



Scottish Further Education Unit

# What's Missing from C\_\_riculum?



## Influencing Design and Delivery



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# Foreword

## Curriculum Thinking

One of the formative articles I read when I started to examine this complex thing called 'curriculum' was entitled 'The Sabre Tooth Curriculum'. Way back in the stone age, wise men were extolling the virtues of their traditional curriculum based on the skills of tracking, stalking, hunting, killing, butchering, cooking and eating the sabre tooth tiger. These core skills of that time were, they argued forcibly, transferable. The powerful arguments of these wise men and their authority dismissed radical thinking demanding curriculum renewal. After all, these new arguments were based on the mere inconvenience that sabre tooth tigers were extinct. A purely theoretical perspective, they argued, was even more relevant.

We have come a long way since then in all sorts of respects with many perspectives of curriculum developed through history. Our modern thinking of the curriculum in Scotland's Colleges has been based on a balance of vocational skills development with core skills. Curriculum design has been a process of fitting required units together within parameters defined by learner needs, institutional requirements and curriculum specialist expertise.

This approach to curriculum is being challenged. We demand more of the learner experience. We have expectations of greater match to learner need. We require our curriculum thinking and consequent design to reflect society demands for it to enhance employability skills, develop citizenship, reflect community values of equality and respect, promote volunteering and ensure sustainability. We need new ways of curriculum thinking.

Faced with such a challenge, SFEU invited a group of curriculum thinkers to share with us their perspectives on 'curriculum'. They have delivered a varied, engaging and challenging set of papers which make up a powerful invitation to think about curriculum. We thank them all for their excellent efforts and hope it triggers new debate and discussion about curriculum. I am sure they, in turn, will wish to thank Morag Kerr and her team at SFEU for providing the opportunity and for their support and persistence in seeing the process through.

We will need new thinking about curriculum to sustain the increasingly valued contribution of colleges to national life. This is a beginning and the process will continue. Questions will arise of how to take the thinking forward, how to articulate that thinking in imaginative curriculum designs and how to deliver our designs in a way that learners achieve and ask for more.

Questions of who can take this forward are more simply answered. For those currently engaged in curriculum design, planning, resourcing and delivery, the answer is – UR. We trust these papers will help.

John McCann  
Depute Chief Executive, SFEU



# The Chicken and the Egg

John Laird  
Cardonald College

I'm always impressed by the audacity of Burger King. They sell a very limited menu, with a very small selection of items prepared in an identical way in lots of countries all over the world, and their award winning advertising slogan seems to say it all "Have it your way...!".

However, I can't help but think that should be subtitled...*if you only want burger and chips...in one or two portion sizes...with or without lettuce*. So successful have they become at convincing us that selling a small range of absolutely identical items with marginal variations is giving us it 'our way' that a whole printing industry has sprung up around making and selling parody items!

I would argue that we're a bit like that in Scottish colleges, *"Student centred" ...if you'll start in August... and can come during the day...and want to do SQA Units and learn in 36 hour chunks* – then we're happy to help you.

Perhaps only a bit like that, and we are making real progress. I'd like to look at some of that progress.

There is a big change to come in colleges, and it hinges on the basics of curriculum design. It's not as fashionable as HN Review, as grand sounding as SCQF or as politically attractive as inclusion, but is absolutely key to our delivery of a good service to the people who want our support. However, we first need to reflect on some basic questions about 'purpose' if we're going to get this change right.

What is the curriculum for? Why is a look at these first principles relevant? What does it tell us? What should we do about it?

In this article I want to launch an outright challenge to what we do in colleges, and encourage the radical, the passionate (and the mildly amused) amongst us to think again.

### **What is the curriculum for?**

We agonise (annually) on the subtle wording of vision, aims, principles and strategic objectives, but at the heart of this is a fairly good understanding of what we set out to do. Let's not get bogged down in absolute definitions and careful phrasing, but be confident about the fundamentals. We want to support the aspirations of our students through developing their knowledge and personal skills, we want our communities to be a more welcoming and prosperous environment, and we want the economy to be able to develop in order to improve the quality of life for people. Let's look at this need from four key perspectives: the individual; employer; education provider; and community

perspectives to see what this suggests about the appropriateness of our curriculum.

For the individuals who use us, they often have a reasonably clear goal, and it's mainly related to work or further study - did I say 'often' and 'reasonably' ? Even from this starting point, what we are offering and what is wanted by individuals begins to diverge. What we offer for the vast majority of students is a structured programme of learning and assessment leading to a qualification. What they want is a better job, a University place, more skills, increased confidence. It follows then that, if we were really focussed on the user needs, there would be a lot more work placement or work experience, an awful lot more 'employability skills', real help with Job Search or articulation advice. These should then be the building blocks of the curriculum, not the add-on extras. Do you want fries with that? Looking at it from a different perspective, 'Burger King' are not really in the Burger business, they are in the hunger business. I would suggest that we're not, or shouldn't be, in the qualifications business, but in the education business. This may seem like a subtle distinction but it is a fundamental that we need to remember.

### **Employers**

From an employer's point of view, something strangely similar emerges. They tell us in survey after survey that they want people to have a range of aptitudes and abilities which are hard to describe, but are often summed up in terms like Core Skills, Key Skills, Employability Skills, Transferable Skills, or Soft Skills. High level and convincing research has helped us to confirm this. Organisations like Futureskills Scotland do us a good service in pointing this out. In simple terms, employers want confident individuals who communicate well, and are good at learning new things and coping with change. In fact this is what employers are telling schools and Universities too. This sentiment is echoed every time employers engage with college staff, whether it be in a large scale questionnaire, through a Course Forum or at an Employers' Breakfast. Ever so rarely an employer will comment on the technical content of programmes, yet, that's where we most often put our programme design effort and make the changes. We agonise over subtle details of subject content: the inclusion of differential statistics or not; whether Intermediate 1 or 2 is best in their Computing Unit; or which Accounts Unit is best for Admin students. It raises the question about our ability to prioritise in response to employer feedback.

## Other providers of education

This is primarily Universities, for the students who leave us are similarly clear on what they want. Indeed, our own staff who interview HN students also give us clear feedback, because they know the characteristics that will help a mature student without the traditional entry qualifications to succeed. Lots of work from Paisley University, Glasgow Caledonian and others point to the things they need to have in place to have well prepared students. The gap here is mainly in learning and study skills, as well as in developing confidence and maturity. Indeed, the whole concept of the 'mature entrant' who doesn't need the normal entry qualifications epitomises this idea. We need to do more work to develop those aptitudes or skills that make someone 'mature'.

## What do our local communities need of us?

They want people coming out through our doors who can be active economically, but who can also contribute to an inclusive and vibrant community. They want people who will volunteer, be active in local politics, embrace the idea of good citizenship and be pro-active in contributing to the well being of others. This is not really controversial or new, yet discussion about how these elements feature in the content of particular programmes is rare. Many American Community Colleges use the idea of 'service learning', volunteering as an accredited part of someone's development. It's so simple, and clearly reflects a practical contribution to citizenship, and is just the kind of thing to benefit individuals and their community. Yet this simple and appropriate concept hardly features in college life.

## Issues

These issues point to a very fundamental problem – we often design the curriculum the wrong way round. We look at 'off the shelf' programmes, provide a limited menu, and an educational diet that we know is not as good for our students as it could be. It's our own version of the Happy Meal. To be fair, this approach is often driven by the imperatives of funding and efficiency, and change is not easy. However, there is also a very spurious supposition behind the approach most people take – that our students have come to us for a qualification in the subject of their choice. In fact the qualification is only a means to an end, and in a robustly designed curriculum it should be the end we are thinking of, not just the means. Even worse – the majority of our students, at least at NQ level, don't really get a qualification in their chosen subject. Should they sign up for NQ Hospitality, they will get a collection of Units related to Hospitality, but there is

no certificate or group award called NQ Hospitality. If our students really needed accreditation, they could readily buy it from the internet. Hardly a week goes by without my being offered, for a small fee, an MBA or PhD in my e-mail, and I can't believe that our students are any less internet savvy than I am.

## Development of Learning Programmes

The principle I am suggesting is that a learning programme should be designed from the development needs and potential of the student, and should be built on the foundation of these personal skills. As a shining example, we have impressive evidence of good work being done in many places where Group 18 programmes are designed with this very principle in mind. The experienced amongst you will possibly suggest that my utopian model falls flat however, as no students will sign up for that kind of thing. I disagree – what our students won't sign up for is boring teaching and learning, and like it or not, that's their view of the kind of core skills teaching they expect, rightly or wrongly, to get. We're offering them salad instead of fries with their burger, but such a dull and bland salad that they're not in the least bit tempted by the healthy option.

Are there really alternative ways to design our wider curriculum, and to design vocationally focussed courses or programmes in particular? I would suggest that the answer to this is a clear yes, and that there are several major steps we can take to achieve this. In particular I would propose three golden rules of curriculum design:

- Design with the needs of the student at the centre
- Work on content that is appropriate for the aim
- Offer better support and follow up as part of the learning experience.

Let's look at these rules more carefully.

If students are lucky their needs will be recognised during some kind of basic interview. If they're lucky. Should we instead be trying to properly assess student needs and abilities on entry? Should we be profiling core skills levels and learning styles, or asking what they want out of the experience? Often the instinct to reject this option is, quite sensibly, predicated on the need for cost effective groups and the huge workload associated with assessment. So let's change the maths – and create a programme that's two week shorter, has two less subject Units or finds some other way to release the proper preparation time essential for good outcomes. One good example where this approach

is being taken is Humber College in Toronto. They assess students thoroughly, in spite of being vastly over-subscribed, and timetable a proper programme. (This, incidentally, is a 'programme' which is individual and contains more than teaching and assessment, as opposed to a 'course' of structured and uniform teaching and assessment content). Students are assessed on ten 'support areas' which include Study Skills, Math Skills, Career Counselling, Writing Skills, Financial Aid, Academic Advising, Personal Issues and Learning Disabilities. Based on this, an individual timetable is made up that builds the relevant subject units around these areas of work, as part of a formal and individual programme. I've seen it in action, and there is good evidence that this works well, and that it is, quite simply, genuinely student centred.

