

Understanding Quality and Equity of schooling in Scotland: Locating educational traditions globally

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Abstract

This paper provides a descriptive analysis of the OECD's (2007) national report on Scottish education, *Quality and equity of schooling in Scotland*, while also briefly considering the Scottish government's Diagnostic Report, prepared for the review. The national report is situated against Scottish traditions of schooling, particularly the view that access to academic curricula for all is a democratic and egalitarian approach, and also set against the changing role of the OECD. On the latter, the paper argues that the OECD, in the context of globalisation, has become more of a policy actor in its own right, in addition to its more traditional think-tank function. The OECD is a now significant transnational policy actor in education, contributing to the emergent global education policy field. The overarching argument proffered is that debates provoked by the OECD's report, for example the David Raffe/Richard Teese exchange in the *Scottish Educational Review*, 40(1), 2008, stem from tensions between the new supranational expression of political and policy authority as articulated in the OECD's report and that located more traditionally within the nation. The academic curricula for all, the Scottish tradition, is challenged by the OECD report, which supports more diverse curricula provision, including more vocational education in schools, particularly at the post-compulsory phase. We note, drawing on theoretical and empirical insights of Bourdieu, that the success of the former demands pedagogies which scaffold for those students not possessing the requisite cultural capitals for success with academic curricula, while the latter demands a strategic effort to ensure parity of esteem between different curricular provisions.

Introduction

The overarching argument developed in this paper is that debates raised by the publication of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report on education in Scotland stem from tensions attached to an emerging supranational sphere of political and policy authority. The tensions relate to considerations of what limits and effects this sphere of authority should have on national spheres of policy making authority in respect of schooling. This is to argue that the very real matters raised in the debates reflect a larger issue around the direction and processes attached to

educational change, and the authority that global organisations, such as the OECD, have in representing and influencing national educational systems. This tension becomes even more evident in a country such as Scotland which has a specific and long term history of schooling that links to the Scottish Enlightenment. Additionally, this type of tension has been amplified in Scottish education by the rise of new Scottish nationalism set against the politics of the UK union and Scottish attempts to distance itself from its English 'other'. Since its election in May 2007, the minority Scottish National Party government has worked quite adeptly with a discourse of 'modernised nationalism' (Arnott and Osga 2009). Yet, the OECD report, which is the focus of this paper, was commissioned by a Scottish Labour government, but delivered to the minority Scottish National Party government. This paper is offered as a means of making explicit the sources of this national/supranational tension and to contribute to an understanding of the debate and its significance for the direction of educational change and its effects on teachers, students, policy makers and researchers.

In order to develop this argument, this paper undertakes two basic tasks. The first is to provide a description and analysis of the OECD's (2007) national report on Scottish education, *Quality and equity of schooling in Scotland*. In so doing, the paper also considers, albeit briefly, the *OECD review of the quality and equity of education outcomes in Scotland: Diagnostic report*, produced by Scottish Executive Education Department in preparation for the OECD review. In a way these two reports see a coming together of the 'global eye' and 'national eye' (Novoa and Yariv-Mashal 2003) through an OECD lens and the constitution of a legible space of educational governance. The first task and analysis will be located within considerations of Scottish traditions and approaches to school policy and provision of meritocratic, liberal universalism, evident in the Scottish commitment to comprehensive schools and academic curricula (Paterson 2003, 2009).

The second task of this paper is to locate the OECD's review of Scottish education in the context of what we would see, following Bourdieu (2003), as an emergent global field of education policy in which the OECD is an active player and contributor. Indeed, one way to read the OECD review is as a global positioning device for Scottish Education. This locates Scottish education on a global field of comparison through the usage of PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) performance data, but also through associated comparative practices and discourses. The actual title of the OECD's review derives from OECD analyses of national performance on PISA in terms of both quality (how well students

perform) and equity, defined by OECD as the extent of socio economic effects on student school performance. The impact of OECD educational work can be seen in the very language used now in national systems to describe both quality and equitable education. This is indicative of the ways in which schooling policy at the national level is now imbricated in global or supranational developments and discourses (Risvi and Lingard 2010). In the conclusion to the paper, we will elaborate on this context of education policy production and the tensions it creates with the national sphere of influence in respect of education policy; tensions which are evident in the debate surrounding the OECD's report, especially in relation to the role of curricula in the production of both equality and inequality.

In the sections that follow we use the expression 'emergent global field of education policy' to refer to the practices, effects and networks of agents located in various international organisations such as the OECD, World Bank and UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) (see Lingard, Rawolle and Taylor 2005, Rawolle and Lingard 2008). The use of this expression aims to highlight that the competition between different agents in these organisations has resulted in different kinds of pressures and forces on nations from beyond the nation-state for change. In addition and drawing on the insights of Novoa and Yariv-Mashal (2003), we use the expression 'global eye' to refer to the ways of seeing the world created by the emergent global educational policy field, and as a contrast to the 'national eye', ways of seeing the world within national policy fields (Lingard and Rawolle 2010; Risvi and Lingard 2010).

