BY DIVERSE MEANS:
IMPROVING SCOTTISH EDUCATION

The Commission on School Reform
Final Report March 2013

CSPP
CENTRE FOR SCOTTISH PUBLIC POLICY
reform scotland

BY DIVERSE MEANS
WE ARRIVE AT THE
SAME END. — *Montaigne*

NEVER TELL PEOPLE HOW TO DO THINGS. TELL THEM
WHAT TO DO AND THEY WILL SURPRISE YOU WITH
THEIR INGENUITY. — *General George S. Patton*

EDUCATION IS NOT PREPARATION FOR LIFE;
EDUCATION IS LIFE ITSELF. — *John Dewey*

By Diverse Means:

Improving Scottish Education

Report of the Commission on School Reform

March 2013

Commission on School Reform

In November 2011 the think tanks Reform Scotland and the Centre for Scottish Public Policy set up the Commission on School Reform to consider whether the school system in Scotland is meeting the present and future needs of young people and to try and reach a consensus about specific recommendations on areas for improvement or that require further enquiry.

The Commission was chaired by Keir Bloomer and this final report represents the collective view of all members of the Commission. The full list of members is below:

- **Keir Bloomer (Chair):** Education consultant and former director of education
- **John Barnett:** Regional Manager at Charity Bank; former Lib Dem parliamentary candidate and Parent Council chairman
- **David Cameron:** Education consultant and Chair of the York Education Partnership
- **Heather Dunk:** Principal of Kilmarnock College
- **Hamira Khan:** Chief Executive of the Scottish Youth Parliament
- **Frank Lennon:** Head of Dunblane High School
- **Judith McClure:** Convener of Scotland-China Education Network and former headteacher
- **Anne Marie McGovern:** Head of St Benedict's Primary School, Glasgow
- **Cllr Paul McLennan:** SNP councillor in East Lothian
- **Peter Peacock:** Policy Consultant; Chair of Water Customer Forum; former Education Minister.
- **Morag Pendry:** Education Development Manager at the Co-operative Education Trust Scotland
- **Catriona Reoch:** Teacher, Govan High School
- **Cllr Graham Simpson:** Conservative Councillor in South Lanarkshire
- **Professor Dame Joan Stringer:** Principal of Edinburgh Napier University
- **Angus Tulloch:** Investment Manager

The commission was supported by Jim Goodall as well as Geoff Mawdsley & Alison Payne from Reform Scotland and Ross Martin & Laura Forster from the Centre for Scottish Public Policy.

About Reform Scotland
Reform Scotland is a public policy institute or think tank which was established as a separate Scottish charity, completely independent of any political party or any other organisation and funded by donations from individuals, charitable trusts and corporate organisations. Its objective is to set out policies in Scotland that deliver increased economic prosperity and more effective public services based on the traditional Scottish principles of limited government, diversity and personal responsibility: **www.reformscotland.com.**

About the Centre for Scottish Public Policy
The Centre for Scottish Public Policy (CSPP) is Scotland's only independent, membership based, cross-party think tank. It is a not-for-profit organisation reliant upon the generosity of its funders who include trusts, public, private and voluntary organisations and individuals: **www.cspp.org.uk.**

Contents

Executive summary 5

Recommendations 7

Part 1: Introduction and background
Introduction 12
Raising the level of ambition 16
Looking to the long-term 21

Part 2: Processes of change
Educational reform in a global context 25
Scotland's experience of educational change 25
Conclusion 35

Part 3: Consequences of inadequate change processes
Introduction 36
Raising standards 36
Securing equity 42
Conclusion 52

Part 4: Preconditions of effective change
Introduction 53
Clarity of purpose and roles 54
Securing commitment 55
Incentives 55
Increased diversity 59
School autonomy and empowerment of staff 61
Appropriate governance arrangements 72
Effective support 82
Leadership capacity 83
Management information and evidence base 86
Investment in people 88

Part 5: Conclusion 92

Appendix 1: The evolution of school governance in Scotland 94
Appendix 2: Select bibliography 98
Appendix 3: Summary of written evidence 104

Note: Throughout the main report, superscript numbers refer to items in the bibliography.

"By diverse means we arrive at the same end."

Montaigne[1:], *The Essays*

“Never tell people *how* to do things. Tell them *what* to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity.”

General George S Patton

[1 :] George Buchanan (1506-82), the famous Scottish humanist, was a tutor to Montaigne in Bordeaux

Executive summary

This report does not offer a comprehensive analysis of every aspect of Scottish school education. The Commission has chosen instead to focus on matters that seem to be of the greatest importance but which have been relatively neglected. The focus is, therefore, on change – how it is brought about and why it is often not as successful as intended.

In its interim report, the Commission suggested that the performance of Scotland's schools is good and remarkably consistent but that, taken as a whole, the system no longer ranks among the world's best. Improvement is not as rapid as in many other countries so that there is a risk of Scotland falling behind. A particular problem is Scotland's continuing failure to tackle successfully the educational consequences of social and economic disadvantage.

Scotland does not lack good ideas. It has policies such as *Curriculum for Excellence* and *Teaching Scotland's Future* that are forward-looking and have the capacity to bring about real improvement. However, the experience of other major policy initiatives over the past half-century indicates that Scotland often fails to extract the maximum benefit from good policies.

In short, processes of change in Scottish education fall short of what is required.

To a large extent this is because the system is too uniform. It lacks the diversity that is a vital element of any learning organisation. The Commission sees the promotion of increased variety in the system as a crucially important prerequisite of future improvement.

The best way of achieving this objective is to increase the autonomy of individual schools. Every school should have as much control over its resources as is practicable. They should be encouraged to innovate and take well-considered risks.

At present, however, schools are reluctant to take the initiative. This is because the culture of the system as a whole is disempowering. The structure is hierarchical with an ethos of each layer being subordinate to the one above it. There is too little communication or sense that constructive criticism is welcomed. Above all, the Commission considers it essential to develop a sense of common endeavour where everybody involved feels able to contribute on equal terms.

At present the responsibilities of different tiers of management are ill-defined. The strategic leadership role of government is obscured by a strong tendency to become involved in detail. The freedom of action of schools is too circumscribed. The Commission takes the view that headteachers should be seen as the chief executives of largely autonomous bodies. At the same time, it is imperative that a collegiate culture should exist within schools.

The Commission says little about the details of the curriculum but suggests that *Curriculum for Excellence* offers a suitable framework for the foreseeable future. It does, however, recommend that it should be interpreted in increasingly ambitious ways. It should not be seen as a 'one-off' change but as a long-term process in which successive changes build on each other in a manner that ultimately is transformational.

The report sets out ten preconditions for successful change. If these were put in place, the Commission believes that Scottish education could face the future with confidence.

Education has never been more important. It is, of course, essential to future economic success. However, it is at least as vital to developing individuals who can live fulfilled and purposeful lives. It underpins society and offers the means by which humanity can tackle the pressing problems of our time.

This report is offered in the belief that it can help Scotland to make its contribution.

Recommendations

1 The strategic objectives of *Curriculum for Excellence* should continue to guide the development of Scottish education over the foreseeable future. The detailed guidance, however, should be reviewed and modified as the programme evolves. (page 14)

2 The Scottish Government should make clear that it views *Curriculum for Excellence* as a long-term process of iterative change rather than a one-off programme intended to achieve only specific short-term objectives such as the introduction of new qualifications. (page 16)

3 Increased emphasis should be given to developing skills of employability and the importance of vocational education should be recognised as a greater priority in curriculum planning. In part, this should involve the development of improved assessment so that young people who need intensive support are clearly identified and appropriate support is provided. Skills Development Scotland should continue to work closely with parent groups and to support carers so that they can offer informed advice and support to young people. (page 18)

4 Over the next few years, emphasis within the *Curriculum for Excellence* development programme should be placed on raising broader achievement; on the curriculum principles of challenge and enjoyment, depth and personalisation; and on the promotion of skills and interdisciplinary learning. (page 20)

5 Change processes in Scottish education are not as effective as they should be. The improvement of these processes must be seen as a matter of the highest priority. (page 35)

6 There is a need to sustain and intensify efforts to raise standards of literacy and numeracy. Every school should be committed to reducing to zero the number of young people whose difficulties with basic skills are such as to represent a threat to their future life chances. (page 39)

7 The allocation of support for pupils and schools experiencing disadvantage should be reviewed and needs to be better targeted. More of the available support should follow the individual disadvantaged learner. (page 44)

8 Talented staff should be encouraged to teach and remain in schools in the most disadvantaged areas. Such schools should be resourced in a manner that will make them attractive places in which to work and develop a career. (page 45)

9 Government should give priority to creating an integrated service for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, providing support from before birth to age three and designed to improve life chances by *inter alia* improving learning readiness. Data should be built up to help this service target its interventions effectively. (page 48)

10 A dedicated centre for the improvement of educational outcomes in Scotland's most disadvantaged communities should be established. (page 50)

11 The quality of relationships is crucial to success in education. Greater attention should be focused on the personal and social development of young people. (page 50)

12 There is a need to link school learning more closely to learning in the wider community. Schools need to become brokers, as well as providers, of educational experiences and support. (page 51)

13 To improve change processes, each of ten preconditions needs to be put in place (page 54):
- clarity of purpose and roles
- securing commitment
- incentives
- increased diversity
- school autonomy and empowerment of staff
- appropriate governance arrangements
- effective support
- leadership capacity
- management information and evidence base
- investment in people.

14 The state, both nationally and locally, should encourage and support greater diversity in Scotland's school system. In order to do this, greater autonomy is required at school level. (page 60)

15 The default assumption in the practice of Scottish education should be that schools are entitled to take decisions where there is no statute, regulation or established national policy that indicates otherwise. (page 62)

16 The statutory obligations on ministers and local authorities to secure educational improvement and to take forward national priorities should be expanded to include promoting the four purposes of *Curriculum for Excellence*. At the same time, these obligations should be applied to each individual state school through its headteacher. (page 64)

17 At all levels of the system, vigorous and sustained effort is needed to create in Scottish education a sense of common endeavour, an understanding that learning is co-produced and a culture of mutual respect. (page 65)

18 Schools need to be given effective control over their resources. The guidelines on Devolved School Management should be revised to ensure not only that as large as possible a share of available budgets – both national and local authority – is delegated to school level but also that schools face as few impediments as possible in using these resources as they see fit. (page 68)

19 Schools should not be obliged to use support services (whether educational or not) provided by their local authority but should be free to choose other providers. Considerations of Best Value should continue to apply. (page 69)

20 The autonomy of schools should be greatly extended. As a general principle, decisions that can competently be taken at school level should not be taken elsewhere. (page 70)

21 Government has a responsibility to establish a strategic direction for schools. This involves setting long-term aims and monitoring progress. Government should have as little involvement in operational management as possible. (page 72)

22 Central government should commit itself to enriching the school system, achieving greater diversity through local autonomy, encouraging innovation and specialisation in schools and working in collaboration with other organisations to create new approaches to schooling. It should encourage local authorities to adopt a similar role within their areas. (page 73)

23 The operation and functions of Education Scotland should be independently reviewed not later than 2015. (page 73)

24 The roles of local government in championing the interests of individual children and families, and in promoting collaboration among schools and between schools and other services, should be strengthened. (page 77)

25 Both schools and local authorities should seek to develop existing parent councils so as to include a wider range of skills and interests (such as community, business and educational). The opportunity should be taken where necessary to bring in expertise from outside the community. (page 78)

26 Consideration should be given by local authorities to expanding the membership of their education committees by including representatives of parents, business, community and other interests while maintaining a majority of elected councillors. (page 79)

27 The National Implementation Board should take into account the proposals of the Devolved School Management Review and the support of the Commission for greater school autonomy and the empowerment of headteachers in its work on the establishment of the Scottish College for Educational Leadership; in particular, the discussion should be open and there should be contributions from highly effective headteachers who have encouraged leadership at all levels in their schools. (page 84)

28 A network of highly effective headteachers should be established and sustained by the Scottish College for Educational Leadership, and wide-ranging leadership conversations should take place to assist headteachers to contribute to the national debate on leadership and transformational change. (page 85)

29 The proposal in the Donaldson Report for the establishment of hub teaching schools, working collaboratively with a university and with neighbouring schools, should be taken forward to benefit the development of leadership capacity in the system and to create models for transformational change. (page 86)

30 The Scottish College for Educational Leadership should work with its leadership network of highly effective headteachers to establish a scheme for attracting outstanding leadership candidates to the profession and for ensuring an appropriate place for leadership development and mentoring in all professional learning. It should investigate appointments processes in other fields and consider the setting up of an Appointments Centre to support the selection of headteachers. (page 86)

31 Attention should increasingly be focused on evaluating the effectiveness as opposed to the implementation of educational policy. (page 87)

32 Steps should be taken to strengthen educational research in Scotland. (page 87)

33 Efforts should continue to broaden the measures of success used in education and to ensure that the information available to authorities, schools, families and the public better reflects all of its important outcomes. (page 88)

34 Steps should be taken nationally to improve the quality of management information at the level of the individual learner so as to assist in meeting their needs. (page 88)

35 Staff occupying leadership and management roles in schools have a responsibility for establishing, developing and maintaining appropriate opportunities for professional development in their schools. These opportunities should focus particularly on supporting improvement in teaching and, consequently, in young people's learning. (page 89)

36 All concerned should seek to take forward the recommendations of the Donaldson Report as quickly as practicable, taking due account of the GTCS's new Standard for Continuing Professional Development. (page 90)

37 Investment in professional development associated with major programmes of change needs to be given higher priority. Such investment needs to commence at a very early stage. Although many providers may be involved and schools need to be free to choose, a national strategy requires to be in place from the outset. (page 91)

Part 1: Introduction and background

Introduction

In its interim report, the Commission attempted to evaluate the current standing of Scottish school education. It concluded that Scotland's schools enjoy a good reputation both at home and elsewhere. They deliver a high quality service with great consistency. There is no widespread concern over "failing schools" as there has been in England. Performance in national examinations has been improving steadily and at a credible rate over recent years[79]. In the various comparative studies of performance internationally, Scotland consistently achieves results in the upper quartile[54,55,93].

Furthermore, Scotland has in place a number of long-term policies which seem to be consistent with the requirements of the modern world. Thus, *Curriculum for Excellence*[20] sets a forward-looking strategy for the system as a whole. The Donaldson report[83] emphasises the importance of teaching quality and establishes a strategy whereby this may be raised over time. *Getting it Right for Every Child*[33] embodies the concept of services and agencies collaborating to improve the life chances of individual young people.

There is, however, another side to the discussion. Over time, Scotland's performance in international comparisons has declined relative to most other countries. At best, therefore, whilst Scotland may be improving, it is improving more slowly than others. Scotland's school system can no longer be described as world leading. To some extent, its reputation is based on history rather than contemporary performance. Compared with countries such as Finland, Singapore (or, more recently, China) which have radically improved their schools in a relatively short period of time, change in Scotland is slow, difficult to achieve and seldom brings the rewards initially promised[25,37,38,49,78]. Periodically, universities and employers have expressed dissatisfaction with the standards achieved in Scotland's schools[10,47,101].

This report, therefore, takes as its starting point a view that Scotland's schools offer a sound education and have many strengths on which to build, but are no longer among the world's best. Past achievements count for little. As Andreas Schleicher of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) put it, "The world is indifferent to tradition and past reputations, unforgiving to frailty and ignorant to custom. Success will go to those individuals and nations that are swift to adapt, slow to complain and open to change."

In seeking to improve, Scotland faces a problem that it has so far struggled unsuccessfully to tackle effectively. Scotland contains some areas of the most concentrated disadvantage in Europe. In these neighbourhoods, educational performance lags significantly behind, contributing to persistent problems with employment, low income, poor health, drug and alcohol dependency, crime and poorer housing. The inter-generational cycles of poor performance in educational outcomes themselves need to be broken if the

individuals and families of these communities are to enjoy a better future and if Scotland's overall performance in education is to improve markedly.

The Commission, therefore, considers that although Scotland is striving to achieve goals that are in line with contemporary needs, there is an urgent need to find mechanisms of change and improvement that will yield secure progress much more rapidly than in the recent past. Furthermore, change should be ambitious. Scotland's aspirations should know no bounds. Everyone involved with schools should be aiming to make Scottish education the best in the world. Nothing short of this should be regarded as good enough.

Curriculum for Excellence

Currently, by far the most important national programme of change in Scottish education is *Curriculum for Excellence*[20], which has its origins in the National Debate on Education held in 2002. In reality, there were two debates conducted concurrently; one organised by the then Scottish Executive and the other by the Scottish Parliament. The Parliament's debate focused specifically on the question "What is education for?". The Executive's debate was more wide-ranging and invited comment on any aspect of Scottish school education.

In the event, about 25,000 people attended meetings and events in connection with the debates and the Executive received rather more than 2,000 written submissions. Unsurprisingly, every shade of opinion was represented. However, a relatively small number of common themes stood out. Overwhelmingly, people expressed confidence in Scotland's schools. Where criticism was expressed, it generally referred to aspects of secondary education. The secondary curriculum was seen as excessively dominated by academic subjects and by the requirements of examinations. There was a feeling that the drive to complete the syllabus sometimes meant that learning was neither as stimulating nor as deep as might otherwise have been the case. In addition, many people drew attention to the pace of change in the world at large and offered the view that education would also have to change if it was to equip young people to live successfully in the 21st century.

The Executive published its response to the debate in the following year. Its most important action was to set up a Curriculum Review Group that was not expected to produce detailed syllabuses but rather to identify the principles that should underpin any future curriculum. The Review Group duly produced its report – entitled *Curriculum for Excellence* – in November 2004. It was endorsed by the then Minister of Education and was received positively by teachers. Many indicated that the broad agenda it set out was what they had come into the profession to follow. The notion was warmly received that the Government should set long-term objectives but that teachers could have considerable latitude about how to achieve them. In due course, the report won the support of all major political parties. There was little sign in the press of any significant dissent from parents, the business community or other

important stakeholders. At the outset, therefore, *Curriculum for Excellence* enjoyed the support of a broad consensus.

The original report was quite brief and written at a high level of generality. In essence, it set out four objectives for schooling and seven principles on which the curriculum should be constructed. The objectives were to develop young people as *successful learners*, *confident individuals*, *effective contributors* and *responsible citizens*. Four of the curriculum principles were new; *challenge and enjoyment*, *personalisation and choice*, *depth* and *relevance*. Three existing principles – *breadth*, *progression* and *coherence* - were carried over from earlier programmes. All that has followed over the ensuing eight years has been designed to try to realise these objectives and principles in practice in schools.

The Commission considers that the objectives set out by the Curriculum Review Group remain appropriate and that the detailed guidance can be modified if necessary as the programme develops. It does not believe that there would be any advantage in seeking to develop a new framework at this stage.

Recommendation 1. The strategic objectives of *Curriculum for Excellence* should continue to guide the development of Scottish education over the foreseeable future. The detailed guidance, however, should be reviewed and modified as the programme evolves.

Furthermore, the Commission believes that, during the past eight years, the development programme has achieved a number of important successes. Scotland has a clearer long-term sense of direction for its education system than ever before. Furthermore, it now takes a broader view of young people's learning than in the past. Schooling is important, but so too is the learning that takes place outside. Schools are increasingly likely to recognise broader achievement and to assist young people to access learning opportunities in the wider community. This is a trend that should be reinforced in the continuing development of the programme.

The development programme has been mainly focused on improving the quality of learning and teaching in schools. It has embraced the concept of 'active learning'; the idea that genuine understanding is constructed in the mind of the learner and that the key intellectual activity involved is that of making sense of new knowledge and experience. Efforts have been made to 'declutter' the curriculum, allowing more time for study in depth. The Commission supports this approach and has concerns that, in an effort to be more specific about the *Experiences and Outcomes*, there may be a return to a much more prescribed model of the curriculum. At the same time, *Curriculum for Excellence* has emphasised the importance of developing skills, especially cognitive skills[35], as opposed to memorising factual content. In other words, knowledge remains vital but it is no longer seen as sufficient. Learners need to develop understanding and the capacity to apply knowledge in unfamiliar contexts.

These new emphases are enshrined in the *Experiences and Outcomes* which represent a new way of defining the curriculum. Traditionally, the curriculum has been seen as the aggregate of a number of subject syllabuses, each of which is defined by an indication of the content to be covered. By contrast, the *Experiences and Outcomes* suggest the kind of learning experience that should be provided and indicate what should be the outcome. They seek to answer the question, "What should the learner be able to do that he/she could not do before?". In some cases, the *Experiences and Outcomes* specify or imply certain content, but in many instances it is for the teacher to decide which content would serve the objectives.

The current set of *Experiences and Outcomes* is highly variable. It is unfortunate, for example, that the set relating to the responsibilities of all teachers for health and wellbeing almost entirely lacks progression of any kind. Others are unnecessarily convoluted and, on occasion, skills elements are hard to identify. However, the idea is a powerful one that has the ability to take forward a concept of a curriculum based on developing understanding, skills and personal qualities. There is no reason why the weaker examples cannot be replaced or improved.

Curriculum for Excellence also gives more appropriate recognition to the importance of interdisciplinary study. Without downplaying the significance of academic disciplines and the structures of knowledge, there is a developing understanding that, in the real world, knowledge is "joined up" and that drawing together relevant understandings from different curriculum areas is a critically important skill and an essential ingredient in creativity and enterprise. This should be a focus of further work as the programme develops.

Efforts are also being made to make schooling more personalised. There is an increasing recognition of the importance of relationships as a factor in learning[33,34]. Support for the individual, for example through a mentoring or 'buddying' programme, is a growing feature of schools. Increasingly, learners are being actively engaged in decision making about their own future learning. In effect, there is a recognition that learning is produced by learners and teachers together rather than simply being handed down by teachers. The vital role of intrinsic motivation is increasingly understood. All of these developments are very welcome, but are only a beginning[82]. Many of the traditional features of school organisation – fixed hours, age cohorts and so forth – continue to restrict the extent of the personalisation that is possible. However, a very worthwhile start has been made.

The Commission is obviously aware that *Curriculum for Excellence* has faced difficulties[21]. Some of these are discussed in the section of this report dealing with processes of change. However, the Commission applauds the progress that has been made. It believes that much more can still be accomplished within its general framework. The long-term objectives remain valid and should continue to provide Scottish education with a consistent sense of direction for years to come. For this reason, it is concerned that *Curriculum for Excellence* is increasingly being seen as an "event" rather than a journey. There is a clear risk that schools, perhaps particularly secondary schools, are

coming to see the programme in the same way as they previously viewed, say, the introduction of Standard Grade; a development process of finite length that comes to an end when new syllabuses are finalised or new exams introduced[20].

The Commission believes that *Curriculum for Excellence* is fundamentally different from earlier programmes for change. The original document should be seen not as a blueprint but as a "mission statement". It is in the nature of mission statements that they can be achieved only gradually and over an extended timescale. Most importantly, progress is made through a process of iterative change. At each stage in the process, the changes that are made are those that are practicable in the circumstances of the time. However, each stage opens up increased possibilities for the future. By this gradual process, the system changes in ways that would not have seemed feasible at the outset. Each step in the process builds upon the last and lays the foundations for the next.

The Commission believes that the Scottish Government should clarify its commitment to *Curriculum for Excellence* as a long-term process in pursuit of the objectives of developing young people as successful learners, confident individuals and so forth. It should also make clear that it considers these objectives as likely to be consistent over many years with a process of iterative change bringing schools ever closer to accomplishing them.

Recommendation 2. The Scottish Government should make clear that it views *Curriculum for Excellence* as a long-term process of iterative change rather than a one-off programme intended to achieve only specific short-term objectives such as the introduction of new qualifications.

Raising the level of ambition

Curriculum for Excellence has a number of important achievements to its credit. However, provided that it is considered as a long-term process of iterative change rather than a highly-specific short-term development programme, much more can – and should – be accomplished, even within the next few years. With this is mind, it is worth considering the progress made to date in relation to a number of key aspects of *Curriculum for Excellence*: the four objectives or 'capacities', the seven curriculum design principles, the four contexts for learning, the *Experiences and Outcomes*, promoting skills development and interdisciplinary learning.

Schools have always been concerned with the development of the whole person, but their focus has mainly been on learning and, in particular, academic learning. Unsurprisingly, therefore, progress in *Curriculum for Excellence* is most obvious in relation to the development of young people as successful learners[20]. The schools' greatest efforts seem to have been devoted to restructuring the curriculum, trying to improve approaches to learning and (in the case of secondary schools) preparation for new

examinations. The actions of government and its agencies have had broadly the same focus. The greater part of all five of the papers in the *Building the Curriculum* series is devoted to learning. An analysis of the *Experiences and Outcomes* demonstrates that the huge majority are chiefly directed towards developing young people as successful learners. Only the category devoted to aspects of health and wellbeing that are the responsibility of all teachers contains more 'outcomes' related to the other three capacities.

In short, the work done so far represents only a modest shift in the traditional priorities of schooling. *Curriculum for Excellence* is about promoting four broadly equal objectives. There is clearly scope for more to be done in order to help young people become confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens[34,82]. Some of the curriculum principles have yet to be fully explored. Schools need to give greater recognition to learning and broader achievements in the outside world. The Commission considers that more attention requires to be focused on these objectives.

In particular, there is a need to do more to assist young people towards positive destinations at the same time as helping to support the Scottish economy. *Curriculum for Excellence* attempts to address this through the commitment to give equal status to vocational education, but there is, as yet, little emerging evidence that this is having a significant impact. Indeed, it could be argued that the commitment to “a broad general education” up to the end of S3 might make the situation worse by delaying specialisation and any firm focus on appropriate vocational education. Furthermore, the powerful advocacy of choice in the curriculum may undermine the sort of vocational pathways that would address the skills shortages to which Scotland is subject. These are not insuperable problems but such issues need to be given much greater weight in curriculum planning. It is to be hoped that the Commission for Developing Scotland’s Youth Workforce to be chaired by Sir Ian Wood will make a positive contribution.

There has also been some controversy about the approach to careers information and guidance that is being developed by Skills Development Scotland. That approach places greater emphasis on the development of “career management skills” among young people, rather than on the provision of a universal entitlement to an interview with a Careers Adviser. The development of these skills is supported by a website, *My World of Work*, which offers information, support and the opportunity to develop a CV, all in an interactive environment. The intention is then to work with young people in groups and to concentrate 1-to-1 support on those who really need it. The approach has further strengthened efforts to improve links with employers and to offer a much richer experience of the world of work.

The Commission supports this direction. The changing nature of careers is likely to mean that few young people will make one choice of employment. It is far more likely that they will face several instances of decision-making about their careers and they need to have the skills that will allow them to do that. The key skills involved are those of dealing with knowledge and information, understanding, analysing, synthesising and evaluating – all skills which are

identified in the Excellence Group Report on Higher Order skills and are embedded in the *Experiences and Outcomes* of *Curriculum for Excellence*. They should be developed throughout young people's learning, but they must be exercised in the context of career choice and the world of work. My World of Work is a powerful tool for this, but the Commission believes that it must be complemented through access to high quality work experience that is properly embedded in the context of the wider curriculum. There are many good examples of this in Scotland including the work of the Social Enterprise Academy and the Co-operative Education Trust Scotland, partnerships with Lifescan in Inverness and the partnerships established in Aberdeen city.

Recommendation 3. Increased emphasis should be given to developing skills of employability and the importance of vocational education should be recognised as a greater priority in curriculum planning. In part, this should involve the development of improved assessment so that young people who need intensive support are clearly identified and appropriate support is provided. Skills Development Scotland should continue to work closely with parent groups and to support carers so that they can offer informed advice and support to young people.

The seven curriculum design principles hold an important place in the original *Curriculum for Excellence* paper. Indeed, they could be seen as the part of the paper that constitutes a direct response to the remit given to the Curriculum Review Group to look at the principles which should underpin any future curriculum development. The idea implicit in this remit is that supporting the detail of any curriculum structure or design should be a number of fundamental characteristics that will be consistent over time and exist independent of the details of curriculum content or teaching methodology.

Of the seven curriculum principles, three were carried forward from earlier curriculum policies, particularly the Munn report issued in 1977. These are breadth, progression and coherence. The other four were new; depth, challenge and enjoyment, personalisation and choice, and relevance. In the development work undertaken so far, some of these principles are more evident than others.

Breadth is strongly evident in the phase of "Broad General Education". It is enshrined in the notion of eight curriculum areas and given added force through the *Experiences and Outcomes*. Progression is also reinforced through the "outcomes". *Building the Curriculum 3*[20] is intended to give the curriculum as a whole a high level of coherence by drawing together all of the important pieces of guidance into a single framework.

Some of the new principles have also been taken forward in substantial ways. The work of the Excellence Groups[35] was designed to promote depth, which is also given emphasis through a greatly increased stress being laid on understanding and the application of knowledge. The importance attached to the promotion of skills contributes to realising both depth and relevance.

Furthermore, some progress has been made in relation to the other two new principles. Schools have become much more conscious of the need to suit learning to individual needs. The engagement of learners in taking decisions about their learning has gained much greater prominence. Activities such as personal support through mentoring can be seen as early steps in the direction of personalisation. The language of challenge permeates much of the official guidance and is evident in the Experiences and Outcomes.

Nevertheless, it is clear that personalisation and choice and challenge and enjoyment are the most difficult of the seven principles to realise in practice. The linking together of personalisation and choice has not proved particularly helpful. Choice is a familiar concept, but personalisation is very different. The traditional organisation of the school was established in the late 19th century and was designed for the cost-effective delivery of a standard service. Nothing could be further removed from the notion of personalisation.

