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A critique of *A Curriculum for Excellence* through the works of Paulo Freire

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GUID:

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Abstract

This dissertation provides a critical evaluation of the philosophies of education and a critique of *A Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE) as the national curriculum in Scotland, coupled with analysis of the works of Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire with the aim of demonstrating a correlation between his works and the philosophical rationale of CfE. CfE is frequently cited as difficult to implement due to a lack of clearly established theoretical and philosophical principles, thus becoming ineffective in achieving its reported aims. However, this paper will assert that it is not the absence of educational philosophy that hinders CfE, but rather the fact that elements of the competing philosophies present within Curriculum guidance enable the employment of multiple focal points during implementation. This results in conflicting models of curriculum developing, and when this occurs, entrenched practice dominates, thus negating CfE's initial stated desire to bring about radical change in Scotland's national curriculum. It follows that providing a strong philosophical grounding from which the Curriculum model can develop and that reflects the principles within the original aims and purpose of CfE is key to addressing this conflict in implementation. By means of a review of the various philosophies of education, to identify their inherent principles; an analysis of *A Curriculum for Excellence* and the supporting *Building the Curriculum* series, as well as educational policy; and a systematic evaluation of the works of Paulo Freire, this dissertation aims to suggest that the principles central to Freire may provide the necessary theoretical grounding for CfE to refocus towards its original aims and purpose.

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Declaration

"I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution."

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List of Abbreviations

CfE	*A Curriculum for Excellence*
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development
GIRFEC	*Getting It Right For Every Child*
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Introduction

A Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), the curriculum followed in Scottish schools since 2010, has been frequently criticised for failing to present coherently an educational philosophy or any substantial theoretical grounding on which pedagogy in Scotland is to be based, and this has led to some academics categorising the Curriculum as atheoretical (Davis and Edwards, 2001; Priestley, 2010; Priestley and Humes, 2010; Priestley, 2011; Day and Bryce, 2013; Priestley and Minty, 2013). Combined with the narrow spectrum of additional academic disciplines connected to teacher education in Scotland (Donaldson, 2010; McCormac, 2011) and the reduced influence of educational philosophy and the Humanities in general (Ball, 2003; Dale and Hyslop-Marginson, 2011), the lack of theoretical grounding within CfE inhibits the ability of practitioners to understand the Curriculum – thus resulting in the implementation of CfE often occurring through conflicting curricular models, while opposing philosophies of education, represented through multiple focal points, present competing aims for education in Scotland.

A clearer understanding of theories relating to cognitive development and associated links to educational philosophy would undoubtably help to support the implementation of the Curriculum and allow it to remain focused on its original aims and purpose of assisting young people to maximise their potential as 'successful learners', 'confident individuals', 'responsible citizens' and 'effective contributors' (Scottish Executive, 2006). This dissertation will discuss philosophies of education and theories of learning to advance understanding of interrelated concepts and the implications for pedagogic development in order to provide a foundation for the subsequent evaluation of CfE. A literature-based critique of CfE and the supporting documents will identify different focal points from which

competing philosophical identities may develop, and then discuss potential contradictions within CfE that have led to accusations of it being atheoretical. Evidence from CfE and the supporting documents will be used to indicate that the development of a theoretical identity that links Scottish education with the Progressive educational values expressed within the Social Re-constructive philosophy of Paulo Freire may be possible.

Chapter Summaries

The initial chapter intends to provide a foundation and understanding of the philosophies of education that will be necessary to support the following critique of the Curriculum in Scotland and discussions of the epistemology of Paulo Freire in subsequent chapters. To facilitate discussion of the philosophies of education it must first be clarified that key to the educational debate presented in this chapter and in the later critique of CfE is the schism between Rationalism and Empiricism within educational epistemology and theories of learning. The general discussion of these standpoints will progress to outline various Traditionalist and Progressivist approaches to educational philosophy and related theories of cognitive development. A literature review from peer-reviewed journals will provide insight into the attitudes to different themes within educational philosophy contemporary to the development of CfE.

Following on from this and to critique CfE effectively, an understanding of the aims and purposes of the Curriculum, gained from analysis of the supporting documentation in the *Building the Curriculum* series, is necessary. Equally, an awareness of the key policies relating to education is developed to provide a clearer picture of the political and social drivers within curriculum change in the years prior to CfE and through its initial implementation. Once the aims of and motivations behind CfE are established, the chapter will assess the degree of change that CfE can be said to embody, by comparing it to the previous 5-14 Curriculum in Scotland and the trends globally in education. Based on

peer-reviewed journals of education relating to CfE, a literature review in this chapter will provide an indication as to how the academic community has viewed and engaged with the Curriculum. Finally, provided through detailed analysis of documentation, a critique of CfE will assess the stated aims of the Curriculum and the development of the 'Four Capacities' ('successful learners', 'confident individuals', 'responsible citizens', 'effective contributors') (Scottish Executive, 2006); the purpose of this is to ascertain theories of learning that underpin the Curriculum in Scotland, the philosophical traditions that they relate to, and how compatible and effective they are likely to prove.

The final chapter of this dissertation will introduce an analysis of Freire's work and demonstrate how this might be helpful in exploring and extending critique of the Curriculum for Excellence. In doing so, the stated aims and purpose embodied through the Four Capacities would be given greater prominence once again, as opposed to implementation being focused on the 'Experiences and Outcomes' and the associated Benchmarks (Education Scotland, 2016). Through an assessment of Freire's epistemological works, which are grounded in dialectical materialism, a clear theoretical link to the principles of CfE and the Four Capacities can be inferred, epitomised by the social justice that drives his philosophy of education. Freire's objection to what he terms the 'banking model' of education (Freire, 1970) is interpreted as a rejection of traditional philosophies of education and the models of curriculum that they support, which will thus be shown as having implications for the Experiences and Outcomes as a focus of CfE. His opposition to banking calls for a reassessment of pedagogic authority and increasing use of dialogue as a mechanism for learning.

Chapter One: The Philosophies of Education

This chapter explores the different philosophies of education as a basis for the subsequent critique of the Curriculum in Scotland and discussions of the epistemology of Paulo Freire. To facilitate understanding of the philosophies of education it must first be clarified that key to the educational debate presented in this chapter and in the later critique of CfE is the schism between Rationalism and Empiricism within educational epistemology and theories of learning. Competing epistemologies can be broadly discussed as represented through the works of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) as a Rationalist and David Hume's (1711–1776) Empirical view, which in turn lead to the distinctions between John Locke's (1632–1704) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's (1712–1778) models of cognitive development in children.

The discussion of the theories of Locke and Rousseau will additionally outline Traditional philosophies of education such as Perennialism and Essentialism, as well as the Progressive philosophy of education, which then leads on to Existentialism and Social Re-constructivism. Further, an evaluation of the philosophies of education, discussed in relation to key theories of learning and cognitive development, will enhance the collective understanding of the compatibilities of competing philosophies and theories necessary for the critique of CfE in the following chapter.

The final aspect of this chapter will be to examine academic views on the philosophies of education, published in peer-reviewed journals between 2000 and 2009, i.e. covering the decade in which the conception and development of CfE took place. This literature review aims to establish attitudes related to the various philosophies of education that have shaped and provided a theoretical foundation for the Curriculum in Scotland.

The Philosophies of Education

German philosopher Immanuel Kant is considered one of the most influential figures of pre-20th century cognitive thought and, although primarily a Rationalist, "he was heavily influenced by Empiricist [Scottish philosopher] David Hume" (Bartlett and Burton, 2016, p.209). Empiricism and Rationalism are central concepts in the foundations of epistemology. While Empiricists, like Hume, believe that knowledge can only be ascertained through experience, a Rationalist would counter that reason coupled with rational thought is the only true source and proof of knowledge. (Carr, 2003; Bartlett and Burton, 2016). It perhaps appears that a hybrid of the two should shape educational philosophy, with Empiricism being considered as developing knowledge and Rationalism linked more closely with developing an understanding of the empirically developed knowledge. Indeed, Kant ventures precisely this in his *Critique of Pure Reason* as he attempts to negate the schism in traditional philosophical thinking, both in response to Empiricism and in resistance to the scepticism of Hume:

> the categories of modality are nothing more than explanations of the conceptions of possibility, reality and necessity, as employed in experience, and at the same time, restrictions of all the categories to empirical use alone, not authorizing the transcendental employment of them. For if they are to have something more than a merely logical significance, and to be something more than a mere analytical expression of the form of thought, and to have a relation to things and their possibility, reality, or necessity, they must concern possible experience and its synthetical unit, in which alone objects of cognition can be given. (Kant, 1781, p.88).

An Empiricist epistemology of knowledge through experience influences most, if not all, of the philosophies of education and cognitive theories discussed in this chapter, and permeates discussion

of education from the Enlightenment onwards, primarily in the form of Lockean thought (Raferty, 2012). John Locke claims that all children are born as 'blank slates', or '*tabula rasa*', (Berk and Meyers, 2016) on which all knowledge, learning and experiences are to be printed:

> Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper void of all characters, without any ideas. How comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has printed on it with an almost endless variety? (Locke, 1698, p.95).

Locke's model of childhood cognitive development involves knowledge being imprinted onto the child from an adult source (Raferty, 2012; Berk and Meyers, 2016). In contrast, Jean-Jacques Rousseau believed that talent and ability, as well as an innate sense of right and wrong, are inbuilt at birth, and that each child requires support and encouragement to develop (Berk and Meyers, 2016). Rousseau "advocated a free, unrestrained environment which the child would explore, learning at their own pace" (Bartlett and Burton, 2016, p.209) – an attitude greatly divergent from that of Andrew Bell (1753–1832), Joseph Lancaster (1778–1838) and the Lockean educational tradition from which they are derived (Raferty, McDermid and Jones, 2007). The differing opinions on childhood cognitive development demonstrated by Locke and Rousseau appear fundamentally to divide Behaviourism, Constructivism and Social Constructivism as schools of cognitive development and the philosophies of education with which there are closely aligned.

A philosophy of education can be defined as "a generalised theory of education" (Dewey, 1916, cited in Oancea, 2012, p.66), while Meigan and Harber (2007, p.218) define ideologies of education – and, as such, philosophies of education – as "the set of ideas and beliefs held by a group of people about the formal arrangements for education, specifically schooling", which, perhaps more simply, can be interpreted

as saying that one's educational philosophy is a way of thinking, being and acting in an educational context (Oancea, 2012).

Thus, it would appear beneficial to explore and outline several key philosophies of education, notably: the Essentialist and Perennialist views held by Robert Hutchins (1899–1977) and Mortimer Adler (1902–2001) (Mulcahy, 2012), which represent a Traditionalist philosophy of education (Bartlett and Burton, 2016); the Progressivism of John Dewey (1859–1952), which is further developed through the Existentialist theory of A.S. Neill (1883–1973) (Darling and Nordenbo, 2003); and finally the post-modernist – or perhaps considered neo-Marxist – philosophy of Paulo Freire's (1921–1997) Social Re-constructivism (Peters and Besley, 2012; Sanovik, Cookson Jr. and Semel, 2013). Once outlined, links between these educational philosophies and key theories of learning based in an Empiricist epistemology can be established.

Essentialism and Perennialism are closely linked as educational philosophies, both stemming from the concept of liberal education and being representative of a Traditionalist model of education. For Essentialists and Perennialists, a broad Traditionalist education is seen not only as a worthwhile end unto itself, but as additionally providing the best foundation for either further academic study or entry to employment. (Carr, 2003). Essentialism focuses on teaching pupils the essential elements of academic knowledge. Essentialists argue that in order to maintain academic standards, schools should 'get back to basics'. They believe that a prescriptive and strong core curriculum is required to achieve high academic standards and support an academic hierarchy, with disciplines such as mathematics, science, history, foreign languages and literature central to the foundation of their curriculum. (Bartlett and Burton, 2016).

Perennialists believe in the everlasting nature of universal truths and the significance of important works of literature that have withstood the test of time. Hutchins was a key exponent of Perennialism, and during his tenure as President of the University of

Chicago (1929–1945) implemented the 'Great Books' programme as testament to his commitment to liberal education and Perennialism. (Mulcahy, 2012). Adler worked closely with Hutchins at the University of Chicago and held the view that education should be "general and liberal", "nonspecialized and nonvocational" (Adler, 1982, p.18, cited in Mulcahy, 2012). Perennialists such as Hutchins and Adler argue that students should read works by great philosophers and authors in order to develop a clearer understanding of the philosophical concepts that underlie human knowledge (Mulcahy, 2012).

The Perennialist's classroom is organised around books, ideas and concepts, with the teacher playing a central role in directing the learning of the pupils. This is similar to the teacher-centred approach advocated by Essentialism, which allows little flexibility as part of a content-driven curriculum. Within the Traditionalist liberal education of both philosophies, religious instruction and moral training are perceived as having little involvement, with emphasis instead being placed on what is deemed to be useful knowledge and universal fact – although religious and associated moral inputs do appear in the Traditionalist models of education emanating from the 19th century (*cf*. Bell-Lancastrian models of education). Education, in a Traditionalist model, is a sorting mechanism, a way to identify and prepare the intellectually gifted for further academic study and as leaders of society, whilst providing vocational training for those deemed incapable of more lofty pursuits. (Carr, 2004; Mulcahy, 2012).

Perennialism and Essentialism as educational philosophies both emanate from Locke's '*tabula rasa*' view of child development and education. Characterised by passive learning and the teacher as the instiller of knowledge, Lockean theories permeate Enlightenment education. (Raferty, 2012). These theories undoubtedly influenced Bell and Lancaster in their development of mass education in the 19th century, in which a single teacher in conjunction with a series of class

monitors taught large classes in a highly prescriptive and mechanical manner (Tschurenev, 2008; Mesquita, 2012).

In contrast to Essentialist and Perennialist theories, Progressivism is influenced by Rousseau's 'noble savage' view of child development. Unlike Locke, Rousseau believed that children have a unique understanding of the world around them, which develops further through their own enquires and discoveries, and that "undoubtably the notions of things thus acquired for oneself are clearer and much more convincing than those acquired from the teaching of others" (Rousseau, 1769, pp.88-89). His view was that a child's progression can be hampered by too much adult instruction and that a child-centred approach is required, with the adult being receptive to the needs of the child. (Berk and Meyers, 2016). The work of German philosopher Fredrich Hegel (1770–1831) also promotes this Progressive concept of developing learners through active and creative methods of education. Rousseau and Hegel both strongly influenced John Dewey as he continued to develop his Progressivist ideology in the 20th century. (Lawton and Gordon, 2002).

Progressivism is largely conceived on the basis that lessons must be relevant to the students in order for them to learn. As part of the Progressivist theory of education, the curriculum in schools is built around the personal experiences, interests and needs of students, as opposed to the teacher-directed learning that forms the basis for the theories discussed above. The Progressivist classroom is typified by children working in small groups, moving around and talking freely. (Darling, 1994; Sanovik, Cookson Jr. and Semel, 2013). One of the most influential educationalists of the 20th century, Dewey called for a shift from Traditional models of education – effectively rebelling against the educational system that he was a product of – towards Progressive education. In the opening chapter of *Experience and Education* Dewey (1938) explains this as a move away from passive learning and towards participatory and democratic learning. (Aubrey and Riley, 2016).

Progressive education has as its focus not only the needs of the learner, but also the concept that learning is based on active experiences, with group discussions and activities. In a Progressive system, the design of the curriculum should accommodate the needs of the individual, combined with educational experiences that relate to real-world experiences for learning. (Darling and Nordenbo, 2003; Sanovik, Cookson Jr. and Semel, 2013). In contrast to the works of Hutchins and Adler, the teacher becomes more of a facilitator rather than solely an instructor and education becomes linked to active experience, which is nurtured through "habits of criticism and free enquiry" (Carr, 2003, p.223). Progressivism has strong links to concepts developed in Montessori education systems, although Dewey is critical of Maria Montessori's (1870–1952) restrictive view of play and imagination and highly prescriptive view on how play should occur (Aubrey and Riley, 2016).

Building on the Progressivist theory of Dewey, Existentialism as an educational philosophy can be seen as an extension of the learner autonomy at the centre of Progressivism (Darling and Nordenbo, 2003). Constituting the life's work of Scots educationalist A.S. Neill, and implemented through independent co-educational boarding school Summerhill founded by Neill in 1921, Existentialism is both progressive and controversial. The philosophy is centred upon the notion of democratic free schooling and a child-centred approach to learning. Perhaps founded on Rousseau's assumption that children have a predetermined sense of right and wrong, Existentialists like Neill believe that values and morals should not be dictated to children and that traditional methods of education are harmful to their individual development. (Aubrey and Riley, 2017).

Existentialism is premised on a powerful belief in human free will and the thought that individuals require the capacity to shape their own future to develop. Students in Existentialist classrooms thus have a greater degree of control in the development of their own education

than under any other educational philosophy. Students (and teachers) are encouraged to understand and appreciate individual uniqueness, whilst taking responsibility for their actions. Each student directs their own learning, in essence deciding not only what they learn, but also how and when they learn it. The role of the teacher has once again changed from the supreme purveyor of knowledge to a more facilitatory role, supporting the experience-based learning of the student. (Petty, 2014). Existentialism should be seen as a clear rejection of Traditional educational philosophies and approaches to schooling – instead offering a model that is self-paced, self-directed, and includes a great deal of individual learner autonomy. That being said, Existentialist philosophy still traces its roots from an Empirical knowledge and is a further development of Progressivism (Aubrey and Riley, 2016). Dewey and Neill ultimately both strive for the same educational goals: to develop "confident, self-assured and responsible young people capable of critical reflection" (Carr, 2003, p.223).

