

**Critically analyse the strategies for promoting inclusivity in a
given UK curriculum.**

Scotland Curriculum for excellence

According to The Glossary Of Education Reform (2015) the term 'curriculum' is defined as "lessons and academic content taught in a school or in a specific course or program" and it "typically refers to the knowledge and skills students are expected to learn, which includes the learning standards or learning objectives they are expected to meet", these standards and objectives often monitored through exams, assessments, tests and other processes in order to evaluate pupil's learning. However, the definition of the term curriculum is more of a generic term as there are a number of different curriculums that are taught throughout the UK such as The National Curriculum, Steiner Waldorf Curriculum, The National Curriculum for Wales, Reggio Emilia approach, and the Montessori approach. However one particular curriculum that will be discussed is the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence and how the curriculum promotes inclusion in education. According to The Alliance for Inclusive Education (2020) an inclusive education is defined as "education that includes everyone, with non-disabled and disabled people (including those with "special educational needs") learning together in mainstream schools, colleges and universities". However an inclusive education doesn't just necessarily refer to creating an inclusive education for just children with disabilities, it refers to children and inclusivity as a whole, such as including every child and ensuring every child has opportunities to learn, play, communicate and develop as they should.

The Scottish Curriculum for Excellence was first introduced in 2010 and aims to put learners first and "at the heart of education" (Education Scotland, 2020). This curriculum, similarly to Wales' foundation phase's seven core aims, has four fundamental capacities which are aims in which enable children to become through their education and on to their life in the future. These four capacities are "Successful

learners, Confident individuals, Responsible citizens and Effective contributors” (Education Scotland, 2020). These four learning capacities suggest that their curriculum is focused on ensuring each and every child, in order to promote inclusion, has the best knowledge and developmental support they can possibly have in order to have a successful future, and the term ‘Curriculum for *Excellence*’ also suggests that the outcome of the curriculum is to ensure the learning experience develops excellent individuals. However it is important to discuss whether the curriculum supports *all* children and provides an inclusive education for all.

According to the Unicef (2019), The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is based on a list of 54 articles which state a child’s rights. According to Education Scotland (2020), these legislations such as the UNCRC underpin the Scottish education system. According to Article 28 of the rights of the child, “Every child has the right to an education”, as the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence’s state that this legislation sets the foundations to the curriculum, this states that all children should have a right to education, suggesting that they must provide education that is inclusive to all children, regardless of their race, disability, gender, or religion. Although it is important for children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and disabilities to be provided with the best possible education just as individuals without ALN, it is also important to provide an inclusive education to children which may face a number of barriers other than ALN. For example, children who live in poverty, their gender, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic backgrounds and their geographic challenges. As a curriculum, it is important to acknowledge and provide a strategy to tackle each barrier to education and ensure that the child who faces these barriers are educated inclusively, ensuring they are receiving the same education as children who do not face these barriers.

One of the main focuses of inclusion in education is children with additional learning needs and disabilities. According to Education Scotland (2019), they state that the curriculum for excellence is an inclusive curriculum for all children who study between the ages of 3 and 18, and states that some children may need additional help to ensure inclusivity. Within schools, it can be considered that children with disabilities

and Additional Learning Needs will need more support in order to provide inclusivity within their education system. In Scotland, the Additional Support for Learning legislation supports children who may need additional support, such as children with disabilities or ALN. The Additional Support for Learning legislation (ASL), provides advice and support for teachers and local authorities who educate children with ALN (Scottish Government, 2020), this suggests that within the Curriculum for Excellence, practitioners who provide education are able to seek advice through this legislation in order to ensure they are being fair and inclusive to all, this can be a great advantage as sometimes it can be difficult to ensure practitioners are *a/ways* providing inclusive education, so with the ability to seek advice is a great benefit as if they are in doubt, they can determine through the ASL how to move forward and what the best steps are to establish an inclusive curriculum.

