The urgent need for new approaches in school evaluation to enable Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence

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Abstract This paper presents observations on the nature of school audit methods in light of the implementation of Scotland's incoming Curriculum for Excellence and the major normative, technological, and cultural changes affecting schools. It points to a mismatch between the concepts and structures of the incoming curriculum and that of the universalistic yet atheoretical grading schemas used in Scottish school inspections. The analysis demonstrates how school inspection with its basis in specifications and fixed measures conflicts with the formative agenda of the incoming curriculum, causing a barrier to its creative realisation in schools. An alternative framework of school developmental engagement is presented via interpretative processes, theoretically grounded purposes and systems thinking.

1 Introduction

Scotland's school education is at a crossroads. Since 2004 schools have engaged with the principles of the national curriculum initiative, Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). During the same period there have been changes to school audit, in particular altered evaluation schedules of the Scottish school inspectorate HMIE, *How Good Is Our School?* (HMIE 2007a), *The Child at the Centre* (HMIE 2007b), and new inspection grading schema of The Care Commission: *Grading is Coming* (The Care Commission 2007, 2009). In summer 2008 a major revision of the methodology of school inspections was introduced by HMIE, at next to no notice, requiring schools and local education authorities to implement significantly altered forms of school development and improvement planning for immediate implementation (HMIE 2008).

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The incoming curriculum has been guided by a series of five *Building the Curriculum* documents containing reflective questions for pilot implementation (Scottish Executive 2006, 2007, 2008, Scottish Government 2009a, 2010). Further changes to school inspection are signalled in a public consultation by HMIE in late 2010 for implementation in 2011 (HMIE 2010). In Scotland it has been a busy recent period for those involved in organising school curricula, auditing practice and, indeed, enabling the core tasks of organising teaching and learning activity. There is only so much change that can be absorbed in any given period. Are Scotland's schools to take the road of active participation in the development of new principles of curriculum design and structure, enabled through the scaling back of the top-heavy, duplicative, overly prescribed and rapidly altering school audit systems? That is the central question of this paper.

2 Changing times

It is not just internal structures which are causing rapid and major change in schools. These have come about in response to the changing nature of society, employment structures, types of work, technologies—especially communication media—rapidly shifting expectations, changing social norms, and a new connected awareness in globalisation. Consciousness and thereby the inherent potential of learning itself is undergoing a transformation as forms of social interchange, interaction with knowledge, skill sets and social processes are all shifting, due in large part to the technological changes enabling these, altering the forms of social contact, and enabling and disposing towards transformative new forms.

Schools are to be commended for rapid adaptations of forms of pedagogy to these upheavals of social norms. But increased pressure through audit is not what schools need whilst undergoing major changes to curriculum and assessment systems drawn from rapidly changing contextual to normative circumstances. This is why I part company with what has become known as 'the improvement agenda'. The main shift which is needed is not to improve, which is unidirectional and devoid of rationale, but to learn and thereby develop and enhance practice, in rapidly changing conditions and circumstances, finding new solutions and adaptations.

Given the transformations of the twentieth century and of this decade, at an ever rapid pace, what may the remaining decades of this century hold? We may hazard some guesses, but that is all they may be, and that is the same for everyone else and every other institution, whether global or local. We can outline some parameters of change, but that is all. The *Did you know? Shift happens* video states:

> We are currently preparing students for jobs that don't yet exist, using technologies that haven't yet been invented, in order to solve problems we don't even know are problems yet. (Fisch 2006)

School education matches society, preparing learners for their roles within it. As the *All Our Futures* report into the role of creativity in education put it, now a decade ago:

> The foundations of the present education system were laid at the end of the nineteenth century. They were designed to meet the needs of a world that was

being transformed by industrialisation….The challenges we face now are of the same magnitude, but they are of a different character. The task is not to do better now what we set out to do then: it is to rethink the purposes, methods and scale of education in our new circumstances. (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education 1999:17)

This matches Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence, which is presented as a "transformational" change in the aims of learning (Learning and Teaching Scotland 2009). But two years ago I queried why, if the then Education Cabinet Secretary, Fiona Hyslop, had just written to every school saying the aim of CfE was to "transform" the Scottish education system, was it necessary for the president of School Leaders Scotland to say to her at the draft outcomes launch that there was a fundamental need for reassurance that teachers were going about things the "right" way? The problem lay within inspection methods, measuring as if all was in place now, seeking "improvement" with pre-determined indicator level descriptors (MacKinnon 2008b). Two years on, my view is that the problem has intensified due to major contradictions in method and consequent enablement of developmental processes between the implementation of CfE via Scotland's curriculum agency, Learning and Teaching Scotland, and the inspection audit systems of HMIE and The Care Commission.