Following a similar democratic notion of teaching and learning to Dewey and Neill, Social Re-constructivism is also founded on the needs of the individual, and thus a child-centred curriculum. However, Social Re-constructivism deviates away from Progressivism and Existentialism by placing a more direct and immediate attention on reshaping society. Social Re-constructivists believe that addressing social problems such as racism, sexism, homelessness, poverty and domestic violence should be the primary concern of education and that, through a combination of academic study and social work, education can ameliorate social problems. (Aubrey and Riley, 2016).

As a philosophy of education, Social Re-constructivism stems from Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire's "deep conviction that education played a significant role in freeing people from oppression" (Aubrey and Riley, 2016, p.128). According to the introduction to the Penguin Modern Classics edition of Freire's (1970) seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he was strongly influenced by Hegel, as

well as Marxist philosophy. Aubrey and Riley (2016) assert that it is Freire's unusual blend of Marxist and Christian ideology that shapes the strong element of social justice within Social Re-constructivism. Freire established his educational philosophy whilst working within adult education, setting up what he called 'cultural circles', which were designed to be different from traditional schooling in both curricula and pedagogy. The cultural circles were based around a dialogical model of education that encouraged communication and collaborative learning, favouring a problem-solving education in opposition to the traditional 'banking model'. (Apple, Gandin and Hypolito, 2001). Under the dialogical model of education, "the teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but the one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach" (Freire, 1970, p.53). The concept of a teacher engaging in shared learning experiences with their pupils sits in stark contrast to the teacher-focused education characteristic of the Essentialist and Perennialist philosophies previously discussed. Critical of these models, he saw them as a 'banking model' of education in which "the scope for action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing and storing the deposits" (p.45) and serving "only to dehumanize" (p.48) and continue oppression (Freire, 1970). Social Re-constructivism aims to employ a praxis model, in which – enabled by curious enquiry – knowledge is constructed and reconstructed, and learners progress from a mere passive acceptance to deeper understanding (Connolly, 1980).

Representing a clear departure from Traditional models of education – again similar to Dewey, and perhaps more so Neill – Freire's ideas are difficult to implement in a traditional, time-standardised curriculum based on regulations and compliance (Aubrey and Riley, 2016; 2017). However, his concepts are still highly significant to our current educational debates and are particularly relevant in a time of perceived international inequality in education (Apple, Gandin and Hypolito, 2001).

Theories of Learning

The basic philosophies of education outlined above can be closely aligned with various cognitive development theories or theories of learning. These theories of learning not only provide the philosophies – which can, at times, feel like abstract concepts – with a certain level of theoretical grounding, but also help to facilitate their transformation from educational philosophy to educational practice. Cognitive development can be roughly broken down into three major schools of thought: Behaviourism, Constructivism and Social Constructivism. (Berk and Meyers, 2016).

Traditionalist philosophies such as Essentialism and Perennialism have a clear link to the Behaviourist school of cognitive development as both are consistent with Locke's '*tabula rasa*' view in which adults can mould children's behaviour and the pupil is seen as an empty vessel to be filled with knowledge. (Pollard, 2008; Petty, 2014; Berk and Meyers, 2016).

Behaviourist theory stems from the work of Ivan Petrovich Pavlov (1849–1936) concerning classical conditioning. Classical conditioning is based on a process of stimulus and response as a way of teaching or altering behaviour, with a new stimulus becoming associated with a pre-existing response. However, it is the operant conditioning theory – developed by Edward Thorndike (1874–1949) and latterly B.F. Skinner (1904 –1990) and based on reinforcement of desired behaviour and eradication of undesired behaviour through a system of rewards and punishments – that is most influential in Behaviourist classroom practice. (Bartlett and Burton, 2016). Skinner's theory that "the frequency of a behaviour can be increased by following it with a wide variety of rewards, or decreased through punishment" (Berk and Meyers, 2016, p.17) has resulted in operant conditioning becoming a broadly applied learning principle (Berk and Meyers, 2016).

"The Skinnerian perspective states that pupils learn best by being rewarded for 'right responses'" (Carroll, 2014, p.42) and that the transmission of knowledge is most effective when broken down into small chunks and delivered in a coherently structured and logical way, coupled with stringent control of pupil behaviour (Pollard, 2008). Clearly operant conditioning reflects the notions of Traditionalist educational philosophy, whereby the pupil receives set knowledge from a teacher and is asked to produce the correct answer when required to do so. The stimulus is the teacher asking the pupil a question and the response behaviour is that the pupil repeats the answer previously transmitted to them by the teacher.

For operant conditioning to be effective, the correct response or learning must be followed promptly by reinforcement. In terms of the rats that Skinner used to develop his theory, this reinforcement of desired behaviour could be a food pellet, or it could be the removal of an unpleasant stimulus. In a modern Behaviourist classroom, the reinforcement or reward may come in the form of teacher praise or other encouragements (stickers/house points). Equally, in order to eradicate unwanted behaviour, the rats in a Skinner box received electric shocks; pupils who fail to produce the correct response are discouraged with either the removal of privileges or the receipt of an unpleasant punishment. (Petty, 2014; Berk and Meyers, 2016).

Similar to the Traditionalist education found in the educational philosophies of Essentialism and Perennialism, Behaviourism is characterised by a transmission model of cognitive development whereby knowledge is delivered within a highly controlled environment. Education and learning opportunities are directed by a teacher or more knowledgeable individual, with pupils only passively involved in the learning process. As such, Behaviourism as a theory of cognitive development and the associated educational philosophies are often criticised as underestimating children's contribution to their own learning. (Pollard, 2008; Berk and Meyers, 2016). Despite such

criticisms, Behaviourism so greatly influenced the field of child development throughout the first half of the 20th century that theories linked to Constructivism and Social Constructivism, whilst developed in a contemporary timeframe, only started to gain attention in the 1960s, primarily due to their being at odds with Behaviourism (Berk and Meyers, 2016). Central to the development of the Constructivist school and Social Constructivist school of cognitive development were Swiss theorist Jean Piaget (1896–1980) and Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934), respectively.

Based in Constructivism, Piaget's cognitive development theory articulates that children develop through experiences, with schemes of knowledge built through direct interaction with the environment around them. For Piaget, the construction of knowledge consists of two complementary activities: assimilation and accommodation. (Berk and Meyers, 2016). According to Bartlett and Burton:

> Central to Piaget's theory are the concepts of assimilation – taking in and adapting experiences or objects to one's existing strategies or concepts – and accommodation – modifying and adjusting one's strategies or concepts as a result of new experiences or information. (Bartlett and Burton, 2016, p.233).

Piagetian thinking stresses a Progressive and pupil-centred pedagogy. Knowledge is constructed by pupils, and it is not possible to transfer knowledge straight from teacher to pupil. Piaget asserts that genuine learning can only occur if the pupil is actively engaged in the process of learning – through play and active experimentation – and that previous learning forms the foundations for future learning to be built on. (Carroll, 2014).

The concept that the acquisition of knowledge is based on personal discovery and that the experience must be meaningful to the child and relatable to a real-world application mirrors the Progressive

philosophy of John Dewey and all those that he subsequently influenced. Constructivist theory requires a child-centred approach whereby the individuals construct knowledge based on experiences facilitated by the teacher, rather than the teacher simply transferring knowledge. In stark contrast to Essentialist and Perennial philosophy, but again reflective of Progressivism and the Existential beliefs of Neill, mistakes and different answers are not punished in a Constructivist learning environment. Instead, when misconceptions occur pupils are encouraged to explore why they have happened and use them as a basis for future learning. (Bartlett and Burton, 2016).

Piaget's cognitive development theory presented a child's development as sequential, with them moving through four different phases of development – sensorimotor, pre-operational, concrete operational, formal operational – and with each phase staged to occur at different ages. Therefore, misconceptions related to experiences in the sensorimotor phase or the pre-operational phase would be corrected through assimilation and accommodation throughout the latter phases of development and had simply occurred because the child was not ready to move into that developmental phase. (Bartlett and Burton, 2016; Berk and Meyers, 2016).

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is similar to Piaget's cognitive development theory in that they both assert that children are active and constructive learners. While Piaget emphasised the child's independent efforts to make sense of the world around them, Vygotsky viewed cognitive development as a socially mediated process. Sociocultural theory (often referred to more simply as Social Constructivism) focuses on social interactions as necessary for children to learn – in particular, cooperative dialogues with peers and more knowledgeable members of their social environment. The need for learning to be a collaborative effort between learners and more capable individuals gives root to an aspect of Social Constructivism that Vygotsky terms the 'Zone of Proximal Development' (ZPD). The ZPD is

the skill set just outside of the child's current level of ability, but which can be achieved through careful support. (Petty, 2014; Berk and Meyers, 2016). Educational theorist Jerome Burner refers to a concept similar to ZPD as 'scaffolding', in which developmental support from the teacher acts as scaffolding to the building of knowledge and is scaled back as the learner develops. While both scaffolding and ZPD appear to represent the same notions of socially constructed knowledge, scaffolding tends to refer to teacher or adult support, whereas Vygotsky's ZPD tends to lean more towards collaborative peer support. (Bartlett and Burton, 2016).

A further difference between the two Constructivist theories is that Vygotsky rejects Piaget's notion that developmental progress is staged or non-continuous and that individuals are required to wait for staggered bursts of development to take place. Instead – and facilitated through the ZPD – Social Constructivism represents a continuous rather than staged model of cognitive development. Knowledge is jointly constructed with others through problem-solving activities and discussions that allow the pupils to access knowledge initially beyond their ability level. (Carroll, 2014).

Vygotsky recognises and stresses in Social Constructivism the particular importance of both language and discussion in the development of learning (Carroll, 2014). Learning as a socially interactive process very much aligns with the work of Dewey, and the requirement for learning to be based in problem-solving scenarios is implicit in both his Progressivist classroom and learning through the ZPD. These social and cultural aspects of learning are central to Vygotsky's theory, and a child's learning in school improves if it connects to life outside of school (Bartlett and Burton, 2016). The importance of sociocultural backgrounds is further adopted by Freire through his 'cultural circles' and in the development of Social Re-constructivism (Aubrey and Riley, 2016).

Vygotsky's work dates from the 1920s and 1930s; due to its strong opposition to the dominant, Traditionalist educational values of the time, it failed to establish a following in Western education until the 1960s and 1970s (Bartlett and Burton, 2016). However, since then "educators have increasingly recognised the importance of the ideas of Lev Vygotsky" (Bartlett and Burton, 2016, p.247). Both Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and the Progressivist educational philosophy that it represents are clearly demonstrated throughout the highly influential *Plowden Report* (Central Advisory Council for Education, 1967), which has shaped much of the educational policy in Scotland since its publication.

The Empirical conception of knowledge and the ideas of Locke and Rousseau permeate all aspects of this discussion of educational philosophies and theories of cognitive development. Perennialism and Essentialism, reflective of a Traditionalist model of education, are both rooted in the Lockean '*tabula rasa*' approach that knowledge is imprinted onto children by more knowledgeable peers and adults. These educational philosophies form the basis of Skinner's Behaviourist pedagogical ideology, which dominated educational practice until the middle of the 20th century at the expense of all else. Dewey's Progressivist philosophy developed in opposition to the Traditionalist liberal education system that he himself had gone through and is focused on children's need to experience the world for themselves, as opposed to being imprinted with second-hand adult experience, in order to develop and learn – a concept central to the philosophy of Rousseau. The Existentialist philosophy implemented by Neill through his Summerhill school builds on the Progressive ideas of Dewey with a child-centred experience approach to education, but also develops the notion of an innate sense of right and wrong from Rousseau's noble savage, allowing the learners to structure their own day and decide upon the curriculum they follow. Brazilian philosopher of education Paulo Freire links to both Dewey and Neill through a democratic notion of teaching and learning and pupil-centred focus. While Freire

developed Social Re-constructivism working with adult learners, his work is nonetheless highly relevant to childhood education and reflects much of Dewey and Neill, with the additional aim of restructuring society and addressing social problems – perhaps placing less faith in the innate good seen by Rousseau. Progressivism, Essentialism and Social Re-constructivism are all connected through their shared links to Constructivism (Piaget) and Social Constructivism (Vygotsky) and the pedagogical belief that knowledge is constructed through experience and builds upon previous learning to create understanding.

The emergence of Constructivism and Social Constructivism as well as Progressive educational philosophies, in opposition to Behaviourism and Traditionalist philosophy, demonstrates the ways in which perceptions of philosophies and theories relating to education are susceptible to change. Therefore, it is necessary to frame any curriculum analysis – in this case, a critique of CfE – with contemporary views on the philosophy of education.

Academic Review of Philosophies of Education

To assess the changing attitudes to educational philosophy and theory that have shaped the conception and implementation of CfE, a review of literature published since the year 2000 in peer-reviewed journals related to educational philosophy and contemporary educational policy is required, principally to ascertain how perceptions of these philosophies have altered since 2000 and if there are any dominant trends currently in educational philosophy. The review in this chapter will cover the years 2000 to 2009 (a literature review covering the period 2010 to present is discussed in the subsequent chapters, with a focus on CfE), thus encompassing the final decade of the previous 5-14 Curriculum in Scotland, as well as the conception and development of CfE. In order to streamline and simplify the enormous body of work to be reviewed over this time period, the literature review will focus primarily on two prominent journals: *Educational Philosophy and Theory* and the *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, with selected

inclusions from other peer-reviewed journals, notably the *Oxford Review of Education* and *Studies in Philosophy and Education*.

Gough and Scott (2001), in *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, assess contemporary curriculum development as a collection of concepts lacking in clear philosophical underpinning, resulting in views that are insecure in their theoretical founding and causing further schism in both interpretation and application. In agreement with Gough and Scott, Carr (2004), in the *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, states that "education has become insulated from philosophy" and expands on this by clarifying that the theoretical nature of philosophy in relation to education has led to contemporary philosophy having "little practical effect" (p.68) and simply being invoked to provide a theoretical dressing to educational practice, resulting in advocation that has been removed from the original philosophical rationale. Philosophy of education is thus often seen as an unnecessary component of the teacher education with regard to prospective new teachers and the continued professional development of existing practitioners, and of no use to educational policymakers (Wilson, 2003). The failure to clearly define the concepts and terms within the field of educational philosophy and the difficulties that occur from this do not appear to lessen during the first decade of the 21st century. In the editorial *A Teaching Philosophy or Philosophy of Teaching,* for a 2009 issue of *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, Peters (2009) identifies the ambiguity of Ohio State University's use of the phrase 'philosophy of teaching' when asking those undertaking teacher training to outline their own philosophy of teaching as part of their personal statements. Peters is critical of the misrepresentations that may occur with philosophy of teaching simultaneously being used by the University website to represent "your conception of teaching and learning, a description of how you teach, justification for why you teach that way" (Peters, 2009, p.111). For clarity, in this dissertation the term 'philosophy of education' is used with reference to the overarching concepts of teaching and curriculum, such as Perennialism,

Essentialism, Progressivism, Social Re-constructivism and Existentialism (as outlined above). The term 'theory of learning', on the other hand, is used to describe the subsequent practices that lead to learning taking place under the auspices of the various philosophies. In simplified terms, the philosophies of education are about what sort of learning should take place, and the theories of learning emphasise how learning can best be fostered.

The *Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000* sets out the devolved educational policy agenda in Scotland at the start of the 21st century. The Act establishes that due regard must be given to the views of young people in matters and decisions that significantly affect them and that local education authorities have a duty to ensure that young people's education is focused, to develop their individual personalities and talents as well as their physical and mental wellbeing. The *Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000* aligns the Scottish education system with a more Progressivist philosophy of education, whereby pupils are to be seen as individuals with differentiated educational requirements. This shift is indicative of the international influence on educational philosophy from such figures as Dewey and other Progressive educationalists (White, 2003).

Marsh, Richards and Smith (2001) state that independence and autonomy in education have a strong tradition in a number of educational philosophies and that, with the publication in 1997 by the then-New Labour Government of a Green Paper entitled *Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century,* the importance of this philosophical tradition has been recognised in policy. This philosophical tradition can also be traced through both the *Plowden Report* (1967) and the *Hadow Report* (1931) (Darling and Nisbet, 2000). According to Marsh, Richards and Smith (2001), the Green Paper aims to develop a social culture that embodies life-long learning and promotes the goal of a 'learning society'. Although the Green Paper focuses on higher education in England, the desire for differentiated, individual

educational needs to be addressed as a central concept within applied educational philosophies is equally present in Scottish educational policy (*Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000*).

Marsh, Richards and Smith (2001) caution against individual autonomous learning being used as rhetoric. Carr (2004) is also critical of rhetorical devices being used in policy and practice as a means to convince others of validity that is unfounded, for he believes that this has the potential to produce conceptual disorder and lacks intellectual rigour. Marsh, Richards and Smith, through citing an earlier article by Derrida, highlight that, without sufficient explanation, terminology such as 'individual', 'independent' and 'autonomous' can all be interpreted in different ways, leaving pupils "situated within a network of competing, even contradictory discourses" (Derrida, 1982, cited in Marsh, Richards and Smith, 2001, p.384).

Divergent interpretations of terminology can be seen clearly within the divide in what can broadly be called 'Progressive' educational philosophies, with Dewey's individually differentiated learning far distant from the full learner autonomy of Neill. The vague use of terms like 'autonomy', 'choice' and 'independence' in education is not the only aspect that could lead to a situation of contradictory discourses. While almost any interpretation of these terms suggests a leaning towards a Progressive model of education, the concept of a 'learning society' or 'learned society' has overtones of a broad liberal education in a much more Traditionalist model typified by Essentialism and Perennialism. Further conflict arises through two "alternative visions of education", according to Marsh, Richards and Smith (2001, p.391). One vision interprets education as training – developing the skills required to enter the labour force and fulfil an economic need; the other sees education as a learning process – promoting a sense of understanding. The distinction between these two views of educational purpose is more subtle than that of Traditional versus Progressive education, and is a divergence between theories of learning. At the

foundation of the concepts, training as a vison for education requires the pupil to be able to provide the correct response to a stimulus, much in the same way as Pavlov's dogs, Skinner's rats or Thorndike's cats (*cf*. Berk and Meyers, 2016), and fits clearly within the Behaviourist school of thought. The alternative vision of learning promotes the journey of discovery typical of Piaget's social learning theory and Vygotsky's Social Constructivism. The ability to give the correct response to a stimulus (or question) without thought or hesitation is quite starkly opposed to what both Piaget and Vygotsky are trying to achieve, "not least because something other than measurable achievements is the primary educational goal" (Wringe, 2009, p.250) of the differentiated individual learning that they are promoting.

