FROM THE EDITORS

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We are delighted to introduce the latest edition of the Scottish Educational Review. We write this editorial in the wake of two recent important events in Scottish education. Interestingly both have their roots in the same issue: the improvement of the educational experience for children and young people and promoting equality of opportunity. First, this year is the fiftieth anniversary of the introduction of comprehensive school education in Britain and this has been commemorated by a conference in Edinburgh, which was held on the twenty seventh of October 2015. The conference was organised by the Centre for Research in Education Inclusion & Diversity (CREID). The anniversary has also been marked by the publication of a new book: Everyone’s future: lessons from fifty years of Scottish comprehensive schooling (2015) edited by Daniel Murphy, Linda Croxford, Cathy Howieson and David Raffe. The book is reviewed in this edition of SER by Donald Gillies who describes this book as an ‘excellent addition to the Scottish canon’. Second, the government published: Creating a Smarter Scotland – A Draft National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education in September 2015. The government is anxious to close the attainment gap and Creating a Smarter Scotland outlines some ambitious new plans to raise standards in Scottish school education, especially in reading, writing and numeracy. The inclusion of new national standardized assessment for children in primaries 1, 4, 7 and S3, as part of the overall assessment evidence, has already been the object of much scrutiny and has generated intense discussion and debate. We await further developments with great interest.

This edition highlights a number of important themes in Scottish Education: the position of Human Rights Education in Initial Teacher Education; The role of school education in anti-sectarian initiatives; The achievements of William Boyd; developments in Further Education and the level of qualification in mathematics required by primary teachers. This expanded edition also includes: a research note on the impact of poverty on aspirations to Higher Education; our regular feature on Education in the Scottish Parliament and four book reviews. We think the readers will find the papers interesting, informative and insightful. Further, we hope that the papers pose challenging questions, prompt debate and generate ideas about further research.
In the first paper, Alison Struthers focuses on Human Rights Education (HRE) and argues strongly and passionately for the inclusion of HRE in national education programmes. Alison comments that there is very little explicit mention of HRE in CfE. She also points out that the Building Blocks report has revealed that the teaching of HRE in schools across Scotland is very inconsistent and HRE appears to be equally inconsistent in ITE programmes in Scotland. She recommends that it should be more integrated in teacher education. This would help to create a culture that values the importance of human rights and HRE and would enable teachers to be more knowledgeable and confident in teaching human rights issues in the classroom. This would then help pupils in schools understand the local, national and international implications of Human Rights. Alison’s research raises many challenging questions that are related to the concept of a ‘responsible citizen’ in school education and how we educate children and young people to understand their position in Scottish society and beyond.

*The Final Report of the Advisory Group on tackling Sectarianism in Scotland* was published in April 2015. This report can be contextualized within the very recent research commissioned by the Scottish government on Public Processions; Community Experiences of Sectarianism and Public Attitudes to Sectarianism. Stephen McKinney, in the second paper, identifies the prominent references to school education in the Final Report and analyses the internal and external coherence of these references. Stephen presents some serious questions about the conception of the role of schools, and the methodologies proposed, in anti-sectarian education.

Our third paper is another welcome addition from Professor Walter Humes as he continues to revisit key educationalists who have had an impact on the history of Scottish Education (see his article on A.S. Neill and Scotland in *SER* 47(1)). Professor Humes seeks to draw our attention to the debates and initiatives in the past that resonate with the contemporary educational scene. His paper on William Boyd is the story of a man who pursued education at different levels but his activity was always characterized by innovative teaching methods aspiring to stimulate students to critically engage with major educational themes. Boyd was a man of vision but also of strong and unwavering opinion that may not have endeared him to everybody. Somewhat mischievously, Professor Humes cites the example of Boyd describing school inspectors as ‘outsiders with powers that paralyse originality’. It is disappointing that Boyd appears to have been too populist for members of the academy in his time and this may have contributed to the lack of recognition of his achievements.

