SCOTLAND

Introduction

1.   This note outlines key reforms to the institutional arrangements for school education in Scotland in recent years, and how these relate to the goal of improved educational outcomes for all children. It is a background document for wider work on a comparative international analysis of schooling reform. The focus is on reforms within the schooling sector, although in parallel Scotland has made changes to increase the coherence of policy and programmes across the social sector[1] that address poverty and impact on the well-being of children. The note does not address issues of special education.

The Scottish Context

Overall structure of school system and profile of students

2.   In Scotland in 2014, there were approximately 700,000 school students, spread across some 2,500 schools. The vast majority of students attend government funded schools (677,000), including 370 state-funded denominational schools. Some 30,000 students attend private schools, which receive no government funding.[2]

3.   In the period from the mid-1990s to 2013, school enrolments had steadily declined, but have since been increasing[3]. Compared to New Zealand, the school population is not ethnically diverse, although diversity is increasing, with the ethnic minority school population increasing from 3% to 6% between 2003 and 2013. In 2013, schools in Scotland were less socially-economically segregated compared to the OECD average.[4] Also compared to the OECD average a smaller proportion of Scotland's population lives in non-urban areas.[5]

4.   The Scottish Government is the central education authority and sets education policy.[6] Thirty two local authorities are responsible for the provision of school education, for a duty of improvement as an education authority and on behalf of their schools, and for implementing government policy. Local authorities appoint, and are responsible for the line management of the Head Teacher, are the employer of other teaching and non-teaching staff[7], and are responsible for the management of school property.

5.   Practice varies across local authorities in terms of the degree of autonomy they allow the Head Teacher over curriculum design and the organisation of teaching and learning, and influence over staff appointments.

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[1] Getting it Right for Every Child.

[2] Improving Schools in Scotland: An OECD Perspective, 2015, page

[3] Need to see if I can get more up to date data on enrolments.

[4] Using the OECD index of social inclusion.

[5] Note this contradicts Samantha's report.

[6] Some policies are quite prescriptive in defining how schools will operate; for example maximum class sizes are defined in legislation.

[7] But employment conditions are negotiated centrally.

6.   The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement Act) provides a framework supporting parental involvement in schooling at all levels.[8] It requires local authorities to promote and support a Parent Council in each school. The role of the Parent Council is, however, fundamentally different from a New Zealand Board of Trustees. As currently constituted the Parent Council is a form for sharing information and consultation.

7.   At the national level the Government consults with a National Parent Forum of Scotland, comprising representatives of Parent Councils and other parent bodies[9].

Overview of Achievement and School Quality

8.   Since 2000, the achievement of Scottish students measured by PISA reading, maths and science assessments has declined absolutely and relative to other countries. In 2000, Scotland was ranked above average on all three domains, but by 2015 had fallen to average. In 2000, Scotland:

- scored in excess of 530 in maths, but performance declined over the following five PISA cycles to 491 in 2015

- scored 525 in reading, with performance dropping in the next two PISA cycles before some recovery over 2006 to 2012, but fell to its lowest level of 493 in 2015

- scored just above 520 in science, with performance falling in 2003 but stabilising in subsequent PISA cycles until a further fall to 497 in 2015.

9.   Based on 2013 PISA data, the OECD assessed Scotland to have a relatively equitable schooling system. The degree to which socio-economic status predicts performance was close to the OECD average, the spread of achievement by socio-economic background is narrower than the OECD as a whole, and a third of disadvantaged students were identified as resilient, higher than the average across the OECD. Gender differences were also smaller than OECD averages. Further, students in rural areas performed better than peers with a similar socio-economic status in a town, and similar to those in a city.

10.   Separately, secondary schools are viewed as facing particular challenges with concerns about the level of engagement, sense of belonging, and perceived level of teacher support by students. Scottish adolescents are less likely to report that they like school than students in many other countries. At the secondary level, a much larger proportion of students perform at the lowest level of expectations than at the primary level.

11.   In regard to school quality, in 2013 Education Scotland assessed a sizeable minority of schools to be performing just at satisfactory (20%) or below satisfactory (10%). There is also concern about the variability in performance of local authorities.

