Three Essays on Scottish Education

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Conflicting Philosophies

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the questions of what schools should both be and do has been hotly debated. In order to understand what is happening in our current education system it is important to understand the two opposing philosophies that have shaped contemporary thinking and approaches.

Generally speaking, the traditional philosophy encompasses long-established aims and practices that society conventionally used in education. What is termed traditional education in the current debate does not refer to past abusive and neglectful practices such as harsh discipline, bullying and a complete disregard for children's wellbeing. Instead, it embraces traditions worth conserving such as conscientiousness, responsibility, discipline, work, and knowledge. For educational traditionalists, schools are chiefly institutions with an academic purpose - to pass on a body of factual and cultural knowledge to the next generation.

According to educational traditionalists, this is achieved through delivering a knowledge-rich curriculum. The teaching practices associated with this philosophy include 'direct instruction', where a teacher stands at the front of the classroom and presents information, thus putting importance on the role of the teacher in leading and directing pupil learning. As such, classrooms tend to be set up with desks in rows or in a horseshoe layout, so that pupils face the front. Traditionalists have no problem with testing to assess if objectives

have been met. This philosophy also puts importance on hierarchy and authority. In any classroom the teacher should be at the top of the hierarchy and should be the authority figure. Children are taught right from wrong and given reasonable punishments for misbehaviour. Under a traditional philosophy, children are seen as having agency over their own behaviour and are responsible for their actions and choices. In Scotland in recent decades however, the ideas and methods associated with a traditional education philosophy have been phased out in favour of a progressive 'child-centred' approach.

It has been suggested that everyone knowingly or unknowingly follows one influential philosopher or other to some extent. The eighteenth-century philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau is likely to have had the greatest single influence on today's educationalists. He believed that children were intrinsically good and, when left to develop naturally without being corrupted by adults or society, would reach their full potential, morally and educationally. Rousseau strongly believed in the corrupting influence of society and propagated the idea of the perfect, almost divine child untouched by this corrupting influence. Somewhat paradoxically, he went on to abandon five of his own children to orphanages.

In the early twentieth-century, progressive educationalists seeking a modern form of education invoked Rousseau's vision of the intrinsic goodness of children and the value of learning through personal experience, rather than through a corrupting authority figure. Progressives advocated, as Rousseau before them, that each child should be viewed as a unique individual and should learn through

discovery and personal experience. Pushing back against the dusty classrooms of the past characterized by drilling and harsh discipline, these ideas took hold at teacher training institutions and gradually spread out across our education system. By the mid to late twentieth century, progressivism was becoming the dominant ideology in education and by the end of the century had become orthodoxy.

Like Rousseau, educational progressives believe learning should be child-led, with teachers taking on the role of facilitators. As such, learning should be fun, entertaining and, above all, relevant to each pupil's interests. Progressivism favours collaborative group work, discussion between pupils, discovery and contextualised learning. Classrooms are set up to reflect child-led, collaborative approaches, such as table groups with pupils facing each other. They take a more holistic approach of schooling, viewing self-esteem and emotional wellbeing as just as important, if not more so, than academic achievement. As such, teachers must have a good understanding of child psychology and their role must include therapeutic practices to promote mental and emotional wellbeing in the classroom. Progressives also believe that the emphasis should be on acquiring general skills over content and knowledge in order to prepare pupils to participate in the modern workforce. According to this theory, pupils acquire these skills through conducting their own investigations and organizing their own projects in contrast to the supposedly old-fashioned methods of teachers leading learning from the front of the classroom. It should be noted that traditionalists aren't against promoting wellbeing or developing skills, but believe

such aims are best approached indirectly, as the result of pursuing academic aims.

The reality is that the utilitarian, child-led, skills-based emphasis of progressivism simply results in a fractured and unintelligible curriculum which lacks direction and rigour, as is currently the case in Scotland. For example, if a Scottish parent wanted to know what her child could be expected to learn in a particular year, she would struggle to get a clear answer and the response would vary significantly from school to school and teacher to teacher. Under a progressive education philosophy, assessment is highly subjective, and so honest measurements of results are difficult to obtain.

