

ATPS

**The Association for the Teaching of Psychology
Scotland**

www.atps.org.uk

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Report of a Round Table discussion on professional qualifications for psychology teachers

**This event was held at 13.30-14.30 on Saturday 6th February 2010 at
Stirling University SMC, as part of the ATPS 9th Annual Conference.**

In the chair: Bridget Hanna, British Psychological Society.

Round Table participants:

Ms Anna Boni, HM Inspector, HMIE

Ms Julie Bostock, PGCE Programme Leader, Edge Hill University

Professor James C. Conroy, Dean, Faculty of Education, University of Glasgow

Jonathan Firth, Psychology Teacher and Committee member of the Association for the Teaching of Psychology, Scotland (ATPS)

Deb Gajic, Psychology Teacher and Chair of the Association for the Teaching of Psychology (ATP UK)

John Gunstone, Head of Teacher Development Team, the Scottish Government

Mary Hainey, Qualifications Manager for NQ Psychology, Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)

Ms Bridget Hanna (Round Table Chair), British Psychological Society (Scotland) committee member, and Lecturer in Occupational Psychology

Dr Chris Holligan, Senior Lecturer, School of Education, University of the West of Scotland

Dr Udo Kittler, Vice-Dean of Humanities Faculty and Programme Director for training of Psychology teachers, Technische Universität Dortmund; Secretary, European Federation of Psychology Teachers' Associations (EFPTA).

Siobhan MacAndrew, HEA Coordinator of the Psychology Network Scotland; Reader in Psychology, University of Abertay Dundee

Myra Pearson, Head of School of Education, University of Aberdeen

The session was attended by an audience of approximately 15 ATPS members who were all practising teachers and lecturers in Psychology in Scottish schools and colleges.

Apologies were received from:

Anthony Finn, Chief Executive / Registrar, General Teaching Council for Scotland

Dr Ray Harris, Chief Executive, Scotland's Colleges

Dr Vincent Oates, Faculty of Education, University of Strathclyde

Learning & Teaching Scotland

Appendices

1. Table 1: National Qualifications selected subjects by availability of teaching qualification/GTCS registration, number of NQ entries 2009, and number of presenting centres.

2. Curriculum for Excellence: the curriculum at a glance.

To introduce the session, the Chair invited four participants to each give a brief presentation outlining the issue and its context:

Jonathan Firth (ATPS Committee) explained that Psychology, especially at SQA Higher level, is very popular in Scottish schools and further education (FE) colleges, but in many cases is being taught by non-specialists, because of the lack of training and CPD for teaching the subject. As far as existing Psychology teachers and lecturers are concerned, CPD opportunities are needed to help them gain subject or professional expertise and GTCS registration in Psychology, but the greater concern is the absence of an initial teacher education (ITE) qualification and GTCS registration for Psychology at secondary level; this is a barrier to raising standards in the teaching of the subject which is studied by over 3000 students every year in Scotland¹. Meanwhile, Psychology graduates² with a high level of subject expertise are in effect being denied a career in teaching Psychology (other than in FE, for which a Post Graduate Diploma in Education [PGDE] does exist). ATPS is therefore pressing for ITE qualifications, ie BEd and PGDE (secondary), in Psychology as a subject on an equal footing with other secondary subjects.

Dr Udo Kittler (EFPTA and Technische Universität Dortmund) outlined the history of the establishment of teacher-training courses for Psychology teachers in Germany and at his own institution in particular. He emphasised the developmental value of learning Psychology for all young people and children, pointing out that pre-degree Psychology education is perceived in this way – that is, as valuable “learning for life” as well as an academic discipline - across many European countries. Good quality universal Psychology education for young people had the potential to enhance personal wellbeing and prevent “crises”; it could thus promote societal wellbeing including economic benefits. It followed that specialist training of Psychology teachers was essential.