3 Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence

CfE points to new principles of experiential relevance, contextual linkage, wider capacities and deeper potentialities beyond attainment. Assessment for Learning places new emphasis on identifying and assisting paths forward in pupil learning. A child-centred approach is re-emerging in a modern guise.

Yet Scottish school education is just coming out of a phase of tightly bound programmes, elaborated content, top-heavy planning, time balances, and an over-riding emphasis on attainment. Audit had shifted to fixed measures, specifications, scaled indicators and idealised descriptors of grade levels. Accountability had become the imposition of external judgement. Inspection had turned into quasi-judicial process, rendered by snapshot. Evaluation had narrowed in meaning to grading (MacKinnon 2007).

Now pointing away from this tightly drawn culture, an innovatory feature of CfE is that it is not a new set of procedures and curriculum content set out from the centre to be put in place from a given launch date. New principles foster four stated capacities in children's learning, these to be introduced gradually. The transition from the existing 5–14 curriculum is thus conceived as incremental, for schools to adapt, learn and adjust practice to the new principles. In this way implementation differs from earlier curriculum reforms in Scotland.

Only one of these capacities is "successful learners", what we may think of as traditional curriculum content. The others: "confident individuals", "responsible citizens" and "effective contributors" place emphasis in this curricular reform on meta-learning, the development of the person and linkage beyond themselves to others, through a curriculum constructed in practical terms to enable these capacities.

4 A clash with *How Good is our School*?

The inspectorate's *How Good Is Our School?* (HMIE 2007a, b) is a very different framework to that of the developmental pathway of the incoming curriculum. It defines self-evaluation as the matching of a school's attributes to a set of 30 thematic level descriptors, termed "indicators". These are further divided into sub-themes within each level descriptor. Each is ranked at six grade levels. The audit task for schools is to conduct a matching exercise to these descriptors, to determine "how good" they are across this landscape of specification. A school may then seek to "improve" by modifying practice to fit with higher specifications of the audit indication categories. Self-evaluation then comprises this matching exercise, driving change as "improvement" through heightened grade marking in accordance with the schema.

But with the unfurling of the new curriculum over several years therein lies a stark contrast. The audit matrix of specifications within the 30 "indicators" drawn up by the inspectorate is a different mental map of educational reality to that of CfE and its categories: four capacities, seven principles of curriculum design, four elements of "thinking about the curriculum differently", seven inter-disciplinary aspects, and the developmental implementation journey through the *Building the Curriculum* series of reflective documents.

It is a different conceptual entity tantamount to a fundamental distinction of paradigm concerning the nature of learning and pathways to realisation. The CfE developmental journey is set out formatively through reflective questions to guide emerging practice. Yet *How Good Is Our School?* is about summative graded measurement, the determination of 30 'readings on the dial', to be calibrated at six-point accuracy, double that when taking into account the separate *The Child at the Centre* audit specifications for nursery education, and 17 more when adding The Care Commission's separate quality statements. This over-weighty, summative audit structure is about fitting yourself to a pre-set thought matrix, fixed and immutable.

Since CfE is constructed in formative terms, specifically termed *Building the Curriculum,* the inspectorate's method of self-evaluation no longer makes practical sense at school level. The conceptual schema is different with different terminology, structure, concepts and thereby different mental concepts. Consequently HMIE is not guiding the implementation of the single most important reform currently underway modifying the heart of practice and curriculum rationale of Scottish schools, probing the nature and rationale of practice, rethinking its suppositions, finding new concepts and practical means to realise wider potentials of learning. This is the very opposite to a conceptual matrix of prescription.

5 Whither evaluation?

For HMIE the "How good is…" method defines an evaluation as the summative product of their inspection process, the graded rendering of each indicator. Apart from initial presentation at the outset of a school inspection, when a head teacher presents a school's own derived grade rankings and justification (self-evaluation), a school takes no part in the formation of the grades which emerge from the inspection

process. The outcome of an inspection is the grading of the audit indicators, with textual addition in the report. Self-evaluation within this mindset becomes merely the process and outcome of inspection carried out by oneself, that is schools and teachers, feeding into the inspection process. The over-riding desire to determine how 'good' schools are leads to the elaboration of prescription, by criteria determined wholly by the auditors. By definition these elide any possibility of *building* the curriculum, or any curriculum in terms of conceptual redefinition or situational application.

