

# History and civic education in Scotland

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## Abstract

*International educational strategies and policies of our time show that the focus of interest is on the efficiency of the efficiency of schools and the adaptability of the knowledge acquired in school, as is rightly reflected in the annual reports of the OECD or the documents containing educational guidelines published by the European Union. This focus on knowledge as an instrumental factor is also 'forcing' educational systems to change.*

*Currently the focus of international history didactics is on the development of historical thinking, multiperspectivity, personalised history teaching, competence development and the corporatisation of ICT tools. In terms of trends in history teaching, two fundamentally opposing directions can be identified, one of which has become a focus on the approach to learning history (substantive history) and the other on understanding historical thinking (disciplinary understanding). Postmodern interpretations of history teaching and citizenship education have transformed earlier traditions that go back several centuries especially in Western countries.*

*Scotland has taken an international lead in adapting wider 21<sup>st</sup>-century educational and extra-curricular skills. Thus, this paper aims to present the Scottish education system and the state of Scottish history teaching and citizenship education, addressing the current challenges, dilemmas, and good practices. When covering the national exams, this article focuses on the National 5 level (which is an equivalent of a basic exam, being taken at school-leaving age as a qualification), with occasional comments on how the higher levels (Higher, Advanced Higher) are different in nature.*

*keywords:* Scottish education system, educational assessment, history teaching, citizenship education

## Introduction

Scotland is a country in the United Kingdom, bordered by England to the south, the North Sea to the east and the Atlantic Ocean to the west and north. There are nearly 5.5 million

people living in Scotland, 20% of whom are under 18. The distribution of the Scottish population is not evenly spread across the country, with most of the population living in the central area, which is the north and north-west of the country. The population has been growing steadily since the turn of the century, which experts attribute to migration into the country alongside an increase in births. Scotland is therefore an ethnically diverse country, with schools teaching a range of languages in addition to English, including Polish, Urdu and Gaelic (OECD, 2021).

## **The Scottish education system**

There are around 2,500 schools in the Scottish education system. Over 90% of these schools are publicly funded and locally maintained. The Scottish public-school system has roughly 96,000 pupils in pre-school (ECEC: early childhood education and care), approximately 398,000 pupils in primary school; 164,000 pupils in lower secondary school; and 127,000 pupils in upper secondary school. In addition, the school system employs over 49,000 teachers. Moreover, there are about 100 non-public schools in the country, with an additional 30,000 students (OECD, 2021). Approximately 5% of students attend independent schools, whether it is a preparatory, special, primary or secondary school. They can be a wide range: single sex, denomination or boarding schools as well (Scottish Executive Education Department, 2007).

There are 114 state schools for children with special educational needs, with over 7,000 additional pupils attending these institutions, although the majority of pupils with SEND (special needs and disabilities) do not attend special schools but mainstream ones (over 30% of all pupils). The Scottish education system also includes a secondary school system with a medium of instruction in Gaelic, where pupils learn both Gaelic and English in primary and secondary education. There are only a handful of 'bilingual' institutions of this type in the country: 52 primary schools with a mixture of English and Gael and 32 secondary schools with a Gaelic specialisation (OECD, 2021). In Scotland parents have the right for school choice but catchment areas are also defined by education authorities (Scottish Executive Education Department, 2007). Administrative control over education is obtained by the First Minister of Scotland appointed by the sovereign. This person is nominated by the governing political party (currently: Humza Yousaf, Scottish National Party, SNP) Another important body is the Learning Directorate supervising education through different agencies, boards, authorities

(e.g. Education Scotland) (OECD, 2015; OECD, 2021) A full description of the bodies can be seen in the annex in table 7.

The education starts at ECEC level, which is provided up to the age of five (ISCED 0) and, despite being not compulsory, it is taken up by 98% of eligible children aged three and four and is getting more prominent. For years, this has meant 20 hours of supervision, which the parliament plans to increase to nearly 40 hours. Broad general education is for children aged 5-12. It does not completely refer to the period when compulsory education occurs because it starts in early schooling and lasts until the age of 14. After the 7-year primary education ends, it continues with secondary education consisting of lower secondary and upper secondary stages. In Scotland, it is common not to organize entrance examinations. Lower secondary education (ISCED 2) refers to the three years after general education. This is divided into two stages. In the first two years, pupils are provided general education while the last year is a preparatory year for the national qualifications. At this stage, students learn a whole range of subjects every year, learning from a specialist in the field and sometimes they are taught in smaller groups. The next three years are upper secondary school. Most pupils continue their education beyond the compulsory age of 16 in upper secondary education. Upper secondary school is a three-year course (ISCED 3) for 15–18-year-olds. Its aim is to prepare young people for further education, higher education (ISCED 6-8) and the demands of the labour market and individual specialization. Further education colleges (ISCED 3) also offer vocational education and training opportunities for students to pursue vocational studies and higher education (ISCED 5-8), while alternative schools become more and more popular as well. (OECD, 2015; OECD, 2021; Scottish Executive Education Department, 2007). A detailed overview is provided in Table 1.