The focus on the active learner and cooperative learning so central to both Piaget and Vygotsky surfaces in a number of the academic journal articles reviewed. Howe (2006), while discussing exemplary practice, marks as significant in best practice the need for a "supportive environment promoting time for collaboration, [and] reflection" (p.287) within teaching. Marsh, Richards and Smith (2001) also acknowledge the important role of active and cooperative learning, emphasising that active learning is much more influential than passive learning. Vokey (2003), in the *Journal of Philosophy of Education,* demonstrates the correlation between active/cooperative learning, problem-based learning activities and an interdisciplinary approach to education, while Duarte (2006) indicates a further link between these aspects of Constructivism and Social Constructivism and the Social Re-constructive philosophy of Freire.

Vanderstraeten and Biesta (2001), in the journal *Educational Philosophy and Theory,* identify the trend of pupil-focused active and cooperative learning as a recent phenomenon, with Biesta stating that:

> initially the modern discourse of education focused primarily on the teacher and its activities. Only in due time, primarily through the efforts of what is known as

> ‘progressive education’, the learner came into view, resulting in an approach which tried to do equal justice to both ‘parties’ in education. (Vanderstraeten and Biesta, 2001, p.11).

The shift in focus identified by Vanderstraeten and Biesta from teacher-centred education to pupil-centred is, as they point out, indicative of Progressive educational philosophy rather than the Traditionalist models of education. With the removal of the teacher from the spotlight as educator, it becomes the provision of stimulating educational situations that allow learning to take place as pupils actively discover information for themselves rather than passively learning from the teacher’s experiences. (Vanderstraeten and Biesta, 2001).

The transition from a teacher-centred to a pupil-centred learning environment is conceivably easier in a theoretical sense than a practical one, as classroom practices can display a momentum entirely of their own, making it “hard to change what teachers do in classrooms even where apparently quite radical reform of education systems has been achieved” (Gough and Scott, 2001, p.142). This is perhaps due to ‘radical’ educational reform rarely being given the resources and support required to implement the change or the timeframe necessary for it to become embedded in practice (Vokey, 2003). Thus, although “it should in principle be possible to produce educational institutions of one description rather than the other by modifying educational policy” (Wringe, 2009, p.250), it would seem that policy alone is not effective enough to bring transformative change to practice. Gough and Scott (2001), Vokey (2003) and Wringe (2009) are perhaps all pre-emptively forecasting difficulties that may arise within the transition to CfE. In order to dissipate the internal inertia of classroom practice, a new approach to professional culture within teaching and teacher education is required. The renewed professional culture requires skills of inquiry, self-reflection and critically evaluative

colleagueship to be the habitual cornerstones of practice. (Howe, 2006).

Throughout the various suggestions of required change discussed in these journal articles, including the move towards Progressivism and the shift from teacher-focused practice to a pupil-centred approach, one question seems to persist in the *Journal of Educational Philosophy and Theory*: "what is the point of education?" (Gupta, 2008, p.265). Gupta (2008) theorises that society confuses "teaching with learning, grade advancement with education, a diploma with competence" (p.272) and that schooling or education becomes a societal value of itself rather than a mechanism to promote the values of the society. Gupta is undoubtably ardent in his pursuit of a Social Re-constructive philosophy of education, as epitomised by Freire. Gupta (2008) cites Illich's (1970) assertion that schools embody the consumer values of a capitalist society – a view shared by Steinnes (2009), as she depicts teachers as part of the production line in producing workers rather than individuals capable of taking a full part in a democratic society. Gupta (2008) suggests that the true goal of education should be human fulfilment and both democratic and societal engagement, which is described by Vokey (2003) in the *Journal of Philosophy of Education* as 'virtue-centred education'. The desire for education to result in better members of society appears strikingly similar to the stated objective of Scotland's CfE of developing the 'Four Capacities' – 'successful learners', 'confident individuals', 'responsible citizens', 'effective contributors' – within students (Education Scotland, 2011).

Summary

Having identified and described the roots of educational philosophy from the epistemological standpoints of Empiricist and Rationalist philosophers (Kant and Hume, respectively) and the division between knowledge through experience and that constructed theoretically through logical thought, it has become apparent that knowledge acquisition through experience – or an Empiricist epistemology – typifies

our overarching understanding of education. All of the modern philosophies of education outlined have continued to follow this line of belief that education and knowledge are based on experience. While Traditionalist educational philosophies such as Perennialism and Essentialism place classical knowledge and a broad liberal education at their heart, they have been challenged over the latter part of the 20th and into the 21st century by a Progressive philosophy of education exemplified by the works of Dewey and Scottish educationalist Neill. The democratic element of both Dewey and Neill is further developed by Freire in his philosophy of Social Re-constructivism, which details that education should be used to improve society. The shift towards Progressivism can be simplified as a transition from teacher-centred education to pupil-centred education and a growing understanding of how the needs of an individual can shape the educational process and the classroom practice. This change in classroom practice is important to note as it observes a change not only in a philosophical sense, but also in the theories of learning associated with the various philosophies. The development of Progressivism marks a move away from not only Traditionalist philosophies, but also their associated theory of learning: Behaviourism. Educational theorists Piaget and Vygotsky, through their models of Constructivism and Social Constructivism, respectively, develop the concept that children – and indeed all learners – construct their own understanding of the world around them based on personal experience, and, with an emphasis on the individual experience (shared in a social interaction or not), establish a clear link to the educational philosophies with Progressive roots of Dewey, Neill and Freire.

Although the peer-reviewed journals consulted – *Educational Philosophy and Theory,* the *Journal of Philosophy of Education,* the *Oxford Review of Education* and *Studies in Philosophy and Education* – concur with the idea that Progressivism may have become the dominant prism for educational philosophy and theory, and observe a growth in learner autonomy and a pupil-centred approach to education, they also suggest that educational philosophy has little impact on practices

within education. This may be accounted for through two related lines of thought: firstly, a lack of certainty or consistency in the way in which terms are used within the construct of educational philosophy and, secondly, a reluctance to include philosophy in the education of new teachers or the continued professional development of existing teachers in a manner that eases practical application, coupled with a refusal to change established practices.

The conception of CfE within Scottish education (which took place during the period reviewed in the academic literature) is evidence of a desired change in teaching practice. However, if changing perceptions within the field of philosophy of education are not responsible for altering teaching practices, then the driving force behind this change must be sought elsewhere. Consultation of policy related to education in Scotland and social policy in wider society must therefore be considered as instrumental in this change and thus must be taken into account in order to effectively critique the Curriculum.

Chapter Two: *A Curriculum for Excellence*

In order to critique *A Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE) effectively, it is important to understand the aims and purpose of the Curriculum as set out in the supporting document *A Curriculum for Excellence, Building the Curriculum 1: The contribution of curriculum areas* (Scottish Executive, 2006[a]) and The Curriculum Review Group report (Scottish Executive, 2004). An insight into what is meant by the term 'curriculum', as defined by Scottish educationalist Lawrence Stenhouse (1926–1982), and the varying models of curriculum will enhance understanding of what is to be achieved through CfE. Further to knowledge of the aims and purpose of CfE, an awareness of the key Scottish Executive and, subsequently, Scottish Government policies (the Scottish Executive was 'rebranded' as the Scottish Government in 2007) relating to education is necessary to provide a more holistic picture as to the motivations for curriculum change in the years prior to CfE and in the early years of its implementation. Once the aims of and motivations behind CfE are established, the chapter will assess the degree of change that CfE can be said to embody, by comparing it to the previous 5-14 Curriculum in Scotland and the trends globally in education.

The latter part of this chapter will begin by giving a review of academic literature from peer-reviewed journals on education (the *Scottish Educational Review* and *The Curriculum Journal*) relating to CfE from its launch in 2010 and through the first decade of its implementation. Principally, this will demonstrate how academics and professionals have engaged with CfE and highlight any shifts in attitude towards it. The literature will be viewed in relation to policy from the Scottish Government introduced during the same period that may have impacted on the application of CfE and contributed to its potential to fulfil the previously discussed aims of the Curriculum.

Finally, this chapter will, through a detailed critique of CfE, assess the aims of the Curriculum and the development of what have become known as the 'Four Capacities' ('successful learners', 'confident individuals', 'responsible citizens', 'effective contributors') (Scottish Executive, 2006[a]); the implementation of CfE through the 'Experiences and Outcomes' set out at each development stage and, more recently, the introduction of Benchmarks (Education Scotland, 2016); the role of assessment within the Curriculum; and the effects of current education policy on each of these aspects. The purpose of this is to ascertain theories of learning that underpin the Curriculum in Scotland, the philosophical traditions that they relate to and how compatible and effective they are likely to prove.

Aims and Purpose of *A Curriculum for Excellence*

In the foreword to The Curriculum Review Group report, then-Minister for Education and Young People Peter Peacock highlights the strengths of the Scottish education system: "its well-respected curriculum" (Scottish Executive, 2004, p.3) and its components, including early years (3 to 5-year-olds), the broad 5-14 Curriculum and the National Qualifications structure encompassing Standard Grade and Higher qualifications. However, the foreword to the report also acknowledges that – although carefully designed for each age group – the requisite parts of the 5-14 Curriculum were all developed independently and did not provide a cohesive route through education or a basis from which to develop excellence. (Scottish Executive, 2004). 'The National Debate' on education (2002) is also credited in the foreword to the report as it "showed that people want a curriculum that will fully prepare today's children for adult life in the 21st century, be less crowded and better connected, and offer more choice and enjoyment" (Scottish Executive, 2004, p.3).

The National Debate differed from previous public consultations as it did not seek a response on a particular policy issue, but asked in more general terms about the shape that future education and schools

should adhere to, including "What should pupils learn? How could pupils learn more effectively? What were the best and worst things about the current system? What were the priorities for improvement?" (Munn, Stead, McLeod, Brown, Cowie, McCluskey, Pirrie and Scott, 2004, p.434). The National Debate should be seen as an innovative and successful attempt to extend the scope to voices not normally part of policy formation in shaping the discussion developing policy (Munn *et al.*, 2004). The public consultation carried out through The National Debate and The Curriculum Review Group report "establishes clear values, purposes and principles for education from 3 to 18 in Scotland" (Scottish Executive, 2004, p.3) and has implications for educational policy, including curriculum content, delivery and assessment, of which CfE is the product.

The Curriculum Review Group designed CfE to embody the values of democracy, taking influence from the Scottish Parliament and the words inscribed on the Parliamentary Mace – 'Wisdom, Justice, Compassion and Integrity' – and to promote the best possible start for young people in Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2004). A focus on important knowledge and the development of core values reflects concerns raised in The National Debate and demonstrates that the Curriculum is concerned with not only what is learned, but also how it is taught (Scottish Executive, 2004).

The values-driven foundation of CfE is most clearly demonstrated by the "aspiration that all children and young people should be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors" (Scottish Executive, 2006[a], p.1), as outlined in the Curriculum supporting document series *A Curriculum for Excellence: Building the Curriculum* (Scottish Executive, 2006[a]; 2007; Scottish Government, 2008; 2009; 2011). These core values are referred to collectively as the 'Four Capacities' throughout CfE and supporting documents, as well as in the academic literature and within the practical environment of school handbooks and displays.

Each of the Four Capacities (successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, effective contributors) is further unpacked as part of The Curriculum Review Group report (Scottish Executive, 2004). This furnishes teachers with a framework to assess the achievement of these core aspirations. Each Capacity is broken down as follows: successful learners are pupils with enthusiasm and are motivated learners, they demonstrate a determination to achieve at a high level and they are open to new ideas; confident individuals have self-respect, are ambitious, understand the importance of physical, mental and emotional wellbeing and have secure values and beliefs; responsible citizens respect each other and are committed as participants in all aspects of society; effective contributors are resilient and self-reliant with a positive and enterprising attitude (Scottish Executive, 2004, p.12; see Appendix 1).

Developing the Four Capacities, fostering democratic values and giving children and young people the best possible opportunities in life provide the foci or 'aspirations' – the term used most commonly in the *Building the Curriculum* series that supports Curriculum development (Scottish Executive, 2006[a]; 2007; Scottish Government, 2008; 2009; 2011) – but it is the curriculum model through which CfE is implemented that will be most decisive in shaping the achievement of these aspirations. Although curricula can be subdivided into formal, informal and hidden (Kelly, 1999; 2004) and all have a role in the educational experiences of pupils, CfE is intended to form the formal aspect of curriculum in Scotland (Education Scotland, 2011), and the focus here will be those models of curriculum that relate to the formal curriculum – principally, a content curriculum, the mastery model of curriculum, and the praxis model of curriculum.

A 'content' curriculum holds the curriculum to be the syllabus of work set out for both the teacher and the class, to be covered within a set time period. Content models of curriculum are highly prescriptive, with an adherent value placed on set texts and procedures. (Kelly,

1999). The content model methodises well with the Perennialist and Essentialist philosophies previously discussed. However, to categorise a curriculum in these terms in relation to any discussion of legitimacy has little impact or use:

> Any definition of curriculum, if it is to be practically effective and productive, must offer much more than a statement about the knowledge-content or merely the subjects which schooling is to 'teach' or transmit. (Kelly, 1999, p.3).

Therefore, discussions of curriculum must go beyond content and deliberate on how the content is to be delivered and achievement is to be measured. CfE explicitly provides freedom within the subject areas (Scottish Executive, 2006[a]; 2006[b]), designed "to allow teachers the freedom to exercise judgement on appropriate learning for young people" (Scottish Executive, 2004, p.4). Thus, two other models remain to assess CfE once the content curriculum model has been discounted. Principally, these are the 'mastery' model and the 'praxis' model of curriculum.

The 'mastery' or 'product' model of curriculum is marked as being linear in approach, with a final product or outcome set as the principal objective of education. There is an emphasis within the mastery model on preparing the young person for the working environment, and it is often likened to a factory setting and described as being reflective of 19th century educational practice. (Kelly, 1999; O'Neill, 2010; Robinson, 2010). In many ways, the mastery model of curriculum can be seen as an extension of the content model. Both the content and mastery models typify a Traditionalist concept of education; they are teacher-focused and give little thought to the needs or experiences of individual pupils. Similar to the content model, the mastery model engages with Behaviourism as a theory of learning, being outcome rather than process driven. (Kelly, 1999).

‘Praxis’ curricula differ from the models outlined previously in that the body of knowledge and the final outcomes of education do not provide the central focal points. The learning process and the development of skills of enquiry adopt the dominant position in the praxis model. The praxis model is often referred to as the ‘development’ model and forms part of the Progressive field of educational philosophy, with the child or pupil being central to classroom practice. (Blenkin and Kelly, 1987; 1996). As such, the praxis model is alluded to in the works of Dewey and Freire and heavily associated with the Constructivism (Piaget) and Social Constructivism (Vygotsky) theories of learning: “what provides a cutting edge to this particular ideology [curriculum as process and development] is that it is firmly rooted in a concept of social democracy” (Kelly, 1999, p.77).

Scottish educationalist Lawrence Stenhouse is noted as “arguably the most prominent person in the field of curriculum development” (Aubrey and Riley, 2017, p.122), with his *An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development* (Stenhouse, 1975) being regarded as “the definitive statement of the notion of curriculum as process” (Kelly, 2004, p.224). In it, he defines curriculum as:

> an attempt to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal in such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice. (Stenhouse, 1975, p.4).

Stenhouse is critical of the mastery or ‘objective-based’ model of curriculum, favouring instead a praxis model or ‘development curriculum’ (Aubrey and Riley, 2017) (Stenhouse uses the terms ‘objective-based’ and ‘development’ in describing the two models of curriculum, whereas ‘mastery’ and ‘praxis’ or ‘process’, respectively, are the terminology preferred by Kelly and other contemporary curriculum theorists (Blenkin and Kelly, 1987; 1996; Kelly, 1999; 2004)). The Stenhouse model of a praxis/development curriculum stresses the need for pupils to be able to access information and knowledge and the

significant benefit of collaborative learning to the learning process. The praxis model can be seen as "teaching by discovery or inquiry methods rather than by instruction" (Stenhouse, 1975, p.91), reinforcing the clear connection between this model and philosophers and theorists like Dewey, Freire and Vygotsky.

According to Blenkin and Kelly (1987; 1996), any curriculum that is to be based on the praxis model of curriculum theory relies on a clear statement of both the underpinning principles and the learning processes that it is to promote, rather than the objectives that it desires to attain. If the core Curriculum values of wisdom, justice, compassion and integrity are to be seen as the underlying principles, then the Four Capacities set out as the aspirations of CfE may be regarded as the objectives, and further scrutiny of the processes embedded within the design of CfE is required if it is to adopt the praxis model and assume a role within Progressive educational theory. However, further explanations within the *Building the Curriculum* series (Scottish Executive, 2006[a]; 2007; Scottish Government, 2008; 2009; 2011) set out a more cohesive framework on which the Curriculum is developed, and align the Four Capacities as founding principles, establishing cross-curricular and interdisciplinary learning and coherent progression as the central learning processes of the Curriculum. These do not dismiss the core Curriculum values outlined above, but rather establish a clearer underpinning to the construction of the Curriculum within Scotland.

