

Scotland and Pedagogy: Moving from the Anglophone Towards the Continental?

Paul Adams

University of Strathclyde, Scotland

Contact author: paul.adams@strath.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

Across the Anglophone world, throughout the late 20th and early 21st century, learning and teaching became the go-to descriptions for teacher and learner activity. Notably, this term posited individualistic views that ‘education is an individual right’ realised through technically proficient teacher–action that engenders favourable positioning in a post-industrial, efficient world. More recently, pedagogy seems to have reemerged as a flavoursome term. However, its use is still dominated by the doctrines of the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM) realised through education science assumptions and approaches. In turn, across much of the Anglophone world, pedagogy is mostly described as ‘the methods and practices of teaching’ often associated with delivery–type teaching and learning judged by quantitative uplift on test scores. Pedagogy, it seems, is still subservient to individualism reified by forms of technically legitimate teaching competence.

In many respects, Scotland is no different: policy frames and explanations (Adams, 2016) often legitimise through technocratic and positivist Discourses (Gee, 2012). Matters such as the recent incorporation of the UNHRC into Scottish law offer hope though, for they offer ‘rupture’. The OECD might prevail over system-wide evaluation and conversations about ‘curriculum’ dominate, but ever-increasing calls to shift ‘schooling’ from ‘learning and teaching’ to ‘education, *more broadly conceived*’ seem to have widened discourse (Gee, 2012) and acknowledged the inherently political. While this has not magically moved pedagogy on, it is clear is that pedagogy as ‘being in and acting on the world, with and for others is finding a Scottish voice.

Keywords: *pedagogy, Scotland, methods, practice*

Manuscript received: 27.09.2021. Manuscript accepted: 31.01.2022.

©2022 Paul Adams. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons CC-BY 4.0 License. ISSN 1891-5949, <https://noredstudies.org>

Citation: Adams, P. (2022). Scotland and pedagogy: Moving from the anglophone towards the continental? *Nordic Studies in Education*, 42(1), 105–121. <https://doi.org/10.23865/nse.v42.3770>

It was Pasi Sahlberg who coined the phrase *Global Education Reform Movement (GERM)* to describe an educational landscape oriented around: standardisation; curriculum narrowing; high stakes accountability; and corporate management mechanisms (Sahlberg, 2012). Spreading virus-like across predominantly the Western world, the seeds of GERM were sown in the 1970s and 1980s through the policy-direction given by New Right thinkers and premiers (Fuller & Stevenson, 2019). As an educational manifestation of the demise of Keynesian economics and the rise of monetarism and trickle-down economics, GERM was presented as inevitable and the only real alternative to the failed Welfarism of the 1950s and 1960s. Although it has observable, underpinning features, GERM enactment varies according to jurisdiction and its operationalisation is frequently context specific. Most importantly and ubiquitously though, local deployment of academic testing as a mechanism to demonstrate educational (in)effectiveness and (in)equality has proven so often to be the catalyst for continuing extensive reform along GERM lines, in turn seen as a panacea to combat the vicissitudes inherent through the deployment of oft maligned pedagogies. Such global movements, as Verger (2014, p. 14) states, profoundly alter the education policy landscape, compress time and space in policy processes, and revitalise the role of a range of supra-national players in educational reform. This global network offers both challenge and solace to education policy-enactors through its focus on comparison between intra- and inter-country local realities that identify and laud/bemoan educational success/failure. As Suarez-Orozco and Qin-Hilliard (2004, p. 1) state '[w]hile human lives continue to be lived in local realities, these realities are increasingly being challenged and integrated into larger global networks of relationships'.

Such global moves might be described as the end of geography: while early modernism was all-too aware of the limits of time and space, the world now appears as a series of relational connections whereby nationally mediated perceptual realities are ever dwindling (Delanty, 2000). Globalisation signals the deterritorialization, not just de-limitation of space and education policy, with attendant, important theoretical implications. On the one hand, and incongruously, GERM displaces and diffuses all (education) culture, not just that of the western sphere, through its challenge to 'grand narratives' marked by the deployment of specific mechanisms. Often this is operationalised through systemic organisational features designed to 'release potential' in both learner and educator. Accordingly, some countries have dismantled intra-country, locally organised schooling in favour of features that extol choice such as pro-market free schools (Sweden and England) or voucher systems (Chile) in the belief that individualised approaches to school organisation will lead to greater educational uplift. Contradictorily, in some jurisdictions concomitant teaching and learning policies have contracted in scope and reach, adopting instead reductive features that, whilst lauded as increasing effectiveness, in fact reduce professional and learner agency. At their heart, such approaches promote teaching (and by implication, pedagogy) as a series of linear interactions designed to ensure 'successful learning' as measured by national

and international tests. However, as Gough (2012, p. 46) writes, we should be 'cautious of complying with models and trends in education that assume linear thinking, control and predictability'.

In tandem, educational science is touted as the mechanism by which education enactors might better engender observable learning uplift. Education science seeks mechanisms to identify, transpose, and monitor 'good' teaching/learning. Accordingly, either education has taken the place of terms such as pedagogy to describe and mandate that which is important, or in those jurisdictions where pedagogy does not enjoy a rich heritage, education has been replaced by the term 'learning and teaching'. In short, such shifts in terminology reflect a move from the political and intergenerational to the individual and intragenerational (Ketschau, 2015) where responsibility for educational 'success' is mandated as collusion between accountable teachers and conscientious learners. Accordingly, social, cultural, and political matters are elided: it is no longer acceptable to cite disadvantage, poverty, class, etc. as reasons for lower attainment even though they are accepted as influential. Politically, educational science offers a readily digestible way of marrying global, neoliberal, market features with individual approaches to uplifting and upskilling the workers of tomorrow. Simply put, it both reduces the range of reasons for educational (in)equality and cites individual failings as their cause.