Age (years)	ISCED	Education level	Length of education level	Nature of education level	Institutions
2/3-5	0	early learning and childcare		optional	
5-12	1	primary school	7 years	compulsory	primary schools
12-15	2	lower secondary	3 years	compulsory	secondary schools

15-18	3	upper secondary school	3 years	compulsory	secondary schools, colleges of further education, independent training providers
			4-5 <sup>th</sup> years	optional	
	4	further education, higher education		optional	colleges
17+	5	higher education		optional	universities, colleges

*Table 1: Structure of education in Scotland (based on OECD, 2021, 21)*

Schools are open for approximately 190 days, depending on the local authority. School year is between mid-August and end of June. Weekly taught hours in primary schools are around 25 hours while in secondary schools this number is around 27.5 hours. (Scottish Executive Education Department, 2007)

## **School maintenance, funding**

Although Scotland is part of the United Kingdom, (Scotland Act) it has had full legislative and executive powers in all areas of education since 1998. In government, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills is also the Deputy First Minister and has overall responsibility for education in Scotland including Community Learning and Development. The Cabinet Secretary cooperates with other Ministers and relevant public bodies (e.g. the Learning Directorate, Education Scotland (education development and inspection), SQA (exam development, assessment and evaluation), Scottish Funding Council (funding for higher and further education as well as for training education and research). The Scottish Government, through the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, sets overall policy for all aspects of Scottish education. Scotland has 32 local education authorities that maintain schools and education is free for all (OECD, 2021; Stobbart, 2021; Gönczöl, 2015). From the 1980s parents, staff members and other members of local communities are elected to freshly established school boards in all education authority school located in Scotland. The 32 Local Authorities work closely with schools. (OECD, 2015). Parents' representation is so valued that a formal role for the parent council is maintained, the

aim of which has been to participate in the appointment of a new headmasters since 2006 due to the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017).

The country pours considerable money into education development (e.g. see presence of OECD or DYW - Developing the young Workforce - Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy program, see more: Gönczöl, 2019), placing it at the forefront of 21st century skills and capability development (Stobbart, 2021).

## **Social function and curriculum of the Scottish school system**

Scotland's core curriculum is called the *Curriculum for Excellence* (Scottish Executive, 2004), which was introduced in 2004 and plays a crucial role in 21<sup>st</sup> century skills development (Stobbart, 2021). The preparatory work started in 2002 with a 5-month long consultation launched by the Scottish Executive (Government) and it has been compulsorily introduced in all Scottish schools since 2010 (Smith, 2018a). The curriculum contains aims and pedagogical values that should be emphasized in the education of pupils aged 3-18 (OECD, 2021; Gönczöl, 2019). The curriculum places particular emphasis on ensuring equity, equality and fairness, and specific programs are organised to address these. Curriculum for Excellence does not focus on subjects or prescriptive information, but gives a holistic approach to help students acclimatize to today's world in a complex multi-dimensional way (OECD, 2015; OECD 2021).

Apart from the Curriculum for Excellence itself, five more documents have been published under the name of 'Building the Curriculum' each aiming to specify subject areas, assessment, etc (Smith, 2018a)<sup>1</sup>. The four core objectives of the curriculum include becoming a successful learner, building confidence, becoming responsible citizens and developing effective participation/cooperation in students (Table 2) (OECD, 2021; Scot-

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<sup>1</sup> The additions are the following:  
Curriculum for excellence – Building the curriculum 1 – The contribution of curriculum areas, 2006  
Curriculum for excellence – Building the curriculum 2 – Active learning in the early years, 2007  
Curriculum for excellence – Building the curriculum 3 – A framework for learning and teaching, 2008  
Curriculum for excellence – Building the curriculum 4 – Skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work, 2009  
Curriculum for excellence – Building the curriculum 5 – A framework for assessment, 2011 (Gönczöl, 2015, Smith, 2018a)

tish Government, 2009a). To each objective belong a set of capabilities and attributes, thus, history teaching and its aims are organized in a way to be in balance with the fundamental development of these capacities (Smith, 2018a). The curriculum includes eight curriculum content areas: Expressive Arts, Languages and Literacy, Religious and Moral Education, Social Studies, Mathematics and Numeracy, Sciences, Technologies, and Health and Wellbeing. Each content area focuses on the linear progression of skills development in that area. Each contains a list of principles and guidelines, and interdisciplinary and specific topics/themes are also introduced (e.g. sustainable development, global citizenship). Above all of this, seven curriculum principles exist (e.g. challenge and enjoyment, personalization and choice) which serve as organizational and classroom management factors (OECD, 2015). In social studies history, geography, civics and other similar subjects are placed (Gönczöl, 2015).