Similarly, the yoking together of challenge and enjoyment is problematic. Like choice, challenge is a well understood idea and there are clear signs in the development programme of an attempt to make the curriculum more challenging. Enjoyment, on the other hand, is concerned with intrinsic motivation. There is, as yet, little in the programme which has the development of this kind of motivation as an explicit objective. Both personalisation and enjoyment pose significant challenges to traditional forms of school organisation. Addressing these will need to be a key feature of the next stages of *Curriculum for Excellence* development.

It is a very welcome feature of the new curriculum that it gives unprecedented recognition to the importance of learning outside the classroom. It is understood that schools may offer the most explicit and formal learning opportunities, but the influence of the outside world is frequently greater. In establishing four contexts for learning, only two of which are related to the formal curriculum, the development programme has, therefore, taken a significant step forward. Nevertheless, the guidance produced to date focuses very largely on the formal curriculum and, in particular, on the part of it concerned with learning within curriculum areas. However, the significance of the two non-classroom contexts for learning will have to be increasingly recognised. The power of learning in the broader community to inspire ambition among all young people is of vital importance. Well-grounded learning in a practical context can help to tackle educational under-achievement among the disadvantaged and disengaged. If the very broad aims of *Curriculum for Excellence* are to be realised, then over the next few years schools will require to stop seeing themselves as monopolistic providers of educational experiences, and rather as part-provider and part-broker of experiences offered elsewhere. Partnerships will increase in significance. The implications of this shift in role cannot be underestimated.

Curriculum for Excellence has placed a greatly increased emphasis on understanding and the capacity to apply knowledge, particularly in contexts which may be very different from the one in which the knowledge was acquired. None of this means that knowledge is unimportant. On the

contrary, it is the only foundation on which secure understanding can be built. An emphasis on making use of knowledge, however, implies a recognition of the importance of skills. This is evident in the official guidance with one of the five *Building the Curriculum* papers being devoted to the promotion of skills. Unfortunately, it is widely seen as the least satisfactory document in the series. At the same time, however, the report of the Higher Order Skills Excellence Group puts deep learning and the cultivation of advanced cognitive skills at the centre of what *Curriculum for Excellence* should be about.

All of this suggests the need to develop advanced skills from an early age. It implies that the curriculum should become steadily more ambitious with skills such as synthesis and systems thinking being given due emphasis. There is a need also for more systematic development of personal skills and the attitudes that go with them. Without skills in communication, the ability to work in teams, resilience, perseverance and positive attitudes, knowledge and the capacity to apply it may count for little. At the same time, young people must be helped to develop sound values. Schools must be committed to turning out human beings who are, at the same time, effective and ethical. When planning pupils' learning, teachers will need to focus on this extended range of skills and attitudes as much as on content, and will have to evaluate progress in relation to skills. Aims of this kind cannot be achieved rapidly, but the need to build the necessary capacity in schools must be recognised.

It is perhaps surprising that one of the five papers in the *Building the Curriculum* series was devoted to the subject of learning within curriculum areas, given that this is the type of learning with which schools are most familiar. Interdisciplinary learning, which is given greater emphasis in *Curriculum for Excellence* than in any previous curriculum policy, was not the subject of any of these documents. The new curriculum recognises that major issues are almost invariably interdisciplinary, and that the capacity to bring together and use knowledge from different parts of the curriculum is an essential skill. However, developing sound interdisciplinary learning is not straightforward. It is vital that the total experience should be coherent; the whole must be greater than the sum of its parts.

This brief survey does not claim to be comprehensive but merely suggests that, while promising progress has been made, much remains to be done, even within the relatively short term. The development programme tends to be strongest in areas with which schools were already familiar. The more innovative features of *Curriculum for Excellence*, such as its emphasis on a broad concept of education, its use of principles such as personalisation and enjoyment, its emphasis upon the development of skills and the importance of interdisciplinary learning, are as yet at early stages of development but must be kept constantly in mind.

Recommendation 4. Over the next few years, emphasis within the *Curriculum for Excellence* development programme should be placed on raising broader achievement; on the curriculum principles of challenge

and enjoyment, depth and personalisation; and on the promotion of skills and interdisciplinary learning.

It is also noteworthy that little has been done to evaluate the programme systematically, although official sources have made periodic assertions about its success. This has been remarked on by, among others, the Royal Society of Edinburgh and Professor Walter Humes in the *Times Educational Supplement Scotland*. The Commission considers that independent research could be of great value; evaluations carried out by agencies of government such as 'deep audit' of teachers' state of readiness have evoked only scepticism[101]. The Commission believes that the credibility of the programme would be greatly enhanced if the Government, even at this stage, were to commission genuinely independent research to evaluate its progress to date. As developments move further forward, research of this kind is essential.

Looking to the long-term

The early 21st century is a time both of great challenge and extraordinary opportunity. Both of these features are readily apparent in school education.

Schools have the task of helping young people to lead lives that are successful and fulfilling in circumstances of rapid change, growing competitiveness, ever-expanding scientific knowledge and global problems of unprecedented significance. Addressing such issues is, of course, what is implied by the four long-term objectives set out in *Curriculum for Excellence*; the so-called 'capacities'.

The economic context is perhaps the easiest to grasp. Although there is a very small number of countries that remains in almost complete isolation, the world has steadily developed into a global economic unit. Economic reform beginning at the end of the 1970s has created in China a dynamic economy which has expanded at a wholly unprecedented rate. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the countries of the former Eastern Block have also embraced the market economy. More recent reforms in India have led to sustained and rapid growth. Similar trends can be observed elsewhere. In total, it is perhaps fair to say that some 3,000,000,000 people have, over recent decades, become potential partners, customers and competitors.

Countries such as Scotland which enjoy a high standard of living cannot compete to provide basic manufactured goods or routine services. A significant part of Scotland's economy has to be focused on very high added value activities. Success depends on creativity, entrepreneurship and very high levels of skill. Scotland's education system needs to be capable of developing these qualities. In this context, a static or declining relative performance in international comparative studies is deeply worrying. The contrast with the rapid educational progress being made in many developing countries has to be seen as a call to action. The astonishing success of educational reform in China in particular requires Scotland to look at its own performance honestly and objectively[49,78].

Yet, at present, Scotland continues to squander an unacceptable proportion of its human resource. Despite the best of intentions and a succession of policy initiatives, the link between educational underachievement and deprivation has not been broken[26,36,62,65,67,72]. Around one child in five gains little benefit from the years of schooling. The same families and neighbourhoods continue to experience poverty, ill-health, criminality and a host of other ills.

In the past, Scotland has made a significant contribution to the world. In particular, the combination of the thinking of the Scottish Enlightenment and the technological achievements of the Scottish industrial revolution did much to shape the modern world. At a time when humanity faces challenges such as climate change, long-term sustainability and peaceful co-existence, it is more necessary than ever to turn new knowledge to well-considered practical use and Scotland should again make its distinctive contribution. At the very least, it needs to equip its own future citizens to cope in circumstances that require constant adaptation to rapid change.

No country will be able to face the challenges of the current century without rapidly improving the quality of its educational provision. Yet education faces its own challenges and new opportunities.

It is clear that new technology offers huge possibilities[52,101]. It provides readier access to information than has previously been possible and in ways that many people find motivating. Education could learn much from the computer gaming industry with its capacity to handle multiple pathways and provide instant feedback in sophisticated ways. New technology has organisational possibilities that could finally render traditional timetabling and class organisation obsolete. Furthermore, it offers the opportunity to open up new dimensions of choice. Yet its impact in the classroom has as yet been relatively limited.

Similarly, knowledge about the workings of the brain and the nature of the learning process has expanded rapidly over the past two decades[11]. John Abbott of the 21st Century Learning Initiative summed up the possibilities thus:

"Our growing knowledge of and understandings about learning show, for example, that the brain is driven by curiosity, learning must be active, children learn in different ways and at different rates, intelligence is mutable and more than just a general capacity to learn, children's search for meaning starts very early in life, the brain works best when it is building on what it already knows and when it is working in highly challenging but low-threat environments and that learning is an immensely complex business. Some would argue from this that to put our faith in a highly directive, prescriptive curriculum, is to go 'against the grain of the brain', that it inhibits creativity and enterprise ... the very skills needed in the complex, diverse economy and community for which we need to prepare our children.

The knowledge and understandings being developed by cognitive scientists, working alongside neurobiologists and anthropobiologists, lead them to advocate constructivist approaches to learning, with its progressive deepening

of earlier understandings, and the joining together of what had earlier been separate, disconnected ideas. Through mixing experience with reflection human beings weave their own experiences and knowledge into unique patterns.

The Santa Fe Institute would go so far as to say that 'nearly everyone would agree that experience is the best teacher, but what many fail to realise is that experience may be the only teacher'."

With its references to constructivist pedagogy and deep understanding (teaching approaches designed to help young people make sense of their learning), this quote supports crucial aspects of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

As yet, the educational impact of neuroscience has been felt most strongly in relation to young people with additional needs. However, it has so far had little impact within mainstream schooling.

Indeed, a remarkable feature of schooling worldwide has been the survival into the 21st century of organisational models that originated in the 19th, and that have undergone only limited change since. In one sense, this can be seen as positive. Schools are efficient organisations, delivering a high standard of service on a consistent basis. Nevertheless, it is difficult to imagine that, given an entirely fresh start and the knowledge and technology of the present day, we would design a system of the kind that exists. The system can scarcely avoid fundamental change for much longer.

The Commission has no blueprint to offer for the longer-term. However, it believes that some predictions can be offered with confidence and that Scottish education should be organising itself to deal with them.

1. The impact of new technology on schools will increase dramatically. It will:
    - allow schools to plan and deliver a more personalised curriculum through greatly improved record keeping, more sophisticated timetabling etc.
    - enable wider curriculum choice through distance learning and video conferencing
    - allow learning outside school (project work and homework) to be properly integrated into the whole learning experience
    - expand the capacity of the system to give timely individual feedback
    - develop pupil research as an important element in learning, thus facilitating approaches such as “flipped learning” (which uses technology for basic instruction, leaving the teacher more time for individual and small group interaction with learners)
    - enable an element of “anywhere, anytime” learning, perhaps particularly for older learners
    - promote forms of learning involving collaboration with other learners and other places
    - reduce the dependence of schooling on extensive fixed sites
    - contribute to more flexible patterns of organisation, reducing reliance on, for example, age cohorts, fixed times of opening and so forth.

2. The social dimension of learning will remain vital. Schools must improve the quality of the social experience and develop more effective links with their communities. Within schools, the quality of relationships – among learners, between learners and teachers, between schools and other levels of the education system – will require increased attention and improvement.

3. School education will become increasingly evidence-based, with neuroscience influencing classroom practice.

4. Schooling will become more international. The importance of making links with other countries will increase. The curriculum will require to be increasingly internationalist in ethos and content. The implications of increasing movement on a global scale, probably particularly among high-achievers, will require careful adaptation. There will be a demand for a curriculum and qualifications that can command global recognition.

5. Successful countries[37,38,78] will be unable to support high levels of failure. In Scotland, the issue of underachievement in areas where deprivation is highly concentrated must be addressed with fresh determination and willingness to take radical action.

The Commission believes that Scotland is capable of addressing these issues successfully. However, to do so, five prerequisites must be fulfilled:

1 The principles of *Curriculum for Excellence* should continue to guide development over the next 10 to 20 years. However, it requires to be interpreted in increasingly bold and innovative ways and put into effect through a process of iterative change.

2 Apart from channelling revenue from taxation into education, government has to see its main responsibility as being to encourage school autonomy so as to promote diversity and innovation in response to the demands of a changing world and the needs of young people. In this context, the recent decision by Education Scotland to see itself as a "change agent" is encouraging.

3 Scotland needs to develop more effective mechanisms for bringing about change in its school education system. These will certainly include changes in culture and process and may also require changes in structure and governance as well.

4 There has to be a clearer recognition of the educational impact of disadvantage, allied to a consistent determination to take the radical measures needed to remedy the situation.

5 Measures of success in the system must reflect social and educational priorities.

Part 2: Processes of change

Educational reform in a global context

Every country is interested in improving the quality of its education system. It is universally recognised that education plays an indispensable role in national economic success. Furthermore, although the argument is generally expressed in economic terms, governments and citizens everywhere understand that economic failure leads not only to a decline in living standards but also to social unrest and a host of accompanying evils. Less emphasised by governments, but still of the greatest importance, is the role that education plays in the development of the individual and the human community.

The contemporary world is distinguished from what has gone before primarily by the extent of globalisation and the pace of change. In both cases, the difference is one of degree rather than of kind. Furthermore, the world in which today's school pupils will operate as adults will be still more globalised and even faster changing.

Globalisation intensifies competition. The increasing pace of change means that current success is no guarantee of future excellence. In almost every field of human activity, the best practice of 2012 is likely to be obsolescent by 2020. This applies to education as much as to manufacturing or even new technology. In other words, it is not enough that Scotland's schools perform well (but not outstandingly) in global comparisons. They must improve at least as fast as those elsewhere if they are to make their proper contribution to fulfilling the country's ambitions in terms of economic competitiveness, equity or quality of life.

Scotland's experience of educational change

Scottish school education has undergone a series of policy-driven changes over the past 50 years or so. Some of these, for example comprehensive reorganisation of secondary schooling in the 1960s and 70s and the raising of the school leaving age in 1971, were essentially structural. However, most of the initiatives have been mainly concerned with the curriculum and teaching methodology. The latest in the series is, of course, *Curriculum for Excellence*. Earlier examples include the *Standard Grade Development Programme* that followed the publication of the Munn and Dunning reports in 1977, *Higher Still*, *Five to Fourteen* and the *Post-16 Action Plan*.

Scotland thus has extensive experience of significant programmes of educational change. This experience is, however, far from entirely successful. Indeed, the Commission would argue that Scotland needs to carefully reconsider and radically improve the processes of change that are employed if it is to meet the challenges of the new century and improve as fast as many of its competitors.

The following paragraphs outline some of the problems that have been encountered in recent initiatives.

1. Timescales tend to be unduly protracted. To take the most recent example, the original policy statement *Curriculum for Excellence* was published in November 2004. Although the paper was intended to give Scottish education a long-term sense of direction and to usher in an extended period of iterative change, there was an expectation that the process would start quickly and that results would be apparent throughout the system within a few years. In the event, the production of national guidance was slow with the *Building the Curriculum* series being completed only in 2009, around the same time as the "Experience and Outcomes" were published. The first pupils to sit new examinations will do so in 2014, nearly 10 years after the publication of the initial report.

This timescale is, however, rapid compared with that of the Standard Grade Development Programme. This Programme arose out of the Munn and Dunning reports which, in turn, were a response to the lack of suitable courses and assessment for pupils staying on at school as a result of the raising of the leaving age in 1971. In the event, serious work on new courses did not start until the early 1980s and was not completed for a further 10 years. In effect, the courses were ready for the children of the children for whom they were initially intended.

Such timescales need to improve in order to match the pace of change in the most successful areas of the private sector or, indeed, with what has been achieved in areas of further and higher education or by many voluntary sector bodies. It has proved extraordinarily difficult for the school system to achieve rapid change at the same time as continuing to provide a good quality service on a day-to-day basis [99]. The Commission believes that, in part at least, this is because the system tends to regard innovation and service delivery as separate, rather than as inseparably linked. It is a main contention of this report that empowering those at school level makes innovation part of daily practice and can ensure that change is better grounded, more closely linked to real needs, more rapid and less burdensome.

However, some aspects of the change process require greater attention and may require to be more extended. An important part of any successful change process is securing "buy-in" from key stakeholders, particularly teachers. This is inevitably a time-consuming process. However, time spent at the outset in building a consensus around the need for change, if not the details of what is to be done, is likely to avoid significant obstruction and delay at later stages. A crucial feature of well-planned change is that time is devoted to building consensus and capacity while the timescale for implementation is greatly accelerated.

2. Gains are relatively modest. There is no doubt that successive programmes of change have brought about worthwhile improvements in Scottish education. Nevertheless, these improvements are generally smaller than was claimed at the outset. Thus, *Higher Still* left the purpose of the sixth year uncertain and the interface between school and higher education somewhat confused. *Five to Fourteen* certainly improved planning, but at a high cost in terms of increased curricular rigidity and a greater emphasis on compliance with a centrally-designed template. None could be said to have achieved transformational change. Thus, for example, one of the objectives of the Standard Grade programme was to put in place a system for giving meaningful recognition and accreditation to the achievements of less academic young people at the point of completing the period of compulsory education. Standard Grade introduced a much more complex system of assessment than any that had preceded it. Awards were given at three levels – Credit, General and Foundation – with the intention that certificates would be within the reach of all young people while suitable recognition was given to high levels of achievement. In the event, Foundation level awards never achieved any market currency. Over time, only Credit and upper General awards were seen as constituting a "pass". One of the main intentions of the initiative was fatally undermined.

This is an instance of a much broader and more significant failure. A high proportion of the policy initiatives taken in Scottish education over the past half century have been aimed at improving the prospects of young people variously described as less able, slow learning, socially deprived or whatever. The intention of "closing the gap" has lain behind a succession of policies from comprehensive reorganisation through the raising of the leaving age, Standard Grade, legislation on special (now additional) educational needs to *Curriculum for Excellence*.

Combating educational disadvantage is, of course, a complex process involving much more than purely educational change. In addition, it is still too early to see what effects the various initiatives being undertaken as part of *Curriculum for Excellence* may have. Nevertheless, looking at the 50-year timescale as a whole, it has to be conceded that progress has been much more modest than was hoped. (See later section on Equity).

3. Objectives are compromised. One of the reasons why programmes of change fail to realise the hopes of their authors is that, during the process of implementation, compromises are made for any of a wide variety of reasons; to placate opposition; to lessen teacher workload; to circumvent practical obstacles. Commendable as these reasons may sometimes be, the effect is that ambitious objectives are not fully carried into effect. There is, of course, nothing wrong with compromise but underlying principles and purposes should be consistent.

Thus, for example, *Higher Still* failed to address the issue of the underlying purpose of the Scottish sixth year. It remains to be seen how far *Curriculum for Excellence* will succeed in its more ambitious objectives

such as developing a focus on skills and a capacity to measure what matters in examinations.

4. Change has become dependent on central direction. None of the major change programmes of the past half-century has originated at school level. *Curriculum for Excellence*, Standard Grade, Five to Fourteen and many others had their origins in reports and initiatives developed nationally. Such programmes have conscripted the energies of teachers on a scale quite different from more local initiatives.

However, good practice developed by individual schools and authorities has sometimes come to permeate the system as a whole. Instances would include behaviour improvement strategies developed in schools and the phonics-based reading approaches pioneered in Clackmannanshire and West Dunbartonshire.

The *Schools of Ambition* programme[61] is interesting in being an essentially decentralised initiative, enabled by central government. It is frequently cited as one of the most successful change programmes of recent times. However, the number of schools directly involved was small and the changes they made had greatest impact in those schools.

Looking across the field, it is difficult to conclude that the benefits brought by the major national programmes have been proportionate to the effort they demanded. Less ambitious, local schemes have arguably achieved more in relation to the resources deployed.

There is, in principle, nothing wrong with major programmes being centrally directed. Indeed, powerful strategic leadership from the centre has been a significant element in the recent success of several eastern and Pacific Rim systems[37,38]. However, it is essential that the role of the centre is genuinely strategic and not micromanaging. (This crucial point about the proper roles of different levels in the system is discussed in more detail later.)

It is also quite appropriate that strategic leadership should reflect national priorities. Political considerations are thus properly involved. Nevertheless, both among the public and the teaching profession, there is suspicion of educational change that is seen as excessively politically motivated. Education is rightly regarded as having purposes that should be respected and regarded as independent of politics.

An important consequence is that educational change should generally be pragmatic and directed towards successful outcomes. However, experience indicates that centrally-directed programmes with close political involvement tend to monopolise teacher time and can generate a defensive mindset that is unhelpful to progress. All programmes inevitably have both successes and failures. Guidance will have strengths and weaknesses. A willingness to listen to criticism and to make changes as developments progress are the hallmarks of a mature attitude to bringing

about change in a complex system[21]. Unfortunately, they have not been strongly evident features of the way in which Scotland's major programmes have been directed from the centre.

5. Current processes do not engage early adopters. As indicated above, major programmes of change in Scottish education do not arise organically out of the activities of individual innovators at school level, but rather they are responses to policy initiatives at national level, sometimes arising out of the recommendations of Committees of Inquiry or Working Groups. This approach tends to mean that, once a policy has been decided upon, all of the country's schools are expected to progress in lock-step fashion according to a centrally-determined timetable. This is not an inevitable consequence of managing change at a national level. It would be conceivable, for example, for schools to opt into programmes at a time that took account of their state of readiness and particular priorities. However, such permissive approaches have not found favour so far.

One of the disadvantages of prescriptive timetables is that they do not allow full advantage to be taken of early adopters. In the commercial world, producers of goods and services do not expect customers to move simultaneously and in an orderly fashion from one product to the next. On the contrary, producers use early adopters to help refine their products and then act as unpaid salesmen and champions. There are plenty of schools which would willingly act in a similar capacity. Furthermore, the process of reform would be greatly strengthened, not least because such schools have a vastly greater capacity than national agencies to win parental trust and commitment to change and to give appropriate reassurance. To an extent, this kind of approach was a feature of the *Schools of Ambition* programme.

By contrast, the current lockstep model of change means that change cannot be initiated until politicians are sure that a sufficient consensus is built up in favour. This clearly runs the risk that changes are obsolescent before they are introduced. Even after a programme has started, the pace of change has to be such as to avoid undue protest and difficulty. Thus, if programmes do not move at the pace of the slowest, they move considerably more slowly than the most willing and accomplished of innovators would achieve.

It is also fair to point out that a uniform pace of progression inhibits the process of mutual learning. As all schools at any given time are at much the same position in the programme, there is no scope for schools to benefit from each other's experience by taking forward different aspects of the programme at different speeds. Neither can less capable institutions benefit from the support of others who have proceeded ahead of them.

This does not imply that other schools need to await the progress of the early adopters. Indeed, it is important that every school should make progress as quickly as it can. However, processes of change can proceed in parallel in different schools and at varying rates.

It is worth noting that this idea of change proceeding simultaneously at different speeds in different institutions could have other important implications. For example, many curricular changes in Scottish education have hinged upon changes in examination arrangements and it has always been assumed that examinations require to be introduced from a stated date. This is not self-evident. Indeed, it could be argued that there are many benefits to a process in which a new examination needs to prove itself through uptake by early adopters before the previous exam is entirely superseded and ceases to be available.

Assuming that the experience of the early adopters demonstrates the success of the new arrangements, pressure on slower moving schools to adopt them is increased. The pace of change is liable to be more rapid than in circumstances where all are coerced into moving at the same time. (If, of course, the experience of the early adopters is unsatisfactory, lessons can be learned. The programme can be altered in ways that will strengthen and improve it or, indeed, be dropped altogether.)

6. Current change processes encourage uniformity

One consequence of excessively detailed central direction and the lock-step approach to change is that individual schools are usually expected to conform to a standard timescale and a limited range of approved approaches. Even where, as in the case of *Curriculum for Excellence*, there is a stated intention to empower schools and encourage diversity, current change programmes still exert a powerful influence in the direction of standardising practice. As a result, the creativity of the teaching profession is not utilised as effectively as it could be. Professional self-confidence tends to diminish and the reliance of teachers on central direction grows.

7. Changes are based on assumptions rather than knowledge

Education is only gradually building the extensive knowledge base that creates the possibility of true evidence-based policy making. In this respect it is far behind medicine and other professions such as architecture and accountancy. It is only in the past twenty or so years that accumulating essential management information has begun in a relatively systematic way, for example in relation to performance at national, school or individual pupil level.

In the absence of a sound knowledge base, policy has had to be informed by theory and philosophy (much of it of great value), informed 'hunches', wishful thinking and ideology. In short, educational policy making is to a significant extent a matter of judgment. At its best, this approach has allowed significant progress to be made. The quality of teaching in Scotland's schools has unquestionably improved. Assessments are more sophisticated. Formative approaches have been used to help the learning process.

However, there are also less positive instances. A critical aspect of the continuous efforts that have been made to improve the relative

performance of disadvantaged children will serve as a striking example. The Standard Grade programme was intended to give all young people qualifications that would have some market value. Reasonable sceptical thinking would surely have revealed that the chances of Foundation awards – which really demonstrated how much more poorly the holder performed than the average – were never likely to fulfil this aspiration. Yet criticism from teachers was swept aside and a complex system of awards at three levels was introduced. In the event, whatever other benefits Standard Grade brought, Foundation awards never achieved the currency that was sought for them.

Scotland is in no sense unique. Globally, education struggles to become an evidence-based activity. However, there are clearly steps that can – and should – be taken within the Scottish system:

- Educational research requires to be given higher priority.
- Consideration needs to be given to the kind of research that is most likely to benefit practice.
- Data gathering needs to become more purposeful and systematic.
- The Scottish Government (possibly through Education Scotland) should see horizon scanning and information gathering and dissemination as an important function.
- Systematic independent evaluation of policy initiatives should become routine.

8. Programmes inadequately reflect classroom needs

An aspect of this kind of central direction has been the relative remoteness of some programmes of change from needs perceived on an everyday basis in the classroom. This has been particularly evident in relation to a far-reaching programme such as *Curriculum for Excellence*. Although initially seen by very many teachers as potentially fulfilling their hopes, the difficulty that national agencies have experienced in moving beyond ambitious and abstract objectives has proved an obstacle to sustaining teacher support[101]. While this difficulty might potentially have been overcome by sharing objectives at an early stage and engaging in sustained efforts to "sell" the big messages, few such efforts have been made, and with little success.

Currently, there are few effective channels for bringing classroom concerns to the attention of either central or local government. In a few instances – literacy is a good recent example – issues of importance to classroom teachers do become the focus of national initiatives. In some other instances, such as 'Assessment is for Learning' a development gains widespread grassroots support *after* beginning as an initiative by a national agency. Attempts are often made by influential figures such as ministers to keep in touch with classroom opinion but it is not clear that this has real impact on national policy priorities. For the most part upwards communication is insufficient and, indeed, some teachers believe that their real concerns are often accorded little priority.

9. The public is alienated from educational reform

In a way that is quite different from its attitude towards advances in other public services, a significant section of the public is deeply sceptical about educational reform. It is inclined to take the view that educational change is shaped by those some times described as 'ivory tower theorists', very remote from classroom concerns. There is little confidence that change will bring about improvement. Indeed, the consequence is often believed to be 'dumbing down'. There is no other policy area where there is such a large constituency for the view that the best way of making progress is to return to the way things used to be done.

In part, this attitude appears to be a reaction to so-called progressive educational methods, introduced in the 1960s and 1970s and more prevalent south of the border. The Initial Teaching Alphabet could serve as an example. Several other initiatives in relation to reading, spelling and number also fall into this category. It is perhaps surprising that folk memory of this period continues to exert such powerful influence. However, the prevalence of sceptical or even hostile attitudes to reform merely emphasise the need to make more sustained efforts to influence public opinion, probably most successfully by demonstrating where change is effective.

Several local authorities have, however, made a strong commitment to communicating with parents. The establishment of the National Parents' Forum, which is highly supportive of *Curriculum for Excellence*, is an example of a worthwhile initiative at national level. Schools, of course, have a much longer record of dialogue with parents and are better placed to engage them. However, although schools often take time to inform parents about major programmes of change, they are not seen – and do not see themselves – as part of a co-ordinated communications strategy intended to build public support for change.

10. Confusion of ends and means

Clarity of purpose requires a clear distinction to be drawn between policy objectives or *ends* and the *means* used to accomplish them. Perhaps because of its relatively weak evidence base, education has a bad record of transmuting *means* into *ends* and coming to see the latter as having a wholly inappropriate totemic significance.

Thus, when national education systems were being established, it was necessary to determine a starting age. Subsequently, as more children were encouraged to progress to higher levels, it was found convenient to distinguish between an initial elementary or 'primary' stage and a later 'secondary' one. In Scotland, primary education came to run from age 5 to age 12. In England it finished at 11. In many continental countries, it began only at 6 or 7.

All of these arrangements have been made to work with reasonable success. There is no compelling evidence supporting one pattern rather than another. (There is some support for the idea that kindergarten

methods work better than more formal ones with five and six year olds, but there is no reason why they should not be used in the early stages of a primary school just as successfully as in a pre-five setting.) However, Scotland along with most other countries behaves as though the age of transfer from primary to secondary represented some deep reality in the development of the child. The words 'primary' and 'secondary' appear with clear definitions in legislation. The distinction affects teacher qualifications, school management structures and much else besides.

This translation of what is merely one pattern of organising school provision into a statutorily supported 'given' has serious adverse consequences. Although *Curriculum for Excellence* is supposed to represent a continuous process stretching at least from 3 to 18, the reality is that wholly artificial divisions, created for reasons of managerial convenience, have come to represent a serious barrier for many children.

Traditionally the overall outline of the curriculum in Scotland – and to a large extent also elsewhere – has reflected a variety of epistemological considerations and vested interests, rather than a clear and consistent perception of young people's needs and the nature of their progress through the education system [11]. Thus, during the primary stages, the entire classroom experience is normally choreographed, if not delivered, by a single teacher. In recent years, while the number of visiting specialists has tended to decline, schools have become more imaginative in the use of the talents of staff and various forms of team teaching and sharing of classes have developed. Nevertheless, for a very large part of the school year, the child is in contact with a single teacher and, perhaps, also a classroom assistant.

The contrast with the first two years of secondary education could hardly be greater. This is the stage when the curriculum is at its most fragmented. Pupils normally have contact with more than a dozen teachers and, on occasion, as many as 18. Almost all subject areas are represented in one way or another. Ostensibly the reason is in order to give young people a "tasting" of what the subject has to offer. However, because subject choices will be made at the end of S2 (or now in S3), vested interests are much to the fore.