Our use of the concept of 'spheres of authority' is likewise linked to different scales of educational policy fields, and is what we consider the main contention in debates about the OECD's report on Scotland (Rosenau 1997). Different spheres of authority at national and supranational scales help us to talk about the political basis for advocating change, and the justification that underpins the OECD's advice for changes to Scottish education. We suggest that given the central role of schooling in the constitution of the imagined community that is the nation, tensions between the stances of these spheres of authority are particularly evident in the education policy field, and that this is particularly so in contemporary Scotland (see also Arnott and Osga 2009).

Scottish and OECD Traditions

Scotland

Education has been central to Scottish society and identity since at least the time of the Enlightenment. The Scottish parliament in 1696, prior to the act of union with England in 1707, enacted legislation that required each parish to provide elementary schooling for all. By the end of the eighteenth century, well prior to other comparable nations, Scotland was a literate society, with literacy established well beyond the intellectual classes. Indeed the American historian, Arthur Herman in his book, *The Scottish Enlightenment: The Scot's invention of the modern world*, observes that: 'Scotland became Europe's first literate society' (Herman 2001: 23). Scottish universities and secondary schools, which existed prior to the expansion and provision of mass comprehensive secondary schooling from the 1960s, had very much a public character. Further, the expansion of comprehensive secondary schools from the 1960s provided a more academic curriculum than their counterparts throughout the UK and Europe. The expansion of secondary schooling from the 1960s provoked educational debates around the globe as to the appropriate curricula response: one response has been to broaden curriculum provision quite early in secondary education, most often through the inclusion of more vocationally oriented curricula; the other has been to see access to academic curricula for all as more democratic. The latter has been the Scottish tradition, framed by strong arguments about democracy and equality (Paterson 2003, Raffe 2008a).

This distinctiveness of Scottish schooling reflects particular Scottish perceptions of the relationship between education, democracy, opportunity, equality and individual and collective well-being. Paterson (2002) argues that the positive vote for devolution on the 1997 Referendum reflected the Scottish opposition to the construction of the self-concerned neo-liberal individual, which underpinned Conservative and New Labour UK policies from the late 1970s onwards. Following devolution, economic policy for the UK is still made at Westminster, while education, cultural policies and health are devolved powers of the Scottish parliament.

McCrone speaks of Scotland as an 'understated nation' and notes that, 'people think of themselves as Scottish because of the micro-contexts of their lives reinforced by the school system' (McCrone 2005: 74). Further, McCrone (2005) argues that social democratic values were 'badged' as Scottish, while Paterson (2002) suggests that the political centre in Scotland is closer to the left than it is in other parts of the UK. In this context, schooling policy developments in England under both Conservative and New Labour governments have been taken as negative references for Scots and Scottish policy makers.

Education policy-makers in Scotland have also looked more to Europe than their counterparts in Westminster and Whitehall, seeking to establish a more social democratic approach (Arnott and Osga 2009).

The Scottish National Party in government since May 2007 have worked with a modernised version of nationalism, according to Arnott and Osga (2009), who have analysed the major policy documents emanating from this government. This modernised nationalism works with globalised policy discourses but 'vernacularises' them, while seeking to position the Nordic and Baltic states as the significant reference societies for Scotland, rather than its powerful neighbour. This also serves to discursively excise Scotland from the (dis)United Kingdom and thus supports an independence agenda. Thus, while policy making has been centralised in England, there is still a wide variety of institutions which oversee Scottish schooling.¹ This liberal state structure dispersal of power is very different from the accretion of power at the centre in English schooling policy making, which began under Thatcher and continued unabated under New Labour. This form of dispersed educational governance was of concern to the OECD review in terms of the achievement of its recommendations.

The changing policy role of the OECD in education

George Papadopoulos's history of the OECD's approach to education was published in 1994. In that history he traced the broad liberal humanist stance which the OECD had traditionally taken on education, which was influenced as well by progressive concerns of the sociology of education. At the same time, he alluded to a growing tension in the OECD's education work between a policy emphasis on the broader purposes of education and the economic growth functions of the OECD, which were beginning to occur by the early 1990s.

Drawing on research on the OECD (Henry *et al.* 2001, Risvi and Lingard 2009), we would argue that the work of the OECD has been transformed since that time. Globalisation has impacted upon the Organisation as it has sought a continuing role for itself, set against other political developments such as the enhanced policy prominence of the European Union (EU) and other regionalisms. The OECD has

¹ For example, the Scottish government, Learning and Teaching Scotland, the Scottish Qualifications Authority, the General Teaching Council, Her Majesty's Inspectorate and Local Authorities. Local Authorities still have policy-making power in schooling, unlike their English counterparts

been both affected by globalisation and expressed or articulated a particular version of it in its policy work. The social imaginary underpinning the OECD's articulation of globalisation in education has been a neo-liberal one, which has worked in what Bourdieu (2003) would call a 'performative' fashion, that is, helping to create that of which it speaks, while crowding out other readings. Indeed, the OECD has been a bearer of neo-liberal globalisation (Risvi and Lingard 2009), while simultaneously taking on more of an activist policy role in education and other fields.

We would note, though, that there are some contradictions in different parts of the OECD's work. For example, the OECD practices and discourses attached to its science and innovations branches have been one of the foundations for policies associated with the knowledge based economy, which could be interpreted as a post-neoliberal policy frame, since they focused on different capacities for innovation that result from varied national histories and linkages between education and research communities.² These practices and discourses have slowly been adopted into the OECD's educational vernacular, with the focus on innovation and constraints to innovation in education mirroring an emerging body of economic work on scientific research and innovation associated with National Innovation Systems (see Enright and Roberts 2001, Lundvall 1998, Nelson 1993). The OECD's strengthened policy role extends beyond its original function as a high quality think-tank for the rich nations of the globe.