To enable all young people to become:	
<p>successful learners</p> <p><u>with:</u> (attributes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enthusiasm and motivation for learning</li> <li>• determination to reach high standards of achievement</li> <li>• openness to new thinking and ideas</li> </ul> <p><u>and able to:</u> (capabilities)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use literacy, communication and numeracy skills</li> <li>• use technology for learning</li> <li>• think creatively and independently</li> <li>• learn independently and as part of a group</li> <li>• make reasoned evaluations</li> <li>• link and apply different kinds of learning in new situations.</li> </ul>	<p>confident individuals</p> <p><u>with:</u> (attributes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• self-respect</li> <li>• a sense of physical, mental and emotional wellbeing</li> <li>• secure values and beliefs</li> <li>• ambition</li> </ul> <p><u>and able to:</u> (capabilities)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• relate to others and manage themselves</li> <li>• pursue a healthy and active lifestyle</li> <li>• be self-aware</li> <li>• develop and communicate their own beliefs and view of the world</li> <li>• live as independently as they can</li> <li>• assess risk and make informed decisions</li> <li>• achieve success in different areas of activity</li> </ul>

<p>responsible citizens</p> <p><u>with:</u> (attributes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• respect for others</li> <li>• commitment to participate responsibly in political, economic, social and cultural life</li> </ul> <p><u>and able to:</u> (capabilities)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop knowledge and understanding of the world and Scotland’s place in it</li> <li>• understand different beliefs and cultures</li> <li>• make informed choices and decisions</li> <li>• evaluate environmental, scientific and technological issues</li> <li>• develop informed, ethical views of complex issues.</li> </ul>	<p>effective contributors</p> <p><u>with:</u> (attributes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an enterprising attitude</li> <li>• resilience</li> <li>• self-reliance</li> </ul> <p><u>and able to:</u> (capabilities)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• communicate in different ways and in different settings</li> <li>• work in partnership and in teams</li> <li>• take the initiative and lead</li> <li>• apply critical thinking and new contexts</li> <li>• create and develop</li> <li>• solve problems.</li> </ul>
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*Table 2: The four core development areas of Curriculum for Excellence  
(Scottish Government, 2009a, iii)*

In Scotland standards are part of the core curriculum, under „statements of experiences and outcomes” levels to be achieved, with an emphasis on the “how” instead of the “what” (Reményi, 2015a). Standards are usually included in the national core curriculum when it is the only central document with regulative effect, and equality, objectivity, comparability and accessibility are defined as important educational policy objectives. Thus, the resulting content regulatory documents become product-oriented helping the planning process by demonstrating the expected learning outcomes. It also serves as a guidance for schools to prepare their own local curricula and as a reference point when assessment takes place (Reményi, 2015a, 2015b).

Schools also develop their own curricula (local curricula) based on this, putting development in the context of each school (Gönczöl, 2019).

Along with the Curriculum for Excellence, a framework (SQA’s Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work) has supported achieving the general goals stated in the core curriculum. In this document, the main skill areas are listed as well as the skill subsets (Scottish Government, 2009b).

The Scottish education system is course-based, meaning that students do not complete subjects but courses that correspond to credits (OECD, 2021; SQA, 2021a), so history is also taught along with courses. The flexibility of the Scottish education system is demonstrated by the conversion of qualifications into credits (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework), which help to make different qualifications comparable in terms of difficulty. The Scottish education system is also credit-based, with qualifications being converted into credits under the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), which helps to make different qualifications comparable in terms of difficulty. While credits indicate the level required to obtain a qualification, levels indicate the complexity of obtaining a qualification. The National 5 exam is ranked fifth out of 12 SCQF levels, with 24 credits out of 6-32 credits in the National Qualifications credit system (SQA, 2019b, SQA, 2017a; SQA, 2017b; SQA 2021c).

## **Teachers in the Scottish education system**

From the 20<sup>th</sup> century teachers have an important position in writing curricula and maintaining the examination system alongside the Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA), previously known as the Scottish Examination Board (SEB) and the Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS), previously known as the Consultative Council on the Curriculum (CCC) (Scottish Executive Education Department, 2007).

Teachers have a reduced workload (maximum 22.5 hours per week) and are required to attend 35 hours of in-service training per year. In Scotland, teachers' professional autonomy is stronger, as demonstrated by the General Teaching Council for Scotland, a self-governing, professionally representative body of teachers, to which all teachers are required to belong (OECD, 2021).