These subject choices mean that pupils study somewhat fewer subjects in the middle period of secondary education and fewer again in the last two years. It is impossible to think of any convincing intellectual rationale for this process of moving from contact with one teacher to many to progressively fewer. It is also clear that the key area of difficulty is in the early years of the secondary school where the excessive fragmentation of the learning experience, compounded by the move from primary schooling and the onset of puberty, causes many to lose their way. This has been apparent for at least forty years. Yet decisive action has never been taken.

Young people should develop and learn seamlessly from one age to another. The school system plays an important role in this process from age three until some time between age 16 and 18. However, it does not always see its role as truly continuous. Instead, as described above, it divides the period into quite distinct phases that have different patterns of organisation, different curricula, differently qualified teachers and so forth. It is important to bear in mind that terms such as "pre-five", "primary" and "secondary" do not describe natural stages in the development of the young person: they are purely arbitrary concepts adopted for administrative convenience. This is not to argue that teaching in a nursery setting is the same as teaching sixth year. Equally, however, it is not to accept uncritically that there is something fundamentally different between teaching P7 and teaching S1. These are matters in which commonsense and professional judgement are surely more relevant than rigid regulation.

A further instance of damaging confusion of means and ends may, somewhat paradoxically, be emerging in relation to important aspects of *Curriculum for Excellence*. A basic principle of the new arrangements is that *ends* should be expressed in terms of the outcome for learners rather than the content to be studied or the label attached to it. Thus, developing young people who are successful learners, effective contributors, confident individuals and responsible citizens is a statement of *ends*. It is possible to state ends at a much more detailed level and, indeed, many of the experiences and outcomes do precisely this.

A different kind of *end* is that young people should become familiar with the ways in which knowledge has come to be organised and structured. In other words, educated people need to be familiar with the traditional *disciplines* such as mathematics, science and history.

However, these are also labels attached to syllabuses that may, or may not, adequately convey the key concepts, procedures and some of the content of these disciplines. Thus, it is fair to say that it is not possible to be an educated person in the early 21st century without some understanding of science, but this is really a shorthand way of pinpointing a series of understandings, skills and areas of knowledge that the person should possess. The inclusion within the curriculum of something bearing the appropriate label is not a guarantee of achieving the desired outcomes.

The Commission believes that the rationale for the inclusion of a subject or activity in the curriculum is often not reflected in what subsequently takes place. Thus, the motivation behind the introduction of "two hours of quality PE" related to children's fitness and problems such as childhood obesity. Yet it is clear that the two hours is often taken up with skills training for various sports, during which most members of the class are active for short periods of time only.

The teaching of modern languages tends to be justified, in part at least, by reference to international trade. Yet the choice of language tends to be

determined by tradition and the availability of staff. Other considerations, such as the fact that English along with Chinese and Spanish are emerging as global languages, has had little impact.

The same kind of point could be made across the curriculum. Questions such as "Why is this subject or unit of work important to all young people?" are asked too seldom. The question, "Does it fulfil its ostensible purpose?" is hardly asked at all.

Curriculum for Excellence has introduced a range of new terms such as 'level', 'outcome', 'context for learning', 'curriculum principles' and so forth. These generally help understanding (although it is difficult to know what the ugly word 'capacities' adds other than fresh jargon). However, the tendency to invest such terms with excessive significance is already in evidence. Terms such as 'phase of broad general education' are perhaps already on the way to becoming established as ends in their own right. Much of the current confusion over course choice and numbers of subjects that it is possible to study in S4 has its origins in a confusion of ends and means.

These examples all relate to the curriculum. The problem, however, has much wider application. It tends to be forgotten, for example, that comprehensive education was introduced in order to improve the chances of the less advantaged and stands to be judged on its success in achieving this aim. The tendency, however, is to see such developments as embodying some kind of ideological rectitude and as immune from criticism.

A further damaging consequence of the confusion of ends and means is a tendency to focus on *inputs* rather than *outcomes*. Increasing spending or reducing class size is not a virtue in itself. Ultimately , what matters is the effect on learners. The Commission takes no view on these particular examples but would emphasise the importance of focusing on the effects of action rather than on the action itself or the inputs associated with it.

Conclusion

The problems affecting the processes of change in Scottish school education are highly complex. Several inter-related factors have profoundly deleterious effects. Scottish education does not lack good intentions, nor promising ideas. What it lacks is the means of implementing them effectively.

Recommendation 5. Change processes in Scottish education are not as effective as they should be. The improvement of these processes must be seen as a matter of the highest priority.

Part 3 looks at some of the effects of this failure, and Part 4 at how the shortcomings in the change process might be addressed.

Part 3: Consequences of inadequate change processes

Introduction

Over the last two decades, several countries have undertaken highly successful programmes of educational reform. Systems that would not have been considered for inclusion in any list of the world's most successful have emerged as leaders. In its work "How the world's most improved school systems keep getting better", McKinsey[37,38] included the following: Armenia, Aspire (a US charter school system), Boston (Massachusetts), Chile, England, Ghana, Hong Kong, Jordan, Latvia, Lithuania, Long Beach (California), Madhya Pradesh (India), Minas Gerais (Brazil), Ontario (Canada), Poland, Saxony (Germany), Singapore, Slovenia, South Korea, and Western Cape (South Africa). Few people would consider this a definitive list but it does illustrate the variety of countries that have made significant improvements in recent times.

Different countries have taken different routes[49,78]. Finland (which is much admired but not cited by McKinsey) chose a decentralised approach[30]. China, which performed outstandingly well in the 2009 PISA survey, has relied on central strategic leadership.

Although there is no single path to educational success, it is clear that some approaches are more successful than others. Appropriate objectives are essential, but not sufficient. Failure to pursue the objectives effectively will lead to failure or, at best, reform programmes that achieve much less than was hoped for.

It is perhaps into this latter category that Scotland's successive reform programmes fit. Initiatives from comprehensive reorganisation to the programmes of today have certainly not been outright failures. They have worthwhile achievements to their credit. But ultimately, they have fallen behind expectations and left Scotland less well placed internationally than at the outset. This section provides two illustrations.

Raising standards

The Commission's interim report sought to evaluate the current standing of Scottish education. It found that, although the system generally performs well and enjoys a good reputation both in Scotland and elsewhere, it is no longer a world leader.

The interim report looked at three possible indicators of performance:

- performance as measured in examinations and surveys
- the extent to which Scotland's schools meet the expectations of their stakeholders
- how well placed they are to meet the needs of the future.

The picture as presented by various international surveys of school performance is mixed. Scotland performs well overall, being consistently placed in the upper quartile of achievement, at any rate in earlier surveys. However, the trend has been generally downward. This is particularly marked in relation to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which is now the only survey in which Scotland participates. The following table shows how Scotland's performance has altered over the period 2000 to 2009[54]. (The figures give Scotland's scores that can be compared with the average score of 500.)

	2000	2003	2006	2009
Reading	526	516	499	500
Mathematics	533	524	506	499
Science	522	514	515	514

Scotland remains above average in reading and science but only similar to the average in mathematics.

Concerns about mathematics (and science) are reinforced by the findings of the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in which Scotland last participated in 2007[93]. The following table looks at the position from 1995 to 2007 and shows a decline in science and a position in mathematics that is, at best, static.

Mathematics

Year group	1995	2003	2007
P5	493	490	494
S2	493	498	487

Science

Year group	1995	2003	2007
P5	514	502	500
S2	501	512	496

In the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), Scotland scored significantly above the international average in the two surveys in which it took part (2001 and 2006)[55]. However, in 2006, 19 countries or regions had better scores than Scotland's. Furthermore, while the 59 participating countries included obvious comparators in Europe, North America and the Far East, almost half were developing countries whose standards would be expected to be much lower than those of Scotland.

Of course, there are many methodological problems surrounding all attempts to compare educational performance across different cultures and systems[28]. The results can provide no more than a broad indication of levels of performance. Nevertheless, so far as Scotland is concerned, the picture is relatively clear and consistent across the major surveys. Scotland's performance puts it among the world's higher achieving systems, but its position is relatively weaker than it was when the surveys began. Although it

is almost certainly not the case that Scottish standards have declined, it is clear that many other systems are improving faster.

So far as national examinations are concerned, the picture is perhaps more encouraging[72,79]. As the following tables show, there have been small gains made in all measures. Although the rate of progress has been slow, it is credible and does not seem to be exaggerated by the kind of grade inflation that has been seen south of the Border.

Fourth Year

Year	% of S4 with Eng and Maths at level 3 or better	% of S4 with 5+ passes at level 3 or better	% of S4 with 5+ passes at level 4 or better	% of S4 with 5+ passes at level 5 or better
2001/02	91	91	77	34
2002/03	91	91	76	34
2003/04	91	91	77	35
2004/05	90	90	76	34
2005/06	91	91	77	35
2006/07	92	91	76	33
2007/08	91	90	76	34
2008/09	93	92	78	35
2009/10	93	92	78	36
2010/11	93	93	78	35
2011/12	n/a	94	80	37

Fifth Year

Year	% of S4 with 5+ passes at level 5 or better	% of S4 with 1+ passes at level 6 or better	% of S4 with 3+ passes at level 6 or better
2001/02	45	39	23
2002/03	45	39	23
2003/04	45	39	23
2004/05	45	38	22
2005/06	45	38	22
2006/07	46	39	22
2007/08	45	38	22
2008/09	47	41	23
2009/10	49	43	25
2010/11	50	44	26
2011/12	n/a	46	27

The interim report also looked at the now discontinued Scottish Survey of Achievement[73] and the new Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy[62] which was first conducted in 2011. Both consistently show a drop in performance against expectations between P4 and S2. In the 2011 survey, the position was as follows:

- About 76 per cent of P4 pupils were performing well or very well in numeracy at first level, at P7 about 72 per cent of pupils were performing well or very well at second level and at S2 about 42 per cent of pupils were performing well or very well at third level.
- The percentage of pupils not yet working within their respective levels in numeracy was less than one per cent in P4, about two per cent in P7 and about 32 per cent in S2.

It is also worth noting that S2 pupils living in areas with lower levels of deprivation were twice as likely to be performing well or very well as pupils living in areas with higher levels of deprivation.

Recommendation 6. There is a need to sustain and intensify efforts to raise standards of literacy and numeracy. Every school should be committed to reducing to zero the number of young people whose difficulties with basic skills are such as to represent a threat to their future life chances.

Despite these rather disappointing statistics, parents are revealed by inspection surveys as being highly satisfied with Scotland's schools. Furthermore, the continuing increase in the number of young people staying on in school beyond the years of compulsory education suggests a widespread appreciation of the value of education.

	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
S4-5	79	79	77	77	77
S5-6	46	45	46	45	44

2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
77	78	78	78	81	83
44	44	45	45	50	54

In addition, the proportion of the age group entering further and higher education has risen from 52% of the age group in 2001/02 to nearly 63% in 2010/11[79]. Numbers remaining in school have not risen because of declining uptake of other kinds of education. Both the upper secondary and the tertiary sectors have expanded steadily.

Employers' views were more mixed[10,32,47,101]. The CBI recognises that it is unrealistic to expect schools to produce young people ready in all respects for working life. "UK employers do not expect schools to produce job-ready employees by the time they leave secondary school. But what they do expect is to be able to recruit young people with the right skills, capabilities and attitude for the workplace".

However, according to the CBI, 70% of employers experience weaknesses in new recruits' employability skills while two-thirds believe that standards of literacy and numeracy are too low. A similar proportion considers it necessary to provide remedial support. Relevant employers detect shortcomings in specialist areas such as STEM and modern languages. Although the figures relate to the UK as a whole, the CBI does not believe that the Scottish position is markedly different from that in other parts of the country.

When the Commission looked at the system's fitness for the future, its conclusions were necessarily tentative. However, it considered that:

- Deep learning – which involves understanding and applying knowledge – needs to become more firmly established as the central organising principle of *Curriculum for Excellence*.
- Scottish schools are right to focus on active learning and appropriate approaches need to be further developed.
- Scotland needs to be more ambitious in developing cognitive skills, especially advanced skills.
- The educational potential of new technology has yet to be sufficiently explored but underpins many of the new learning approaches that are urgently required.
- More needs to be done to promote STEM subjects. In particular, computer science in schools is in its infancy.
- Useful progress has been made in relation to personalisation but much remains to be done.
- It is vital to develop independence and personal responsibility among learners, along with associated qualities such as optimism and resilience.
- Overall, Scotland is pursuing appropriate education goals but the pace of change and the ambition of the developments need to be increased.

The modern world is highly competitive. Being a relatively high performing system that is not improving as fast as many others is not enough. Standards need to be raised – not merely for those who are currently underachieving (which is the subject of the next sub-section) – but across the board. So far, Scotland's change processes have not delivered the pace of improvement that is required.

However, Scotland already has many examples of individual teachers and whole schools successfully raising standards and promoting wider achievement in exceptional ways. There are also schools where pupils' achievements far exceed what might be expected, given their social circumstances.

Such schools are usually characterised by:

- strong leadership from the headteacher and staff at every level
- effective self-evaluation and high-quality continuing professional development
- teachers' high expectations of pupils' attainment and their commitment to supporting pupils and extending their achievements

- relationships between staff and young people, which help learners to become confident and motivated to achieve success
- high quality pastoral care for all pupils
- strong links with the communities served by the school
- well-managed and targeted developments to improve the curriculum
- a culture among staff of seeking improvement and making sure changes improve teaching and learning continuously
- the promotion of fairness and equity amongst pupils
- a focus from all staff on meeting the learning needs of every individual
- high levels of participation and achievement in the arts, sport and other activities
- ambition, positive attitudes and high motivation among learners.

Reports published in January 2013 by HM Inspectorate on three outstanding secondary schools comment in more detail on the characteristics of teachers and young people in such schools.

Teachers:
- provide effective feedback
- offer innovative learning experiences
- ensure good pace and challenge in their lessons
- know their pupils well
- monitor their progress and intervene quickly when they fall behind.

Young people:
- feel secure and valued
- work well together and with staff
- behave well
- are motivated and engaged
- have a strong work ethic
- take responsibility for their own learning and are capable of working independently
- are encouraged to express opinions and to influence decisions made about their learning and the curriculum
- engage willingly in challenging discussions and in problem solving
- are aware of their progress as learners and of their strengths and weaknesses
- are involved in peer and self-assessment
- have their work recognised and accredited in a range of ways
- are confident and mature
- are developing skills for life and work
- show leadership and are able to work in teams
- communicate effectively.

None of this is especially surprising. If all schools in Scotland demonstrated these characteristics and developed them in staff and young people, there would certainly be a major impact on standards. The task, therefore, is to create the conditions which will make this possible.

Securing equity

Equity – or the lack of it – has long been one of the most important issues facing Scottish education. In any area of human activity, it is inevitable that some will perform better than others. Even in the most successful schools, some pupils leave with levels of understanding, skills and qualifications that others cannot match. However, it is concerning that a significant proportion of school leavers enters the outside world badly prepared, underqualified, demotivated and frequently lacking in even the most basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Depending on the criteria used, this proportion varies, but most commentators would agree that about one in five or one in six of Scotland's young people experience some important degree of educational failure at school. Furthermore, this proportion has not significantly altered over decades.

Educational failure is clearly a personal disaster for those involved. Their prospects of employment are low. Even if successful in getting a job, it is likely to be poorly paid and to offer few prospects of advancement. Educational failure is also positively correlated with many other negative indicators; poor health, drug addiction, criminal behaviour and so forth.

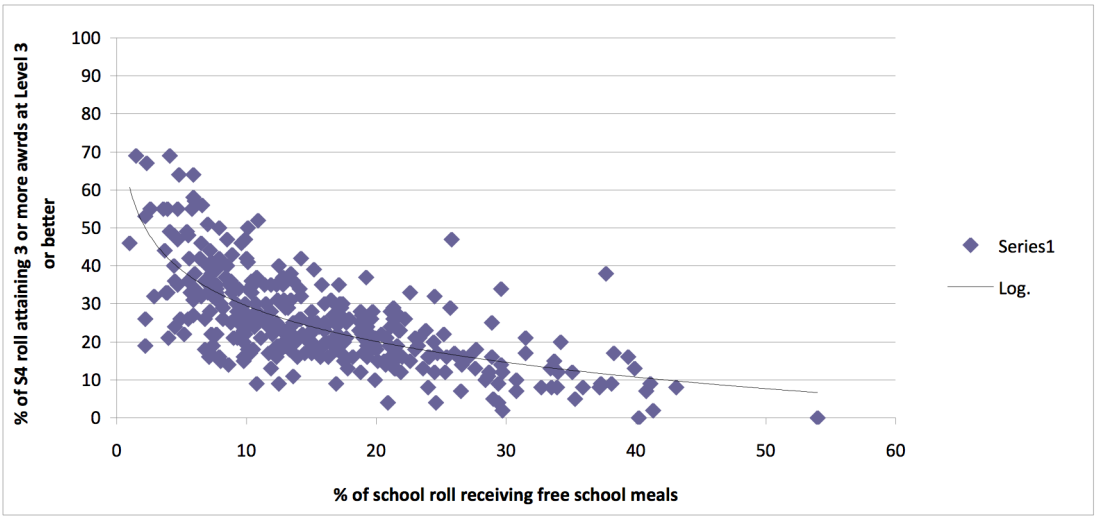
Thus, the 2012 *Report on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation*[65] indicates that the most deprived 20% of Scottish society is four times more likely to be unemployed than the least deprived 20%, three times less likely to live in a satisfactory area, significantly more likely to experience crime and has only about two-thirds of the likelihood of enjoying good health. At the same time, only 9% have degree qualifications compared with 39% of the affluent. By contrast 28% (compared with 5%) have low qualifications.

The social consequences of educational failure are as damaging as the economic. Human potential is wasted. Many who could have made a positive contribution to society become, instead, a drain on its resources. Social divisions are increased and the cycle of deprivation reinforced.

One of the most obvious and damaging characteristics of educational failure is its close association with socio-economic deprivation. In its 2007 report, the OECD noted that the quality of provision varies comparatively little from one school to another in Scotland. However, outcomes measured in terms of educational success or failure vary very widely. What is particularly concerning about this variety is its predictability. In Scotland, schools in more affluent areas achieve better levels of educational performance than those in poorer areas. 'Looked After' children fare even worse than the generality of young people from the most deprived areas. Of the Looked After children who left school during session 2010/11, only 55% found long-term positive destinations compared with 87% of all school leavers[26].

The chart below shows on a school-by-school basis the relationship between socio-economic circumstances and success in gaining 3+ Higher passes. It is clear that affluence supports success, whilst poverty hinders it. The same kind of graphs can be produced for various levels of attainment. All show a

similar pattern, with little variation over many years. The 3+ Higher statistics have been chosen because this level of qualification is vital for entry to higher education.



Some schools in areas of deprivation do better than might be expected, whilst some in wealthy suburbs underperform relative to their neighbours. However, no school in a deprived area has ever matched or exceeded the performance of a school in a wealthy district. It is worth noting that this is not true of other countries. It is no longer even true of schools in London where the London Challenge[51] appears to have yielded remarkable results in some unpromising areas. In all countries, there is some correlation between economic circumstances and school performance. In Scotland, however, the correlation appears overwhelming and thus far unbreakable.

If Scotland is to make progress, it must begin by accepting an unpleasant reality. Scotland's schooling is not equitable.

Although the statistical evidence overwhelmingly supports this bald assertion, there are apparently many people who would dispute it or, at any rate, choose not to face up to its consequences. When radical change is mooted in Scottish education, it is frequently opposed on the grounds that change will lead to greater inequality. The implication that the status quo is, in some significant measure, egalitarian is, of course, false. While there are certainly changes that might increase inequality, the case for indiscriminatingly defending the existing system on grounds of assumed equity is threadbare.

This is not because of lack of effort. Most major educational initiatives in Scotland over the past 50 years have had as one of their objectives improving the prospects of the less advantaged. From comprehensive reorganisation to *Curriculum for Excellence*, policy makers and teachers have sincerely and conscientiously tried to reduce inequality – but the results have not yielded success.

There are still countries that distribute resources to schools in a way that favours the already advantaged. Where systems are selective, it is not

uncommon to find that the more academic schools are better staffed. In Scotland, this kind of discrimination was ended more than 40 years ago. Although levels of funding vary from one local authority area to another, within each area, schools are treated similarly with some preference being given to those serving more deprived areas or catering for larger numbers of young people with additional needs.

The extent of these additional resources is limited and has not generally increased in recent years. Most, if not all of the additional staffing, is the legacy of Circular 991, a central government scheme that was absorbed into mainstream funding nearly 20 years ago. It is unfortunate that the Urban Aid scheme, which for many years was the main vehicle for channelling money into tackling disadvantage, was seldom used to assist mainstream education. Furthermore, the financial incentives that used to be given to teachers to work in deprived areas – known as 'designated payments' – disappeared at an even earlier date, without leaving any residual funding to counter disadvantage.

In contrast, the Institute for Fiscal Studies has suggested that targeted support for disadvantaged areas has increased in England and can now, in extreme cases, nearly double the available resource. Such figures are difficult to compare because of different ways of treating expenditure such as free school meals that are related to deprivation but do not contribute directly to educational activity. The Commission, therefore, believes that there would be merit in comparing the additional support given in Scotland with what is available in other developed countries. Such a study might well lead to the conclusion that further measures should be taken to increase the additional support that is given to boost the capacity of schools in disadvantaged areas.

It is possible to question whether the available additional resources are appropriately targeted. Previous work suggests that they are often used to increase the capacity of the school as a whole, rather than to address the needs of disadvantaged pupils. The Commission believes that there would be merit in adopting a more finely-tuned method of distributing additional resources in a way that would ensure that the extra resource followed the individual pupil and required to be used for his/her benefit.

However, it does not believe that Scotland's record in allocating resources can be seriously criticised: rather, it is evident that the problems of disadvantage are particularly firmly entrenched and that other kinds of policy initiative will be needed if they are to be combated effectively.

Recommendation 7. The allocation of support for pupils and schools experiencing disadvantage should be reviewed and needs to be better targeted. More of the available support should follow the individual disadvantaged learner.

In one respect, however, public policy in Scotland has served to exacerbate problems of educational disadvantage. The huge programmes of slum clearance undertaken in the big cities in the 1950s and 1960s resulted in the

creation of very large housing estates with poor amenities and very little social mix. However well-intentioned these policies may have been, when taken together with the introduction of a purely territorial basis for allocating pupils to schools, they created large areas in which there are few avenues of opportunity open to aspiring young people.

This problem disproportionately affects Glasgow where several of the most disadvantaged areas in Europe are to be found. In that context, the progress that the city has made in recent years in raising levels of attainment in the worst affected areas is impressive, even though attainment remains below city and national averages. Almost all of its S4 pupils attain 5 or more Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework awards at Level 3 or better – a rise of 5 points since 2010; 73% attain 5 or more awards at Level 4 or better – a rise of 4 points since 2010; and 27% attain 5 or more awards at Level 5 or better – a rise of 3 points. The percentage attaining at least 1 Higher has risen by 5% to 37% in the last 3 years. The recent exceptionally positive report by HM Inspectors on St. Andrew's Secondary in Carntyne in the east end of the city demonstrates the kind of progress that is being made. The percentage of school leavers in positive destinations has also improved; from 72.6% in 2000/01 to 87.6% in 2011/12. Glasgow has benefited from *inter alia* well-developed systems for analysing performance information, a clear focus on the systematic promotion of literacy and numeracy and a well-regarded learning and teaching strategy.

It remains evident, however, that there are areas of such concentrated disadvantage that aspiration among young people is frequently extinguished at an early stage and avenues of opportunity are correspondingly restricted. Central government in Scotland has always – rightly in the Commission's view – refused to talk of 'failing schools' in this context. The scale of the problem is such that more than the efforts of the school (and the often very able teachers that work in them) is required. However, it has to be accepted that levels of attainment are often such that the school would automatically be seen as failing if situated south of the Border.

Thus far, achieving any level of success in the most deprived areas has called for exceptional qualities of leadership and inspiration at headteacher level and outstanding commitment and skill from staff. Sustaining these conditions over a protracted period is extraordinarily difficult. When they disappear, a school can quickly revert to the norm for its area.

Recommendation 8. Talented staff should be encouraged to teach and remain in schools in the most disadvantaged areas. Such schools should be resourced in a manner that will make them attractive places in which to work and develop a career.

In addition, if Scotland is to tackle educational disadvantage where it is most deeply entrenched, it must be prepared to challenge comfortable assumptions and contemplate radical policy changes.

This will involve far more than targeting additional resources as suggested above. It will certainly require greatly increased decision-making powers at school level, in line with the main thrust of this report. In the case of schools in particularly deprived areas, it should involve the right to depart from established policies on the school day and year and standard approaches to resourcing and staff deployment.

It should be for schools themselves to determine how such freedoms should be used, but the Commission envisages that the school day might be extended, that extensive enrichment activities might be offered beyond the school day, week and year and that the school would be more closely involved in outreach work with families [53]. Indeed, some schools might find that many learners find it easier to relate to education if it takes place in community premises rather than in the school itself. Some schools might wish to look at the zero tolerance of failure approaches that have been tried with some success in inner cities in the US. The key point is that schools should be resourced and liberated so as to be as flexible and innovative as possible.

In recent years, Governments have laid considerable emphasis upon multi-disciplinary working between services. This was an important part of the case for introducing Community Planning. Perhaps more relevantly, it is at the core of *Getting it Right for Every Child* (GIRFEC)[33], an initiative concerned with the all-round development of young people. Both of these initiatives have taken a considerable time to yield results and neither is as fully embedded in practice as their advocates desire.

However, there are signs that GIRFEC, in particular, is beginning to make an impact of a positive kind. For example, the Early Years Collaborative is a multi-agency initiative concerned with giving children the best start in life by translating the GIRFEC principles and the Early Years Framework into practical action. The Commission endorses its commitment to early intervention as part of a strategy of shifting expenditure on public services towards the prevention, rather than the later alleviation, of disadvantage.

Experience with community planning suggests that sometimes discussion is at too abstract a level and that ways will have to be found of ensuring that there are useful consequences in practice, in this instance at the level of the individual child. Nevertheless, as indicated elsewhere in this report, the Commission considers that local government has – and is likely to continue to have – a key role in bringing service providers together to discuss, plan and co-ordinate their efforts to alleviate disadvantage.

The Commission also believes that inter-service working is important but that its potential has yet to be fully realised. It is important, therefore, that outcomes should be carefully monitored and efforts made to spread good practice around the system. In particular, the Commission believes that best results are likely to be obtained through collaboration among professionals who are directly involved with the individual young person.

In theory, Scotland was committed to the principle of universal nursery education from 1947 onwards. However, over most of the next half century, progress was extremely slow and the number of places available did not remotely match demand. Furthermore, virtually all of the places were part-time and, whatever the value to the child, there was little benefit to the family in terms of creating economic opportunity for mothers.

By the 1980s, the expansion of pre-school provision had become a priority both from the point of view of improving the life chances of young people and in order to make it easier for parents to balance work and childcare responsibilities. The introduction of an integrated pre-five service in the former Strathclyde Region from 1987 onwards embodied this fusion of ideas.

It was not, however, until a further 10 years had passed that the availability of significant financial resources from central government made a wholesale expansion of pre-five services possible. Thereafter, within a relatively short period of time, it became possible to ensure that part-time provision was available for every family who wished to take it up. In effect, all three and four year olds were given access to the equivalent of at least two and a half days of pre-school care and education. For most children, this involves attendance for either five mornings or five afternoons per week. Legislation currently before the Scottish Parliament is intended to increase the available hours from 475 to 600 per annum.

The pre-school sector is by far the most varied sector of the education system. Indeed, it is perhaps not entirely appropriate to describe it as part of the education system because its aims are more complex than that title might imply. All local authorities now offer many places in Council nurseries and other establishments. However, they also provide free access to services provided by others. Some services are strongly education-focused while others are more concerned with care and play. Some families have access to full-time places funded at public expense. Others choose to buy additional time beyond that which is provided free. Most children start at around age three but a small number begin attendance much earlier. The number not entering education until age five is now very small.

It is not yet clear what impact this massive extension of pre-five provision has had on either educational standards as a whole or on the relative position of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The Commission considers that this is an area worthy of serious research. Unfortunately, the reported views of teachers and other nursery workers suggest that they observe at age three the same phenomenon often reported by primary teachers at age five. Some children come into the nursery well-equipped to benefit from what it has to offer. Their previous life experience has given them an interest in ideas, the beginnings of a rich vocabulary and an emerging conceptual framework. When they are presented with new information or a new idea, these advantages make it meaningful. They can fit it in to what they already know. It is, therefore, memorable and adds to their understanding of the world. Other children come without these advantages and very often fail to find their new learning memorable or meaningful. Research suggests that, even by

age three, the gap in cognitive development between the most and the least learning-ready is more than a year. In short, if pre-school provision is to make any impact upon disadvantage, age three appears to be too late to start.

Much research from a variety of fields of study indicates the importance of the years immediately following birth. It is essential that the very young child forms loving attachments. Experiences at the outset of life are deeply formative. Children need to be talked to long before they can understand. The number of words a child has heard by the age of two or three appears to be an important indicator of future success. The brain goes through a period of rapid development, forming connections and enhancing its cognitive capacity. For most children, this period of rapid change in the brain comes to an end around the age of two. Obviously, the fertility of this development is influenced by the environment in which it takes place.

All of this suggests that there is scope for seeing the first three years of life as a period in which effective steps might be taken in order to try to prevent the kind of educational disadvantage that otherwise condemns some young people to failure and poverty [85]. Furthermore, it would appear that the objective of any intervention should be to counteract what might be described as the "cultural deprivation" that contributes to a lack of learning-readiness. Children, of course, need love above all, but love in itself is not enough to ensure educational success. Parental concern is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for success. Children from homes that are culturally rich – even if they are materially poor – tend to succeed. Conversation, the exchange of ideas, a rich variety of experiences – all these appear to be important. Glasgow City Council's experience of setting up 'nurture classes' suggests that this could be a fruitful line of development.

