learning. At the heart of CfTE's approach is its developing network of professional learning hubs—collaborative, practice-anchored spaces that connect teachers, researchers, and education partners across diverse contexts.

The symposium draws on the early work of three core hubs: (1) the **Teaching-focused Hub** anchored in Glasgow, focusing on cross-sector collaboration and large-scale practitioner engagement; (2) the **Rural and Remote Hub**, supporting educators in geographically dispersed communities and addressing equity in professional learning access; and (3) the **Gaelic Education (GE) Hub**, committed to sustaining and advancing Gaelic education through context-specific research-practice partnerships. Through three papers, we explore how these hubs are enacting CfTE's mission—co-constructing professional learning, amplifying teacher voice, and embedding research in practice. The symposium will share preliminary findings, highlight tensions and opportunities in scaling teacher-led research nationally, and provoke discussion on sustainable models for practitioner inquiry.

Aligned with SERA 2025's themes of inclusive education and research-practice partnerships, this symposium invites participants to reflect on how collaborative hub models can support equitable, system-level change in teacher professional learning.

Paper 1

Embedding Research in Practice at Scale: teaching-focused research hub

This paper presents the early development of the Teaching-Focused Research Hub at the Centre for Teaching Excellence (CfTE) in the University of Glasgow's School of Education. It shares some strategies for scaling research-informed practice through co-constructed professional learning pathways. It examines how the hub supports teachers as active contributors to enquiry and as leaders of practitioner-led research. Teacher Associates are critical in driving these initiatives, fostering professional dialogue and sharing practice.

Key functions of the hub include producing high-quality research briefs, facilitating expert panels and sessions, and developing materials that inform and inspire professional practice. The hub also acts as a national engine for practitioner enquiry and research-practice partnerships, supporting communities of practice that connect classroom teachers, school leaders, and researchers across Scotland.

By embedding these activities within the local context of Glasgow's schools and communities, the paper highlights the challenges and opportunities of sustaining a culture of research engagement in an extensive, multi-sector urban system. It offers practical and theoretical insights into how hubs can support teacher agency, build professional capacity, and connect local learning to national education reform priorities. This paper will interest educators, researchers, and policymakers working to embed research-practice partnerships at scale.

Paper 2

Addressing Professional Learning Equity Through the Rural Hub

This paper explores the development of the Rural Education and Learning for Sustainability (LfS) Hub in Dumfries, Scotland. This hub was developed to ensure that the work of the CfTE is accessible to and appropriate for teachers working across rural locations. It also supports rural teachers to engage in and with research, with a complementary focus on embedding LfS within schools across Scotland.

Professional learning priorities, as determined by key actors in Scottish education, have historically had an ‘urban-centric’ focus, yet the nature and content of professional learning required by rural teachers is often different, given the distinctive and multifaceted nature of rural education (Paterson, Abarzúa-Silva, Machfudi & Henderson, 2024). Teachers working across rural settings require professional learning that is relevant and embedded within their specific rural contexts (Dick & Burns, 2024). Access to professional learning is difficult, due to distances between schools, travel costs and available time (Coker, 2019), which means that alternative models need to be considered.

This paper draws on data from focus groups conducted with rural teachers and reflections from members of the hub team, analysed through reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). We share key findings on the extent to which hybrid models of professional learning utilised within the hub have helped to overcome geographic barriers in teacher research engagement. We conclude with a series of steps to be taken to support equitable access to professional learning across rural settings, as part of a national drive towards self-sustaining systems of teacher learning.