Deb Gajic (Chair, ATP UK Committee) described the situation that pertains in England, where large numbers of students³ study GCSE and “A” level Psychology every year. Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) in Psychology is attainable through two routes: PGCE courses which are available at six HE institutions, and the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP, on-the-job training). The funding of PGCE places for Psychology in England had come about as a result of pressure by the ATP and BPS on the Training and Development Agency (TDA). QTS allows the teacher to teach Psychology in schools, and in effect is the English equivalent of GTCS registration in Scotland. The situation remains confused for a number of reasons: some PGCE courses lead only to “QTLS” which does not qualify graduates to teach in schools (only in FE); GTP providers set varying entry criteria; some centres employ graduates without QTS as “instructors” to teach Psychology (on a different pay scale, ie lower pay, than a teacher). For the PGCE providers there are difficulties such as securing lower-secondary school placements for trainee teachers (required for QTS in a secondary subject), and very limited funding of places in relation to demand. However, those difficulties apart, Psychology graduates do have a career route for becoming qualified teachers of Psychology in English schools. Many do, and the problem of Psychology being taught by non-specialists (which has reflected the Scottish situation) is diminishing.

¹ Despite the lack of ITE in Psychology, GTCS registration for Psychology (secondary) is possible: (a) for those qualifying in England (or other countries) and (b) for existing teachers in Scotland, via the Framework for Professional Registration, which requires additional training & experience.

² 1245 Psychology graduates from Scottish universities in 2008. Source: Scottish Government (2009): Attainment in Higher Education and Destinations of Leavers 2007-08 <http://scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/295371/0091418.pdf>

³ Nearly 30,000 A-level awards each year; the fourth most popular subject in 2009. Source: Department for Children, Schools and Families (2010): <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000906/index.shtml>

Julie Bostock (Programme Director, PGCE Psychology, Edge Hill University) outlined the PGCE course for Psychology teachers which she directs. She echoed Deb Gajic's concerns regarding limited funding and difficulties over school placements; the latter was due, not to a shortage of centres teaching Psychology, but to the fact that they were often reluctant to hand over their GCSE and A-level Psychology classes to a trainee teacher. In addition, pre-GCSE level classes were required on placement (as secondary teacher-training in England requires experience across two "key stages"), and although centres tended to perceive this as a difficulty, trainee Psychology teachers could be allocated to subjects such as biology, maths, personal and social development, with younger pupils. Julie highlighted the enormous demand for places on her course at Edge Hill and elsewhere, which reflected the high demand for Psychology from school and college students themselves. Virtually all graduates from her course readily obtained teaching posts very quickly.

The Chair then opened up the discussion to the panel and the floor; some key questions provided a degree of focus. The main points raised in the discussion are summarised below.

1. Is there agreement that improved provision of teaching qualifications, including ITE, is needed for Psychology teaching in Scotland?

1.1 Adverse effects of the lack of a Psychology teaching qualification (secondary) and corresponding GTCS registration

Psychology teachers and some panel members were aware that in many schools and colleges teachers were being assigned to teach subjects other than those in which they had trained, and that Psychology in particular suffers from this practice. No-one disputed the notion that teachers' competence was based on both their subject expertise and their professional skills – which are the components of teacher education – but it was pointed out that these are not equally observed in practice; currently, teachers trained in any subject but with no academic background in Psychology can be (and are) allocated, by virtue of their secondary training, to teach Psychology by a headteacher or college manager; this undermined the function of GTCS registration in maintaining professional standards.

Mary Hainey (SQA) asserted the importance of teachers' specialist subject expertise; it was unwise to assume that because a teacher was qualified and registered in one subject they would be competent to deliver a different subject which they may never have studied. Several panel members agreed that this situation has allowed subject expertise to be devalued (and not just in Psychology), which is therefore having a negative impact on students' learning.

It was suggested that the subject element of a teaching qualification (including its associated entry requirements and its corresponding GTCS registration) and professional skills might be less rigidly linked; all aspiring teachers must naturally be trained to teach (ie gain professional skills), but the required competence in specialist subject(s) might be more flexibly fulfilled than at present, to enable graduates from a wider variety of disciplines to train for secondary teaching. In turn centre heads would more easily find / allocate appropriate staff.

