

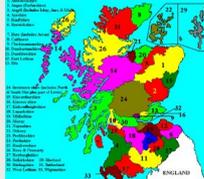


Children's Early Learning Experiences:
Policy and Practices

SUII Well Connected Child Seminar Series 5

"Scottish Early Years: Values and Culture. Yesterday, today and tomorrow"

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21st October 2013



What I hope to do is to reflect upon-

- ✧ Trends in Scottish early years policies and practices
- ✧ The values that withstand time
- ✧ What makes for a distinctively Scottish approach that draws on our history and culture but is potentially dynamic, forward looking and puts children and their families first

- by thinking about....

- Scottish History and Education
- The Scottish Enlightenment
- Yesterday and today
- Current Scottish Policy
- Tomorrow
- Ambitions
- Expectations of professionals
- Positioning of families
- Change (in) the child
- Change (in) the System
- Shared values



Scottish History and Education

John Mair (1467–1550) was a Scottish philosopher much admired in his day as a teacher and someone who influenced many of the thinkers of his time – attending to logic, science, politics, the church, international law and human rights seem decidedly modern. The humanist concern with widening education was being understood at that time as a group of ethical positions and philosophies that emphasize the value and agency of human beings individually and collectively. (Hector Boece, 1495)



THE
THEORY OF
MORAL
SENTIMENTS

ADAM
SMITH

Scottish Enlightenment

Human morality depends on sympathy between the individual and other members of society; it shows that our moral ideas and actions are a product of our very nature as social creatures.

Yesterday



Yesterday



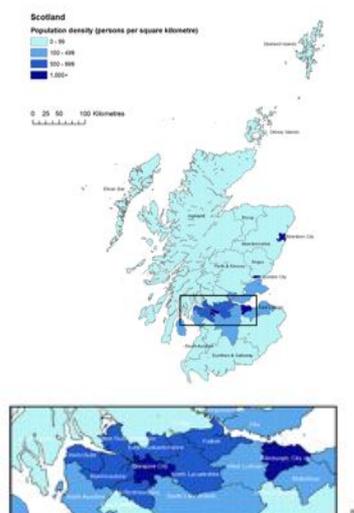
Yesterday



Yesterday and Today.....



Figure 7b Population density by council area, 2011



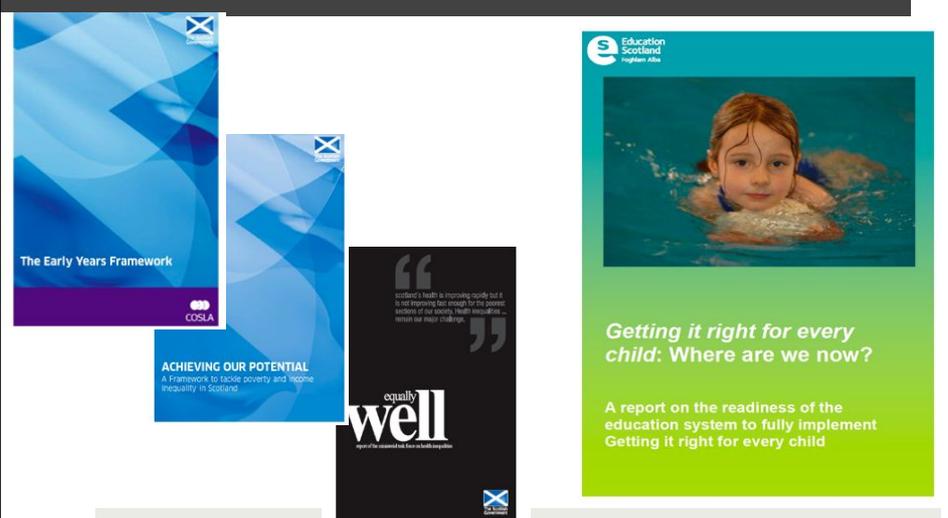
September 2012

- 293,00 children aged 0-4
- 2,548 local authority or partnership pre-school education providers in Scotland.
- 97,985 children registered for pre-school places funded by the local authority (96.1% of eligible children)
- Three quarters (75.4 per cent) had access to a GTCS teacher of whom there are 1,463 WTE (LA-85%; Partnership-40%)