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[8] It also places a duty on schools, local authorities and Ministers to help all parents to be involved in their own child's learning, to be welcomed as active participants in schools and to be able to express their view on school education generally.

[9] This was established in 2011.

School Choice[10]

12.   Most education authorities allocate children to schools in their area by defining catchment areas for each school.

13.   The Act, as amended in 1981 and 2000, allows parents to express a preference for the particular school they want their child to attend, even if they do not live within the catchment area for that school. If parents express a preference for a particular school (through a "placing request"), the Local Authority has a duty to grant the request wherever possible. Parents have a right to appeal against a Local Authority's decision not to grant their placing request, first to the authority itself and then to a court.

14.   Placing requests typically happens when children begin primary and secondary schools. Patterns of application across the country will be influenced by a range of factors, including geographic location of alternative schools, parental perception of school performance, parents' desires to have siblings educated at the same schools and the mixture of denominational and non-denominational schools. Where there is high demand for a school, priority is normally given to learners within the catchment.

15.   There are no other mechanisms in place in terms of school placements (e.g. placement to equalise average socio-economic status of intakes).

Reforms

16.   Scotland has undertaken an extensive programme of reforms over the last ten years, to strengthen how the overall system supports the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. The reforms have reflected evidence about what makes the biggest difference to educational outcomes, with a particular focus on the quality of teaching. Underlying the programme is a high value attached to teachers and school leaders as professionals, and more recently a focus on continuous improvement driven by leaders and teachers. The Scottish Government has characterised its vision as a 'school and teacher led-education system, centred on the child'. The reform programme has been set against the backdrop of very significant curriculum reform, which began in 2002, with implementation of the new curriculum beginning around 2010.

Curriculum reform

17.   The *Curriculum for Excellence*, is a coherent curriculum centred on capacities and learning, rather than school subjects, and takes a different approach to assessment and national prescription than had existed previously. It comprises a broad general education to age 15,[11] combined with a flexible senior phase when various academic and vocational qualifications can be achieved.

18.   *Curriculum for Excellence* is substantially a curriculum framework, with schools required to build the curriculum for their particular learning setting. It would appear to have similarities to the New Zealand curriculum approach, but the 'framework' seems to 'drill down' to a lower level, with the OECD noting that it

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[10] Scottish Government (2015) *OECD-Scotland Education Policy Review*

[11] Incorporating early learning from age 3 years.

'has more to say about teaching than a standard curriculum framework (page 41).

19. The curriculum comprises four capacities - successful learners, confident individual, responsible citizens and effective contributors – covering 12 attributes and 24 capabilities in total. Expectations about how learning should be experienced, the corresponding learning that is to be achieved (outcomes), and progression through the whole curriculum at different ages is set out in what are referred to as 'Experiences and Outcomes'.[12]

20. The 'Experiences and Outcomes' are structured around five levels (from early to senior), and eight curriculum areas and three interdisciplinary areas. The interdisciplinary areas are designed to put literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing at the centre of all learning.[13] Further, there are seven principles[14], six entitlements and ten aims relating to curriculum design.

21. The development and implementation of the new curriculum was a very substantial and deliberate process, involving building consensus, designing and creating frameworks, the development of reference materials and professional engagement.

22. An integral part of the design and implementation of the new Curriculum were reforms to senior school qualifications, to align these with the new curriculum and to provide a wider range of qualifications in light of higher retention levels in secondary education. The new qualifications have a greater focus on skills, and include a greater role for internal assessment (supported by moderation). Responsibility for the design and administration of the qualifications systems sits with the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

23. From 2010 Scotland has undertaken a series of other reforms aligned with strengthening system capacity to support the Curriculum for Excellence, which are discussed below.

24. The Curriculum for Excellence sets high expectations of what is to be delivered in a programme of teaching and learning. The OECD in its 2015 review of progress in implementing the curriculum noted that successful implementation in practice required a high level of capability (professional expertise) at the individual school level. It suggested that underlying the curriculum is an expectation that teachers' professional judgement[15] rather than external accountability would be the foundation for quality and improvement.