Working on content that is appropriate for this aim can be difficult. We need to look at the long term, and beyond subject content. We also need to recognise that a large number of students go on to work in a sector unrelated to the one they just qualified in. The challenge is to be much clearer about aims and potential, and think about things that will help. Areas like Care and Sport are a good example, where work experience and placement are often integral parts of the work. However there are still some obvious and helpful things we give a low priority to. For example, should CV preparation be down to a dedicated member of staff squeezing it into other teaching time, or worse still, a voluntary lunchtime session? There is some interesting work being done on learning styles, and research from projects like Focus on Learning provides good evidence of just how helpful this can be. Surely every student should know a little about their own learning style. Experience also shows that students really like to reflect on themselves and do little quizzes and tasks that rate them. This can easily be motivational. For the majority of students employability (but not necessarily employment) is central to their aim. There are lots of other recent strands of research helping to identify useful practice – the challenge for us won't be finding good ideas, it will be finding ways of building them into the programme. What's also really encouraging here is the Scottish Executive and SFC recognition of the importance of employability. As one good example of concentrating on the aim, some American States have developed a range of interesting performance indicators. In their indicators they look at the number of students who moved on to a degree programme and passed. They see that as the aim, not *progression to a degree programme but success in a degree programme*.

## Student Support

Another fundamental of a positive student experience is really good support throughout the programme. Again, good progress is being made here, but there are still a number of programmes where this might only amount to an extra hour being added, often at the end of the day, and where the quality of the learning experience is subject to the enthusiasm and ability of the staff. We usually recognise those students at higher risk of leaving, often as early as the point of interview, yet we struggle to offer targeted support. What we are getting really good at is learning support, but we struggle with the social support. Educational writers and researchers, like Paul Martinez, tell us convincingly that social support is the primary factor in helping students to stick with the college experience. If we did a thorough job of the diagnostic and evaluative steps, we would know what to work on in learning styles, understand how to build emotional intelligence, be able to build in structured activities to improve employability and ensure that the student feels welcome and positive about the learning experience.

## Barriers

So why are these steps only apparent in some of our activity? I would suggest that there are a number of barriers, all of which can, with time, be further broken down. Our obsessive use of SQA Units is one. We use them because they are neat and efficient, not because they are flexible. SQA themselves are being more responsive, as characterised by their thinking on more creative personal development planning Units in HN. However, let's not forget the embarrassing fact that the NQ Guidance Units currently available carry dates like 1984 and 1989. Let's also remember that we shouldn't just accept it if an HN doesn't have enough Unit content on employability and soft skills. It's much easier than most people think to add a Unit to the options for a programme.

Some policy issues are also a big barrier. We need to lobby for a funding mechanism that's not designed for full time (university?) students, and which actively militates against good individual design. The majority of our users are part-time, and we would have even more if the bursary, student funding and the way that colleges are paid for teaching were properly student centred. The complex rules of payment for SQA Units, definitions of full-time, '16 hour' rules and bureaucratic constraints are huge barriers to change. We can and should be willing to plan, timetable and teach without obsessive use of Units that concentrate on assessment and certification.



## **So what do we do in the meantime?**

We have to be pragmatic about these complex resource issues – with really good teaching and support materials a lot of student support can be individually tailored and delivered with reasonable efficiency. We have to establish priorities - some of the issues we provide support for, childcare or scribes for example, have become a priority for our funds. So why can't work placement or professional financial advice be dealt with in the same way? I would suggest that good financial advice and support will impact on many more students than childcare! We also have to maintain professionalism – we should not be forgetting the huge amount of research telling us the things that help students complete and succeed. And we have to reach a 'tipping point' – many people reading this now already agree with some of the ideas, but making fundamental change across a big institution takes widespread acceptance and support.

## **So where does this take us?**

In summary, curriculum design has some complex ideas and definitions, but basically, we understand what it should be about. It's like the famous philosopher Billy Connolly's take on dieting 'eat less, move more'. The three principles I am suggesting that we adopt are at the same level of complexity. It is helpful to have clear definitions of soft skills, employability, essential skills etc, but fundamentally we know the aspect of the curriculum that really needs effort and attention. We are improving, but only incrementally. Let's be a bit more radical, and take a fundamental look at the curriculum we provide. Yes, it's difficult! Our programmes are all tidy, well organised, formed over time into a recognisable shape, that fits nicely into the burger bun, and any change would ruin that convenient shape! But let's decide once and for all what we're in – the burger business or the hunger business? That is, unless we're too chicken



# The Road Ahead

Stephanie Graham  
Anniesland College





## Choosing the Road

I left an interesting meeting where we had discussed philosophical questions as to what we actually mean by 'curriculum'? I'd been asked if I would consider writing a 'Think Piece' around the topic.

Then, on the long drive home, I started to think of 'the curriculum in terms of a road, rather like the one I was following myself.

There were a variety of routes for me to take home that night to travel from one side of Scotland to the other. At that point I had a clear end destination in mind – home. My motivation was high! I could travel the fast motorway route or the scenic tourist one. The scenic route would be a lot more interesting, it might show me places that I hadn't been before. However, that night, with a clear vision of destination, I chose speed. All the way home I had numerous options to turn off and discover other destinations. The motorway was busy with travellers going at their own individual speeds and leaving at points to suit their requirements. All across Scotland there are roads to suit every traveller. All across Scotland there is a curriculum to suit every learner. Isn't there?

At the end of my own journey that evening I had begun to formulate some questions to ask myself about the curriculum, and what we offer our learners, but for the moment I was still thinking in terms of roads, and that is how my questions formed themselves:

- Do all our roads have a purpose and lead to a worthwhile destination?
- Are they easy to access and navigate?
- Can we join and exit where we want?
- Are they all as well built and smooth as they could be?
- Are they as beautiful as possible or as uplifting and interesting throughout?
- Are they well maintained and upgraded to suit the variety of today's traffic?
- Will they suit the traffic of tomorrow?
- Are they far too overcrowded in stretches and empty, lonely in other parts?
- Are there pot holes and dangerous black spots?
- Are they designed to suit the drivers or more the builders and council budgets?
- Do all the travellers who start out, make it to the end of the road?

These were the questions that I needed to address, but bear with me because I want to try to work out the answers in terms of my roads metaphor. The questions will be about the curriculum, but the answers are about roads. Does that make sense? Let's try it for a few miles and see how it goes.



## Do we need a curriculum ?

Perhaps I should start with fundamentals. Why do we have roads anyway? Wouldn't we all be freer and more creative carving out our own individual routes to our destinations? We could use the sun and contours of the land to find far more interesting routes to work! Fairly obviously, if we wish to reach an intended destination within a timeframe, there is a need for structure, a solid surface and direction to avoid being bogged down and lost.



## What are the underlying principles of curriculum design ?

That's established then – we need roads to get to wherever we're going. But surely the purpose of a road is to enable and ease our journey, not to constrain and restrict our travel? Furthermore, following a road should not just be about the tarmac and route. It should be about the different sights and experiences on the way, either planned or unplanned. Some of those will depend on who **you** are or who you're travelling with. The same road on another day or with other travelling companions could be an entirely different experience. Some travellers will be attracted by the flora & fauna or local architecture, a few could be more interested in the other vehicles en route. A good road should have something for every traveller. And if, for some people, that means the fastest and straightest way from A to B, so be it.

Of course, the big problem with roads is that once built, they are very difficult to move or change, whether they've been planned, or have just evolved. They need constant upgrading and maintenance to suit changing traffic. Many of our roads were built for yesterday, but now need to suit the traffic of today. And sometimes we just have to forget an old road altogether, because it's no longer fit for purpose, or because it goes somewhere that nobody wants to visit anymore. Then we build a bypass – if we can get it past the planning people of course.



## Does the curriculum foster access?

Our road systems have to meet the needs of our travellers. That seems to be common sense. But do we meet all those needs? We should ask some more questions of our roads. For example, do our roads give a genuine choice of routes and destinations? Do they have enough exits and places to turn, or are travellers too often stuck on a single track, without any options

to leave, apart from reversing back the full length. What's more, do these routes – these choices we make people take - actually lead to somewhere worthwhile, or are too many of them dead-end destinations?

Do we ensure that other travellers are able to join the road along the way rather than start at the very beginning? There should not be unnecessary restrictions to entry or complicated navigations to get on to the route. Have you ever had that experience, perhaps on the outskirts of Edinburgh or Glasgow, where you can actually see the road you want but somehow you just can't find the necessary slip road? Perhaps we're not getting the signposting right, and not giving our travellers enough information to make the right choices at the right time.



### Does the curriculum prepare learners for progression?

Getting on to a road system is one thing, moving off from it is another. How well do our roads allow that? Think of it perhaps as taking the slip road on to a motorway. Are drivers well prepared? Are the changes well signed, allowing drivers to move up from one speed to the next? Is it safe to slowly pick up speed when entering the motorway or does the road force you to put your foot down immediately and drive uncomfortably fast before you feel adjusted to the change of pace? Perhaps we need a filter lane, where travellers can bring themselves up to speed slowly. Not everybody is comfortable in the fast lane, after all.