The Commission recommends that Government gives priority to the creation of services from birth (or even before) that address problems of disadvantage and seeks to create learning-readiness among children from less favoured circumstances. The services should be publicly funded and available free of charge to those families who require them. The Commission sees the Government's current intention to provide a service for some two year olds in particular need as a useful, if limited, step forward.

It will be important to ensure that the information available to various services about individual children is linked to data and understandings about the factors that contribute to success or failure in order to target anticipatory interventions towards children most in need. Outreach work, initially through health visitors and other NHS workers and later by nurseries and schools, is vital to the building of constructive relationships between families and the key public services.

Recommendation 9. Government should give priority to creating an integrated service for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, providing support from before birth to age three and designed to improve life chances by *inter alia* improving learning readiness. Data should be built up to help this service target its interventions effectively.

The Commission has no blueprint to offer. Indeed, it considers it to be vital that services should be innovative and diverse, that varied experience should accumulate and best practice be identified. It does not consider that services should necessarily be provided exclusively by agencies of the state: indeed, it would regard a variety of providers as an advantage. The voluntary sector is likely to have a key role.

This need not require the creation of a unified free-standing "very early years service". Children's and families' needs vary, and they change over time. Around the time of birth, the focus is inevitably on health. Later on, the stimulation of learning assumes a greater importance. In short, there is a need to build on the multi-disciplinary initiatives referred to earlier.

Central and especially local government will have a vital role in bringing together the key services and agencies involved. To ensure that services are as responsive as possible, resources should be tied to the individual child (with the disadvantaged child benefiting from a premium) and families should, so far as is practicable, be in a position to exercise choice. The creation of the new services will undoubtedly have cost implications that ideally would be met by the injection of new resources. The Commission recognises that this is a time of serious financial constraint but, nevertheless, takes the view that a significant new initiative to break the cycle of disadvantage should be accorded high priority, even if this implies diverting resources from elsewhere.

Despite a long-standing commitment at every level of the education system to tackling the educational consequences of disadvantage, it is clear that Scotland has yet to face up in a sufficiently determined manner to the full implications of the congenital underperformance that is most evident in Scotland's most disadvantaged communities. The inequity in outcomes that has been acknowledged for decades continues with successive policy initiatives making little conspicuous or consistent change. The Commission, therefore, believes that, given the evidence of the lack of success to date, a renewed focus on targeted policy and practice improvement is desperately needed.

This will require a more systematic gathering of data and ideas and the collaborative development of effective policy based on both theory and experience. This work could be taken forward by an expert centre established for the purpose. Such a centre would be tasked to work collaboratively with the schools and local authorities most affected, to bring together Scottish and international expertise, to conduct research, and to drive, support and share practice improvements in seeking to bring about decisive change. With the clear support of the Scottish Government to fund and support such a centre, together with a willingness to target resources to areas of greatest need, and to allow policy to adapt quickly and unencumbered, the Commission believe such an initiative could make a significant contribution to tackling one of Scotland's lasting shames.

Recommendation 10. A dedicated centre for the improvement of educational outcomes in Scotland's most disadvantaged communities should be established.

In addition, the Commission believes that there are aspects of current policy that, if more fully developed, could make a difference. *Curriculum for Excellence* takes an admirably broad view of the nature of learning. It sees learning as taking place in four contexts, two of which relate to the formal curriculum, one to the young person's participation in the life of the school and the last to broader achievement outside school. As yet, however, relatively little has been done to suggest how the third and fourth contexts might be purposefully exploited.

Personal development in the context of the life of the school is significant for many pupils[34,82]. However, it is clear that the social experience of pupils in some schools is sadly deficient. In part, this is due to inadequacies within the premises themselves. In some cases, much more could be done to extend the range of extra-curricular activities that the school offers. Perhaps most important, however, is to pay attention to the quality of the relationships that the school supports. One of the most important conclusions to be drawn from the conversations with senior pupils at secondary schools during the Commission's visits was the importance of cultivating respect and positive relationships.

Recommendation 11. The quality of relationships is crucial to success in education. Greater attention should be focused on the personal and social development of young people.

So far, schools' initiatives in relation to the fourth context are quite wide-ranging, often involving participation in external activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, uniformed organisation, work on behalf of charities, enterprise and social enterprise programmes, engineering clubs and Eco Schools and similar environmental initiatives. These are clearly important and worthwhile. However, the challenge for many schools will be to find ways of extending the range of opportunities that they offer and providing access for a broader range of young people. In some cases, it may be important to ensure that these are affordable by using the school's resources to support them.

Thus, the role of the school is likely to change in two important respects. It will become a broker of experiences provided by others as well as remaining a direct provider of education itself. This will involve the school in seeking out opportunities provided by, for example, the voluntary sector, youth organisations, private companies and others and ensuring that young people are made aware of them and, if necessary, assisted to take part. Secondly, it will need to take responsibility – including a measure of financial responsibility – for learning in all its contexts. If the broader contexts of learning are genuinely valued, they also have to be resourced. Where some part of a pupil's education is provided by a partner organisation, the school may well have to share financial resources with that partner.

Recommendation 12. There is a need to link school learning more closely to learning in the wider community. Schools need to become brokers, as well as providers, of educational experiences and support.

At a time of financial constraint, the second will not be a welcome message. If, however, classroom learning is only a small part of a broader process of learning – and most people believe this is the case – then society has to interpret its obligations more widely than in the past.

There is one further issue that the Commission considers has important implications for tackling disadvantage and should be further explored. The attainment gap between schools in different kinds of neighbourhood is evident from early years. However, it becomes markedly greater after transfer from primary to secondary education. Young people in deprived communities are more likely to disengage from education completely.

Much recent learning about the nature of the brain and, in particular, about the changes that take place in it during the period of adolescence, suggests that a relatively unvarying diet of book learning in a classroom environment is not naturally suited to the needs and preferences of many adolescents. While young people from supportive backgrounds are able to look to the long-term and benefit from secondary schooling, less advantaged young people frequently are not. This is more than simply a matter of the onset of puberty. It is what John Abbott calls "going against the grain of the brain". This suggests a need for:

- greater variety in learning experiences
- more emphasis on physical and practical activities
- greater flexibility about the school day and year
- increased use of technology
- use of cognitive learning approaches
- developing learning environments that offer high challenge but low threat
- much-increased efforts to stimulate intrinsic motivation.

These points have far-reaching implications for the organisation of secondary schooling. Potentially, they conflict with the traditional pattern of classes of similar size, formed from age cohorts, operating on a strictly timetabled basis. They suggest the need for more individual and group work. In particular, they imply a greatly increased reliance on developing intrinsic motivation as well as continuing to rely on the extrinsic motivation supplied by qualifications, entry to further and higher education and access to the world of work.

Conclusion

The history of Scotland's attempts to raise educational standards, both across the board and specifically in relation to the less advantaged, is an instructive one.

On the one hand, there has been an admirable constancy of purpose, particularly in relation to disadvantaged young people. Governments of different political persuasions, councils and the teaching profession have genuinely sought improvement though a series of policy initiatives and consistent attempts to enhance classroom practice.

Furthermore, the expression of that shared purpose has steadily evolved in the light of experience. The limited, but real, success of structural changes in the 1960s and 1970s led to an increased emphasis on improvements in learning and teaching. More recently, collaboration with other agencies has been seen as a promising way forward. Consistency of purpose has been accompanied by flexibility regarding methods.

However, the results have been disappointing, especially regarding efforts to 'close the gap'. A significant minority of young people continues to derive little benefit from 11 years of compulsory education. Indeed, it could be argued that they are relatively more disadvantaged at the end of the process than at the start. Disadvantages of birth and upbringing continue to determine the future of many young people, despite the best efforts of schools.

More generally, although standards have improved, the pace of improvement is slow. It is perhaps unrealistic to expect that a long-established system such as Scotland's will improve at the pace of, say, that of China. However, it is disturbing that several systems in Asia and the Pacific Rim appear not only to have caught up with, but also surpassed, Scotland's achievements.

Why should this be? It seems that reform programmes have often been insufficiently bold – or at least that bold ideas have not been pursued resolutely in the face of vested interest. The failings of Scotland's processes of change, outlined in the previous section, have ensured that worthy and vital objectives have not been fully secured.

Part 4: Preconditions of effective change

Introduction

The processes that traditionally have been used to bring about change in Scottish school education fall far short of being as effective as necessary. Although the problems that have arisen have varied from time to time, the underlying issue of efficient change processes has been constant over decades. It is important, therefore, that the question of how change is initiated, directed and monitored is addressed explicitly – rather than being largely taken for granted.

This matter is particularly pressing, given the fact that recently there has been a significant shift in public and political attitudes about how change should be fostered. Confidence in top-down processes has noticeably declined, while a belief in the importance of empowering staff at all levels and consulting stakeholders has steadily increased. Indeed, this more open and potentially democratic model of change is implicit in much of the philosophy of *Curriculum for Excellence*, even though its implications have not been thoroughly understood.

It is important to recognise that, at a time when knowledge is increasing at an unprecedented rate, technology is transforming many areas of human activity and even matters of custom and belief can no longer be seen as constant, change in education will have to be of two significantly different types. To date, change has generally been about *improvement*, change within the system, doing what has always been done better. Increasingly though new understandings of how learning takes place and new technology are opening up the possibilities of genuine innovation or *transformation*, change beyond the system, doing things differently. It does not follow that the same kinds of institution and processes will succeed for both types of change and the need to accomplish both, therefore, requires careful consideration.

The Commission believes that each of the following ten factors is indispensable for effective change to take place. Each is described in more detail in the following sections:

- clarity of purpose and of roles
- securing commitment
- incentives
- increased diversity
- school autonomy and empowerment of staff
- appropriate governance arrangements
- effective support
- leadership capacity
- management information and evidence base
- investment in people.

These factors are highly consistent with many of the well-researched models of change that have been developed in business and elsewhere[12,27,31,66].

Within the educational field less attention has been paid to the *process* of change. An exception is the work done by McKinsey[37,38] on the world's most effective education systems: the crucial success factors are the selection and continued development of the right teachers along with the capacity to intervene effectively at the level of the individual learner. These feature also in the suggestions below. So too do ideas on culture and governance. Global experience over the last few decades suggests that what is essential is an appropriate combination of far-seeing but light-touch strategic direction from the centre and empowerment and initiative at school level [25].

Recommendation 13. To improve change processes, each of ten preconditions needs to be put in place.

They are explained in more detail below.

Clarity of purpose and roles

It is absolutely vital that all the major stakeholders should be clear about why change is being proposed. This obviously requires that objectives should be specified in language that is commonly understood and that conveys a powerful idea of the need for change. This is the first step in securing buy-in.

It is also essential that major players should be clear about their roles.

Schools have, of course, the prime responsibility for providing a high quality of service to all learners. In the context of programmes of change, they also carry a key responsibility for innovation at classroom level. This is not merely a matter of implementing ideas generated elsewhere. Schools have a duty to develop their own ideas, to experiment, to collaborate with others and to enrich the experience of the system as a whole.

The key role of central government is strategic leadership. It should set out objectives clearly and convincingly. It should develop a shared sense of direction, indicating the need for change and establishing long-term aims. The strategy should be expressed at a high level of generality; the original *Curriculum for Excellence* report and the national priorities [77] are at a broadly appropriate level.

As described elsewhere in this report, the Commission believes that government also has important roles to play in looking for ideas and funding significant innovation; in ensuring that developments are properly evaluated; and in the overall allocation of funding.

There is a number of roles that are best carried out at an intermediate level. Schools require to be accountable and this implies the need for appropriate governance arrangements. They will also wish access to support services ranging from curricular advice to the negotiation of energy contracts. It is neither necessary that all schools should have the same arrangements, nor that governance and support should be provided by the same agency.

Equally, it is possible for there to be a formally constituted intermediate tier or for schools to deal with a variety of providers and agencies.

Securing commitment

As described earlier in this report, there is widespread public scepticism about educational reform. Such a backdrop makes it even more important to try to ensure the maximum level of buy-in before major programmes of educational change get under way. Parents, learners, prospective employers, further and higher education and a range of other stakeholders need to be convinced that there is a strong case for change and that the proposed programme will meet the perceived needs effectively. In short, there need to be compelling answers to questions such as "What is wrong with the current arrangements?". "How will the proposals address the problems?" and "What will be different as a result of making the suggested changes?".

It is equally important that as high as possible a proportion of the teaching profession is committed to the suggested reforms. In addition to the concerns listed above, teachers will wish to know that the suggested changes relate in some realistic way to difficulties that are experienced in the classroom. In other words, proposed programmes should meet some need that teachers actually experience. They should also be seen as practicable, properly supported and professionally fulfilling.

The track record suggests that if these issues were more fully addressed, and the ground well prepared in advance, the various essential audiences would be offered compelling reasons for change and would feel engaged in constructive dialogue before programmes commence. Over several decades, there has been a steadily increasing understanding of the amount of front-loaded investment in professional development that needs to take place in advance of major programmes being implemented. It is time that the same argument was recognised in relation to public awareness, persuasion and involvement.

Incentives

Commitment to young people, concern for their progress and welfare and professional pride constitute strong incentives for constant improvement. The great majority of teachers will readily take the opportunity to improve classroom practice on a day-to-day basis. They show a strong desire for their own professional development and they readily collaborate with each other, for example through the mechanism of teacher learning communities.

However, in any system, the forces of inertia are strong. Whilst opportunities to improve individual practice are usually keenly grasped, enthusiastic participation in an externally directed process of change can be another matter.

Furthermore, there are important external factors which inhibit – or are perceived as inhibiting – experiment and innovation. Three are particularly important.

(a) Inspection was frequently portrayed in submissions to the Commission as a major inhibitor of innovation and diversity. Although some schools described inspection as a positive experience, the more common view was that inspection is the principal mechanism by which central government enforces compliance with a centrally-driven agenda and pre-determined notions of what constitutes good practice.

Examples would include establishing whether schools are delivering 'two hours of quality PE', in itself a prime instance of focusing on means and inputs rather than outcomes. Attempted prescription by Education Scotland in relation to the organisation of the 'phase of broad general education' in secondary schooling is another. In this connection it is worth noting that the form of organisation adopted by all three of the schools given outstanding inspection reports in January 2013 are at variance with this guidance.

At the very least, it is clear that such perceptions of the role of inspection are widely shared and this in itself discourages initiative at school level. The same may also apply to local authorities, because their education functions remain subject to a loose form of inspection.

It is, of course, possible for an inspection regime to encourage innovation. However, this is only possible in a context in which schools feel that change that is well-considered and offers a realistic prospect of improvement will be looked upon favourably regardless of whether or not it accords with normally accepted notions of good practice. In this context, it is worth noting the work that inspectors have done in recent years[68] with the International Futures Forum to develop a toolkit to help schools take a longer term and more strategic view of their future development. This 'Three Horizons' approach is now available to all schools and has the capacity to act as a powerful stimulus for change.

There have also been important changes in the inspection regime in recent years. Perhaps the most significant has been the greatly increased emphasis on self-evaluation, introduced by the first version of "How good is our school?" (HGIOS) in 1996. This publication was intended as a stimulus to schools to reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses, and on what steps they needed to take to improve. It has been revised a number of times, generally in ways designed to make it less prescriptive. In theory, inspection can be seen as external moderation of internal self-assessment. On this model inspection should be less judgemental, and more concerned with helping the school to perceive itself more accurately, and with evaluation of the school's attempts to improve in accordance with its own priorities. Whilst some schools found the inspection process in line with this approach, others did not.

One submission offered a more theoretical objection to self-evaluation. On this view, HGIOS invites schools to inspect themselves, using imposed criteria set by the Inspectorate on the basis of little evidence. By this argument, self-evaluation gives schools little increased freedom and merely represents a more sophisticated – and possibly less honest – means of requiring compliance. Although having some substance, this argument overstates the degree of prescription in HGIOS.

The stated purpose of self-evaluation is improvement. The Commission takes the view that this positive objective is entirely appropriate and, indeed, should govern all aspects of any mechanism for the external assessment of school quality. Improvement is, of course, also a statutory responsibility placed on ministers and local authorities.

Scotland's experience of self-evaluation reveals a paradox. Scotland is perceived globally as a world leader in the field. HGIOS has reached a worldwide audience and the expertise of the Scottish Inspectorate has been in great demand. However, Scotland's schools seem to be improving less rapidly than those in many other countries. Therefore either the Scottish model is less effective than is commonly supposed, or there is something else in the culture of Scottish education that reduces its benefits in practice.

Furthermore, other countries might suggest that there are models of inspection that, although less focused on stimulating improvement, nevertheless have successes to which they can point. The Ofsted regime in England, for example, is mainly concerned with eliminating failure. When a school is judged to be failing, it is liable to be put in "special measures" and, unless it improves rapidly, will then be closed or taken over by new management. This approach appears to have sharply reduced the incidence of 'failing schools', although other initiatives such as London Challenge[51] and the steadily increasing autonomy and diversity of schools[74,95] have also played a part. Furthermore, it can be persuasively argued that a 'failure regime' does little to secure improvement in the system as a whole and, in particular, not in schools that might be judged to be 'coasting'.

Scotland has rightly avoided the language of failing schools. However, there are certainly schools in Scotland that, by virtue of their low levels of examination success, would be labelled as failing if they were in England. The reason is the high levels of socio-economic disadvantage with which they are dealing. Unsurprisingly, "failing schools" in England are also concentrated in such areas. It is worth noting, however, that 29% of schools serving disadvantaged areas in Scotland have received critical inspection reports. This very contentious matter is discussed further in Part 3 in relation to Scotland's persistent difficulty in tacking disadvantage effectively.

Regardless of the respective merits of the improvement and failure models, the Commission considers it essential that there should be some means of challenging schools, giving them incentives to improve and holding them to account for their performance. (In the view of its proponents, a thoroughgoing market-led system could do this through competition and

customer preference. Whatever the theoretical truth or otherwise of this, it is clear that many families lack either the necessary information or discernment to make such an approach work successfully, at least in the short term.) The persistently high levels of satisfaction recorded by inspection surveys [72] even in relatively poorly performing schools is evidence of this.

The Commission, therefore, believes that some form of external evaluation of school quality is a necessary feature of the quality improvement process – at least for the moment. However, it considers that the following features must be emphasised:

- There should be a clear focus on improvement rather than judgement.
- A high value should be placed on well-considered innovation as a positive feature. External evaluation should look for evidence of innovation and comment positively on original practice. Credit should be given to the effective, considered and professional exercise of discretion.
- External evaluation should be based as far as possible on internal self-evaluation.
- Schools should be required to engage in an externally validated self-evaluation on a significant topic of their choice every third year. Local government quality improvement units, universities, HM Inspectorate and a range of other agencies might be involved as validators.
- Schools should be obliged to publish the outcomes of such studies and to share good practice.
- In addition, periodic light-touch evaluations should be carried out by HM Inspectors. These should no longer be described as *inspections*. They should focus on learning and teaching, but there should be no suggestion of any requirement to comply with an externally designed template.

Of course, recent changes in HM Inspectorate procedures are already in line with the first three of these points[68]. However, there is a need to go further and, in view of the widespread scepticism among teachers, to be seen to go further. Furthermore, if external evaluation is to command confidence and respect, it must be fully independent of government and criticise policy as much as implementation whenever that is appropriate.

(b) The idea that there is a compliance agenda to which schools have to conform is reinforced by the sheer bulk of the guidance that has been issued in connection with *Curriculum for Excellence* and, indeed, by the reverential manner in which the guidance is usually described, at any rate in official publications. Guidance should be just that: advice, not prescription. The tendency to see it as having exalted status is an instance of the unhelpful culture that sees pronouncements coming from higher levels of the system as immune from criticism.

(c) In addition, secondary teachers see the national examination system as reinforcing well-worn approaches and cautious attitudes towards change. Some teachers may exaggerate these concerns (although there is certainly some truth in them) but the fact that such perceptions are widespread is, in

itself, a powerful incentive to teachers to keep safe by adhering to existing practice.

It is, however, possible to see examinations in a very different light. *Curriculum for Excellence* is concerned with *inter alia* the promotion of skills, deep learning and application of knowledge as key features. There is general agreement that examinations should test what is considered important. Examinations can, therefore, be used to provide an incentive to change. Indeed, it could be said that this is one of the main advantages of maintaining a national examination board in a world in which assessment and certification can be readily obtained from a wide variety of sources. As yet, however, the use of the exam system to incentivise change is very limited.

At a time when empowering the individual professional is seen as a vital factor in effective change, it is particularly important that the incentives to innovate should be greater than the incentives to stick to 'play safe'. At present, the balance lies in the other direction. The Commission believes that the Scottish Government should seek to correct this and should look particularly at inspection, national guidance and examinations as areas where change could be incentivised.

Increased diversity

A remarkable feature of Scottish school education is its high level of uniformity. Except in a small number of remote areas where geography dictates some other form of organisation, schooling consists of seven years of primary education and up to six years of secondary.

With the sole exception of Jordanhill School in Glasgow (which is funded directly by the Scottish Government), the entire state sector is managed by local authorities. The placing request mechanism allows families to exercise considerable choice but, for the most part, only among schools that are broadly similar in organisation, curriculum and, in the case of secondary schools, access to qualifications.

Roman Catholic schools are available in many, although not all, parts of the country but these differ from non-denominational schools in ways that have little impact on teaching approaches or the structure of the curriculum. Gaelic schools are available but only in a limited number of localities.

There is, of course, also an independent sector which contains not only prestigious and generally academic schools (located mainly in the cities) but also a small number of schools that pursue a distinctive educational philosophy, such as that of Rudolf Steiner, and a range of special schools that cater mainly for pupils paid for by local authorities. This more varied sector caters for only about 4.5% of Scottish young people. However, almost a quarter of Edinburgh secondary pupils attend independent schools.

This degree of uniformity is highly unusual. In some respects it can be portrayed as positive. The 2007 report by the OECD[65] on Scottish education commented favourably on the fact that the quality of Scottish schools was highly consistent although their outcomes varied greatly, largely because of the low success of the system in dealing with problems of disadvantage. However, there is also a vitally important negative consequence of this lack of variety. Scotland's school system has only a limited capacity to learn from its own experience because that experience lacks genuine variety.

A true learning system requires variety and that variety now has to be consciously cultivated. The Commission takes the view that the state, probably mainly at national level, has a vital role in promoting diversity within the system.

Recommendation 14. The state, both nationally and locally, should encourage and support greater diversity in Scotland's school system. In order to do this, greater autonomy is required at school level.

Different types of organisation, philosophy and practice have to be consciously fostered. This can obviously be done within the existing school system. Schools can be positively encouraged to make greater use than they currently do of the considerable freedoms that exist within the system. (This issue is explored in more depth below.) Local authorities have an important role to play in encouraging this type of diversity.

Indeed, to an extent this has already happened. The former Strathclyde Regional Council developed specialist schools for music and dance. Other national centres of excellence have been created. Several authorities have taken an interest in Gaelic education. North Lanarkshire's 'enhanced comprehensives' put additional emphasis on chosen areas of specialism such as sports, languages or arts. Aberdeen established a French-medium primary school that was subsequently closed for financial reasons.

A less well-known example is the recent collaboration in Edinburgh with the Co-operative Education Trust Scotland (CETS). In 2012 the City of Edinburgh Council passed a resolution to work towards becoming a Co-operative Council. It was decided that education would be the starting point and that the CETS offering of a Scottish School of Co-operation and the resources and awards available through CETS would make this achievable in the short to medium term. The main aim is to use the co-operative values and principles to provide the ethos for more democratic involvement of the schools communities and encourage more autonomy for decision-making by staff and pupils. Within this context, CETS is now working with a cluster of schools on a range of enterprise and other projects involving technologies and focusing on primary/secondary transition.

These examples are important – but they are relatively few. There are far more examples of local authorities insisting on uniformity of approach among their schools than of them promoting diversity.

There has also been limited effort by government to sponsor diversity at school level. The best known example is the *Schools of Ambition* programme. This was designed to use central government funding to encourage schools to innovate in ways that arose out of the school's priorities. The ethos of the scheme was permissive and supportive. It is often cited as one of the more effective of recent change programmes. However, only a small number of schools was involved and its impact on the system as a whole was very limited.

Large scale innovation capable of influencing the system as a whole will require the establishment of even more diverse approaches. Examples might include the proposed senior school campus in Dumfries, closer integration of senior school and college provisions, the encouragement of specialist schools, the introduction of foreign language medium schooling, greater use of distance learning and more use of partner organisations such as Skillforce Scotland or Spark of Genius. Local government has at least as great a locus as central government in promoting this kind of innovation.

The Commission sees all of these possibilities as part of a broader strategy for fostering diversity. Instances might include schools placing much higher reliance on new technology, basing curricula around interdisciplinary rather than subject-based structures or emphasising practical skills and employability. Such varied approaches would strengthen the capacity of government to provide the kind of strategic leadership that has been an essential part of the success of other education systems, especially those of the Pacific Rim.

School autonomy and empowerment of staff

The issue of governance is dealt with in a separate sub-section below. However, it is appropriate here to consider the question of school autonomy.

Scottish schools currently enjoy, in theory at least, considerably more latitude than is commonly understood. Scotland has no national curriculum (although *Curriculum for Excellence* is often wrongly seen in this way). It has National Priorities issued by Ministers under the authority of the Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000[77] but these are written at a high level of generality and would not prevent schools diverging considerably in their policies and practices. Obligations and prohibitions contained in statute are remarkably few. Scotland does have a national examination board but there is no obligation on schools or local authorities to make use of it. (Indeed, there was a period before the Standard Grade Development Programme got seriously under way when a significant number of Scottish schools made use of the Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) qualification run by English examination boards.) Some requirements are contained in regulations issued by the General Teaching Council for Scotland [92] and others are contained in agreements relating to teachers' terms of employment but these certainly do not cover all – or even most – aspects of schools' operations.

To a degree, *Curriculum for Excellence* is itself a policy designed to empower teachers and encourage them to innovate in their own ways. Particularly in its early years, *Curriculum for Excellence* was portrayed in this light and many teachers did, indeed, see it as liberating and providing an opportunity to be creative at a local level. However, many in the profession have been reluctant to grasp the opportunities offered. Most of the demand for more detailed prescription has been coming not from the Government and its agencies but from a significant proportion of the teaching profession. If the development programme has become increasingly directed from the centre, it is in significant measure in response to demands from practitioners. This lack of professional self-confidence is a consequence of the excessively hierarchical culture of Scottish education (see later) and constitutes an important barrier to successful innovation at school level.

Overall, Scotland's schools are much less fettered by legal requirements than, for example, those south of the Border. Yet, the variety among Scottish schools is less. Why should this be? Why are Scotland's teachers, including the most senior among them, apparently reluctant to use the discretion that is available to them?

Of course, it has to be understood that the absence of a legal impediment is not the same thing as a power delegated to school level. Even where no rule exists, it is unclear who in the system has the legitimate authority to make relevant decisions. The default assumption tends to be that that authority lies at local authority level rather than with the school. For individual schools this is a crucial constraint.

Recommendation 15. The default assumption in the practice of Scottish education should be that schools are entitled to take decisions where there is no statute, regulation or established national policy that indicates otherwise.

There are many pressures to conform that are more subtle than explicit regulation and line management procedures. It is often said that Scottish education is largely run by consensus. Powerful agents in sustaining this consensus have been and remain national agencies such as CoSLA, ADES, professional associations and so forth. The grassroots – even the grassroots among headteachers – may often agree with this consensus, but they play little part in forming it and may not feel that it empowers them.

Whereas practice varies, some authorities clearly seek to limit headteachers' right to comment and express opinion. This is a sensitive area. The Commission recognises that employers are entitled to loyalty and that explicit criticism by employees is seldom tolerated in any walk of life. On the other hand, education policy and practices are highly contestable. Headteachers and others have much to contribute to the debate and should not be unnecessarily inhibited from doing so.

In addition, there are more overt forces tending to enforce compliance:

(a) As discussed earlier, the well-established view among the profession is that inspection is intended to put pressure on schools to conform. This viewpoint was expressed to the Commission in the written evidence that it has received[101]. Submissions welcomed the new emphasis being given to self-evaluation in school inspections, but expressed concern that inspections remained too judgemental and offered the view that further steps needed to be taken to make such reports altogether more formative in character. There remains scepticism about the extent to which innovation and well-judged risk-taking are officially approved. The Commission believes that the inspection process has changed significantly but accepts that the fact that inspection continues to be widely perceived as being about compliance is sufficient to ensure that it tends to reinforce risk aversion and to discourage innovation. The Commission's own view of the appropriate place of inspection in the broader improvement process is set out on pages 56 to 58.

(b) Local authorities' practices vary greatly. However, the evidence received suggests that they too are often seen as a force for conformity[101]. Often, national advice (for example, in relation to *Curriculum for Excellence*) is augmented by local interpretations that have the force of policy. In addition, councils are frequently seen as working in partnership with the inspectorate, for instance in briefing inspectors prior to an inspection. The subsequent inspection findings then provide officers of the authority with a quality assurance tool to direct the school's improvement agenda.

(c) So far as secondary schools are concerned, the national examination system is seen as exerting an influence that extends back well before the years in which pupils are studying for national qualifications.

In a more general sense, there can be little doubt that school education is organised on a strongly hierarchical basis that is much at odds with the way in which other (often, more successful) organisations are evolving. All too often, central government, local government, school leaders and the profession as a whole are seen as distinct levels with each being subordinate to those above it. Criticism from below, however constructive, is perceived as unwelcome.