The OECD has been described variously as a think tank, a geographic entity, an organisational structure, a policy-making forum, a network of policy researchers and consultants and a sphere of influence (Henry *et al.* 2001: 1). Indeed, it is now, following the argument of Rosenau (1997), a new sphere of political authority working above nations with real effects within them. While these older descriptors still apply to varying degrees, we would argue that the OECD has become more of a policy actor in education. In this actor persona the Organisation now stresses the economic or human capital (productivity) functions of education policy over others. Indicative of this, a separate directorate of education was established in

² This distinction is important as the OECD Report's rapporteur, Richard Teese, employs language consistent with performativity, but not neo-liberalism. That is, the language around innovation and innovation systems in his report is economic, but focuses more on different constraints to the maximising of economic potential in a nation. This is consistent with the knowledge economy, but uses a variety of perspectives to address the limits. Ironically, in some ways, an equity focus is consistent with an innovation systems focus, in that it points to areas where human capital could be further developed and connected to long term economic needs and developments, and to potential instabilities in the system.

2002. Until then education had to win a continuing mandate and had a largely inferred role within the Organisation's broader economic policy work.

In the context of globalisation, the OECD has strengthened relations with what the OECD refers to as non-member economies (NMEs) and with other international organisations such as the World Bank and UNESCO. For example, these three organisations have collaborated on the development of world education indicators (WEIs), which have been designed to provide comparative performance data on the transitional and developing economies, but all located within a human capital conception of education (Rutkowski 2007).

The OECD has always conducted national reviews in education – the empirical focus of this paper is the OECD national review of Scotland. This work, however, has been affected by the OECD's enhanced role in developing comparative international educational performance data, which is viewed as of increasing importance, given the role that the OECD sees education playing in developing capacity for and enhancing innovation, and social and economic growth. Indeed, we would argue that in the context of globalisation, the OECD has built a significant policy niche for itself as a site of technical expertise in comparing national educational outputs. In this role, it has provided advice to national systems regarding data collection and statistics, while also working collaboratively with the EU on a variety of indicators and statistical collections. In terms of the OECD as major source of technical expertise in comparative performance data, we are referring to the WEIs, the OECD's educational indicators, published annually in *Education at glance*, and particularly to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

PISA, developed from a 1999 OECD report, *Measuring Student Knowledge and Skills – A New Framework for Assessment* (OECD, 1999), was first conducted in 2000 and then every three years since. PISA examines the applied knowledge of students near the end of compulsory schooling in relation to literacy, numeracy and science (see Grek 2009). The basic assumption of PISA and the need for such international comparative performance of schooling systems are intimately linked to the human capital view that the best measure of the potential international competitiveness of a national economy is 'the quality of national education and training systems judged according to international standards' (Brown *et al.* 1997: 7-8).

This statistical work of the OECD, alongside that of other international organisations, have, together, contributed to the 'layers of governance spreading within and across national boundaries' (Held and McGrew, 2005: 11). This is reflected in the imbrication of national and supranational frames in policy production in education (Risvi and Lingard 2010). This is the emergent post-Westphalian reality of challenges to national sovereignty in politics and policy making and related networked ('cellular') relations, which now accompany the older hierarchies ('vertebrate' relations) of national policy development (Appadurai 2006). Further, WEIs, Educational Indicators and PISA (along with a range of other international comparative performance data) have contributed to the emergence of a global educational policy field (Lingard *et al.* 2005, Osga and Lingard 2007) and a commensurate global space of measurement. International data are now 'brokered' at the national policy level and constitute another layer of educational governance (Grek *et al.* 2009). Rose (1999) has spoken about 'policy as numbers' in respect of such developments within nations; PISA and other measures can be seen to be this policy as numbers approach writ globally.

PISA results provide international comparative data on the quality and equity of national education systems. The very title of the OECD's national review of Scottish education represents a coming together of these new roles and new forms of education policy governance – a new sphere of political authority – with the traditional approach of national reviews. However, we should note here that for the OECD that the UK is considered to be the national unit. For the most recent PISA (2006) and for the current 2009 PISA Scotland has asked for and financially supported the OECD to treat Scotland as separate nation (as well as part of the UK). Both factors – the impact of supranational policy frames as with the OECD (and the EU) – the new sphere of policy authority, along with nationalist developments in Scotland - are responses to and expressions of globalisation.

The OECD's Review of the *Quality and Equity of Education Outcomes in Scotland*

With people who take up a position, whether leftist or conservative, on the question of education, it is always necessary to ask what interests they have in the educational system, to what degree their capital is bound up with mobility through this institution, and so on. I believe that, in the intellectual world in the broad sense, relationship to the educational system is one of the major explanatory principles for practices and opinions. (Bourdieu 2008: 50)

Background

In December 2007 the OECD released the final report of its review of Scottish education, entitled *Quality and equity of schooling in Scotland* (OECD 2007), providing Scotland with the evaluation offered by an international team of educational experts led by Professor Richard Teese, an Australian academic, and Bourdieuan scholar. The key problem that the Review text addressed was the extent to which Scottish education could be said to provide both quality and equity for its students and what measures would ensure its continued development and competitiveness relative to other OECD nations — a broad problem agreed upon in discussions between the OECD and Scottish Education. This problem necessitated an examination of the strengths and weaknesses of the Scottish education system relative to its competitor OECD nations and mechanisms of the system that produced problems in terms of the equity of provision and outcomes. The report offered policy recommendations based around these problems for Scottish education to consider, viewed through the twin lenses of an international eye and a global eye on Scottish Education.

