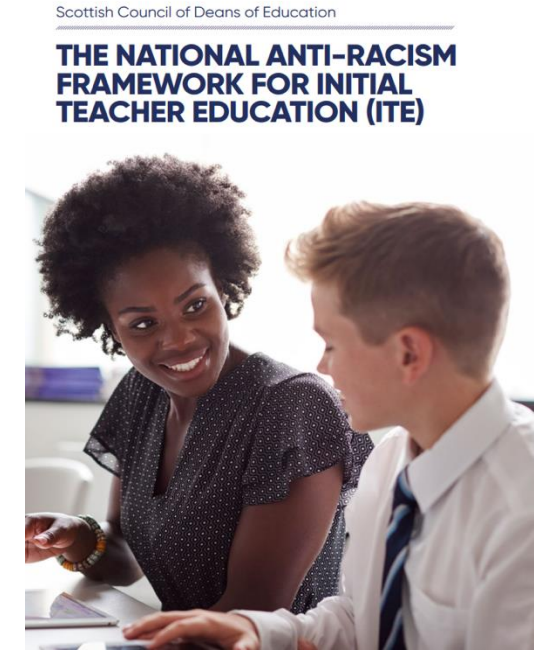


William Quirke – Teaching Fellow, The Strathclyde Institute of Education, The University of Strathclyde.
Kathryn McCrorie – Teaching Fellow, The Strathclyde Institute of Education, The University of Strathclyde.

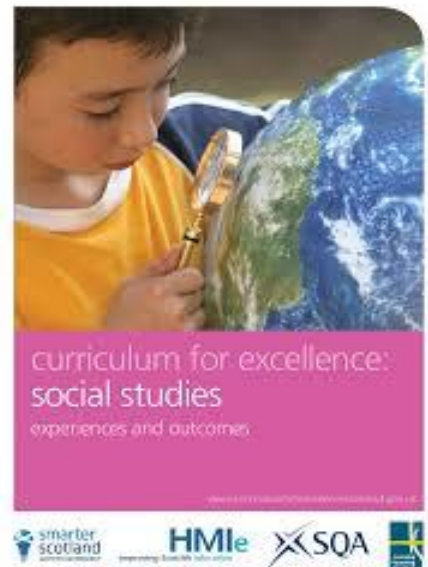
Introduction

This research is based on the experience of post-graduate initial teacher education (ITE) students at the University of Strathclyde. Both the curricular structure in Scottish schools and the wider educational landscape have changed in recent years (Anderson & Nixon, 2010; Priestley, 2011). The participating tutors (the researchers) sought to implement an initiative to reflect these developments. In addition to this, it was aimed for the initiative to further challenge students to take an activist stance and embrace their agency as curricular change makers (Priestley & Philippou, 2018) and democratic professionals (Zeichner, 2020).



SCDE (2023)

What is Social Studies?



Education Scotland (2010)

Traditionally Scottish schools taught discrete social subjects, with a separate teacher for each e.g. geography. More recently, schools have taken an integrated approach, with teachers making links between subjects or teaching thematically (Priestley, 2009).

The most recent iteration of the curriculum brought geography, history, modern studies and business education together under a singular curricular area, 'Social Studies'. This has created an opportunity for greater collaboration and connection in schools. It also led to the creation of a faculty structure in many Scottish secondary schools.

Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Scotland

The majority of high school teachers in Scotland complete an under-graduate degree and then study for a further year to attain a teaching Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE). Disciplinary knowledge from an undergraduate degree is seen as valuable and underpins education students' ability to become effective teachers (Anderson & Nixon, 2010). This research sought to explore the impact of changes made to campus teaching by participating tutors on students' ability to transcend disciplinary boundaries.

Literature Review

Student teachers in Scotland need to meet Professional Standards to fully enter the teaching profession (GTCS, 2021). Professionalism is emphasised throughout the Standards, reflecting a global development (Sachs, 2001; Zeichner, 2020). Within the Standards, expectations for student teachers are framed around the four values of social justice, trust & respect and integrity. These terms have become ubiquitous within the educational narrative but are seldom analysed for understanding (Brown & Merceica, 2024). There is also a disconnect between the values expressed and the enactment of the curriculum (see image, right).