**What do you think, is the metaphor still working for you? I think it is. It makes sense to me, and the more I think of our road systems the more it helps me to understand the problems of designing, creating and maintaining a curriculum. After all, the term *Curriculum* has its origins in the running or chariot tracks of Greece. It was, literally, 'a course'. In Latin, curriculum was a racing chariot and *currere* was to run. Let's run with it a little further.**



### Guiding learners through the curriculum

In order to travel successfully there should be clear directions or a route map. We need to know where the road is heading. Vague oral directions are not really helpful. Following a backseat guide or the car in front is fine so long as we trust those we follow.

Signs and maps are what we really need to enable us to understand the route. We need to know why

we are turning a particular way. If we appear to be doubling back we need to understand that this is the only route to safely navigate an obstacle. On the other hand, too many signs can just confuse and be more of a hindrance than a help. So, if we can talk to someone who's been there before, and knows the way, that's a help too.



### Curriculum content and structure

Of course travelling is not just about getting to the destination - the chosen route should be interesting and enlightening.

Compare the tourist route, which highlights all the attractions along the way, with the shortcut, which may pass them by completely, leaving beauty-spots hidden and undiscovered.

Some roads have long tedious stretches linking the interesting scenic parts. Travellers have to endure the tedium in order to experience the interest. What about the boring stretches? Are they just inevitable? Can anything be done to make them more interesting? Other roads are so packed with sights on all sides that the traveller is just unable to take it all in.

Maybe it's not just about the sights along the way, but also about how we vary the experience of travelling that route, to make sure that the driver stays awake. A good road should introduce gradual changes in surface and width. Variety makes the journey more interesting but a sudden change from track to motorway will only confuse and cause risk. Drivers should be able to 'read the road' and change gear accordingly.



### Pacing the curriculum

In fact pace and speed is an important concept in this journey, as we've seen already. Not all travellers want to go at the same pace. The best roads have more

than one lane to allow travellers to move at different speeds. We've all had that experience of being stuck behind something slow moving, and getting frustrated because we can't go on at the speed we want, but there has to be room for the tortoise as well as the hare.

Remember too, while motorways may allow us to cover more miles faster, when speed is important for the traveller, driving at real speed means it is inevitable that sights will be missed along the way. Motorways do not encourage drivers to stop and admire the view.



### Assessment, Remediation and Support in the Curriculum

There are those travellers who 'tick off' the towns and cities along the road - the American way of "done Rome" "done Paris". This is the 'tick box' approach to travelling. These travellers could close their eyes when being driven between towns. They fail to realise that

much of the interest is actually in all the other experiences on route. Travellers should be encouraged to experience the whole journey and see the towns along the way as a natural part of the journey.

These towns should not become an obstacle and a frustrating bottleneck to pass through. Good signposting will prepare the traveller when approaching a town, in order to enter at the correct speed and progress safely. A route which goes through town after town, closely spaced and poorly signed, will weary the traveller and make any journey an endurance test.

We also have to keep an eye on one of the other main purposes of travelling – to get to the destination, successfully and in one piece. How many of our travellers actually reach the end of the road and is there more we can do to help them? Some drivers need to pull over on a journey, take a break, and then rejoin the traffic flow. They should be able to do that – the system should allow it. And should they break down en route, is there speedy and efficient access to emergency services, to help them get back on their way again?



### Motivating through the curriculum

'Are we there yet?' - the all too familiar chant of young children. How can we motivate, excite and make the journey more

interesting? With younger travellers we have to work harder, as every parent of a young child knows. We need to point out the landmarks, play games along the way, insert breaks, or resort to bribes! Older travellers may just be happy to admire the scenery or to take a drive for the sake of it.



### Technology supporting the curriculum

Of course we're seeing more and more technology on the roads nowadays as well. Does technology help and enhance travelling? Some technology has now become a necessity for a safe

journey. Traffic lights are essential to ensure the safe movement of cars across busy towns; when they break down it becomes clear how important they are. Cats' eyes guide our route and flood lights emphasise warning signs as well as highlighting beauty spots. Street lights may not be essential for driving but they certainly make our journey easier and less tiring. New technology such as satellite navigation and changing electronic warning signs are now further improving travel. Some people may be dubious about these aids, but before long they're likely to become just another part of the driver's armoury and something we all learn to rely upon.

**Well, by now I'm near the end of my journey and it seems to me, at least, that it has gone pretty much as I intended. I've tried to answer as many of the questions as I could that occurred to me along the way, and I've certainly given myself some food for thought. Perhaps its time, finally, for me to pose one last question – if we are going to build ourselves new roads, how are we going to make sure we get it right ? What would you do?**



### Designing for Learner needs

If you were designing a new road would you ask the intended travellers? How would you approach the task? It would be an expensive waste of money to build

a road that no one really needed. Thorough market research would be required, along with investigation into future traffic requirements and neighbouring routes and development plans.

Who is the best to influence and shape the road? Those who dig it and maintain it or those who travel it? Are our roads designed to make the construction easier or the travelling smoother and more interesting? A road designer should understand much more than construction methods, materials and civil engineering. The designer should also understand the capabilities of the vehicles on the road and the abilities of the drivers.

**What are your roads like? A pleasure to travel? An experience to remember or something to endure? And can we really build the roads that we all want, as well as the roads that we all need? Answers, please.**

**Domestic Science: First-year Course for Public Schools – British Columbia 1920**

**Needlework**

Household sewing: Pillow-slips, towels, etc. Making and repairing kitchen linen. Hemstitching, button-holes, patching, darning, knitting. Free cutting continued from previous grades.

**Practical Cookery**

Definitions, tables, and rules of cookery to be taught by simple lessons selected from the following methods: Boiling, steaming, baking, roasting, shallow frying, sautéing, stewing, etc.

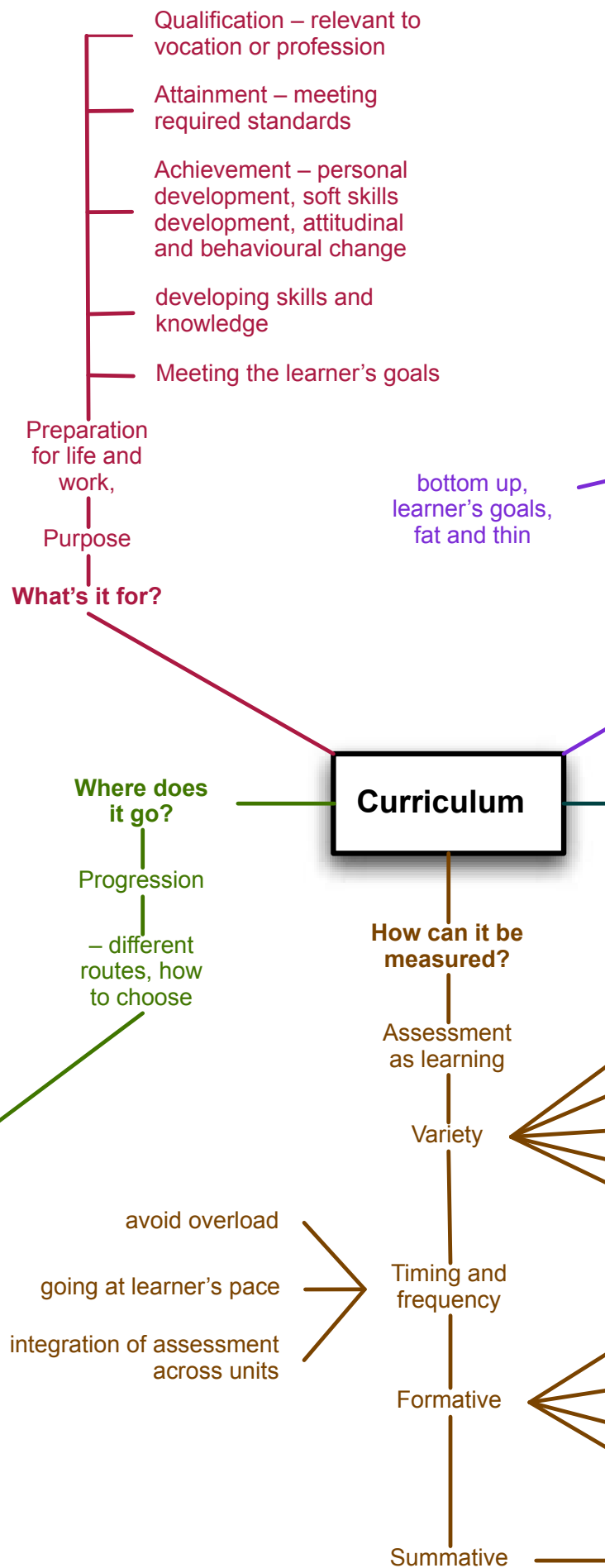
**Preparatory Lessons in Home Management and Personal Hygiene**

Washing dishes and saucepans. Care of white wool. Care and cleaning of metals in daily use. Care, cleaning, and disinfecting of sink. Waste and its removal. Construction, management, and cleaning of kitchen range, with simple study of combustion and use of wood and coal respectively. Sweeping and cleaning. Laying the table. Personal cleanliness, care of teeth, nails, hair.

**Theoretical Cookery.**

As "practical application is the only mordant which will set things in the memory," principles should be taught in conjunction with the practice of cookery. Reasons for cooking food; effect of applying heat to food. Food principles; use of food to the body. Fuel foods and tissue-building foods. Carbohydrates, proteids [sic], fats, mineral matter.