In addition to this, a fundamental policy that is enforced in the Curriculum for Excellence is the Supporting children's learning: code of practice (revised 2010) which aims to “create a stronger, better system for supporting children's learning” (Scottish Government, 2010) which helps practitioners meet the needs of the child by being inclusive and providing them the best possible education. According to Boyle (2012) “in the UK there is now a legal obligation on schools to provide curricular and physical access for all pupils”, this suggests that within the Curriculum for Excellence, practitioners are legally required to provide education that is inclusive, suggesting there should be no factors that stops any particular child from receiving the best possible education, just as much as other pupils. In comparison to the Supporting Children's learning code of practice, it states that in order to promote inclusion within the Curriculum for Excellence, schools are required and are able to work in partnerships with “local authorities and NHS Boards to establish clear arrangements for joint working so that they can work together effectively in order to benefit from their shared knowledge to improve outcomes for children and young people”, this conveys the idea that if children require additional help from local authorities , for example children with Additional Learning Needs such as a hearing impairment, who may need support from health authorities are supported inclusively as their school has the ability to seek help from authorities and health boards if the child requires it. It is important to acknowledge

that not only do policies and legislations within the curriculum help practitioners promote inclusion, but also “teachers and classroom environments can promote effective inclusion. In our research we have heard teachers openly promote individual differences as something beneficial for all students” (Boyle, 2012) This suggests that instead of focusing on the barriers to inclusion for children in the curriculum, educational practitioners could celebrate children’s differences, for example, learning about the numerous Additional Learning Needs, different religions, race, sexual orientations and disabilities. This allows children to see these differences in a positive manner, avoiding the negative stigma and attitudes which may come along with these differences, ensuring that not only the teachers are inclusive, that the environment in which the children learn in is inclusive too as it includes all children’s different individualities.

Within Scotland in 2017, there were roughly “14,897 looked after children in Scotland, approximately 1.4% of the 0-17 year old population”, (Scottish Government, 2017) meaning that children who have learning difficulties, disabilities or additional learning needs are categorised into the ‘looked after’ term in Scotland. This large amount suggests that these children are expected to feel as though the Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland is an inclusive curriculum for all. Strategies in which the Curriculum for Excellence implemented are to ensure that these children feel included. Supporting this, a literature review on the evidence of the link between Inclusive Education and Social Inclusion reported by European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2018) states that “learners with disabilities educated in inclusive settings may perform academically and socially better than learners educated in segregated settings”; this suggests that to ensure that children with disabilities learn to the best of their abilities, the curriculum must ensure it is inclusive in order to promote learning. This statement also suggests that the Curriculum for Excellence is currently working efficiently towards a fully inclusive education as this form of research methodology by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education was carried out through peer-reviewed papers collected through databases, suggesting the evidence collected is credible and a reliable source due to the thorough research carried out. In addition to this, a programme which supports inclusion for children with disabilities and ALN is the Embedding Equality and Diversity in the Curriculum

framework. This framework aims to promote equality and diversity throughout in a cross-curricular way “through the lens of curriculum design, delivery and assessment” (The Higher Education Academy, 2015). This framework may create an inclusive curriculum as by learning about equality and diversity within schools from a young age, children will have opportunities to learn about individual differences, such as disabilities, in a positive manner, in turn hopefully resulting in practitioners and pupils including all pupils without having to focus on being inclusive, instead implementing this strategy automatically without having to think about it, implying that this would ultimately be an inclusive curriculum if all children were including without having to think about what needs to be done, instead being done automatically in practitioners and pupils day to day lives; in support of this, Malloy (1997) states that by promoting diversity and equality through inclusion practices and strategies such as the Embedding Equality and Diversity in the Curriculum framework, it “will eliminate this potential clash by providing an educational atmosphere that encourages heterogeneity in all classroom settings and school activities”. Within this framework, there are a number of strategies to promote inclusion, for example, one being to “avoid sexist, racist, homophobic etc. language/humour” (The Higher Education Academy, 2015). This strategy may be effective in promoting inclusivity as children may pick up negative language relating to pupil’s individual differences, by avoiding negative language relating to these differences avoids children from repeating this language which may be hurtful to others. In agreement of this, Ferrante (2012) states that “language is a powerful tool that can be effective in both the removal of barriers and in the creation of barriers within inclusive education”, proving that if a practitioner within the Curriculum for Excellence avoided negative language towards pupil’s differences or barriers that they may face which makes them feel unincluded, the positive language which they portray can remove the inclusion barriers such as negative language, in turn, creating an effective inclusive curriculum. Furthermore, the National Improvement Hub (2020) created an article providing ideas for the curriculum to promote inclusion by recognising differences through celebrating diversity such as learning about different disabilities, following from the strategy of avoiding negative language terms. One learning activity by the National Improvement Hub (2020) stated that in order to avoid this negative language,