Does such a process constitute evaluation? Is this what the term itself means? Does it encapsulate the process? I contend that it does not for the reason that as audit intensity has increased and become focused on only one conceptual criterion: "good", it is thereby devoid of purpose, theoretical basis or conceptual underpinning. Evaluation as a term has slipped into a narrowly restricted remit, to mean calibration against an ideal specification. In doing so it has switched from process to product, from verb to noun, which is reflected in the linguistic shift, how the term "evaluation" itself is used by the inspectorate. HMIe talk of reaching "an evaluation", and can state, as I have directly heard: "We shall shortly be moving to form our evaluations", or "I don't think we agree with that evaluation". The term as they apply it means a grade, the encapsulated, summative product of numeric scoring to the graded categories of the audit indication schema. This is enshrined in the nature of the inspection process as indicated by Graham Donaldson, then senior chief inspector:

> HMIE puts considerable efforts into the professional development of its inspectors to make sure they apply the quality indicators in *How Good Is Our School?* to make sound evaluations (Donaldson quoted in Munro 2010).

Thereby the static and fixed notion of evaluation as noun, matched to an ideal specification as determined by the inspectorate, comes to determine the developmental trajectories and thus conceptual landscape of schools, since this determines inspectors' judgements and hence schools' professional and public affirmation. But what if the concepts and notions are changing, not just the content of the curriculum, but the very notion of what constitutes the concept, as Scotland undergoes "transformational" curriculum change? What then for evaluation, as noun? As verb there is no problem. For HMIE have confused the grading of something, which as a process could be useful on occasion as a component of an overall process of evaluation, with that of the process of evaluation itself, as if a grade constitutes an evaluation. This is reflected in their task, what they seek to achieve in an inspection. Their underlying question is straightforward, encapsulated in the very title of their audit document: how 'good' is our school? (my parentheses). I can well imagine and recognise in the sense of linguistic short-hand that a parent moving into a district might ask whether such-and-such school is a 'good school'. But for the teaching profession itself is 'good' really the most appropriate, central, defining conceptual criterion around which to construct and guide our evaluatory discourse and developmental progression as primary educators of children, particularly at this moment of fundamental change to new principles in curriculum design? This is further intensified by the imposed shift of terminology from "development" to "improvement" in processes of direction and audit, as "school development

planning" up to 2007 from then on became "school improvement planning". Schools had no say in this linguistic and conceptual diminution.

The use, nature and definition of the terms "improvement", "evaluation", "good" are also enshrined in the nature of scrutiny contact. In Scotland this is the one in seven years "snapshot" of a school inspection. The whole of a school's institutional being and internal functioning is determined in this one visit, of three or four days. This is a highly formulaic process, but it has to be given the inspectorate's desired output of a report based on the one-off nature of the contact and method, yet all-encompassing and one-time only within each national inspection cycle.

Periodic national reports are drawn from these national aggregations of indicator grading. The most recent was last year (HMIE 2009). It aims to tell us as a national school education system how we are doing. But I contend that it does not because as a nation we have lost sense of the nature of evaluation as process and of how to engage with locally-mediated meaning and examination of circumstance in regard of that perspective. In reducing evaluation to a summative product it diminishes to a statement of grade-marking of categories and descriptors determined solely by the inspectorate. It does not tell us what categories schools may find useful to explain and determine their developmental progression, whether for overcoming difficulties or embracing enhanced potentials, including of course the new "transformational" incoming curriculum principles as now. In so doing those pathways are edited out of the reporting, both local and national, because the system of audit is not set up to notice, recognise or *evaluate* them in the first place. The audit tools prevent them.

6 Self evaluation or self inspection?

The process of school evaluation through self-evaluation in the sense that the inspectorate use these terms has become the prescribed co-option of a school's own processes to assist the inspectorate in its task of inspecting them in order to rank them, a shift of function picked up by John MacBeath, Chair of Educational Leadership at the University of Cambridge:

> In well developed inspection regimes there is a compelling logic for governments to devolve their own frameworks to schools, providing the goals, criteria and protocols so that schools engage in a form of self inspection. Therein lies a paradox, however. It appears that the more governments provide the template the less inventive and spontaneous the process at school and classroom level becomes. Self evaluation all too easily becomes a ritual event, a form of audit in which senior leaders assume the role of an internal inspectorate applying a set of common criteria arising from quite differently held assumptions about the nature of accountability and improvement. (MacBeath 2008)

In Scotland the "differently held assumptions" are enshrined in *How Good Is Our School?* (HMIE 2007a, b) and conflict with the core proposals of Curriculum for Excellence, particularly its opening chapter: *Proposals: looking at the curriculum differently* (Scottish Executive 2006a).