<http://www.mala.bc.ca/homeroom/content/topics/programs/2001/DOMSCI20/index.htm>

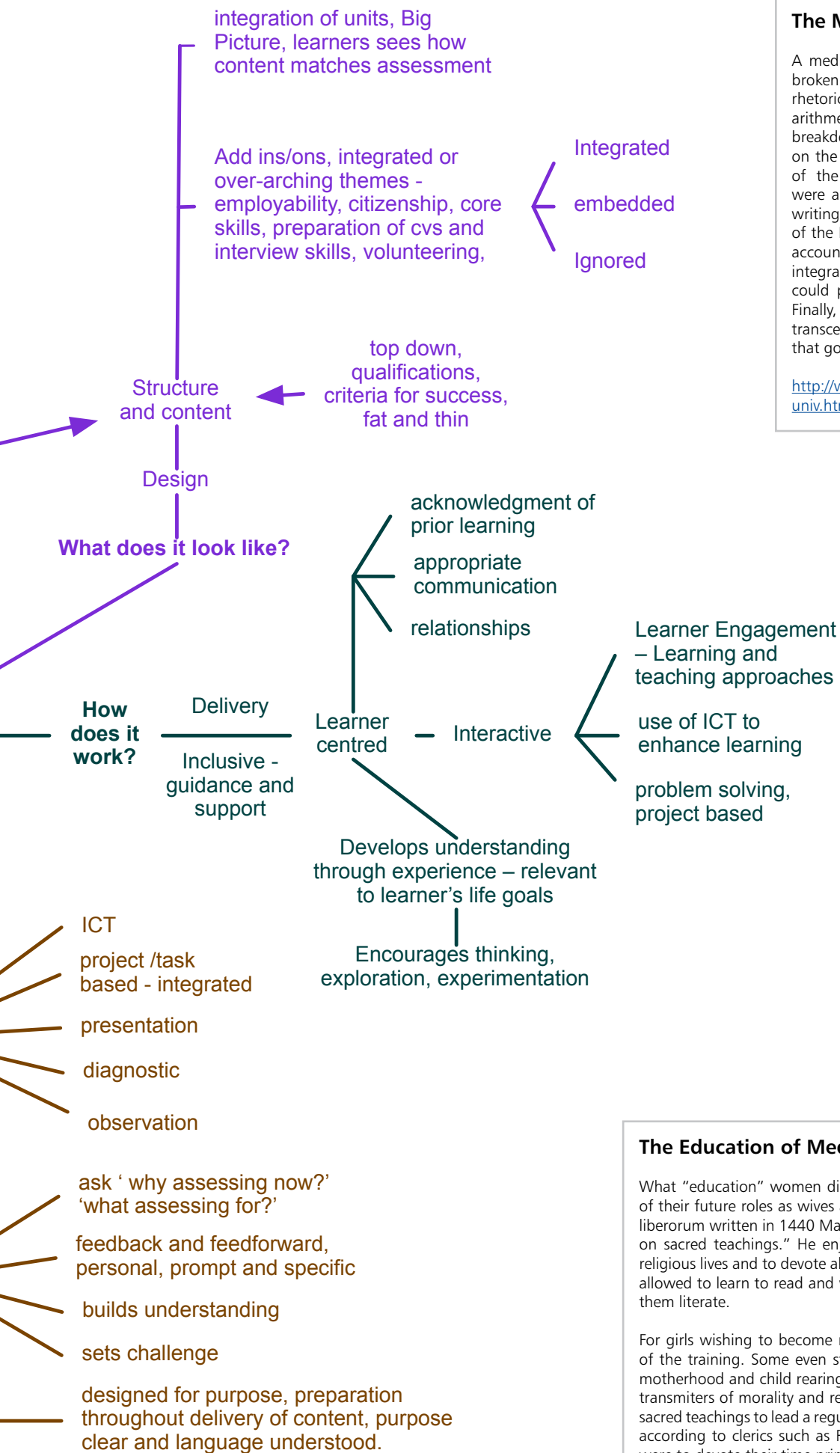


**A Knight's Education**

Any boy with ambitions to become a knight had to undergo thorough training that began, usually at the age of seven.....He was first taught unflinching obedience to his new Lord and Lady, he would serve them at their table and be taught to ride. It was left to the Lady of the manor to teach the child the gentler aspects of Knightly behaviour such as the arts of chivalry, love and religion.

At around the age of Fourteen the child would graduate to the rank of Squire, at a religious ceremony he would exchange his dagger for a more manly sword. Over the course of the next few years he would be trained in it's correct use and his duties would become more varied. He would be trained in the use of other weaponry such as the lance and the battle axe.

[http://www.longshank.com/a\\_knights\\_education.htm](http://www.longshank.com/a_knights_education.htm)



### The Medieval University Curriculum

A medieval University’s curriculum was generally broken down into the trivium of grammar, rhetoric, and logic, and the quadrivium of arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy. This breakdown of the liberal arts was focused mainly on the philosophical and theological implications of the subjects. Grammar, rhetoric, and logic were all related to the discipline of reading and writing Latin, the common international language of the Middle Ages. Arithmetic could be used for accounting revenues and taxes; music was an integral part of church services; and astronomy could predict eclipses and other heavenly signs. Finally, geometry was a means of showing transcendental truth by means of the various laws that governed the relations of angles and lines.

<http://www.renaissancemagazine.com/backissues/univ.html>

### Seven Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education – 1918

The Commission of the Reorganization of Secondary Education, appointed by the National Education Association of the United States, submitted the report “Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education.”

The commission identified seven main objectives of education:

1. Health
2. Command of fundamental processes
3. Worthy home membership
4. Vocation
5. Citizenship
6. Worthy use of leisure
7. Ethical character

[http://fcis.oise.utoronto.ca/~daniel\\_schugurensky/assignment1/1918cardinal.html](http://fcis.oise.utoronto.ca/~daniel_schugurensky/assignment1/1918cardinal.html)

### The Education of Medieval Women

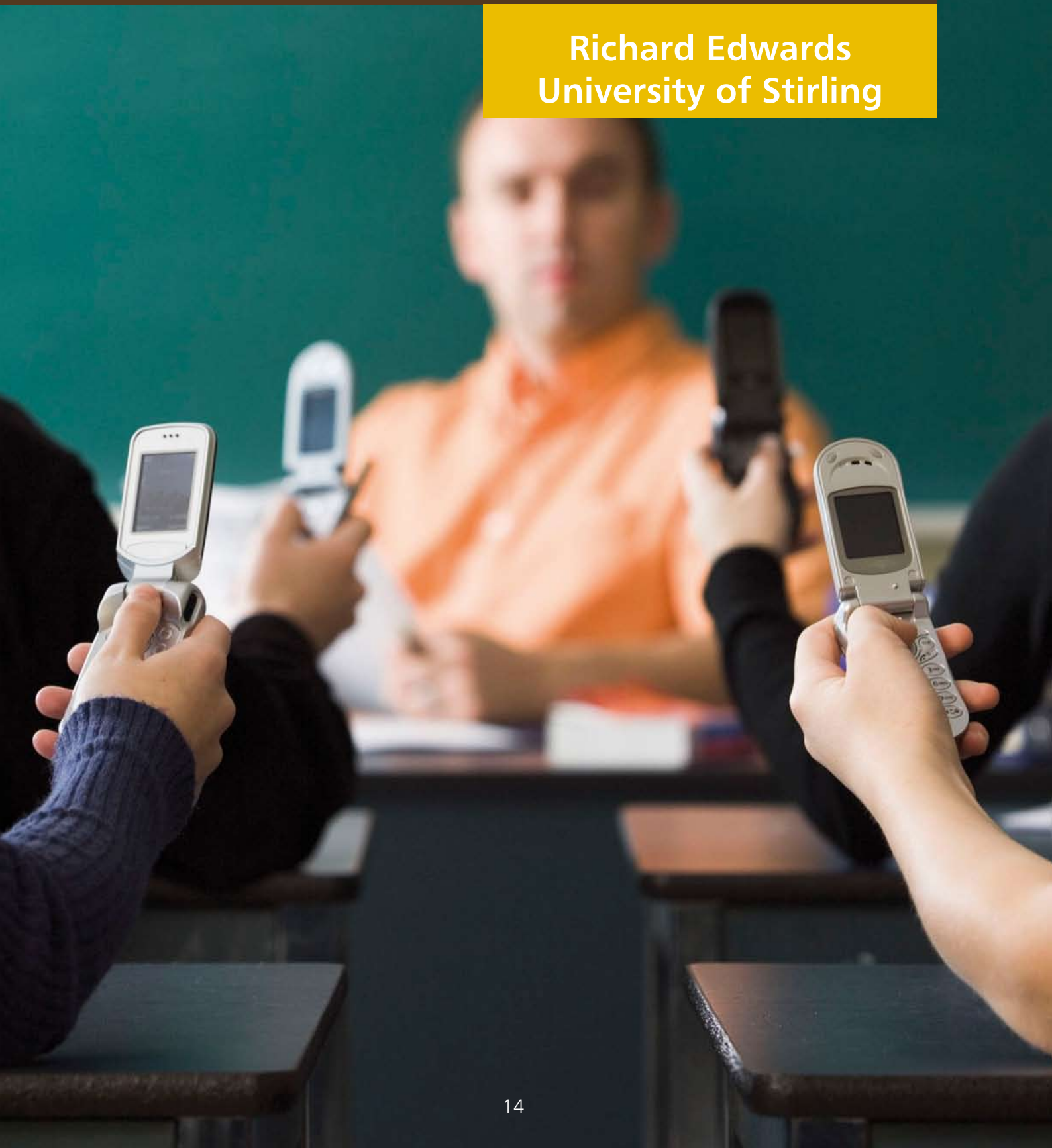
What “education” women did receive was likely to be one with a view of their future roles as wives and mothers. In his treatise *De educatione liberorum* written in 1440 Matteo Veggio advocated that girls “be raised on sacred teachings.” He enjoined them to lead “regular, chaste, and religious lives and to devote all [their] time to female labors.” If girls were allowed to learn to read and write it was not for the purpose of making them literate.