Public responses to the OECD review were swift and ongoing. For example, the David Raffe (2008b)/Richard Teese (2008) debate in the pages of the *Scottish Review* centred on the accuracy of the representation of Scottish education offered by the OECD report, particularly, in relation to the character of Scottish secondary curricula and inequality, and more broadly the seeming exclusion of Scottish education researchers from the process of the Review. One of the points of contention offered by Raffe (2008a) was that the OECD Report argued that a highly academically focused curriculum acted as a capacity constraint on the further growth and contribution that the school sector could add to both economic and social goals. Part of Teese's response to Raffe's comments was phrased in terms of equity, which is consistent with an economic focus on maximising the potential of human capital and embedding systems that promote innovation and growth across education systems. The counter position was that the Scottish academic secondary curriculum was an important part of the strength of the Scottish education system, and was also deeply embedded in questions of nationalism. Specifically, David Raffe (2008a) argued that the Scottish norm of access to academic curriculum for all was part of the democratic and egalitarian tradition in Scottish schooling. This is a stance also clearly articulated across a range of the important historical and policy work of Lindsay Paterson (e.g. 2003, 2009). In contrast, Richard Teese (2008) argued that this worked to exclude those from disadvantaged and lower social class backgrounds and that more diverse curricular provision could potentially overcome the issue

of strongish correlations between social class background and school performance and low numbers in the postcompulsory stage.

In effect, the debate raised a tension between the authority of the OECD Review's Rapporteur to comment and make suggestions in regard to Scottish Education, and the right of reply from Scottish education researchers. One culmination of ongoing debates about the report was a Keynote Address presented by Lindsay Paterson at a large international education conference in September, 2007 (BERA), which was subsequently reported in the *Times Education Supplement*. The article summarised the presentation in the following way:

Professor Paterson said the OECD report was heavily influenced by the Australian academic Richard Teese, the review team's leading light and rapporteur, whom he described as a leading exponent of the 'nebulous ideas' of the philosopher Bourdieu. He denounced the idea of offering different curricula to different kinds of pupil as 'an insidious idea, derived from tendentious research, that the liberal curriculum is intrinsically inaccessible to certain social groups, and hence that the curriculum needs to be reconstructed to avoid this alleged cultural bias'. (Munro 2008)

Paterson's disagreements with the OECD Review analysis highlight the considerable investments and interests of people and governments within nations in respect of representations of their national educational systems. The viewing position and lens through which international experts view national systems often does not coincide with that of educational experts within a nation, which leads to differences in ways to then structure reform efforts. Here there is a tension between the global research eye as articulated in OECD reports and the national eye of educational research, which is grounded more thoroughly in Scottish traditions and their histories.

The rapporteur and overview

Our task in this section is not to offer an evaluation of the current and ongoing debates about the OECD's report, but to provide an overview of the Review itself. The issue of interest in this section is how the OECD's final report on Scottish Education resulted from the refraction of data when viewed through the twin lenses of an international eye and a global eye. In order to undertake this task, we will keep in mind Bourdieu's comments about the importance of understanding the interests and

investment that people hold in education systems when evaluating public comments that they make. The starting point for this task is to consider the background of the Review's academic leader and rapporteur for the review, Richard Teese. An understanding of Teese's background aids an understanding and exploration of some of the features of the OECD's report, in both the logic and argument sustained in the text, as well as the recommendations that the Report details for the renewal of Scottish Education.

Professor Richard Teese is an Australian academic who has written a number of policy papers both within Australia and internationally for the OECD. Teese's academic interests span three overlapping areas. First, Teese is a leading researcher and has published extensively in post-compulsory education, focusing particularly on the role and function of further education and training in national education systems. Second, Teese has played an important role in the sociology of education, having both translated a major text of the original writing of the late French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu on education and developed a Bourdieuan approach to the study of education in other nations, particularly in Australia with a focus on how cultural capital deeply embedded in curricula catalyses the reproduction of inequality. Teese's approach is focused specifically on developing an understanding and explanations of relations between different groups and the mechanisms of education that result in unequal educational rewards to different groups of students, particularly in relation to social class and location. This reality can be somewhat simplistically reduced to a focus on 'who gets what' from different parts of education (a phrase also used in different sections of the OECD's final report), and how this occurs. Third, Teese holds an interest in policy sociology, in the application of sociological thinking to developing policy advice for reforming and shaping education so that who gets what from education is more evenly distributed to students from different social and cultural backgrounds. This normative stance illustrates a commitment to equity in the provision and outcomes of schooling. How Teese's interests and background matter to understanding the OECD's report on Scotland lie in the approach and dispositions that he held towards education and schooling, which he brought to the task of the Review. These background comments provide a way to understand the relationship between the process of the OECD's Review, the arguments developed in the final report, and the final recommendations. The following sections will deal sequentially with these three issues raised by the OECD's review of Scottish education: the process of the OECD's review of Scottish education, including some discussion of the terms of reference and the diagnostic report prepared by the Scottish Government, the key arguments of the final text, and the recommendations of the Report.