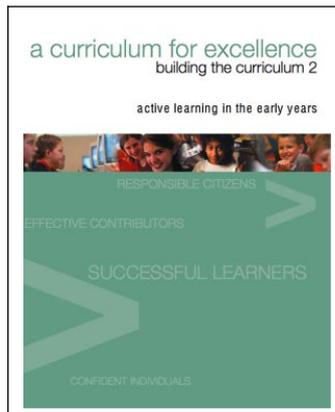
Multiple Disadvantage in Scotland Scottish Household Survey (2012)

- 24,000 families experience severe, multiple disadvantage, including overcrowding, worklessness and poor health
- Glasgow is the worst affected area with 1 in 10 families severely disadvantaged
- Unmarried households with children are six times more likely to be severely disadvantaged than married households.
- (Scottish Household Survey (SHS), a large-scale survey of the characteristics, attitudes and behaviour of Scottish households and individuals on a range of issues, including social justice, housing and transport)

Three linked Scottish Policy Pillars



The Early Level 3-6 (3-18)



- Active, experimental learning
- A holistic approach to learning
- Smooth transitions
- Learning through play.
- 4 capacities, 7 principles, 8 subjects

Thinking about policy

- Policy is “the authoritative allocation of values” (Press, 2013)
- “Ideology (values) is an important part of any policy-evidence...is only ever one contributing factor in policy production” (Head, 2008) in Lingard.
- Policy not just the written down, it's the process (formulation), implementation and text. About what is not acted upon as well as what is.
- Role of policy making can be seen as informed prescription at the systemic level and support for informed professionalism at the school [service] level within a culture of trust, innovation and ongoing learning for all (schools) (Shleichler, 2008)
- UK wide policy discourse will be mediated by country context. There may be a common language but this can hide deep differences

In Scotland - Early Years Collaborative

- We do know from historic Scottish and international evidence that 20-30% of children do not currently meet their developmental goals at 27-30 months.
- Again we know, based on Scottish and wider international data, that 20-30% of children do not meet their developmental milestones on entry to primary school. We believe that given the expected improvements being made for children in the preceding workstreams we can set this aim at 90%.
- Again we feel that this is a challenging aim, but if, as we develop our data collection, this proves to be easily achievable we can revisit. We have set the aim to be achieved by the end of 2017, so the children who will impact on this aim are being born now.

Ambitions

(Stretch aims - baselines? goals?)

- To ensure that women experience positive pregnancies which result in the birth of more healthy babies as evidenced by a reduction of 15% in the rates of stillbirths (from 4.9 per 1,000 births in 2010 to 4.3 per 1,000 births in 2015) and infant mortality (from 3.7 per 1,000 live births in 2010 to 3.1 per 1,000 live births in 2015).
- To ensure that 85% of all children within each Community Planning Partnership have reached all of the expected developmental milestones at the time of the child's 27-30 month child health review, by end-2016.
- To ensure that 90% of all children within each Community Planning Partnership have reached all of the expected developmental milestones at the time the child starts primary school, by end-2017.

A three way view

- Expectations of professionals
- Positioning of families
- Change the child

Emerging practitioner values

- Committing to a holistic view of the child
- Working inclusively with children and families
- Planning, assessing, reflecting, and implementing strategically
- Working in partnership with other agencies
- Sharing information ethically
- Promoting and supporting children's learning and development
- Ensuring children's physical, emotional and social well-being
- Identifying risks, preventing injury and weighing benefit
- Protecting children and young people
- Building capacity