Traditionalists and progressives also differ significantly in how they view and manage behaviour in school. Progressives believe that education should be egalitarian. Right and wrong are not set in stone and behaviour expectations vary from child to child. Progressivism rests on the belief that children want to learn and behave and that teachers should not impose their authority on children. Instead, children, who are after all inherently good when free of adult constraints, should be given the freedom to make the right choices. The image of the perfect Divine child looms large – with children being incapable of bad behaviour. When misbehaviour does occur, it is always due to past trauma, disadvantage or an unmet need. As such, children are largely viewed as vulnerable and fragile, and it follows that teachers shouldn't give punishments for misbehaviour but should instead work to uncover the reasons why children are

making bad choices. In reality, these ideas have led to low level disruption going largely unchallenged.

The table below summarises some of the major tenets of traditional and progressive education philosophies:

Traditional	**Progressive**
The curriculum should be knowledge-based and subject-centred	It must be child-centred, relevant and focus on experience and experiment
Emphasis on knowledge	Emphasis on skills
The end point is the acquisition of knowledge and this should be objectively tested	The process matters more than the end point and assessment is subjective
Teachers are authority figures and must be at the top of the hierarchy in their classrooms	Teachers and pupils are equals and decisions in the classroom are made democratically
Children are responsible for and have agency over their behaviour	Children have little or no agency over their behaviour and poor behaviour is a form of communication
Wellbeing and social development are reinforced by academic progress and achievement	Emotional wellbeing and social development are the core aims of schooling

While there are many who reject the premise of conflicting philosophies in education, arguing that it is a false dichotomy, these philosophical differences exist within each individual teacher whether they are aware of it or not. Many busy teachers have little time to spend theorising but are plainly motivated by one philosophy or the other. Traditional teachers in Scotland often feel that they're constantly being told they're just doing it incorrectly, by the Government, Education Scotland and the teaching unions, who are all profoundly progressive. They're made to feel guilty for using the evidence informed approaches that they see working best for their pupils, such as teaching from the front, using textbooks and expecting children to behave well.

Teachers must have a reasonable grasp of these philosophies if they are ever to question the status quo. Teacher training providers continue to almost exclusively teach the evidence-free methods and practices associated with progressive philosophy, leaving many teachers oblivious to the debate.

Despite the harms done by progressivism over recent decades, there are signs of change on the horizon. Older teachers still tend to be strongly progressive (although they may not articulate it as such), as well as new teachers freshly out of training who have been indoctrinated by their training providers. But in recent years, there has been somewhat of a pushback from younger and mid-career teachers, many of whom have experienced first-hand the problems with progressive approaches. These teachers, sometimes labelled

neo-traditionalists, have begun to question what they were taught and are instead embracing evidence-informed approaches.

Recently, England has become one of the few countries to begin to turn its back on the progressive education orthodoxy and to embrace a knowledge-rich curriculum. While the backlash has been tremendous, the new approach is already undoing years of decline. England has since overtaken Scotland in reading, Maths and Science in international league tables. Scotland's performance in all three subjects ranks well behind where it stood in 2000. Despite this, the education establishment in Scotland remains very much in thrall to progressivism.

While most teachers or parents spent little time concerning themselves with philosophical debates in education, it can’t be denied the dominance of progressivism has shaped the way many education policymakers and teachers think, and has had a devastating impact on our education system.

The Failure of Inclusion in Scottish Schools

In recent decades, there has been a massive policy push to include pupils with special educational needs and disabilities in mainstream classrooms. Section 15 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act (2000) states that the education of all children should be provided in mainstream schools, unless certain, specified, exceptions apply. Inclusive education, or just "inclusion", aims to provide all pupils with equal learning opportunities. The concept of inclusion originally began with particular reference to children with physical disabilities and special educational needs but now increasingly refers to children with complex emotional and behavioural difficulties. In addition, there is a growing tendency to classify behavioural and emotional issues as disabilities; bringing many more children under the scope of anti-discrimination laws. While research on the impact of inclusion has been scarce, there is general agreement among policy makers that educating pupils with additional support needs in inclusive settings provides them with improved academic outcomes and more social acceptance and friendships, while providing for their peers an increased understanding of diversity.