This education science/pedagogy debate often presents as a contest. For education science adherents, pedagogic and curricular structures should be formulated by 'what works' (Claxton, 2021) or 'best practice' (Adams, 2008; Claxton, 2021). Here teaching is synonymous with pedagogy viewed simply and straightforwardly as the best way to ensure maximum learning, judged by attainment on national and international tests. Often such approaches are termed 'direct instruction through a knowledge rich curriculum' (Claxton, 2021). Conversely, others promote pedagogic orientations which seek learner development cognitively, affectively, emotionally, and physically through the adoption of a variety of approaches. Associated here are attempts to understand the contextual nature of educational inputs/outcomes and their application/realisation through wide-ranging teaching/evaluation constructs. Whereas the first position holds that (often scientific) canons offer readily digestible features that translate unproblematically into pedagogy (Gough, 2012), the second, while rarely arguing against evidence-based practice in teaching *per se*, makes a case for an underpinning rooted in complexity. Such dichotomous discussions are not wholly contemporary though; they have taken place for centuries caught, as they often are, in a contest between 'teacher-focussed' and 'child-centeredness' or 'traditional' and 'progressive'.

This article considers Anglophonic interpretations for pedagogy in contrast with 'continental' explanations. In turn, the paper will argue defining pedagogy as the methods and practices of teaching is insufficient through an examination of what method and practice might entail. The paper then considers this in the Scottish context and following a brief discussion of pedagogy as 'being in and acting on the world with

and for others', will outline how this might be effected across Scotland. This definition identifies the inherent relational element in pedagogy both in terms of between people and between people and the world.

That thorny issue at the heart of education: Pedagogy

Although pedagogy has a rich history, it is a term that has been singularly lacking in some jurisdictions, particularly Anglophone countries where it has historically been shunned in 'favour of amateurish and pragmatic educational theory and practice' (Adams, 2011, p. 468). In English private schools in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (and the same might be said of those in Scotland) teachers 'tended to conceptualise, plan and justify their teaching by combining pragmatism with ideology but not much else' (Simon 1994, p. 10). Conversely, continental and Nordic interpretations favoured alternatives to such post-industrial, empirically-based Anglo-American approaches (Klitmøller, 2018) often through the theory and practice of *pädagogik*.

Partly, pedagogy owes its contestation to the English language: as with associated terms such as *bildung*, pedagogy presents marked challenges to Anglophone educational systems not least due to difficulties in translation, but also policy direction and foci. Often cited as vital to continental and Nordic pedagogy, *bildung* has not captured the hearts and minds of Anglophonic educational policy in the same way: while it may be a feature of academic writing and research, it is not a term readily deployed by statutory-school professionals. Writing such as Nordenbo's (2002) quad-partite classification of *bildung* as: image; form; cultivation of the soul; and formation, reflects inherent problems Anglophonic interpretations have with pedagogy. While character formation featured strongly in 19th and early 20th century private-school British education, this was more concerned with preparing students therein to take their place in leadership echelons upon leaving school. The Muscular Christianity movement (Mangan, 1981; McIntosh, 1987) objectified at the time can hardly be said to have been ordered around *bildung* as a self-referential term. Despite emerging from upbringing in ordinary life, *bildung*'s very definition challenges *traditional* life through a concentration on the *essence* of life (Nordenbo, 2002). The person-centredness implicit in *bildung*-related pedagogy posed a direct challenge to British education's one design: to formulate citizens able to meet state (or more recently, market) need. As a feature of continental and Nordic perspectives, it is of little surprise that the term 'pedagogy' was rarely used across the UK until the end of the 20th century/beginning of the 21st when it seemed to have something of a reprise. Although there are those who questioned official policy for its lack of substantive insight into that which pedagogy might be (Alexander, 2004), it at least reared its head as a term to be deployed.

Further 21st century debates continue such contradictions. The rights of children and young people to 'quality education' are now taken for granted leading to educational systems and procedures that, on the one hand extol individual success, while on the other seek to prepare learners for future gainful employment. Although this contradiction may be centuries old, it is specifically marked now by the deployment of

a reduction in inequalities as *raison d'être*. Deployed language may infer societal progress, but the processes and ends of education are decidedly individualistic and marked as the responsibility of each successive generation.

Students and teachers have been 'responsibilised' for the quality and outcomes of education, with assessment and examinations providing the quintessential vehicle for individualising and responsibilising success and failure in relation to achievement and social mobility. (Torrance 2018, p. 83)

Accordingly, mitigating the effects of structural inequalities has become the province of educational intervention; improvements in teaching quality and learner attainment are proffered as responsibilised terms designed to reduce failure (Steadman & Ellis, 2021) through the 'fact' that they confer equality. Education science extols such features by elevating learning as an individual activity and teaching as a series of acquirable skills. Awkwardly, pedagogy is often now identified as precise forms of technically legitimate teaching competence, massified and corporatised to meet the ends of individual consumer competition. Specifically, each individual child is believed to have his/her right to a quality education to take their (economically profitable) place in society supported by skilled teachers. This is not universally accepted for there are those who challenge the seeming simplicity of underlying theory (such as that of cognitive science) as the main delineator of effective and efficient teacher practice. However, the hold such mono-interpretive views have is gaining ground across the Anglophone world.