practitioners could “ask children to watch the short video on What does diversity mean? Invite them to write a few sentences about what they thought of the video”. This strategy could be beneficial as, like previously mentioned, supports the idea that practitioners can view if pupils have negative definitions of children’s differences through their thoughts, and learn how to avoid this type of language and teach children what is right and wrong, in turn create an inclusive environment for all children within this setting. However, although this strategy may be effective, this may not also completely create an inclusive environment as practitioners avoiding negative language relating to pupil’s differences may not always be avoided from the pupils themselves, there are always outside factors which may influence a pupil negatively, for example, hearing the negative stereotypes relating to children’s disabilities outside of an educational setting, as this negative language may be brought up within schools and the curriculum when discussing diversity, this in turn may not completely create an inclusive environment as this cannot always be avoided, however practitioners doing their best to avoid this type of language is a step in the right direction in order to make the Curriculum for Excellence fully inclusive.

Another strategy that the Curriculum for Excellence provides in order to promote inclusion is through providing “opportunities for students to relate content and learning methods to their own experiences” (The Higher Education Academy, 2015). This method suggests that from using this strategy, children are able to relate their life experiences to their current curriculum. For example, when learning about cultural diversity, children could have the opportunity to speak about their cultural experiences and share this with the class, and how their culture may be different to others. Similarly, someone with a disability could also share their life experiences with their peers, explaining what makes them unique and difficulties they may experience in life, this may support the strategy as their peers and teachers will learn about these differences, and how to help with the difficulties, in turn allowing the curriculum to be inclusive as peers and teachers will learn about how they can support these individuals. However, although it is important to celebrate people’s differences in a positive manner, it is also important to not label these children as different in a negative way. This strategy may point out how these children, although their own experiences do not necessarily mean

they will be negative, we do not know for sure how children will relate to these topics. To support this, Ferrante (2012) explains that “It is not an inclusive school if members of staff are still classifying students into two groups”, implying that it is important for the curriculum as a whole, the practitioners and pupils to make everyone, not just children with more prominent differences to their peers, feel as though they are being taught in an inclusive way, by implementing these strategies in a careful and strategic manner, possibly in a similar way to the examples given.

As previously mentioned, tackling the topic of inclusion in a curriculum does not just refer to children with disabilities or ALN, it can also refer to the other barriers in which may make a child not feel included or treated with equity and fairness compared to other children. For example, as reported by Bryan (2019) “Child poverty in Scotland is projected to hit a 20 year high in the next few years, despite ambitious targets set by the Scottish government to reduce the problem”. Child poverty or a child’s socio-economic background can have a large negative effect on a child’s school performance, mental health, physical health and their overall development as a whole due to the circumstances some live in. Due to this, it is fundamental for the Curriculum of Excellence to be inclusive and to ensure that children who are affected by these factors are not at a disadvantage in the curriculum. Children who live under these circumstances may feel as though they are not included within the curriculum due to the adverse circumstances they may face. For example, uniforms in schools can be an expensive thing to buy, which may not always be accessible for parents or carers to pay for, which may lead to children being bullied from their peers. In addition, some children living in poverty may fall ill due to poor living conditions or other economic factors, resulting in their attendance and education being effective, in turn, the curriculum not being inclusive for these individuals. A strategy from the Scottish Government is the Achieving Our Potential: A Framework to tackle poverty and income inequality in Scotland. This framework works with local and national governments which focuses on prioritized strategies to tackle poverty and income inequality while supporting those who are living in poverty, including children and their parents or carers. This framework which was produced in 2008, was in place before the implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence in 2010, indicating that this framework is a core government framework