It is argued that inclusion facilitates more appropriate social behaviour because of the higher expectations in the general

education classroom and the fact that peers can act as role models for social skills through their interactions with each other.
However, while rarely discussed openly, the limitations of inclusion are becoming ever more apparent. Proponents of inclusion failed to consider the effects that such classroom compositional changes could have on other pupils. The few teachers who did express concern were ignored, or worse, accused of ignorance and insensitivity. Notwithstanding, a 2016 study found that children who shared a classroom with those who have emotional and behavioural difficulties had lower maths and reading scores, more absences, were more likely to struggle with social skills and were more likely to display negative behaviours themselves such as arguing, fighting, increased impulsivity and poorer self-control.[1]

This is in keeping with the experiences of teachers who report that other pupils quickly pick up or emulate disruptive behaviours. There are a number of reasons that this occurs. Some of this is likely due to reaction. For example, if a child is hit, they hit back because they can only patiently take so much. Another reason is that children see others appearing to 'get away' with misbehaviour with no apparent consequences and decide to push the boundaries themselves. In addition, peer contagion is likely to play a role. This is the process where an individual and peer mutually influence each other in a way

[1] A. Gottfried, Michael & Egalite, Anna & Jacob Kirksey, J. (2016). Does the presence of a classmate with emotional/behavioral disabilities link to other students' absences in kindergarten?. Early Childhood Research Quarterly. 36. 10.1016/j.ecresq.2016.02.002.

that promotes negative emotions and behaviours, and has been well documented in the research.[2] Any behaviour that pupils see happening frequently in their schools and classrooms will become the new normal, incorporated into the routines of many other pupils. Disruption, aggression, bullying and violence can quickly become normalised. It just needs to happen enough times.

Many progressives and proponents of inclusion argue that high behaviour or even academic expectations are unethical because children with additional support needs may be discriminated against by the demands of having to learn and behave well. This idea is particularly misguided given that high expectations, routines, consequences, and showing pupils that you care are the same in specialist settings as they are in mainstream settings. Often there is a dangerous assumption that under-achievement is caused by something irreparably wrong with children, and this has resulted in expectations being disastrously lowered. This will affect the perception children have of themselves; they are more than aware of lowered expectations and will respond accordingly. However, often these children would have been able to meet high expectations if only they had been set. And if they are to reach their potential, then

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[2] Dishion TJ and Tipsord JM. Peer contagion in child and adolescent social and emotional development. Annual Review of Psychology. 2011; 62: 189–214. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.093008. 100412 PMID: 19575606 ***and***
Prinstein MJ. Moderators of peer contagion: A longitudinal examination of depression socialization between adolescents and their best friends. Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology. 2007; 36:159–170. https://doi.org/10.1080/15374410701274934 PMID: 17484689

expectations **must** be high. Pupils with additional support needs actually thrive in a calm classroom where disruptive behaviour isn't tolerated. Despite this, in recent years, it has been argued that accommodating children with additional support needs requires a dumbing down of academic standards and an increasing tolerance of poor behaviour. It's not hard to see the negative impact this could have on a class. All too often, after a diagnosis has been made, teachers change how they interact with the child. They wrongly start to view all behaviour as part of their condition and believe that any behaviour must be permitted. Handling such pupils with kid gloves is rarely effective. They need to be taught good behaviour too, which requires high expectations, strong routines and an authoritative teacher who isn't afraid to issue punishments when a child falls short of the expectations.

Adding to the failures of the inclusion model is the serious lack of funding and support for the children who need it most. In 2020, the Scottish Government's annual pupil census[3] found that there were 226,838 pupils in Scottish schools with additional support needs. The number of pupils with additional support needs in Scotland has doubled since 2012 (from 118,011 pupils) and now represents almost a third of all pupils. While the number of children with additional support needs has increased exponentially over the past decade, children with such needs are receiving £1,000 less per

[3] Scottish Government. Schools in Scotland - summary statistics: 2020. https://www.gov.scot/publications/summary-statistics-schools-scotland-2020/pages/5/.

pupil compared to 2012, a 24.6% drop[4]. The reality is that pupils are plopped down into mainstream classrooms with little or no support, leaving teachers to pick up the pieces. This is not actually inclusion; it's throwing children and their teacher under the bus and giving them no chance of success. In particular, pupils with emotional or behavioural needs seem to get the least support. Often, these children do not respond to typical classroom behaviour systems that work well with other pupils. These are the pupils who do not willingly go to the cool down area or use the strategies that the educational psychologists have developed for them and will instead continue in disruptive behaviour. For the other children in the classroom, not to mention the teacher, this leads to a very stressful environment.