The Common Core

- Promoting the well-being of individual children and young people
- Keeping children and young people safe
- Putting the child at the centre
- Taking a whole child approach
- Building on strengths and promoting resilience
- Promoting opportunities and valuing diversity
- Providing additional help should be appropriate, proportionate and timely
- Supporting informed choice
- Working in partnership with families
- Respecting confidentiality and sharing information
- Promoting the same values across all working relationships
- Making the most of bringing together each worker's expertise
- Co-ordinating help
- Building a competent workforce to promote children and young people's well-being:

Aspirations for Family

| AsP (2008) | EY | Other Ed | Health | SW | Other/Community |
|---|--|----------|---|--|--|
| Parenting at heart of policy: pre-schools and schools family learning environments (reach potential, avoid poverty); p13 Support parents and communities to provide nurturing, stimulating environment for children. (p14) | ETT (208): children have strong sensitive relationships with parents and carers. P4 Parenting skills pre and post natal. P5 Intensive family support services. p6 Support parents to provide stimulating and supportive home environment (previously linked to 'solidarity' and 'cohesion and participation' and 'productivity' and 'improving the economy'.) p7 Safe, stable, nurturing relationships with parents. p11 Parents supported to be involved in children's learning. P11 Help parents develop relationship with child and deal with stress. P11 ETT: parenting skills as part of wider skill and community development. P5 Value to child of parent learning about parenting, family learning and | | Equally well Mentalism: (206) Young children need secure and consistent relationships. P2 Support for parents whose children display violent behaviour. P5 Early brain development needs secure and consistent relationships. P2 Import of EY for later health, family wellbeing, physical and social, services that cause health problems. P17 End cycle of health inequalities. P18 Need support for families that protects children's physical and mental health. P18 Home visiting and parenting programmes to improve quality of interaction between parents and children P19 Pre-pregnancy support, alcohol, drugs. P22 Tackling domestic abuse. P31 Universal gateway to targeted support. P35 | Kinship and foster care: (209) High quality kinship and foster care p8; learning households p20; sense of family, identity and heritage, child best valued p21. Domestic Abuse (206) Domestic abuse affects child - damages child-parent relationship. P2 Want to ensure children are brought up in safe homes and communities in safe nurturing relationships p22. Protect from harm because of contact with abusive parent. P4L Sensitive support for children and abused parent (usually mother). Safer lives changed lives: (205) ref UNCRC - grow up in an environment of happiness, love and understanding. P6 Changing lives: (206) Importance of strong relationships as protective factor in | Adult Literacy (217) Family literacy - learn how to help children develop skills and develop own skills. P16 Culture delivers: (208) Cultural activities provides opportunities for vulnerable families to access opportunities for learning and developing relationships; each-esteem p6. GIRFEC (206): focus on improving outcomes for young people and their families. P13 Gender equality: boys and girls experience close and positive relationships with both parents, resident or non-resident. P5 Homelessness (209): principles of early intervention include the experience of strong, sensitive relations with parents and carers. P4a21 Preventing Offending |

GIRFEC wellbeing indicator: Nurtured: Having a nurturing place to live, in a family setting with additional help if needed or, where this is not possible, in a suitable care setting.

Change the Child

- Readiness is a troublesome concept
- Usually predicated on a particular model of the child -
- Often used as gatekeeping for school
- Associated with skills - or lack of them
- Parents and teachers have different views of which skills are important
- Sometimes causes children to be "sent back" (Hopps, 2013)
- Puts huge pressure on families: concept of academic school readiness (Fridani, 2013)
- Readiness is influenced by family and other environmental factors
- Readiness can be enhanced by effective preschool education
- Is associated with age and stages and universal or selective testing
- Ready to learn? Ready to fail?
- Problem of the identified 'unready' child

Who is and who isn't ready for school?