Education Scotland

25. Education Scotland, an independent agency, was established in 2011 combining the functions of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and Learning and Teaching Scotland. It is responsible for the combined roles of quality assurance and supporting school improvement. It undertakes external

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[12] Documentation in excess of 300 pages.

[13] Expressive Arts, Languages and Literacy, Religious and Moral Education, Social Studies, Mathematics and Numeracy, Sciences, Technologies, and Health and Wellbeing.

[14] Challenge and enjoyment, breadth, progression, depth, personalisation and choice, coherence, relevance.

[15] The OECD further characterised professional judgement 'as the ability to exercise earned expertise and make wise decisions, and to do so in circumstances when the right answer is not obvious or given by data, research, statute or regulation' (page 125).

evaluations of local authority education services, inspecting a sample of schools annually. It also promotes schools self-evaluation and self-improvement, undertakes evidenced based research in education, provides curriculum support and support in areas of continuing teacher professional development and teacher appraisals and develops assessment materials[16].

Quality of Teachers and Leaders

26. Since 2010, Scotland has undertaken reforms to strengthen the teaching profession.[17] The General Teaching Council of Scotland, the independent professional body for the teaching profession, has been a key player in these reforms. It is responsible for setting teacher professional standards, registering teachers and accrediting Initial Teacher Education.[18]

    Professional Standards

27. The professional standards for teachers have been revised and strengthened, with the new suite of standards approved in December 2012. These support ongoing teacher development and career progression, and comprise:

    - The Standards for Registration (provisional and full)

    - The Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning

    - The Standards for Leadership and Management.

28. Professional Values (social justice, integrity, trust and respect) and Personal Commitment are at the core of the standards. The standards include 'a high expectation of all learners', and set out areas of both expected professional knowledge and understanding, and of professional skills and abilities. The OECD has characterised the standards as 'inspiring'.

29. From 2014, participation in an ongoing Professional Update process, which is overseen by the Council, is a requirement for maintaining registration as a teacher. This involves engagement in ongoing professional learning, including through practitioner enquiry, and the teacher knowing and evidencing how this learning has impacted on their thinking and professional actions, and on their students and/or colleagues. An integral element is the interface between the Professional Update and the annual Professional Review and Development process that teachers participate in as part of their employment.

    Initial teacher education

30. A range of changes have been made to initial teacher education and support to probationary teachers has been strengthened. All initial teacher education is university based, and there are only 8 programmes in all.[19] The requirements for entry to teacher education programmes have been strengthened, with a

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[16] In 2015, some 100 teachers were employed on secondment to Education Scotland to provide support for implementing the curriculum. The programme of rolling secondments was designed to contribute to building capacity in good practice at the local and national level. (It has parallels to practice in Ontario.)

[17] Based on the recommendations of the report 'Teaching Scotland's Future'.

[18] The Government of Scotland has recently completed consultation, but not announced final decisions, on proposed changes to establish an Education Workforce Council, which would bring together into a single agency standard setting and registration for the teaching profession and for other education professionals. The rationale appears to be to strengthen framework within which other education professionals operate.

[19] The OECD in its 2015 review of progress in implementing the Curriculum for Excellence suggested 8 was a sensible number of programmes, enabling better coherence and co-ordination.

greater focus on a candidate's disposition to teach as well as stronger requirements around literacy and numeracy. Initial Teacher education programmes, especially at the primary level, have been strengthened with students undertaking a combined four year degree involving study in specific subject areas (to develop content expertise) as well as in education expertise. Changes have also been made to strengthen the relationship between universities and local authorities (the employer of teachers).

31.   Interestingly, students are guaranteed a year's employment as a teacher in a school at the completion of their study period (through a centrally administered programme with a requirement on schools to provide these placements). There has also been work to strengthen the mentoring and support provide during this probationary period.

Scottish College for Educational Leadership

32.   The Scottish College for Educational Leadership was established in 2014 as an independent agency. On 1 April 2018 the College and its programmes were transferred to Education Scotland.