Psychology teachers bemoaned the paradoxical situation that those with the greatest expertise in their subject, Psychology graduates, are currently effectively denied access to professional training in the first place. From the floor came the point that there were additional barriers preventing Psychology graduates from teaching in schools: college lecturers who have trained and registered for Psychology in FE are not allowed to teach in schools without additional training, although there is no such barrier in the opposite direction, ie for secondary

teachers moving into FE. It was also pointed out that many schools do overcome the difficulty of providing suitably qualified staff by using a partnership arrangement with a local college, however the ambiguous status of non-secondary-registered lecturers teaching in high schools has been challenged by some local authorities, giving rise to anxiety over employment security for lecturers in some cases.

1.2 There was some focus on the value and distinctiveness of Psychology education in the curriculum, with the implied – or explicitly stated – conclusion that Psychology teaching qualifications were essential

Siobhan MacAndrew (HEA) drew attention to the facts that many school and college students progressed onto a Psychology degree, and that Psychology graduates are highly employable as they have developed a range of skills that are much sought-after by employers: critical thinking, scientific enquiry, research skills including research design and data analysis, variety of communication skills, team working, reflective practice, self-management etc. She pointed out that psychologists are scientists – and in contrast to other sciences many are female - and therefore Psychology education has an important role to play in achieving government aims of promoting science in education and in society. Her point that Psychology education offered substantial benefits not just to the individual but to society was echoed by Udo Kittler. Siobhan addressed the audience of Psychology teachers directly, highlighting their important role in providing the starting-point for generating these benefits, which, she claimed, made Psychology different from other subjects. Julie Bostock (Edgehill University) supported the view that Psychology, taught by Psychology graduates, has unique benefits, though from a different angle: Psychology graduates who become teachers have an in-depth understanding of children’s cognitive, social and emotional experiences of learning.

There was some objection to the argument that Psychology is somehow special in the curriculum: it was claimed that all subject specialists were likely to feel that *their* subject is more valuable than all others. Comparisons were drawn with other subjects which had recently been added to the NQ portfolio; and which therefore raised the question of whether a teaching qualification might be offered. Mandarin has recently been added; a proposal for Dance was regarded as unlikely to be successful.⁴

It was important to see the issue in the context of the current major overhaul of Scottish education, Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), Anna Boni (HMIE) asserted. She drew panel members’ attention to the underpinning principles of CfE⁵, and Psychology’s cognate area of Health and Wellbeing in particular, which is strongly psychological in nature. She felt that Psychology teachers’ expertise in health and wellbeing was of value in the curriculum revision process, and that this was a “listening opportunity”. In addition, a key feature of CfE is increased flexibility and integration within the curriculum; panel and audience members involved in CfE agreed with this point and it was suggested that the current traditional compartmentalisation of secondary teaching qualifications into subject categories may not adequately reflect the CfE vision.

2. What might be the obstacles to establishing teaching qualifications courses for Psychology at secondary level?

2.1 Employment opportunities for secondary teachers of Psychology

As far as employment opportunities were concerned, some participants believed that the extent of Psychology provision in a typical Scottish high school did not merit even one full-time teacher, therefore it would be foolish to train teachers for jobs that “did not exist”. Others claimed that demand from students is currently underestimated by the authorities, and that schools do want to offer Psychology courses but their ability to provide good quality Psychology teaching was hampered by the lack of qualified Psychology teachers. There was plenty of evidence,

⁴ See table of NQ subject entries, Appendix 1

⁵ Curriculum for Excellence aims to develop young people as “successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors”. See Appendix 2.

from teachers on the ground, of the popularity of the subject and oversubscribed classes. Many schools without the expertise in-house relied on partnerships with local colleges to provide Psychology classes.

Deb Gajic (ATP UK) said there appeared to be a “chicken and egg” situation in Scotland, and that once a teaching qualification was available there would soon be a pool of trained Psychology teachers whom schools could employ with confidence, to fulfil demand from their students. The jobs would arise once trained people were available to fill them, and would facilitate innovation in a school’s curriculum; this had been the experience in England. It was pointed out that even at the moment Psychology is being taught not just in S5 and S6 (Higher level), but in S4 and even S3 (Intermediate 1 and 2) in some Scottish schools, suggesting that a full timetable for a Psychology teacher is not an unrealistic prospect. In any case, trained Psychology teachers might well have a second subject to offer (depending on their degree subjects and training); Julie Bostock said that that qualified Psychology teachers in English schools often contribute to a wide range of other subjects, such as biology, business studies, media studies, personal and social development, religious education, sports science, maths. Such teachers facilitated flexibility and integration in the curriculum of a school.