References

- Braun, V., & Braun, V. (2021). *Thematic analysis: a practical guide*. Sage.
- Coker, H. (2019). Mediating the Flow of Professional Capital: The Potential of Technology for Rural Teachers Professional Learning in Scotland. *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*, 29(3), 39–55. <https://doi.org/10.47381/aijre.v29i3.234>
- Dick, S. & Burns, H. (2024). Professional learning and an emergent community of practice on the Scottish islands as viewed through Biesta’s educational domains. *Contemporary Issues in Practitioner Education*, 6, 3-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/25783858.2023.2256649>
- Paterson, A., Abarzúa-Silva, L., Machfudi, M. I., & Henderson, R. (2024). Thinking About Rural Education and Binary Logic. *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*, 34(2), 106–112. <https://doi.org/10.47381/aijre.v34i2.742>

Paper 3

Sustaining Gaelic Education through Research-Practice Collaboration

The Centre for Teaching Excellence’s Gaelic Education Hub is based at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, on the Isle of Skye. It provides research-informed support and activities – in-person and digitally – for teachers working in Gaelic education throughout Scotland. With a focus on national and international research on immersion and language education, the Hub offers research briefings, communities of practice, professional conversations, and research partnerships to support engagement in practitioner enquiry and the sharing of evidence with other professionals, thereby enhancing Gaelic education outcomes. The Hub also facilitates access in Gaelic to research-related materials generated by the Centre’s other hubs.

This paper presents early findings from the Gaelic Education Hub, highlighting the role of immersion and culturally sustaining pedagogies, as well as partnership working with Gaelic education stakeholders to develop research-informed, context-specific professional learning for teachers. The paper will draw on data from focus group research conducted with teachers and stakeholders in Gaelic education. It will present priority areas of focus in learning, teaching, and assessment in Gaelic education. In light of the Centre’s aim to support teachers in actively leading and engaging with research and evidence to inform and develop their practice, these priority areas of focus will be analysed and discussed.

Poverty and Education Network Symposium 2: Research into School Education

Chair: Stephen McKinney, University of Glasgow

Email: Stephen.McKinney@glasgow.ac.uk

Discussant: Jakob Billmayer, Malmö University

Email: jakob.billmayer@mau.se

The Poverty and Education network focusses on new research findings and insights for our annual symposia. We continue to have a special emphasis on the more hidden, or less well-known, aspects of poverty and education. Arguably, one of the responsibilities of academic research is to identify and systematically explore forms of 'hidden' poverty and the short term and long-term impact of poverty on education. For many years we have highlighted hidden poverty in school education, and we continue to address some of these serious issues in this Symposium. The work of members of the network has now extended into higher education and that is addressed in Symposium 1.

The four papers in this symposium address live issues and areas of ongoing research in school education. Paper one provides a critical review of some recent interventions aimed at creating greater equity for children and young people from working class and poor backgrounds. In paper two, the researchers propose a *multidimensional poverty and educational achievement model (MPEAM)* to establish which illustrates the influence of three dimensions of poverty - school resource, household, and accessibility - on educational attainment in Ghana and Malawi. Paper three presents research findings that highlight the very mixed approaches to school uniform grants in local authorities. The final paper seeks to centre structural inequities, particularly poverty, in school-based experiences of young people on the edges of care and who are affected by parental substance use and intersecting issues

Paper 1

Intervention, interventions, interventions - solving or perpetuating educational inequality

Alastair Wilson and Katie Hunter, University of Strathclyde

Email: al.wilson@strath.ac.uk

Keywords: Interventions; educational inequality; working class

Long established ideas in sociology offer complex but illuminative explanations for the reproduction of educational inequality. Social and cultural capital have been used relentlessly but purposefully by researchers theorising why pupils from working class and poor backgrounds are so consistently outperformed at all levels of the education system. Against this backdrop it would be realistic to expect that policy to address this issue would be immersed in or at least informed by processes to adjust a pupil habitus or increase their social and cultural capital. However little research has focused on translating these ideas into practice. The exception in the higher education field perhaps being the work of St John and colleagues on academic capital formation.

This paper will draw from a number of different educational interventions addressing educational inequality to argue that these ideas fail to permeate policy interventions in meaningful ways in Scotland and the wider UK. The case is made that part explanation for this lies in the neo liberal market ideas that have permeated local authority, council and HEI practice. Instead, an urgency exists to 'buy' fixes to different aspects of the problem without fully addressing its underpinning tensions. The paper advances this position to argue that this effectively stunts the role of educational research as a catalyst for innovation.