The concept of *subsidiarity*, which has proved helpful in many contexts, seems as yet to have had little influence in education. Subsidiarity is the principle that superior authorities should not seek to take decisions that are better made at a level closer to where they have effect. This clearly and strongly conflicts with the idea apparently quite prevalent that local authorities centrally can reverse or annul school decisions of practically any kind – even if those decisions are best made by the people on the spot. This kind of thinking obviously has the effect of making school leaders feel that, even where there is no statute, regulation or policy in place in relation to a particular matter, they are not empowered to reach their own view.

Some of the written evidence submitted to the Commission went so far as to say that the influence of education authorities was characterised by

excessively controlling and bureaucratic behaviours and that it was a barrier to innovation and improvement[101]. This severely constrains headteachers and others from making use of the apparent freedoms within the system.

Local authority mechanisms tend also to set a high premium on conformity and uniformity. While exceptional departure from normal procedures can occasionally be permitted, there is generally no established route by which schools can seek 'derogations', even where local circumstances or a school's well-considered desire to take forward an innovation might warrant it.

There is, indeed, too little sense of all levels within the local school system being involved in a common endeavour that can be the subject of mature discussion among them. The Commission considers that there is an urgent need to review the cultures within which schools operate. At national level, government needs to welcome dialogue and constructive criticism. Locally, while practice clearly varies considerably from authority to authority, the Commission is persuaded that the general picture is one of excessively rigid hierarchy without proper mechanisms existing to enable the interests and views of the individual school to receive appropriate consideration.

The Commission considers that excessively hierarchical attitudes and practices must be curtailed, that the management of education should be seen as being co-produced at various levels and that schools should feel able to take initiatives in any circumstances where there is no obvious prohibition. The concept of 'co-production' involves seeing the system as an integrated whole in which different contributors have distinct and complementary roles, but without the notion of each layer being subordinate to the one above it.

To reinforce the idea of co-production and common purpose, the Commission considers that the main obligations currently placed on central and local government in relation to securing improvement and taking forward key policy objectives should be applied to schools also, thus emphasising that schools are autonomous partners in a shared enterprise.

Recommendation 16. The statutory obligations on ministers and local authorities to secure educational improvement and to take forward national priorities should be expanded to include promoting the four purposes of *Curriculum for Excellence*. At the same time, these obligations should be applied to each individual state school through its headteacher.

The Commission strongly believes that headteachers need to be perceived as the chief executives of largely autonomous institutions. To achieve this, changes in culture are the key ingredient but changes in governance cannot be ruled out: see the next section.

Procedures for the development of potential leaders and for succession planning certainly require to be reviewed[83]. However, more than anything, changes are required in the culture of Scottish education[4,19,45]. The development of a world-leading service depends on the creation of an ethos

of collaboration and equality among all of the key partners. This may involve defining more clearly the functions of each level of organisation. More importantly, however, it calls for the development of a culture of trust and mutual respect.

Furthermore, it is vital that increasing the autonomy of schools should not be seen solely in terms of increasing the autonomy of headteachers or senior management within schools. Everything said in this report about the importance of encouraging initiative at school level is equally true of empowering staff at classroom level.

In its policy statement *The EIS and Leadership in Schools*[87], the Educational Institute of Scotland indicates a principle that "leadership is not merely a function associated with a specific post or with school management", instead offering a view that "every teacher who has achieved the Standard for Full Registration has, by definition, a leadership role to play in schools". This view underpins the concept of 'collegiality', the notion of the school as a community where "all qualified teachers have a leadership role in the areas for which they are responsible". In this report these ideas are more fully explored in the sub-section on leadership. It is important to note here that empowering school leaders will be of little significance unless they in turn empower the wider school community.

Recommendation 17. At all levels of the system, vigorous and sustained effort is needed to create in Scottish education a sense of common endeavour, an understanding that learning is co-produced and a culture of mutual respect.

There are some signs that attitudes may be changing in ways that will assist to develop a better culture. For instance, there is now a growing consensus that effective educational change requires greater powers to be passed to school level and more initiative to be taken by headteachers and school staff. This consensus is reflected in, for example, the overall lessons which have been drawn from the most recent PISA Study[97] and in the stated positions of School Leaders Scotland (SLS) and the Association of Headteachers and Deputes of Scotland (AHDS)[69]. It is consistent with the proposals in the *Devolved School Management Review*[63] carried out by David Cameron for the Scottish Government. The evidence submitted to the Commission gave '…consistent expression of support for headteachers, working in close association with parents and the communities served by their schools, to have greater delegated authority to lead, manage and administer their schools or their schools operating in clusters of one form or another'[101]. This also reinforces the argument made by the OECD in its landmark 2007 report on *The Quality and Equity of Schooling in Scotland*[65] where it argues for '…greater school autonomy in a local government framework'.

Within local authorities also, there is some interest in change. At least one Scottish local authority has looked very closely at the feasibility and the pros and cons of setting up arrangements for the community-based management of schools[9]. Alongside the prevailing consensus on the importance of

reforming curriculum and assessment systems in line with the philosophy of *Curriculum for Excellence*, there is now a general call for more decision-making powers to be devolved to schools and for staff to be increasingly empowered.

Such delegation is an international phenomenon. The trend, in developed countries at least, is to increase the amount of decision-making capacity at school level. Perhaps for this reason, the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe)[2] attempted a comparison of school autonomy across Europe. It looked at the balance of school-based and more centralised decision-making in 25 areas of school management and operation.

The paper found that the highest levels of autonomy were to be found in the Netherlands and the Flemish-speaking area of Belgium, both systems that are highly regarded. Cyprus had the lowest level of devolution to schools, followed by others such as Germany, Austria and Spain.

Within the UK the paper's findings are interesting in that they show that in England and Wales the clear trend is towards granting schools very extensive autonomy, whereas in Scotland the position is more mixed, with schools enjoying rather less than half of the areas of full autonomy currently enjoyed by schools in England and Wales.

The paper also demonstrated, however, that the position is very mixed within England itself. Thus, Academies and City Technology Colleges have extensive autonomy. Foundation Schools have rather less; voluntary aided less again. Local authority fully maintained schools, officially known as community schools, have least. The complexity of these arrangements appears unnecessary and confusing. However, the trend to increasing autonomy is clear.

On paper at least, Scotland began to take an important step towards increasing school autonomy more than 20 years ago. The former Strathclyde Regional Council introduced a scheme of Delegated Management of Resources in 1990. This was quickly developed into a national scheme entitled Devolved School Management with guidelines being in place by 1993. Successive governments have sought to ensure that a high proportion of the resources available for education are delegated to schools. The 1993 regulations required 80% of budgets to be devolved and this was increased to 90% in 2006.

However, the extent of the freedom of action that accompanies notional financial delegation is sometimes severely limited. Thus, for example, the teacher staffing budget is notionally delegated but local authority staffing policies, class size legislation, local agreements and other factors mean that the school's ability to redirect resources is severely circumscribed. The Commission considers that the focus should now be on ensuring that schools have the capacity to exercise control over the budgets that are delegated to them.

The review of Devolved School Management, undertaken by David Cameron, addressed such issues. The review refers to a "remarkable political consensus about the need for enhanced devolution of responsibility to schools. …. In general, there has been widespread recognition that improvement is more likely to come where those delivering change can make the strongest possible contribution to determining the nature of that change."

The Cameron review offers clear support for *Curriculum for Excellence*, in part because it seeks to promote initiative at school level. It describes *Curriculum for Excellence* as having "many strands within it, but one of the strongest is the commitment to allowing schools, and teachers, greater control over the provision that they make for their students and how they deliver that provision. Schools cannot do this unless they have the capacity to make the relevant decisions. "

"The approach of *Curriculum for Excellence* is the correct basis for responding to the changes and challenges alluded to above. It automatically increases school autonomy by offering schools greater power to tailor the curriculum to the needs of their learners. There would be little point in giving them that opportunity if they could not exercise it. *Curriculum for Excellence* demands that schools have the ability to make decisions about curriculum content, resources and teaching approaches. In many instances this will require an increase in school autonomy."

"The focus of the guidance should be on identifying the roles and responsibilities that are appropriate at all levels within the system. If schools have a clear responsibility for the design and delivery of the curriculum within an agreed framework, we should think more in terms of their entitlement to lead and deliver, rather than in terms of devolved responsibilities."

However, action has yet to be taken on this review. Instead, in 2011 it was agreed between government and CoSLA that the 2006 guidelines should be replaced and a report entitled *Devolved School Management (DSM) Guidelines*[64] was published by CoSLA in 2012. It noted amongst other things, that "... the variable scope of current DSM schemes is, in significant measure, a reflection of the inconsistent application of the 2006 Guidelines across the country". However, it went on to argue:

"… it is apparent that those guidelines have supported the establishment in a number of councils of suitably empowering schemes which devolve significant levels of resource and functional responsibilities to schools."

The DSM 2012 *Guidelines* will have a statutory underpinning since the new guidelines, as was the case for the 2006 guidelines, are linked to the Standards in Scotland's Schools (2000) etc Act. There is, however, a distinct lack of enthusiasm in this CoSLA document for school empowerment. Every time the point is made about devolving decision-making powers to schools it tends to be hedged by statements such as: "…headteachers need to understand and take account of the corporate and wider community planning partnership arrangements in managing their schools and, therefore, devolved

budgets " and "All decisions about resource use at school level should have regard to the actions that will best meet the needs of the school and its pupils and to inevitable judgements about what provides best value, drawing on corporate finance and procurement guidance".

The document highlights what it sees as a council's need to: "…protect its schools from unacceptable levels of risk". It repeatedly stresses the role of local authority policies and procedures as moderating influences on any innovative approaches that head teachers might adopt. Thus, for example, we have the injunction that: "…joint work with partners should be guided by agreed priorities framed in the *School Improvement Plan*, *Education and Children's Services Planning* and the *Community Plan*."

The professional and operational culture exemplified by this document may indicate the scale of the impediment to autonomy that schools currently face. The culture remains unduly risk-averse. The weight of monitoring and accountability tends to foster and to maintain a climate of conformity. Even in the implementation of an ostensibly empowering policy such as Devolved Management of Schools, the effect is to reinforce a culture that is unduly hostile to enterprise and creativity.

Recommendation 18. Schools need to be given effective control over their resources. The guidelines on Devolved School Management should be revised to ensure not only that as large as possible a share of available budgets – both national and local authority – is delegated to school level, but also that schools face as few impediments as possible in using these resources as they see fit.

Over the years, there have been criticisms (from headteachers among others) of the extent of differences in the level of funding for schools between one local authority and another. Discussion of this issue is made more difficult by the fact that local authority budgets are composed in widely differing ways and that the costs of operating schools, even of broadly similar sizes, can vary considerably as a result of a range of factors such as rurality, deprivation or the presence of specialist units. The capacity to determine funding levels would seem to be an intrinsic feature of local democratic control. Furthermore, local authorities play a role in relation to capital funding that could not easily be carried out in any other way. Nevertheless, the Commission takes the view that the current arrangements are not sufficiently transparent.

There is a further vitally important respect in which school autonomy needs to be greatly strengthened if Devolved School Management is to create genuine empowerment at school level. At present, schools have only limited discretion to obtain support and services wherever they deem most appropriate. Significant sums are spent on behalf of schools by local authorities, which then provide what are, in effect, compulsory monopoly services.

This situation has arisen because of the confused nature of local authority governance arrangements. In effect, these comprise a mixture of what might

be called control functions and support functions. In the former category are the measures that councils take to ensure that schools comply with legal requirements, are properly accountable for their expenditure and remain solvent. Proper governance arrangements of this kind would, of course, be needed, regardless of whether schools were controlled by local government, central government or in some other way.

Most local authorities also require adherence to a range of educational and other policies. These often sit less easily with the concept of school autonomy.

In the category of support functions are a wide range of services such as quality improvement, educational psychology, speech therapy and curricular advice. (It is fair to note that, over recent years, quality improvement services have tended to become less supportive and more akin to inspection.) The support functions that local authorities provide also include many of a non-educational character such as cleaning, catering, maintenance and school transport.

The Commission takes the view that, if schools are to be both empowered and accountable for their actions, they must be free to choose where they obtain their support.

Recommendation 19. Schools should not be obliged to use support services (whether educational or not) provided by their local authority, but should be free to choose other providers. Considerations of Best Value should continue to apply.

This is not to suggest that local authorities should cease to provide such services but merely that schools should be able to choose to go elsewhere and that, where they use local authority services, these are paid for from school budgets. Of course, schools have always been free to shop around for educational materials and increasingly in recent years have done so also with regard to professional development and curriculum advice. What is being suggested is that this freedom of action should be extended to include all support activities.

It should also be noted that giving schools the right to choose where they obtain support services does not have any necessary implications for governance arrangements. Schools could remain within local authority control and be subject to whatever arrangements for good governance authorities might put in place: see also pages 72-81.

Such an extension of schools' freedom of action implies the need for a significant increase in their decision-making capacity. For some schools – especially larger secondary schools – this may not present a problem, but for smaller schools it has important implications. It suggests that schools will require some way of joining together to aggregate their management capacity. There are a number of ways in which this might be done.

The Commission believes that two are worthy of particular attention:

- In recent years, increased emphasis has been placed on neighbouring schools co-operating through “cluster” mechanisms. One option would be for the cluster to replace the individual school as the basic unit of educational management. This would imply that leadership should be focused at cluster level with a 'headteacher' or 'principal' being in overall charge of the group of schools.
- Another option would be to build a kind of “bottom-up” support organisation as a result of schools voluntarily coming together in some kind of association. An example of such an approach exists, to a limited extent at least, in the form of the Scottish Council for Independent Schools (SCIS)[69] or, more completely, in the case of the Schools Network (formerly the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust) [74], operating south of the border. Were the attempts to diversify the school system to result in networks of like-minded schools being established throughout the country (as might happen, for example, in the case of the Apprentice Schools mentioned above) such networks would form an obvious basis for the kind of association that is being envisaged here. The primary purpose of such networks would be to supply support services. Their existence would not be incompatible with local authority governance.

There are many options that could be adopted. What the Commission considers essential is that the system should become more diversified and, in order to achieve this, individual schools should be much more autonomous than at present.

Recommendation 20. The autonomy of schools should be greatly extended. As a general principle, decisions that can competently be taken at school level should not be taken elsewhere.

This report strongly advocates promoting greater autonomy from which it believes greater diversity within Scottish education will develop. The Commission also recognises that there is a firm commitment to maintaining and building strong communities of which schools are part. Increased autonomy should not involve isolating schools from other services or fragmenting educational provision. The Commission has, therefore, been concerned to find examples where a successful balance has been achieved between these commitments to autonomy and to community.

Finland is a striking instance. A strong belief in common values and a relatively homogenous society has allowed high levels of autonomy for schools and for teachers without threatening national standards or increasing levels of inequality. Indeed, Finland is generally recognised as possessing one of the world’s most successful school systems.

There are also powerful examples nearer home in a cultural setting similar to that of Scotland. In England there are successful examples of schools of every type and local authorities developing strategies and approaches that have maintained a commitment to public service and community values[74].

York is a single unitary authority covering the city area with some outlying villages. It has a tradition of civic pride and a strong sense of identity as a community. It has a Children's Services structure and the current Director has a background in Social Work. The leadership style in the city is well-established, consensual and considerate, but is based on a clear sense of purpose and a vision.

The city is generally prosperous and viewed as a desirable place to live or to move to, but it has pockets of disadvantage and deprivation. Traditional industries such as chocolate making are very much in decline and there has been a rise in unemployment as a result. There is an historic commitment to philanthropy and charity established through the Rowntree and Cadbury families.

At present only two schools in York have gone for academy status and there are, as yet, no free schools. However, there has been a concern about potential fragmentation which could make it difficult to deploy resources to make improvements for the most vulnerable neighbourhoods and damage the sense of community.

The city, therefore, moved to establish an Education Partnership, which was open to all of its schools. It consulted widely on the proposals and gave the headteachers, in particular, a formative role in shaping the Partnership. A constitution was agreed and a Board established to manage the partnership. The membership includes school governors, representatives of all of the school cluster areas and of particular interests, e.g. early years, special education, further education, senior politicians, the Director and two members of the senior management team in the Authority. Academy heads and governors are involved in the partnership and the Board which has an independent Chair.

Thus far the Board has had unanimous support and has agreed to the creation of a school improvement fund of £350,000 which will be allocated to support those schools which are most in need of improvement.

Wakefield Council has taken a different approach and has emphasised the key role of school cluster groups or 'Pyramids', as these groups are referred to, which serve wider communities. They have supported the establishment of multi-academy trusts, which mean that the governance of schools stays within their communities. Also of note are self-improving partnerships, which exist widely in England. London Challenge is a well-known example which has been very successful in raising standards.

Such examples illustrate the feasibility of reconciling autonomy for schools with their role in the wider community. The Commission believes that lessons could be drawn from them that could contribute to the development of a uniquely Scottish model of school governance supporting the delivery of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

Appropriate governance arrangements

Governance should not be seen as an end in itself but rather as a means of ensuring that the system works as effectively as possible.

Whereas in relation to its curriculum and teaching approaches Scotland has consistently adopted a forward-looking stance, the approach to autonomy and governance might be seen as oddly conservative. Indeed, school governance has not been an important feature of educational debate in Scotland. In some other countries (notably New Zealand, Sweden, the United States, England and the Netherlands)[11,12,13,59,74] initiatives to increase school autonomy have led to the establishment of a range of alternative forms of governance - charter schools in the United States, free schools in Sweden and academies in England. There has been vigorous discussion of the place of competition in improving schools. Opinions on such matters diverge sharply.

Change in Scottish education has tended to focus on reforming the curriculum and assessment systems but has tended to ignore school governance. (Appendix 1 sets the development of Scottish school governance within the context of the broader development of Scottish education.) By contrast, there has been no change in overall governance arrangements for almost a hundred years.

This fails to address the paradox that schools are relatively unfettered by statute and regulation but, in practice, are severely restricted from exercising their apparent autonomy by a culture that is strongly hierarchical and exerts formidable pressure to conform.

A vital requirement is clarity of roles (as discussed in the 'Clarity of purposes and roles' sub-section above). The role of central government is primarily strategic. Recent experience, especially in Asia, suggests that effective strategic direction is crucial to educational success.

The Commission believes that the Scottish Government is primarily responsible for establishing a strategic sense of direction for the education service. It believes that this should mainly involve setting broad objectives (as was done by the original *Curriculum for Excellence* paper) and monitoring progress on outcomes. The National Priorities set under the 2000 Act offer a suitable model.

Recommendation 21. Government has a responsibility to establish a strategic direction for schools. This involves setting long-term aims and monitoring progress. Government should have as little involvement in operational management as possible.

The Commission takes the view that government should have a particular concern with promoting innovation and transformational change. This requires government to be well informed about educational policy and practice across the world and to be clear about long-term objectives for society as a whole, the economy and the development of individuals. It must encourage

innovation at school level but, at the same time, be prepared to sponsor strategic initiatives and to support and fund transformative change.

Recommendation 22. Central government should commit itself to enriching the school system, achieving greater diversity through local autonomy, encouraging innovation and specialisation in schools and working in collaboration with other organisations to create new approaches to schooling. It should encourage local authorities to adopt a similar role within their areas.

Until the reorganisation of local government in 1995/96, it might reasonably have been claimed that educational policy making in Scotland was divided between central and local government. Since that time, however, the role of local government has steadily declined – partly because of the relatively small size and diminishing financial capacity of councils and partly because of the ambitions of successive governments – to the point where strategic policy is, in effect, a national monopoly with local authorities being focused on matters of implementation. Even these operational concerns, however, are now heavily influenced by central government and, more particularly, by its agencies, especially Education Scotland.

There are risks inherent in this situation. Close association of government with the detailed guidance issued to schools tends to create defensive attitudes, to impede the establishment of a culture in which constructive criticism is welcomed and thus to reinforce a climate of compliance. Furthermore, points made in the previous sub-section about freeing schools to exercise choice in relation to their support services should apply also at national level. The mix of functions currently exercised by Education Scotland has the potential to confuse the role of the national tier of governance.

Education Scotland's predecessors, the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum (SCCC) and Learning and Teaching Scotland, did not have the full confidence of schools and local authorities. Schools in particular looked to these bodies as sources of assistance, responsive to their needs but felt that they acted more to further the agenda of government. This confusion over who was the 'customer' undermined the agencies' credibility. The Commission is concerned that the extended and potentially conflicted role of Education Scotland could result in this problem recurring.

Ensuring that the national curriculum agency is responsive to schools' perceived needs is all the more important at a time when *Curriculum for Excellence* gives schools greater discretion, the use of ICT is becoming more pervasive and the demands of other stakeholders such as universities and large companies are liable to increase.

Recommendation 23. The operation and functions of Education Scotland should be independently reviewed not later than 2015.

A key issue is whether Scottish school education requires a tier of governance intermediate between the Scottish Government and individual schools or

clusters. Past experience, practice elsewhere and simple logic all suggest that this is indeed necessary. It is impossible for central government to have the necessary level of detailed knowledge of the circumstances of each community to allow it to make appropriate operational decisions.

For the past 100 years, local government has provided this intermediate tier. This sub-section, therefore, considers first the suitability of the current local government arrangements and then goes on to look at some alternatives.

There have been two major reorganisations of Scottish local government in the last 40 years. The first in 1974/75 followed on from the work of a royal commission, was carefully researched and took account of Scotland's unusual geography, allocating functions to one of two tiers of council as seemed appropriate. Thus, large regional councils dealt with larger services (such as education) and had a strategic capacity appropriate to the task. Other services were organised at a more local level by district councils.

From an educational perspective, this pattern of organisation had some important advantages. Most of the regional authorities were large enough to be able to afford quite extensive support systems. They had the capacity to develop policy and to put it into effect. In a way that has not been true since 1996, both central and local government had a role in policy making. Indeed, many features of the post-96 national landscape – Devolved School Management, analysis of school performance, delegation to school level of most staff appointments, the concept of community schools – had their origin in initiatives by one or other of the larger regional authorities.

However, there were also downsides. The larger authorities were seen as remote and hierarchical. The divisional structures operated by the education departments of several of the larger councils were not always perceived as successful. Furthermore, the two-tier structure of local government was not understood by everyone and few people readily identified with units that extended far beyond anything they considered to be their local community.

The second reorganisation in 1994-96 was less thorough, creating a 'one size fits all' settlement for all parts of Scotland. Councils ranging in population from 20,000 to 600,000 took charge of all services. This settlement was unpopular at the time but, perhaps surprisingly, has now lasted almost as long as its predecessor. Indeed, many who disapproved of the reorganisation at the time now support its continuation. Scepticism about the benefits and costs of a further restructuring rather than its intrinsic merits has served to keep it in place.

In general, the 1994-96 settlement is seen as having worked less well for education than its predecessor. Over the years, there have been adverse comments about the ability of relatively small local authorities – the average population is around 165,000 – to provide strategic direction or effective support for schools. Policy development has largely passed to national level with the loss of the pluralism that was a positive feature of the previous regime. Much local authority policy is now concerned only with the

interpretation and implementation of national policy. Arguably, a feature of having 32 authorities with limited strategic capacity has been an increase in line management accountability in relation to issues that are more properly resolved at school level.

The growing importance of corporate policy making in local authorities after 1975, and even more so after 1996, has had some important benefits. In particular, it tends to make it easier for services such as education and social work to act in a concerted manner and, through the community planning mechanism, to collaborate with other services outwith the local authority. However, it also makes it more difficult for schools to exercise initiative. For many parents, having schools conform to the corporate identity of the council is less beneficial than encouraging them to create a distinctive identity of their own.

Criticism is also heard of the cost of maintaining 32 directors of education and education offices. There is a widespread feeling that 32 local authorities is a luxury that Scotland does not need. Of course, such a view short-circuits many important arguments about the function of local government under a devolved administration.

One approach that might be adopted to counter these criticisms would be the development of joint services, whereby two councils would come together to run a single service for both areas or one council might provide the service on behalf of another. Currently, there is one such arrangement in place between Clackmannanshire and Stirling councils (with Stirling acting as lead authority). Another similar arrangement was proposed for East Lothian and Midlothian and reached an advanced stage of planning before being abandoned following a change in political control in one of the councils.

The concept of shared services has enjoyed considerable official support, particularly in relation to corporate services such as IT, finance and HR with significant sums being invested in developing proposals. To date the practical outcomes have been few. Experience suggests that the notion does not sit well with councillors' idea of local democratic control. Furthermore, if a council felt that there could be efficiency gains from replacing an in-house service by an alternative arrangement, it is not clear what advantage a joint service offers as opposed to the simpler (and more easily reversed) notion of outsourcing. The Commission, although not hostile to the concept of joint services, does not see it as likely to be widely adopted or as offering a particularly useful alternative to either in-house or outsourced provision. If it were felt that the current local government arrangements do not benefit education, a further reorganisation or an alternative means of governing education would seem to be required.

There is, of course, a very powerful reason why a further reorganisation of local government (and consequent opportunity to revisit the governance of education) appears likely. The structure put in place in 1996 had been in operation for only three years when the institutional arrangements in Scotland were profoundly changed by the establishment of the Scottish Parliament and

the creation of the Scottish Executive (later Scottish Government). It is perhaps surprising that, thirteen years into the devolution era, more has not been done to reorganise the structures of public services below national level. However, the recent creation of a national police force and ministerial statements about the possibility of further restructurings suggest that attention will be given to these issues before long.

It is not in the Commission's remit to make recommendations regarding the future shape and functions of local government. However, in view of the central role that councils currently play in the running of schools, some comment is unavoidable.

Given the existence of the Scottish Parliament and Government, any future reorganisation of local government should surely fit within the context of a more general redesign of the Scottish institutional landscape. Merely adjusting boundaries will not suffice. Form has to follow function. What should be within the remit of local government? What is better managed at national level, by ad hoc authorities or by quangos? Should councils be more focused on service delivery or on planning for their communities? How important is grassroots democracy? What account is to be taken of Scotland's geography with its densely populated central belt and widespread rural communities? The answers to these questions will presumably emerge gradually over the next few years and will determine how well any future structure will serve the needs of education.

From the Commission's point of view, however, the key point is that education is far too important to be forced into a structure that is less than fully appropriate. If councils are to retain a significant role in relation to schools, the future pattern of local government has to be designed in a way that ensures that their role can be carried out effectively. If the other considerations that quite legitimately affect local government mean that the future structure is unsuited to the management of education, then education must be run in some other way.

It is perhaps worth noting that, even at present, the key statutory responsibility of councils (as contained in Section 1 of the 1980 Education Act) is not to run schools but "to secure that there is made for their area adequate and efficient provision of school education". All councils have always discharged this duty by owning and managing schools but, in principle, the duty could equally be fulfilled by commissioning. This is, indeed, the way in which councils tend to meet their obligations in relation to those with very specialist additional needs.

In recent years commissioning has been extended to include the efforts made by councils and individual schools to enrich the curriculum and offer increased opportunities by using a wide variety of partners such as arts and theatre groups, The Social Enterprise Academy, Columba 1400, Spark of Genius, Skillforce Scotland and so forth. Inputs from further and higher education are similar although the funding arrangements are different. A current proposal by a prominent businessman to establish an 'Apprentice School' in Glasgow could be seen as a particularly ambitious example of a similar approach.

Community planning has widened the scope for this kind of thinking and also emphasised the idea that education services (and schools) should be willing to contribute to broader initiatives, and that others should similarly contribute to ventures serving educational purposes. Indeed, in principle at least, community planning focuses councils' attention on developing a strategic overview for their area rather than on the day-to-day management of service delivery.

One of the main ideas underpinning community planning is the idea that many of society's more intractable problems cannot be tackled effectively by any one public service acting alone. It is necessary to bring to bear the combined energies of many services and often too of other agencies such as voluntary sector organisations. In other words, local authorities are playing an increasingly important role in bringing service providers together and helping them to collaborate and co-ordinate their efforts.

So far, the effect is most noticeable at a strategic level but there is no reason why the kind of thinking cannot be applied also at the level of the individual, particularly the individual who is experiencing difficulties. Thus, a local authority role that is likely to grow in future is that of helping to mobilise action on behalf of young people who are not succeeding at school or who have additional support needs. As schools become more autonomous, the local authority is likely to emerge as the champion of the individual child.

Recommendation 24. The roles of local government in championing the interests of individual children and families, and in promoting collaboration among schools and between schools and other services, should be strengthened.

The Commission believes that all this suggests that organisational arrangements are likely to become both more varied and more complex in the future if they are to deliver the sort of schooling it sees as necessary. Schools have responsibilities to their communities that go beyond merely providing good quality learning and teaching and these should be reflected in governance arrangements. At the same time, the core educational functions are best promoted by giving them very high levels of autonomy.

An intrinsic feature of local authority management is that schools are grouped together for governance purposes on a geographical basis. This has both strengths and weaknesses.

It enables schools to link more easily with other local services. It means that school education can play an appropriate part in the community planning process. On the other hand, it precludes schools from banding together on the basis of a common educational philosophy or, indeed, any other common interest unless, of course, schools are permitted to form strong alliances across local authority boundaries (which is not a current feature of the system). It can mean that schools are poorly supported on the basis of geographical accident.

Furthermore, it is clear that some local authorities are seen by their schools as adding significant value whereas others are not. This does not appear to be closely correlated with size although concerns are frequently expressed that the post-1996 authorities are too small to provide effective support to major services such as education. It is difficult to justify a situation in which schools and the families that use them are obliged by accident of geography to remain linked to an authority that is ineffective or provides poor value for money. Redress through the ballot box can be a slow and uncertain remedy.

The areas of local government activity that attract most criticism tend to be those concerned with support. If the Commission's proposal that control and support be separated were accepted, the problems arising from the differing levels of effectiveness of councils would sharply diminish. This measure could thus be seen as a way of resolving the governance debate in a way that would be unique to Scotland, combining local authority governance (and involvement in broader community issues) with a very high level of school autonomy.