7 Looking at the curriculum differently

The HMIE audit indication schedule presents "the curriculum" as an indicator, being the component labels of their graded specifications, which thereby disposes it towards being itself a thing, or as Sahlberg (2007) terms it "curriculum as a product". It thereby becomes conceptually separate from the processes of realising outcomes to experiences in children's learning, and thereby separate from all the other indicators. These include for instance "QI 2.1 Learners' experiences" or "QI 5.3 Meeting learning needs" or "QI 5.5 Expectations and promoting achievement".

In their text these all contain apparently worthy aspirations. But they do not constitute separate 'indicators'; they are not separate to a school's 'curriculum'. The terms and method of the audit grading schema do not match the conceptual schema and evaluatory journey of Curriculum for Excellence, which is set out in different terms. It has an elaborate structure but it is a formative one based on reflective questions and principles to be enacted locally. It is not a completed set of content prescription. Its concepts are ones to be realised, only to come into being once the formative journey of *Building the Curriculum* occurs at school level, realising practice operating in accordance with the new principles, *once worked out,* thereby necessitating a different audit method and rationale in the developmental phase. Thereby Sahlberg's different conceptual notions of curriculum are particularly relevant, such as his very different "curriculum as outcomes" and "curriculum as process" (op. cit.).

8 Mental digestion

Whilst the 2007 updated edition of the *How Good Is Our School?* audit schema now contains some Curriculum for Excellence terminology, for these reasons it is very much the audit tool of the former era, of the 5–14 curriculum now going out. Some of its defining concepts match that of the four capacities, in particular an emphasis on skills and developing informed attitudes. It is the structure which is so different. In the 5–14 curriculum the content is presented as attainment targets. Attainment is all. This is the explicit difference to CfE, with the visionary placing of experiences alongside outcomes, experiences now being valid educational objectives in their own right. The outcomes are also not constructed as attainment targets, as specifically stated in the *Writer's Guide* for CfE: "The outcomes should not be written in the form of assessment criteria. Outcomes should also be related to the high level 'essential outcomes'" (Learning and Teaching Scotland 2007). This is practising what you preach regarding the key conceptual difference of a genuinely transformational approach enabling "de-cluttering". The initial framework paper *A Curriculum for Excellence* stated:

> We will therefore set in motion a programme of detailed, linked work to: have significantly de-cluttered the curriculum, particularly in key areas of primary, to free up more time for young people to achieve and to allow teachers the freedom to exercise judgement on appropriate learning for young people, by 2007. (Scottish Executive 2004:7)

This is a huge shift. Just over a decade ago (and just 6 years before this was written) attainment was the pivotal crux, as outlined by the then senior chief inspector in commending the then target setting agenda:

> We are simply asking schools to do what good schools are already doing which is to get the maximum attainment out of their pupils, in which the emphasis is on good teaching, a focus on attainment, good ethos and improved attendance. (Osler quoted in Munro 1998)

But this is not what Scottish education is asking for now. New potentialities through capacities and experiences have opened up, with attainment now moulded into fewer more rounded outcomes linked to these. But there is still a barrier in underlying attitude, process and power. Don Ledingham, director of education in East Lothian points to a self-destruct mechanism deep in the Scottish psyche (Ledingham 2010). Times columnist Melanie Reid has written of a culture of hypercriticism in education (Reid 2008). This points to a lack of trust. Trust does not mean leaving people alone, but respectful engagement in their terms. But the state thought it should and could measure every aspect of the being and actions of schools, to tell us 'objectively' how 'good' they were in a universalistic grading schema. It did not. It presented a behaviourist mechanism of control. We created a monster of specifications and an enforcement mechanism to apply them. CfE arose in reaction, which takes me to power.

In developing school self-evaluation John MacBeath wrote *Schools Must Speak for Themselves* (MacBeath 1999). But self-evaluation latched onto inspection, which turned it into its opposite: a grading matrix to fixed notions and imposed commentary. For MacBeath et al. (2009) the process needs to rediscover dialogue, to become once again a conversation; indeed, they insist: "Self evaluation *is* dialogue".

Self-evaluation has to be about realising purposes and the creative, situationally dependent means by which these may be realised. Grading to prescribed indicators does not do this. It constrains thought and thinking. We did the same to the curriculum and created a labyrinthine matrix of attainment targets and thereby a product model of learning. In all this Scotland became a world leader at fixed specifications, judgement, control and silencing the professional voice. England did too.