CfE is constructed from 'Experiences and Outcomes', grouped across eight curricular areas: expressive arts; health and wellbeing; languages; mathematics; religious and moral education; science; social studies; and technologies. The Experiences and Outcomes are divided into five stages (early, first, second, third, fourth) designed to provide a smooth progression through academic achievement for pupils aged 3 to 18. (Education Scotland, 2011).

In *Building the Curriculum 1: The contribution of curriculum areas*, Education Scotland expresses a desire for CfE to be more than the sum of the individual Curriculum topics that it is presented within (Scottish Executive, 2006[a]). Core skills in literacy and numeracy, along with the aspirations of the Four Capacities, are intended to provide the pillars for interdisciplinary work and cross-curricular projects that will allow for curriculum planning to be viewed as a whole rather than a subject-based fragmentation process. *Building the Curriculum 1* provided practitioners with guidance to each Curriculum area and how it can be used to facilitate the development of the Four Capacities, reiterating that "it should be clear from these descriptions that the curriculum areas are not intended to be rigid structures" (Scottish Executive, 2006[a], p.3). This approach to curriculum development is supported by Kelly (2004, p.3): "Schools should plan their curriculum as a whole. The curriculum offered by a school, and the curriculum received by individual pupils, should not be simply a collection of separate subjects". It is also highly relevant to any attempt at building a Progressive curriculum utilising a praxis model. The design of the Curriculum intends its scope to extend beyond subject areas: *Progress and Proposals* (Scottish Executive, 2006[b]) outlines progression as the key factor in a child's journey through education, with a need to facilitate experiences that are meaningful, relevant and provide opportunities for personal success, further emphasising the pupil-focused intention of CfE.

Within CfE, the Experiences and Outcomes are seen as playing a key role in facilitating the progression of pupils and providing a cross-curricular framework for such to occur:

> The OECD noted that if a curriculum is operated as a rigid structure, the time available for learning will be for subjects and not students. […] They [the Experiences and Outcomes] describe stages in the acquiring of knowledge and establishment of understanding and support the

> development of skills and attributes. They are written so that, across the outcomes and experiences, children and young people have opportunities to develop the attributes and capabilities for the four capacities. They can be applied in a range of contexts which will be meaningful and relevant to the children and young people and so offer a degree of personalisation and choice which can give children and young people a sense of ownership of their learning. The curriculum areas are therefore the organisers for setting out the experiences and outcomes. They are not intended as structures for timetabling. (Scottish Government, 2008, p.23).

The Curriculum is therefore designed with a focus on the experiences of the pupil and the need for those experiences to be differentiated to provide a clear and continuous path of progression, with the aims and purpose of CfE set out as the Four Capacities providing a cross-curricular, interdisciplinary objective to its implementation.

Education Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2006[a]) identifies the role of teachers as being vital to the implementation of CfE and states that the teacher's embodiment of the Four Capacities in each classroom "will be critical to achieving our aspirations for all young people" (p.1). The need for teachers to accept and, where necessary, adapt to the principles of the new curriculum is the critical element in the success of any change in curriculum. According to Stenhouse, they are the only group that can meaningfully change the curriculum as they, ultimately, are the only ones who know what takes place day to day in the classrooms (Dickson and McQueen, 2014).

Contemporary Policy Development

Curriculum development and meaningful change cannot occur alone or in isolation from government policy, regardless of whether classroom practitioners are ultimately responsible for the implementation of change, as claimed by Stenhouse. Therefore, to provide a clear

understanding of Curriculum development within Scotland, it is also appropriate to outline some of the key policies relating to education and their links to CfE in the years preceding its conception.

Education Scotland (2020) identifies the *Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000*, the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014* and the *Education (Scotland) Act 2016* as the key contemporary legislation that shapes policy within Scottish education. *Getting It Right For Every Child* is also listed as a key policy driver in shaping the Curriculum in Scotland (Education Scotland, 2020). Although it must be acknowledged that both the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014* and *Education (Scotland) Act 2016* shape the current implementation of CfE, as neither Act came into force prior to the launch of the Curriculum, they will be discussed in a later section of this chapter as an element of the critique of the Curriculum, rather than here as aspects of its development.

The *Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000* is concerned with the educational rights of children within Scotland and the roles and responsibilities of education authorities in their delivery. According to Enquire (2020), the Scottish advice service for additional support for learning (Enquire is an educational advice service for young people, providing additional support for learning. It is funded by the Scottish Government and administered by the charity Children in Scotland), the *Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000* ensures that educational provision does not solely focus on academic achievement, but is also directed towards the needs of the child as an individual, aiding the development of their personality and mental and physical attributes to their full potential. When viewed alongside the *Education and Training (Scotland) Act 2000*, which identifies the five 'National Priorities In Education' (Achievement and Attainment; Framework for Learning; Inclusion and Equality; Values and Citizenship; Learning for Life), a clear pattern of language and concepts familiar from CfE begins to emerge. These are reflected in the Four Capacities and the emphasis

on individual pupils achieving their fullest potential, and CfE fully embodies in its design each of the National Priorities In Education (Scottish Executive, 2004).

As policy and legislation are outlined chronologically, it is also worth mentioning briefly at this point that the *Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004*, which introduced the concept of additional support needs, gave parents and pupils new rights, as it provides an indication of a Progressive direction to educational policy, with an increased focus on the needs of individuals and a pupil-centred educational experience. (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2005; Education Scotland, 2020).

Happy, Safe and Achieving Their Potential (Scottish Executive, 2005) is also worthy of consideration, given the consistent focus in the *Building the Curriculum* series on ensuring that pupils are reaching their full potential. *Happy, Safe and Achieving Their Potential* reinforces the importance of the individual being the core of, and involved in, planning. Further, attention is given to the need for positive relationships to be established between individual pupils and staff, and the vital role of each individual in creating a school ethos. The development of individual relationships between pupils and educators is key to the latter's ability to identify the needs of the individual and direct them towards their own potential.

Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC), launched in 2006, ultimately shapes all practice, extending a sphere of influence beyond the boundaries of education and having ramifications for agencies working with and supporting the development of children and young people and safeguarding their wellbeing, and thus should be seen as a key policy in the development of CfE. (Scottish Government, 2012). At the time of its conception and throughout its implementation, GIRFEC recognises the pivotal role that it plays in shaping the Curriculum by identifying within the policy what children and young people need, to ensure that they are safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active,

respected, responsible, and included, in order that they can achieve the Four Capacities (Scottish Government, 2012, p.3). For teachers and practitioners this means:

> Putting the child or young person at the centre and developing a shared understanding within and across agencies [and] Using common tools, language and processes, considering the child or young person as a whole, and promoting closer working where necessary with other practitioners. (Scottish Government, 2012, p.5).

This effectively summarises the core components upon which GIRFEC is founded and which the policy stresses should be applied in any setting and in any circumstance involving the development of children and young people (Scottish Government, 2012).

The ethos of the policy and legislation that are cited as shaping the development of CfE and the educational agenda within Scotland appears coherently in, and is reflected throughout, the *Building the Curriculum* series that supported the launch of Scotland's new Curriculum. GIRFEC, as a policy, embodies the legislative acts that precede it and provides a working framework for the development of the Curriculum. A clear and unambiguous focus is placed on the needs of the individual and on helping them to develop all aspects of themselves to their full potential throughout CfE. The Four Capacities, identified as the aims and purpose of CfE, and the design of the Curriculum, which is focused on pupil experience, both provide a tangible link to the Progressive philosophies of education typified by Dewey and Freire outlined in the previous chapter and the learning theory of Vygotsky. All aspects of the conception and development of CfE indicate a desire to promote a Progressive philosophy of education.

With the establishment that curriculum development does not take place in a vacuum but rather is coherently linked to national policy, the next matter in the development and eventual

implementation of the new Curriculum must concern why, and indeed how, it differs from the curriculum that it aspires to replace.

The 5-14 Curriculum and Global Curriculum Trends

CfE was first conceived in 2004 as a result of 'The National Debate' on education (2002) conducted by the Scottish Executive to address growing public concerns that standards within Scottish education were falling, leaving the country at a disadvantage in economic terms, with a less competitive workforce (Scottish Executive, 2004). The principal concerns relating to education were that the 5-14 Curriculum being implemented at the time was overcrowded and linear in nature and that the classroom focus was to get through the content of the Curriculum rather than developing a deeper understanding (Hayward and Hutchinson, 2013). According to Priestley and Minty, CfE (first implemented in the 2010/2011 academic session) is:

> hailed in Scotland as a radical departure from existing ways of both defining the curriculum and from prevailing practices in Scottish schools. It has also been heralded as unique and distinctive as a curriculum. (Priestley and Minty, 2013, p.39).

However, although CfE clearly does embody a move away from the notion of a centrally prescribed curriculum overcrowded with content, it is neither radically different from its predecessor nor unique. For example, many similarities exist between CfE and the 5-14 Curriculum in terms of structure and use of assessment. Furthermore, CfE is not as unique or distinctively Scottish as some describe it as being; rather, it forms part of a global trend in national curricula particularly evident in anglophone countries. (Priestley and Minty, 2013; Sinnema and Aitken, 2013; Priestley, Biesta and Robinson, 2015).

Since approximately the year 2000 – and coinciding with the build-up to The National Debate on education in Scotland – there has been a global trend towards the development of new styles of national

curriculum. Scotland's CfE is typical of this trend in that it seeks to combine the best elements of various approaches to curriculum planning. Most notably, these new models of curriculum strive to provide central government prescription coupled with local autonomy. This design claims to ensure the maintenance of national standards in education while providing the freedom and flexibility for the teacher to meet the individual needs of the pupils. (Priestley, 2010). The latter is an integral factor in CfE and its supporting documents – "it [CfE] provides professional space for teachers and other staff to use in order to meet the varied needs of all children and young people" (Education Scotland, 2011, p.3) – while the Experiences and Outcomes preserve the uniform standards of education (Education Scotland, 2011). New Zealand's Curriculum and recent modifications made to the National Curriculum in England and Wales both manifest this global trend (Priestley, 2010). Further shared characteristics common in this global trend and also pertaining to CfE are a structure based on a linear progression of outcomes and a focus on skills and capacities over specified content or knowledge (Young, 2008; Priestley, 2010; Wheelahan, 2010).

Through the construction of CfE, Education Scotland has sought to address public concerns that the 5-14 Curriculum was overcrowded, with too great a focus on covering content. Consistently, global policy has also been to shift the emphasis of education away from knowledge acquisition and towards the development of capacities and generic skills. (Watkins, Carnell and Lodge, 2007; Berry and Kidner, 2008; Shapira and Priestley, 2018). CfE aligns fully with this trend, stating its purpose as ensuring that young people fulfil their potential in developing the Four Capacities (Education Scotland, 2011). In addition, the supporting document *Building the Curriculum 4: Skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work* (Scottish Government, 2009) emphasises the shifting paradigm from knowledge to skills. Analysis by Ball (2017) in the third edition of his book *The Education Debate* indicates that we should not be surprised that CfE appears as part of

this current global trend in curriculum development. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is an international testing system that renders the performance of national education systems from around the world directly comparable, and based on recent PISA results "the US, the UK and Australia are all 'looking East' for new policy ideas that might be 'borrowed' or moved to boost their own performance" (Ball, 2017, p.41).

Watkins, Carnell and Lodge (2007) cite the curricula of Hong Kong and Singapore as examples leading this global trend in curricular development away from prescription of content and towards a renewed focus on the processes of learning. According to the Hong Kong Education Department (2003, p.78, cited in Watkins, Carnell and Lodge, 2007, p.18), "schools should also encourage students to inquire beyond the confines of 'curriculum prescriptions' and textbooks, and to process information". In Singapore, secondary school policy states: "The changes will shift the emphasis of education from efficiency to diversity, from content mastery to learning skills, and from knowing to thinking" (Singapore Ministry of Education, 2002, cited in Watkins, Carnell and Lodge, 2007, p.18). It is not only the concepts, but also the language of these new models of national curricula that are prevalent within CfE. The desire for deeper learning beyond prescribed knowledge and the shift from content mastery to process and skills outlined in the policies of Hong Kong and Singapore read as if lifted from CfE and the *Building the Curriculum* series that supports it. The language is indicative of the trans-national movement away from content or mastery models of curriculum towards the praxis model previously outlined.

Having ascertained that Scotland's CfE is neither unique nor distinctive but rather part of a global trend in curriculum development, attention must be given to claims that it is a clear departure from the previous educational system. The purpose of CfE, its structure, and the

use of assessment all need to be considered to assess this curriculum's departure from its predecessor.

During 'The National Debate' on education that led to the conception of CfE, the 5-14 Curriculum being taught in Scottish schools was viewed by the general public as overcrowded and driven by content (Hayward and Hutchinson, 2013). The absence of specified content and lack of instruction to teachers is one aspect in which CfE can be seen as clearly different from its predecessor. This conscious reduction of content and the un-crowding of the Curriculum provides greater professional autonomy to teachers and allows them, in turn, to facilitate a child-centred environment that focuses on the development of the Four Capacities. Outlining the purpose of CfE in terms of capacity development rather than coverage of content is the clearest departure from the 5-14 Curriculum. (Hedge and MacKenzie, 2016).

CfE may represent a move away from a central prescription of curriculum. However, similarities remain between CfE and the 5-14 Curriculum. For instance, the structure of CfE parallels that of 5-14. The outcomes that represent educational progression in both models of curriculum are grouped by subject and are split into eight separate subject areas. In CfE, the Experiences and Outcomes for each subject area are then split into five levels (early, first, second, third, fourth) that offer a linear progression of education. (Priestley and Humes, 2010; Priestley and Minty, 2013). Outcomes in the 5-14 Curriculum were used principally to shape assessments and it is difficult to envisage how they will be used differently in CfE, which will result in a "maintenance of status quo in schools" (Priestley and Humes, 2010, p.22).

The introduction of the Four Capacities does necessitate a change in the nature of assessment within the Curriculum. Assessment of the Four Capacities requires teachers to employ their own professional judgement through summative assessment, as opposed to the formative assessments used in the standardised national tests of the 5-14 Curriculum (Hayward and Hutchinson, 2013). The CfE

supporting document *Building the Curriculum 5: A framework for assessment* (Scottish Government, 2011) asserts that assessment should follow and support, rather than drive, the Curriculum. However, tensions have emerged between assessment for learning and assessment for accountability as a result of the Experiences and Outcomes in the Curriculum (Baumfield, Hulme, Livingston and Menter, 2010; Priestley and Humes, 2010), and according to Hayward and Hutchinson (2013, p.65), "international evidence suggests that if tensions between different purposes of assessment are not reconciled, then assessment will continue to drive curriculum and pedagogy, as it has done in the past". This suggests that assessment is still the principal force driving CfE, in the same way that national assessments drove 5-14.

Returning to Stenhouse's comment earlier in this chapter that teachers are the only ones who can truly facilitate meaningful change in the curriculum, "Curriculum for Excellence allows for both professional autonomy and responsibility when planning and delivering the curriculum" (Scottish Government, 2008, p.11). It will therefore be through the implementation of the Curriculum that any radical change and departure from the previous 5-14 Curriculum is demonstrated. However, this will require teachers to be able to engage with CfE, the supporting documents and academic literature in a critical and self-reflective manner.

Academic Review of *A Curriculum for Excellence*

Academics within the field of education have regularly engaged with CfE throughout the first decade of its implementation. Through a summary review of the literature published in peer-reviewed journals (the *Scottish Educational Review* and *The Curriculum Journal*) in the initial years of CfE, a clear standpoint begins to emerge, which is characterised by repeated use of terms such as 'vagueness', 'atheoretical', 'contradictory' and 'conflicted'.

Priestley (2010) indicates a number of problems, with CfE being centred around vague pedagogical approaches, and a lack of coherence between combinations of different curricular models. Priestley identifies the potential for tensions between policy and implementation. Priestley and Humes expand on the lack of coherence between the policy of CfE and classroom practices, describing CfE as:

> inherently not a process curriculum, but rather a mastery curriculum, an expression of vaguely defined content articulated as objectives. It is our belief that these contradictions will ultimately water down the impact of the new curriculum, meaning that the espoused vision of changes to teaching will be rendered difficult in many schools and that the maintenance of the status quo will be a likely outcome in many cases. (Priestley and Humes, 2010, p.355).

Priestley further states:

> at the meso and micro levels of curriculum enactment, an atheoretical perspective potentially denies local policymakers and practitioners the conceptual tools to make sense of policy, and to reconcile it with local needs and contingencies in a manner that is educational. (Priestley, 2010, p. 24).

By framing the content of the Curriculum in exceedingly general terms, policymakers propose that the professional autonomy of teachers is being re-established; however, educators must have the requisite theoretical understanding (Priestley and Humes, 2010). Thus, an atheoretical curriculum does not provide the basis for autonomous practice to be built upon, and the combination of reduced theoretical underpinning and increased practitioner autonomy creates a contradiction that weakens rather than strengthens the Curriculum. Additionally, given that through the previous educational epoch teacher autonomy had been corroded by structural reforms and an educational

paradigm that values recall, results and product outcomes (Biesta, 2004), it would seem especially difficult not to draw a conclusion similar to that of Day and Bryce (2013, p.63) "that most teachers would prefer more substance and less rhetoric". This is a conclusion that the Scottish Executive/Scottish Government has both recognised and failed to address through the *Building the Curriculum* series and published summary documents (Day and Bryce, 2013).

Similar to Priestley and Humes (Priestley, 2010; Priestley and Humes, 2010), Day and Bryce (2013) engage with the Four Capacities as a mantra and aspirational rhetoric rather than as a meaningful driver of practice, thus identifying an inherent duality within CfE that combines aspects of conflicting models of curriculum, pedagogy and educational philosophy.