Contemporary debate about pedagogy is not at all straightforward and in one sense typifies other educational deliberations. Challengingly, what has seemingly occurred are well established attempts to narrow pedagogy conversation, scope, and theory across parts of the Anglophone world. As a reflection of 'teaching' any examination of pedagogy obviously divides opinion and speaks to a variety of educational/systemic endeavours. This is rather the point though: pedagogy does not and should not have one practical interpretation. Rather, pedagogy points in myriad directions depending on who is speaking/writing, for whom and why. The problem is that fashionable, deterministic conceptions of pedagogy elide questions of intent and purpose preferring instead to assume that the sole aim of education is to support learners to attain qualifications to gain traction in the corporatised and marketised working world.

Readers of this journal, particularly those from the Nordic region or those who are sympathetic to continental philosophies of pedagogy may well be confused by such simplistic assertions. Perhaps then, the debate should be approached from another direction. Taken as 'the methods and practices of teaching', narrow conceptions of pedagogy (Anglocentric perhaps) are often relegated to the means to achieve pre-defined GERM ends. This is a restricted interpretation of the term and belies rich debate and is related to a *particular* position. Niemi, Kumpulainen, Lipponen, et al.'s (2015, p. 681) conception of pedagogy as a 'normative concept that often refers to a teacher's presumptions, criteria or any conscious activity to design and to enhance learning in the classroom' may well seem to reinforce personal/'what works' ideologies,

particularly when driven by specific scientific canons or personal experience. While Klitmøller (2018) may identify Niemi et al.'s work as 'the teacher's ideal', it is important to note that the latter promote learner and teacher agency and an appreciation of the social nature of learning and co-evaluation. Gough (2012, p. 46) states that understanding education and associated pedagogic forms in such complex terms, '... invites us to understand our physical and social worlds as open, recursive, organic, nonlinear and emergent ...'.

Pedagogy asks us to examine the discourse of teaching. This is not unlike van Manen's (2015, p. 19–20, as cited in Klitmøller, 2018) view that *pädagogik* involves,

distinguishing actively and/or reflectively what is good or right and what is life enhancing, just, and supportive from what is not good, wrong, unjust, or damaging in the ways we act, live, and deal with children.

Further, on *pädagogik*, Klitmøller (2018) asks: 'what is the purpose of education; what is it for?', questions that are not asked of GERM schooling intents realised through educational science approaches for these are taken as read. Whereas Anglocentric interpretations cite pedagogy as method and practice, a continental interpretation might be that of '*being in and acting on the world, with and for others*'; a position explored later.

Education, pedagogy, and method

While the examination above sets the scene for a discussion about pedagogy in Scotland, it is also clear that wrapped up in the debate are considerations of terms such as education, methods, practice, etc. To do full justice to such debates is beyond the scope of this paper; duly, a shortened discussion will have to suffice.

To start, I wish to take a segmentary position: I delineate between *education*, *method*, and *practice* so that the remainder of the paper might deploy the pedagogy position outlined at the end of the previous section. The brevity of my deliberations notwithstanding, they are necessary for how I am going to explore the furtherance of pedagogy in the Scottish context.

On education

To start, I take education to be the organisation of teaching/learning/assessment/testing moments into a coherent pattern and order, often realised through formal settings. I draw no distinction between education for different purposes or for different groups of learners; rather, I note that education is defined here systemically. This systems approach may be realised in the confines of a classroom, school, group of schools, region, or country and consists of recognisable organisation for the purposes of achieving (usually predefined) outcomes and ends. In this sense, non-formal education might also fit as its endeavours may have defined outcomes as an aim. This differs from informal education in that this may not have such ends in mind. The definition here is certainly loose and warrants further discussion but will suffice as part of a simple heuristic to lead into pedagogy.

Clearly, education, as I envisage it is a Big-D/Discourse (Gee, 2012), that is, ways of organising and in turn recognising such organisation. Although contested, Gee's formulation of Big-D/Discourse originated in his frustration with '... discussions of power that were always about oppression, imperialism, and post-colonialism, and post-modernism' (Rogers 2004, 8). What his theory posits are ways in which we might understand how language is embedded in society and social institutions (Gee 2012, p. 112). Big-D/Discourse is

... composed of distinctive ways of speaking/listening and often, too, writing/reading coupled with distinctive ways of acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, dressing, thinking, believing with other people and with various objects, tools, and technologies, so as to enact specific socially recognizable identities engaged in specific socially recognizable activities. (Gee, 2012, p. 152)

That pedagogy in some interpretations may in fact be translated as education positions this definition. My reason for delineating here is simple: across the western world, education has been cornered by political elites as a mechanism for the control of societal ends through embedded capitalism. This statement about education is, then, an attempt to wrestle pedagogy from the grip of politicians and Politics (but not politics).

