

Career education in Scotland – who’s minding the store?

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Introduction

Career education in Scottish secondary schools has received a great deal of attention in the last decade with the publication of numerous policies and guidelines (Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum, 1997 & 1999; Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2001; Scottish Executive, 2002, 2004a, 2004b & 2007; Scottish Government, 2008a, 2008b & 2009). There has also been additional input to careers work in schools from Careers Scotland, the statutory provider of career guidance in Scotland, which employed dedicated enterprise in education (EiE) advisers to support schools in developing and sustaining their career programmes. Additional funding was also made available for schools through an initiative known as *Determined to Succeed* (Scottish Executive, 2002, 2003, 2004a & 2007). However we now appear to be moving from a period when careers work in schools had a high profile to one where it may have few supporters and will have to compete for attention in schools - hence the question, ‘who’s minding the store?’

The raised profile of career education

The *Determined to Succeed* (DtS) initiative was established to promote ‘enterprising learning and teaching, entrepreneurial learning, work-based vocational learning, and appropriately focused career education’ and substantial funding over recent years - £42m to 2006 and a further £44m to 2008 (Brownlow, in Semple, 2008) - has provided an additional impetus for schools to develop and run a range of enterprising and career related activities. Careers work in schools was also underpinned by two important national frameworks which provided schools with comprehensive guidelines on how to develop and evaluate their career related learning and education-industry links. The first of these documents, *Education Industry Links in Scotland – A National Framework* (Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum, 1999), focused on the benefits of links between education and industry and identified a series of activities that could be developed to create a progressive programme in schools from age 5 to 18. The follow-up document, the *Career Education National Framework* (Learning and Teaching

Scotland, 2001) similarly identified activities on the DOTS model from age 5 to 18 and highlighted the need to both permeate career activities into the curriculum and to deliver additional discrete lessons:

‘The core career education programme will normally be provided through discrete career lessons and activities. However, these need to be supported by careers links to other parts of the curriculum. Career work is relevant to every department ...it is essential that links to the curriculum are clear’.

Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2001: 9

Careers Scotland responded to this policy push by developing *Career Box*, a series of lessons to support career education teaching, delivering in-service training to teachers and providing external expertise and consultancy (Careers Scotland, 2005). Howieson and Semple, writing in *Scottish Education* (Bryce and Humes, 2008), described this as a positive development: ‘*This has led to some increase in consistency and standardisation of provision, something which had been lacking previously*’ (2008: 455). Thus, by the end of the first decade of the 21st Century, Scotland appeared to have the makings of a coherent and progressive career and enterprise programme in place in its secondary schools, albeit still non-statutory in nature and subject to local variations in delivery.

Models of delivery

Career and enterprise education has been delivered in two ways in secondary schools in Scotland, through permeation into curricular subjects and through the provision of discrete career lessons – essentially no different to the rest of the UK (Watts, 2001; Barnes, 2002; Andrews, 2006; Semple, 2008). There was a good reason for this – no single approach was regarded as sufficient on its own to ensure effective delivery. Policy documents over the last 20 years understood this. The 1986 position paper on Guidance in Scottish schools (*More Than Feelings of Concern*) stated: ‘*The Committee (the Scottish Central Committee on Guidance) recognises the potential of careers education through the curriculum ... but does not believe that assisting pupils to make informed choices can be achieved simply by permeating the curriculum. There is a need for units timetabled for all pupils ... taught by members of staff with appropriate skills including members of the guidance team*’ (SCCG, 7.06).

The discrete delivery model has actually dominated delivery to date: ‘*The traditional approach has been to deliver career education as part of a rolling programme of Personal and Social Education (PSE), with a number of weeks devoted to career education ... Some schools had a*

discrete career education programme, and a very small number delivered career education through other subjects in the curriculum’ (Howieson and Semple in Bryce and Humes et al., 2008: 455). An OECD review of career guidance and public policy in 14 countries, including England, (OECD, 2004) found 3 delivery models - stand-alone, subsumed (ie included in PSE) and infused (into the curriculum) - but similarly maintained that separate provision is required:

‘Where career education is mandatory, its quality is easier to monitor in its stand-alone or subsumed forms. Within the infusion model, provision can be patchy, disconnected and often invisible to the student. Experience in Austria and Norway shows that the infusion model requires a high level of coordination and support to be effective. And it needs some separate provision where the students are helped to make personal sense of the bits and to pull them together’. OECD, 2004: 44