A study published in the *Scottish Educational Review* by Millar and Gillies (2013), which focused on children's views and classroom practice based around the concept of 'successful learner' – one of the Four Capacities central to CfE – reported that:

> the term [successful learner] is infinitely ambiguous and can be used to support a whole number of different classroom approaches, some of which run quite counter to the ethos of CfE. (Millar and Gillies, 2013, p.68).

When the concept of success is linked to being the best or smartest in the class and becomes a term only associated with high achievement in the minds of the children, the potential for the core Capacity – successful learner – to impact negatively upon some learners increases. Similarly, if the term becomes synonymous with progress, framing the mechanical practice of ticking off itemised 'learning outcomes' or the unprocessed storage of information as a definition of a successful learner seems somewhat removed from the intentions of the Four Capacities. (Millar and Gillies, 2013). However, it is not only the Capacity of 'successful learner' that casts up problems of definition. In separate articles in the *Times Educational Supplement* (cited by Millar

and Gillies, 2013), both Cockburn (2010) and Buie (2010) indicate the vacuous nature of the Four Capacities. Buie (2010) pronounces that many pupils' recognition of the Four Capacities extends little beyond recitation, and that the Capacity prefixes of 'successful', 'confident', 'responsible' and 'effective' are simply understood as good. The study also exposed a lack of discernment regarding the role of the Four Capacities as they transition from purpose to general "aspirations values of the sort found in 'mission statements'" (Millar and Gillies, 2013, p.80).

Priestley (2010) categorised CfE as atheoretical as it tries to combine incompatible models of curriculum, principally embodied by the Four Capacities on the one hand and the Experiences and Outcomes on the other (this conflict will be addressed later in this chapter). However, Smith (2016) identifies that contradictions of purpose do not stop there, but continue throughout the subject areas within the Experiences and Outcomes. According to Smith, placing the discipline of history as part of a social studies syllabus is to put together

> two contradictory visions of the purpose of school history: as an aid to socialisation and self-actualisation on one hand, and as an epistemic frame for uncovering and recounting the past on the other. These visions are ontologically mutually exclusive: one prizing historical knowledge for its extrinsic utility, the other a commitment to the pursuit of objectivity. (Smith, 2016, p.501).

A similar dichotomy is prevalent within the science Experiences and Outcomes, with the conflict again centred on tensions between education for the next generation in the academic field and the pursuit of citizenship. Both forms of science instruction can be said to work towards scientific literacy, which is the aim within the Curriculum support framework. However, no indication as to what the definition of scientific literacy is or as to what a scientifically literate person should

be capable of is apparent within the Curriculum or supporting documents. (Day and Bryce, 2013).

Humes (2013) highlights the central feature of CfE discourse as "its lack of serious philosophical analysis of questions relating to the nature and structure of knowledge" (p.85). Humes contrasts CfE with a much earlier policy document, the *Munn Report* of 1977 (Department of Education and Science, 1977), which was strongly informed by the epistemological arguments of Paul Hirst (*cf*. Hirst, 1974), claiming that "one of the weaknesses of CfE is that it was under-conceptualised right from the start, insufficiently grounded in historical and theoretical understanding" (Humes, 2013, p.92).

A Curriculum for Excellence

This section aims to analyse CfE critically through policy documents and the supporting material that provides guidance to the implementation of the Curriculum. It makes no claims to explicit knowledge of professional practice in schools. Undoubtably, there is a considerable implementation gap between stated policy and the reality of practice and, therefore, it should be clear that conceptual analyses and critiques regarding the Curriculum are not intended as a criticism of practitioners.

At the level of the academic literature, it is indicated that the education system in Scotland is currently suffering from a general identity crisis. Embodying opposing curricular models, and with an insufficiently clear theoretical underpinning, CfE represents not a drive for extensive educational change as is purported, but rather a confused hybrid. (Priestley, 2010; Priestley and Humes, 2010; Priestley, 2011; Priestley and Minty, 2013).

CfE, implemented throughout Scotland since 2010, asserts its purpose as aiding children and young people in becoming successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors, which, to reiterate, are known collectively as the 'Four

Capacities' (Scottish Executive, 2006[a]). The Four Capacities place an emphasis on collaborative learning and the individual's learning experience. The philosophy of education underpinnings of CfE can therefore be understood in the context of the educational philosophies of Vygotsky, Dewey and Freire. Through the Four Capacities, CfE is thus strongly oriented towards a praxis curriculum. Contrary to this, however, *Curriculum for Excellence: A Statement for Practitioners from HM Chief Inspector of Education* (Education Scotland, 2016) makes no reference to the Four Capacities, instead identifying that "moving forward, the two key resources which teachers should use to plan learning, teaching and assessment are: Experiences and Outcomes [and] Benchmarks" (p.1). Through the Experiences and Outcomes – listed under the eight subject areas within the Curriculum – and their corresponding Benchmarks (introduced in 2016), an alternative curricular focus can be seen that perhaps does not match the aspirations for education that are the Four Capacities. This recent intervention significantly modifies CfE's praxis orientation towards a mastery curriculum, shifting emphasis from the process of learning to its final product.

In order to assess whether the ambition of educational change promised by CfE can be realised through either of these contrasting curricular models and divergent focal points, it is vital to gain an understanding of the aims of education within Scotland. A shift towards the mastery model of curriculum can be interpreted as a return to the ethos of the 5-14 Curriculum that preceded CfE, despite an expressed desire for change. The differences between these curricular models appear to be explored in the works of both Kelly (1999; 2004) and Stenhouse (1975) as they frame an understanding of the aims of education and curriculum design compatible with Progressivism (Dewey) and Social Re-constructivism (Freire), as well as Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning, which overlaps with the praxis model of curriculum. The conflict of curriculum models and the lack of theoretical explanations within CfE and its supporting documents,

combined with a litany of terminology and concepts that are insufficiently unpacked for there to be any certainty that they are being implemented in the centrally conceived way (or, indeed, whether a centrally conceived interpretation even exists), have led many academics to argue that CfE is atheoretical in design.

In *Creating the Curriculum,* Wyse, Baumfield, Egan, Gallagher, Hayward, Hulme, Leitch, Livingston, Menter and Lingard (2013) try to help define the Four Capacities, outlining the additional attributes that, if developed, will enable young people to realise their potential in each of the Capacities. The *Building the Curriculum* series (Scottish Executive, 2006[a]; 2007; Scottish Government, 2008; 2009; 2011) also provides a basis to better understand the nature of the Capacities, separating each Capacity into various attributes and the skills that a pupil demonstrating each particular Capacity should be able to achieve. Identified amongst the attributes for 'successful learners' and 'confident individuals' are being enthusiastic and motivated for learning, with self-respect, and a sense of personal wellbeing (including physical, mental and emotional wellbeing), respectively. These can be seen as connected elements of a virtuous circle (Petty, 2014), whereby success as a learner reinforces an individual's confidence, resulting in increased self-respect and self-belief, which in turn creates a motivated and enthusiastic learner. The two Capacities are so interconnected that the attributes for one could be placed in the column of attributes for the other, and vice versa, without significantly changing the impact of either Capacity. While this may be presented as a weakness within the Four Capacities, it in fact only serves to highlight that the Capacities are weak if taken individually and that it is collectively that they can function as the aims and purpose of CfE. Individually, the attributes identified by Wyse *et al*. (2013) and Education Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2006[a]; 2007; Scottish Government, 2008; 2009; 2011) have extraordinarily little impact in providing clarity within these Capacities. It might even be suggested that the Capacities could be changed to 'confident learners' and

'successful individuals' and not alter either their attributes or our understandings of the terms. With regard to the other core Capacities of CfE, 'effective contributors' are able to communicate in various ways and work well in groups, applying critical thinking, whilst 'responsible citizens' respect others and acknowledge a commitment to participate responsibly (Wyse *et al.*, 2013). Again, the terms used to define the Capacities are entirely interchangeable. The attempt to define what constitutes fulfilment of each of the Capacities provides little reinforcement to them as the purpose of CfE, and this is perhaps why they are described as 'aspirations' in the introduction to *Building the Curriculum 1* (Scottish Executive, 2006[a]) and – as will be discussed later – have become marginalised as the starting point for the Curriculum.

Nonetheless, the ethos and the skill set that the Four Capacities collectively outline exemplify the Social Constructivist theory of learning developed by Vygotsky through his Zone of Proximal Development (Berk and Meyers, 2016), whilst the latter Capacity demonstrates a strong link to the Social Re-constructivism of Freire (1970), who asserted that education needs to combine academic study with a social awareness. Both Vygotsky's learning theory and Freire's philosophy of education are consistent with the praxis model of curriculum established previously through the work of Kelly (1999; 2004) and Stenhouse (1975).

The position of CfE established by the Four Capacities is strengthened by Petty (2014), who links their interrelated attributes to the positive aspects of the virtuous circle, and thus to learning experiences that are engaging and enjoyable. With engaging interactions and relatable experiences positioned as the focal points of education, learning becomes a process, and instead of the teacher being an instructor of content, they become the facilitator of experiences (Petty, 2014). Positioning process – as opposed to content – as a key driver of education requires the needs of the pupil on an individual basis to be addressed.

In the introduction to *Teaching Values and Citizenship Across the Curriculum*, Bailey (2004) states that "education, and each of its constituent elements, should contribute systematically to all aspects of pupils' development" and includes in this "their social and moral development" (p.ix), and although the attributes unpacked from the Four Capacities appear highly fluid and make each Capacity hard to substantiate individually, when looked at as a collective, Bailey's statement in effect appears to be the goal to which the Four Capacities aspire. It has previously been claimed that curriculum development cannot take place in isolation and that government policy and legislation inherently must play a role. Bailey's (2004) view of the contribution of education in supporting all aspects of development reinforces the Four Capacities and demonstrates their alignment with the government legislation relating to children and young people in the years of both CfE's conception and its implementation.

The Four Capacities, when regarded as the aims and purpose of CfE, provide a starting point for education and the development of children and young people in Scotland that is fully coherent with the national priorities and policy set out in both the *Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000* and the *Education and Training (Scotland) Act 2000*. The policy outline shows that an educational system based around skills and personal development is desired and, although individually each of the Four Capacities provides a rather uncertain starting point, collectively they form the context for either a mastery or a praxis curriculum to develop, best supported through the learning theory of Social Constructivism and the Social Re-constructivism of Paulo Freire. The focus within policy on the needs of the individual also greatly shapes this aspect of the development as, without the focus on the individual pupil reinforced since CfE's launch by GIRFEC (Scottish Government, 2012), the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014* and *the Education (Scotland) Act 2016*, the Four Capacities of 'successful learners', 'confident individuals', 'responsible citizens' and

'effective contributors' could each be interpreted to fit a content-based model of curriculum.

However, in practical terms, the Four Capacities are not the only starting point to address CfE. Under the headings of each of the eight curricular areas are a series of 'Experiences and Outcomes', spread over five levels to cover the full range of learners within the Scottish education system (Education Scotland, 2011). It is possible to view these Experiences and Outcomes as the real driving force that defines practice within CfE, as opposed to the stated purpose that is the Four Capacities (Wyse *et al.*, 2013). Due to this apparent conflict of objectives, it is necessary to identify both the theories of learning and the curriculum model related to the Experiences and Outcomes before any comparison with the praxis curriculum advocated by the Four Capacities can take place.

Stenhouse (1975) and Kelly (1999; 2004) describe a 'mastery' or 'product' model of curriculum as one that is linear in structure, with products or outcomes as the objectives of education. The skill development component of the mastery curriculum places emphasis on preparing the young person for the working environment, which could be said to create a parallel in objective with the Lancastrian model discussed in Chapter One. In *Building the Curriculum 3: A framework for learning and teaching*, Education Scotland sets out an aim different from the Four Capacities (although previously in the document it also identifies the Four Capacities as the aim of CfE, which suggests confusion of purpose):

> The aim of Curriculum for Excellence is to help prepare all young people in Scotland to take their place in a modern society and economy. The curriculum will provide a framework for all young people in Scotland to gain the knowledge and skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work that they need. (Scottish Government, 2008, pp.3-4).

This clearly indicates a link with a mastery model of curriculum, which is work and skill-focused and thus arguably at odds with the process and child-focused model supporting the Four Capacities. This view is supported by Priestley when he classifies the Curriculum as "atheoretical" (Priestley, 2010, p.24) in its combination of different, and at times incompatible, curricular models (Priestley and Minty, 2013; Stenhouse, 1975). Found in both of these models of curriculum, Education Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2006[a]; Scottish Government, 2008) emphasises the need for learning to be based around a series of experiences and collaborative group work, grounding it in Piaget's cognitive learning theory of Constructivism, where pupils make sense of the world by constructing schemas based on experience, and Vygotsky's Social Constructivism, utilising scaffolding within mixed-ability groups (Berk and Meyers, 2016). This theoretical grounding would suggest that CfE can be seen as either a praxis or a mastery model, depending on whether the Four Capacities or the Experiences and Outcomes, respectively, are considered the focal aim.

Conclusion

Given the lack of clarity in the CfE framework itself, it would appear that implementation – rather than policy or theory – holds the key to ascertaining the extent to which CfE meets the aspirations of the Four Capacities. An examination of the 'Learning Experience Plan' template (Appendix 2) used by the University of Glasgow MA (Hons) Primary Education with Teaching Qualification programme (circa 2017) would indicate that the Experiences and Outcomes take precedence over the Four Capacities. When compiling these Learning Experience Plans while on university teaching placements, there is a requirement for student teachers to outline which Experiences and Outcomes – as well as the recently introduced Benchmarks – will be addressed in the lesson in question, but the Learning Experience Plan omits any mention of the Four Capacities. This would demonstrate that Experiences and Outcomes are the focus of teaching and general classroom practice

within primary schools. Supporting this observation, *Curriculum for Excellence: A Statement for Practitioners from HM Chief Inspector of Education* (Education Scotland, 2016) makes no reference to the Four Capacities, but instead identifies that "moving forward, the two key resources which teachers should use to plan learning, teaching and assessment are: Experiences and Outcomes [and] Benchmarks" (p.1). This would strongly suggest that CfE takes the Experiences and Outcomes as its starting point, placing it within the domain of a mastery curriculum, and therefore provides little support in developing the Four Capacities.

Conflicting access points to the Curriculum and noncompatible models of curriculum design are not the only aspects of CfE that seem to contradict each other or provide a basis for the atheoretical assessment of Priestley (2010; 2011). Language shapes how policy, CfE and supporting documents are viewed, and it has already been demonstrated that the language of the Four Capacities as aspirations, and their attributes, are interchangeable. However, such problems also surface as part of the Experiences and Outcomes. Kelly's (2004) definitions of process and mastery curricula rely heavily on the terms 'experiences' and 'outcomes' respectively, from which it can be identified that, when used in combination within CfE, the two terms are promoting educational models that could be at odds with one another. 'Experiences and Outcomes' require both the learning journey and the final product to be the simultaneous goal. The 2016 introduction of Benchmarks for learning, however, shifts the weighting within the Experiences and Outcomes towards the outcome or product required to meet the benchmark, which changes the focus still further from the aims and purpose set out as the Four Capacities.

Assessment within CfE continues the trend of practice undermining the aspirations of the Four Capacities. Whilst the policy document *Assessment is for Learning* (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2005) clearly follows a praxis and pupil-centred approach through peer

and self-assessment and the use of assessment as a diagnostic tool in the planning of future experiences, the Scottish Government's plan to introduce national standardised testing represents a stark contrast in approach, moving the focus of assessment away from the needs of the individual pupils (BBC, 2016):

> Assessments that produce direct comparisons over a wide range of the population are rarely sufficiently finely tuned to produce diagnostic feedback, or to provide more than a crude ranking for the individual child, but do allow league tables to be constructed that – if everything is equal – allow the direct comparison of the 'standards' or 'effectiveness' of different schools and LEAs. (Ross, 2001, p.128).

The ranking of teachers and schools based on national testing does not provide the opportunities across the Curriculum for pupils and teachers to become absorbed in the process of learning, but rather narrows the Curriculum to include only that which will be in the test. Moreover, whether intentional or not, this will produce a test-backwards style of classroom practice, as pressure is placed on the teachers and schools to perform. (Darling, 1994). In this way, the Curriculum can be seen as moving towards an input-output model (Wyse *et al.*, 2013) more allied with a content model of curriculum, which has no connection to the Four Capacities.

Priestley critically diagnoses the role of the Four Capacities when he states:

> The Four Capacities take on the status of aspirational slogans or mantras, clearly visible on posters in classrooms and corridors; however, beyond this, they are not commonly informing curricular innovation, and are not generally seen as a starting point for curriculum development. (Priestley, 2010, p.28).

It appears that the Four Capacities may have been designed with the role of inspirational tagline in mind, for they have a similar quality to the way in which Robinson (2010) describes the concept of 'raising the standard of education' in *Changing Educational Paradigms* – being that they are impossible to argue against. This would certainly account for why they are given prominence as the stated aim of CfE but are not then supported through the model of curriculum or used as the focus for classroom practice. The concept of the Four Capacities being seen in this way is supported by a research-based study in the *Scottish Educational Review*: "The majority of interviewees welcomed CfE, saying that it tied in with their own ideas and beliefs about education. Teachers described the Four Capacities as "a strong hook"" (Priestley and Minty, 2013, p.46). Thus, potentially, rather than being atheoretical, CfE is a mastery curriculum dressed in the language of a praxis curriculum.

The academic literature from peer-reviewed education journals both during the years of development and since its launch support the view that CfE lacks the theoretical rigour to clearly link it to educational philosophies or theories of learning consistently throughout the Curriculum itself and the *Building the Curriculum* series of supporting documents. This is a perception that is advanced by the duality of setting out the Four Capacities as the aims and purpose of the Curriculum while the Experiences and Outcomes are to be used as the focus for planning.