Although control of professional acts can, and often is P/politically motivated, policy mandate and missive inevitably centre on organisational features that orient professional work. To this end, local discursive acts come to the fore for the ways in which they note moment-by-moment realisations of professional endeavours set within Big-D/Discourse. Here, Gee (2012) offers little-d/discourse, or '... stretches of language which 'hang together' so as to make sense to some community of people, such as a contribution to a conversation or a story' (p. 112). Little-d/discourses are conversational moments; thus, it is possible to conceive of how sense making can be uncovered through moment-by-moment discursive events. Pedagogy is, of course, organisational but in describing education systematically, what I am attempting to do is mark out loci of control between education (as a system) and pedagogy (as both Big-D/discourse and little-d/discourse (Gee, 2012)).

On method and practice

In the same way that conversation about education is fraught with difficulties and could entail myriad discussions and debates about the merits of and causes for certain features, a discussion of *methods* is similarly problematic. Usefully, Bell (2003) offers three interpretations:

1. Small-m/method as a smorgasbord of ideas: the elicitation of particular activities such as procedures or demonstrations so that the teacher can embark on the overt aspects of teaching. This describes, for example a series of hints and tips for teachers.

2. Big-M/Methods as prescription for practice: the definition of a series of classroom practices that are drawn together to provide prescriptive approaches to realise an education outcome perhaps described by the term 'Pedagogy as Ritual' (Adams, 2011b). While this might entail that covered by small-m/methods, the adoption of a Big-M/Method seeks to direct, control, and constrain practice. It is more than a series of activities to be deployed; it represents attempts to overtly control teaching and learning.
3. *Italicised-methods* (my delineation): 'an umbrella term comprising approach, design, and procedure' (p. 327). Here 'a method is theoretically related to an approach, is organizationally determined by a design, and is practically realized in procedure' (Richards and Rogers, 2001, p. 20, as cited in Bell, 2003).

It is not difficult to note the problems inherent in definitions 1 and 2. Small-m/methods, while perhaps providing comfort to hard-pressed teachers, provides for little in the way of professional development. Cascade methods of teacher learning are often built on such an approach in the belief that if teachers can only make lessons 'more interesting', 'more fun' or 'more focused' and share these with others then learning is more likely to occur. Often such a position is expressed by the aims of professional development courses such that teachers 'should always leave with at least one thing they can immediately implement in their classroom' and a concomitant focus on observable and measurable learner outcomes/teacher behaviours. Associated here are neuro-myths such as 'Brain Gym', 'learning styles', or 'Multiple Intelligences' (Gardner, 1983): interventions that offer seemingly readily deployable evidence-based methods through the elicitation of technique. When captured through digestible teaching activities, such specific and simple approaches are promoted (as having their basis in neuroscience perhaps) when in fact evidence is scant and contestable.

Such approaches position teaching (and learning) as *activity*; that is experiences directed solely at something or someone beyond the individual that can be held up to external scrutiny. Activity projects outside of oneself and seeks only to impact (or be impacted by) 'the other' through visible moments. Such a view rests on the idea that of sole concern is the (observable and evidenced) learning of students/teaching of teachers towards pre-determined ends. Concomitantly, this often leads to the belief that if a teacher is not overtly 'busy' then they are not being effective and alludes to MacIntyre and Dunne's (2002, as cited in Noddings, 2003) position that teaching is 'never more than a means'.

Either missed or elided here is *action*: experiences directed towards inner growth that may not be overt and observable. Action is *missed* because activity separates intra-personal and inter-personal development as done and occurring in different ways and at different times. More problematically, action is *elided* when activity becomes the defining feature: successful teaching as the deployment of observable activities that demonstrably effect student attainment whether teachers themselves

learn or not. While this may suffice for predefined educational intent, it is professionally narrowing in that it fails to connect teachers 'identifying', 'knowing', and 'doing' teaching (Adams & McLennan, 2021). What is required is the conjoining of activity and action: a perspective that promotes growth development and learning on the part of both teacher and taught. Here we can use the term *acts* to define such moments directed towards both identified education outcomes and teacher/learner professional/personal growth.

Big-M/Method is problematic for different reasons. Although activity-directed, it does strive to develop professional action through the ways in which it seeks to orient professional thought. However, while ensuing acts may seem transformational in how they seek to redefine professional exigencies towards pre-ordained means *and* ends, they are ultimately non-emancipatory: they position the professional as acting agentially only when demonstrating pre-determined activities. Although possibly connected to an identifiable education philosophy, the ritualistic nature of Big-M/Methods is such that they pre-ordain input, process, and outcome in ways that may conflict with personally held (teacher/learner) desires, aims, means, and ends. Professional, and perhaps personal transformation may occur, but this is codified and directed by others; professional development is defined and lauded by the acceptance and adoption of taken-for-granted 'truths' rather than through deliberation and critique. Whereas in small-m/methods, successful activity becomes nothing more than the deployment of observable technique that engenders a favourable climate or the realisation of successful predetermined attainment, for Big-M/Methods successful teaching is defined by the achievement of defined educational outcomes through the 'correct' elicitation and acceptance of 'acceptable' means. Big-M/Method negates professional learning freedom through the conferment of terms such as 'best practice' via 'what works' (Adams, 2008).

Both positions deny teaching as *practice*; they position teaching as 'means directed', effectively denying agentic governance beyond anything but that focused on the elicitation of outcomes through pre-ordained and specific professional input. Even though Big-M/Method alludes to professional growth, such growth is directed at ways of ensuring pre-determined student learning (often defined in terms of test attainment) through attendant professional activity rather than as a means for agentially determined and transformational growth.