Paper 2

Understanding pathways to low educational attainment: Insights from low-and-middle income country contexts

Edward M. Sosu, Peter Mtika, Sofia M. Pimenta, Nana Yaa Nyarko, Diane Fleischer-Djoleto, Claire Wilson, Felix Maulidi Isaac Mepenedo, University of Glasgow
Email: edward.sosu@glasgow.ac.uk

Keywords: educational attainment; Ghana; Malawi

Aims

Despite the strong link between poverty and educational achievement, the underlying mechanisms, especially in low-and middle-income countries (LMIC), is poorly understood. In the present study, we examine the pathways from poverty to educational attainment in two LMIC contexts, Ghana and Malawi.

Methods

Our method was a qualitative multi-perspectival research design. Data consisted of multistakeholder interviews ($N=109$) of pupils ($n=34$), teachers ($n=33$), headteachers ($n=11$), education advisors ($n=8$) and parents ($n=17$) connected to schools with historically low educational achievement. We chose these schools because they predominantly serve pupils living in poverty. Our analytic approach involved coding for key concepts and themes as well as theoretical connections between these themes to generate a theoretical understanding of the poverty-achievement relationship.

Findings

We propose a *multidimensional poverty and educational achievement model (MPEAM)* which illustrates the influence of three dimensions of poverty - school resource, household, and accessibility - on educational attainment. These dimensions influence achievement through impact on the learning environment; learner participation; learner concentration and tiredness; pupil and teacher absenteeism; and teacher-student-community interaction.

Conclusion

Our findings offer new insights into the need for policies and practices that address the multiple dimensions of poverty and their impact on educational achievement, to improve outcomes for learners facing socioeconomic disadvantage.

Paper 3

The postcode lottery of school clothing grant in Scotland

Rachel Shanks, University of Aberdeen

Email: r.k.shanks@abdn.ac.uk

Keywords: local authorities; school clothing grant; school uniform.

In 2018 a national minimum school clothing grant for primary and secondary school children was introduced (in 2024-25 it was £120 for primary and £150 for secondary). Since the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 came into force there has been a duty on local authorities to provide clothing for school under the (s.54). Furthermore, the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 requires Scottish Ministers to prepare a delivery plan that includes measures to support local authorities to consider the automatic payment of benefits and support.

From its launch the eligibility criteria for school clothing grant have been set by local authorities and this was to be reviewed every two years. Thus, we can see that there are duties on both the Scottish Government and local authorities to work towards helping with the cost of school clothing and ensuring that it is easy to obtain.

Three sets of Freedom of Information requests have been sent to local authorities to gain information on, inter alia, level of grant, numbers receiving it, and whether the grant is paid automatically and/or rolled over from one school year to the next. Scottish local government finance, known as the Green Book, has been checked as this details the level of grant provided to local authorities for school clothing grant.

By analysing this information, three interconnecting sets of postcode lottery are evident. Firstly, the level of grant is determined by local authority/postcode, secondly the eligibility criteria depend on local authority/postcode, and thirdly the take-up rate differs by local authority/postcode.

Paper 4

Edges of Care: Systemic Inequalities and Experiences of Care for Children Affected by Parental Drug Use in School

Joyce Nicholson, University of Glasgow

Email: Joyce.Nicholson@glasgow.ac.uk

Keywords: Poverty; Edges of Care; Children Affected by Substance Use, Teachers Responding with Care