CfE is now blocked because these mechanisms are still in place. Certainly we are talking a different game. But proclaiming something and enabling it are quite different. We are told, endlessly, that CfE has given responsibility and direction back to schools. But it has not and will not until those who wield power over us grasp that it is a different model of learning and relinquish their grip of control. CfE is integrative. It is an insight model of learning, as distinct from a process model or a product model.

England may now be in a better position to move forwards because its debates are more frank and open. Chris Howard, president of the National Association of Head Teachers, spoke last year of "too many people minding forms and still not enough forming minds", and of a curriculum "nipped, tucked, stretched, squeezed and rebuilt more often than an aging rock star as government seeks to micro-manage each social matter of the moment." (Howard 2009). For Mary Bousted, general secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, "Ministers can exhort the system at length to do any number of things, but their words are wasted, lost in the ether, unless what they want is included in the Ofsted inspection framework."

(Bousted 2010). The 2009 Cambridge Primary Review spoke of the curriculum strategies and control mechanisms of English school education constituting a "State Theory of Learning" warning that "A process which has concentrated so much power at the centre, and over the course of two decades has so decisively re-configured the relationship between government and teachers, cannot be instantly unpicked." (Alexander 2009).

I contend that the elaborated attainment matrices of Scotland's 5–14 curriculum along with the HGIOS audit indication schema constitute Scotland's own "State Theory of Learning" deriving from similar underlying presuppositions of the nature of pedagogy to audit. It is still dominant, now distorting CfE.

The new UK Government is freeing up targets, control and prescription for England's schools, opening up a focus on accountability. Announcing a post-election forum on "accountable autonomy" the Cambridge Review team ask "how professional re-empowerment can be achieved in a way that doesn't replace compliance and dependence by non-accountable license" (Alexander 2010). BBC education correspondent Mike Baker asks "Can schools be free and accountable?" (Baker 2010)

CfE in Scotland cannot proceed unless we engage likewise. But we are doing the opposite. Scottish schools are now evaluated against "indicators of progress" agreed between HMIE and the CfE management board (Seith 2010). This contradicts a central recommendation of the Crerar Review of scrutiny in Scotland that audit should place emphasis on "outcomes" not "process measures" (Scottish Government 2007).

CfE currently has some 200 reflective questions in its guidance. This is sophisticated and welcome. It builds professionalism and local ownership of purpose. But specification will kill CfE. Which 'indicators' will be chosen and how? Nothing has more bedevilled Scottish school education than looking over one's shoulder for the ever changing "what are they looking fors" of imposed judgemental criteria in inspections. We must now learn in system terms. Measures must be locally owned to local purpose. If this is not grasped we cannot enable an insight model of education, for staff or pupils. As the Cambridge Review team noted: "Children will not learn to think for themselves if their teachers are expected merely to do as they are told." (Alexander 2009).

9 Deferring judgement

Scotland is in the middle of this major process of curriculum change. How then in any meaningful sense can we judge, in summative terms, a school's curriculum, if it is engaged with incoming principles, and going somewhere that not only it has not gone before, but that Scotland as a nation has not either, and right at the mid-way point of the switchover? As the *All our Futures* report into creativity in education pointed out:

> Deferment of judgment is an invaluable element as we produce ideas and then stretch them and connect them imaginatively as far as they can go. Although there is always a stage, maybe many stages, where critical appraisal is necessary, if only to assess coherence and relate ideas to evidence,

practicability, utility and audience response, generative thinking has to be given time to flower. At the right time and in the right way, rigorous critical appraisal is essential. At the wrong point, criticism and the cold hand of realism can kill an emerging idea. (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education 1999:34)

This is why now, as a matter of urgency, we must shift from a culture of centrally-imposed indicators to measures, to one of locally-owned questions and purposes in realising practice, within the broader national policy and practice frameworks of the incoming curriculum. There is now a critical choice to be determined by a fundamental question. Should ownership of purpose, function and developmental direction lie with the scrutineers via imposed and centrally-determined universalistic grade reference markers, or with schools and their communities of interest: pupils, parents, teachers, communities, professional bodies and elected representatives, via mutually-constructed purposes and their practical and collaborative realization? (MacKinnon 2010a)

That is the theoretical, political and practical choice which lies before us as a profession, as a society and as a nation at this critical moment of curriculum change. It is also a political choice. The path we choose to take will have fundamental repercussions for the developmental processes of schools in realising potentials for learning. It will thereby determine the very nature of learning processes, of pupils and of their educators, which thus emerge into and construct the essence of our society, as the next generation of school pupils and students make their way from school to take their place in the wider society, into the second decade of the first century of the new millennium and beyond.