For girls wishing to become nuns, learning to read and write was part of the training. Some even studied Latin. For the most part, marriage, motherhood and child rearing were the principle goals for most girls. As transmitters of morality and religious dogma, they were to be “raised on sacred teachings to lead a regular, chaste, and religious life.” Furthermore, according to clerics such as Francesco Barbaro and Maffeo Vegio, they were to devote their time primarily to “female labors” and prayers.

<http://www.csupomona.edu/~plin/ls201/medieval3.html>

It ain't (simply) what you know,  
it's the way you communicate it:  
**Curriculum knowledge  
and communication**

Richard Edwards  
University of Stirling





## Introduction

Since 2004, the Literacies for Learning in Further Education project has been exploring the literacy practices involved in study within thirteen curriculum areas in England and Scotland (for more information see the project website at [www.lancaster.ac.uk/lffe](http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/lffe)). The project has involved two universities working with four Further Education colleges and its aim is to develop strategies that will enable students to draw upon the literacies developed in their everyday lives, on their courses, as a basis for more successful study. The project specifically works with the notion that literacies are not a disembodied set of skills that can be learnt in isolation from contexts of use, but are developed within meaningful and purposive activity. Thus the use of the term literacy practices rather than literacy. We also view literacy practices broadly as embracing icon and screen as well as text and page, and the many multimodal artefacts and genres of communication which are to be found in colleges and everyday life, including computers, mobile phones, etc.

Given that the teaching of literacy has sometimes been promoted outside meaningful contexts of use, our study works within the grain of what is a wider critique for formal educational provision. This is that it is abstracted from contexts of use, out of touch, decontextualised, inauthentic, not relevant, etc. Over the years many such critiques of the curriculum in general have been offered and indeed, one of the rationales for the development of a competence-based approach to the vocational curriculum was that it would make it more relevant to the end contexts of use i.e. the workplace. The fact that employers, students and others still point to the gaps between learning a subject and work suggests that there is more to the problem than simply a focus on performance in the curriculum.

The past two years of research in colleges has resulted in the collection of large amounts of data through interviews and other interactions with students and staff, through the participation of Further Education staff in the project, and through observation. We have also collected together a large number of documents to do with teaching and assessment in the various curriculum areas. While the focus of our study has been on literacy practices, this data has provided us with many insights into curriculum issues within Further Education.

This article attempts to sketch some of these issues as a contribution to the debate that already exists around the current position and future possibilities for developing the curriculum within Further Education.

Central to the debate, although not the sole message, is the point that we cannot separate what is to be learnt from the forms of interaction and communication through which the curriculum is enacted. And here it is important to recognise that there can be some distance between how the curriculum *is* enacted and how it is described by lecturers and students. What has been clear in our project is that in a lot of cases interaction and communication, including literacy practices, are a part of the hidden curriculum in Further Education. As a result, the capacities which students bring with them to their studies are in many cases overlooked, marginalised or not utilised as much as they might be. This impacts upon retention and outcomes.

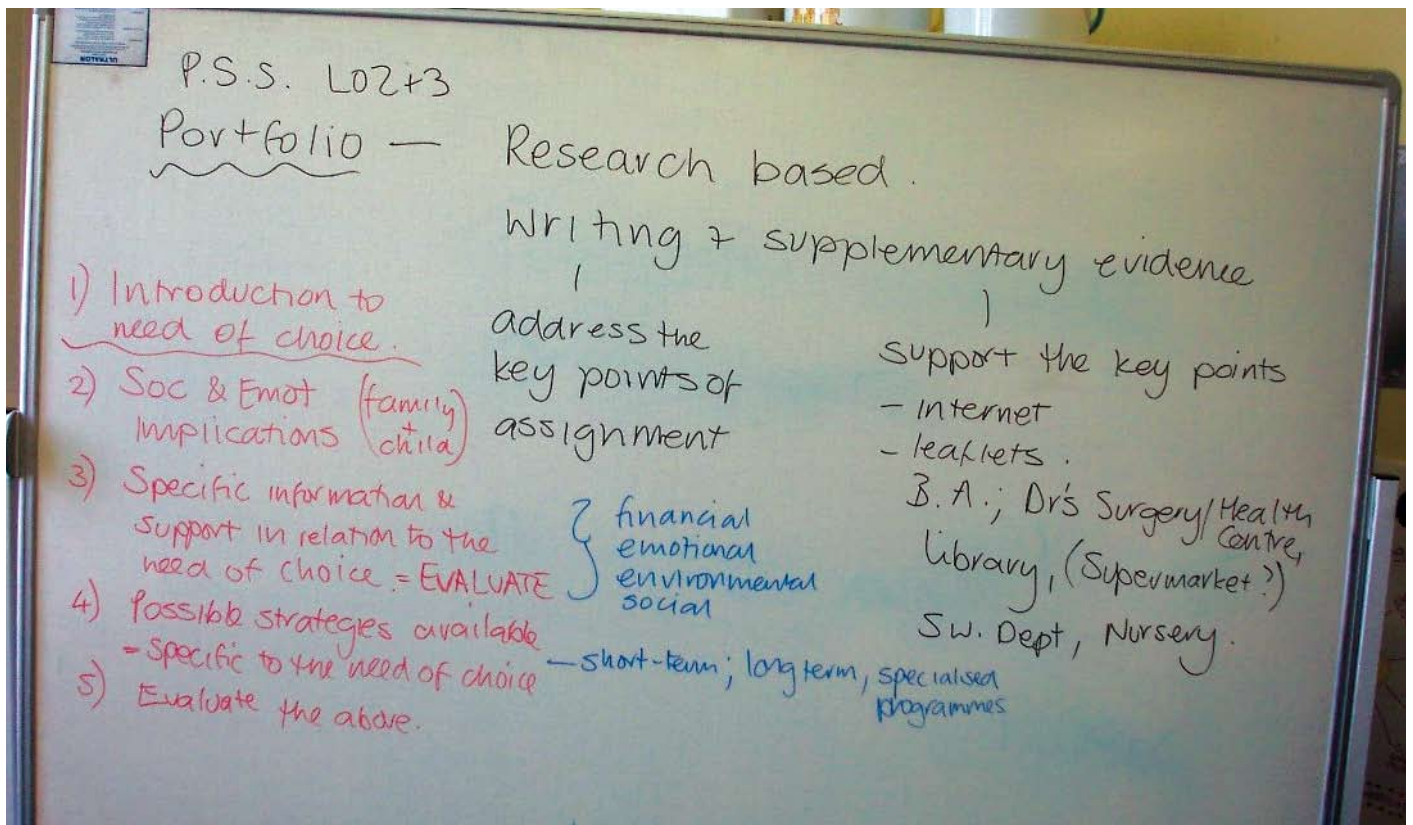
## Issues

The issues identified here are outlined in no particular order.

Further Education has often been criticised for having developed an assessment driven curriculum. This is something that we have certainly found in our own study. The data suggests that the writing students do at all levels seems, to a great extent, to be about preparing for and producing assessments. Building up knowledge, understanding and capacity beyond that required by assessment is often seen as necessary by lecturers, but the twin constraints of curriculum organisation and pressure to ensure student achievement do not always make that possible.

This points to a second issue, which we might refer to as the literacy careers of students. The lower and intermediate level units tend to use a wider range of text and require more diverse practices of reading and writing than the higher ones. This is often done to make units more interesting and stimulating for students. However, it requires students to engage in a wide range of literacy practices. They therefore receive complex messages about what is necessary for them to succeed. As they progress to higher level units, the literacy practices become more academic, and there is a more consistent message about appropriate forms of reading and writing. They therefore receive a clearer trajectory for their literacy careers. There is a definite difference in emphasis between the levels. If not made explicit and worked with, this shift may impact upon progression.

The lower down the levels we are the more practical the activities that are built in to the programmes and the more varied the literacy demands; whereas at the higher levels, the students are provided with a restricted access to different literacy practices in



the classroom. They are treated more formally and expected to do more homework. This oversimplifies, but it points to the ways in which lower level courses may be more complex from a literacy perspective than higher level courses, as they require a more diverse range of artefacts and genres for students to engage with and produce. This seems, however, to challenge common sense understanding.

There is also greater consistency of literacy practices for students doing more traditionally academic courses than those doing vocational programmes. They learn that 'success' is to be had in extended academic writing and reading similar types of text. By contrast vocational students can get a range of possibly confusing messages, as they are asked to engage with and produce a far greater range of artefacts and use a more diverse range of genres.

This may be further added to when the curriculum focuses on the unit, rather than the overall programme of study, as individual units may involve different practices, which do not readily articulate with one another. The literacy demands on the vocational students may therefore be interpreted as greater than those on academic students, once again challenging stereotypical ways of viewing the issue. This too may impact upon progression, unless the curriculum is looked at and taught within an overarching framework.

The issues is further complicated by the ambiguity of

terms for both tutors and students of the genres of writing required by specific assessments. Terms such as essay, report and article are used interchangeably and in different ways from unit to unit. Research is used as a generic task with often implicit clarity over what is required. NC assessments can require a variety of tasks to present relatively simple information. At HNC fewer literacy practices are used to present more complex information. Yet the terms used to describe the tasks are often the same.

It also seems that the reading and writing that the students do as part of the learning within the classroom is very different from that which they have to do in the assessments. Some tutors seem to believe that if we give students the right information in an effective and interesting way then they will be able to do anything with it. Yet transfer is not a straightforward practices and talk around texts is crucial for this to occur. The use of a text is therefore more important than the complexity of its content. This involves diverse tasks, making links between the curriculum and the task, for example, and relating back to practice to give purpose and to encourage ownership.