This paper seeks to centre structural inequities, particularly poverty, in school-based experiences of young people on the edges of care and who are affected by parental substance use and intersecting issues. Bywaters et al. (2022) argue that structural inequities are major drivers of child abuse, neglect, and intervention in family life. In Scotland children, living in the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods were 20 times more likely to be looked after or on the child protection register than children in the least deprived 10% (Bywaters 2016). This paper will explore both young people's and teachers experiences of care, their relationship with receiving and providing care within and outwith school. The paper will draw on small-scale qualitative research with young people aged 8 - 15 years (n=7) affected by parental drug use, their relationship with school and discussion groups with teachers (n=10) on recognising and responding to their needs. The fluid dynamics of giving and receiving care by young people within their families and the care they receive from teachers will be explored. Teachers' experiences of responding to recognised needs will be outlined. Structural inequities are central to the experiences and outcomes of children and to teachers care responses in school, particularly in response to 'visible' poverty.

Rapid Thesis

Highlands or the World? Place-Oriented Identity Constructions of Scottish Teachers and Their Pedagogical Implications in the Classroom

Valeriia Hulkovych, University of Hildesheim
Email: hulkovych@uni-hildesheim.de

Keywords: place-oriented identity; civic education; mixed-methods research

Belonging to specific social groups significantly shapes human thought and behavior – from everyday preferences to fundamental political beliefs. While these different layers of identity are rooted in historical and cultural contexts, they can also be shaped by school-based processes. Social science subjects such as History, Geography, and Politics, as well as language education, hold considerable potential to (consciously or unconsciously) address various place-oriented identities.

This doctoral research investigates how Scottish secondary school teachers construct and perceive their place-oriented identities—spanning local, national, and supranational levels—and how these identities influence their reported teaching practices. Grounded in Social Identity Theory, the study applies a mixed-methods approach, combining a curriculum analysis, a survey and qualitative interviews, to explore how identity and belonging are perceived and communicated in the classroom.

At this stage, the presentation will focus on the first phase of the project, including the conceptual framework, the development of a multi-dimensional identity instrument, and initial insights from the pretest and curriculum analysis on aspects relevant to identity issues.

Of the SERA conference strands, this project is particularly aligned with:

1. **Globalisation and Education**, as it explores transnational and multi-level identity constructions in the context of national curricula and political discourse; and
2. **Curriculum and Transformation**, through its analysis of Scottish secondary school curricular documents in relation to identity-related content, examining how belonging is addressed—explicitly or implicitly—within subject-specific guidelines and frameworks.

Global citizenship education in secondary mathematics classrooms, affordances and constraints.

Corinne Angier, University of Stirling

Email: cfa1@stir.ac.uk

Keywords: global citizenship; mathematics; social justice; neoliberal policy

Strand: Globalisation and education

The PhD explored the theoretical affordances of bringing mathematics education (ME) and global citizenship education (GCE) into conversation and the empirical outworking of this in the Scottish context. GCE is included in 'Learning for Sustainability' (Scottish Government, 2012) which holds a poorly defined place within the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence. The underpinning values and aspirations of critical ME (Andersson & Barwell 2021) align with those of a critical GCE (Andreotti, 2014). These transformative approaches are challenged by global trends towards competitive neoliberal education which appropriates social justice by claiming that increasing individual human capital leads to security and prosperity (Stein *et.al.*, 2017).

Working with a development education centre I devised and facilitated bespoke GCE courses for mathematics teachers. Online writing was collected, and a small subset of the group recorded conversations. The pandemic restricted classroom activity, nonetheless some stories were told of tasks addressing global themes and pedagogies that aligned with Teaching Mathematics for Social Justice (Cotton *et.al.*, 2024).

The mathematics teachers cared about the foregrounds (Skovsmose, 2012) of their students and cared that young people engage with mathematics which they describe as both useful and beautiful. Some were initially unsure how GCE could fit into the mathematics curriculum. They described their accommodation of what I call a *curriculum for assessment* in the senior phase which produces a backwash into the BGE. This constrained their activity, but some teachers found, made and gave space for activity which I describe as aligning with a GCE 'otherwise' (Andreotti, 2021).

Andersson, A. and R. Barwell (2021). Applying critical mathematics education, Brill.