In Scotland, secondary teachers have to hold a degree in history if they intend to become a member of the General Teaching Council of Scotland (GTCS), but this can be achieved in different ways: there are several ways to become a teacher in Scotland. After a BA degree, teachers can obtain an additional teaching qualification (PGDE, post-graduate diploma in education), which entitles them to teach in schools. Teacher qualifications can also be obtained by obtaining a BA in education and their specialising subject, without the need to undertake additional training (Smith, 2018a, OECD, 2021), including being able to conduct researches on their own (Réti, 2015).

## Historical roots of the Scottish education system

In the 15th century, Scotland already had three universities, and in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, elementary schools had to be established in every parish. Due to the many schools being inaugurated in the country, literacy was common already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. From 1872, due to the Education (Scotland) Act, all children between 5 and 13 were given education which was funded by local property tax. This was the time when it was no longer the churches that were responsible for education but the School Boards (locally elected people). Primary education was not free until 1890, and compulsory education lasted until the age of 14 from 1901. By the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, over 200 more secondary schools had been founded and 36 local education authorities to replace School Boards. In the Education (Scotland) Act of 1936, primary education became 7-years long, providing education for students between the age of 5-12, and it got separated from secondary education. From the 1960s vocational further education also expanded, including full-time courses and new colleges (Scottish Executive Education Department, 2007, OECD, 2015).

The United Kingdom came into being in 1707 with the Act of Union, the union of England and Scotland, which had a major impact on Scotland's education system and led to the adoption of the British-style examination system in Scotland as well. In this system, examinations are highly prestigious and have a long tradition, but the role of internal assessment is low, i.e. teachers play a smaller role in assessment at a local level than they would normally in a continental education system. In the British tradition, in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Victorian England (a century earlier in universities), the state took control of the examination process, so that either direct (government-appointed bodies (Scotland) or direct examination boards (England) administer the examinations (Stobbart, 2021).

The Scottish examination system is characterized by the specific structure of secondary schools. Compulsory education lasts until the age of 16, the end of lower secondary school, when students sit their compulsory National 5 examinations. The broad general education ends when the qualification is obtained. The second three years of upper secondary school are made up of optional courses. As this is not a school leaving examination, students gain a qualification on completion of National 5 level. And for this qualification, there is no set age at which it has to be completed, so citizens can obtain these qualifications even after completing vocational schools (Stobbart, 2021, Gönczöl, 2019).

At the secondary level, examination preparation is more dominantly regulated by the national curriculum. Higher education starts at the age of 17, but today nearly 90% of students also take a Higher or Advanced Higher exam to increase their chances of further education and their choices (Gönczöl, 2015). Therefore, the removal of National 5 has been raised in the educational policy discourse<sup>2</sup>. Admission criteria for higher education are set by the universities themselves (OECD, 2021).

## Position of history education in Scotland

Before 2004, the so-called '*5-14 National Guidelines*' (SOED, 1993) the predecessor of the Curriculum of Excellence served as a curriculum on history education, and it was not compulsorily adapted. It did not prescribe time periods precisely (only main historical eras like the twentieth century), so it gave the teachers particular autonomy (Smith, 2018b). Although *5-14 National Guidelines* did not have a strong impact on everyday practice, the outcomes written in the core curriculum enabled history to become a socialising subject putting emphasis on employability to become responsible Scottish citizens (Smith, 2018b).

The Curriculum for Excellence implies a less critical attitude in heritage and identity formation, more emphasis is put on appreciation and assimilationism, which might be in relation with the core capacities defined in the curriculum. Since the curriculum puts much more emphasis on the "*utilitarian instrumentalist conception of knowledge*" (Moore & Young, 2001, cited in Smith, 2018b), competence-based learning is more valued than conceptual understanding in general and employability is very much valued. However, the curriculum tends to over-exemplify subjective concepts, focusing on 1-1 examples making broader understanding problematic, turning learning into being able to understand "a specific instance", "an international event" (Smith, 2018b). The content of the curriculum implied a discipline-oriented perspective, putting emphasis on how historians interpret the past. (Smith, 2018b)

The Curriculum for Excellence was introduced in 2004, where the position of history did not change, positioning history among the 'social subjects' alongside geography and modern studies (Smith, 2018a). Since the Curriculum for Excellence places special

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<sup>2</sup> For more see: <https://news.stv.tv/scotland/scotlands-fourth-year-national-five-and-national-four-exams-to-be-scrapped-under-radical-education-review>

emphasis on the adaptability of skills and citizenship as well, Scottish history and identity have become more significant. The curriculum does not, however, explicitly aim at developing national identity, or a patriotic historical view, and neither do the history courses in the Scottish education system (Smith, 2018b).