The use of texts that the students can relate to from their own experience seem to help them engage with the reading tasks more enthusiastically. These are mostly utilised in the lower level courses. However, such texts would probably be deemed inappropriate at higher level units, as the literacy practices take on a more 'standard' academic form



This raises issues of authority, ownership and value at two levels: the pedagogic and contextual. At the pedagogical level, for instance, different tutors' opinions of whether students should copy down exactly what the tutor says or whether they should write things in their own words reflect different stances. This also relates to issues of academic referencing. One of the issues for many students was how to quote other sources, a demand which they will probably not have in their workplaces. At the contextual level, there is the question of who decides which literacy demands are valuable? This comparison suggests that there is a hierarchy of demand particularly prioritising the academic, but it might be interesting to see where these values come from. We might relate these partially to the philosophy of the specific institution. There are also value issues coming from the SQA and other awarding bodies, teacher training courses and dominant pedagogies. Of particular interest might be whether the values of the intended workplace are heard in relation to literacy demands. So the policy prioritises certain literacy demands rather than the workplace, even as it ostensibly positions employability and the workplace as a central concern. There are tensions here within educational policy.

Finally, from the data, there is a tension between educational (academic) imperatives and occupational (vocational) imperatives in terms of literacy practices, types of texts and types of engagement with texts required by students, especially as they progress in terms of level.. Thus the same unit can be taught differently and therefore entail a different curriculum according to whether it is primarily perceived to be for preparing students for the workplace or for academic



progression. This raises the most fundamental of curriculum questions. Is the purpose of the programme to extend education or to fit vocational context? Each has implications for the literacy practices in which people participate, both students and tutors. If it is to do both, then the issues of what is valued as literacy and the resources necessary for the multimodality of the world will need seriously to be addressed in the curriculum expectations and pedagogic practices of courses.

### Further thinking

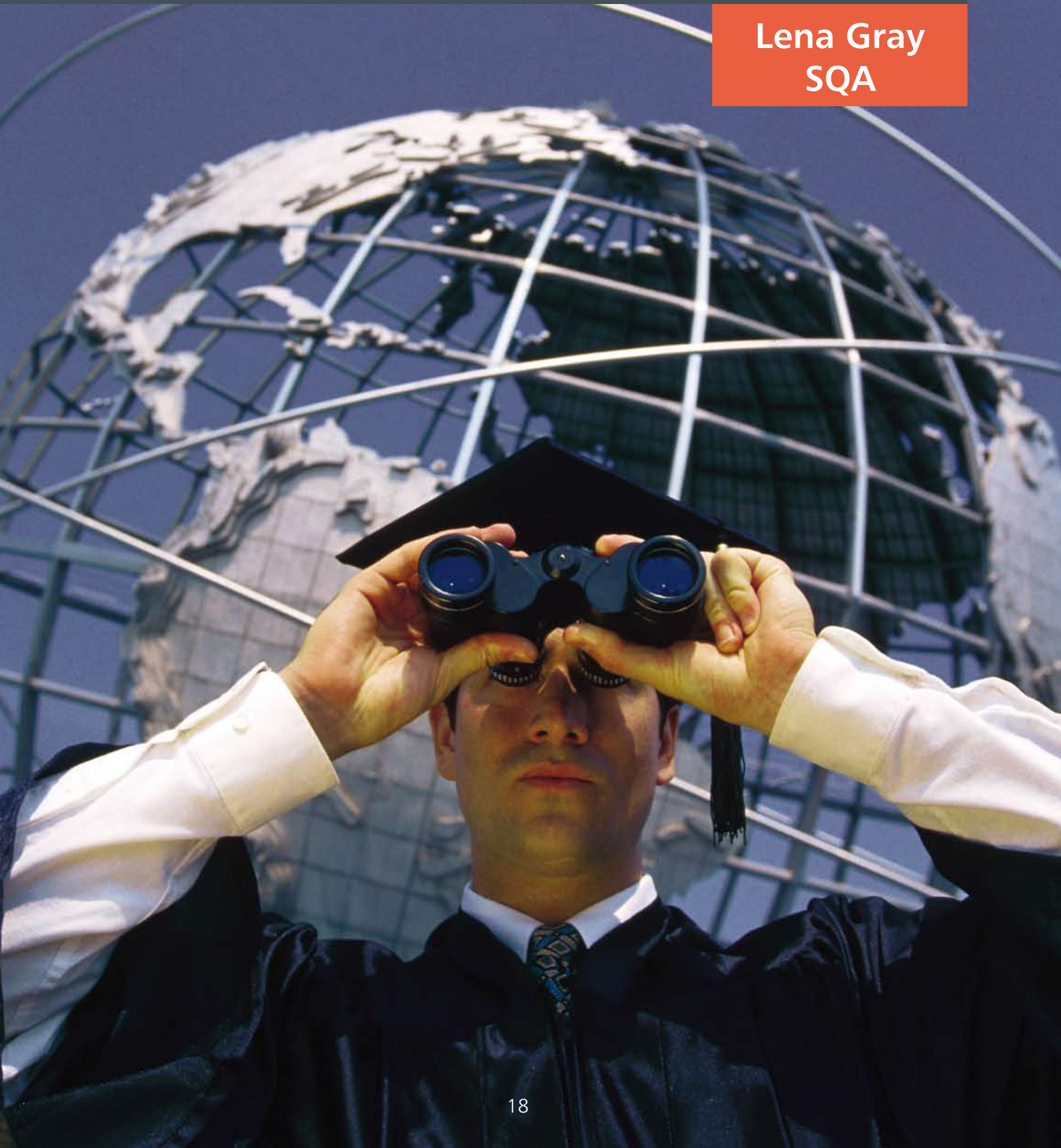
Each of the above issues could be expanded and extended. They play out in different curriculum areas in different ways and vary according to college and even individual lecturer. However, there are also common threads. One thing for certain is that they can only be addressed through a more extended discussion of curriculum, which focuses on the purposes and practices associated with the subject as a totality, as part of the core of the educational practices in Further Education.

### Note

This article arises from work done within the *Literacies for Learning in Further Education* research project, funded by the ESRC's Teaching and Learning Research Programme (grant number RES-139-25-0117 ).

# Qualifications for the future: where now?

Lena Gray  
SQA



This publication is about the curriculum. It's not about assessment and qualifications, and as the other contributors stress, the curriculum is about learning and teaching, and should not be led by the demands of assessment and qualifications. Indeed, the qualifications and assessment system should be led by the demands of a curriculum designed to meet local and individual needs. In Scotland's colleges, this will involve meeting the needs of lots of different types of learners, of different ages, with different previous experiences, different reasons for returning to education, and so on.

However, as John Laird points out, students attend colleges for a purpose, and the most common purpose is to achieve (more) qualifications in order to get a (better) job. This means that the curriculum also has to meet the needs of employers. Arguably, what employers want is some kind of "stamp of approval" which attests the learner's learning ability, either in general, or in particular areas. Qualifications are the most obvious way to provide that stamp of approval. In practice, then, it can be next to impossible to untwine the curriculum from the qualifications system which supports it. In that spirit, this paper offers some questions for reflection on issues which seem to be dominant in current debates about assessment and qualifications.

### **What are they key issues of the moment?**

Current debates on the future of qualifications are dominated by the need to ensure that future qualifications at SCQF levels 4 and 5 meet the needs of the new curriculum being developed as part of the *Curriculum for Excellence* programme. Ministers are keen to ensure that the scope and nature of assessment and qualifications are consistent with the values, purposes and principles of *A Curriculum for Excellence*. They have also emphasised the importance of providing more effective opportunities for the development and recognition of learners' wider achievements beyond National Qualifications. In relation to National Qualifications, Ministers intend to retain Access, Higher and Advanced Higher as points of stability within the system. These qualifications will have to adapt over time to reflect *A Curriculum for Excellence* but this will be built into the normal procedures for updating and refreshing National Qualifications. The main focus is on addressing the use of Standard Grade and Intermediate qualifications (SCQF 4 and 5) in providing a unified structure that reflects *A Curriculum for Excellence*.

Within that context, five very closely-related questions seem to dominate the debate:

- How should SQA's system of qualifications take account of recent research on learning and assessment?
- How can the qualifications systems take account of increasing social and political emphasis on the development of personal skills and attributes?
- How can the qualifications system meet increasing demands for local and individual flexibility?
- What role can technology play in learning and assessment?

And permeating all of these:

- What we can we learn from practice in other countries?

At this point, there are no easy answers to any of these questions.

### **How should SQA's system of qualifications take account of recent research on learning and assessment?**

Research suggests that assessment must support learning and teaching; and that learners should be actively involved in the assessment process. Another lesson from recent research, which is at the heart of the *Assessment is for Learning* programme, is that it is vital that assessment is flexible in timing – summative assessment tasks should be administered when the learner is ready– the teacher/lecturer's professional judgement of learners s/he knows well is at the heart of good assessment (as is the involvement of learners in making that decision). This suggests a leaning towards internal assessment, but not only that, towards particular types of internal assessment.

If qualifications are to truly serve learning and teaching, the associated assessment regimes will have to be light touch, fleet of foot, nimble, flexible. What changes would we need to make in order to achieve this?





### **How can the qualifications systems take account of increasing social and political emphasis on the development of personal skills and attributes?**

We are all aware that education is increasingly seen as the answer to social and economic problems, serving the role previously served by family and community. There is a growing list of “essential” skills and attributes which the education system is expected to develop.

As Dan Sweeney notes in his contribution, *A Curriculum for Excellence* identifies the key purpose of education as helping to ensure that young people become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to society. Dan highlights the emphasis on personal development and values education – elsewhere, documents stress the importance of helping learners to develop personal attributes like enthusiasm, open-ness to new thinking, self-respect, respect for others, and resilience. Many in Scotland’s colleges would argue that this has been their goal for years.