The next paper provides a very timely and pertinent analysis of developments in the Scottish Further Education Sector. Patrick O’Donnell, Mark Murphy and Carey Normand use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to explore key policy texts related to Further Education. The focus of the paper is on the recent reforms in the operating structure and governance in Further Education and they provide a critical analysis of the consequences of the move to ‘regionalisation’ in Further Education in Scotland. The paper is helpfully contextualised within wider developments in regionalization of Further Education within Europe. The issues
raised in this carefully argued paper concerning the Further Education sector and the future of the sector deserve close study and reflection.

The topic of the final paper acquires even more significance with the publication of *Creating a Smarter Scotland*. This paper explores the issue of mathematical qualifications for entry into primary school teaching and the implications of certain qualifications for the effective teaching of mathematics in schools. Sandra McKechan and Stephen Day have undertaken a fascinating small-scale case study in one Scottish university and the results have been surprising, if not counter intuitive. Sandra and Stephen are careful not to make too many claims in the very closely written discussion section but it would be intriguing to see the results if this research could be widened and undertaken on a more longitudinal basis.

In this edition we include a shorter article, a research note by John McKendrick of Caledonian University. John’s academic work focusses on poverty, child poverty and the consequences of child poverty for the future for young people. This research note examines the work of the *Caledonian Club*, which supports young people by ‘raising their aspiration, improving their key skills and better understanding of what makes a difference in attaining positive educational outcomes’. John analyses the reasons why young people from backgrounds of poverty and deprivation may not consider or proceed to Higher Education. While one of the main reasons is that the young person may secure a job, other reasons include cost, children do not want to go and the children may not acquire the qualifications. John’s research note prompts many questions concerning: the viability and sustainability of some of these jobs; the reasons why some young people may not wish to go to Higher Education and the challenges they may face in acquiring qualifications in a culture of high tariffs for many university degree programmes.

The update on Education in the Scottish Parliament by Morag Redford covers a range of current issues: Curriculum for Excellence; the British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill; the Educational Attainment Gap; the Education (Scotland) Bill; the Inquiry on attainment of pupils with sensory impairment and a meeting with Scotland’s Commissioner for children and young people. This appears to have been a very busy time for the Parliament’s Education and Culture Committee. We also have four book reviews: the *Edinburgh History of Education in Scotland*; *Everyone’s future: lessons from fifty years of Scottish comprehensive schooling*; *Schooling Scotland. Education, Equity and Community* and *Educating the More Able Student: what works and why*.

We conclude our discussion with some final comments on one of the key themes to emerge in this edition. Professor Humes discusses the work undertaken by William Boyd in the Glasgow University Students’ Settlement Society and the Clydebank Mutual Service Association. Boyd was committed to social justice and improving the social and educational conditions (and aspirations) for people from deprived areas in Glasgow and Clydebank. The *Caledonian Club* and other organisations and initiatives (see, for example, the paper on Mentoring into Higher Education by Wilson et al., 2014, in Scottish Educational Review 46(2)) are, arguably, also engaged in similar work. The continuing reality is that the social evil of poverty continues to plague the lives of...
children and young people in Scotland and be a barrier to sustainable futures - futures which would benefit their own development and enrich Scottish society. Education has an important role to play in overcoming these barriers, but it is our firm belief, coherent with the view of Daniel Murphy in *Schooling Scotland, Education, Equity and Community*, that the role of education must be considered and discussed in conjunction with wider initiatives to tackle poverty and deprivation such as ensuring adequate income, safe and appropriate housing, healthy diet and accessible social support.

We are grateful to the authors for contributing their papers and granting permission for them to be published in the journal. We are also grateful to the many reviewers who have been generous with their time and academic advice. We are, as always, indebted to Morag Redford for producing the latest report on education in the Scottish Parliament. This standing feature provides an invaluable summary of the key issues being addressed in the Scottish Parliament. Finally, we thank our book reviewers and a special thanks to Anne Pirrie for organizing the book review section.

REFERENCES