Both small-m and Big-M/m/Methods curtail development beyond anything other than acceptable professional activity/student attainment; they both suggest that unless explicit teaching 'is correct' and leads to (test) accomplishment then it cannot be said to be good. Notably, even allowing for learning outcomes wider than mere test success is problematic as a definition for teaching, for as Noddings (2003, p. 242) notes, 'learning is not the only end sought in teaching'. A focus on teaching as 'means' (even to a learning end) is problematic; what is required as 'method' is that defined by reflection in/on acts for the achievement of both agentic student educational outcomes and agentic teacher personal/professional growth.

Anglophone pedagogy

This debate about methods and practice is necessary because across much of the Anglophone world pedagogy is seen to be ‘the methods and practices of teaching’. If this definition is to bear scrutiny, then it stands to reason that the above debate is required, if for nothing more than to clarify what might, or might not be considered method/practice, and associated tensions, debates, queries, and assumptions. To position method as a smorgasbord may assist in defining teaching as a series of related (or perhaps unconnected) activities that will (hopefully) lead to some form of student learning. It does not, though, lead to any systematic identification of pedagogy as something providing replicable, theoretical insight or, indeed as anything transferable between teachers that develops more than ritualistic activity. Further, if none of the smorgasbord activities work in a particular context then the teacher will be left floundering, unable to systematically understand inherent problems and formulate solutions thereto. Big-M/Methods, whilst seemingly providing something theoretical that guides practice, places certain assumptions on the part of both teacher and learner. First, it assumes that all teachers can teach in this defined way and that if someone cannot so act then they are ‘not a good teacher’ or worse ‘not a teacher’. Second, it posits that the sole purpose of teaching is to ensure pre-defined learning on the part of the student. Such aims are often legitimised through official curricula but are more often concretised by assessment/testing regimes where anything other than the acquisition of attainment becomes extraneous and is either ignored, side-lined or, at worst, rejected.

Third, Big-M/Methods assumes that all learners can and should be able to learn the same things in the same ways. The adoption of such ubiquitous practice either denies individual learner differences or posits that such differences can be overcome by adherence to specific pedagogic forms (and for those learners for whom such measures do not work, there is always ‘special education’). Finally, adoption often misconstrues or misrepresents research, especially that of neuroscience. For example, while it appears that globally the human species is remarkably similar in how it becomes literate, cognitive science also notes that how we come to read differs greatly between individuals (Guerrero, 2013): attempts to globally instil phonics-based approaches to reading as a panacea, for example, are therefore at best problematic and at worst ill-founded.

This debate is particularly pertinent in discussions about pedagogy. The inherent connections between method and teacher activity cannot be overstated; they hold significant sway in the identification and reification of certain educational forms. In particular, across much of the Anglophone world, pedagogic forms such as direct instruction through a knowledge rich curriculum are often held up as a cure-all (Claxton, 2021) by a vocal minority for whom teaching is seen as easy, formulaic, and beholden to the idea that anything other than the instillation of facts for the purposes of passing exams is an abdication of teacher-responsibility and an acceptance and celebration of low expectations (Claxton, 2021). Such perspectives often turn to research

to reinforce their claims such as Sweller's (1988) ideas on Cognitive Load Theory. They seemingly present options for the realisation of classroom methods. Problematically, such methods laud certain beliefs about learning, memory, the brain, etc., presenting them as *immutable fact*, rather than positions based on interpretation and associated forms of empirical research. To argue these are always 'right' is as dubious as arguing they are always 'wrong'. Essentially though, such beliefs offer succour for they both *define* and *prescribe* pedagogy. The distinction here is Political; pedagogy deployed as educational control. If such pedagogy were held as truth by less vocal adherents or indeed if such views were not viewed as politically expedient, then perhaps, it may be possible to pay them limited concern.

And so ... to Scotland

Although the United Kingdom has four, independent education systems, overseen by four separate parliaments/assemblies, it will not have escaped attention that: England's parliament still holds sway in many areas of UK public life; funding for each of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland is dependent on complicated formulae whereby money is transferred from each country to Westminster for subsequent re-distribution; England is the largest country population-wise; much of the UK media hold antagonistic views of the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland and Welsh Assemblies; and much of what passes for policy in England affects policy matters elsewhere.

Connected here are matters that speak explicitly about aspects of social and public policy. English education policy and political statements thereon are no exception. Even though adherents to direct instruction pedagogy are world-wide, UK support seems greatly (and unsurprisingly) to emanate from England. When one considers contemporary education policy therefrom this is foreseeable. In the main, English education policy seems overly concerned with exam results, a curriculum that bears all the hallmarks of a pub-quiz (Evans, 2015), centralised control of teachers and teacher *training*, and the instillation of pedagogic forms that mirror wistful remembrances of past grammar-school traditions. This is not to suggest that the other three UK countries do not share some of these features, but it is fair to state that (at least) across Scotland these debates are not of the same type as 'South of the Border'. Even though Nicola Sturgeon, Scotland's First Minister said '[i]mproving school attainment is arguably the single most important objective in this programme for Government' (Parliamentary address, 1 September 2015) the levels of scrutiny applied to attainment in Scotland is not of the order of that applied to schools in England: schools are not threatened with closure/takeover/academy conversion if results are poor; there is no teacher performance-related pay across Scotland; initial teacher education does not extol the virtues of any particular pedagogic narrative; and league tables while constructed by the media are not a feature of Scottish government policy. Given that the incumbent administration actively supports the creation of an independent Scotland, it is unsurprising that they often distance themselves from Westminster policy rhetoric

and practice. However, Scotland operates in a global context and politicians are keen to highlight the country's important role in global politics.