This emphasis on personal attitudes and attributes present a challenge to traditional assessment and certification systems. It may be that these things should not be measured – but if we agree that the key role of education is to develop these attributes, then society must have a way to measure whether the education system is serving its purpose. This would mean a move away from traditional assessment methods, towards a greater use of self and peer assessment, observation of candidates carrying out “real-life” tasks, witness statements from employers and workmates, more use of project and portfolio assessment, and so on. We do this already, of course, in vocational qualifications, including HNs, SVQs and Skills for Work Courses, but in the more general education/“academic” subjects, this is currently not common practice.

### **How can the qualifications system meet increasing demands for local and individual flexibility?**

Traditionally, qualifications have been seen as inflexible. They make demands of learners (and teachers/lecturers) rather than meeting their needs. It is often argued that qualifications developed for a national system can’t take account of local needs and that the more personalised curricula become, the more this problem is likely to be exacerbated.

What might “flexibility” mean in the context of a national qualifications system which will be used in both schools and colleges? Are we talking about flexibility to decide the content, to design the assessment, or to judge the evidence? Where should the flexibility lie? In the specification? In the assessment task? In the success criteria? Or just in the timing? When does flexibility go too far and become lack of guidance and support?

### **What role can technology play in learning and assessment?**

ICT plays an increasing role in our daily lives, in ways few of us could have predicted ten years ago. ICT, and especially e-learning and e-assessment, has the potential to revolutionise what happens in Scotland’s classrooms. Colleges are at the forefront of developments to use technology to help learning and teaching, and the qualifications system cannot allow itself to be left behind. For example:

- Technology provides an opportunity to enrich learning and assessment and make it suit the learning/thinking styles of more people – for example, it does not have to rely on verbal tasks, but can introduce visual and sound elements, which have been shown to help some learners.
- Technology can allow greater interaction between teacher/lecturer and learner, and between learners. Indeed, technology might provide at least a partial solution to the issue of how to provide meaningful feedback to learners - e-assessment developments allow immediate feedback to learners. It also allows learners to interact with each other through so-called “social software”.
- Technology could allow some curricular areas access to learning and assessment experiences which could not practically be provided in the classroom – for example, technology is already able to provide useful simulations of practical activities in science topics and design activities which cannot be done “for real” (without danger to learners).

- Technology has the potential to remove issues with authenticity of evidence – to ensure that the learner’s work is his/her own, and that he/she is who they say they are. This includes the potential to tease out the contributions which learners have made to group activities. If technology can do this, it can resolve a long-standing mismatch between good learning and teaching (which is often collaborative) and the need for reliable assessment (which requires identification of individual contributions to collaborative tasks).

**Finally, then, what we can we learn from practice in other countries?**

Scotland is internationally recognised as a world leader in the design of assessment and certification, but there are still lessons we can learn from other countries. Current interest tends to focus on two countries; Finland, and Australia (especially the state of Queensland).

Both of these countries:

- have systems in place which allow local development of programmes of learning and assessment
- use a variety of assessment methods, including greater use of building a portfolio of evidence over time
- place great importance on teacher/lecturer assessment of learners
- have few examinations.

However, Finland and Australia are countries which differ enormously from Scotland in terms of economic, social and cultural factors – and teachers/lecturers are accorded a different status, with more authority. Before importing any ideas from elsewhere in the world, we have to be sure that they would run here.

**Conclusion**

So, if we have five key questions to answer:

- What does recent research tell us?
- Can we, and should we, attempt to assess and certificate personal skills and attributes?
- Can, and should, qualifications mirror increasing local and individual flexibility in curricula?
- What role can technology play in the qualifications system?

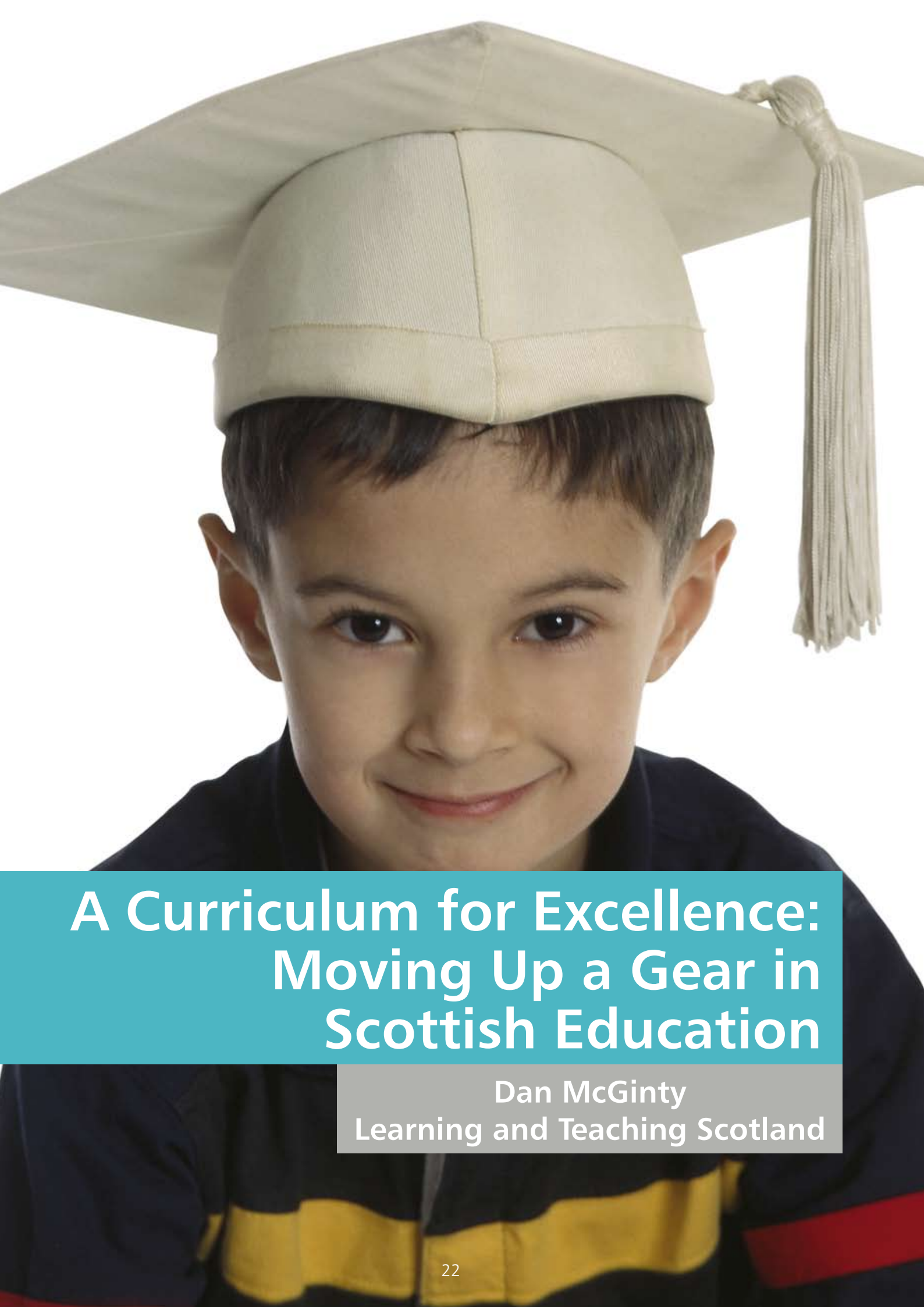
and

- What we can we learn from other countries?



**What answers can we give?**

The answer is “none yet”, although we have identified a range of possible answers and are busy testing them out to ensure that they will be helpful in the Scottish context. Lively and informed debate about these issues is carrying on across the education community in Scotland, including within the SQA, and between the SQA and its customers. What we do know at this moment is that whatever answers we come up with must be practical, credible, and cost-effective to implement in the current environment in Scotland. We want to be visionary, we want to be forward-thinking, but we must always be realistic. Any major shift in emphasis in the qualifications system will require collaboration and contribution from all sectors with an interest in Scottish education – including further and higher education, schools, parents, and learners. We must take account of where Scotland’s learners, professionals and general public are now, and what they will expect of qualifications in the future.



# A Curriculum for Excellence: Moving Up a Gear in Scottish Education

Dan McGinty  
Learning and Teaching Scotland



## Background

In 2002, the Scottish Executive undertook the most extensive consultation ever with the people of Scotland on the state of education through the National Debate on Education.

Many of the people who contributed to the debate said that they valued and wanted to keep a number of aspects of the current curriculum. These included:

- The flexibility which already exists in the Scottish system – no one argued for a more prescriptive national system
- The combination of breadth and depth offered by the curriculum
- The quality of teaching
- The quality of supporting material that helps teachers to deliver much of the current curriculum
- The comprehensive principle

Some contributors also made compelling arguments for changes to ensure that our young people achieve successful outcomes and are equipped to contribute effectively to the Scottish economy and society both now and in the future.

People argued for changes which would:

- Reduce over-crowding in the curriculum and make learning more enjoyable
- Better connect the various stages of the curriculum from 3 to 18
- Achieve a better balance between 'academic' and 'vocational' subjects and include a wider range of experiences
- Equip young people with the skills they will need in tomorrow's workforce
- Make sure that assessment and certification support learning
- Allow more choice to meet the needs of individual young people

The Curriculum Review Group, which reported in 2004, took into account the views expressed in the National Debate, current research and international comparisons. The result of this work is A Curriculum for Excellence.

## Programme Summary

A Curriculum for Excellence makes explicit the values, purposes and principles which underpin the vision for Scotland's future

## Values:

**Wisdom, justice, compassion and integrity: the words which are inscribed on the mace of the Scottish Parliament have helped to define values for our democracy.**

It is one of the prime purposes of education to make our young people aware of the values on which Scottish society is based and so help them to establish their own stances on matters of social justice and personal and collective responsibility. Young people therefore need to learn about and develop these values. The curriculum is an important means through which this personal development should be encouraged.