We must move away from imposed pressure, grading to fixed notions as the guiding criteria of external audit. Future direction can only lie in identifying, formulating and then realising purpose. Measurement has to reconnect with purpose (Biesta 2009). For Seddon (2008) forms of measurement must be locally determined to local goals and priorities thus allowing services to "gain knowledge" from their own systems, acquiring the capacity to "pull" responses in accordance with customer determined demand, termed by Seddon "value work". In this way purpose connects with action leading to systemic connection at the local level and functional understanding at the broader organisational level. This then connects with purpose as an organisation becomes imbued with knowledge of itself and where it is going. Opposed to this are fixed, elaborated, centrally determined specifications and imposed methods of inspection, enforcement and reporting.

Achievement of purpose is all there is, all that there can be and all that may be. It may be probed through meaning, perception and insight, only realisable via a review method which uses these concepts, thereby assisted by, drawing on and enhancing motivation, trust and esteem. In this way we may find ways to "build trust on the job" and construct an organisational culture of "spirited leadership" (Castro 1998). For Seddon thought tools must never be externally imposed, and the role of external auditors and moderators is to engage with measures and criteria which have been locally determined.

These approaches build capacity by freeing up capability to deal and engage with new concepts in ways which are meaningful to those deploying them, for purposes

which have been locally determined. This opens up a deeper notion of capacity building, extending far beyond training. The development of human capacity is not just dependent on, but must begin with a thorough understanding of participants' reality and be firmly rooted in the local context (Evans et al. 2004). As Sakil Malik puts it:

> Let us understand capacity building as a journey, or a series of journeys. There is a path, and a facilitator. The capacity building aspirant may undertake long and difficult journeys to obtain completion. There is an inner as well as outer journey. Therefore a capacity building journey must be understood in both senses. One is of the organic body of the organization, the other of the minds of the people working there. (Malik 2003)

But Malik is not writing about school education. He is writing in the context of rural development programmes in Bangladesh. What has that got to do with Scotland's incoming Curriculum for Excellence? In Bangladesh, and throughout the Third World, the route to genuinely transformational and sustainable rural and agrarian change was found to be the local ownership of the process, the sensitivity to local context, to existing local development pathways, involving those who are the 'recipients' of the development process, engaging with their realities and perceptions in their terms, and respecting what is genuinely meaningful to them. External agency focuses on the people, networks and communities who shall carry responsibility and who are thus empowered to realise and take forward development processes, constructing, engaging and building meaning with those who are making sense of their own lives and steering the direction of change. This huge yet essential shift came from the failure in earlier decades of externally-imposed development models, led by first world 'experts' parachuting in imposed models and concepts from the silos of aid agencies to development quangos operating from first world perspectives.

The way the term 'capacity building' is functioning in Scottish education is much as it was in these first-world, centrally imposed models of third world agrarian reform in the 1950s and 1960s. Scotland's school direction, audit and development agencies now need a similar change of overall organisational approach. Indeed they need to work in far more coherent fashion regarding the central messages they are putting out. The Crerar Review of public sector audit in Scotland identified a "lack of fit" between service delivery and the existing "silo-based scrutiny organisations" (Scottish Government 2007:55).

Certainly within Curriculum for Excellence the rhetoric has changed considerably. But little has changed in terms of fostering school review processes to enable this initiative because schools have not been freed up to engage with its underlying principles through appropriate, locally-determined developmental pathways. They do not own the ways and means of constructing meaning. The problem lies in scrutiny method and imposed 'improvement' ethos, rooted in forms of language from a different paradigm of the nature of learning, applied with imposed measurement tools to different imperatives. "Challenge", "rigour", and the "pacing" of learning still hold sway and so new means to explore the cultivation of other notions in realising pupil learning progression such as "insight" (MacKinnon 2010a, b), "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi 1990) or "intrinsic meaning" (Kohn 1999) to realise heightened learning potential cannot come forth. A division has opened up between performativity (Ball 2003, Reeves 2008), the defining concept of 5–14 and *How*

Good is Our School?, and constructivism (Dewey 1897, Bruner 1960), the defining concept of CfE and *Building the Curriculum.* This rift is not reflected in the audit schedules, despite their enormity. Consequently there is a developmental clash between insight, interpretation and meaning as constructed by the learner (pupil/ student and teacher/educator) against measured attainment and externally specified criteria of performance determined by auditors. For CfE to be proceed meaningfully this tension must be resolved and removed. But it first has to be recognised.