Matters of Processes

Understanding a report such as the OECD's review of Scottish education requires a context, and the processes involved in the undertaking of the review provide some of the background in which the final report emerged. Scotland's review of education was initiated by the then Labour/Liberal national government in November 2006, when they invited the OECD to undertake a review of Scottish Education and to compare its performance relative to other OECD nations. Together, the OECD and the Scottish Executive³ prepared a set of terms of reference for the Review, and a timeline. Following this step, a set of experts from comparator countries were selected as the review team in consultation between the Scottish Executive and the OECD, drawn from Finland (Simo Juva), New Zealand (Frances Kelly) and Belgium (Dirk van Damme), with the rapporteur and final report to be chaired by an academic expert from Australia (Richard Teese). The justification for this selection of experts is not publically provided in documentation associated with the review. However, the choice of Richard Teese as rapporteur may lie in similarities between the history and current challenges facing Scottish and Australian education systems. More specifically, Australia's education system was originally modeled on Scotland's educational system, and though they have travelled somewhat divergent paths, similar challenges have been faced by both nations. In the early 1990s, for example, Australia adopted an outcomes based curriculum throughout its constituent states and territories, and the experience of this process shares some similarities with Scotland's recent curriculum reform efforts. Alternatively, the selection of Teese may lie in his institutional location at the University of Melbourne alongside Professor Barry McGaw, former Director of Education at the OECD.

In order to set the scene for the Review team, the Scottish Executive developed a background report on education in Scotland, which set out the key features of the education system, current policy initiatives and known challenges. To better understand the final report, it is important to note the specific terms of reference provided to the review team, and the information provided by the Scottish Executive in their background report.

³ Following devolution in 1997, the Scottish government and public service (after 1999) were referred to as the Scottish Executive. After being elected in May, 2007 the new minority Scottish National Party government changed this to Scottish Government.

The Scottish Executive provided both specific terms of reference for the review panel, along with some contextual discussion regarding the policy framework to highlight the interconnections between the terms. The terms of reference for the review can be described in two overlapping ways, relating to the overall objectives of the Review and a series of specific questions to be dealt with by the review panel. In the appendix to the final text these terms of reference were outlined in two sections:

The Scottish Executive's key objectives for the review are:

- to invite the OECD to carry out a review of the quality and equity of education outcomes in Scotland.
- to structure the review in a way which integrates lessons from PISA and other benchmarking countries/regions with an expert analysis of key aspects of education policy in Scotland.
- to invite the OECD, on the basis of their analysis, to highlight areas of policy and levers which might add further value to our agenda of improving education outcomes for young people in Scotland. (OECD 2007: 161)

The first objective for the Review dealt with two major issues which still face education systems globally — equity and quality. Equity and quality are both necessary and somewhat contradictory or competing principles in education. We would note here though, that the concept of equity has historical manifestations in different policy language (for example, social justice, equality of opportunity, inclusion). The usage of the term equity was aligned with the term quality in the terms of reference. This alignment reflects the way the OECD's PISA data are represented in international league tables of student performance. Furthermore, this alignment provides an indication of the discursive effects of OECD policy, where in policy terms, equity and quality are rearticulated in OECD PISA terms.

Equity is associated with the equivalent treatment of students towards the achievement of commonly agreed upon skills and knowledge, such as basic literacy and numeracy. These are seen as nationally valuable and contribute broadly to the social, cultural and economy capacities of a nation's population. David Raffe's (2008a) critique of the OECD review in relation to equity also turns on how equity is defined. For our purposes here, we need only be concerned with what Raffe (2008b) calls Equity 1 and Equity 3. The first defines equity as 'a narrow spread of achievement and /or by a very large proportion of students achieving at or above a minimum 'threshold 'level' (Raffe 2008b:25). In these terms Scotland

does well on the OECD measure of equity in PISA. Equity 3, however, is defined 'by a relatively shallow gradient of achievement across the whole spectrum of socio-economic status' (Raffe 2008b:25). The impact of SES background on PISA scores was above the OECD average for Scotland, whereas in relation to Equity 1, Scottish schooling is quite equitable. The OECD review, Raffe suggests, works with both Equity 1 and Equity 3 and is why the report can say Scottish schooling is equitable but also that social class background limits opportunity through schooling.

Quality is associated with two kinds of educational issues, in the provision of "rigorous" curricular, pedagogical and assessment regimes, and in the way that these regimes act to select the most able students and reward them with greater educational or vocational opportunities. The focus on rigorous curricula has historically been interpreted by policy makers as suggesting that regimes are provided to challenge cohorts of students academically, and to avoid "dumbing down" educational provision. This requires a significant investment in teachers, in whose hands rest the task of interpreting and giving form and context to curriculum to suit the needs of students in their classrooms. The focus on selection leads to an emphasis on the promotion of individual student's skills, capacities and knowledge, and providing opportunities for students to develop and pursue their own interests relative to their academic abilities. In OECD terms, however, quality has been 'reduced' to good scores on PISA, a manifestation of the phenomenon of 'policy as numbers' (Osga and Lingard 2007).