Andreotti, V. d. O. (2021). "Depth education and the possibility of GCE otherwise." *Globalisation, Societies and Education* **19**(4): 496-509.

Andreotti, V. O. (2014). Soft versus critical global citizenship education. *Development education in policy and practice*, Springer: 21.

Cotton, T., et al. (2024). *Towards a Socially Just Mathematics Curriculum: A Theoretical and Practical Approach*, Taylor & Francis.

Government, S. (2012). *Learning for Sustainability the report of the One Planet Schools Working Group*.

Skovsmose, O. (2012). "Students' foregrounds: Hope, despair, uncertainty." *Pythagoras* **33**(2): 1-8.

Stein, S., et al. (2017). "The educational challenge of unravelling the fantasies of ontological security." *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education* **11**(2): 69.

Workshops

A framework for Learning for Sustainability in Initial Teacher Education: Next steps

Rushton, E.A.C., University of Stirling; Aldous, S., General Teaching Council; Christie, B., University of Edinburgh; King, B., Learning for Sustainability Scotland; Leask, K., University of Edinburgh & Ramjan, C., University of Glasgow

Email: Claire.Ramjan@glasgow.ac.uk

Keywords: Learning for Sustainability; Initial Teacher Education; Professional Development

Strand: Education for Sustainability

Rationale

Learning for Sustainability (LfS) is embedded in the Professional Standards for teachers in Scotland, as set out by the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS, 2021a). Student teachers are expected to demonstrate LfS in their practice to achieve the GTCS Standard for Provisional Registration (GTCS, 2021b) and Initial Teacher Education (ITE) has an important role in supporting educators to develop this important professional competence. The framework for LfS in ITE is a co-created initiative involving over forty teacher educators, from across the 11 ITE providers in Scotland and other key partners. The framework is structured around the LfS 'Target 2030' concept of *Sustainable Learning Settings*, which integrates LfS across all aspects of the context for learning through a focus on the four 'Cs' of Curriculum, Cultures, Communities and Campus, and aims to support reflection and enable change.

Aims and Methods

The aim of this workshop is to trial the use of the LfS in ITE framework to facilitate professional reflections on LfS engagement and provision in ITE institutions across Scotland. By using 'touchstone questions' (inspired by Jickling et al, 2018) as an interactive tool, the participants will be invited to; reflect on their own practice, identify opportunities and challenges in engaging with the concept of the 4 C's, and consider their own personal and institutional 'orientations for action'. Professional reflections on using the LfS in ITE framework will contribute to ongoing collaborative work supporting ITE institutions to respond to LfS in critical, caring, collective, and iterative ways.

References

- General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS). (2021a). The Standard for Full Registration. Available at: <https://www.gtcs.org.uk/documents/the-standard-for-full-registration>
- General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS). (2021b). The Standard for Provisional Registration. Available at: <https://www.gtcs.org.uk/documents/the-standard-for-provisional-registration>
- Jickling, B., Blenkinsop, S., Morse, M., & Jensen, A. (2018). Wild pedagogies: Six initial touchstones for early childhood environmental educators. *Australian Journal of Environmental Education*, 34(2), 159-171.
- Scottish Government (2023). *'Target 2030' A movement for people, planet and prosperity. Scotland's Learning for Sustainability Action Plan 2023-2030*. Scottish Government.

Reflecting on the opportunities and challenges of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in Higher Education

Mark Peart & Leon Robinson, University of Glasgow

Email: Mark.Peart@glasgow.ac.uk, Leon.Robinson@glasgow.ac.uk

Keywords: Reflective practice; Pedagogy; Generative AI; Technology; Ethics

Strand: Education and Technology Integration

The ever-evolving landscape of technology-enhanced learning and the plethora of digital technologies and Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) tools are, and have been, present in classrooms for some time; in addition to growing empirical evidence on the effectiveness and gains for learning (e.g., Crompton, 2023; Stinger et al., 2019). However, little support exists to help teachers navigate and critically reflect on these technological advances and how to integrate them into practice.

