

Career learning in schools in Scotland – past, present and future

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Career education has never been statutory in Scotland but has nonetheless been subject to the ebb and flow of government policy. At times this has been helpful, generating funding, guidelines and advice. However, government engagement has also been characterised by short-termism and, often, wasteful repetition. In Scotland, by 2015, there will be a model that is underpinned by several new policy initiatives, one which locates learning about life and work within the curriculum, and one which provides more robust quality assurance arrangements. This could be the makings of a concerted national effort to improve career learning or yet another short-term initiative that eventually leaves us back where we started.

Introduction

Career education and guidance in Scotland are fully-devolved functions of the Scottish Parliament and the provision of career education, or career learning, is the responsibility of local authorities and individual schools. Over recent years government engagement in Scotland has been characterised by periodic interest in specific aspects of career learning, usually as a result of a report or the publication of a new policy or guidelines, and the provision of some temporary funding to develop it. However, inevitably, a government 'gaze' moves elsewhere, leaving behind some traces of the initiative it spawned but probably not enough to embed any change in the long term. A good example of this was the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI), albeit at that time an initiative of the UK government as it pre-dated the creation of the Scottish Parliament. From the mid-1980s to 1990s, TVEI promoted vocational education, employer engagement, work experience and better

preparation of young people for the world of work. When the funding came to an end in 1997 (the cost had been around £900 million across the UK) so too did the secondments for staff and the support for schools. Similarly, Education Business Partnerships were formed in the 1990s to promote employer engagement in schools, but when the funding ended so too did the effort.

Initiatives to support career learning have invariably deployed the key words and phrases: career(s) education, with or without the 's' (sometimes in the same document!), world of work, work related learning, enterprise, employer engagement, work experience etc., but evidence of consistent, embedded programmes of progressive and developmental learning about careers is limited (Howieson and Semple, 1996, 2000, 2007). In 1996, Howieson and Semple described career education as lacking progression, planning and integration with career guidance. This is not dissimilar to the situation in England (Barnes, 2000; Barnes, Donoghue and Sadler, 2002). Scotland never experimented with the notion of making career education a statutory requirement as happened in England and Wales between 1998 and 2007. Both Scotland and England had for a time national framework documents for careers education (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2001; Department for Education and Skills, 2003) but again there is little evidence of their application in practice (Howieson and Semple, 2006; Howieson and Semple, 2007; Mulvey, 2006).

Policies

Over the years and alongside other initiatives we have also had policy developments in Scotland that gave us a pupil support system in schools (Scottish

Education Department, 1968) and created promoted 'guidance' teachers with responsibility for careers work and liaising with the careers officer (SED, 1971). This additional career-focused support assisted, for example, in the development of work experience and the beginnings of careers education in personal and social education programmes. In 1986, 'More Than Feelings of Concern' (SCCG, 1986), discussed careers education for the first time as both a permeating feature of school subjects and discrete career-related activities separate from the curriculum:

The Committee recognises the potential of careers education through the curriculum...[but] does not believe that this can be achieved simply by permeating the curriculum. There is a need for units timetabled for all pupils, at least from S2 onwards...taught by members of staff with appropriate skills.

(SCCG, 1986: 27)

In the 1990s the then Scottish Executive published performance indicators for education for work activities and guidelines on promoting education industry links in schools (SCCC, 1997, 1999). The 1999 document stated: 'Education for work is a major priority for all sectors of education, industry and the wider community' (SCCC, 1999: v). Also in the 1990s and 2000s the schools inspectorate in Scotland (HMIe, 2000, 2004) conducted reviews of careers work, principally around how schools were promoting 'education for work' and 'enterprise'. The 2004 document, a guide on quality indicators for enterprise activities, stated, 'The guide recognises and underlines the importance of enterprise in education as playing a key part in the education of all young people' (HMIe, 2004: 1). In 2001, Learning and Teaching Scotland published the 'Career Education Framework', which was heralded as '...the first national document of its kind...to demonstrate the place of career education within the school curriculum' (LTS: ii), conveniently forgetting that we had similar publications in 1986 (SCCG) and 1999 (SCCC). This document again reiterated the importance of permeating careers education through the curriculum as well as providing discrete activities:

The core career education programme will normally be provided through discrete career

lessons and activities. However, these need to be supported by career links to other parts of the curriculum. Career work is relevant to every department.

(Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2001: 9)

This notion of permeated and discrete models of delivery has been explored in a range of literature. Tony Watts, in his discussion of careers education in the UK and other European countries (Watts, 2001), identified four delivery models (specific enclosed, extended enclosed, integrated and extra-curricular), the OECD (Sweet and Watts, 2004) discussed 'stand-alone', 'subsumed' and 'infused' models, and Barnes, Bassot and Chant (2011) have recently discussed the merits of 'separate' and 'integrated' provision. The literature essentially values having a model that integrates career learning into school subjects but also provides for separate stand-alone inputs. This is the model that emerges from the policy documents in Scotland.

A high water mark

The 2000s were probably the high water mark in the development of career learning in Scotland. With the publication of the Careers Education National Framework (LTS, 2001), the interest shown by advisory bodies such the Scottish Consultative Committee on the Curriculum and its successor, Learning and Teaching Scotland, the publication of performance and quality indicators and a heightened level of interest being shown by HMI in careers work, there seemed to be an affirmative answer to the question posed at the beginning of this article as to whether we had at least the potential for developing a progressive and developmental career learning programme in Scottish schools. This was further bolstered by the creation of a new national careers service in Scotland, Careers Scotland, in 2002, with a policy to develop career learning resources for schools and provide support for teachers in delivering careers work underpinned by extensive funding from the government. Careers Scotland, initially extremely well-resourced, subsequently published a comprehensive guide to career education products and services that it would offer to schools, developed a series of 100 'career box' lessons for use in schools at different

ages and stages and appointed dedicated career staff, 'enterprise in education advisers', to deliver career learning activities and provide support and training for teachers (Careers Scotland, 2003; 2004). We therefore had what was perhaps a national, concerted effort to promote career learning in secondary schools. A sense of this was captured by Semple (2002) and Howieson and Semple (2006), writing about careers education and careers guidance in Scotland, and by Tony Watts in his review of Careers Scotland in 2005:

Careers Scotland provides materials and training to build the capacity of schools to deliver career education programmes designed to develop pupils' career management skills... Careers Scotland also organises teacher placements in business and industry; and in nearly half of local authorities it administers pupil work-experience placements.

(Watts, 2005: 24)

In addition we also saw the introduction of 'Determined to Succeed' (Scottish Executive, 2002, 2003), which provided temporary funding to promote enterprising learning, work-based vocational learning and career education:

Our vision is for our programme of Enterprise in Education to give pupils the wide range of experiences needed to increase their self-confidence, to motivate and to provide them with an understanding of the world of work and the opportunities that are open to them.

(Scottish Executive, 2002: Ministerial Foreword)

This initiative ran from 2003 to 2011 and, by the beginning of its final phase, was able to report that:

Significant progress has been made... we have enjoyed unprecedented support from the business community... enterprising approaches in all local authority areas are increasingly evident... children and young people are developing enterprising, entrepreneurial and employability skills.

(Scottish Government, 2008a: 4 and 9)

Quality assurance is the key to the success of any policy and, as noted above, through the HM

Inspectorate in Scotland, we had the makings of this for career learning in the early 2000's. In 1997 the HMI published quality indicators for education industry links in schools (SCCC, 1997), then a thematic report on education for work in schools (Scottish Executive, 2000), quality indicators for enterprise (HMIe, 2004) and a thematic review on improving enterprise (Scottish Government, 2008b). Taken together these signalled a commitment from the HMI to seek out evidence of world of work activities in the course of their inspections (Semple, 2008). In 2014 this was further strengthened when HMI were given responsibility for the review and quality assurance of careers service provision in Scotland (Education Scotland, 2014), with the main focus on reviewing the work of Skills Development Scotland, both in schools and with partner organisations. Importantly these review reports will also capture the quality of career learning in schools and school inspections by HMI's will in future be expected to comment explicitly on a school's performance in this area (Scottish Government, 2014).

How is it looking now?