In a somewhat simplistic way, the principle of equity leads to an emphasis on providing similarities in student experiences and equivalence of educational provision to all students, whereas quality leads to an emphasis on highly academic, university oriented studies and student choice, diversity of provision and competition between students. National education systems have developed specific features that weight the importance of equity and excellence in different ways. Yet, in an era where the international performance of student matters as a way of highlighting the strength of nations relative to their competitors, the balance between these two principles has been increasingly placed under scrutiny. As the terms of reference suggested '(t)he economic, cultural, and social dimensions of globalisation and the emergence of the knowledge society intensify the pressure on governments' (OECD 2007: 161).

While both principles have their place throughout different phases of education, the early stages of education have historically been weighted in Scotland toward the logic of equity, while the later stages of education have been weighted towards the logic of quality. However there has been an increasing

pressure to ensure and emphasise the importance of equity in the later stages of education. This pressure can be accounted for by three overlapping processes; for example, in widening participation policy agendas. First, the widening of educational provision and changes in national labour markets has led to credential inflation, where more educational achievement is required for comparable job opportunities. Second, there has been increased scrutiny on the effects of education on different equity groups in societies and demands on school systems to be more equitable to those groups historically excluded from the upper levels of education. This has been linked to social movements and democratic politics and economic thought concerning the wastage of human capital accompanying the low retention rates of some groups of students, particularly those from working class and poverty backgrounds. Third, the globalisation of educational policy has led to the emergence of international comparison of the performance of educational systems, in which the standing of national education systems is ranked according to national scores on measures such as PISA and the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement's (IEA's) Trends in International Maths and Science Study (TIMSS). This overarching balance between equity and excellence can be read as the central problem that the Scottish Executive set for the OECD review panel. The contemporary policy goal around the globe, and sponsored in no small way by the OECD, is for systems to achieve *both* high quality *and* high equity.

The second section in the terms of reference provides a series of questions to be responded to by the review panel in relation to the key objectives of the review:

1. Viewed from an international perspective, what are the strengths and weaknesses of education in Scotland, particularly with reference to those who are not achieving their full potential, including those at risk of becoming part of the NEET group.
2. Do the range of current reforms, including specifically work in progress on the wider agenda of A Curriculum for Excellence, address the challenges sufficiently? How well do the reforms compare with reforms in countries which have common issues to deal with? How effective have implementation policies, particularly in respect of outcome-based curriculum reforms, been in comparator nations?
3. Are there international insights in the delivery of education to young people at risk of underachieving from which Scotland might draw? If so, what appear to be the principal benefits

and advantages of these approaches to Scotland? And what are the most plausible strategies to deploy in a manner that respects the culture, values, and traditions of Scottish education?

4. How well do current reforms disseminate to the classroom? How effective are they at changing behaviour on the ground? Are the key messages being communicated effectively and getting through the system?

5. How sustainable is the current direction of travel? (OECD 2007: 162)

These questions provided a frame of reference for the review panel, focusing on key policy problems that related to particular areas of interest and concern to the Scottish Executive. Treated in one way, the frame directed attention towards unintended effects of recent reform efforts, and in particular curriculum reform efforts, on young people who transition from school into precarious positions — those who were at risk of falling into the category of not in education, employment or training (NEET). The emphasis of these questions was not to highlight the high achieving students in Scottish schools, whose pathways are relatively seamless, but on the plight of students whose achievement at school is more troubled, and personally, socially and economically risky. The emphasis and weighting of the questions for the review panel was, in short, on blockages and shortfalls in the dissemination of policy themes that systematically resulted in the exclusion of a known and identified group of students.

Arguments of the Review

Given the weighting of the review's terms of reference, the final report offered by the review panel gave great credence to the strengths of the Scottish education system, but identified a number of underlying challenges. In order to understand the final text, the following section outlines four core arguments, based on the high comparative performance of Scottish education, the way that this performance masks areas of underachievement and concerns for some groups of young people, the role of the curriculum in these patterns and its relevance to students at risk of becoming part of the NEET groups and finally the lack of a coherent vocational education and training system embedded within the comprehensive system of education provided in Scotland. These arguments are drawn from throughout the final text, rather than offering a chapter by chapter account. In order to fill out these arguments, each will be developed in relation to the evidence provided in the final report and the explanation offered by the review panel of the data provided. These details will help contextualise the recommendations offered in the final report.

One of the core arguments that the final report offered was a positive view of the (then) current state of Scottish education relative to its OECD competitor nations. The report argued that Scotland's comparative educational performance, on both equity and quality measures, was strong relative to its competitor OECD nations. The evidence provided in the report suggested that the Scottish education system produces cohorts of students who consistently perform well in mathematics, reading and science relative to other OECD nations. This was consistent with records of PISA results, which measure the performance of students still in school at the age of 15.