Building on previous research (e.g., Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Beetham & Sharpe, 2013; Tondeur et al., 2019; Ellul, 1964; Kirkwood & Price, 2014; Puentedura, 2006; Koehler et al., 2013), this workshop aims to explore how a reflective practice framework can support teaching staff in navigating pedagogical and ethical dilemmas that arise with technology and, specifically, AI integration into practice. This interactive workshop invites participants to critically explore and discuss assumptions and analyse their own practice, through a reflective lens, when considering the integration of GenAI and digital technologies in Education.

The workshop is anchored within the *Education and Technology Integration* strand of the conference, contributing to: “*what are the potential threats and ethical dilemmas associated with AI and machine learning in Education?*” and will examine the opportunities and challenges in relation to pedagogy, technology and ethical considerations to learning and teaching. Participants will engage with a familiar activity from their own experience and will be guided through a reflective analysis, using a practical framework for reflection on integrating technology thoughtfully and ethically into practice, informed by research.

References

- Beetham, H., & Sharpe, R. (2013). *Rethinking pedagogy for a digital age. Principles and practices of design*. Routledge (3rd Ed.).
- Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L. (2009). *Inquiry as Stance: Practitioner Research for the Next Generation*. New York: Teachers College Press
- Crompton, H. (2023). Evidence of the ISTE Standards for Educators leading to learning gains. *Journal of Digital Learning in Teacher Education*, 39(4), 201-219
- Ellul, J. (1964). *The Technological Society*. Vintage Books.
- Kirkwood, A., & Price, L. (2014). Technology-enhanced learning and teaching in higher education: what is ‘enhanced’ and how do we know? A critical literature review. *Learning, media and technology*, 39(1), 6-36.
- Koehler, M. J., Mishra, P., & Cain, W. (2013). What is technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK)? *Journal of education*, 193(3), 13-19.
- Puentedura, R. (2013). *SAMR: Getting to transformation*. Available at: <http://www.hippasus.com/rrpweblog/archives/2013/04/16/SAMRGettingToTransformation.pdf>
- Stringer, E., Lewin, C., & Coleman, R. (2019). *Using digital technology to improve learning. Guidance report*. Education Endowment Foundation.
- Tondeur, J., Scherer, R., Baran, E., Siddiq, F., Valtonen, T., & Sointu, E. (2019). Teacher educators as gatekeepers: Preparing the next generation of teachers for technology integration in education. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 50(3), 1189-1209.

Inclusive Practices for Supporting Student Writing in ITE

Rebekah Sims & Sharon Hunter, University of Strathclyde

Email: rebekah.sims@strath.ac.uk s.l.hunter@strath.ac.uk

Keywords: initial teacher education; academic writing; inclusive practice; mature students

Strand: Inclusive Education

Rationale

ITE courses, particularly the PGDE, draw students from a wide range of disciplinary and educational backgrounds, including mature students and a rising number of multilingual students. PGDE courses are tightly scheduled and relatively brief, which can raise logistical challenges for embedding practices that make content and assessments more inclusive. Amid these logistical challenges, a common source of frustration among ITE students and tutors is navigating assessments that involve writing, yet it is also something Scottish teacher educators are motivated to address (Authors, 2025a; 2025b). Very limited previous research is available specifically on how teacher educators address writing in ITE; that which exists found that teacher educators construct knowledge about academic writing in collegial conversations which tend to be descriptive of experiences, rather than analytical or pedagogy-focused (Ofte, 2024; Ofte & Solli, 2024). Otherwise, scholarship on writing in ITE focuses how to teach primary/secondary writing or leveraging reflective writing to connect classroom experiences to theory (e.g. Fraser et al., 2024; Gardner & Kuzich, 2024; Walters, 2025). Yet, the practical challenges to addressing writing within PGDE programmes are not intractable; there are many modifications that can make writing and assessments more inclusive.