The *How Good Is Our School?* (HMIE 2007a, b) audit schedule is a universalistic schema and thereby devoid of theoretical rationale, and thus devoid of and unrecognising of motives and intentions as reflected in different models and purposes of education. Yet Scottish education, from its performative entrenchment in the period 1995 to 2008, is embarking on a very different journey through CfE in terms of underlying theoretical presuppositions, although a criticism placed on the initiative is that these are not made explicit (Priestley & Humes 2010). CfE, based on fostering capabilities and capacities through outcomes and experiences, is very different to the 5–14 curriculum based on highly elaborated, finely graded attainment targets. But whatever emanates from the CfE management board nothing fundamentally can shift unless audit shifts. Audit is locked into specifications, which are applied by fiat and diktat. That paradigm still holds sway because that is where power lies and is what has to shift. Central to this are the tools, that is the thought tools and their method of application. As graded specifications they need to go. If they do not there can be no developmental rationale for schools based on theoretical precepts and models of learning. Without these audit enters into an evidential void. Learning (pupil/student and educator/institutional) is constructed through mutual, interpersonal journeys of making sense, without which actions as processes cannot be interpreted. For these reasons "There is no such thing as the right way" (MacKinnon 2008b) and Scottish schools are "between a rock and a hard place" as between Curriculum for Excellence and the quality initiative in Scottish schools (Reeves 2008).

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

If the principles of CfE are to be realised we must build capacity by engaging with the concepts, models and solutions which make practical sense to those implementing the new framework. The 'thought tools' have to be locally constructed

and locally owned to local purposes and engaged with on that basis. There can be no other 'indicators'. The conclusions, judgments and developmental pathways must be negotiated, enabling local ownership of interpretative processes, leading to locally meaningful and determined developmental direction. The current methods and tools of school audit in Scotland do not dispose towards this. They are imposed, top down, command-and-control. As Seddon puts it:

> When I teach students on Masters courses, I impress upon them the need to ask every lecturer who teaches them management tools two questions:
>
> 1. Who invented this tool?
> 2. What problem was he or she trying to solve?
>
> Then students are encouraged to ask themselves: does my organisation have this problem? It never ceases to amaze me how few lecturers can answer the two questions. They, like the commercially-motivated toolkit salesmen, usually react defensively when unable to answer the questions and assume tools have universal application. These actors have produced an army of fools with tools. (Seddon 2010)

Without a rapid shift in the applied definition of evaluation and the abandonment of the overloaded audit toolkit, CfE will only come to be implemented as an audit-sanctioned, grade-ranked chimera, as we all look over our shoulder to discover what has been centrally-approved, the ever feared, ever-changing "what are they looking fors" of imposed, grade ranked, judgmental criteria in inspections. The essential processes of institutional learning, enabling the discovery of transformational pathways, locally constructed and enacted to the new principles, will have been smothered. As Stephen Chinn observed:

> One of the great problems in so many organisations is a culture that rewards constant activity along well worn processes instead of focusing on identifying breakthrough insights where effort can be targeted much more selectively. (Chinn 2008)

10 Conceptual logistics and personal effects

This may be an article for an academic journal but my reason for writing is practical, to be better enabled to do my job as a class-committed, rural, small school headteacher, through ownership of the conceptual means of development, and to promote, through conceptual analysis, a linkage between policy makers and practitioners regarding curriculum change and audit function. With colleagues and this school community I wish to *build* the new curriculum, but am severely inhibited from doing so by the plethora of audit schedules from a range of different regulatory bodies, their methods, their magnitude, changes to them, their construction to different conceptual under-pinnings of the nature of learning, and their imposed nature (MacKinnon 2008a). I wish to audit in regard of the new curriculum capacities of successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors, and the new principles of curriculum design, and its meta-themes, citizenship, enterprise,

sustainability and so on, as they apply to the school I lead. So let me. With so little time do not stifle me in the myriad complexity of a wholly separated, individualised, universalistic, grade ranked quality indicator system of labyrinthine complexity to different notions. On so little management time I simply cannot do it.

There is a personal cost to imposed audit and one-way public judgementalism when the contradictions between competing agendas and mismatched concepts reach the level of institutional dysfunction and personal incomprehension. In March 2008 shortly following her school's inspection by HMIE, Scottish headteacher Irene Hogg took her life by an overdose of paracetamol. Having parked her car at a remote location in the Cheviot Hills, she became nauseous and dizzy from the drug and then became immersed in the cold water of a stream where she suffered a cardiac arrest. Having been a headteacher for 19 years, her brother reported that she had become "extraordinarily stressed" by her administrative workload and had felt "distraught, almost shell-shocked", by the inspection of Glendinning Primary School, Galashiels, believing that it had undermined her as a professional (Reid 2010).