There could, nevertheless, be a case for locating some elements of governance at a more local level than the Council. Recent proposals in East Lothian[9] reflect this kind of thinking. Communities clearly have a stake in local schools and have relevant expertise and contacts to offer. The establishment of the kind of community trusts envisaged in East Lothian would not, however, remove ultimate governance responsibility from the local authority.

One advantage of this kind of arrangement would be the existence of a board, the sole function of which is to advance the interests of the school. At present, while colleges, universities and independent schools benefit from the expertise of board members, drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds, who are focused on the individual concerns and interests of the institution rather than on broader policy considerations; in the state sector only Jordanhill School has this advantage.

Apart from the expertise that they can bring, such boards offer a generally supportive mechanism that can be used by senior staff in order to develop the institutional autonomy that has been a successful feature of these other sectors and obtain decisions in relation to matters that are not delegated to them. This is not a role that local authorities have taken on and, indeed, it is difficult to see how a large local authority could act in such a role towards a great number of schools.

However, the flexibility of the current arrangements means that there is nothing to prevent schools and local authorities from actively encouraging and supporting parent councils in extending their membership (and, possibly, their field of competence). In this way, many of the advantages currently enjoyed in other sectors of education could be extended to state schools.

Recommendation 25. Both schools and local authorities should seek to develop existing parent councils so as to include a wider range of skills

and interests (such as community, business and educational). The opportunity should be taken where necessary to bring in expertise from outside the community.

The same argument could be made out in relation to local authority education committees. These too could benefit from the presence of co-opted members with a range of experience and a strong interest in education.

Recommendation 26. Consideration should be given by local authorities to expanding the membership of their education committees by including representatives of parents, business, community and other interests while maintaining a majority of elected councillors.

One further matter requires to be referred to in connection with governance. The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS)[92], although not a public body, has a quasi-governance role.

The GTCS was established following the enactment of the Teaching Council (Scotland) Act in 1965. It was largely a response to the particular conditions of the early post-war years when acute teacher shortage had led several local authorities to pursue a policy of 'dilution' or employment of under-qualified or unqualified people as teachers. Very widely supported industrial action by teachers brought about a government commitment to eliminate the practice by establishing an independent council which would keep a register of suitably qualified people. Only those on the register could then be engaged as teachers. The Council was also given powers in relation to professional standards of conduct and the approval of courses of teacher training. Over the years these powers have been extended and the GTCS now has significant influence over standards of teacher competence and professional development.

Throughout its history, the GTCS has been composed of teachers and members representing a range of interests such as parents, local authorities and the major churches. There have also been members nominated to represent a broader public interest. Teacher members have always been in a small majority. When originally established, the GTCS was a Non-Departmental Public Body but in 2012 it became independent of government.

However, its current powers give it a significant role in matters that influence the success or otherwise of attempts to bring about change in the education system. Thus, although the GTCS has no locus in curricular matters, it has powers relating to initial teacher education, professional development and, indeed, teacher deployment, that can potentially impede developments in unintended ways.

For example, it was much in the mind of the authors of the 2004 paper, *Curriculum for Excellence* that the problem of S1 and S2 required to be tackled. In part, this accounts for the emphasis that has been placed upon interdisciplinary approaches and demonstrating that, in the real world, learning is "joined up". The concept of a "broad general education" is

intended to take this thinking further although the risk in requiring all young people to overtake all experiences and outcomes in all eight curriculum areas, is that fragmentation will be perpetuated in S1 and S2 and extended into S3.

Many secondary schools are, of course, aware of this risk and anxious to reorganise the curriculum in S1 and S2 (and probably also in S3) in ways that will minimise it. However, this requires freedom to deploy staff in ways that enable interdisciplinary learning to take place. In time, it will probably also require changes in initial training.

Although the GTCS has made clear its support for *Curriculum for Excellence* and some measure of interdisciplinary working, it is expressed in disappointingly lukewarm terms. It 'accepts' rather than welcomes the commitment to a broad general education but sees these as applying only "…until the end of the third level". It makes no reference to the fourth level. Furthermore, its current guidance, citing the example of social subjects, states that teachers could "become involved in the teaching of integrated units in, for example, S1 and occasionally in S2 but never above that stage". The Commission considers it would be more appropriate for the GTCS to show a positive commitment to the principles and to playing its part in seeing them applied in practice.

Such a stance potentially not only makes it possible for an individual teacher to resist becoming involved in interdisciplinary and integrated working but also, by reporting the matter to the GTCS, preventing such a course being run even if other colleagues are willing to participate. The Commission believes that it is important that teachers are appropriately qualified and it may be that there is a need for an independent body to ensure that this is the case.

However, it is certainly not any part of the role of such a body to stipulate, even inadvertently, the fine detail of the circumstances in which a teacher may be deployed or to specify qualifications in such a way as to perpetuate long into the future a model of the curriculum that belongs to the past. Furthermore, it is important to recognise that teachers develop and extend their knowledge and expertise as their career progresses. It would be surprising if a teacher with 10 years' experience were not capable of undertaking a wider role than one who is newly qualified.

This matter also raises important questions of accountability. As matters currently stand, the GTCS is required to make a report to the Scottish Parliament each year. If it felt the report to be unsatisfactory, Parliament could take various kinds of action. It could require the GTCS to give evidence. The minister could be summoned and questioned. An investigation could be carried out and recommendations made for the attention of government. However, it could not directly intervene. In effect, therefore, an independent body has powers in relation to a major public service while not being subject to the normal forms of public accountability.

The Commission does not consider that the GTCS is liable to abuse those powers but it does believe that the current arrangements are potentially

unsound in governance terms. A useful first step would be to ensure better communication between government, its agencies and the GTCS so that the implications of educational change for professional registration and deployment were fully understood on all sides and properly taken into account. However, the Commission considers that the accountability issue should be borne in mind and the situation monitored.

There are other areas of its activity where the Commission considers that the GTCS has contributed substantially to the raising of professional standards. For example, its work on establishing (and keeping up to date) Standards for Registration, Professional Learning and Leadership has been of great value.

However, the Commission has concerns that the role of the GTCS in relation to matters of professional shortcomings and misconduct tends to obscure the role of the employing authorities by introducing an additional layer of complexity. Competence is primarily a matter for the employer who must not be allowed to evade his responsibilities on the basis that a professional registration body also has a locus in such matters. The Commission strongly believes that the overwhelming majority of the Scottish teaching profession is conscientious and effective. It is not, however, persuaded that the small number of instances of incompetence is always properly addressed. The Commission agrees that teachers guilty of serious misconduct should not merely be dismissed by the employer but also removed from the register. However, it is concerned that application of similar procedures in the case of incompetence can lead to situations where the GTCS reaches a different view from the employer, thus introducing confusion and providing fresh channels of appeal for the unsatisfactory teacher. There is a need to give the public increased confidence in the education service's handling of such matters. In this context, the Commission believes that government should review the operation of the current arrangements on a regular basis.

Finally, the Commission is concerned about the narrowness of the entry routes into teaching in Scotland. Particularly in contemporary circumstances, schools need a wider range of expertise and would benefit from a greater mix in terms of previous experience and professional background. Furthermore, it is increasingly clear that schools require creative, enterprising and entrepreneurial people, perhaps particularly in leadership positions. The Commission understands that the Teach First scheme is widely believed to have contributed much of value elsewhere in the UK. Approaches that capture its benefits but are appropriate to the Scottish context should be considered as part of the implementation of the Donaldson Report.

Above all, it is essential that teaching attracts the best applicants and that they can then be deployed in ways that meet the ever-changing needs of schools. Rigid demarcations based on subject qualification and sector do not accord with these needs.

Effective support

Points already made about the separation of control from support underline the importance of ensuring that the support that is available to schools is highly effective. Schools frequently complain that, at present, this is not the case and standards tend to vary from one part of the country to another. Criticisms are also frequently heard of the national agencies in relation to the level of support that they provide[101].

Both in relation to the major national agencies and to the local authorities, it is important to recognise that the resources potentially available to schools are top-sliced in order to fund the provision of what are effectively monopoly services. This is a procedure that needs to be reappraised. There is a case for providing support in relation to major national initiatives (although the nature of that support has repeatedly been the subject of complaint from schools). However, the Commission takes the view that as far as possible, resources should be delegated to school level and exceptions to this principle should be few and well-justified.

There are some areas of support where few alternative sources of supply are available. Thus, educational psychology services are for the most part local monopolies although the Notre Dame Centre in Glasgow serves as an exception. The supply of speech therapy is, if anything, more constrained. The introduction of more choice into these areas could have a beneficial effect.

There already exists the beginnings of an open market in relation to professional development and curricular and pedagogical advice. Greater empowerment of schools would undoubtedly accelerate this trend. This is the area of support of greatest direct educational relevance and of most interest to teachers and school leaders.

At the other end of the scale, are a number of support services that are essential but of little direct educational impact. Schools would probably welcome greater control over, for example, maintenance budgets (where this was not precluded by existing PPP arrangements). They might wish greater choice in relation to catering or to be able to vary a level of expenditure on cleaning. They are less likely to welcome direct involvement in transport and energy contracts, although experience elsewhere suggests that these are areas in which significant savings can be generated[101], thus giving schools greater freedom of action on matters not of direct educational significance.

The Commission would expect that local authorities would continue to offer such services but on a commercial basis. There is no reason why they should not sell services outwith their own boundaries. Equally, there is no reason why schools should not band together in order to purchase such services from elsewhere, or to set up a means of providing them on a collective basis.

Leadership capacity

The Commission takes the view that effective change in Scottish education can only come about through schools that enjoy increased autonomy and are led by headteachers working collegially with their staff to introduce the transformational developments necessary to equip Scotland's young people for life and work[4,19,45,66,101].

Outstanding headteachers are independent-minded and display courage, resilience and vision, inspiring the trust and confidence of their colleagues. They promote leadership at all levels so that all staff, young people, parents and the community as a whole are engaged in developing their school's values and mission and in defining its strategic objectives. They encourage the leadership development of their colleagues, listen to the student voice and promote student leadership.

There are already many creative leaders in Scotland's schools. They would relish greater autonomy and what a prominent director of education has called 'space for innovation'. However, there is the challenge of increasing leadership capacity in education from the early identification and mentoring of future leaders to the support and development of headteachers[21,40,41,57].

Scottish education has sought to respond to the challenges of leadership development, at least from the time of the establishment of the Scottish Qualification for Headship[90] in 1998. The national working groups following the McCrone Report[6] produced guidance in 2003 on CPD for Educational Leaders - a framework for leadership development that has been widely used - and on personal review and development (PDR). HM Inspectorate provided important support in its leadership evaluations, in 'Improving Leadership in Scottish Schools'[40] and in the very significant 'Journey to Excellence'[43] initiative. The GTCS has developed the Standard for Headship while the National CPD Team[18] led International summer schools, produced 'Flexible Routes to Headship' and, more recently, the Strategic Leaders Development Programme.

In 2011, *Teaching Scotland's Future* (the Donaldson Report)[83] recommended the development of a clear, progressive educational leadership standard. It suggested that the routes for achieving the Standard for Headship should be evaluated and that CPD opportunities for experienced headteachers should be improved. Professor Donaldson also considered that highly effective headteachers should contribute more to national policy development and that a virtual College for School Leadership should be formed.

As a result of the work of the National Partnership Group[83], a Scottish College of Educational Leadership will be established by August 2013. The Commission strongly endorses this development and looks forward to open debate on the constitution and work of the College. It hopes that the College will work with a range of strategic partners, including university leadership centres and the National College of School Leadership south of the border.

The Commission is also pleased that other action is being taken to pursue the recommendations in *Teaching Scotland's Future*. The GTCS will be publishing revised Standards in January 2013, including those for leadership and a new Standard for Career-long Professional Learning[92]. Research on the current routes to headship will be published and teacher education institutes are responding in various ways to the recommendations.

These developments and those which will follow from the work of the new National Implementation Board are promising. The Commission hopes they will succeed in developing a teaching profession which embraces change, supports leadership at school level and conducts itself in a spirit of collaboration but without being subject to the domination of vested interests. However, it is vital that the development of outstanding headteachers is not seen as a simple matter of standards and qualifications. If schools are to become increasingly autonomous, then headteachers need a far greater range of skills. They must have the opportunity to exercise genuine leadership at the same time as recognising their accountability to the wider school community. So far as is practicable, future leaders should not be bogged down in paperwork. However, they are likely to be called upon to take a stronger lead on a whole range of practical matters such as employment issues, finance and procurement and the management of risk.

Practical experience and skill is as important as additional qualifications. Business leaders support the MBA qualification but when they make appointments to senior posts, they look first for experience, clear achievements and vision. They want to know how applicants have encouraged leadership and innovation at all levels of their organisation and how well they have engaged and met the needs of their customers. They would not want their leading managers to become mired in the kind of low-level activity that is best described as routine administration. Currently many headteachers see some of the demands placed on them as falling in this category.

Recommendation 27. The National Implementation Board should take into account the proposals of the Devolved School Management Review and the support of the Commission for greater school autonomy and the empowerment of headteachers in its work on the establishment of the Scottish College for Educational Leadership; in particular, the discussion should be open and there should be contributions from highly effective headteachers who have encouraged leadership at all levels in their schools.

The development of creative school leadership requires a vision that extends beyond the educational context. Many leadership qualities are generic. There should be opportunities for much broader networking and leadership conversations with effective leaders in a range of areas, not only in universities, colleges and independent schools, but also in national and local government, business, culture, parliament, the armed forces, the police and many others.

In developing educational leadership there will be many synergies with the work of business schools which deal with more generic issues. There is clearly scope for distance learning and the opportunity should be taken to learn from innovative forms of professional development such as that of the Judicial Studies Institute, which is providing learning on judge craft at all levels in an international context.

It is important that current outstanding headteachers should be given opportunities to widen their knowledge and develop their skills, both in Scotland and through international connections. This will enable them to inspire their colleagues in schools throughout Scotland and to contribute to the national debate. A network of highly effective headteachers would be a helpful counterweight to the deeply conservative interests that leaders will almost certainly encounter in their schools. It could also connect with other such networks of society's leaders, enabling the exchange of experience and ideas and perhaps encouraging other leaders to show an interest in education through parent councils, membership of working groups and in other ways.

Recommendation 28. A network of highly effective headteachers should be established and sustained by the Scottish College for Educational Leadership, and wide-ranging leadership conversations should take place to assist headteachers to contribute to the national debate on leadership and transformational change.

Learning and teaching is at the heart of all educational leadership, whether in nursery, primary and secondary school, college or university or in lifelong learning. All leadership development has to reflect this priority.

In education generally, leadership and research connections have not been forged as they have been in other professions such as medicine, law and accountancy. It is important that they should be in future. Links to universities are of great importance. Headteachers, especially those in the secondary sector, should be aware of developments in higher education such as internationalisation and online learning. They should understand the strategic direction of universities within both a national and international context. School links with universities should involve the direct participation of headteachers rather than being mediated through local authority partnerships as the National Partnership Group has recommended.

The recommendation in *Teaching Scotland's Future* that 'a school which is recognised as offering a model of good practice in promoting professional learning could become a hub teaching school, working collaboratively with a university or other agency and with neighbouring schools' should be further explored. This would enable university/school links and leadership issues to be taken forward and would have the benefit of bringing university researchers and lecturers directly into schools. That way, as in other professions, educational research could be developed in partnership with practitioners and would inform practice more directly.

Recommendation 29. The proposal in the Donaldson Report for the establishment of hub teaching schools, working collaboratively with a university and with neighbouring schools, should be taken forward to benefit the development of leadership capacity in the system and to create models for transformational change.

The question of how best to attract high quality educational leaders must be seriously considered. As with medicine, entry to education has been seen very much as a vocation and the emphasis in initial training has been on the early stages of practice as a teacher rather than on subsequent career development. However, it seems appropriate for a longer-term view to be taken.

It seems clear that the best school leaders are true teaching professionals with wide-ranging experience of teaching, project and team leadership, and of engagement with parents, the community and the world at large. In attracting young people to the profession, leadership must be recognised from the outset as essential to the work of all teachers. Special efforts must be made to establish that there is a clear path to school leadership for those with the necessary talent, skills and commitment. This is not something that will be achieved simply within a university context; it is important that the new leadership network is involved in reviewing the admissions process to teacher education courses and that existing highly effective headteachers make a contribution to such courses. They will assist in identifying and ensuring the mentoring of outstanding students with leadership potential from the outset, and recommending that leadership development should form an important part of their future professional review and development.

Recommendation 30. The Scottish College for Educational Leadership should work with its leadership network of highly effective headteachers to establish a scheme for attracting outstanding leadership candidates to the profession and for ensuring an appropriate place for leadership development and mentoring in all professional learning. It should investigate appointments processes in other fields and consider the setting up of an Appointments Centre to support the selection of headteachers.

Management information and evidence base

The Commission considers that, at several levels, the evidence base of Scottish school education is deficient.

It is not clear that policy making at national level is sufficiently based on credible evidence. The efforts of HM Inspectors, who are the Scottish Government's main educational evidence-gathering force, have been traditionally more focused on the quality of policy implementation by schools rather than on the quality of policy itself although, over the years, many useful reports have been produced on particular themes. The amalgamation of the Inspectorate with Learning and Teaching Scotland carries the risk that the

scrutiny of policy will become still weaker. The Commission hopes that greater attention will be focused on the effectiveness of policy and that the activities of Education Scotland will be carefully monitored and subject to regular review. In particular, attention needs to be paid to the risks inherent in a body that has both policy development functions and quality assurance responsibilities.

Recommendation 31. Attention should increasingly be focused on evaluating the effectiveness, as opposed to the implementation, of educational policy.

The impact of educational research on both policy and practice has been very limited. The contribution of academic departments of education over recent years does not seem to have significantly affected policy thinking, no doubt in large measure due to a tendency in government circles to underestimate the value of educational research and a consequent lack of funding. The Commission, however, believes that research is important and that steps should be taken to strengthen the performance of Scottish universities in this respect. The Commission looks to the Scottish Government and the Scottish Funding Council to strengthen the incentives to universities to commit resources to this area of activity.

Recommendation 32. Steps should be taken to strengthen educational research in Scotland.

It is important that as much information as possible is available on the performance both of the system as a whole and of individual schools. The Commission, therefore, regrets the decision to withdraw Scotland from participation in two of the major international surveys of performance (TIMSS and PIRLS) and hopes that this decision may be reconsidered.

Over recent years, the nature of information available on school performance has become increasingly sophisticated. This has enhanced the quality of schools' self-evaluation processes and also the dialogue between schools and local authorities. The Commission considers that these kinds of activity have considerable value in a way that, for example, simple league tables of performance do not.

However, the dominance of examination success as the basis of comparative performance information remains largely unchallenged. If examinations validly and reliably measured what matters, this might not be a problem but, despite some worthwhile progress, this cannot be said to be entirely the case. *Curriculum for Excellence* focuses on deep learning; understanding, skills and the application of knowledge. It stresses the importance of being an *effective contributor*, capable of communicating in diverse ways and working in teams and a *responsible citizen*, with positive values, engaged in the affairs of society and able to influence others. These are not easy things to measure but, while more traditional examinations are likely to remain of importance for some time, that is no reason to place excessive reliance on forms of assessment that continue to emphasise retention of information.

Recommendation 33. Efforts should continue to broaden the measures of success used in education and to ensure that the information available to authorities, schools, families and the public better reflects all of its important outcomes.

Moreover, there is growing evidence that the most important kind of management information is that which relates to performance at the level of the individual learner and to the school's expectations for the future. Such information makes effective intervention much easier and assists schools to meet the needs of individuals more effectively. Furthermore, giving parents access to more good quality information of this kind would support the development of more productive relationships between young people, parents and schools, help parents to become constructively critical of the education their children receive and promote increased personalisation and choice.

The Commission has been impressed by the kind of management information that has been developed by East Renfrewshire Council[23] in particular and believes that there could be merit in taking a similar approach on a national basis.

Recommendation 34. Steps should be taken nationally to improve the quality of management information at the level of the individual learner so as to assist in meeting their needs.

Investment in people

The world's most successful organisations invest heavily in their people. They do this both to improve the quality of what they do and to effect change.

In the education world, it is acknowledged that no system will be better than the quality of its teachers. The work done by McKinsey [37, 38] on how the best school systems improve identifies selecting the best people to be teachers and then investing in their development as two of the three essential success factors. (The third is having the capacity to intervene effectively at the level of the individual learner.) The Commission entirely agrees with these points.

Scottish education has gradually increased its spend on professional development over the past half century from a very low base in the 1960s, when in-service training (as it was then generally called) was regarded as a dispensable extra. It is now universally accepted that investing in teachers' increased knowledge and expertise is absolutely essential and the cost must be budgeted for on a reasonably generous scale [66]. Even in this time of spending cuts, schools and local authorities continue to make provision for it. The Commission warmly endorses this development and hopes that the upward trend will resume after the country emerges from the current period of financial restraint.

In the past most of the available professional development was provided either by local authorities or by colleges of education (which are now incorporated in universities). It frequently took the form of one-day events or short courses. The subject matter was largely determined by the providers.

Today, the picture is much more varied. Local authorities and universities continue to be involved. The main national agencies have a keen interest in this type of work also. However, a thriving free market has developed with organisations such as Tapestry, Aspect and (until recently) ELT offering a wide range of highly-valued opportunities for professional development.

Furthermore, the concept of professional development has broadened. The value of working together, sharing experience and collaboratively addressing problems is now widely appreciated. This approach is embodied in 'teacher learning communities' that are a prominent feature of Tapestry's work[101]. Schools are now more inclined than in the past to draw on their own in-house expertise or the expertise of neighbouring schools. There is increasing recognition of the idea that a significant element in the total programme of professional development should be uniquely tailored to the needs of the individual practitioner.

The use of 'teacher learning communities' embodies best practice in professional development – it reflects, for example, the work on school reform being done by Professor Richard Elmore[66] of Harvard University. He has demonstrated that, in schools where young people's attainments and achievements are well beyond the levels predicted by the social circumstances of their pupils, the scale and character of the professional development undertaken by staff is always a key strength and is normally reflected in their inspection reports.

The significance of professional development, particularly in strengthening the link between improving teaching and improving learning, is emphasised in many HM Inspectorate publications; its *Guides to Self-Evaluation*, much of the material in *Journey to Excellence* and the *Learning Together* reports. The importance of the continuing professional development of teachers cannot be overestimated. It is recognised in the Standard for Leadership and Management which has been developed by the GTCS. This is as it should be.

Some of the key characteristics of good professional development are set out by Richard Elmore when he says, "We know a great deal about the characteristics of successful professional development: it focuses on concrete classroom applications of general ideas; it exposes teachers to actual practice rather than descriptions of practice; it involves opportunities for observation, critique and reflection; it involves opportunities for group support and collaboration; and it involves deliberate evaluation and feedback by skilled practitioners with expertise about good teaching…"

Recommendation 35. Staff occupying leadership and management roles in schools have a responsibility for establishing, developing and maintaining appropriate opportunities for professional development in

their schools. These opportunities should focus particularly on supporting improvement in teaching and, consequently, in young people's learning.

A less successful aspect of Scottish experience over the last twenty years or so has been successive attempts to reward good practitioners to remain in the classroom rather than seek management positions. The creation of senior teacher posts after 1990 was ultimately used mainly to strengthen management structures rather than for the intended purpose. The more recent chartered teacher scheme faced criticism on grounds of cost as well as in relation to the contribution of at least some of those who reached the new grade. The scheme has now been abandoned.

A feature of *Teaching Scotland's Future* (the Donaldson Report)[83], published in January 2011, is the suggestion that teaching should gradually become a masters degree level profession. The success of this approach will depend on teachers undertaking a significant and structured programme of professional development over a sustained period. It is not yet clear whether the incentives are in place to ensure that this takes place. However, the proposal has the advantage over the two approaches just mentioned that it is focused on improving the professional skills of the generality of teachers rather than on rewarding a small group that are already seen as high performing.

The Commission takes the view that the Donaldson report offers a sound strategy for the professional development of teachers from the point of embarking on initial training onwards. The Commission has nothing to add to its recommendations and hopes that implementation will now proceed smoothly. It considers that the period of two years since the report's publication has not been as fruitful as it might have been and hopes that, now that the National Implementation Board has been created, the pace of events will increase.

Recommendation 36. All concerned should seek to take forward the recommendations of the Donaldson Report as quickly as practicable, taking due account of the GTCS's new Standard for Continuing Professional Development.

Despite the many positive steps that have been taken in recent years, the Commission is concerned that the necessity of investing the people of the education system has not yet been fully taken on board.

Although resources and opportunities for the professional development of teachers have been greatly increased, this is less true of other personnel in the service. The needs of teaching assistants, librarians, technicians, music instructors and others are met less systematically and the resources available to them are usually less generous.

Equally important – and highly germane to the main argument of this report – the demands of major programmes of educational change for front-loaded

professional development continue to be underestimated. There is always a need for initial awareness training. Teachers must be clear about the intentions of the proposed changes. Thereafter, there is a need to develop teachers' skills, update their knowledge and promote expertise in areas such as learner involvement, developing advanced cognitive skills and organising interdisciplinary learning. Such training can be provided by a wide variety of agencies, governmental and otherwise, but resources need to targeted appropriately. Furthermore, there needs to be a national strategy to ensure that priorities are identified and needs met.

Recommendation 37. Investment in professional development associated with major programmes of change needs to be given higher priority. Such investment needs to commence at a very early stage. Although many providers may be involved and schools need to be free to choose, a national strategy requires to be in place from the outset.

Part 5: Conclusion

We are the learning species. Over the millennia, human beings have come to dominate the earth, creating a new world suited to their needs. Once the easy prey of larger, stronger, faster creatures, their supremacy is now unchallenged. Their journey from hunter-gatherer on the savannas to the complexities of modern life has been powered not by brawn but by intelligence – the pioneering intelligence of the enterprising individual and the collective intelligence of the group.

The journey has been fraught with mishaps. Along with an unparalleled creativity, human intelligence shows an unmatched capacity for folly. It accounts for the destruction and the cruelties of history just as much as the progress and the enlightenment. Human intellect has spawned the unprecedented problems of our time and it is human intellect that must resolve them.

Our need for education has never been greater. The children of today, just as much as those before them, must learn how to make a living and contribute to society. But their education must offer much more – for the issues they face are issues of survival. Understanding is as vital as information. Wisdom is as necessary as capability.

This is within our grasp. A century and more ago, far-sighted people envisioned that there would be schools for all, giving every child a preparation for adult life. For most, that meant little more than a low-cost induction into routine labour. But it was a start. We have moved on. Our horizons have been enlarged, but our practices lag behind.

Scotland has fine schools. Every day, thousands of teachers instruct, inform and inspire. In many other countries, it is the same. Yet all of this falls short of what is necessary and possible. The knowledge and the technology of today can realise human potential as was never possible before.

We are on the cusp of far-reaching change. The model of schooling created in the nineteenth century and developed in the twentieth will be transformed in the twenty-first. All over the world, mission statements such as *Curriculum for Excellence* proclaim the need and the possibility. Yet, though incremental progress is made, transformation does not occur.

This report has not been much concerned with the content of the curriculum, the mechanics of school organisation, nor the detail of assessment. It is about change.

How can good ideas be made to yield great results? How can the creative energies of the whole education community be released? What must be done to inspire and to create trust? Who should be involved and how are they to be encouraged and supported?

Strong strategic leadership is important. This is the role of central government. Strategy should be outlined clearly and in general terms. The national priorities and the four objectives of *Curriculum for Excellence* can serve as examples. It is not the job of government – nor of its agencies – to micromanage.

As General Patton says (see page 4), people do not need to be told *how* to proceed. Given clear leadership, they will exercise their ingenuity in ways that those at the centre could never have predicted. Empowering schools – and hence, individual teachers – is vital because that is the way to bring the creativity of the whole school system to bear on the challenges of the day. However, it is also the way to promote diversity, creating the richness of experience on which all learning systems depend.

In a true learning system, all are conscious of being part of a common endeavour. Communication flows in every direction. Ideas are exchanged. Constructive criticism is offered and received gratefully. The culture is collaborative, purposeful, empowering. There is nothing of the consciousness of hierarchy and place that currently impedes progress in Scotland. The Commission considers its recommendations on culture among its most important.

In all, the report indicates ten preconditions of effective change. Taken together, these would give Scottish education the capacity for effective change. They would create the possibility of transformation.

But what would a transformed education system look like?

It would be intellectually ambitious and culturally rich; organisationally and technologically sophisticated; creative and eclectic in its learning approaches. Success would be within the grasp of all – because it would be capable of tackling disadvantage. It would build on the innate desire to learn – because we are, indeed, the learning species.

Appendix 1: The evolution of school governance in Scotland

Scotland's claim to being among the first countries in the world to have established a national system of school education dates from the end of the 17th century by which time university education was already well established. By the end of the 15th century Scotland already had three universities: St Andrew's (1413), Glasgow (1451) and Aberdeen (1495). With the founding of Edinburgh (1583), this had increased to four by the end of the 16th century.

In 1561 the Reformed Church's *Book of Discipline* proposed that there should be a school in every parish. However, it was not until the 17th century that the Scottish Parliament began passing Acts that sought to ensure the provision of schools. There had been schools run by the Church since the Middle Ages and, by the 16th century, some run by the burghs. It is not clear how speedily the numbers increased but schools were widespread by the time of the signing of the National Covenant in 1638. The 1696 School Act of Parliament finally required a school to be established in every parish, thus creating a truly national education system. Crucially, the Act made financial arrangements to cover the costs of a salaried teacher, thus raising the issue of school governance.