## Purposes:

"Our aspirations for all children and for every young person is that they should be **successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors** to society and work. By providing structure, support and direction to young people's learning, the curriculum should enable them to develop these four capacities. The curriculum should complement the important contributions of families and communities."

This echoes the purpose of much of the curriculum of Scotland's colleges as they endeavour to embed employability and citizenship into the vocational and professional training they deliver across a wide range of programmes and courses.

## Principles:

- Challenge and enjoyment

Young people should find their learning challenging, engaging and motivating. The curriculum should encourage high aspirations and ambitions for all.

- Breadth

All young people should have opportunities for a broad, suitably-weighted range of experiences

- Progression

Young people should experience continuous progression in their learning from 3 to 18 within a single curriculum framework.

- Depth

There should be opportunities for young people to develop their full capacity for different types of thinking and learning

- Personalisation and choice

The curriculum should respond to individual needs and support particular aptitudes and talents.

- Coherence

Taken as a whole, children's learning activities should combine to form a coherent experience.

- Relevance

Young people should understand the purposes of their activities. They should see the value of what they are learning and its relevance to their lives, present and future.

Again these principles are in harmony with the aims of Scotland's colleges and in programmes such as Skills for Work there is a huge amount of effort on behalf of staff to adapt the content and delivery of their curriculum to meet the learning needs of young people.

### What has been happening between 2004 and 2006?

There have been three main strands of activity:

- Engagement

The engagement process included a major programme of conferences and professional development events in each of the 32 education authorities and with

independent schools.

There is now a network of education authority contacts who will lead change within their authority.

There has been useful dialogue with colleagues involved in related programmes such as Assessment is for Learning and Determined to Succeed, to promote coherence.

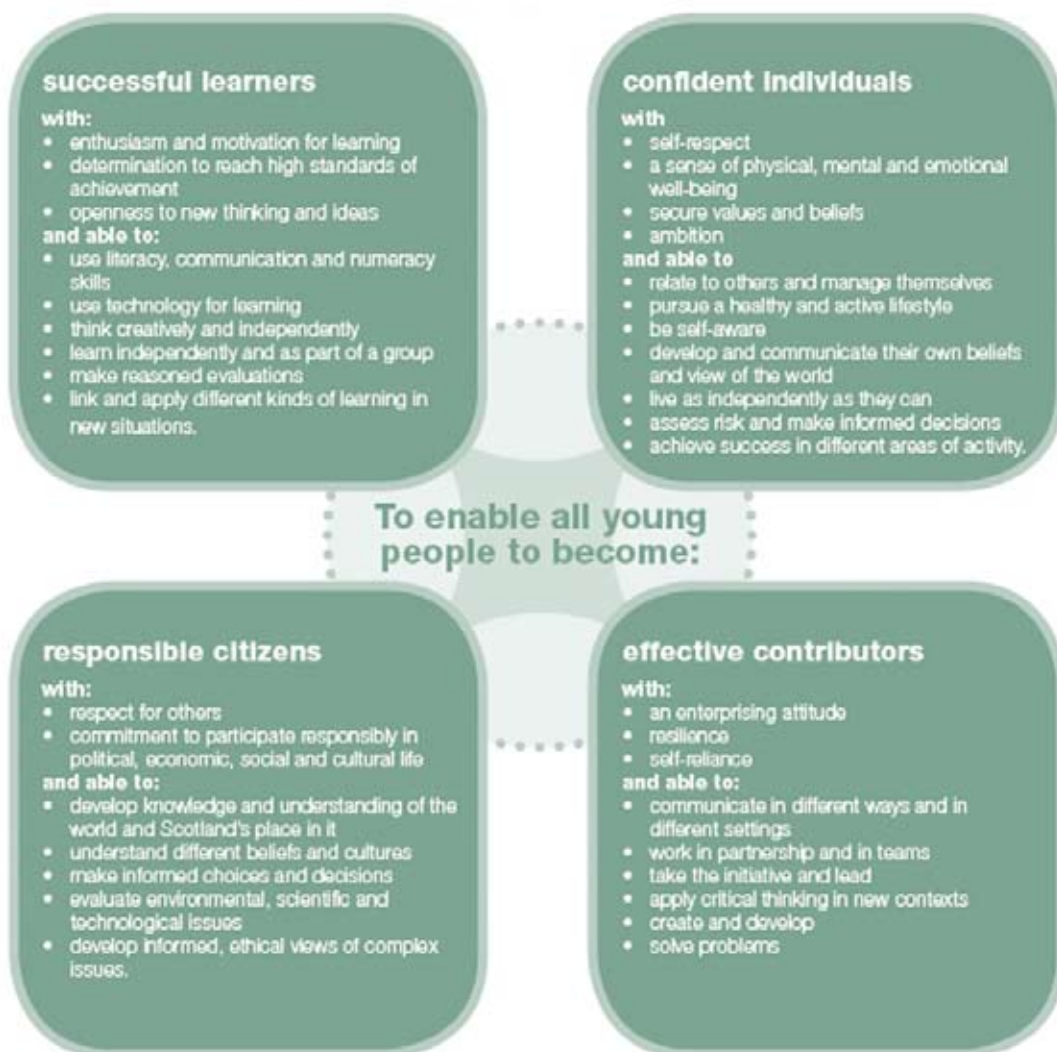
More than 600 centres have enrolled in the register of interest, which is designed to identify examples of good practice, and to test and develop innovative approaches.

- Review

As part of the review process it was recognized that there was a need to develop clear guidance which sets out expectations of what children and young people should learn and also promotes flexibility and space so that teachers can use their professional judgement creatively to meet children's needs.

This was done working with partners considering the implications of a Curriculum for Excellence for the overall structure of a curriculum which will span all stages from 3 to 18. The implications for assessment and continuing professional development (CPD) and resources have also been considered.

## Purposes of the curriculum 3-18



Groups carried out initial reviews of existing curriculum guidance using evaluative questions based on the values, purposes and principles of A Curriculum for Excellence. They prepared outlines of suggested changes to guidance.

Research was commissioned to make sure that, where possible, proposals for change were supported by research or other evidence. The research papers are available on the website.

- Skills for Work

One of the proposals in Scottish Ministers' response to A Curriculum for Excellence was to extend the range of qualifications for all young people through developing Skills for Work courses. The first of these courses were piloted in session 2005-06 in: construction crafts; early education and childcare; financial services; and sport and recreation. The courses focus on the skills, knowledge and attitudes which are important not only for employment but also for lifelong learning. Learning is mainly practical and takes place in schools, colleges and other work-related settings.

Phase two of this programme will be completed in June 2007 and in the SQA evaluation document produced in December 2006 it was noted there was very positive feedback from learners, and deliverers, on the practical and experiential nature of the learning and assessment processes. Quotes such as, 'I enjoyed going to college. It made me more confident with other people and myself.'

'This is the best education I have had.'

from young people who participated confirm that the programme is meeting their needs.

More detail on the progress is available in the document A Curriculum for Excellence: Progress and Proposals, which was published in March 2006 and is available on Learning and Teaching Scotland website.

### **What happens next?**

During session 2006-2007, many schools and learning centres, including those in the FE sector, are including A Curriculum for Excellence in their strategic planning.

There is strong interest in developing Skills for Work courses.

In these courses 1300 young people, 28 colleges and 145 schools across 21 education authorities have taken part in the first year. The range of courses is being extended during session 2006-2007 to cover hairdressing, rural skills and an Access 3 course introducing students at this level to working in construction and engineering. In August 2007 three new courses will be rolled out in Hospitality, Engineering and the first Skills for Work course at Higher in Health and Social Care.

### **What does all this mean for my professional practice?**

In order to participate fully in A Curriculum for Excellence, some aspects of our professional life may be different. There are some strategic questions we may wish to ask:

- To what extent are colleges involved in discussions about A Curriculum for Excellence?
- Is ACfE included in our strategic planning for session 2006-2007?
- How is a partnership approach being developed with our associated schools and lifelong learning partners, e.g. in the area of Skills for Work courses?
- Have we considered an interdisciplinary approach e.g. literacy and numeracy, enterprise
- How do we work with schools to evaluate our current partnership working?
- Are our existing partnerships sufficiently robust to promote appropriate courses for young people?

At a personal level, there are also some practical steps we can take:

- Build in some time to reflect on the potential impact of A Curriculum for Excellence in our college during our CPD time
- Continue to develop collaborative working practices, particularly with school colleagues

### **Useful contacts**

For general enquiries relating to A Curriculum for Excellence, please call the Learning and Teaching Scotland Customer Services Team.

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Also available is the ACfE website:

<http://www.acurriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk/index.asp>

for contact with the Engagement Team for A Curriculum for Excellence:

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# The Curriculum: Where now?

The papers in this publication are a starting point and, hopefully, a catalyst for discussion in Scotland's colleges as to how the curriculum can be designed and delivered with the needs and aspirations of the learner as the focus. The papers pose a range of questions which require feedback, discourse and participation. If we are to move the agenda forward the views of practitioners are required on:

- Alternative ways to design the wider curriculum
- Creating content that is appropriate for the aim of the curriculum
- Offering robust support and follow up as part of the learning experience
- Motivating learners through the curriculum
- Using technology to enhance delivery of the curriculum
- Whether the writing students do at all levels is about preparing for and producing assessments
- What can be changed in qualifications and assessments to ensure they truly serve learning and teaching
- How the Curriculum for Excellence will impact on professional practice

The questions provide a framework to shape up responses. The informal style of this publication is a deliberate choice to motivate and engage the potential audience, hopefully you will be inspired to remove the mind map and add to it!

The Centre for Learning Effectiveness Reference Group look forward to receiving your views so that the agenda can be defined, refined and translated into action.

Please forward your responses to:

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