The most recent report on Scotland's education system (OECD, 2021) noted how the Scottish *Curriculum for Excellence* fares internally against nationally derived benchmarks, and internationally. This concentration on curriculum is notably Scottish. Though pedagogy is discussed, the main conversational presence centres on the form and role for curriculum. Notably, the OECD report states:

Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) offers an inspiring and widely supported philosophy of education. Its framework allows for effective curricular practices and for the possibility of a truly fulfilling education for learners. (OECD, 2021, p. 11)

'Pedagogy' is mentioned in the report 11 times (one instance is for the role description of one of the interviewees) and 'pedagogic/pedagogical' 15 times. Given that the OECD highlights that:

CfE is meant to be a pedagogical approach to provide learners with a rich education, to develop the knowledge, values and skills that make them resilient in a fast-paced, global society and economy. (OECD, 2021, p. 62)

it might be questioned as to why pedagogy/pedagogic/pedagogical are never defined. Although the OECD did not state their interpretation of curriculum either, they did note that 'CfE defines curriculum as all the learning planned for children and young people from early learning and childcare, through school and beyond' (OECD, 2021, p. 30). From the report alone it may be assumed that pedagogy is seen as a vehicle to enact curriculum.

Scotland, pedagogy and the UNCRC

On 16th March 2021, the Scottish parliament voted to incorporate the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) into Scottish law. Globally, UNCRC is recognised as offering a legal basis for children's rights.

Contestation to the UNCRC seems to coalesce around western, liberal tensions between paternalism and anti-paternalistic features alongside a lack of academic focus on conceptual foundations (Quennerstedt, Robinson, & I'Anson, 2018). Here, the UNCRC's operationalisation seems to suggest a 'standards setting-implementation-monitoring' function which runs the risk of it becoming technocratically functional and curriculum-like (Harcourt & Hägglund, 2013; Quennerstedt et al., 2018). Indeed, even though the three P's (protection, provision, and participation) form cornerstones of the UNCRC's mandate, interpretation is often country-specific (Roose & Bouverne-De Bie, 2007). Frequently, provision and protection are promoted but participation avoided. Mostly, this stems from a developmentalist view of the child as either innocent and in need of safety or unruly and in need of discipline (Lyle, 2014) or

an approach conferring upon young people the status of 'immaturity', 'not yet adult' or 'not yet able or competent' (Roose & Bouverne-De Bie, 2007). Stemming from a view of rights as individually based, such a position seek to embed provision for the 'not yet citizen' who needs to learn to act (Lyle, 2014) and in turn identifies suitable and acceptable 'upbringing'. Legalistic and individualistic approaches to educational systems and pedagogic interventions simply reinforce this child-adult binary.

Historically, childhood liberationists and childhood reformists oscillate respectively between a belief in the sanctity of children's agency and the need for children's protection. Attendant social, political, cultural, and philosophical constructs of childhood orient pedagogic acts, and education is formulated to meet desired ends with inevitable pedagogic interpretations. Traditionally and historically guided by the church and the workplace, education has been seen as the vehicle to turn children into socially desirable adults as quickly as possible (Montà, Carriera, & Biff, 2020); this is notable in Scotland.

Global players such as the OECD hold great sway over children's learning and development policies and reinforce a sense of 'what matters' both personally and in terms of systemic organisation (Devine & McGillicuddy, 2016). Education science positions education and associated pedagogy as providing for citizen rights, which ultimately hover between individualist and collectivist interpretations, and thus a utilitarian conception of citizenship (Roose & Bouverne-De Bie, 2007) where social cohesion is achieved through individual success. Further, neoliberal tendencies both reinforce education as a move to employment, while contradictorily extolling matters such as children's agency and self-determination. Such interpretations postulate a governance role rather than reimagining a form of living together, reframing the debate away from political control to social realisation and support (Montà et al., 2020).

Lundy (2012) maintains that the UNCRC has potential to be a significant driver of policy through mechanisms which recognise and enact 'good' childhood and attendant pedagogy as both means and end for socially just education. As Devine & McGillicuddy (2016, p. 425) state,

Pedagogy and teacher 'effect' is not only then about the 'what' and 'how' of teaching and learning (the quantity and quality as it were). It is fundamentally relational, potentially involving in/equalities in the 'doing' of teaching and learning between different groups of children.

Possibly the most contentious aspect of the UNCRC is the call for participatory provision. Many Scottish schools currently work towards the achievement of the Rights Respecting School Award (RRS) by embedding a rights-based approach to education. A focus on teaching and learning *about*, *through*, and *for* rights is consistent with a conception of pedagogy wider than simply methods and practice. Both the UNCRC and associated RRS take a participatory approach to pedagogy embedded in a frame of liberal paternalism (Roose & Bouverne-De Bie, 2007) which posits that children and young people should be seen as both 'having' and 'moving towards' autonomy,

only to be curtailed when autonomous acts may lead to jeopardy. The UNCRC requires pedagogy to be embedded in matters wider than just methods and practices that may be divorced from matters of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, etc.; it must be 'with' children not 'done to them'. This calls for discursive acts that understand that values and beliefs are positioned by education structures and mandates that seek to embed disciplinary regimes.