The explanation that the report provided for the strength of the Scottish educational system relative to its OECD competitor countries rested on the coherence of institutional support structures with academic goals that the system had been built around. The support structures singled out for comment by the review panel included universal early childhood education, consistent and adequate funding to different regions, leadership programs that ensured that head teachers were equipped with relevant knowledge prior to beginning their positions, exemplary support for the inclusion of students with special needs, strong teacher education programs and ongoing feedback loops with students. One key difference from many other schooling systems highlighted by the report was the lack of dividing structures within schools in the compulsory years of schooling, such as streaming and tracking of students. Effectively this indicated that all students received equivalent educational provision in schools, in terms of curriculum offered, pedagogy and grouping within schools, unlike many systems that separate students on the basis of perceived ability and achievement at younger ages and offer different kinds of curriculum for the same subject or separate curriculum paths. This key difference helps to explain the low *between* school differences in educational performance of students: the school that Scottish students attend was less influential on their academic performance than *within* school differences based on academic performance and their social class backgrounds.

Despite the strong performance of Scottish schools, the OECD's final report argued that strengths of Scottish education mask inequities in the outcomes of, and benefits received by, students from low SES backgrounds and in particular those students from areas of high levels of poverty. While this may appear contradictory, given the strengths of Scottish Education outlined by the Review team, the report drew on a closer examination of national and international data that helped to substantiate their claim. The OECD review team here worked with Raffe's Equity 1 and Equity 3. While formal measures of equity

within the Scottish educational system are comparable with other competitor nations, two ways of looking at data sets presented in the report lead to a more detailed picture.

The first set of data that supported the argument lay in the comparative performance between students from the highest SES backgrounds and those from the lowest SES backgrounds in different nations. Nations that have high distributional equity (i.e. not just the allocation of resources but on performance statistics) show a low gap between these two measures. Based around this categorisation, the report identified that Scottish schools do have some room for improvement, slipping out of the top two or three countries on this measure. The second way of filling in the data relates to the localisation of disadvantage according to the level of deprivation in the surrounding areas. This way of looking at performance data highlighted how evenly distributed educational performance was across rural and urban areas in Scotland, in effect a lens to view the geographical and spatial distribution of equity in Scotland. One of the most startling comparisons made was that relative to comparator nations, Scotland had the lowest percentage of people aged 15-19 years in either employment or training (at just above 60%) (OECD 2007: 113). In and of itself, this does not necessarily pose social issues or policy problems, if the vast majority of those not in education and training are in employment. Yet, it could be argued, coupled with the concentrated location of disadvantaged groups within Scotland, that the education system was unequally weighted toward high academic achievement, rather than broader life and work skills and training for all students.

However, the report noted two factors that suggested this rate of participation in education or training may pose a potential crisis for the education system and the meaningful participation and social involvement of people in their later lives. First, the report presented data that suggested a change in the employment structure in Scotland, in line with other OECD nations, whereby people with limited education faced a shrinking number of work opportunities, with improvements in technology and the global redistribution of manufacturing and associated industries to nations with lower work standards and lower costs. This links to credential inflation, where basic educational attainment provides entry to fewer and fewer jobs, and acts as a barrier to social mobility. Second, the report suggested that moves towards a knowledge society had increased the opportunities and employment needs for both highly skilled and flexible workers in emerging industries such as biotechnology, the computer and software industries. Hence, these two complementary pressures may in fact lead to an increasing residualisation

of students with low educational attainment, and a set of negative looping effects in disadvantaged areas, where higher percentages of students leave school early and do not enter into further training.

Perhaps the most controversial argument in the report is the claim that the then current Scottish curriculum in post-compulsory years of education was detrimental to the interests and future lives of students from low SES backgrounds, and may prove problematic in maintaining Scotland's then currently high standing on international comparisons. While the low participation rates provided some strength to the argument that the level was of concern and required attention by policymakers, the diagnosis that it was the academic focused curriculum that was the cause of this low participation required more evidence. (Paterson 2007, 2009), for example, strongly disagrees with this assessment.) The explanation presented in the report focused on a perceived (or asserted) lack of incentives for students to continue with academically demanding courses of study. This was caused, the report suggested, by a lack of intrinsic relevance of curriculum to the future lives of students who tended to leave early and by students perceiving that there were few extrinsic motivators, such as financial gains to be accrued from further study in academically oriented curriculum. This raises a question as to why the curriculum was identified as being irrelevant to students who leave early rather than other factors, and suggests that students who leave school early face an investment tradeoff between early leaving and entering trades or other work opportunities or staying on at school and receiving low achievement results.

The last major argument offered by the report suggested that students who were likely to leave school early would benefit from a strengthened vocational education and training system embedded in high schools. The main evidence for this suggestion rested on an argument that more vocationally relevant options at school would provide motivation for students considering leaving school early to reconsider. This argument was predicated on the comparison with other OECD nations that had more embedded vocational education and training options at school, such as Australia. However, given the focus and argument of the report on the quality and equity of Scottish education, the report lacked statistics from comparator nations that had embedded VET courses. This would be particularly important in relation to the academic performance of students who chose these courses relative to students who undertook academic courses. This would have supported the argument that it was more equitable for all students to have access to VET courses.

The four major arguments presented in the report provided a basis for understanding the final recommendations. The final recommendations for the report were presented in the following way:

While not wishing to specify measures, the review team considers that to effectively tackle the environment of poverty and deprivation and to make good schools work more equitably, a set of five broadly-framed strategies are required:

- National priorities funding through local government compacts
- Greater school autonomy in a local government framework
- A comprehensive, structured, and accessible curriculum
- Continuous review of curriculum and teaching
- Monitoring of student destinations. (OECD 2007: 18)

These recommendations can be broadly classified as relating to educational governance, curricula provision, quality of pedagogy, and outcomes from schooling. These recommendations flowed from the account provided by the report. This is a phenomenon common to policy, that is, policy – here the report – constructs the problems in particular ways and then creates solutions to the problems as constructed. This is how such reports work discursively; this is exactly the case with the OECD review.