Before senior phase/upper secondary school, students learn history as a part of ‘social subjects’, and if they intend to achieve a certificate in history, they have a separate subject in senior phase (Smith, 2018a, Scottish Government, 2006).

Even though Curriculum for Excellence emphasizes interdisciplinary learning, transferable skills and citizenship education, it also implies a weakening of the teacher’s subject identities as well as the view of the purposes of a history education being more instrumental than before. (Smith, 2018a)

As a case for history and civics, under “*People, past events and societies*” it is stated in which level what skills are required, indicating the curriculum to be standard based. The learning outcomes are divided into 5 levels (early, first, second, third, fourth), each being different in their complexity (Education Scotland, 2017) (Table 4).

Second level	Fourth level
I can discuss why people and events from a particular time in the past were important, placing them within a historical sequence. (SOC 2-06a)	Having critically analysed a significant historical event, I can assess the relative importance of factors contributing to the event. (SOC 4-06a)

*Table 4: Social studies: People, past events and societies: experiences and outcomes (excerpt) (source: Education Scotland, 2017, 10.)*

The aim and rationale of social studies is summarized in the syllabus as the following: ‘*Through social studies, children and young people develop their understanding of the world by learning about other people and their values, in different times, places and circumstances; they also develop their understanding of their environment and of how it has been shaped.*’ (Scottish Government, 2006, 1)

Curriculum for Excellence can be interpreted as “*competency-based curricula which emerged in many countries in the first years of the twenty-first century. (...) these curricula are responses to ‘pressures associated with globalizations, particularly in respect of economic competitiveness and citizenship which leads to a prioritisation of instrumental and functional aims.*” (Priestley & Biesta, 2013; cited in Smith, 2018a, 20), these new

approaches seem to have an impact on how history is taught and viewed by history teachers themselves in Scotland too (Smith, 2018a).

In Scotland, history is compulsory in primary education as a distinct subject but is taught as a part of Social Studies for several years, at 4 levels. If students intend to achieve a National 5 qualification in history, they study the subject for a further two years as a separate subject/course at lower secondary school. The enrolment for the 160-hour examination course is not compulsory (McLennan et al, 2020; SQA, 2021a).

In Scotland, there is freedom to choose textbooks. This is evidenced by the fact that there are 25-30 different publishers of textbooks. The most well-known of these are Leckie & Leckie and Hodder. In addition, in Scotland, the validation of textbooks is not dependent on the state, but it is endorsed by expert civil organisations (see for more: <https://collins.co.uk/pages/scottish-curriculum>). The role of textbooks is marginalized here, since they do not determine the content of the public education/regulatory curricula. The curriculum is competence-based and requires a high degree of teacher autonomy. (Réti, 2015)

## **History examination in Scotland (National 5, Higher, Advanced Higher)**

The National 5 examination course is compulsory for Scottish students aged 15-16, where history is an optional subject. The aim of this course is to develop an understanding of the past and present, responsible citizenship, attitudinal skills and the ability to analyse sources. It also develops disciplinary knowledge and understanding of historical processes, responsible citizenship, critical thinking, empathy and openness (SQA, 2021a). The course is built around skills development. The Scottish Qualifications Authority's (SQA) *Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work* cross-curricular document identifies the development of three main skills areas (literacy; employability and entrepreneurship, citizenship; thinking skills) for the subject of history (SQA, 2017a).

The Scottish education system is not characterised by the use of an oral examination component, so in history, two of the National 5 history subjects comprise a written component (Table 2), a pre-research academic essay (assignment) and a short essay question paper. 160 hours are allocated to complete the course (SQA, 2021a; SQA, 2021c).

The syllabus for the National 5 exam comprises three modules (Scottish, British and World History) and 20 topics. Each topic can be further subdivided into four sub-topics,

and the tasks in the examination paper are linked to these four sub-topics. For example, if we look at the topic 'Hitler and Nazi Germany, 1919-1939', we can break it down into four key issues (Weimar Germany, Nazi rise to power, Nazi Germany, National Socialist socio-economic policy) based on the National 5 course description (SQA, 2021a). The exam contains exercises for each sub-topic in chronological order (SQA, 2021a; SQA, 2021b). The topics are studied from multiple historical perspectives. World history is studied alongside British history, covering the curriculum up to 1989 (for more information on National 5 in History, see: Tóth, 2022).

Not all of these 20 topics are studied by the students, half of them belong to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and it is up to the school district or teacher to choose from them. Thus, the curriculum does not prescribe but suggests which key issues should be covered in the course. In addition, there are no prescribed tables of terms and names (SQA, 2021a, McLennan et al, 2020).