The new policy context

The above seems not to have been appreciated in the latest policy developments in Scotland which essentially envisage the delivery of career related activities solely through a permeated or infused model:

‘We will ensure that ... vocational learning, learning about the world of work and learning about the skills needed in the world of work [is] part of the curriculum, valued alongside other learning and not a separate experience perceived to be of lower value’. Scottish Government (2007)

‘Nationally we will ... embed enterprising approaches to learning across the curriculum (p9) ... This is the way we can ensure enterprise becomes part of a young person’s learning experience – across and within the curriculum ... the development of CfE [Curriculum for Excellence] empowers schools to ... embed entrepreneurial activities and enterprising learning and teaching practices within all areas of the curriculum ... making appropriate connections with the world of work within all subjects [and] ... continuing to make certain experiential entrepreneurial learning is embedded in the curriculum’.

Scottish Government, 2008a: 16-18

Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Executive, 2004b; Scottish Government, 2008b) is now the key driver of education in Scottish schools, the title illustrating the focus of schools on the ‘curriculum’, with all related activities, including, one must conclude, career and enterprise education, designed to contribute to the curriculum and to be delivered through the curriculum. Of the 8 curricular areas associated with CfE only one, Health and Wellbeing, has an explicit focus on career related learning:

‘young people should be equipped to explore different options for life beyond school and be supported so they can make successful transitions into work, education or training ... learning through health and wellbeing enables children and young people to make a successful move to the next stage of education or work’. Scottish Executive, 2004b

In their most recent publication on CfE (*Building the Curriculum 4: skills for learning, skills for life, skills for work*) the Scottish Government (2009) has elaborated further on how it envisages delivery of these cross-cutting skills through the curriculum but the proposals are still rather vague:

‘The skills for learning, life and work for Curriculum for Excellence referred to in this document are often cross-cutting and transferable across the whole range of curriculum areas, contexts and settings (p5) ... By talking about and planning their own learning from early years onwards, children and young people will develop the skills to: identify, discuss and reflect on their own evidence of learning, use appropriate language for self-evaluation, take responsibility for managing their own learning, help to plan their own next steps in learning and set their own learning goals, make informed choices and decisions about their future learning. They are skills that can be developed by all learners, whenever and wherever they are learning (p13) ... Enterprising learning and teaching specific activities and tasks across the curriculum and the ethos of the establishment – in partnership with employers – enable young people to transfer skills developed through subject-specific contexts into the world of work’ (p13)

Scottish Government, 2009

The above are aspirational aims which envisage the development of career related skills across and through the curriculum but do not explain how this will be achieved.

So who’s now minding the store?

While it remains the responsibility of local authorities and schools to interpret how they implement these policies the danger is that if career related provision is to be delivered solely through the curriculum it will be compromised: it has always been a contested concept (see Harris, 1999) and its loose relationship to school subjects simply reinforces this. Remember too that in Scotland career education is non-statutory. This is in contrast to England where there has been a statutory requirement to provide career education in schools under the Education Act of 1997 and where the latest policy document (*Quality, Choice and Aspiration*) published by the DCSF in October 2009, explicitly provides for an ‘IAG Guarantee’ to ‘high quality programmes of careers education’ for all young people up to age 18

underpinned by Ofsted inspection focused on 12 Quality Standards for Young People's IAG (DCSF, 2007) and six Principles of impartial careers education (DCSF, 2009b). Again this can be contrasted with Scotland where the HMle (the schools inspectorate) are moving to a very different inspection regime to mirror the all-encompassing *Curriculum for Excellence* and inspections are likely to only tangentially touch on career related learning. From January 2008 inspections in Scotland have focused on 30 quality indicators in the document 'How Good is Our School?' (HMle, 2007) only one of which could be used to evaluate the quality of career related learning and education, namely, indicator 5.8, on care, welfare and development. With the drive to make career related learning part of the curriculum through DtS (mainly unsuccessfully and suffering from short term funding) and CfE (where it is essentially subsumed within a health and wellbeing agenda) there is a very real danger that the progress made over the past decade which was highlighted earlier in this paper will be undermined. Who is going to be minding the store?

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