Pedagogic 'doing' is important. However, 'thinking' and 'talking' pedagogy are also vital for intra- and inter-personal understanding and enlightenment of acts as manifestations of learner/teacher shared experience. Any framing of 'good teaching' thus needs to be questioned in terms greater than exam credentialization; equality (in/through/for teaching) suggests attendance to opportunity and moral integrity. There is a need to talk about how pedagogy connects with systems while reflecting this and education as manifestations of wider societal, economic, and political policy expectations.

Teacher/learner lack and/or awareness of structural matters mediates and positions pedagogy either as a vehicle for small-m/Big-M/m/Methods and practice interpretations or as something more fundamentally rooted in relationships: a way of 'being in and acting on the world with and for others'. As Moss (2007) argues, democratic practice confers: a means for children and adults to participate in decision-making; mechanisms for resisting oppression, injustice, and the unaccountable exercise of power; and new ways of thinking, acting, and flourishing. In this way, pedagogy moves from the conferment and/or realisation of rights (a legal position) to the *possibility of them being exercised* (a political dimension) (Montà et al., 2020).

Challenge to authority is thus a positive thing: it enables the testing of boundaries for the formation of prosocial behaviours and a realisation of the limits of individual freedom and the need to act socially. Student challenge as communicative expression displays an inability to conditionally activate personal and public resources to renew existential balance. Concomitantly, pedagogy as 'being-with' notes that within any singular existence we must, in most cases, accept and live with plurality (Montà et al., 2020). This entails understanding the interdependence of being human: 'with and for others'. Participation is thus reframed: not protective provision because children and young people are vulnerable, but because they are interdependent. This socio-political perspective requires equal relational understanding for there is no autonomous self, only the self in connection with others. Agency through pedagogy thus becomes something actualised, rather than obtained. This redirects teacher acts towards dialogue with children and young people and requires constant (re)appraisal of who is and who is not responsible in any situation for the realisation, not acquisition of rights. Pedagogic ambiguity is thus not 'solved' (as in an individualistic approach) but understood as a site for contest, debate, and dialogue: acts directed towards the acts of others. All too often, education systems captured through education science policy mandate offer a certain authoritarian perspective on life, carry more weight,

and have more visibility than children and their agency/voices. Children and young people need the chance to debate these positions and understandings.

Conclusion

In some ways, this paper demonstrates the frustration with trying to tie down pedagogy as an understandable term. It is little surprise that many Anglophone policy mandates seek to describe it simply, hence the idea that pedagogy is the methods and practices of teaching. At one level this might be unproblematic. It could, after all allude to open and discursive ways by which professionals might theorise, understand, and operationalise their practice. Given that international policy actors and national governments seem to have become wedded to the GERM mantra, the allure of such simplicity is understandable. Input/output orientations position pedagogy as the means to enact the type of education believed needed for success in the 21st century. Student achievement and credentialisation feature as singular points by which governments can meet manifesto promises thus clarifying policy success for the ballot-box. The appeal of teaching approaches based on ‘scientific’ research, translatable as a small-m/smorgasbord or even as Big-M/Methods, orients professional expectations in such an environment.

However, the UNCRC has the potential to provide singular challenge. When understood as a call for legal protection and provision alone, the UNCRC may in fact reinforce mono-directional pedagogy. Similarly, participation does not readily provide challenge to such perspectives. A relational interpretation though, centred on the realisation of interdependence as an expression of agency, may provide a platform for future pedagogic work. However, this potentially positions teachers as ‘actors with’, rather than ‘directors of’ child and young person learning. If, as alluded to in Curriculum for Excellence, learning should be more than simple credentialisation then pedagogy needs to become a venture between those in the world with and for each other. We are all positioned ‘in the world’ and we all ‘act on the world’ individually and collectively. This is less about forging connections between the object of ‘that to be learnt’ and the ‘child as subject’. Rather, pedagogy can be conceptualised through the relational tenet above, for the purposes of acting ‘with and for others’. Here, pedagogy becomes subject to relational positions for the purposes of both teacher and student engaging with the world. The challenge for Scotland moving forward is whether such, perhaps continental orientations can prevail over those of a more Anglophonic hue.

Thus, we can return to Bell’s (2003) tripartite reflections on method. I am not arguing here for the elision of method in teaching/learning. Rather, what I am suggesting is that the debate is more nuanced than some would suggest. My description of pedagogy aligns method with a theoretical/philosophical approach realisable through the auspices of education organisation as the realisation of procedure embedded in a particular interpretation of the UNCRC. This return to pedagogy and *italicised-method*

redesignates the former as located in a deeply connected and human approach rather than one which draws upon objectivity and distance for its lifeblood.

Acknowledgements

This paper follows on from a presentation given at the Nordic Educational Research Association (NERA) Annual Conference, held in Odense, Denmark, 3rd to 5th November 2021 attendance at which was on behalf of the Scottish Educational Research Association (SERA).