33.   The role of the college is to support leadership across all levels of the schooling system – teacher leadership, middle leadership, school leadership and system leadership. The college has developed a Masters level programme for Head teachers[20], which was introduced in 2015.[21] From the 2018/19 school year the qualification will be a new Head teachers.

National Improvement Framework and annual Evidence Report

34.   The National Improvement Framework was launched in 2016[22], and is legislatively mandated with Ministers required to review and report on the framework on an annual basis. Local authority and individual school improvement plans are intended to cascade from, and align with, the National Framework. The annual review process enables new information and evidence to be incorporated, and the plan for improvement to be adjusted.

35.   The Framework sets out the Government's vision for education – achieving excellence and equity for all learners, regardless of social background and circumstances – and the key priorities that everyone in Scottish education should be working towards.

36.   The Framework and Review process explicitly identify:

- key drivers of improvement

- the evidence base for the choice of the driver

- evidence on current performance in relation to each driver and what this 'is telling us'

- improvement priorities in light of the evidence.

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[20] Aligned with the professional standard for Headship.

[21] It is not delivered directly by the college. The college commissions, brokers and works with other institutions.

[22] Information on the Government of Scotland website positions this as one of the most important reforms in the last ten years.

37. The following key drivers for improvement have been identified:

    - school leadership

    - teacher professionalism

    - parental engagement

    - assessment of children's progress

    - school improvement

    - performance information[23].

38. The Framework appears to provide a mechanism to facilitate alignment across the different levels of the system, is consistent with a focus on continuous improvement and evidenced based action.

Most recent reforms

39. The Government of Scotland has recently completed consultation on a number of further legislative reform proposals, proposed through The Education (Scotland) Bill 2018 (the Bill). In June this year the decision was made not to pursue these reforms through a legislative vehicle at this time.

40. The most important elements the Bill had proposed, from a system design perspective, were the interrelated proposals for a Head Teacher's Charter and for Regional Improvement Collaboratives. Other proposals were to strengthen the role of Parent Councils[24], require that principles of pupil participation are pursued in every school, and to bring teachers and other educational professionals under a single professional body.[25]

41. While these elements will not be pursued through legislation at this time, Deputy First Minister Swinney commented that the reforms will be fast tracked through "*our investment in consensus building and collaboration rather than through legislation*".[26] The Minister announced further investment of £46 million to support the improvement agenda. This will be focused on:

    - high quality professional learning for head teachers and further investment in the Columba 1400 Leadership Academies

    - enhancing regional capacity to support schools (Regional Improvement Collaboratives and Education Scotland working together to help schools to close the attainment gap and tackle rural deprivation, support collaboration to share best practice and the delivery of regional interventions); and

    - supporting Looked After Children through Pupil Equity Funding and the Challenge Authorities and Schools Programmes.

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[23] The Scottish government moved away from national standardised testing in 2010, although some local authorities use standardised testing to assess performance and support improvement. Work is progressing to develop tools and improve assessment against the curriculum, with this based on teacher judgement supported by across school moderation.

[24] Changing the duty of head teachers from informing and consulting the Parent Council, to working in a collaborative way on matters relating to school policies and improvement.

[25] See footnote 14.

[26] https://news.gov.scot/speeches-and-briefings/scotlands-education-reforms

42. The proposals aligned with the recommendations made by the OECD in its review of the implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence. The OECD suggested a need for a "*shift to professional leadership focused directly on the nature of teaching, learning and curriculum in schools, networks and communities*" and to "*reinforce the middle through fostering mutual support and learning across local authorities, together with schools and networks of schools*". The proposals are consistent with recent OECD[27] perspectives on the efficacy of collective rather individual professional autonomy as a force for change, and the importance in a world of knowledge, connection and complexity of system governance that includes both a vertical hierarchy and a meso level of educational leadership from the middle that enables collaboration and the sharing of strategies and ideas that increase excellence and equity.[28]

43. The proposed Charter gives Head teachers autonomy [29,30] over how learning happens in their school and to lead improvement[31], while simultaneously imposing a duty to collaborate with staff and their school community, and with other professionals across the system in exercising this autonomy. This positions head teachers as contributing to wider system improvement while being subject to professional challenge by 'critical friends' on the decision they make in regard to their own school. The Head Teachers' Charter will be implemented jointly with local government and the education profession.[32]

44. The autonomy relates specifically to having greater influence on how staff are recruited, and the ability to select staff[33], to determine the structure of school leadership[34], and to determine the design of the curriculum and learning programmes in their school. The scope of this autonomy continues to be less than in New Zealand – for example maximum class sizes will continue to be defined by regulation.