Our workshop draws on our recent Scotland-wide study of academic writing among PGDE students – with a particular focus on mature students – as well as our extensive professional experience creating, implementing, and evaluating academic writing interventions to widen access within ITE courses. The research is the first of its kind in Scotland; thus, this workshop offers new insights to teacher educators.

Proposed Activity

The purpose of this workshop is to equip university-based teacher educators with the ability to (1) identify the strengths and gaps of their ITE programme's current provision for supporting academic writing, and (2) evaluate possible forward paths to integrating anticipatory, inclusive practices that support students' writing development in ITE.

The activity will invite participants to 'map' where their courses require specific writing skills, as well as the affordances and constraints of their courses. We will then offer examples, drawn from our research and practice, of how inclusive practices can support ITE students' writing development. Participants will connect their 'maps' to the strengths and needs of different groups of students; finally, they will consider what inclusive practices can make writing in ITE more accessible in their contexts.

Participants will leave this workshop with a stronger understanding of what writing abilities their ITE programme requires of students, why integrating anticipatory writing support forwards inclusive ITE, a better metalanguage for talking about writing with students, and practical paths forward towards a robust provision for ITE writing.

References

Authors. (2025). Bloom where you're planted: Integrating writing knowledge into a Scottish initial teacher education programme. *Composition Forum*. Accepted & in press.

- Authors. (2025). Exploring Scottish university teacher educators' conceptualisations of 'good writing.' *Writing & Pedagogy Special Issue: Approaches to Writing Instruction around the World*. Accepted & in press.
- Fraser, M., Wotring, A., Green, C. A., & Eady, M. J. (2024). Designing a framework to improve critical reflection writing in teacher education using action research. *Educational Action Research*, 32(1), 43–59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2022.2038226>
- Gardner, P., & Kuzich, S. (2024). Student teachers as writers: Using an 'immersive' approach in ITE to build positive writers. *Literacy*, 58(1), 13–24. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lit.12337>
- Ofte, I. (2024). Collective meaning-making in collegial conversations: Teacher educators' talk about students' academic writing. *Education Inquiry*, 15(2), 260–278. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20004508.2022.2096840>
- Ofte, I., & Solli, K. (2024). Exploring in-class writing activities in teacher education: A study of perspectives on writing in literacy events. 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.23865/njlr.v10.5278>
- Walters, A. (2025). 'Something I've carried with me': Visibility and vulnerability within the writing journeys of preservice secondary English teachers. *Literacy*, 59(1), 8–20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lit.12396>

Building Research Communities Brick by Brick

Claire Andersen, University of Dundee, Chantelle Boyle, University of Glasgow, Jana Chandler, University of the West of Scotland, David Vescio, University of Glasgow/University of Strathclyde/University of Stirling

Key Words: Community Learning; Early Career Researchers; Support; Imposter Syndrome

Strand: Professional, Community and Vocational Learning

Rationale/Theoretical Background

"Imposter Syndrome" is a psychological phenomenon where individuals doubt their abilities and fear being exposed as frauds, despite evidence of their success (Clance & Imes, 1978). This experience is particularly common among postgraduate researchers (PGRs) and is often exacerbated by isolation, perfectionism, and systemic inequities within academia (Thériault et al., 2022; Breeze, 2018). Recent research indicates that these feelings can be influenced by performative institutional cultures (Breeze, 2018), advocating for interventions that foster inclusion and belonging, recommending spaces for PGRs to explore these feelings and enhance culturally inclusive academic communities.

Aims

This 60-minute workshop utilises insights from recent research on LEGO Serious Play (Ganiyu et al., 2025) to help postgraduate researchers (PGRs) and early career researchers (ECRs) explore "imposter syndrome." Participants will translate their abstract concepts of a supportive, academic research community into a visual representation using the LEGO Serious Play method. This will bridge the gap between subjective experience and possible concrete solutions through the co-creation of tools which reframe experiences and foster resilience in overcoming 'imposter syndrome'.