Effects of degradation on the tundra landscape

People

- Illegal hunting and fishing is threatening the traditional way of life for the Inuit hunters as their food sources come under threat.
- Local people have found employment in new industries, which provides them with money to improve their standard of living, but, changes their traditional lifestyle.
- Entertainment and modern 'Western' facilities are influencing the traditional lifestyle of Inuit hunters.
- Pesticides present in the food chain are harmful as local people hunt food for survival.

Example of geography course content taken from BBC Bitesize



Statue of Edward Colston, Bristol
Source: BBC News/PA Media

The curriculum retains subject specific outcomes which combine knowledge and skills and can be argued to lack the culturally responsive, transdisciplinary values expressed in the Standards. Pupils are taught about topics and issues at a remove, distancing them from "complex and urgent problems" (Fazey, 2019). The curriculum is also a snapshot of what was prioritised at one point in time, and can lack a focus on contemporary issues. Teachers can find their agency restricted by both politicians and public discourse (Feurstein, 2022) and therefore arguably have limited ability to engage with changing and challenging global contexts.

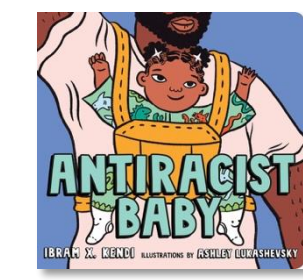
A culturally responsive, just approach to Scottish education supports the retention of subject specialists but needs to foster greater connection across the curriculum. This reflects a global trend toward greater interdisciplinarity (McPhail, 2018; Tonnetti & Lentillon-Kaestner, 2023; Whitty, 2010). The majority of Scottish schools have restructured individual subject departments into faculties, with subject teachers teaching a range of subjects in S1-3 (Anderson & Nixon, 2010; Fenwick et al., 2013). This has not however led to universal integration but to teachers delivering lessons beyond their subject expertise (Anderson & Nixon, 2010), often causing a tension between teachers' identity and curricular expectations (Locke, 2008). As Fenwick et al observe, the creation of effective interdisciplinarity 'is dependent on a major cultural shift within schools' (2013, p. 455). On this basis, this study sought to trial an approach which supported student teachers in developing a culturally responsive practice that prepares them for an interdisciplinary working environment.

Methodology

The Social Studies Immersion Days utilised a transdisciplinary approach. Working in mixed disciplinary groups, students engaged in workshops and educational experiences led by participating Social Studies tutors relating to climate education, anti-racist education and culturally responsive practice. The initiative was delivered over four separate days – three taking place prior to the first placement experience and the final one taking place after. Each session was led by a tutor with experience or expertise in the area in question.