The curriculum consists of different aspects of history, including history of mentalities, political history, social and economic history and covers the origins of the nation (cultural-ethnic-linguistic-political) and important milestones of national history in a very versatile manner. The political position with England might give an explanation to the extensive nature of British history. Within the topic of the Cold War, the Hungarian revolution of 1956 is also included, which serves to exemplify international conflicts from this period (McLennan et al, 2020). The European Union is not included in the course material, because it is studied in other courses (e.g. Politics Higher, see later).

As for Higher level, the triple division of course material (British, Scottish, global history) remains, but the main themes and subtopics (key issues) are more abstract and require deeper understanding from learners (e.g. Church, state and feudal society, 1066-1406). At Advanced Higher level, the triple division of course material disappears, it is replaced by 10 fields of study, (e.g. Northern Britain from the Iron Age to 1034, Germany: from democracy to dictatorship, 1918-39). The 10 study areas are dealing with 9 countries, where Scottish history appears twice (SQA., 2020a; SQA, 2019a).

To indicate the extent to which the three courses differ in the competences they aim to develop, we list some objectives from the course syllabi. The objectives of the previous level are also part of the following examination courses of higher difficulty, but they are not listed again here.

National 5, Higher <sup>3</sup> :
<i>Candidates acquire breadth and depth in their knowledge and understanding of the past through the study of Scottish, British, European and World contexts in a variety of time periods. Options cover topics from the Medieval, Early Modern and Later Modern periods and include elements of political, social, economic and cultural history. The approach and understanding gained can be applied to other historical settings and issues. (SQA, 2021a, 2; SQA, 2020a)</i>
At National 5 level, students will develop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>a conceptual understanding of the past and an ability to think independently</i></li> <li>2. <i>the ability to apply a detailed historical perspective and evaluate sources in a range of contexts</i></li> <li>3. <i>a detailed understanding of the factors contributing to, and the impact of, historical events</i></li> <li>4. <i>the skills of investigating historical events and, on the basis of evidence, forming views</i></li> <li>5. <i>the skills of explaining and analysing historical events and drawing reasoned conclusions by completing the course. (SQA, 2021a, 2)</i></li> </ul>
At higher level, student will <i>also be able to analyse, evaluate and synthesize historical information</i> by completing the course. (SQA, 2020a, 2)

Advanced Higher:
<i>Candidates acquire depth in their knowledge and understanding of historical themes, and further develop the skills of analysing complex historical issues, evaluating sources, and drawing conclusions. The depth of study enables candidates to engage in historical debate and thereby develop a deeper appreciation of the forces which have shaped historical developments. (SQA, 2019a, 2)</i>
During this course, students develop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>a critical analysis of existing historical research, including identifying important lines of argument and evaluating schools of thought on particular historical issues</i></li> <li>2. <i>analytical skills through the use of historical sources relating to authorship and purpose, perspective and historical and historiographical context</i></li> <li>3. <i>synthesis through the use of primary sources and perspectives from historical research to analyse complex historical issues and sustain coherent lines of argument skills to adopt a relevant and structured approach to researching a historical issue,</i></li> <li>4. <i>drawing conclusions in a clear and well-reasoned way, while reflecting the complexity of the issue and the limitations of the available evidence. (SQA, 2019a, 2)</i></li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> The wording of the two levels are almost exactly the same.

## The position of civic education in Scotland

Citizenship education as a subject does not exist on its own in Scotland, but before the Curriculum for Excellence was introduced (as part of 5-14 National Guidelines), civics education was part of “People and Society”, and now is part of ‘People, Society, Economy and Business’ (Smith, 2018b).

Citizenship is one of the four main attributes in the Curriculum for Excellence and thus is put significant emphasis on during compulsory education. Citizenship is not interchangeable with civics or political literacy. *“While civics education develops a familiarity with the institutions of the state and civil society, citizenship education implies an induction into this society. Citizenship education, therefore, is inherently uncritical; it assumes the rationality of existing practices and socialises the student to conform to these.”* (Smith, 2018b 39).

Civic education in Scotland is integrated into most subjects in ISCED 1-3 levels, therefore, a separate ‘civic education’ subject does not exist. The content and methodology are specified by local authorities as well as schools in reliance to the Curriculum of Excellence (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017).

Citizenship is taught at different ISCED levels as a cross/inter-curricular aim, and is not compulsory in secondary schools, but it is covered in an integrated, cross-curricular manner (e.g. through Global Citizenship Education) before ISCED 3. Students can take the National 2 level internal course in social subjects in primary school, which involves geography, history, modern studies, classical studies. With completing this course, students can continue their studies with ‘people and society’ subject course on National 3 level and later with the 4 level (SQA, 2012a. 2014a). At National 4 level, the curriculum is divided into three compulsory units: Investigating Skills, Comparing and Contrasting, and Making Decisions.