- ▣ The troublesome concept of school readiness in relation to studies of transitions to school
- ▣ What happens to children who are deemed to be unready by comparison to those who are perceived as ready for school, and why?
- ▣ Socially constructed models of children
- ▣ Curriculum reform, family difference, debates about the purpose of universal preschool provision and the assessment of young children
- ▣ Readiness as an ethical responsibility (Graue, 2006) - coordinated systems, receptive schools, inclusive approaches

Readiness - Transitions

Developmental domains

- physical well-being and motor development
- emotional health and a positive approach to new experiences
- social knowledge and competence
- language skills
- general knowledge and
- cognitive skills.

Self-making narratives

(Bruner, 2000)

- Knowledge and Skills
- Competence
- Dispositions: inclinations, ability, sensitivity to occasion
- Competent and confident learners
- Shifts and developments in identity

(Carr, 2004, 42)

Early Years Task Force and Early Years Collaborative

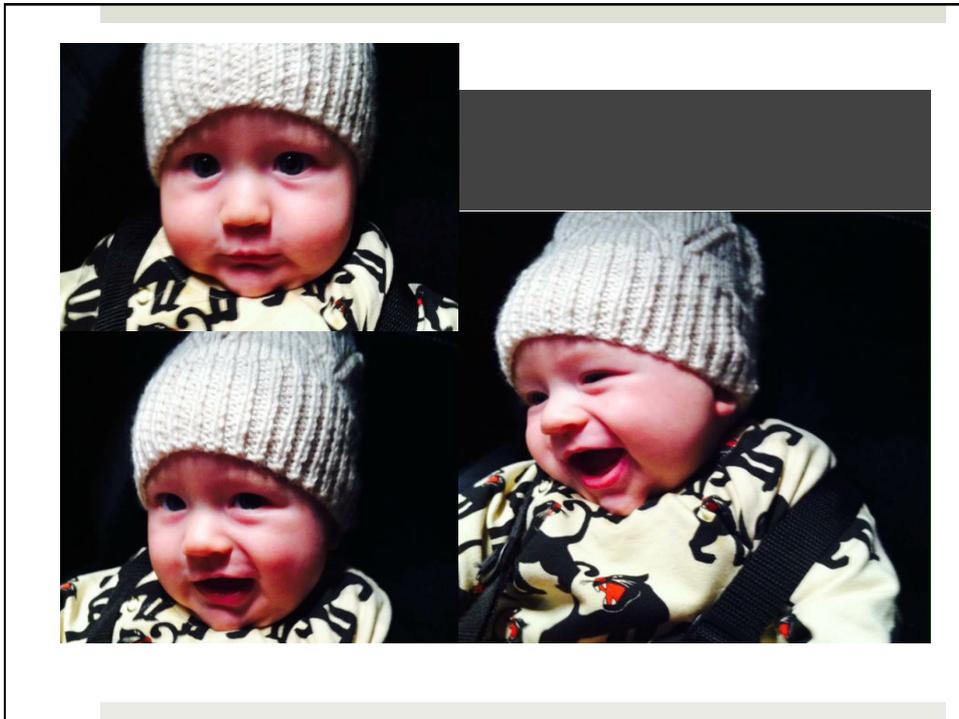
- The EYC is a very promising methodology for ensuring a shared vision for babies and young children, and a reflective, peer led system for continual improvement in public services aimed at young families. Some key factors for success that were present were a very good mix of reasonably senior staff from local areas, a willingness to discuss possible barriers to progress, and a need to ensure a shared understanding of child development across all front line staff working with babies and young children.

So what have I found?

- ✧ Trends in Scottish early years policies and practices,
- ✧ The values that withstand time
- ✧ What makes for a distinctively Scottish approach that draws on our history and culture but is potentially dynamic, forward looking and puts children and their families first.

Values shared in our culture

- The innate capacity of children
- The importance not just of educational culture but primarily of home culture
- The tools to do a good job that theory provides us with
- The importance of evidence to inform practice
- The curiosity, motivation and drive of nearly all children to find out, experience and learn so driving their development
- The central importance of children's interests and curiosities and how to capture the interest of children who are less able to focus and delve deep into exciting and interesting discoveries
- The very important skill of 'following ahead' of children
- The joy of companionship



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