2.2 Funding and related factors

Some panel members felt that lack of funding was a major obstacle. Prof Jim Conroy (Glasgow University) was of the view that at this time of severe funding restrictions it would be difficult to introduce a new course; the resources that would be required were simply not available. Such projects had been proposed in the past, including Philosophy (which he himself had supported) but had failed for this reason. Several participants, including Dr Chris Holligan (UWS), argued that financial constraints should not be used to halt innovation, as the ultimate consequence would be that the *status quo* would never be changed.

Myra Pearson (Aberdeen University) stated her view that the issue should not be framed in terms of “obstacles” or “barriers”. She informed the panel that the School of Education at Aberdeen already provides a BEd course which offers Psychology as a second subject. She asserted that the potential to develop a Psychology secondary teaching qualification was not determined by funding alone, but that other factors were influential, such as the nature of GTCS registration categories: a broadening of categories was needed to facilitate development of qualifications and of the profession. In the teacher education institutions the necessary structures and expertise were already in place; some creativity in course design, and “political will”, were also necessary. These were issues which should be addressed by the forthcoming “Donaldson Review”, ie the major review of teacher education in Scotland due to take place in 2010 and led by newly-retired HM Chief Inspector, Graham Donaldson.

John Gunstone (Scottish Government) compared the funding situation in England with that of Scotland; he stated that in Scotland a “10% rule” normally applied, so since c.60 places were funded each year for Psychology in England, about six places might be offered in Scotland if a qualification were established. He suggested that perceived barriers between sectors were diminishing; his government department is now a ‘learning directorate’. There was increased recognition that education goes on in colleges as well as schools; and teacher training would need to reflect this reduced compartmentalisation of education sectors.

3 How might a decision be made, to offer a Psychology teaching qualification (secondary) and corresponding GTCS registration?

The Scottish Government, the GTCS, the teacher education institutions and HMIE would be involved in any such decision, however there was some debate as to where the initiative should lie.

In her concluding remarks the Chair summed up the information and arguments put forward. Concerns about funding notwithstanding, she discerned a good deal of support from the panel for a teaching qualification and GTCS registration (secondary) in Psychology. She proposed that representatives of those bodies with responsibility for teacher education in Scotland might meet soon to take the matter forward.

APPENDIX 1

Table 1: National Qualifications selected subjects by availability of teaching qualification/GTCS registration, number of NQ entries 2009, and number of presenting centres

Subject	Teaching qualification available?	Higher entries 2009	Total entries all NQ levels 2009	Total presenting schools and colleges 2009 (Higher)
Mandarin	Yes	0	36	0
Media Studies	Yes	764	2036	64 (Higher)
Psychology	No	2762	3421	78 (Higher)
Philosophy	No	906	1180	88 (Higher)
Dance Practice	No	217	217	15 (Higher)