The curriculum in Scottish schools has undergone a major transformation in recent years which, in 2014-15, has reached the final senior phase of secondary schooling. Curriculum for Excellence (Education Scotland, 2004; Scottish Executive, 2004; Scottish Government, 2009) has aimed to develop four 'capacities' in children and young people through the curriculum, namely successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. It is significant for career learning in that, while it makes little mention of providing discrete or separate career learning activities, it focusses heavily on embedding skills for life and work into the curriculum. It (Curriculum for Excellence):

'...empowers schools and local authorities to expand, develop and embed entrepreneurial activities... within all areas of the curriculum, developing the right progressions in skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work. Moreover, making appropriate connections with the world of work within all subjects... will ensure all young people... have the opportunity

to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.’

(Scottish Government, 2008a: p17).

To support the principles in Curriculum for Excellence for the effective engagement of learners, Skills Development Scotland (the successor to Careers Scotland in 2008) published the ‘Career Management Skills Framework for Scotland’ (CMS) in 2012. CMS is aimed at enabling individuals to take more responsibility for managing their own career development with a focus on evaluating their ‘self, strengths, horizons and networks’. This has been loosely based on the ‘Canadian Blueprint for Life/Work Design’ (Jarvis, 2003). Supporting CMS is an extensive web-based offer of information and resources called ‘My World of Work’, and work is underway to develop related resources for schools similar to the career box materials developed by Careers Scotland after 2003.

Determined to Succeed has come and gone, with its emphasis on developing an understanding of the world of work and promoting links to industry and entrepreneurial thinking. Curriculum for Excellence is entering the senior phase of schooling with its emphasis on embedding understanding of the skills needed for life and work, and we now have the report of the Commission on Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce (Scottish Government, 2014). In January 2013, the Scottish government established this commission to develop proposals to ‘enable young people to make the best transition from a broad general education under CfE into a comprehensive range of opportunities for vocational and further education and training...[and to]...stimulate work awareness and work readiness, and make best use of work experience’ (Scottish Government, 2014: 74).

While the emphasis in the report is mainly on promoting vocational opportunities, particularly modern apprenticeships and ‘industry relevant vocational pathways alongside academic studies’, it also made recommendations which have some relevance to career learning in schools. For example, the report wants an effort to be made to improve work experience, promote employer engagement, more access to ‘career guidance’ at an earlier age and the

development of a new standard to quality assure these. The report calls for:

- greater ‘exposure’ for young people ‘to a wide range of career options (p8) ...[and]...early careers advice and world of work knowledge in S1 and S3’ (p23)
- ‘schools and employers systematically working together in meaningful partnership to expose young people to the opportunities available across the modern economy’ (p8)
- the quality of work experience and career guidance to be ‘significantly enhanced...[with] ... all school pupils to receive work experience and career guidance...by 2020’ (p9) ...[and] ‘...work experience should feature in Education Scotland school inspections’ (p10)
- ‘a more comprehensive standard for careers guidance which would reflect the involvement of employers and their role and input’ (p10)
- ‘regional industry-led Invest in Youth Groups across Scotland and a single point of contact and support to facilitate engagement between employers and education’ (p12).

The draft standards for career education were published for consultation in May 2015 by Education Scotland (it is interesting to see a return of this phrase and pleasing that the ‘s’ remains dropped even if ‘career learning’ is surely more appropriate to the principles of CfE and CMS). The standards set out a progression pathway from early level (i.e. primary school) to senior phase (i.e. end of secondary schooling) that describes the knowledge and experiences that can be provided through the curriculum to prepare young people for the world of work. The following examples demonstrate the developmental nature of this learning:

- By the end of early level... ‘I can talk with my friends and family about their jobs’ (p14)
- By the end of second level... ‘I can use my skills to get more information about jobs/ careers’ (p15)
- By the senior phase... ‘I can apply well developed career management skills reflecting on a variety of experiences of the world of work to navigate the best pathway for me through a range of learning and career pathways (p15)

There is also a draft standard for Work Placements and these will be followed in the autumn of 2015 by standards for School Employer Partnerships.