Methods

The workshop features speed introductions, a PowerPoint presentation, and hands-on model-building using the LEGO Serious Play methodology, which encourages collaboration and problem-solving. Participants will create individual LEGO models to represent their experiences as Early Career Researchers (ECR) and Postgraduate Researchers (PGR). Then, in small groups, they will design collective models of an ideal research community, which will facilitate further discussions, knowledge sharing, and decision-making. This session aims to provide a model for supporting ECR and PGR that can be replicated in other academic institutions.

References

- Breeze, M. 2018. Imposter syndrome as a public feeling. In *Feeling academic in the neoliberal university: Feminist flights, fights and failures*, eds. Yvette Taylor, and Kinneret Lahad, 191–219. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Clance, P. R., & Imes, S. A. (1978). The Imposter Phenomenon in High Achieving Women: Dynamics and Therapeutic Intervention. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice*, 15, 241-247.
- Ganiyu, I.O., Plotka, G., Seuwou, P. and Ige-Olaobaju, A. 2025. Examining the use of LEGO Serious Play to enhance postgraduate research capacity. *Humanities & Social Sciences Communication*. **12** (223). [What is LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY®? | Official LEGO® Shop CC | Official LEGO® Shop GB](#)
- Kilby, L., Labinjo, T., Machaka, R. and Porritt, J. 2022. What am I doing in a place like this?: Understanding Imposter Phenomenon amongst postgraduate students from minoritised racial backgrounds. *QMIP Bulletin*. **1** (34). pp. 6-21.
- Thériault, V., Beck, A., Mouroutsou, S. and Billmeyer, J., 2022. Formalised peer-support for early career researchers: potential for resistance and genuine exchanges. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Imposter Syndrome in Higher Education* (pp. 241-257). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Wilson, C. Arshad, R., Sapouna, M., McGillvray, D. and Zihms, S. 2022. PGR connections: using an online peer-learning pedagogy to support doctoral researchers. *Innovation in Education and Teaching International*. **60**(3). pp. 390-400.

Restorative Practice: Promoting equity for all in education

Gerard Farrelly, Mary Immaculate College
Email: Gerard.Farrelly@mic.ul.ie

Keywords: Relationships; Values; Equity; Connection

Strand: Educational Equity and Access

Rationale and/or theoretical background

According to Wachtel (2016, p.1) restorative practice can be defined as a 'social science that studies how to build social capital and achieve social discipline through participatory learning and decision making.' In this context outlined by Wachtel (2016), social capital refers to the connections amongst individuals and the trust, mutual understanding, shared values and behaviours that bind human beings together and make co-operative action possible (Cohen & Prusak, 2001). Where this social capital or network of relationships has been established, it is easier to respond effectively to wrong doing and restore social order, whilst simultaneously creating a healthy and positive organisational environment.

The restorative process incorporates the use of various cognitive behavioural activities, such as role play, discussion, feedback, demonstration and other creative forms of active learning, that are designed in such a way that can help to repair harm to all involved including the wronged person, school and community, and 'build peer and intergenerational relationships through mutual respect and fairness' (Zaslow, 2010; p.59).

RP is particularly suited to all who work in schools /education, such as teachers and staff, who wish to build positive relationships and school culture.

Aims and methods of the proposed activity

This practical and interactive workshop seeks to explore how this practice allows for building and nurturing trust between and with people. RP provides a structured approach in the form of a scaffold, which helps build and sustain relationships, and provides a focus which allows for the potential growth of positive relationships to become established between people, and creates a sense of belonging, inclusion, and equity.

The workshop briefly explains how RP works, the values it seeks to promote, such as fairness, empathy, respect, accountability, problem solving and interconnectedness, and to explore restorative circles and conversations, which are practical and key tools that can be used in any community to promote education for all and reduce inequality.