The first recommendation sought to achieve greater coherence of policy across Local Authorities, but within this more autonomy for schools was suggested. The dispersed power of the liberal state in Scotland was seen to be a problem by the review. David Raffe (2008a) well encapsulated the disjunction between the global eye of the OECD and the national eye in respect of this approach to educational governance. As Raffe put it:

The Scottish style of policy-making, which seeks progress through consensus, partnership and tacit agreement rather than formal regulation (exemplified in a curriculum that is *de facto* compulsory but not a national curriculum), is seen by many Scots as a virtue. (Raffe 2008a: 28)

To the global eye of the OECD, however, this muddling through is a problem. As Raffe suggests, the OECD take a very different view of educational governance in Scotland from that dominant amongst Scots:

It appears to the OECD panel as a muddle in which responsibilities are unclear, concepts are confused and rigorous evidence and analysis are shunned in the name of consensus. (Raffe 2008a: 28)

The review team appeared to strongly support the model implicit in new public management of setting broad strategies at the centre, which steer at a distance through accountabilities constructed around outcome measures, and which, on the surface, appear to offer more autonomy to the local sites of professional practice. (Raffe (2008a: 28-30) has some interesting things to say about this.) We would also note that the OECD has been a significant sponsor of such new public management generally and specifically in schooling systems.

A restructuring of the curriculum was also argued for with continuous review of curriculum and teaching. The curricula choice at secondary schooling between access to academic curricula for all versus diversity of curricula provision requires in our view two caveats. The first approach, that of the Scottish tradition, demands pedagogies, which link to and extend the different backgrounds students bring to secondary school, so as to ensure that implicit cultural capitals inherent in academic curricula do not limit the opportunities for success of working class students (Lingard 2007). The second strategy of diverse and alternative provision, demands a press for parity of esteem between different curricula offerings, so as to ensure the non-reproduction of inequality. The emphasis upon continuous review of teaching links to the substantial 'within school' differences in Scottish education noted by the review. Here pedagogies of a particular kind are required.

The monitoring of student destinations is an attempt to enhance the evidence base for policy making, so as to reduce the numbers of young people classified as NEET (Riddell 2009). This monitoring is also linked to curriculum review and the nature of the curriculum. As already noted, the report saw the academic character of Scottish secondary schooling as a factor in the nature of equity outcomes, while Scottish educators (e.g. Raffe 2008a, Paterson 2009) saw this as a real strength of Scottish education and one of its significant distinguishing features. The policy context of the Review was that, also proselytised by the OECD, of an emergent knowledge economy, where all will need qualifications and advanced skills, otherwise they will face a future of extreme deprivation; those without the necessary qualifications will be condemned to the NEET group.

Conclusion

In providing a descriptive and analytical account of the OECD's review of Scottish education, we have argued that the responses to it and the debates it has provoked, particularly amongst Scottish educational researchers, can be seen as resulting from a tension between the supranational policy authority of the OECD and the national policy authority of Scotland. What we see is the global eye and the national eye coming together in the review. Even the terms of reference set by the previous Labour government for the review were constructed within the discursive frames of equity and quality and other policy interests as established by the OECD. This provided an indication of the coming together of the national and supranational spheres of policy making authority – soft global policy convergence in Rutkowski's (2007) terms. The symptom of this is that the nation remains important, but must now work differently. Arnott and Osga (2009) argue that the Scottish National Party minority government in Scotland seeks to work with this reconstituted politics and a more fluid construction of nationalism, discursively positioning Scotland more in Europe than within the UK, while perhaps reconstructing more traditional forms of nationalism.

The recommendations of the OECD review challenged and continue to challenge some of the 'taken-for-granted' of Scottish schooling, particularly its academic approach as linked to a democratic and egalitarian agenda and its consensual and dispersed structures of governance. We would note, however, that some Scottish educational researchers have been more skeptical of the egalitarian myths of Scottish education (e.g. Riddell 2009). The review also argued for the introduction of vocational education and training into Scottish schooling with greater monitoring of post-school options so that the Scottish 'system' can become more of a learning organisation. These recommendations challenge Scottish traditions of schooling.

The debate provoked by the review, most evident in the critique by Lindsay Paterson in his BERA Keynote (2007) and in the exchange between David Raffe and Richard Teese, the rapporteur for the review, also reflects the differing political, policy and spatial locations of the global eye and the national eye, and different positionings of educational researchers. It also reflects different views of the work of Bourdieu in respect of schooling and the reproduction of inequality, but both accept, perhaps implicitly, Bourdieu's view that it is 'by knowing the laws of reproduction that we can have a chance, however small, of minimising the reproductive effects of the educational institution' (2008: 53). We would argue that to work in more equal ways, broadening access to academic curricula (the Scottish tradition)

demands more aware pedagogies, while the provision of curricula alternatives (the OECD review position) demands parity of esteem between academic and more vocational curricula provisions.

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