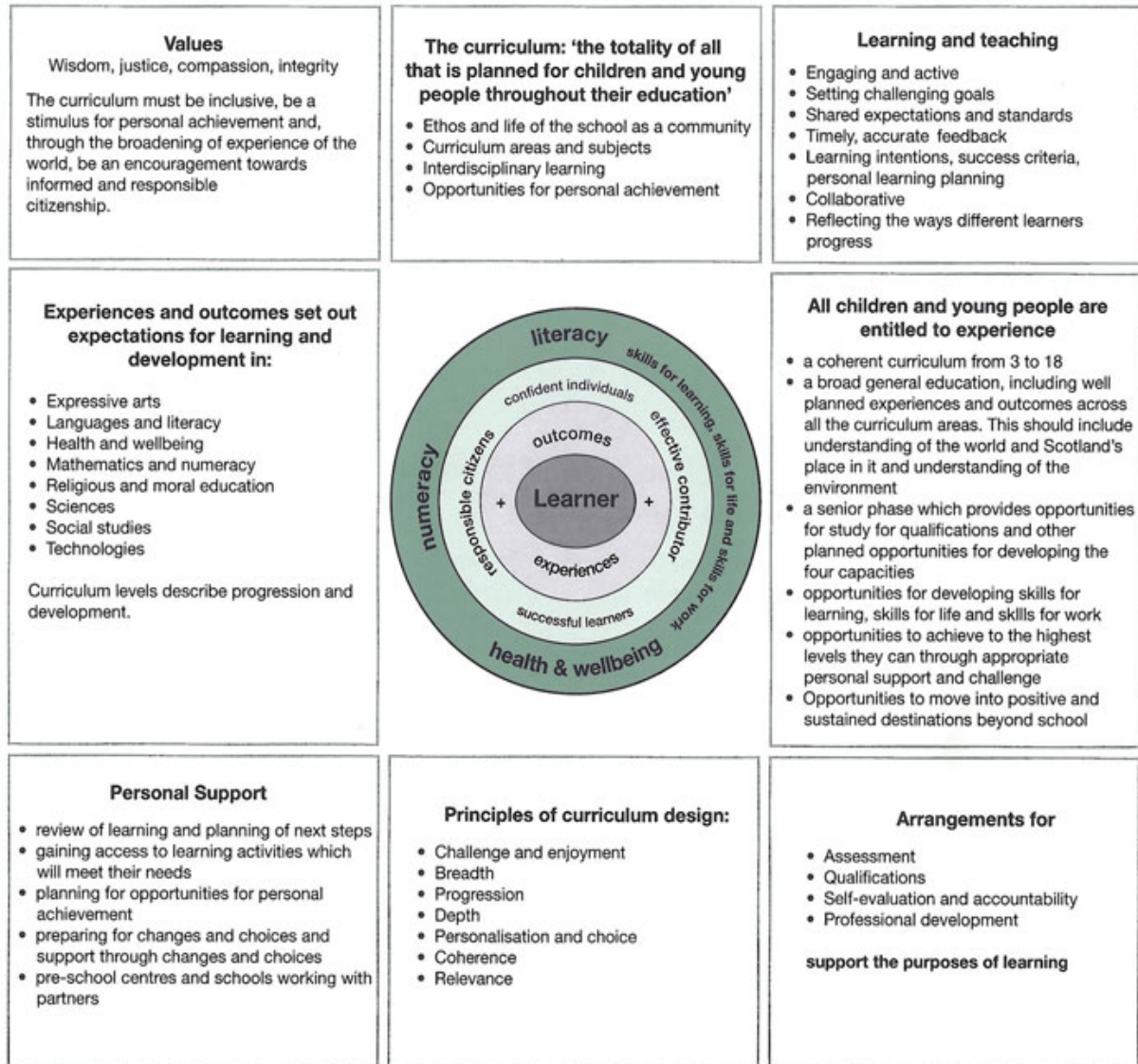
Notes on Table 1:

- 1.Mandarin, Dance and Philosophy are shown because they were referred to in the Round Table discussion as subjects, which, like Psychology, had laid claim to a teaching qualification.
- 2.Media Studies is shown as it is the most recently added new teaching qualification – available as a second subject only.
- 3.Psychology had more Higher entries than: RMPS, Economics, Technological Studies, Drama, Classics, Home Economics, Gaelic, and every Modern Language except French – for all of these there is an available teaching qualification.
- 4.Psychology NQ entries rose rapidly after the NQs were introduced in 2000. Numbers have remained stable for the last five years; there was a slight drop from 2006 to 2008 following major revision of courses, however entries increased again in 2009 to a record total of 3421. Total Psychology NQ entries for previous years: 2008 – 3124; 2007 – 3235; 2006 – 3367.

APPENDIX 2

Curriculum for Excellence: The curriculum at a glance

A schematic guide which presents a summary of the components used to build the 3-18 curriculum, with the learner at the centre.



Source: Learning and Teaching Scotland (2008)

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence/curriculumoverview/ata glance.asp>