At this level, students do not take exams but are assessed “naturally” while they gather different evidence during their learning period. Thus, this course is not externally assessed and can be completed by acquiring the skills defined in the three prescribed units (SQA, 2012b. 2014b. (see example in table 5).

Name of unit	Content of unit
Investigating Skills	In this Unit, learners will develop a range of straightforward investigating skills, including choosing suitable sources of information for an investigation, collecting information from sources of different types, and organising information. Learners will develop these skills through choosing, with guidance, key ideas for study which will allow them to acquire straightforward knowledge and understanding of people and society.
Comparing and Contrasting	In this Unit, learners will develop straightforward skills of using information to compare and contrast. Learners will develop these skills through choosing, with guidance, key ideas for study which will allow them to acquire straightforward knowledge and understanding of people and society.
Making Decisions	In this Unit, learners will develop straightforward skills of using information to make decisions. Learners will develop these skills through choosing, with guidance, key ideas for study which will allow them to acquire straightforward knowledge and understanding of people and society.
+Assignment	In this Unit, learners will choose an issue for personal study relating to at least one key idea of the Course. They will research their chosen issue and present their findings. Through this activity they will have opportunities to experience challenge and application as they further develop and apply the skills, knowledge and understanding acquired in the other three Units of the Course

*Table 5: Units and content of National 4 “People and Society” course (SQA, 2014b)*

During this interdisciplinary, skill-based course, students come across key ideas, including *behaviour, ethics, beliefs, heritage, cause, identity, change, interdependence, citizenship, need, conflict, power, consequence, responsibilities, co-operation, rights, culture, similarity, difference, society, diversity, technology, environment values and equality*. No content is defined, which allows flexibility and lets students study themes they are interested in. Each unit has to be covered in a way that is linked to at least three key ideas listed here (SQA, 2012b. 2014b).

Civic education is not included in the education system at ISCED 3-4 levels, the closest being the “Politics” course at Higher level only. It consists of three fields of study: Political theory, Political systems, and Political parties and elections.

*The course contributes to candidates’ understanding of society by helping them to develop an understanding of political theory, political systems in the UK and international contexts, and factors affecting the electoral performance of political parties. Candidates develop a critical awareness of the nature of politics and the relationship between political theories, systems and parties. (...) the course enables candidates to identify, explore and analyse political issues in order to develop their own views and perspectives. Candidates develop analysing and evaluating skills during the course which help them to interpret and understand political issues. (SQA, 2020b 2.)*

Thus, the main objective of the course is to give general understanding of the concepts, ideologies, parties, legal institutions discussed during the course and to analyse, synthesize and evaluate political events/decisions/etc through attentive source handling. (SQA, 2020b) However, reports on learning in the classroom are rarely available because both schools and teachers are trusted with high level of autonomy (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017). There is a big liberty in content selection. For example, in political parties, students have the choice to study 2 out of these 5 political systems: UK, Scotland, USA, European Union, China (SQA, 2020b). The task types appearing in question papers 1-2 can be seen in table 6.

Analyse questions	Students identify parts of an issue, the relationship between these parts and their relationships with the whole; draw out and relate implications.
Compare questions	Student have to identify differences and/or similarities.
Evaluate questions	Students are required to make a value judgement based on certain criteria.
Discuss questions	Students give their opinion on the statement written in the task. Analysis, multi-perspectivity, different view-points are marked here.
To what extent questions	Students are required to draw a conclusion in which (a) quantitative evaluative judgment on the statement written in the task is made.

*Table 6: Task typology in Higher Politics question papers (SQA, 2019c; SQA, 2019h; SQA, 2019i)*

## Dilemmas

There is an international trend to homogenize an instrumental/ business-friendly approach to education. Nowadays, it is argued that these processes of globalization made history education less important in Western societies (on this topic more e.g. Fink & Furrer & Gautschi, 2023), but this is not the case in Scotland. Since it is an “emerging nation” – nationalism (or even separatism) and globalization go hand in hand there (Smith, 2018b).

History teaching in Scotland is generally not viewed as a tool to enhance patriotism, it is much rather viewed as harmful indoctrination that should be avoided during classes. On the other hand, among older teachers, history is believed to serve to make students proud of their county, implying that ‘Scotland is a small country overshadowed by a more powerful neighbour’-narrative (Smith, 2018a, 30). Besides, there has been a strong emphasis on heritage preservation among students, which the following excerpt ‘*develop my understanding of the history, heritage and culture of Scotland, and an appreciation of my local and national heritage within the world*’ clearly shows (Scottish Government, 2006, 1). Similar emphasis on heritage, and a link (though less intense) between heritage and patriotism can be found in 5-14 Guidelines (Smith, 2018a). This also means that there might be tensions between policy (performativity) and moral purpose (achieving the purpose of history teaching e.g. enhancing social cohesion) (Smith, 2018a).