> Carr (2004) states that the
>
> inability adequately to relate philosophy to education or education to philosophy is a consequence of the fact that the contemporary philosophy of education has looked to the wrong place for its own intellectual ancestry (p.55);

and that in doing so

> it is almost certainly being invoked in order to add a theoretical embellishment to the presentation of an educational standpoint that is being advocated for reasons that have little to do with philosophical rationale (p.56).

From Carr's (2004) standpoint it is possible to infer that the combination of conflicting starting points for CfE and, as a result, opposing models of curriculum are the product of a curriculum that initially set out clear aims and aspirations without them being firmly grounded with one particular theoretical stance, and as such allowed theories of learning and aspects of educational philosophy to be attributed in an *ad hoc* manner.

With explicit theoretical underpinning, the Four Capacities of 'successful learner', 'confident individual', 'responsible citizen' and 'effective contributor' could provide a basis for the Curriculum to realise its potential and refocus towards its original aims. The need to understand and refocus the Four Capacities into a simpler and more coherent foundation is key to correctly rooting them – and, therefore, by definition CfE itself – in theory without the appearance of such being necessary for superficial embellishment.

It is undoubtable from previous discussions that 'successful learner', 'confident individual' and 'effective contributor' all sit comfortably within the definitions of Progressive educational philosophy prominent in the works of Dewey and others, including educational theorists Piaget and Vygotsky. These Capacities under a Progressive view could well be rephrased as: 'learning focused on process, and through collaboration and experience'. While this would result in pupils developing into successful learners, confident individuals and effective contributors, there would be less ambiguity in how the current objectives of CfE and its aspirations were to be achieved.

‘Responsible citizen’, as a Capacity, does not sit fully outside of the Progressive education paradigm, but also does not appear as centrally as the other three. Creating pupils as responsible citizens introduces the role of individuals being socially responsible and adds social justice as a requirement to be theoretically underpinned within the philosophy of the Curriculum. It is through the Social Re-constructivism of Paulo Freire that this aspect of the Four Capacities is most clearly introduced. Given the prominence of collaboration and experience within Freire’s (1970) model, designed around a process model of curriculum, it is here that the theoretical influence and underpinning for CfE can perhaps be found. However, the principles of Freire’s Social Re-constructivism need to be further explored with each of the Four Capacities in mind if it is to help support CfE.

Chapter Three: The Epistemology of Paulo Freire

The discussion of the 'Four Capacities' in the previous chapter clearly situates CfE within the spectrum of Progressive educational theory. However, the inclusion of the Capacity 'responsible citizen', and also 'effective contributor', adds an element of collective responsibility and social justice to the Curriculum. It is this additional component within the make-up of CfE that indicates an opportunity to use Paulo Freire's works to develop a theoretical underpinning to strengthen the Curriculum and reinforce the praxis model on which it is built.

Freire's work neither ignores the means to teach nor mistakes the purpose of education (Mackie, 1980), and can thus assist in providing the theoretical underpinning that CfE currently lacks. Sheridan identifies that:

> A key tenet of Freire's ideas is that all education is political, and this is no different from the education of young people, whether formal or informal. There has been a long established political imperative to involve young people in key societal matters. (Sheridan, 2018, p.105).

The political nature of education in Scotland is apparent not only within the two core Capacities of 'effective contributor' and 'responsible citizen', but also through the government policies outlined previously as shaping the basis for CfE. Sheridan (2018) cites *The United Nations' (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)* in ratifying that young people have a right to influence decisions affecting them, and utilises statistics from The Electoral Commission 2014 on the Scottish Independence Referendum to support the idea that young people, when given the opportunity, are prepared to engage actively, thus validating Macleod's belief (cited in Sheridan, 2018) that young people are vital members of society, who have their own thoughts and opinions and a desire to express them.

Continued assertion of the importance of the individual in the construction of CfE would simply involve reiterating the discussions of the previous chapter. Hence, this chapter aims to demonstrate that by supporting CfE with the educational theory of Paulo Freire's Social Re-constructivism, it is possible to shift the curricular focus back towards a Progressive curriculum based around a praxis model. In doing so, a realignment would occur with the stated aims and purposes embodied through the Four Capacities, as opposed to the increasing directiveness focused on the Experiences and Outcomes and the associated Benchmarks.

According to Mackie:

> While his theory has situated origins, its applications are potentially much wider. Consistent with the very best of educational traditions, Freire's ideas derive from practice, are moulded into theoretical explanations and perspectives, returning once again to be refurbished in practice. (Mackie, 1980, p.2).

Developing from practice makes Freire's theory consistent with Stenhouse's (1975) view that only teachers can affect practice as only they know what is implemented in the classroom, although for Freire the pupils have an equal role in shaping practice. The concept that the theory progresses from practice to theory and then back to be reviewed in practice again allows for it to alter and adjust to fit the needs of the individual, and can be seen reflected in the *Assessment is for Learning* policy (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2005) within CfE assessment. Indeed, this policy reflects Freire's approach in that:

> instead of copying or transporting his ideas from one period and one context to another it was necessary to reinvent the same ideas to guarantee their relevance to the new context and conjuncture. (Ireland, 2018, p.24).

Thus, when it is stated that the educational philosophy of Paulo Freire can provide the theoretical underpinning needed to support CfE, it should be clear that it does not provide a one-size-fits-all blueprint to a Progressive curriculum, but more appropriately provides a set of ideas and principles from which to build a framework for epistemological development. Through assessment of Freire's epistemology and pedagogy of liberation and examination of his objection to what he defines as a 'banking model' of education, a clear correlation to the principles of CfE and the Four Capacities will develop and provide a theoretical basis for education in Scotland and its Curriculum.

Dialectical Materialism and Paulo Freire

Paulo Freire's Social Re-constructivist philosophy is grounded in a dialectical theory of knowledge, with his pedagogy shaped through a Marxist, dialectical materialist epistemological view of consciousness, social interaction and the human condition (Roberts, 2003; Au and Apple, 2007). Dialectical epistemology is emphatically different from Traditionalist models of educational philosophy in that an idea or 'thing' can only be understood in terms of its relation to other aspects of knowledge, thus placing dialectical knowledge in opposition to epistemologies based in the use of pure reason and logic, such as those advanced through the Enlightenment (Allman, 1999). While this may, at first glance, appear consistent with Piaget's Constructivism and his theorised need to build schemas of knowledge that can be assimilated with previous knowledge (Berk and Meyers, 2016), "Piaget's Kantian interpretation, […] leaves aside societies and histories as factors in the development of the mind" (Matthews, 1980, p.87).

In order to substantiate the opposition to Traditional epistemologies and the divergence from other Progressive educational philosophers, such as Piaget, a brief explanation of the fundamental concepts within a dialectical materialist epistemology is necessary. A dialectical epistemology envisions a combination of interrelated and many-layered processes that develops as part of human cognition

(Gadotti, 1996). Fundamental to dialectics is the concept that all cognitive constructs are part of a process, and that the process is in a state of continual development as it works both with compatible concepts and against interrelated contradictions (Gadotti, 1996). Allman (1999) suggests that contradictions or opposites are required to drive the process of cognitive development as, although seen as opposites, the ideas are interrelated in a way that makes them part of the process as a whole. That is to say that, in the construction of knowledge, competing or opposing ideas are required to generate hypotheses upon which knowledge can be tested and built. While this may seem to promote a form of epistemic relativism where there are no absolute facts that can be achieved either rationally or through experience, discussion on competing or opposing standpoints can be used to support critical analysis within established pedagogic guidelines. Dialectics therefore sits in contrast to Rationalist philosophy and Traditionalist educational theories, whereby ideas are analysed in isolation from one another and knowledge is absolute (Benton and Craib, 2001). Au (2007) employs Lenin (1972) to unpack 'materialism' in this philosophical context to mean that conscious thought or ideas are developed from and reflective of an interaction with the material world, and not the other way around.

On the surface, dialectics and materialism both provide a basis for not just Freire, but also other Progressive cognitive theorists. Piaget and Vygotsky both utilise materialism as a basis for Constructivism and Social Constructivism, with knowledge being built through experience, and while the dialectic dialogue for Piaget happens internally, the collaborative aspect of Vygotsky's theory is also prevalent in Freire. However, it is the social justice element of Freire that differentiates his educational philosophy from the cognitive learning theories of both Piaget and Vygotsky. This social justice component is evident throughout the work of Freire and develops from his theoretical grounding in Marxist theory (Au, 2007). As such:

> dialectics and materialism need to be together to make sense because the point is to (1) understand the interrelated processes happening in the material world and (2) provide a space for human intervention in those processes to change that material world for the better. (Au, 2007, p.177).

'Effective contributors' and 'responsible citizens' are two of the Four Capacities that have been previously outlined as the guiding principles that support and give purpose to CfE, and both clearly embody the Marxist materialism of Freire and the elements of social justice that define Social Re-constructivism. The remaining Capacities – 'successful learner' and 'confident individual' – have been shown to be malleable to fit either Traditionalist or Progressive educational ideals, and when read from a Progressive standpoint reflect both Piaget and Vygotsky. However, the development of cognitive knowledge can be taken from an individual standpoint that has no social dimension and, as such, does not require an individual to be either an 'effective contributor', in a societal sense, or a 'responsible citizen', and it is their inclusion at the heart of the Curriculum that provides a relevance to the dialectic materialism found in Freire's Social Re-constructivism.

Materialism and Social Justice

It is through materialism that the social justice element of Freire's philosophy is clearly represented. Freire frequently refers to what he terms an 'objective social reality' (Freire, 1970; 1982[a]) and 'objective conditions' (Freire, 2004), and makes similar references to the human condition and the interactions and transformations of 'reality' or the 'world' (Freire, 1970; 1982[a]; 1992; 1998[b]; Freire and Macedo, 1987; Shor and Freire, 1987). Objective reality provides a set, unequivocal reality that must shape the individual and the human experience, whereas a subjective reality is one where the individual has a role in shaping their own reality, and thus the development process of the human condition. Returning to an educational context, an objectivity reality refers to pupils assembled *en masse*, to learn passively the facts

of their objective reality, while a subjective view encourages a focus on the individual learner and how they shape the process of learning. "Knowing," according to Freire (1976, p.99) in *Education: The Practice of Freedom*, "is the task of subjects not objects". This places Freire firmly within the canon of Progressive education influenced by Marx, Hegel and Dewey (Matthews, 1980).

Declaring the dialectical nature of the relationship between the objective reality and subjective understanding as part of human ontology, Freire claims:

> Consciousness and the world cannot be understood separately, in a dichotomized fashion, but rather must be seen in their contradictory relations. Not even consciousness is an arbitrary producer of the world or of objectivity, nor is it a pure reflection of the world. (Freire, 1998[b], p.19).

And in applying this to an educational paradigm he asserts that:

> Our capacity to learn, the source of our capacity to teach, suggests and implies that we also have a capacity to grasp the substantiveness/essence of the object of our knowledge. (Freire, 1998[a], p.66).

Freire explains a dialectical materialist epistemology through use of the concept of *conscientização*, where he explains that:

> Only when we understand the 'dialecticity' between consciousness and the world - that is, when we know that we don't have a consciousness here and the world there but, on the contrary, when both of them, the objectivity and the subjectivity, are incarnating dialectically, is it possible to understand what conscientização is, and to understand the role of consciousness in the liberation of humanity. (Davis and Freire, 1981, p.62).

The interrelation of, and mutual requirement of, objectivity and subjectivity in Freire's epistemology requires a duality in understanding. That is to say, is impossible to fully understand one aspect of reality without the other.

'Successful learners' and 'confident individuals' may be achievable as the aims of CfE through an objective understanding of the world and the ability to state objective facts (setting aside the notion that within a Progressive curriculum a subjective interpretation of the objective realities is required for these Capacities to be achieved). However, for the remaining Capacities ('responsible citizen' and 'effective contributor') to be fulfilled, pupils require not only objective comprehension but the subjective opportunities to shape their society. These subjective opportunities are present within the Experiences of CfE, which have been designed in a malleable way to enable opportunities for pupil-led introductions to topics and facilitate cross-curricular work; however, a focus on the Outcomes, and particularly Benchmarks, introduces a rigidity, which in turn restricts this element of learner directiveness. While 'successful learners' and 'confident individuals' can be accomplished through objectivity alone (i.e. within a Traditionalist model), 'responsible citizens' and 'effective contributors' require subjectivity and therefore can only be implemented in a Progressive curriculum; thus, as discussed, Capacities that appear theoretically weak when viewed in isolation are strengthened by a collective theoretical underpinning, as the Four Capacities can only be present collectively within a Progressive model of education.

The notion that subjective awareness through the 'responsible citizen' must be directed as a form of social justice is reflective of Freire's perception of consciousness, with both being consistent with his Marxist underpinning and coherent with the Progressive educational views of Vygotsky (Au, 2007). For Freire, consciousness is "consciousness of consciousness" (Freire, 1970, p.107) and

"consciousness is intentionality towards the world" (Davis and Freire, 1981, p.58), and fundamentally this consciousness is a social consciousness (Freire and Macedo, 1987; 1995; Roberts, 2003). This results in a continual process of critical reflection, which is how Freire conceives 'praxis' (Davis and Freire, 1981; Freire, 1970; 1982[a]; 1982[b]). Freire explains that:

> [H]uman beings ... are beings of 'praxis': of action and of reflection. Humans find themselves marked by the results of their own actions in their relations with the world, and through the action on it. By acting they transform; by transforming they create a reality which conditions their manner of acting. (Freire, 1982[b], p.102).

Praxis forms not only the core of Freire's epistemology, but also the basis of CfE when perceived as a praxis model of curriculum with the Four Capacities at its heart. Praxis, both for Freire's epistemology and in a curriculum context, requires that those involved, both individually and collectively, are subjects within the process as opposed to being objects in passive participation (Freire, 1970; 1982[a]; 1982[b]). Thus, as subjects, learners are in a constant state of reflection and development (Freire, 1982[b]). This constant development indicates learning taking place through a dialectical process, where ideas and knowledge are broken down, reviewed and then 'retotalized' (Freire, 1970; Freire and Macedo, 1995; Shor and Freire, 1987):

> What we do when we try to establish a cognitive or epistemological relationship with the object to be known, when we get it into our hands, grasp it, and begin to ask ourselves about it, what we really begin to do is to take it as a totality. We then begin to split it into its constituent parts ... In a certain moment, even though we may not have exhausted the process of splitting the object, we try to understand it now in its totality. We try to retotalize the totality which we split! ... The moment of summarizing has

> to do with this effort of retotalizing of the totality we divided into parts. (Shor and Freire, 1987, p.161).

Breaking information or knowledge into constituent parts and then re-building it as part of our understanding is highly consistent with the learning theories of both Piaget and Vygotsky as core concepts within a Progressive educational ideology, and essential to Freire's concept for human understanding and the interactions this generates with the world. For Freire, the ability to understand and influence change in the world derives from the moment we change from being objects in education to subjects, and it is this process that both provides a humanisation to his ontology (Glass, 2001; Roberts, 2003) and extends the epistemological underpinnings to his pedagogy.

The Pedagogy of Paulo Freire

There are two clear components to the pedagogy developed by Freire, based on the epistemological outline above. Firstly, the pedagogy must facilitate both students and teachers in developing a critical understanding of their knowledge and how that interacts with the world around them:

> Education for freedom implies constantly, permanently, the exercise of consciousness turning in on itself in order to discover itself in the relationships with the world, trying to explain the reasons which can make clear the concrete situation people have in the world. (Freire in Davis and Freire, 1981, p.59).

The second component, which is entirely interrelated with the first, is the need to develop a perception of the individuals involved in education as subjects and not objects, thus enabling individuals in attempting to "become consciously aware of [their] context and [their] condition as a human being as Subject ... [and] become an instrument of choice" (Freire, 1982[a], p.56). The transformation of students and teachers to subjects creates "critical agents in the act of knowing"

(Shor and Freire, 1987, p.33). If both the teacher and the pupil are to become subjects, then a reciprocal relationship develops that requires "subjects, who while teaching, learn. And who in learning also teach" (Freire, 1998[a], p.67).

Freire's pedagogy for critical self-consciousness, or conscientisation, is divided in two parts as demonstrated through his adult literacy programme of education. There is initially a need for time and effort to be spent in the establishment of the basics of education and the mechanics of reading and other skills used for basic gathering of information, which can then provide the foundation for self-reflection and the development of understanding and awareness of the world in relation to expanding knowledge. (Glassman and Patton, 2014). Freire believed that teaching an individual to read equips them with the ability to re-read the world around them as subjects, and in doing so they become empowered to question the historical and social situation in which they find themselves. This opportunity to re-examine the human condition provides oppressed people with the capacity to question knowledge dictated to them by their oppressors, and the ability to independently interpret their world. (Freire, 1970). That is to say, students develop the ability to remove themselves from the status of object and become a subject in their developing understanding of the world.

Freire argued that the transformation from oppressed object to liberated subject is indicative of the fact that "the struggle to be free, to be human and make history and culture from the given situation, is an inherent possibility in the human condition" and that "the struggle is necessary because the situation contains not only this possibility for humanization, but also for dehumanization" (Glass, 2001, p.16). To dehumanise an individual – and, in doing so, the human condition – creates them as an object that is the product of history and culture. This denies them the opportunity to self-actualise as a subject within the historico-cultural dimension of the human condition. Therefore,

Freire is attempting through his pedagogy to overcome the instrumentalisation and dehumanisation that objectivise individuals, and instead provide them with the ability and cognitive capacity to develop as subjects towards “an educational enterprise that he calls a practice of freedom” (Glass, 2001, p.16). Education is thus an integral part of the development of the human condition and elevates the human consciousness:

> I cannot understand human beings as simply living. I can under-stand them only as historically, culturally, and socially existing... I can understand them only as beings who are makers of their “way,” in the making of which they lay themselves open to or commit themselves to the “way” that they make and that therefore re-makes them as well. (Freire, 1992, p.97; original emphasis).