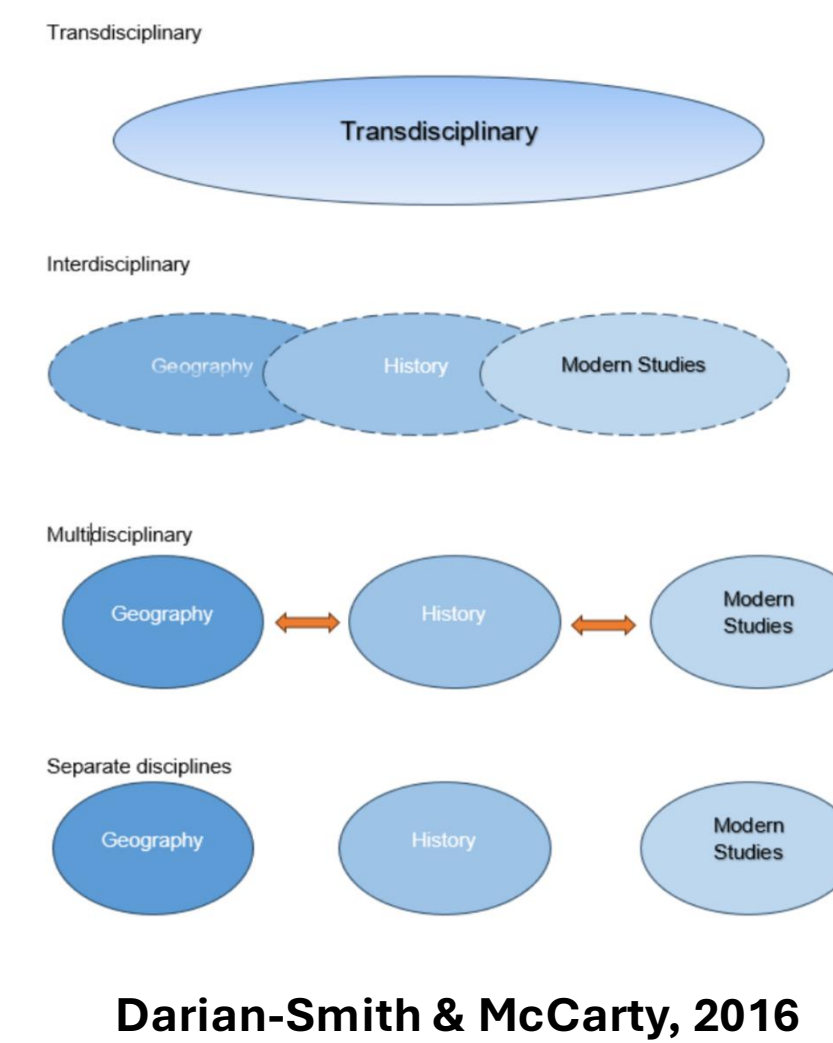
Hearing the voice of others e.g. TikTok Q's Greenland



Positionality and Anti-Racist Education

The intention behind the development of these experiences was to support students with the initial stages of developing a culturally responsive practice that will inform their placement experiences. Drawing upon a social constructivist approach, it was hoped that forming multi-disciplinary groups would allow students to learn from each other's disciplinary knowledge of current global issues. In their first session, students were introduced to the principals of an anti-racist Social Studies curriculum. The second session included work on 'case studies' and considered how the lived experiences of others are represented in our classrooms and with the young people we teach. The third session explored how 'gamification' can be used to explore global issues creatively, such as the climate crisis.

A questionnaire survey was distributed during the final Immersion Day which followed their first placement experience. It aimed to identify the extent to which the Social Studies Immersion Days influenced students' first school placement experience. A total of 54 students responded to the survey. Students were asked to provide information on their placement experiences. This data was then triangulated with the notes made by the participating tutors when observing lessons delivered by students during placement visits. The study received ethical approval from the Strathclyde IoE Ethics Committee.



Darian-Smith & McCarty, 2016



Climate Education

Findings, Conclusions and Next Steps

- 75.9% of students found the initiative to be a beneficial influence on their placement experience.
- Students appreciated learning from others, but did not feel positively about supporting their peers from other disciplines.
- 67% of students experienced a multidisciplinary placement experience.
- Tutors observed a more nuanced approach to global issues and international case studies when taught during placement visits. Observations included:
 - The use of multimedia created by the groups of focus in the case study.
 - Place-based approaches used to contextualise learning.
 - Viewing the curriculum with a critical lens.
 - Bringing multiple perspectives to global issues e.g. "How would this lesson have been different if delivered by ...?".
 - An awareness of additional support needs and the diverse characteristics associated with the learning communities in which they were placed.

The Social Studies Immersion days were found to have a positive impact on the teaching and learning taking place during ITE students' first placement experience. The content delivered over the course of the three days was shown to support students in developing a culturally responsive practice while on placement. The transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach used was also found to reflect the current composition of many Scottish secondary school settings while also retaining the integrity of subject specific knowledge. In relation to next steps, the researchers recognise that there is a need for symbiotic collaboration between students of different disciplines to be facilitated more successfully.

Due to its success, the researchers recommend that a similar model is used to inform the development of professional learning experiences for Social Studies teachers working in interdisciplinary departments in Scottish secondary schools to develop a culturally responsive practice.

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