There is a mismatch between disciplinary history and the school subject history which has been formulated on various platforms (e.g. Smith, 2018a, Kojanitz, 2018), which poses further challenges which the other challenges of the present (see, for example, Popp, 2023; Nølgård et al. 2020) do not make easier.

Human rights education is integrated in all curriculum subjects (although rarely stated explicitly what the different concept means), which might not seem to be efficient enough (Daniels, 2018). As Smith 2018b cites: “*These distortions in practice are usually understood through the lens of performativity (Ball, 1998) following Lyotard (1984). Research into performativity in education is largely focused on a dominant discourse of ‘improvement’ in measurable ‘outcomes’ and the disciplining mechanisms which ensure teachers’ compliance with this discourse. These mechanisms, which Gerwitz (2002) calls ‘new managerialism’ are manifest in punitive*

*inspection regimes, performance related pay and other accountability measures. For this reason, performativity is almost always perceived as a negative phenomenon: Lyotard (1984) talks of the ‘terrors of performativity’ while Ball famously framed the neoliberal education reform as ‘a struggle over teachers’ souls’ (Ball, 2003). In this tradition, empirical work on performativity in education reports that teachers are riven by tensions – torn between the need to ‘perform’ in an education system which polices behaviour through rigid accountability and monitoring systems, and the need to stay true to a loftier vision of what education is and is for (Jeffrey & Tro-man, 2012).” (Smith, 2018a, 24)*

Global and active citizenship education (or GCE in short) has become a global educational concept in the previous decades (e.g. UNESCO agendas, the Global Education First Initiative in 2012, also see Halász, 2005, Kaposi, 2015) implying a paradigm shift: be responsible citizens in global matters. Although it has become apparent that the development of GCE is important, there is little mutual understanding on what the concept is and how it should be implemented and assessed. This also arises the problem of binary understanding of national and global citizenship and the relationship between the two posing different challenges all across the globe. (Akkari & Maleq, 2020)

Two trends can be identifiable: post-nationalism promotes interconnectedness, cultural diversity and interdependence. Still, nationalism, populism and other religious/ethical conflicts serve a good ground for hostility towards these notions beside global competencies (instrumental) and global consciousness (critical) approach. Postcolonial and decolonial perspectives can also be determinative (Akkari & Maleq, 2020).

Since Curriculum for Excellence is a cross-curricular document, all capacities can enhance global citizenship and human rights education, thus, teachers have responsibility in what and how they develop it in classes, since the curriculum gives little explicit guidance developing them. There is a trend that put rights and responsibilities together but the two terms cannot be used interchangeably, and the use of these two words imply inconsistency. However, there is a strong evidence that several content elements (e.g. culture, the environment) are taught through human rights. This implies the development of general values and not human right/global citizenship education in particular (Daniels, 2018).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the Scottish education system has features of the Anglo-Saxon history education tradition due to its geographical-political position. In terms of social function of the curriculum, the education system is primarily concerned with the development of 21st century skills and competences and integration into society, as reflected in the pillars of Curriculum for Excellence.

History and citizenship education in Scotland therefore focuses on the development of general skills and identity as a general curricular goal. It is not prescriptive or detailed on lower levels, but rather seeks to capture the 'big general'. This is also supported by the fact that in history courses, simplified forms of historiographical insight (e.g. the use of source criticism) are used, while in courses such as civic education, the transmission of values, responsible decision-making, and the functioning of political systems are presented in a freely interpreted content framework also presenting history in a fractured manner.

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## Annex

body	role
The Scottish Government	determines national policy and overall direction of education policy
local authorities	provide education for all children in compulsory age, also responsible for the improvement of education in their area as an Education Authority
Education Scotland	its duty is to inspect schools, guide schools with developing curriculum at a local level, organizes professional trainings. It was founded in 2011, before that, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) and Learning and Teaching Scotland were responsible in these roles
Scottish Qualifications Authority	The body works on behalf of the government, but it is completely independent from it. It is responsible for organizing, reviving, entitling, and developing qualifications. It also organizes/implements the assessment of people working in education and training.
Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership	This body is responsible for setting the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, integrating all the qualifications available in one framework (e.g. college, university, achievements earned in school, vocational training)
General Teaching Council for Scotland	independent body responsible for determining teachers' professional standards, supervises programmes in e.g. professional learning, student placement and it is also involved in the accreditation in Initial Teacher Education.
Scottish College for Education Leadership (SCEL)	organizes leadership programmes for the Scottish education system since 2014
Skills Development Scotland	a national body which works in partnership with schools to effective skills development in both people and business

*Table 7: Main actors in the Scottish education system (OECD, 2015, 39)*