As makers of their ‘way’, Freire is understanding the human condition as something that individuals have the power to alter through education. Education allows learners to transform their reality and how they engage with the world; it liberates them from the passive state of subjectivity and facilitates a conscious understanding of their place in the world. Freire relates this as a liberative pedagogy with clear objectives:

> Any attempt at mass education ... must possess a basic aim: to make it possible for human beings, through the problematizing of the unity being-world (or of human beings in their relations with the world and with other human beings) to penetrate more deeply the prise de conscience of the reality in which they exist. This deepening of the prise de conscience, which must develop in the action which transforms reality, produces with this action an overlaying of basically sensuous knowledge of reality with that which touches the raison d'etre of this reality. People take over the position they have in their here and now. This results

> (and at the same time it produces this) in their discovering their own presence within a totality, within a structure, and not as 'imprisoned' or 'stuck to' the structure or its parts. (Freire, 1982[b], p.107; original emphasis).

Pedagogically, Freire is developing a problem-posing approach to learning; this embeds the process of problem solving and the reworking of possible solutions as a means to developing a consciousness with which to critically analyse social reality, both in an educational setting and on a global scale. It is important to note that Freire differentiates between problem posing and problem solving as methods in education. Problem solving is a common feature in most contemporary educational systems. However, it is presented in a manner that is highly artificial – that is to say, not grounded within an experience of perceived reality – and is tackled in isolation with one final solution. In contrast, the problem posing approach requires individual problems to be part of a shared experience, with multiple answers being hypothesised as part of an educational dialogue both between peers and between those traditionally labelled 'teacher' and 'pupil'. (Connolly, 1980). Freire explains:

> In problem-posing education, [learners] develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation. Although the dialectical relations of [each individual] with the world exist independently of how these relations are perceived (or whether or not they are perceived at all), it is also true that the form of action [they each] adopt is to a large extent a function of how they perceive themselves in the world. (Freire, 1970, pp.70-71).

Freire's process of problematisation mirrors that of his epistemology in that it is required to originate from reality and, then, once analysed, must return to be tested in reality and a practical context. Learners

develop knowledge through reflecting on a situation and using their critical consciousness to understand it. However, it is only through testing in practice that a solution can be found. The practical testing of the solution may cause other problems to become apparent, in which case the process of learning begins again as a constant process of reflection:

> The process of problematization implies a critical return to action. It starts from action and returns to it. The process of problematization is basically someone's reflection on a content which results from an act, or reflection on the act itself in order to act better together with others within the framework of reality. There can be no problematization without reality. Discussion about transcendence must take its point of departure from discussion on the here, which for humans is always a now too. (Freire, 1982[b] p.154).

The 'Banking Model' of Education

As it is formed in and developed through practice, and as all practical situations are different, Freire is clear in his pedagogy that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to teaching and that no single approach can, or should, be consistently applied across all educational paradigms (Dale and Hyslop-Marginson, 2011). The repetitive forms of instruction typical of Traditional models of education, such as leaning by rote, are to Freire not conducive to the development of a critical consciousness:

> A progressive educator must not experience the task of teaching in mechanical fashion. He or she must not merely transfer the profile of the concept of the object to learners. If I teach Portuguese, I must teach the use of accents, subject-verb agreement, the syntax of verbs, noun case, the use of pronouns, the personal infinitive. However, as I teach the Portuguese language, I must not postpone dealing with issues of language that relate to social class. I must not avoid the issue of class syntax, grammar, semantics, and

> spelling. Hoping that the teaching of content, in and of itself, will generate tomorrow a radical intelligence of reality is to take a controlled position rather than a critical one. (Freire, 1997, p.75).

In this instance, Freire is referring to the teaching of language and the need to avoid methods that require only repetition and the reproduction of knowledge, or only deal with one aspect of knowledge. Thus, 'teaching in a mechanical fashion' would simply produce mechanical responses and mechanical use of knowledge, and further the dehumanisation and mechanisation of the human condition. Freire in numerous works describes this method of education as the 'banking model', which is the opposite of what he wishes to achieve in development of critical consciousness:

> This is the "banking" concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filling, and storing deposits. They do, it is true, have the opportunity to become collectors or cataloguers of the things they store. But in the last analysis, it is the people themselves who are filed away due to the lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system. For apart from the inquiry, apart from praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. (Freire, 1970, p.73).

According to Freire (1970), the banking approach to education dehumanises through denying the student the ability to reason and reinterpret the information with which they are being presented. Contrary to the mutual dialogue that occurs when teachers learn and pupils teach, the banking model places the educational focus firmly on the teacher as purveyor of knowledge, which they then deposit into the student to be stored and later retrieved in exactly the form in which it was deposited.

The banking method is deeply entrenched within Traditional models of education as outlined in earlier chapters. However, Freire

maintained that Progressive educators can use forms of critical pedagogy and dialogue with students to weaken the dehumanisation of banking education:

> What progressive educators need to do is bring life itself into their classrooms. They need to critically read day-to-day life and analyze, with learners, the shocking facts and disjuncture of our democracy. They need to expose learners to examples of discrimination taken from daily experience (race, class, and gender discrimination), and examples of disrespect for public things, examples of violence, examples of arbitrariness. These examples should be analyzed to reveal their aggressive contradiction of what I have been calling men and women's orientation toward being more, which has been constituted as our nature throughout history. Also, they contradict the authenticity of democratic life. In fact, a democracy where discrimination and disrespect occurs without punishment still has a great deal to learn and to do in order to purify itself. Not that I believe it possible for there to be, someday, a democracy so perfect that such disrespect will not exist. (Freire, 1996, p.155).

In essence, Freire states that Progressive educators need to explore aspects of social justice within everyday life and, as social justice is reflected through the core Capacities of CfE, he is in fact reiterating the important role that 'responsible citizen' and 'effective contributor' have as Capacities in shaping the nature of the Curriculum – thus suggesting that the Four Capacities should be the central focus of educational practice in Scottish education.

Pedagogic Authority

The banking model described by Freire requires a great deal of pedagogic authority to be implemented. As a feature of Traditionalist educational philosophies, it places the focus of the classroom firmly on the teacher as the educational authority: the teacher is the ultimate

provider of information and has the absolute knowledge to be deposited to the pupils. (Berk and Meyers, 2016). Freire believed that these authoritarian practices are designed to "blindfold students and lead them to a domesticated future" (1970, p.79) – that is to say, it oppresses them as objects and stifles the development of a critical consciousness that would allow them to become subjects. However, according to Darder (2018), these restrictive practices not only affect pupils but also hinder the development of teachers and reduce their professional autonomy. One of the claimed objectives of CfE is to reintroduce this professional autonomy and enable teachers to regain an influence over the content and methods of the curriculum (Scottish Government, 2008). Freire's pedagogy again mirrors the intentions of CfE, underlining its potential as the theoretical underpinning required to help refocus the Curriculum aims.

Freire (1998[b]) implores teachers to reject the oppressive nature of an authoritarian pedagogy within their classrooms "by demythologizing the authoritarianism of teaching packages and their administration in the intimacy of their world, which is also the world of their students" (p.9). He highlights instead that "what is important in teaching is not the mechanical repetition of this or that gesture but a comprehension of the value of sentiments, emotions, and desires … and sensibility, affectivity, and intuition" (Freire, 1998[a], p.48). This does not mean adopting a completely hands-off approach to classroom authority; nor does it mean being oppressive and dictatorial. Instead, approaching the classroom as 'liberatory educators' requires teachers to be 'radically democratic' in their pedagogy, which ultimately involves being responsive and directive in the classroom while facilitating pupils in forming their own critical opinions and conclusions (Freire and Macedo, 1995).

Being 'radically democratic' requires the educational paradigm to be shifted, and is presented in the aims and purpose of the Four Capacities of CfE in the form of the 'effective contributor'. The concept

of teacher/student and student/teacher – that is, educators who while teaching can also learn and pupils who while learning can also teach – embodies a praxis curriculum whereby, within the classroom practice and through planning, all constituent parties can effectively contribute to the process of learning. The shift to teachers who while teaching also learn and students who while learning also teach does not fully erode all pedagogic authority, and suddenly create a classroom of equals. Rather, it is the notion of authority that changes, whereby the traditional authoritarian authority is replaced by democratic authority, allowing both teachers and students to maintain their original identities, but with the roles altered from instructor and instructed to facilitator and facilitated:

> Dialogue between teachers and students does not place them on the same footing professionally ... Teachers and students are not identical ... After all, it is a difference between them that makes them precisely students or teachers. Were they simply identical, each could be the other. Dialogue is meaningful precisely because the dialogical subjects, the agents in the dialogue, not only retain their identity, but actively defend it, and thus grow together. Precisely on this account, dialogue does not level them, does not 'even them out,' reduce them to each other. (Freire, 1992, p.101).

Instead, the dialogical method facilitates a synergetic development of both teacher and student, allowing both to explore new understandings.

Dialogue

In resistance to the banking method, Freire seeks to develop a dialogical relationship in education, whereby teachers and their students come together as subjects and both learn through discussion and whereby "the flow is in both directions" (Freire, 1982[b], p.125) as ideas and conclusions are exchanged. Pedagogic authority and traditional

classroom roles are not removed but are, in essence, reformed through dialogue. Freire explains:

> Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the one-who-teaches, but one who is [themselves] taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. (Freire, 1970, p.67).

Freire aptly labelled the 'banking model' of education on account of the way that knowledge is deposited into pupils in the same manner as money is deposited in a bank and, in an equally concise way, he outlines that learning in dialogue is a social process that requires individuals to engage with others as a means to develop critical discussions that then inform understanding (Freire, 1970). Education through dialogue is consistent with the Social Constructivist learning theory of Vygotsky and the collaborative learning referenced in CfE supporting documentation (Scottish Executive, 2006; 2007; Scottish Government, 2008; 2009; 2011), and can thus be seen as working to underpin the theoretical content of CfE. Freire (1983) asserts the need to develop learning collectively: "true education incarnates the permanent search of people together with others for their becoming fully human in the world in which they exist" (p.96). If the need to become 'fully human' is interpreted as to fulfil or maximise one's potential, then the dialogical education of Freire is consistent with the aims and purposes of CfE – "that it should support them in a range of ways which help to maximise their potential" (Scottish Executive, 2006, p.1). Learning through dialogue in the classroom requires schooling to be expounded as multi-dimensional, allowing educators to "construct a revolutionary practice of education, where students are neither asked to deny the wisdom of their bodies nor to estrange themselves from one

another, in the name of academic competition" (Darder, 2018, p.422). The interdisciplinary ethos of CfE attempts to establish a multi-dimensional sphere of connected learning that is suited to Freire's problem-posing model of learning rather than the examination of unrelated outcomes as deposits of knowledge to be simply sorted and retrieved.

Traditionally, the principal role of all education has been to teach literacy and numeracy as part of the skills required for employment (Armstrong and Dale, 2004), with Dale and Hyslop-Marginson (2011) further indicating that "literacy programs are largely geared toward developing job skill competencies that seem, at first glance, a means to help people become economically independent" (p.55). Literacy for employment within a Traditional educational philosophy, and particularly in the context of the neoliberal ideals prevalent during the development of mass education, essentially extends only to the ability to read and comply with instructions (Dale and Hyslop-Marginson, 2011). This 'literacy' requires no more than the one-dimensional skills designed for the banking and retrieval of knowledge related to the forming and meanings of words. In contrast, if literacy is instead defined as "being able to clearly and correctly express one's own ideas in writing" (Torres, 1994, p.5), then the process of developing a critical consciousness can develop.

The different interpretations of literacy based on philosophical standpoints serves to further emphasise the incompatibility of Progressive philosophies of education with the pragmatic Traditional models. Freire is highly critical of Traditional, neoliberal education and authoritarian practice as methods, typified by the use of the banking method and reinforced by the subsequent compartmentalisation of knowledge, which thus affects the learners' ability to understand the world:

> I must return to my criticism of the pragmatic neo-liberal position, according to which an effective educational

> practice today must be centered in technical training or in the deposit of content into the learners. In that case, the selection and organization of the content would be up to specialists. (Freire, 1997, p.46).

The division of content by specialists does not necessarily only refer to the tendency within secondary education for each subject to be taught by a specialist in the discipline, but can be regarded as the mere segregation of the day into time-bound subject allocations.

According to Darder (2018), teachers, whether intentionally or not, reproduce various one-dimensional aspects of authoritarian classroom practice either through structural tendencies that are designed to provide organisation to the school day, but ultimately compartmentalise learning, or through classroom management strategies. Authoritarian classroom management strategies often have their theoretical grounding in forms of Behaviourism as developed by Thorndyke and Skinner (Berk and Meyers, 2016) and consist of behaviour modification through operant conditions – that is, through positive and negative reinforcement and punishment.

The banking model and the Behaviourist theories of learning that support it are described as 'technocratic' or the mechanical process of 'memorise and repeat' (Dale and Hyslop-Marginson, 2011). A set question or request from the authoritarian teacher elicits a prepared and standardised response from the individual student, which in turn brings an equally mechanical further 'responsive' action from the teacher. Dale and Hyslop-Marginson (2011) state that "many student teachers will adopt [this practice] in their own classroom teaching" (p.34). This serves to demonstrate the level to which Traditional models and neoliberal ideals remain present in education, and indicates that through its argued lack of theoretical grounding CfE provides avenues for existing and theoretically contrary practices to persist and hinder the cohesion between the new Curriculum and existing practice – a problem exacerbated by completing dual starting points for CfE, thus

emphasising the need for a clear theoretical underpinning to the concepts developed by CfE. Also emphasised by the conflict with deep-routed practice is the need for the educational philosophy underpinning the Curriculum to support theories of learning and approaches that are developed at a classroom level and continually assessed as part of a process of learning.

Instrumentalisation

The complexity of relationship between different educational philosophies, theories of learning and practical application becomes problematic for many education practitioners. Dale and Hyslop-Marginson suggest that this is due to a lack of philosophical background or understanding during teacher training and is indicative of a decline in relevance given to the study of the Humanities over recent decades, arguing that:

> There is, of course, a neoliberal ideological advantage to be gained by the corporate hegemony in denying teachers access to alternative ideas and perspectives about society. These subjects create space for social exploration and critique rather than focusing on instrumental learning for labour market preparation. (Dale and Hyslop-Marginson, 2011, p.34).

Opposition to the instrumentalisation of both knowledge and learners is precisely what Freire is offering through his epistemology. For CfE to realise the claim that it is radically different, a grounding in the works of Paulo Freire provides the theory necessary to develop a stronger philosophical and pedagogic understanding to support the Curriculum. However, despite the influence of Freire throughout Latin America and on a more international scale, the educational landscape in Scotland continues

> to be dominated by paradigms produced in the global north or under the dominance of the global north in which the

> tension between a more progressive liberalism and a classical neoliberalism is evident. (Ireland, 2018, p.18).

Moosung and Friedrich (2011) share in the view that for Progressive education to fully develop and bring the concept of education as a process of continuous learning to the fore, the global discussion concerning education's philosophy must extend beyond Western notions of paternalism.

The tension between divergent theories and philosophies ultimately produces an educational paradigm at odds with itself. Carr (2004) states that the inability to align philosophies accurately with practice, and vice versa, derives from a failure to identify correctly their "intellectual ancestry" (p.55) and that, in some cases, educational philosophy is "being invoked in order to add a theoretical embellishment to the presentation of an educational standpoint that is being advocated for reasons that have little to do with philosophical rationale" (p.56). There is an increased potential for Progressive theory to become an embellishment to CfE, due to the competing starting points of the Curriculum – that is, that the Four Capacities form the theoretical foci, whereas inherent practice is skewed towards the Experiences and Outcomes and the later introduction of Benchmarks as a starting point. It is for this reason that it is vital that links between CfE and the Progressive educationalists that underpin the Four Capacities continue to be reinforced, with Freire in particular encapsulating 'effective contributors' and 'responsible citizens' within the Capacities.

Orienting Scotland's CfE through the works of a Brazilian educationalist and with epistemologies developed primarily through the global South may seem to encapsulate Carr's (2004) concerns regarding misplaced intellectual roots. However, the central theme of Freire is the opposition to educational practices that objectivise both the student and the acquisition of knowledge. Matthews (1980), in *Literacy and Revolution*, starts to form a connection between Freire and

influential writers from the 19th century, also providing a critique of objective education:

> The view that knowledge is best acquired by inert objects is vividly embodied in the person of Mr Gradgrind, the assure school teacher in Charles Dickens's Hard Times. He has his pupils lined up in serial ranks, and stands over them saying that they will have nothing in their heads but facts. (Matthews, 1980, p.83).

A critique of objective education – or what has previously been discussed as a Traditional model of education – by Dickens may seem to lack a relevance to the discussion of the current curriculum model in Scotland, but with the novel inscribed to Thomas Carlyle (Dickens, 1854) it hints towards a link to Scotland's own intellectual past, and although not overtly educationalist, the works of 19th century Scottish philosophers Thomas Carlyle and Sir William Hamilton (Jessop, 2013).

The supporting documents for CfE refer to the words inscribed on the Scottish Parliamentary Mace – 'Wisdom, Justice, Compassion and Integrity' – as inspiration for the Four Capacities, which suggests a desire to have the Curriculum reflect concepts historically associated with the Scottish character, and while this dissertation has neither the scope nor intention to delve into the potential connections between Hamilton, Carlyle and their critiques of the objective reality of the human condition and opposition to capitalist and neoliberal ideas, a comparison between Freire's 'banking model' of education and Carlyle's 'mechanical metaphor' (Carlyle 1829) in relation to the human condition could certainly be explored.