to aid the promotion of inclusivity in the curriculum. One particular way this framework benefits the Curriculum for Excellence in promoting inclusiveness is the fact that “by 2010-11, we will put in place arrangements for a weekly allowance to be paid to kinship carers of looked after children” (Scottish Government, 2008) the fact that their aim was to implement this by 2010-11 implies that by the time the Curriculum for Excellence was in place, this support for these children will already be in place, helping their curriculum be more inclusive as there is more support to educate these children, such as funding carers in order to pay for food for the children to stay well and return to education, and fund items such as necessary school uniform. Another strategy for the Curriculum for Excellence pinpointed by this framework is the introduction of the early years framework with a strategy to weaken “cycles of poverty, inequality and poor outcomes in and through early years” (The Early Years Framework, 2009) this supports an inclusive curriculum as it aims to tackle poverty issues from a young age, which allows children to get the best start in life from an early age, allowing the same opportunities and education just like other pupils. This strategy is vital as early intervention of poverty is vital as according to Corr (2015), children and young people’s academic development “when combined with poverty, are at an increased risk of academic failure”, resulting in the curriculum not being inclusive when these issues are apparent, implying that that this strategy is a beneficial strategy as it targets the inclusion issues from an early stage.

To conclude, despite the fact that creating and implementing a fully inclusive curriculum for all, Scotland’s Curriculum for Excellence has a large number of strategies in place, from government guidelines and frameworks to their own curriculum’s strategy, which has proved to be effective in order for them to have a success in promoting their inclusive curriculum.

Reference list

- Boyle, C. (2012). *What works in inclusion?*. Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Bryan, C. (2019). Child poverty in Scotland set to worsen despite targets set in 2017. *BMJ : British Medical Journal*. 364 (1), pp.1.
- Corr, C. (2015). The Components of Early Intervention Services for Families Living in Poverty: A Review of the Literature. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*. 36 (1), 55-64.
- Education Scotland. (2020). *What is Curriculum for Excellence*. Available at: <https://education.gov.scot/education-scotland/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5/what-is-curriculum-for-excelle>. [Accessed 16th Oct 2020].
- European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2018). *Evidence of the Link Between Inclusive Education and Social Inclusion: A Review of the Literature*. Odense: Denmark.
- Ferrante, C.A. (2012) *A Case Study of Inclusion and Diversity: A Whole School Approach Using The Social Model Of Disability*. Available at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/9989301.pdf>. [Accessed 18th Oct 2020].
- Malloy, W. (1997). Responsible Inclusion: Celebrating Diversity and Academic Excellence. *NASSP Bulletin*. 81 (585), 80-85.
- National Improvement Hub. (2020). *Recognising and celebrating our differences—second level*. Available at: <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/scotland-learns/resources-for-practitioners/health-and-wellbeing-activities/recognising-and-celebrating-our-differences-second-level/>. [Accessed 19th Oct 2020].

- Scottish Government. (2008). *Achieving our Potential. A Framework to Tackle Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland* . Available at:
<https://www2.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/246055/0069426.pdf>. [Accessed 20th Oct 2020].
- Scottish Government. (2010). *Supporting children's learning: code of practice (revised 2010)*. Available at:
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-childrens-learning-code-practice-revised-edition/>. [Accessed 17th Oct 2020].
- Scottish Government. (2017). *Children and Families*. Available at:
<https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/People/Equality/Equalities/ChildrenYoungPeople>. [Accessed 18th Oct 2020].
- Scottish Government. (2020). *Additional Support For Learning*. Available at:
<https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/additional-support-for-learning/>. [Accessed 17th Oct 2020].
- The Alliance for Inclusive Education. (2020). *What is inclusive education?*. Available at: <https://www.allfie.org.uk/definitions/what-is-inclusive-education/>. [Accessed 16th Oct 2020].
- The Early Years Framework. (2009). *Breaking cycles of poverty, inequality and poor outcomes in and through early years*. Available at:
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/early-years-framework/pages/15/>. [Accessed 20th Oct 2020].
- The Glossary Of Education Reform. (2015). *Curriculum*. Available at:
<https://www.edglossary.org/curriculum/>. [Accessed 16th Oct 2020].
- The Higher Education Academy. (2015). *Embedding equality and diversity in the curriculum: a model for learning and teaching practitioners*. Available at:
https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/EEDC%20Model%20for%20Learning%20and%20Teaching%20Practitioners_1.pdf. [Accessed 18th Oct 2020].
- Unicef. (2019). *A summary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Available at:
https://downloads.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/UNCRC_summar

y-1_1.pdf?_adal_sd=www.unicef.org.uk.1603275936042&_adal_ca=so%3Ddirect%26me%3Dnone%26ca%3Ddirect%26co%3D(not%2520set)%26ke%3D(no.
[Accessed 16th Oct 2020].