Over the centuries, schools have been established, funded and run by churches, by the larger towns, by societies and by individuals, with the level of government intervention varying. After the union of parliaments in 1707, major Government intervention in the education system was severely curtailed, until in 1840, the first inspectors of schools for Scotland were appointed. By 1864 a national review of Scottish education was felt necessary and the Argyll Commission was set up. This led directly to the Education (Scotland) Act of 1872 passed by the Westminster Parliament, which created a Board of Education for Scotland, established the responsibility of parents to see that all children between the ages of 5 and 13 received education and provided for the funding of education from local taxes. The Act thus took the governance of education out of the hands of churches and societies and made it the responsibility of local elected bodies known as School Boards. It allowed the right to opt out of religious education and also established the principle that all headteachers should hold a certificate of competency to teach and that all teachers should be trained. Initially fees were charged but in 1890 free primary education was introduced[2].

By the end of the nineteenth century the Scottish Education Department, created in 1885 and at first London-based, was taking Scottish education in a somewhat different direction from that in England and Wales. The most striking developments from then until 1945 were the establishment in 1888 of a single external national examination system; the founding of more than 200 new secondary schools (between 1900 and 1918); and the replacement in 1918 of nearly 1,000 School Boards by 36 local education authorities. At the

[2] Compulsory education to the age of 14 was not introduced until 1901

same time, schools which had been owned and run by the Roman Catholic Church came into the state education system and accepted, in general, the same governance arrangements on condition that they be allowed to retain their denominational character. Thus, for almost a hundred years, state education in Scotland has meant education in schools managed by local authorities.

The period after the Second World War saw a series of major reports reviewing primary and secondary education. These represented a first attempt by central government to define a distinct educational philosophy. In the event, the reports had little immediate impact but remained a fertile source of ideas that influenced changes made in the 1960s.

The 1960s was a period of significant innovation. In the case of primary schools, the curriculum was radically altered as a result of the publication in 1965 of *Primary Education in Scotland* (often referred to as 'The Primary Memorandum'). At the same time the removal of selection for secondary education at age 12 introduced comprehensive education. Parallel changes in the public examination system made it more accessible to a wider range and larger number of pupils and this, once again, led to consequent changes in the curriculum. Although these were all major changes, they were not accompanied by new arrangements in the way schools were run by local authorities.

However, an important development during this period was the increasing influence of teachers who, through membership of official working parties, became closely involved in planning the new curricula and in developing the examination system. Teacher influence, often mediated by their unions, on the Scottish Examination Board (now the Scottish Qualifications Authority) and on the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum[3] (now Education Scotland)[4] has continued ever since. In this way, Scottish education began to evolve a system of governance that rested, in part at least, on a consensus among leading players.

Changes in secondary education throughout the 1970s and 1980s continued to focus on the curriculum and assessment systems. The publication in 1977 of two very significant reports *The Curriculum in the Third and Fourth Years of the Scottish Secondary School* (The Munn Report) and *Assessment for All* (The Dunning Report) furthered the process of providing a secondary education that was suitable for all. In the later 1980s, *Teaching and Learning in the Senior Stages of the Scottish Secondary School* (1983) dealt with the failure of the post-fourth year examination structure to cater for the increasing number of students continuing in school and the Scottish Education Department's *16–18s in Scotland: an Action Plan* (1983) dealt with the curriculum for non-advanced vocational education for the many students in S5 who were struggling to cope with Higher courses and who had little prospect

[3] The Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum (SCCC) and the Scottish Council for Educational Technology (SCET) were merged in 2000 to form Learning & Teaching Scotland.
[4] Established in 2011 by the merger of Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS), HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE), the National CPD Team and the Scottish Government's Positive Behaviour Team

of achieving usable qualifications. At a later date, the publication of the Howie Report (1992) and the Higher Still programme (1994), continued the preoccupation with changing the assessment and curriculum system.

Currently, the legislation governing Scottish education is derived from an education act of this period: the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 as amended in 1981 and by subsequent legislation notably the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act of 2000. Although the 2000 Act significantly focused on a child's right to an education, previous legislation tended to focus on education authorities and their powers and responsibilities. The 1981 amendment to the 1980 Act gave parents the right to choose a school for their children and made some far-reaching changes in the way in which provision was made for children with additional support needs by establishing the concept of the Record of Needs.

Throughout this entire period, changes in Scottish education were almost exclusively government-inspired and centrally led, with the predominant focus being on changes to the curriculum and assessment that schools would be required to implement. Although at this time Scotland had several large and well-resourced local authorities, there are very few instances of genuinely significant policies being initiated by them. A limited delegation of budgets to schools and the introduction of a systematic approach to quality assurance by the former Strathclyde Regional Council are among the very few exceptions. For the most part, the role of local authorities was to ensure that individual schools implemented the centrally determined national policy agenda.

At no point in the history of change in Scottish education have schools been seen as having decision-making or policy-making roles either individually or collectively: they have never been encouraged to act as initiators, far less leaders, of any policy change. On the contrary, the role of schools has been concerned with the efficient implementation of policies conceived and organised elsewhere. Headteachers, therefore, have had to be efficient managers of a system of implementation whose primary purpose has been ensure that their schools conformed to the locally mediated national policy agenda. Greater attention has been paid to leadership development, for example through the establishment of the Scottish Qualification for Headship. A small number of initiatives such as the *Schools of Ambition* project have been organised on a basis that actively involved schools. Until recently, however, there has been no clamour for increased decision-making at school level and no pressure to change the governance arrangements of schools to make room for it.

There have, however, been attempts to involve parents more actively in governance. The School Boards (Scotland) Act of 1988 cast parents in the role of change agents by giving them statutory powers to influence the appointment of senior staff including the appointment of headteachers and to approve the headteachers' proposals for spending the school budgets. The publication of the *Parents' Charter* in 1991 (revised in 1995) further bolstered the power of parents in the education system. However, the Self Governing Schools (Scotland) Act of 1989, which sought to encourage schools to 'opt

out' of local authority control, had little impact and was subsequently repealed. Thus, although parents acquired greater influence, the underlying system of governance remained unaltered.

In 1994 the possibility of change presented itself. Legislation for the wholesale reorganisation of Scottish local government might have provided an opportunity for a more diverse range of models of school governance to emerge. Instead, however, it merely removed the regional level of administration and created 32 local authorities (a return, in numbers at least, close to the 1918 position), but did not change the governance arrangements for schools. Far from encouraging local diversity, the publication in 1996 of *How Good is Our School?* (revised in 2002 and again in 2008) – with its standardised performance indicators – could be seen as a pressure in the opposite direction.

Since devolution in 1999, the change agenda seen through official reports and legislation has continued to focus – as in previous periods – mainly on the curriculum and assessment. *Curriculum for Excellence* has been the main educational initiative of this period. There have been no changes in governance arrangements with central government having a near-monopoly of policy making, moderated by attempts to maintain a consensus, at any rate among influential players.

Appendix 2: Select bibliography

1. Absence from School: A study of its causes and effects, Heather Malcolm, Valerie Wilson, Julia Davidson and Susan Kirk, The SCRE Centre, University of Glasgow, 2003
2. Administration of school education: international comparisons, Camilla Kidner, SPICe – The Information centre, 2010
3. A Complete and Generous Education – Creating the Big Society, personal communication from John Abbott, President of the 21st Century Learning Initiative, 2012 at www.21learn.org
4. A Self-Governing System in International Context, David H Hargreaves, National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services, 2012
5. Association of Directors of Education Scotland at http://www.adescotland.org.uk/
6. A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century, Scottish Executive, 2001
7. A Vision for Scotland, Scottish Labour Party Literacy Commission, 2009
8. Behaviour in Scottish Schools 2012, Scottish Government 2012
9. Briefing Paper on 'Community-based management of schools': East Lothian Council, 2010
10. Building for Growth: business priorities for education and skills, Education and Skills Survey, The Confederation of British Industry, 2011
11. Can the learning species fit into schools?, paper delivered to The Campaign for Learning by John Abbott, President of the 21st Learning Initiative, 2005
12. Change Management Models – A Guide to Best Practices at http://www.change-management-coach.com/change-management-models.html
13. Charter Schools, Education Week, May 2011
14. Charter Schools no silver bullet, warns US expert, Derek Cheng, The New Zealand Herald, 07.12.11
15. Charter School Research, Charles Buck at **http://stuartbuck.blogspot.com/2011/08/charter-school-research.html**
16. Commission on School Reform – Interim Report, Reform Scotland and The Centre for Scottish Public Policy, June 2012 and further evidence submitted and presented to the Commission between end-May and mid-June 2012
17. Continuing Professional Development for Educational Leaders Teaching in Scotland at http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2003/09/18229/26740
18. CPD Team at http://www.cpdscotland.org.uk/about/team/index.asp
19. Creating a Self-Improving School System, David H Hargreaves, National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services, 2010
20. Curriculum for Excellence; see Education Scotland at and from http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/thecurriculum/whatiscurriculumforexcellence/index.asp and the Scottish Qualifications Authority at and from http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/37917.2088.html
    Including the 3-18 Curriculum Impact series
21. Developing Curriculum for Excellence, Dr Mark Priestley and Sarah Minty, School of Education, University of Stirling, 2012
22. Developing School Principals, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute, 2011

23. East Renfrewshire Council;
    Recognising achievement and raising attainment
    http://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=5440&p=0
    Local improvement plan 2011-2014
    http://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=1640&p=0
    Standards and Quality Report

http://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=1642&p=0
Public Performance Report
http://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=4626&p=0
24. Education and Training in Scotland National Dossier, Scottish Executive, 2005
25. Education Today; the OECD Perspective., OECD, 2009
26. Educational Outcomes for Scotland's Looked After Children, 2009/10, Scottish Government, 2011
27. Eight steps to effective change (John Kotter) at http://www.businessballs.com/changemanagement.htm
28. England's plummeting PISA test scores between 2000 and 2009:Is the performance of our secondary school pupils really in relative decline?, Dr John Jerrim, Institute of Education, University of London, 2011
29. Exploring Models of School Governance: David Marriot, School Governor Update, 2006
30. Finnish Lessons: what the world can learn from educational change in Finland, Pasi Sahlberg, Teachers College, Columbia University, 2011
31. Fullan's Educational Change at http://www.personal.psu.edu/users/w/x/wxh139/Fullan.htm
32. First Steps: a new approach for our schools, Confederation of British Industry, 2012
33. Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), various, Scottish Executive and Government at and from **http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright**
34. Happy, Safe and Achieving their Potential, Scottish Executive, 2004
35. Higher Order Skills Excellence Group, Scottish Government, 2011 and http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/curriculum/excellence for information about other groups
36. How does attainment in Scottish Highers change with income quintile and region?, The Guardian Data Blog at http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/interactive/2012/oct/05/scottish-highers-inequality-attainment-mapped#data
37. How the World's Best Performing School Systems Come Out on Top, McKinsey & Company, 2007
38. How the world's most improved school systems keep getting better, McKinsey & Company, 2010
39. Human Scale Education Movement at http://www.hse.org.uk/
40. Improving Leadership in Scottish Schools at http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/Images/ilss_tcm4-712774.pdf
and leadership, more generally, at http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/hmiepublications/index.asp?bFilter=1&10_presentationcategory=HMIE%20Publication%20types\|Publication%20topic\|Effective%20leadership
41. Improving School Leadership Volumes 1 (Policy and Practice)and 2 (Case Studies on System Leadership), OECD, 2008
42. Improving Scottish Education 2002-2005, HMIe (now Education Scotland), 2006
43. Journey to Excellence HMIe (now Education Scotland) at http://www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk/
44. Keynote Education Secondary Heads' Conference, notes for presentation to have been delivered by John Abbott, President of The 21st Century learning Initiative, November 2011
45. Leading a Self-Improving School System, David H Hargreaves, National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services, 2011

46. Learning Together HMIe (now Education Scotland) including Lessons about school improvement and Improving Teaching, Improving Learning at http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/hmiepublications/index.asp?bFilter=1&10_presentationcategory=HMIE%20Publication%20types\|Publication%20topic\|Learning%20Together%20series
47. Learning to Grow: what employers need for education and skills, Education and Skills Survey, The Confederation of British Industry, 2012
48. Learning to improve the lives and aspirations of young people in Scotland - An aspect report on the provision in Scotland's colleges for young people requiring more choices and more chances, HMIe (now Education Scotland), 2010
49. Lessons in country performance in education, The Economist Intelligence Unit for Pearson Education's The Learning Curve Programme, 2012
50. Looked After Children (LAC), various HMIe (now Education Scotland) reports, e.g.
    Count us in; mind over matter (2011);
    http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/mom-01.html
    Count us in; success for all (2009);
    http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/cuisa09.html
    Count Us In: Improving the Education of our Looked After Children (2008)
    http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/cuiielac.html
    Count Us In: We're still here: Successful Transitions from Secondary School
    http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/cuiwsh.html
51. London state schools best in England, Chris Cook, Financial Times at http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/2c0866fe-dbca-11e1-aba3-00144feab49a.html#ixzz22qs3t7ql
52. More pedagogic change in the last 10 years than in the last 1000 years at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEJ_ATgrnnY&feature=autoplay&list=SPD653EAC9A01E75E6&playnext=1
53. Narrowing the Gap - various papers, National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), 2007-2009
54. Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) – Highlights from Scotland's results, Scottish Government, 2009
55. Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2006 – Highlights from Scotland's Results, Scottish Government, 2007
56. Quality and improvement in Scottish education: trends in inspection findings 2008-2011, Education Scotland, 2012
57. Qualities of Effective School Leadership, The Research and Library Service of the Northern Ireland Assembly, 2011
58. Refreshed Skills for Scotland Skills Strategy, Scottish Government, 2010
59. Replicating Swedish 'free school' reforms in England, Rebecca Allen, Research in Public Policy 10, Centre for Market and Public Organisation, University of Bristol, 2010
60. Report on Post-16 Education and Vocational Training in Scotland, Willie Roe, Scottish Government, 2011
61. Research to Support Schools of Ambition: Final Report, Universities of Glasgow, Aberdeen and Strathclyde, Scottish Government, 2010
62. Results of the 2009 Scottish Survey of Achievement - Reading and Writing, Scottish Government, 2010
63. Review of Devolved Management in Scottish Schools, David Cameron, Scottish Government, 2011 and Report on local authority funding of education and children's services and the future of schools management in Scotland, Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee Report, Scottish Parliament (SP Paper 631ELLC/S3/11/R6), 2011

64. Review of Devolved School Management, CoSLA, 2012 at http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/devolved-school-management/
65. Review of National Policies for Education – Quality and Equity of Schooling in Scotland, OECD, 2007
66. Richard Elmore (Professor) various at: http://www.uknow.gse.harvard.edu/leadership/leadership001a.html; The (only) three ways to improve performance in schools http://www.uknow.gse.harvard.edu/leadership/leadership001b.html; Building a new structure for school leadership
School Reform from the Inside Out: Policy, Practice, and Performance, Harvard Education Press, 2004
67. Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2012 Scottish Government, 2012
68. School and other inspection reports – various, HMIe (now Education Scotland) including inspection arrangements at http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/about/index.asp
69. School Leaders Scotland at http://www.sls-scotland.org.uk/, the Association of Headteachers and Deputes of Scotland (AHDS) at http://www.ahds.org.uk/ and the Scottish Council of Independent Schools at http://www.scis.org.uk/ Scottish Council of Independent Schools
70. 'Scotland Performs' can be accessed at http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/scotPerforms
71. Scottish Executive Education Department (2007), OECD Review of the Quality and Equity of Education Outcomes in Scotland: Diagnostic Report
72. Scottish Schools Online at http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/scottishschoolsonline/ and 'Performativity', Priestly, Robinson and Biesat, Stirling University at https://dspace.stir.ac.uk/handle/1893/3369 and' More than GDP: Measuring What Matters' by the Carnegie UK Trust at http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/getattachment/edc70373-49a0-48bb-84a3-5b0a253a5a6f/More-Than-GDP--Measuring-What-Matters.aspx
73. Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy, Scottish Government, various dates and publications
74. Secondary academies in England, the web addresses below provide information about this matter.
http://www.yor-ok.org.uk/Downloads/CYPP/Dream%20Again/York%20Children%20and%20Young%20Peoples%20Plan%202013-2016.pdf
http://www.co-operative.coop/membership/local-communities/Co-operative-Schools/
http://www.co-op.ac.uk/2012/04/englands-co-operative-multi-academy-trust/
http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies/primary/steps/b00205443/primarymodels
http://www.ssatuk.co.uk/ssat/programmes-support/academies/
75. Social-Class Inequalities in Education in England and Scotland, David Raffe, Linda Croxford, Cristina Iannelli, Marina Shapira and Cathy Howieson, Centre for Educational Sociology, University of Edinburgh, 2006
76. Spending on School Education, Centre for Public Policy Research, Glasgow University, 2009
77. Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000, Scottish Parliament
78. Strong performers and successful reformers in education – A video series profiling policies and practices of education systems that demonstrate high or improving performance in the PISA tests at http://www.pearsonfoundation.org/oecd/

79. Summary Statistics for attainment, leaver destinations, exclusions, the school estate, expenditure on school education, healthy living, etc, National Statistics Publications for Scotland, Scottish Government, various reports and dates
80. Summary of Indicative Quality Indicator Results from HMIe Inspections, HMIe (now Education Scotland), 2010
81. Swedish 'free schools' fail to improve results, Graeme Paton, Education Editor, Daily Telegraph, 23.06.10
82. Teach children the skills of optimism, Michael Grose at **http://ezinearticles.com/?Teach-Children-The-Skills-Of-Optimism&id=9078**
    Related articles:
    Carol Dweck's work on mindsets at http://minsetsonline.com/
    Guy Claxton's work on 'building learning power' at http://www.buildinglearningpower.co.uk/
    Alan McLean's work on positive learner environments and engagement at http://www.themotivatedschool.com/
    A research summary on self-motivation at http://www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk/resourcesandcpd/research/summaries/rsselfmotivation.asp
    and How the Flipped Classroom Is Radically Transforming Learning at http://www.thedailyriff.com/articles/how-the-flipped-classroom-is-radically-transforming-learning-536.php
83. Teaching Scotland's Future – Report of a review of teacher education in Scotland, Graham Donaldson, the Scottish Government, 2011
    And
    Teaching Scotland's Future - National Partnership Group - Report to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning - September 2012 at http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/11/7834
84. The Causes, Views and Traits of School Absenteeism and Truancy: An Analytical Review, Ken Reid, Swansea Institute of Education, Manchester University Press, 2005
85. The Early Years Framework; Learning Together, Positive Start, Positive Outcomes, HMIe (now Education Scotland), 2009 and Early Years Matters at http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/earlyyearsmatters/index.asp
86. The Education System in Scotland February, Eurydice Executive Agency, Education Audiovisual & Culture, 2011
87. The EIS & Leadership in School, Educational Institute of Scotland, 2010
88. The Importance of Teaching – The Schools White Paper, Department of Education, England, 2010
89. The Notre Dame Centre at http://www.notredamecentre.org.uk/
90. The Scottish Qualification for Headship at http://www.sqh.ed.ac.uk/programme
91. The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act, Scottish Parliament, 2006
92. Standard for Headship at http://www.gtcs.org.uk/standards/standard-headship.aspx and General Teaching Council Scotland more generally, including revised standards, at http://www.gtcs.org.uk/home/home.aspx
93. Trends in International Maths and Science (TIMSS) 2007 – Highlights From Scotland's Results, Scottish Government, 2009
94. Towards a new governance of schools in the reinventing of civil society, Stewart Ranson and Colin Crouch, The Institute of Education, University of Warwick, 2009

95. Unleashing Greatness: Getting the best from an academised system, The Academies
    Commission, 2013 at https://dl.dropbox.com/u/6933673/130109%20-%20Academies%20Commission/Academies_commission_report%20FINAL%20web%20version.pdf
96. What learning opportunities are there for young people? Scottish Government at
    http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/edandtrainingforyoungple/opportunities
97. What makes a school successful? Resources, Policies and Practices' - PISA, 2009 Results, OECD, 2010
98. When "21st Century Schooling" Just Isn't Good Enough: A Modest Proposal, Alfie Kohn at http://www.alfiekohn.org/teaching/22century.htm
99. Why is school reform difficult, and frequently problematic?, The 21st Century Learning Initiative, December 2011
100. Young People not in education, employment or training, young people needing more choices and chances (the NEET Strategy), Scottish Executive, 2006
101. The Commission received submissions and took presentations from a wide range of individuals and organisations. It also heard evidence from a wide range of individuals and organisations on matters such as leadership, science education, PISA, the challenges faced by disadvantaged young people, the nature of learning and the teaching of modern languages. Members of the Commission made a number of visits to schools and other institutions. Journal and newspaper articles were used as an on-going source of information about contemporary developments in Scottish and elsewhere in education, and Jordanhill School at http://www.jordanhill.glasgow.sch.uk/

Appendix 3: Summary of submitted written evidence[5]

'The review must not begin from a position that Scottish education is a deficit model – but it is, of course, perfectly legitimate to look at ways in which Scotland can improve.' (GTC Submission, 2012)

'Staff are much more likely to show commitment and gain job satisfaction if they are treated with respect, listened to when changes are proposed, given support when under pressure, and accountable to managers who lead by example rather than exhortation. Sadly, however, in a culture which prefers spin and celebrity, common sense is likely to have little appeal.' (Professor Walter Humes, Scottish Review, 26th April 2012).

'Whilst it has been widely noted that the Finns have seen positive results from measures such as children starting school at age seven and no national inspection of schools or league tables, the event's first speaker from the University of Helsinki attributed Finland's success to its educational approach. She highlighted the fact that Finnish culture regards education as a source of hope for a better society and life. This requires the same educational opportunities for every child, hence a completely comprehensive system. At the forefront of this are excellent quality teachers, who are trained to at least Masters Level, with only ten per cent of those that apply being accepted onto the teacher training program. Although teachers are not paid especially highly, prestige and status attracts the best candidates into the profession, who are then given the freedom and trust they deserve.' (Part of report of a meeting in the Finnish Embassy: Finnish-English meeting)

Background

The Commission called for written submissions as part of its overall evidence gathering process. It received a total of over 70 written submissions.

Evidence was sought under three headings. These were:

1. What are the main challenges facing Scottish education and how are these best addressed?
2. Is Scottish education sufficiently ambitious? What should it do to ensure it meets future challenges and remains internationally competitive?
3. What are the outcomes for children and young people that we should hold as being most important?

This summary follows this general format although much of the evidence submitted did not.

[5] In this report, the word 'evidence' is used to describe the contents of the submissions that the Commission received, whether factual or matters of opinion.

Introduction

The submission from the education committee of a learned society provides a comprehensive set of comments on many of the issues with which the Commission has engaged.

The submission's summary is printed below.

There is a need to consider what it is that the Scottish education system as a whole is trying to achieve. A strategic overview is required. In consultation with other partners the Scottish Government should identify the strategic priorities and needs of education in Scotland.

The way in which people make choices about their futures is critical to current and future reforms in Scottish education. Much more consideration will need to be given to the factors that influence the decisions which learners make so that future learners are in a position to consider and take-up more diverse educational pathways. The pathways and destinations will need to be understood and valued by all stakeholders, especially employers.

One of the most pressing issues is the underlying trend of youth unemployment. While youth unemployment is undoubtedly a multi-sector challenge, there is a need to clarify the role that the school sector is to play in helping to address this. The extent to which current school education and the careers advice enables learners to make an informed decision about apprenticeship opportunities and other routes as opposed to the traditional university or college pathway is unclear. This will require careers advisors, guidance teachers and parents to be better informed about the diverse pathways which will be available to learners. While the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) could potentially be used to support this, experience to date suggests that, although it is widely praised, it has had little practical impact.

When trying to compare Scotland's educational performance with that of other countries, care needs to be taken when relying on the results of international surveys such as TIMSS and PISA. Different countries will inevitably collect education data in different ways and there will be difficulties in translating standards, initiatives and programmes from one culture and system to another. Furthermore, curricula vary considerably across countries and in the extent to which they 'match' the test material. Even within Scotland expectations of the standard of educational performance can be ambiguous. The matter of how criteria of attainment are set at different stages (or ages) is both complex and important and has to be supported by sound argument and evidence.

In order that Scottish school education is capable of overcoming challenges that are, as yet, unforeseen, there is a need to have mechanisms in place which allow for curriculum review and refreshment. This will need to be accompanied by high quality CPD. There are opportunities to adopt collaborative partnership approaches involving schools, local authorities,

universities, learned societies and others that can help make best use of limited resources.

As a part of this it will be important to ensure that there is a regular review and consultation process involving disciplinary experts. This is particularly important for the sciences where what is studied at school can become detached from contemporary scientific issues and real world contexts. One option would be to establish a standing group with which SQA and Education Scotland would be expected to engage. Given the interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary aspirations of Curriculum for Excellence, it is imperative that consideration be given to how such a group can ensure representation of contemporary science, engineering and technology and the universities.

The teaching profession needs to respond readily and creatively to what will be a ***continuing need for change*** *in: teaching and learning approaches, curricula (review and refresh), the re-engagement of disengaged students, and the preparation of young people for multiple destinations in later life. To achieve that, the practice of teaching must be a fulfilling and fascinating experience. That requires innovation to be managed in a way that makes clear the importance of teachers' own ideas (and their reservations), recognises and responds to those ideas (but not without constructive criticism and provision of necessary resources), and offers opportunities to learn about, and apply critical thought to, the wider field of educational and intellectual matters. Formal credit for performance and adequate time for involvement, in these kinds of effective professional practice can be part of an incentive structure that motivates individuals to play a central role in improving our education system.*

While the Scottish Government recognises the importance of research in areas such as science and technology, unfortunately, in the field of education, at least in the very recent past, there has been no priority given to the understanding that can come from independent systematic research. For example, there are assertions of "success" in relation to Curriculum for Excellence, but no proper evidence. Without high quality evaluation, not only do we not know what is going well and what is not, without an evidence-base we have no way of developing a proper understanding or an ability to plan so that things go better. In these circumstances, Scotland will not have the impact internationally that it so desires.

1. What do you think are the main challenges facing Scottish schools and how are these best addressed?

Submissions reflected a broad perspective on the challenges facing school education in Scotland. In the main these could be seen as falling into the following broad categories;

a. governance
b. finance
c. equality

d. personalisation and choice
e. early intervention
f. quality of teaching and leadership; teachers' conditions of service
g. curriculum and assessment
h. inspection and school effectiveness.

a/b Governance and finance

In relation to governance, there was a consistent and strong expression of support for headteachers, working in close association with parents and the communities served by their schools, to have greater delegated authority to lead, manage and administer all of the affairs of their schools or their schools operating in clusters of one form or another. It was noted that any such arrangements would provide a context for young people/pupils to play a more significant role in the running of the schools they attend. It was noted too that such arrangements might allow much more significant partnerships to develop between schools and local businesses, including social enterprises. Some submissions sought clarity about what the school's broader role in promoting community development might be.

One submission made a very strong plea for parents to be provided with very much more support than is available to them currently. A number of submissions argued that the involvement of parents in their children's education needed to be enhanced significantly. The effective performance of current parent roles, e.g. in Parent Councils (formerly School Boards – described as an expensive irrelevance in one submission), was thought to be difficult. There was seen to be a need for well-grounded and research-informed information about different educational approaches, the capacity to engage with 'experts' to make sense of that information, a more results-focused emphasis within the School Improvement Planning process and better access to more and richer information about the work and impact of the schools their children attend. This interest in having more and richer information included some interest in there being more rigorous testing of young people's skills in literacy and numeracy. Parent Councils as constituted currently were not thought to be strong enough to be able to play a positive role in securing school improvement.

The submissions indicated a concern about the scale of the funding available to schools currently – it was thought to be insufficient, even though it has doubled since 1999. There were concerns that this lack of funding was having a significant effect on schools' operations. The submissions indicated also strong support for more financial control being delegated to headteachers so that the efficiency and effectiveness with which they deploy their budgets can be increased. Some submissions indicted that it would be beneficial if there were also a more substantial delegation of authority to headteachers over matters such as staff recruitment and other personnel matters.

The review of *Devolved Management in Schools (2011),* which was carried out by David Cameron, is very apposite in this connection. Much of what it has to say is echoed in the comments made on this matter in submissions. The papers and links to papers on East Lothian's emerging interest in the community management of its schools are relevant here too. It is worth quoting substantially from the views of one parent on matters of governance and accountability.

"Can Scotland's state school system justifiably claim to be world class and enable all young people to fulfil their potential? The answer is plainly 'no'. The socio/economic achievement gap remains stubbornly high. Even good schools' seem unable to transcend socio/economic/cultural disadvantage – with inequality more prevalent within schools than between them.

There is an alarming lack of urgency on the part of policy makers and political leaders to address this. More alarming, and probably connected, is the absence of accountability. Many people south of the border are astonished when I tell them schools have no Governing Bodies and that tests and assessment results are kept secret. In England some would argue that politicians' have been overly involved. However, there is no doubt that the Blair years injected energy and a renewed purpose into the English school system. The pressure to improve performance was immense down south, particularly in inner-city schools. The pendulum may have swung too far towards targets/outcomes but the focus was at least upon the people the system is there to serve – pupils."

Concerns were expressed about the extent of the resources available to support schools and the variations in such support across the country. Greater transparency in the provision of funding was argued for. It was also argued that capital investment in schools needs to be informed more completely by appreciations of how young people might best be supported in their learning in the future.

Related issues were raised elsewhere in submissions. There was a concern expressed that schools were over-controlled by local authorities and that the support provided by these agencies was highly variable and, often, ineffectual. Some submissions characterised councils as excessively bureaucratic and controlling, a barrier to innovation and improvement. Several submissions echoed calls which have been made elsewhere that there are too many education authorities in Scotland and that there is a need for schools to be brought under the management of regional boards.