45. Further, unlike New Zealand, the reforms seek to limit the extent to which this increase in autonomy goes hand in hand with additional administrative requirements at the school level. For example, local authorities would continue to be responsible for key aspects of human resource management and to be the employer of teachers. This allows the system to take advantage of economies of scale in terms of specific expertise at the local authority level and reduces the degree that 'educational leadership' is crowded out by administration.

46. There are six Collaboratives. Each brings together a number of local authorities and all their schools. Both the local authority and school leaders contribute to the Collaborative. This potentially provides support to the weaker local authorities, with differences in performance at the local authority level identified as a problem by the OECD.

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[27] Refer to OECD 2015 papers on innovative learning systems and on governance. (need access)

[28] They also appear to build on elements of the 2012 Raising Attainment for All Programme and Challenge Scotland.

[29] The level of autonomy local authorities allow Head Teachers varies across the system. For some principals the extent of increase will be more limited given the autonomy they already exercise.

[30] The Professional Standard for Head Teachers is to be updated in light of these new responsibilities and duties, as well as support material provided by the Scottish College for Educational Leadership.

[31] At the school level, the priorities for improvement need to align with those in the National Improvement Framework, discussed above.

[32] https://news.gov.scot/speeches-and-briefings/scotlands-education-reforms

[33] While still having to provide places for probationary teachers.

[34] Requiring greater delegation of staffing budgets to the school level. A separate review of possible future approaches to funding school education to support the vision of excellence and equity was carried out between June and October 2017. The Government of Scotland has not yet reported on the outcome of the review.

47.   The focus of the Collaborative is to provide support to schools on curriculum and improvement issues. While local authorities would continue to be responsible for school provision, when it comes to actual teaching their role is to participate in the Collaborative. Local authorities will also be required to achieve their duty for school improvement through their participation in the work of the Collaborative. The local authority also continues to have influence through their role as employer of the head teacher.

48.   The Collaboratives have already been established and are now starting to involve Head Teachers, (the Bill had intended to clarify their relationship to local authorities, it is not clear if there are plans to formalise these roles and relationships). Each Collaborative is headed by a lead, appointed by the chief executives of the relevant local authorities and the Government of Scotland (advised by the Chief Inspector). Government documents note that in terms of effectiveness, much will rest on the relationship that the Collaboratives establish with Head Teachers and the extent that they are involved in setting the priorities of the Collaboratives.

49.   More generally, consultation findings showed that there was support for the principles of the Bill, although was less support for legislation to enshrine these principles. A number of key findings emerged from consultation responses:

- collaboration was recognised as being important at all levels of education system

- a clear desire to protect and enhance the teaching profession

- a desire to preserve a significant and meaningful role for local authorities

- desire for clarity over the roles and responsibilities of the Regional Improvement Collaboratives and local authorities

- a need for adequate levels of funding, resources, support, guidance, training and sharing of good practice the need for transparency, accountability and oversight in decision-making.[35]

Concluding Comments

50.   There is a high level of alignment between the reforms progressed by Scotland, and evidence about what is important for raising achievement. A key question is how the poor 2015 PISA results should be interpreted. Do they reflect the criticality of the next stage of reform, that the reforms to date could only be expected to deliver improvement over a long time frame as capability is improved, the risks around the capacity of a system to absorb an expansive programme of reform, the fundamental challenges in changing behaviour within a complex system, or a mix of all of these.

51.   Following the 2015 PISA results, the OECD advised the Government of Scotland to hold steady on its reform programme.

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[35] Why Research (2018) *Analysis of responses to Empowering Schools: A consultation on the Provisions of the Education (Scotland) Bill* http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0053/00534829.pdf