As a correspondent to the Scottish Times Educational Supplement observed following the Fatal Accident Inquiry adjudication:

> Inspectors impose their opinions, and what they are concerned with is matching you to descriptors they have dreamed up. They reach broad sweeping generalisations in a very short time but do not discuss them with you or allow you to comment on them. These are given to you in "feedback", already fixed by the time you try to get your view across. The reports are written without your input, what inspectors call "securing our evaluations". Evidence is heard in secret and if anyone has an axe to grind, you get no right of reply.
>
> Then you are damned in the public domain. Headteachers are subjected to withering personal criticism, to which they don't get any opportunity to respond, and this is presented as if set in stone. (Anonymous correspondent 2010)

As reported by a columnist in the Times:

> Ms Hogg had told her brother that her administrative duties had become burdensome. She was expected to manage a pre-ordained budget, run a team of seven or eight teachers and cope with wave after wave of bureaucracy as well as teach.…Mr Hogg said his sister had felt that her job had become unsustainable. "What she was saying was that things were changing and she wasn't enjoying it." She felt, he said, that the changes were not necessary or appropriate and were keeping her from her most important role—teaching. (Reid 2009)

Mrs Hogg faced the prospect of a witheringly poor inspection report, especially of her own personal leadership qualities, yet it took a Fatal Accident Inquiry to find, on the basis of the substantial evidence presented to it, that:

> What did shine through the mass of evidence however, and was spoken to by witness after witness, was the fact that Glendinning Primary School was a school with a happy, family atmosphere. The headteacher, Irene Hogg, was

respected and held in high esteem by her staff and by parents and loved by the many children who over the years were fortunate to have been in her care. By virtue of these achievements Irene Hogg proved herself to be an outstanding headteacher. (Farrell 2010:10)

This thereby is the only case of the findings of a Scottish HMIE inspection being subsequently reversed by an external body. Though one case, the Fatal Accident Inquiry closely followed the report of the Scottish Headteacher Recruitment and Retention survey which told of a core job which had become overloaded and unattractive (Scottish Government 2009b). Partly initiated by this sad and extreme event, it was also prompted by a lack of applicants and high level of pre-retirement departures from head teacher posts in Scotland over some time, which led to the Scottish Government commissioning this research (MacKinnon 2009b).

11 Conclusion

Assessment for Learning has placed a major new focus on the formative nature of pupil assessment (Black et al. 2003). The curriculum in Scotland has widened out from attainment to experiences, capacities and more rounded outcomes in and of learning. These changes contain major implications for the organisation and planning of teaching and learning in schools. Within the new curriculum guidance the principles and purposes may be outlined, but how we are to do it is not. If we are to work in a new formative manner with pupils, then surely the developmental and audit processes applying to educators should be formative too? It is only possible to work in terms of bridgeable "next steps" relevant to our contexts, resources, timescales and time availability, especially given such a high externally-imposed initiative load. For very much else is changing too in terms of policy and administrative procedures affecting Scottish schools, all impacting at the same time e.g. new Parent Councils, *Getting it Right for Every Child* inter-agency procedures, new Additional Support Needs legislation and much else.

For these reasons external grading to fixed measures applied through all-at-once snapshot has become inappropriate regarding the nature and scale of the changes and challenges now facing schools and their communities of interest. School inspection as an imposed quality control model should therefore cease. It should be replaced with moderated processes of quality review operating within a learning systems model (MacKinnon 2008b). The nature of contact should be staged, focus specific and not all-at-once. The conclusions should be reciprocal and negotiated, most particularly over the concepts used to guide the discourse and via which pupil learning activity is considered and modified. The purpose of engagement should be future action to achievement of purpose, not determination of "How good is…" to abstract, universal and imposed specifications (MacKinnon 2009a). The emphases should be conceptual awareness, exploration of purpose and practical enactment in achieving these, surely the essence of "building" a curriculum?

We should do this to enhance accountability not lessen it, enabling the processes of accounting for what we do to become *account able*. Embedded within integral structures of systems learning, school communities may then take part meaningfully

in the transformational journey of professional reflection, development and evidence-based dialogue of *building* the new curriculum as teaching and learning reality. Scotland's curriculum journey may then be of wider significance, not another curriculum, but a different form of curriculum enabled by different means. It may come to be realised, enabled through a transformed method and ethos of evaluation which works far more readily with schools, both individually and collectively, in terms of what they are doing, what they are dealing with and what they are trying to achieve. The curriculum system, pupil assessment system and developmental review system should work together and be based on the same formative approach and method.

> There is surely nothing quite so useless as doing with great efficiency what should not be done at all. (Peter Drucker 2003:67)

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