There were concerns expressed that the Scottish school system lacked diversity and that this was, increasingly, a factor contributing to perceived declines in the attainment and achievement of young people in Scotland, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Arguments were presented in submissions that more and more

effective partnerships between (secondary) schools, colleges and universities, the business community and the community more generally were need to support young people's development.

Arguments were made in one submission that approaches similar to those of the 'free school movement' should be adopted in Scotland to support the development of a more diverse system of provision, expanding pupil and parental choice. However, at least one submission argued very strongly that the state comprehensive system is a continuing strength of the Scottish education system, that we need to continue to carry out reform within that context and that there is a lot of straightforward evidence that this is wholly possible, e.g. the gains in young people's attainment and achievement evidenced in recent school inspection reports.

c/d Equity; personalisation and choice

Continuing and intractable gaps in attainment and achievement between the relatively advantaged and the disadvantaged were commented on in a number of submissions. These observations reflect comments made in the OECD *Review of the Quality and Equity of Education Outcomes in Scotland* which was published in March 2007:

"One major challenge facing Scottish schools is to reduce the achievement gap that opens up about Primary 5 and continues to widen throughout the junior secondary years (S1 to S4). Children from poorer communities and low socio-economic status homes are more likely than others to under-achieve, while the gap associated with poverty and deprivation in local government areas appears to be very wide.

A second challenge relates to the need to build on the strong platform of basic education through socially broader and more successful participation in upper secondary education and greater equity in Scottish higher education. Inequalities in staying-on rates, participation at different academic levels of national courses, and pass rates in these courses are a concern. So, too, is the number of young people leaving school with minimal (and in some cases no) qualifications and the comparatively high proportion in precarious transition."

There were explicit concerns that little or no progress had been made in relation to the achievement gaps identified in the OECD report.

One submission had this to say about how the 'achievement gap' might be addressed.

"The strong evidence that increased funding for pupils in poverty, when spent on support that has a proven track record of success, can close

the attainment gap is the basis [our organisation's] long standing call for a 'Pupil Premium':

- *A Pupil Premium is additional money paid directly to schools for the benefit of pupils who are growing up in poverty.*
- *School themselves would decided how the money is spent – for instance extra numeracy or literacy tuition; a mentoring project to increase self esteem; or a parenting programme to help improve the home learning environment.*
- *The decision would rest with the school itself, which is best placed to determine the particular needs of its own pupils.*
- *Schools would be held accountable by being required to show an increase in the attainment of pupils in poverty.*
- *The Pupil Premium is, then, fundamentally an outcome-based approach and so sits comfortably with the wider agenda or measuring public services by outcomes, not input.*
- *The level the premium is set at is open to discussion. By way of example, in England, there is a Pupil Premium of £430 per pupil.*

In an era of retrenchment in public spending, we understand that finding new funds is difficult and that tax-payers money must be directed towards initiatives with a proven track record. That is why we are calling for the Pupil Premium to be piloted in the first instance:

- *A pilot scheme would make it possible, at relatively low cost, to gather the evidence we need to determine whether this policy solution would work in Scotland.*
- *The pilot could be in either an area of high deprivation or in a small cluster of schools that serve a high number of pupils from deprived backgrounds.*
- *A pilot would help establish the level of Pupil Premium required to have the maximum impact.*
- *The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is, we would argue, currently the best indicator for determining how much should be allocated to each school.*

If the pilot is successful, the Pupil Premium can be rolled out with the confidence of knowing it will help break the link between growing up in poverty and educational under-achievement as well as providing value for money for the tax-payer.
The Pupil Premium is only one method of targeting additional funds to pupils in poverty. We are open to other methods of doing so, providing they uphold the key, evidence based core principle that children who live in poverty require specific, targeted support to succeed at school."

A number of comments emphasised a need for more individualised action, based on strong evidence about individual attainment and achievement, to be taken to address underachievement, often correlated with disadvantage, such as that which can be observed in boys from the middle of primary school onwards. In this connection, one submission indicated the importance of providing young and

adolescent boys with male mentors, particularly ‘makers’, who can display practical skills.

At least one submission indicated the need for the work of schools to be made more accessible to adults and the community more generally. While this happens in some schools, it is an ambition which in others has been unfulfilled now for many years.

A clear implication of a number of submissions was that personalisation and choice, the creation of a wider range of opportunities for young people and the development of a capacity within schools to support a wide range of learner journeys would depend on the establishment of cluster and other partnership arrangements; no single establishment is likely to be able to do this.

Some submissions expressed concerns that provision for young people with additional support needs are being unreasonably constrained by the availability of resources. There was some concern that the current legislation was not working with as much positive impact as had been anticipated originally.

e Early intervention

A number of submissions were very clear about the importance that should be attached to the early years and the need for this stage in the education system to be given greater and more consistent focus. In some cases the respondents considered the early years of primary education more properly belonged as part of the early years. One submission raised the issue of whether or not Scottish children start their experience of formal schooling too early, arguing that this should be delayed for a year as appears to work well in Scandinavian countries.

The role of librarians in promoting early literacy was emphasised in one submission; the importance of free play in another.

f The quality of teaching and leadership

A number of submissions referred to the Donaldson Report and made clear the importance that should be attached to its early and full implementation. There was also reference made to the McCormac report. The importance of securing consistently good or better standards of teaching was made clear in a number of submissions, as was the need for teachers’ conditions to be kept under review so that they do not become restrictive; barriers to changes in practice, which might become necessary in the future. The need for flexibility was spoken of in relation to class sizes.

There was some concern expressed in one submission about the quality of some Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes and about the extent to which the Teacher Induction Scheme (TIS) might be compromised at a time of significant budgetary constraints.

The continuing significance of high quality Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for teaching and support staff was given emphasis in a number of submissions. The need to ensure that staff are familiar with new technologies and their role in emergent delivery methods was seen as being of some importance. Access to these technologies needs to be improved in schools too. Good quality training in a range of teaching methods of proven significance in the development of young people's personal, social and cognitive capacity was recognised as being of importance in a number of submissions. Some submissions indicate concerns about the range, scale and quality of much of the CPD available to teachers and the funding being made available currently. Concerns were also expressed about the extent to which *Curriculum for Excellence* has been and is dominating the CPD agenda and the alleged failure of much of that training to address the pedagogy and principles underpinning the programme. Several submissions stressed the importance of teacher professionalism and argued that a focus on pedagogy underpinned by meaningful reflection will be vital for quality learning.

Current issues of staff morale were commented on; these were related to concerns about demands arising from *Curriculum for Excellence*, the scale and pace of change generally and pay and conditions issues.

The issue of how the problems posed by underperforming teachers might best be addressed was raised in a number of submissions. Equally, a number of submissions noted that there was a need for employers to give greater emphasis to the general welfare of teachers.

The central role of headteachers in leading schools in motivating and inspiring staff and young people was referred to in a number of submissions. The recruitment of headteachers and other senior promoted staff in schools was seen as being a matter of great significance. Concerns were reported about what might be done when an appointment did not work out as well as had been anticipated. Fixed–term contracts for headteachers were suggested as a way of addressing this concern. One submission expressed concerns about the disparate nature of much leadership development across the country.

The centrality of the teacher's role in securing improvement and change in young people's experience of schooling was emphasised in many submissions. Concerns were expressed that more needs to be done and in a more systematic manner to support the ongoing development of teachers' capacities particularly in the context created by *Curriculum for Excellence*.

Submissions are very clear that school improvement, let alone transformational change in schools, is very closely related to the quality of teaching young people receive and the quality of the leadership which secures consistently high standards of teaching. Building the capacity of teachers and of schools more collectively is represented as the key challenge for Scottish Education. In this connection one submission recommended that Scottish education should adopt a version of the Teach First programme.

One submission addressed this matter of capacity building very particularly. It described the features which appear to be associated with effective programmes of professional development and which are "probably best summarised and exemplified in the work of the US educator Richard Elmore. That work in turn has been much publicised subsequently by Michael Fullan".

The submission provides some extracts from one of Elmore's papers.

"In order to progress from reforms …….. to changes in student performance, one has to assume that changes in policy and organization will result in a different kind of teaching, which will in turn result in a different kind of learning for students, who will in turn demonstrate this learning by doing better on measures of performance. One key element missing in this formulation, however, is the knowledge required for teachers and administrators to engage in a different kind of teaching and learning. Policies, by themselves, don't impart new knowledge; they create the occasion for educators to seek new knowledge and turn that knowledge into new practice. Hence, professional development is the main link connecting policy to practice.

We know a good deal about the characteristics of successful professional development: It focuses on concrete classroom applications of general ideas; it exposes teachers to actual practice rather than to descriptions of practice; it involves opportunities for observation, critique, and reflection; it involves opportunities for group support and collaboration; and it involves deliberate evaluation and feedback by skilled practitioners with expertise about good teaching. The central idea in District 2's strategy is that the work of everyone in the system, from central office administrators to building principals, to teachers and support staff in schools, is about providing high-quality instruction to children.

In District 2, professional development has a very different meaning from this conventional model. Professional development is management strategy rather than a specialized administrative function. Professional development is what administrative leaders do when they are doing their jobs, not a specialized function that some people in the organization do and others don't. Instructional improvement is the main purpose of district administration, and professional development is the chief means of achieving that purpose. Anyone with line administrative

responsibility in the organization has responsibility for professional development as a central part of his or her job description. Anyone with staff responsibility has the responsibility to support those who are engaged in staff development.

A third reform of professional development in District 2 is a heavy reliance on peer networks and visits to other sites, inside and outside the district, designed to bring teachers and principals into contact with exemplary practices. Intervisitation, as it is called in the district, and peer consultations are routine parts of the district's daily life.

Teachers will often visit each other's classrooms in conjunction with consultants' visits, either to observe one of their peers teaching a lesson or a consultant teaching a demonstration lesson. Likewise, groups of teachers will often visit another school, inside or outside the district, in preparation for the development of a new set of instructional practices. Usually, principals initiate these outside visits and travel with teachers. In addition, principals engage in intervisitations with peers in other schools. New principals are paired with "buddies," who are usually more senior administrators, and they often spend a day or two each month in their first two years in their buddy's school. Groups of teachers and principals working on district initiatives travel to other districts inside and outside the city to observe specific instructional practices. And monthly district-wide principals' meetings are held on site in schools and often involve principals observing individual teachers in their peers' schools as part of a structured agenda for discussing some aspect of instructional improvement. Principals are encouraged to use visits and peer advising as management strategies for teachers within their buildings. A principal who is having trouble getting a particular teacher engaged in improvement might be advised by the district staff to pair that teacher with another teacher in the building, or another building in the district. Likewise, principals themselves might be encouraged to consult with other principals on specific areas where they are having difficulties."

g Curriculum and assessment

There was general support expressed for the principles informing *Curriculum for Excellence* and for its overall aims. Its strategic significance was recognised and valued in submissions.

There was continuing concern expressed about the efficacy of the programme which had been mounted to support its introduction into schools. There was criticism of the scale and character of the resources being made available to support the introduction of the programme. There was a view that the potential role of ICT in delivering the outcomes of the programme was not being utilised fully. Some concern too was expressed about the underpinning epistemology and methodology of the programme, e.g. that too much

emphasis was being placed on the acquisition of skills without sufficiently strong knowledge bases having been developed. Some respondents felt that many (secondary school) teachers remained to be persuaded about these underpinning principles, e.g. the emphasis being placed on interdisciplinary study at all stages of the programme. The 'senior phase' was a matter of some concern in some submissions from secondary school staff.

Several submissions stated that these principles remained poorly understood by many professionals involved in education.

The 'implementation' of *Curriculum for Excellence* was a strong focus in the submissions from local authorities. There was concern expressed that support had been insufficient in a number of important regards.

There was strong support for the notion that headteachers and their staff should have a level of delegated authority sufficient to allow them to make decisions, in association with parents and young people, about how *Curriculum for Excellence* might best be implemented in their schools. While *Curriculum for Excellence* was generally supported in submissions, sometimes strongly, there were worries that the focus on interdisciplinary enquiry needs to take more account of the prior knowledge learners might need to carry out such enquiries with effect. Librarians could be expected to have a major role in supporting the design and delivery of such enquiries. These would, of course, not require to be undertaken exclusively in the traditional setting of the school but could take place in virtual settings and with peers drawn from a variety of contexts, nationally and internationally.

Some submissions noted the significance that *Curriculum for Excellence* has placed on the development of young people's personal and social skills and raised questions as to how these might be developed more systematically and inclusively.

Several submissions expressed concerns about standards of literacy and numeracy. They indicated worries about the quality of learning in primary schools, since as many as one in six pupils leave the primary stage without being functionally literate. Subsequent progression with higher order skills might prove to be problematic.

Vocational and practical skills were said to be still very undervalued in secondary schools. This was seen as an intractable problem, diminishing opportunities for many young people. Should there be opportunities, under certain circumstances, for young people to leave school at 14 to follow apprenticeship and similar programmes? More should be done to ensure that young people moved from school into positive post-school destinations.

The need for disciplined, calm schools was referred to in one submission; it was seen as a pre-requisite for the delivery of a positive experience for all young people.

Some submissions indicated that there was a need for much more and more appropriate use to be made of information and communication technologies to promote and support learning. This included a desire to see greater use being made of social media. There was a desire expressed in some submissions to see the deliberate and systematic development of range of alternative delivery systems which did not depend on the school, as traditionally conceived and operated, as the sole context for young people's learning. Such systems may provide school and other librarians with an extension of their role in supporting young people's learning. How education keeps pace with the speed of change was seen as a challenge.

The continuing dominance of the Higher syllabuses and examinations in schools was called into question in some submissions. Other comments on the current examination arrangements included a desire to see more criterion-referenced assessment and examinations which reflect the need for young people to develop a range of skills, including higher order cognitive skills. It was recognised that attempts are being made to focus more on skills and on application of knowledge in the new S4 examinations. In this connection, one submission raised the issue of whether or not secondary schools should be free to use examination bodies other than the SQA. A number of submissions identified the latter stages of what would now be called the 'Senior Phase' as being in need of significant reforms. For example, it was suggested that more emphasis should be placed on STEM courses and that further education colleges, universities and others might have a much bigger and more direct role to play in supporting purposeful progression in learner journeys.

There was support for much more information about effective practice to be shared so that all schools could benefit from the experience of others. The system might benefit from controlled 'experimentation' to look at innovative delivery arrangements, e.g. making much greater use of partnerships with other schools, colleges and universities, making less use of age-based class arrangements and making more use of ICT to promote the independent learning of students in the senior phase of their schooling. There was a desire to see learning better matched to the needs of young people.

h Inspection and school effectiveness

Considerable concern was expressed about the measures that are used to assess school effectiveness. The current emphasis on attainment measures was seen as distorting the work of schools, skewing it in favour of the academic. It was seen as discriminatory and, possibly, antithetical to the successful introduction over time of *Curriculum for Excellence* because it encourages 'teaching to the test'. Measures such as those relating to young people's movement into positive post-school destinations were thought to merit greater emphasis.

One submission contains a strong critique of international surveys describing them as "**totally** misleading". This same submission is critical of school inspections. Other submissions saw the information provided by such surveys as providing strong, negative indications of the 'health' of the Scottish education system.

Inspection programmes, despite a very welcome new emphasis on self-evaluation, remain too judgemental and need to take further steps towards becoming altogether more formative in character. These concerns are expressed in the paragraph below;

"There is the real practical danger that without an understanding of rationale and theoretical bases for school development, practitioners may be judged by auditors on differing underlying assumptions to their own developmental pathways, and the universalistic grading schemas come to be applied as a mask or front giving pseudoscientific veneer to imposed critical judgments which are nothing more than expressions of different views and models of education. Through the mechanism of inspection, a difference of conceptual viewpoint, which could prompt debate and dialogue in consideration of practice, is eliminated in judgemental and differential power relations. One view supplants another. Command and control replaces mutuality, dialogue and conceptual exploration matched to practice development. Those who suffer are those innovating and bringing in new ideas. The audit tools give superficial legitimacy, when in fact they cannot by definition, for a thought tool has to be grounded in a theory of action which depends on motive and purpose. Thereby there can be no universal measuring tools for interpretative social processes. At a time of change, as now, these are changing, rendering this approach even less appropriate."
A number of submissions argued that school inspections needed to give greater and more explicit emphasis to the standards of learning and teaching observed during an inspection and that the role being played by parents in a school should receive more attention.

Alternative methods for assessing school effectiveness were commended to the Commission; those operating in Queensland, Finland and Chile were referred to specifically.

2. **Is Scottish education sufficiently ambitious? What should it do to ensure it meets future challenges and remains internationally competitive?**

The most commonly expressed position was that Scottish education is ambitious but not for all of its young people, not over the full range of its curriculum and not for all of its objectives. For example, schools were not thought to be sufficiently ambitious for young people who are in care or young people growing up in poverty. Schools are not thought to be sufficiently ambitious in relation to issues of global significance such as climate change and sustainability more generally. Clearly there are schools that do not conform to this picture.

There was a clear suggestion that more emphasis needed to be given to the systematic, comprehensive and determined implementation of *Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC)*. There was also reference to the demands which current additional support needs legislation has placed on schools, needs which many school had found it difficult to meet fully.

Here is what one parent, also a teacher, had to say on the matter of the ambition of the Scottish education system.

"During the years I've lived in Scotland what I've found alarming is the lack of urgency on the part of policy makers and political leaders to address this. More alarming, and probably connected, is the absence of accountability. Friends, teachers and even politicians I know in England are gob smacked when I tell them schools have no Governing Bodies and that tests and assessment results are kept secret. In England some would argue that politicians' have been overly involved. However, there is no doubt that the Blair years injected energy and a renewed purpose into the English school system. The pressure to improve performance was immense down south, particularly in inner-city schools. The pendulum may have swung too far towards targets/outcomes but the focus was at least upon the people the system is there to serve – pupils. I was a School Governor in Hackney in the 1990s. Now, Hackney, one of the UK's poorest boroughs is home to some of the UK's top performing secondary schools.

England has been a laboratory for policy experimentation. It's difficult to ascertain what worked and what didn't. In Hackney, though there is no doubt in my mind that the arrival of City Academies raised expectations which, in turn has had a positive impact on other schools.

A key phrase from the OECD Report on Scottish Education has always stuck in my mind: "If you continue to expect less and less of your learners then you will get less." In Scotland there is a cosy consensus that fundamentally the system is 'sound'. The secondary school system is certainly ***reliable****. Wherever you live in Scotland any local secondary school won't be hugely different in terms of what is offered*

or how it's delivered. On one level, uniformity provides a decent benchmark/standard – but is it enough? The enemy here is surely complacency. There are no systemic demands upon schools to improve their performance – this is possibly more true of the higher performing state schools."

Other submissions took a rather more positive view:

"We possess a remarkable curriculum structure, with incredible versatility, a very high quality teaching force, while standards in formal national examinations meet the highest world standards."

Some spoke less positively about England's experience:

"Teachers in England continually expressed their frustration with continual government interference and the endless series of disastrous 'reforms' being carried through there. They often spontaneously spoke warmly of Scotland and how 'we managed to do things better'."

In general terms, *Curriculum for Excellence* was seen as representing ambition on the part of the Scottish education system, but a number of concerns were expressed about the detail of its implementation. Several submissions were concerned that it might not be the 'cure-all' which it is sometimes presented as.

Some submissions strongly expressed the view that the ambition of Scotland's schools has been, and is being, limited by the context in which they are expected to operate and by low levels of competence shown by many national agencies and local authorities.

There were submissions which made very clear attempts to set out what they thought should be done to address the challenges they thought Scottish education faces and how its ambition might be increased. The points made in such submissions are summarised below.

- Young people's learning experiences in the classroom and beyond must be the focus. They should be grounded in emerging understandings about how learning takes place. Drop the term 'Curriculum for Excellence' as a catch-all, silver bullet and panacea and re-establish the highest level curriculum objectives, for example creativity. Firmly align assessment to Assessment is for Learning strategies and to the concepts of application, breadth and challenge set out in *Building the Curriculum 5*. Advise on how to build capacity for transformational change and innovation relating to 'next practice' in **pedagogy** including learning from ICT and games applications.
- Establish ways of ensuring that **learning** (as both outcome and process) is seen as the core business of the learning

environment, schools, services, national agencies and government. The core business is not 'running the system'. That learning is the core should be overtly stated in, and permeate, every establishment and service and the remit of every professional.

- Every senior leader in establishments and services should be skilled in systematic approaches to **innovation and change**. In any such approach, change should be seen as a learning process (in which you learn your way through change during innovation), a perspective that has deep implications for all professional learning. As part of this approach, we need to develop ways that allow all schools and services to take future trends into account.
- Re-engineer **school improvement** approaches so that the school's vision and purpose are regularly re-examined. Self-evaluation should focus on improvement and not be about compliance, including compliance with education authority planning forms. The key evidence should come from young people's achievements in class.
- **Innovation, development, and research** (IDR) should be the remit of a senior leader in every school, authority, agency, and service with the purpose of engaging staff and young people in particular in investigations and action projects. Schools should be actively seeking 'next practice'.
- Develop/support but do not control **learning networks** of teachers, for example, to encourage a culture of ambition, inclusion and achievement in every school. Learn from emerging networks such as Pedagoo.
- Establish a strategic partnership with the National College for School Leadership to introduce a coherent and systematic development programme for prospective and serving **headteachers** and authority officers.
- Headteachers should appear in person before a group of locally elected councilors who would be supported by the education service, to give a **public account** of the work of the school and young people's achievements every year using agreed measures of success. Parents should have the right to attend and ask questions.
- Develop an approach to self-reflection that looks **forward** as well as inward to help schools' Innovation, Development and Research efforts.
- Re-engineer 'pupil councils' as '**learning councils**' where we do not have 'class reps' but young people who are voted for and appointed as 'learning councillors' and whose role it is to reflect on their experiences (for example, engaging with adults on learning rounds) and to advise their teachers and school leaders on how to improve learning.
- Introduce guidance and codes of appropriate conduct for school **ICT** systems including the use of smart phones to give wider access to content and social networking.

- Vocational learning opportunities must be given parity of esteem with academic routes.
- Innovative solutions should be developed in partnerships between schools and colleges to provide greater choice and opportunities for young people in the 'senior phase' of their schooling.
- Careers education and other guidance to young people moving into their 'senior phase' should be clearly signposted and easy to access.
- Schooling should give more emphasis to the acquisition and development of personal and social skills as well as creativity and enterprise.

3. What are the outcomes for children and young people we should hold as being most important?

A significant number of the people and organisations which submitted evidence sought to indicate the overall aims they thought Scotland's schools should be working with young people to achieve in the course of their overall experience of schooling. These outcomes are listed below:

- resilience and perseverance
- self-sufficiency and initiative
- ambition and competitiveness
- confidence
- adaptability and flexibility
- independence and responsibility
- emotional intelligence
- (global) citizenship.

In addition, a number of people and organisations spoke of outcomes such as:

- motivation and engagement and a range of personal and social skills
- employability skills
- language learning
- a relevant experience of vocational education
- a relevant experience of outdoor education
- a relevant, contemporary body of knowledge and related cognitive skills, particularly in relation to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)
- contemporary skills in relation to ICT
- thinking (higher order) skills, including creativity, imagination and innovation
- literacy and numeracy of a good standard.

Some submissions referred to the development of some kind of 'entrepreneurial spirit' in young people as being one of the key outcomes which the Scottish education system should be promoting.

A number of submissions;

- placed great emphasis on schools playing a more significant role in supporting young people to develop an appropriate range of positive values in relation to their own behaviour and the behaviour of the various communities of which they are a part
- thought that it was important that young people should be supported in developing healthy lifestyles through systematic exposure to sport, the arts and outdoor education, including outdoor free play, the importance of which was emphasised on several occasions.

Submissions were very clear about the importance of schools taking an active and central role in promoting the well-being of young people. A couple of submissions have argued for schools to make much more explicit use of the so-called '**SHANARRI**' principles in the design of the range of experiences which they provide to support young people's personal and social development. These principles are that young people should be **S**afe, **H**ealthy, **A**ctive, **N**urtured, **A**chieving, **R**espected, **R**esponsible and **I**ncluded. There may be a need to look at whether or not the implementation of the Scottish Government report *Safe, Healthy and Achieving* needs to be given renewed impetus in order to ensure that securing the wellbeing of young people is a key focus of the work of schools.

The importance of young people developing skills in the use of information and communications technologies emerged as a theme of central significance in a number of submissions as was the need for these technologies to be used to much greater effect in supporting the development of young people's cognitive and other skills and their acquisition and of up-to-date knowledge.

There was also strong support for the notion that young people should be developing higher order cognitive skills along the lines of those described in the Report of the Higher Order Skills Excellence Group. The use of interdisciplinary projects was seen as being of importance in this connection. A number of submissions stressed the importance of young people having opportunities to acquire appropriate bodies of knowledge, key ideas and concepts, which would provide a context for them to develop such skills. Submissions were very clear that the outcomes sought with young people would need to place less emphasis on the acquisition and (temporary) retention of detailed knowledge and more on core ideas, concepts and skills.

The core skill model utilised currently by the SQA was described in some submissions as having continuing merit – the components of this model are Communication, Numeracy, ICT (including information literacy), Working with Others and Problem Solving.

There was widespread support for the idea that education should focus on:

- reasoning skills, logical thinking and the ability to question intelligently
- imagination and creative thinking
- problem-solving skills
- self-esteem and confidence
- practical skills, useful for life, as well as academic achievements
- understanding and tolerance towards others
- a strong sense of community
- communication and social skills
- a strong moral framework within which to make decisions and choices
- flexibility and the ability to adapt positively to change.

One submission argued that what is needed is a curriculum which has an integrated balance of artistic, practical and intellectual content, with an emphasis on social skills and community values. This would be a curriculum designed specifically to fit with the developmental needs of children at the different stages of their growth. It argued also that this curriculum should be delivered in physical and organisational contexts similar to those associated with 'human scale education' and talked of "reducing the scale of larger schools, so that more nurturing communities can be more easily cultivated".

This need for 'human scale education' was referred to in another submission in relation to the under-achievement of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds: "Many lower secondary pupils, particularly in disadvantaged areas, would benefit from smaller schools and/or a structure whereby classes are taught by fewer different teachers."

Some very fundamental questions about the expectations that we have for the middle stages of school education, particularly the latter stages of primary and early stages of secondary education were raised by submissions. Some argued that these stages might need to give much greater emphasis to promoting the personal and social development of young people and encouraging and supporting their engagement with learning both as an individual and within mixed-age groups. Emphasis should be placed on developing their skills and confidence as learners more generally. Perhaps young people need to be allowed to 'play' just a little bit longer before they are expected to engage in the precise, analytical and highly logical learning which characterises the 'senior phase' and defines, in consequence, the need for earlier phases to 'prepare' young people for entry to that phase.

Education for sustainability was identified as a matter of very great significance for young people now and in the future. There was a very clear need identified for young people to be supported in acquiring

relevant knowledge, an informed conceptual framework and relevant cognitive and other skills.

Overall, the outcomes set in submissions could be seen as being broadly equivalent to those set out for *Curriculum for Excellence* which was frequently described as providing a good basis for delivering important educational outcomes in many submissions.

One submission concludes with this statement, *"we believe that this (a broad education which allows young people to flourish outside the classroom as well as in it) is best achieved when there is good leadership, self-discipline, a caring environment in which people matter more than systems management, and when the school experience will inspire as well as teach".*

4. And regarding change itself?

A submission from a major national agency spoke of how innovation in the promotion of young people's learning might best be stimulated, supported and, where shown to be effective, disseminated and incorporated into the general practice of schools. It said;

"(W)e can begin to identify certain trends and conditions for innovation in education. Innovative systems are underpinned by clearly defined aims that succeed in bringing together will and support from all stakeholders, including those outside of the education system. Conceptions of what education entails are pushed to their limits. Resources, tools and communities are identified and effectively reconfigured towards tackling practical changes. Initiatives within the system are informed by evidence while also evaluated and assessed to ensure continued feedback and improvement. Finally, when something works it is scaled across the system, avoiding inequality and 'islands of excellence.'

These trends are important to note but not hard guidelines for increasing innovation in education. Instead, the Scottish education system and its stakeholders need to reflect on their current capacity for innovation in education and the implications of such a shift. Stakeholders must clearly define of where innovation needs to occur and take account of its current landscape – where is innovation taking place and who is taking part? Stakeholders will gain sight of opportunities and be better equipped to identify emerging trends and gaps. From this point, stakeholders need to cultivate a Scottish pipeline for innovation in education – how innovation is identified, supported and tested – and undertake effort to improve access and unlock barriers. These steps set the stage for a more open and informed environment towards innovation in the education system. Equally, the outcomes of this process may even evolve into innovation systems in themselves – as seen with the likes of New York City's InnovateNYC.

Reforming an education system through innovation has immense possibility, but that is only part of the equation. Going beyond improving the systems that make up education in Scotland, we must ask ourselves what kinds of learning should be taking place within?"

Another submission concludes thus; *"Education is about people and their learning. Learning is a process of change and, to complete the circle, change is a learning process. Looking to the future can be scary, because of uncertainty and because of the past investment that people have put into achieving the present. So, change has to deal with emotions; it has to inspire, encourage, support, and stimulate. Educational change can fulfil the dreams of teachers just as education must fulfil the dreams of our young people."*

WE ONLY THINK WHEN
CONFRONTED WITH
A PROBLEM. — *John Dewey*

CIVILISATION IS A RACE BETWEEN EDUCATION
AND CATASTROPHE. — *H. G. Wells*

THE ONLY THING THAT INTERFERES WITH MY
LEARNING IS MY EDUCATION. — *Albert Einstein*

Cover design www.everyonelovescake.co.uk

www.reformscotland.com
www.cspp.org.uk

CSPP
CENTRE FOR SCOTTISH PUBLIC POLICY

reform scotland