In all of the above there is a sense that issues that informed past initiatives are being revisited. The concept of a progressive and developmental approach to learning about work and one's place in it, as described in the draft career education standards, would be familiar to anyone reading the content of the Careers Education National Framework that was published in 2001 and discussed earlier in this paper (LTS, 2001). The Invest in Youth Groups mirror the work of Determined to Succeed enterprise development officers and Careers Scotland enterprise in education advisers to coordinate career and enterprise education activities. Providing early careers advice revisits Careers Scotland's work with younger school pupils, including those in primary schools. Improved work experience and partnership with employers echo TVEI, EBP, Compacts, DtS and every work related learning policy since the late 1960s. The three new standards for career education, work placements and school employer partnerships envisaged by the Commission could have been developed overnight from any number of past frameworks and HMI quality assurance systems: education for work (Scottish Consultative Committee on the Curriculum, 1999), careers education (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2001), and self-evaluation and quality indicators (SCCC, 1997; HM Inspectorate of Education, 2004; Scottish Government, 2008b). Why are we still trying to promote the notion that all pupils should receive work experience, this time by 2020, and why are we only now expecting school inspection reports to contain references to the quality of work experience? The draft Work Placements standards pointedly quote a young person's comment in March 2015 that, 'Placement tasks need to be more hands on'. We have not come very far since the late 1960s when such a comment can feature in a 2015 policy document.

In 2015 in Scotland we are in the middle of one development and about to embark on another. Currently, Curriculum for Excellence, building on Determined to Succeed, may be able to promote career learning through the curriculum for the first time because the focus is on permeating skills for

personal planning, an understanding of the world of work and 'planning for choices and changes' into school subjects. History tells us however that this is fraught with difficulties, suggesting a model that both permeates the curriculum and provides for extra-curricular activities is more likely to be effective (SCCG, 1986; Watts, 2001; Sweet and Watts, 2004). But perhaps the linking of skills for learning, life and work to an explicitly curriculum-focused initiative can overcome these difficulties. Complementing this is the work of Skills Development Scotland on developing resources for teachers to support the development of young people's career management skills, but this is also fraught because of the challenge of shifting young people from the role of passive receiver of career learning to active contributor to their own career learning (Jarvis, 2003; Lovén, 2003, Amundson, 2003), and because the resources are being developed for and not by teachers themselves. For the future, the report of the Commission on Developing Scotland's Young Workforce (Scottish Government, 2014) offers the prospect of seven years of funding (temporary: sic) to support increased employer engagement (initially £13 million in 2014 and £15.6 million from 2015/16), improved work experience and better coordination of world of work activities (however this is also contentious because it has been tried so many times before, recently under the auspices of Determined to Succeed with a significantly larger budget, and is another example of top-down development).

Perhaps the above does represent a meaningful effort to develop a programme of career learning in Scotland's schools through the curriculum, supported by the national career guidance agency and employer engagement but its language, intent and temporary nature also remind us of earlier efforts to do the very same thing. The beginning of this paper noted that career learning in schools in Scotland is largely managed by local authorities and schools themselves. It is not clear that looking to the future there will be the effort and willpower from teachers themselves to embrace the possibilities offered by the above developments: initial teacher training and even teacher CPD has little or nothing to say about the teacher's role in career learning and none of the initiative is coming from teachers themselves. Interestingly, the recent paper from Teach First, *Careers Education in the Classroom*, though for an English context, calls for

teachers to take on the responsibility for careers and employability education: 'ITT [Initial Teacher Training] must prepare all trainees adequately for their pastoral roles regarding careers and employability and help them embed careers content in their subject teaching' (Teach First, 2015: 15). There is no corresponding call in Scotland.

Conclusion

From the evidence it seems that career learning in Scotland has often been trapped in its own version of *Groundhog Day*. Initiatives come with a flourish and some temporary funding, invariably set out to improve some aspect of learning about careers in schools and then disappear leaving only a limited legacy and a vague and diminishing signature. Such initiatives seem to have little direct impact on teachers themselves. It remains to be seen whether the current 'perfect storm' of CfE, CMS and Developing Scotland's Young Workforce will provide the critical mass to enable us to break free from the repetitive cycle of initiative and policy fiddling and the feeling of despondency which comes from knowing we are repeating the same events over and over again in our home-grown version of *Groundhog Day*.

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