REFERENCES

- Adams, P. (2008). Considering “best practice”: The social construction of teacher activity and pupil learning as performance. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 38(3), 375–392. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057640802299635>
- Adams, P. (2011a). (Dis)continuity and the Coalition: Primary pedagogy as craft and primary pedagogy as performance. *Educational Review*, 63(4), 467–483. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2011.620699>
- Adams, P. (2011b). From ‘ritual’ to ‘mindfulness’: Policy and pedagogic positioning. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics Of Education*, 32(1), 57–69. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2011.537071>
- Adams, P. & McLennan, C. (2021). Towards initial teacher education quality: Epistemological considerations. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 53(6), 644–654. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2020.1807324>
- Alexander, R. (2004). Still no pedagogy? principle, pragmatism and compliance in primary education. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 34(1), 7–33.
- Bell, D. M. (2003). Method and postmethod: Are they really so incompatible? *TESOL Quarterly*, 37(2), 325. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3588507>
- Claxton, G. (2021). *The future of teaching and the myths that hold it back* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Devine, D. & McGillicuddy, D. (2016). Positioning pedagogy—a matter of children’s rights. *Oxford Review of Education*, 42(4), 424–443. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2016.1197111>
- Evans, R. J. (2015, September). Michael Gove’s history curriculum is a pub quiz not an education. The rote sets in. *New Statesman*, 8. <https://www.newstatesman.com/uncategorized/2013/03/michael-gove-s-history-curriculum-pub-quiz-not-education>
- Fuller, K. & Stevenson, H. (2019). Global education reform: Understanding the movement. *Educational Review*, 71(1), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2019.1532718>
- Foucault, M. (1972). *The archaeology of knowledge*. Pantheon.
- Gee, J. P. (2012). *Social linguistics and literacies, ideology in discourses*. Routledge.
- Gough, N. (2012). Complexity, complexity reduction, and ‘methodological borrowing’ in educational inquiry. *Complicity: An International Journal of Complexity and Education*, 9(1), 41–56. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007087400014436>
- Guerriero, S. (2013). *Teachers’ pedagogical knowledge and the teaching profession: Background report and project objectives*. Paris.
- Harcourt, D. & Hägglund, S. (2013). Turning the UNCRC upside down: A bottom-up perspective on children’s rights. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 21(4), 286–299. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2013.867167>

- Ketschau, T. J. (2015). Social justice as a link between sustainability and educational sciences. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 7(11), 15754–15771. <https://doi.org/10.3390/SU71115754>
- Klitmøller, J. (2018). Between ‘pedagogy’ and ‘Pädagogik’: A critique of lived pedagogy. *Education 3–13*, 46(7), 838–850. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004279.2017.1373138>
- Lyle, S. (2014). Embracing the UNCRC in Wales (UK): Policy, pedagogy and prejudices. *Educational Studies*, 40(2), 215–232. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2013.870880>
- Montà, C. C., Carriera, L. & Biff, E. (2020). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: A milestone for a pedagogical reflection on the meanings of childhood and democracy. *Educação e Pesquisa*, 46, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1590/s1678-4634202046239004>
- Moss, P. (2007). Bringing politics into the nursery: Early childhood education as a democratic practice. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 15(1), 5–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13502930601046620>.
- Noddings, N. (2003). Is teaching a practice? *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 37(2), 241–251. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9752.00323>
- Nordenbo, S. E. (2002). Bildung and the thinking of Bildung. *Journal of the Philosophy of Education*, 36(3), 341–352. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9752.00280>
- OECD. (2021). *Scotland’s curriculum for excellence: Into the future, implementing education policies*. Paris: OECD. https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/scotland-s-curriculum-for-excellence_bf624417-en
- Quennerstedt, A., Robinson, C. & I’Anson, J. (2018). The UNCRC: The voice of global consensus on children’s rights? *Nordic Journal of Human Rights*, 36(1), 38–54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/18918131.2018.1453589>
- Rogers, R. (2004). Interview with James Gee. In R. Rogers (Ed.), *An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in Education* (2nd edn.). Companion Website to R. Rogers. Routledge. <http://cw.routledge.com/textbooks/9780415874298>
- Roose, R. & Bouverne-De Bie, M. (2007). Do children have rights or do their rights have to be realised? The United Nations convention on the rights of the child as a frame of reference for pedagogical action. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 41(3), 431–443. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9752.2007.00568.x>
- Sahlberg, P. (2012). How GERM is infecting schools around the world? Retrieved September 21, 2021, from <https://pasisahlberg.com/text-test/>
- Simon, B. (1994). Why no pedagogy in England?. In B. Moon & A. Shelton Mayes (Eds.), *Teaching and learning in the secondary school* (pp. 10–24). Routledge.
- Steadman, S. & Ellis, V. (2021). Teaching quality, social mobility and ‘opportunity’ in England: the case of the teaching and leadership innovation fund. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 44(3), 399–414. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2021.1901078>
- Sweller, J. (1988). Cognitive load during problem solving: Effects on learning. *Cognitive Science*, 12(2), 257–285.
- Torrance, H. (2018). Blaming the victim: Assessment, examinations, and the responsabilisation of students and teachers in neo-liberal governance. In C. Halse, C. Hartung & J. Wright (Eds.), *Responsibility and responsabilisation in education* (pp. 83–97). Routledge.
- United Nations. (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. General Assembly Resolution 44/25, UN Doc. A/RES/44/25. UN. November 20.
- Verger, A. (2014). Why do policy-makers adopt global education policies? Toward a research framework on the varying role of ideas in education reform. *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 16(2), 14–29. http://www.tc.columbia.edu/cice/pdf/33064_16_2_Antoni_Verger.pdf