Conclusion

This chapter has built on the critique of CfE offered in Chapter Two, by suggesting that the philosophical work of Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire could provide a theoretical underpinning to the Curriculum in Scotland. This is developed throughout the chapter based on a detailed

analysis of Freire's work with reference to the assessment of CfE previously undertaken.

CfE proffers the development of the Four Capacities in all learners as the aim and purpose of the Curriculum, and while the Capacities can be aligned with Traditional models of education in part, collectively they provide a Progressive slant to the Curriculum. However, two of the Capacities in particular – effective contributor and responsible citizen – suggest an element of social justice, which makes CfE compatible with Freire's Social Re-constructivist epistemology. Grounding CfE in Freire enables the perception of the Curriculum as part of Progressive educational theory and the praxis model of curriculum.

In addition to supporting the Four Capacities, the developmental structure of Freire's epistemology mirrors the policy *Assessment is for Learning* (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2005). Freire conceived his philosophy in a practical context, before reviewing in a theoretical context to then adapt and better reapply the philosophy in practice. Thus, he interprets the need for assessment not as a final outcome but as an opportunity to reflect and identify areas for improvement in the same vein as *Assessment is for Learning* is applied as a process of continual development.

Freire's Social Re-constructivism is grounded in a dialectical theory of knowledge and a materialist epistemology. A dialectical knowledge is emphatically different from Traditional models of education as it requires that all knowledge is seen as interrelated and part of a continuous process, as opposed to isolated facts. The development of dialectical knowledge occurs as a process in which competing ideas are to be examined and tested before being built into existing schemes of knowledge. Dialectical knowledge is then linked in Freire – as in many Progressive educationalists' theories – to materialism, defined in this philosophical context as the development of conscious thought as reflective of interactions with the material

world. While other Constructivist theories, such as those of Piaget and Vygotsky, are also supported by the premise of dialectical materialism, Freire can be seen as particularly suited to underpinning CfE due to the added element of the social justice that he attaches to materialism.

The social justice of Freire is based on freeing students from forms of educational oppression, which in turn allows them to develop the cognitive skills to re-examine society and their experience of the human condition, with a view to alleviating further societal oppression. Freire is critical of educational environments that condition learners to an objective reality – that is, a set reality of unconditional facts that must shape the individual and their experience – favouring instead a subjective reality, which allows the individual a role in shaping reality and the development of the human condition. As Capacities at the core of CfE, both 'effective contributor' and 'responsible citizen' have an implied social justice as they inform how students develop interactions with the world. It is thus their inclusion as guiding aims that provides relevance to Paulo Freire as a theoretical basis for Curriculum development. For learners to realise the aims of CfE and develop as effective contributors and responsible citizens, they must achieve a critical awareness, which is only possible if the educational frame in which they are learning allows them to develop as subjects and does not contrive to shape them as objects.

The pedagogy that develops as a result of this epistemological standpoint has two clear components. Firstly, it must facilitate the development of critical awareness in both the students and the teacher and, secondly, it must be conducive to both the student and teacher becoming subjects and not objects within education. In this pedagogy an educational paradigm emerges whereby those who teach also learn and those who learn also teach. Freire is immensely critical of the 'banking model' of education and establishes his pedagogy in direct opposition to this model and to the Traditional philosophies of education that it represents. The banking model is categorised as one

in which the teacher deposits information into pupils as if making deposits into a bank, where the information can be retrieved intact upon request. Freire identifies this as the mechanisation of education and an attempt to establish a one-size-fits-all approach to learning. Fundamentally, the criticism of the banking model is that it dehumanises the individual and removes the process of learning that creates critical awareness, thus objectifying the learner. While the banking model relies heavily on pedagogic authority and an educational hierarchy with the teacher as the provider of knowledge, the Freirean concept of teachers who learn and learners who teach requires a shift in this authority to a more dialogical relationship. This dialogical relationship enables learning to become a two-way process and introduces a social dimension, necessary for both 'effective contributors' and 'responsible citizens' to develop. Further, dialogue is intrinsic in facilitating the collaborative and cross-curricular learning described in CfE and its supporting documents.

However, many characteristics of Traditional education and aspects of the banking model are deeply entrenched in practice. The continuation of these practices is partially due to the conflict between the competing starting points of CfE, which in turn accentuates the lack of theoretical understanding surrounding the Curriculum. Difficulties between educational philosophies, theories of learning and practical application also occur, however, due to a lack of familiarity with educational philosophy on the part of education professionals.

In an attempt to establish a foundation that could be seen as a philosophical underpinning, according to the *Building the Curriculum* series (Scottish Executive, 2006; 2007; Scottish Government, 2008; 2009; 2011) CfE takes inspiration from the words inscribed on the Scottish Parliamentary Mace – 'Wisdom, Justice, Compassion and Integrity' – which indicates a desire to root the Curriculum in aspects of Scotland's cultural past. Combined with the 'Four Capacities' – 'successful learner', 'confident individual', 'responsible citizen',

‘effective contributor’ – the words from the mace can be seen to reinforce the connection to social justice, and thus the liberation of Paulo Freire’s Social Re-constructivism. Moreover, further reading may suggest that running through Freire are elements consistent with the counter-Enlightenment discourse of 19th century Scottish philosophers Sir William Hamilton and Thomas Carlyle and that the concerns that they raise relating to the mechanisation of the human condition are echoed by Freire’s opposition to neoliberal education and the instrumentalisation of the human experience. Therefore, further academic work could strengthen the concept of Freirean thought as the theoretical underpinning to CfE by exploring parallels with Scotland’s intellectual heritage.

Conclusion

To facilitate a critique of *A Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE) and subsequent discussion on Paulo Freire, it was first necessary to explore the distinctions between various educational philosophies. In an epistemological context, the distinction stems from philosophies adopting either a Rational or an Empirical standpoint; however, in terms of educational philosophy it is perhaps more appropriate or relevant to consider the schism as being between Traditional and Progressive models of education.

Traditionalist philosophies of education are primarily concerned with the distillation of knowledge and fact. Philosophies such as Essentialism and Perennialism are concerned with knowledge that is viewed as essential and always true. The teacher is the focal point of Traditionalist education as they are perceived as the purveyor of knowledge, the ultimate authority and the one who decides what is worth knowing. These ideas stem from the Enlightenment and can be found throughout the mass education systems that were developed through the Industrial Revolution and fit a neoliberal approach to education that is accountable and measurable.

In stark contrast, Progressive philosophies do not focus on the teacher but rather centre around the needs of the individual student, and – while knowledge and content still have a role within pedagogy under Progressivism – the processes of learning and the development of critical analysis and higher-order thinking skills become the dominant aspect of education. While mass education directed by the teacher does not perhaps promote social control, it does limit development to lower-order thinking skills such as memory and recall, whereas the critical analysis and evaluation skills fostered in a Progressive context allow learners the cognitive freedom to decipher knowledge for themselves.

Behaviourism, as a theory of cognitive development, is often closely associated with Traditional philosophies of education in that the stimulus and response found in the classical and operant conditioning of Behaviourism can be interpreted as mirroring the practice of rote learning common in mass education, where the teacher provides a stimulus in the form of a question and an automatic response is generated by the pupils. Behaviourist tendencies have become entrenched in classroom practice, often forming part of classroom management techniques.

Progressive cognitive development theory is more aligned with Constructivism and Social Constructivism, rather than Behaviourism. Within these related theories of learning, instead of a stimulus and conditioned response, pupils build knowledge through a process of exploration and assimilation, developed on the existing knowledge they have created.

The adoption of a Progressive philosophy of education is not to completely disregard Traditionalist views and practices, and indeed the achievement of the critical, analytical and evaluative processing skills sought in the Progressive classroom builds from a foundation established by the lower-order skills fostered in Traditionalism. With Progressivism as the principal educational standpoint there is potential for a hybrid to develop, whereby Traditional approaches are utilised when they meet the needs of the individual learners. However, in a scenario where Traditional educational philosophies dominate and become entrenched practice, co-opted use of Progressive educational ideals will become difficult to implement as it represents a departure from the dominant philosophy.

A Curriculum for Excellence was launched in 2010 with the announced intention of bringing radical change to education in Scotland. Although, in following a global trend in Progressive curriculum reform, use of the term 'radical' may be to overstate the fact, the new Curriculum did introduce a departure from the Traditionalist model of

education that preceded it, with its predecessor, the 5-14 Curriculum, being criticised for having a linear approach that placed an emphasis on content rather than developing a deeper understanding.

CfE and all of the supporting documents in the *Building the Curriculum* series present a Progressive philosophy of education, placing the learner as the central focus of a praxis-driven curriculum. This shift in educational policy, towards the needs of the individual young person, is reflected in government policy. The *Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000*, *Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004*, *Getting It Right For Every Child*, and *Happy, Safe and Achieving Their Potential* as legislation and policies all emphasise involving young people in decisions that affect them and placing their needs at the heart of education in Scotland.

Education Scotland sets out the aims and purpose of the Curriculum as helping each pupil to realise their potential as a 'successful learner', 'confident individual', 'responsible citizen' and 'effective contributor' – known collectively as the 'Four Capacities'. The individual Capacities have been frequently criticised as hard to substantiate, and indeed on the surface the composite parts of each Capacity could be rearranged with any other Capacity to form a set of Capacities that produce the same meaning. Where the *Building the Curriculum* series attempts to unpack the Four Capacities and provide definitions of each Capacity, little clarity is achieved, with the definitions being as interchangeable as the names of the Capacities themselves. However, rather than weakening them, it is precisely this interchangeability that strengthens the Capacities. Their fluidity requires them to be taken as a whole and singular purpose of Curriculum.

If the Capacities are viewed individually, or even as sets of two ('successful learner' and 'confident individual' / 'effective contributor' and 'responsible citizen'), contrasting philosophies of education and models of curriculum could be embodied by the Capacities. 'Successful

learner' and 'confident individual' are both achievable as the purpose of education through a Traditional model. If a successful learner is deemed to be a pupil who can without hesitation produce the correct answer and, in doing so, grow as a confident individual, then the 'banking model' of education can easily be employed to achieve these Capacities. Indeed, the Traditionalist pupil producing the correct answer in this scenario could be viewed as an effective contributor as well; however, the addition of the 'responsible citizen' provides an element of social awareness not applicable to Traditional philosophy and only present within Progressive education. Thus, the collective integrity of the Four Capacities becomes prevalent in shaping CfE as a Progressive curriculum.

Further, the reduction of prescribed content within the Curriculum fosters both professional and learner autonomy that is not possible within a Traditionalist philosophy, and the intention to promote cross-curricular learning is founded on pupils' abilities to construct knowledge based on evaluative and analytical knowledge of other subject areas. However, a failure within these subject areas to avoid the linear presentation of staged development begins to indicate the difficulty of uprooting entrenched educational practice. A focus on educational products rather than process is evident with the introduction of Benchmarks for curricular progression in 2016. The Benchmarks relate to the educational outcome rather than the experience of the 'Experiences and Outcomes', and the shift of focus in classroom planning and practice from the Four Capacities to the Benchmarks prompts a secondary focal point for CfE to develop. The introduction and subsequent focus on Benchmarks indicates a shift back towards Traditionalist practices in education. This shift from the Four Capacities to the Experiences and Outcomes and their associated Benchmarks does not just provide a competing focus for the Curriculum; it introduces philosophical conflict and, as a result, CfE becomes difficult to implement. As previously stated, curriculum hybridisation can occur when Progressive models are supplemented by Traditionalist

attributes, which is to say that the Four Capacities as the purpose of curriculum can be supported by the Experiences and Outcomes; however, when taken from a primarily Traditionalist standpoint, little room is left for Progressive tendencies. Thus, to reorientate CfE to its originally stated purpose and Progressive roots, a clear philosophical grounding is required.

The radical change that CfE seeks to embody is the change from Traditional models of education towards a Progressive curriculum, and this is evident through the Four Capacities. However, the inclusion of 'responsible citizen' within the purpose of the Curriculum adds an element of social conscience to the Progressive orientation. Discussion of the works of educational philosopher Paulo Freire reveals a need not only for the rejection of Traditional models of education, but also for education to develop the capacity for liberation and social justice.

Freire is starkly opposed to what he terms the 'banking model' of education. In this method the teacher simply instils knowledge into pupils as if making a deposit at a bank; the pupils are not required to analyse, evaluate or even understand the information. The pupil's sole task is to store the information until such time as they are required to recite a correct answer. The pupil in the banking model plays no role in their education, and the teacher is the focus of the classroom. This clearly relates to an opposition to Traditionalist philosophy of education and Behaviourist cognitive development. Freire frames his opposition as rejecting education that treats individuals as objects, instead seeking to develop practices that relate to learners as subjects.

Discussion of objective and subjective reality forms the central concept of Freire's pedagogy of liberation and his philosophy of Social Re-constructivism. Freire describes an objective reality as one that is unequivocally formed and must therefore shape the human condition and the experiences of individuals within it; in contrast, a subjective reality allows the individual a role in defining their own experience. In an educational paradigm, objective realities are fuelled by passive

learning and the banking of knowledge as facts from their reality, whereas a subjective reality in education focuses on the process of development for the individual learner, allowing them to shape their own understandings and knowledge. The cognitive development aspect of Freire's model of subjective education is formed from dialectical materialism, meaning that individuals learn through their own experiences and in correlation to each other. As knowledge is assembled through interactions with the world around them, the learner must develop a critical consciousness, allowing them to analyse and evaluate information and assimilate this with prior learning – thus aligning Freire's subjective education with Progressive philosophy. Freire is essentially arguing for the sort of change that CfE was designed to embody, with a rejection of Traditional educational practices, such as 'banking', and the desire to focus on the needs and development of the individual in a Progressive manner.

The educational and societal imperatives that gave rise to CfE at the time of its conception still remain powerful components shaping the future wellbeing of young people in Scotland, and the continued development of the human condition is to a large extent dependent on the potential of CfE being realised. Many are critical of CfE for a lack of clear theoretical grounding, with limited theoretical and philosophical discussion within the process of teacher training further hindering the implementation of the Curriculum as the Progressive curriculum that it was set out to be. In order for learners to be able to develop a critical consciousness, educational practitioners must be able to set aside Traditionalist tendencies and embrace moves towards Progressive education as fostered in CfE. To aid the facilitation of this, CfE must be reoriented back towards the Four Capacities as the aims and purpose of the Curriculum and supported by a clear theoretical and philosophical grounding. While Freire and Social Re-constructivism appear to provide this grounding, encompassing all of the Four Capacities, continued academic work would be beneficial in order to

solidify this position and further explore a connection to elements of Scottish intellectual thought.

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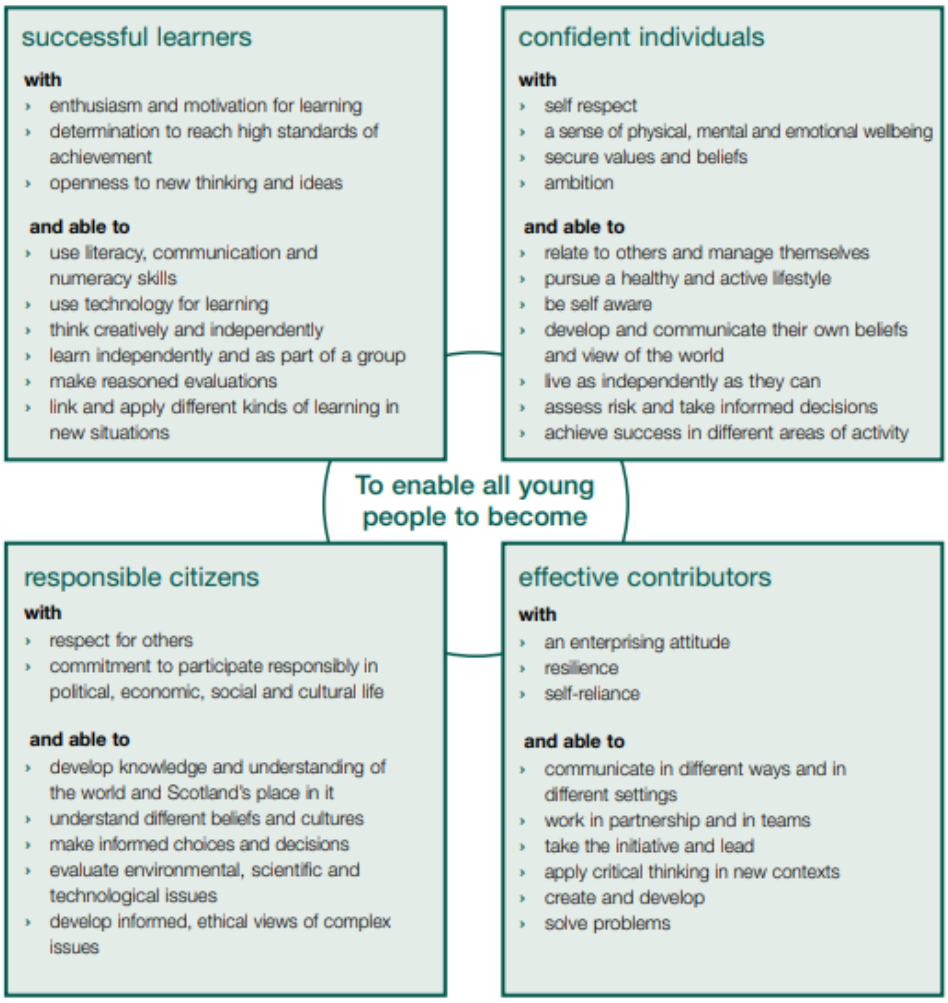
Appendix 1

Scottish Executive, 2004. A Curriculum for Excellence: The Curriculum Review Group Report. p12. (Screenshot by author).



Appendix 2

University of Glasgow MA (Hons) Primary Education with Teaching Qualification programme (circa 2017) (Screenshot by author).