While it may appear that the needs of the few have come to outweigh the needs of the many, no one wins in this situation. Large numbers of children with additional support needs are being badly failed by the inclusion model. It should be recognised that the mainstream classroom is not always the best place for all needs to be met and all problems to be addressed. A child with serious attention and/or behaviour problems may be unable to focus in a large classroom environment that contains twenty or more active children. Often such children do much better in the smaller classes of specialist settings. Unfortunately, as many head teachers will attest, getting a place in a specialist setting for a child who really needs it is a near impossible

[4] Scottish children's services coalition. Concerns raised over support to vulnerable children as spending is slashed. 2021. https://www.thescsc.org.uk/concerns-raised-over-support-to-vulnerable-children-as-spending-is-slashed/.

task. In 2014, there were 145 special schools in Scotland, by 2020 this had decreased to 114, despite the massive increase in children requiring a place.[5]

With the failures of inclusion becoming undeniable, many of its proponents have taken to blaming these failures on teachers. Some argue that teachers are not implementing inclusion properly, are not differentiating properly or lack the strategies to support all pupils. To claim, like some do, that better training for the teachers is going to resolve this problem is disingenuous. Better training will not provide the time necessary to manage the conflicts and problems that arise due to the interactions between pupils with complex needs and those without. Nor will it prepare teachers to deal with four or five different emotional, learning, and/or behavioural 'disabilities' in the same classroom, while also trying to meet the needs of the other 20 children. In reality, classroom teachers find it stressful to manage several pupils with even moderately challenging behaviour, or just one whose behaviour is severely challenging. It can therefore be necessary, and in the pupil's best interests, to be somewhere their needs can be appropriately provided for.

Despite its intended goal of mainstreaming all students with additional support needs into the general education cohort, inclusion has fallen far short of providing adequate education for all. When

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[5] Scottish Government. Children Education and Skills. Summary statistics for schools in Scotland. 15 December 2020. https://www.gov.scot/publications/summary-statistics-schools-scotland-2020/.

used appropriately, inclusion can be beneficial for many children. However, the one size fits all policy of the past few years has contributed to a disastrous situation in classrooms across the country. Not only do a good number of pupils not get the individual help they need to succeed, but other pupils are not allowed to learn in a safe and disruption free environment.

Teachers are seeing classrooms being evacuated routinely several times a day due to pupils with emotional needs displaying chronic, dangerous behavioural problems. When faced with violence from pupils who are struggling in mainstream school, teachers are told they must put up with it because "inclusion", as though this single word is a knockdown argument. More often than not, this challenging behaviour is a sign that pupils are struggling because the mainstream school environment cannot meet their needs. That's not inclusion – it's not fair on them, their classmates or teachers. There must be an end to one size fits all inclusion for pupils with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Instead, alternative provision where these needs can be appropriately met should be properly funded and expanded. Removing a pupil from a mainstream classroom when necessary should be viewed as a positive solution, not as a failure. If the persistent behaviour of a pupil means that a teacher is unable to deliver a lesson, removal is not only unavoidable, but the correct course of action. Pupils with and without additional support needs are not being given the attention necessary to reach their full potential. Inclusion, in practice, has proved impossible to deliver.

Culture Shift

How progressivism took hold in Scottish schools

There is no denying that classrooms in Scotland are significantly less polite, civil and safe places today than they were a few generations ago. Nowadays, for many, authority and discipline have no place in education and children are no longer seen as being in control of their own behaviour. Why have authority and discipline become unspeakable words in our schools today? Past abuses such as corporal punishment and bullying have left many very wary of a strict school environment. When people think of discipline, they think of controlling adults wielding power over scared, damaged children. As such, the pendulum has swung too far in the opposite direction and has resulted in the decimation of traditional authority. In its place came the theory that pupils would behave if lessons were engaging, if they were allowed to do lots of collaborative learning such as carousel activities, project work and group work, and if lessons were child-led. Progressives were sure that these teaching methods would be enough to create great behaviour.

As such, swathes of teachers (and parents) now balk at their responsibility to discipline children and teach them proper decorum. In response, children's behaviour has steadily deteriorated. This has left teachers and educational psychologists searching for ways to explain and deal with poor behaviour. They have stumbled on many

fantastical ideas and approaches; anything to allow them to continue denying that authority and discipline were perhaps needed after all. Despite countless new ways of perceiving and managing poor behaviour, none have managed to turn the tide of classroom chaos. We will now look at just a few of the disastrous theories and approaches that led us here.

Children pre-1960s were held to high standards of behaviour and responsibility at school. It was the duty of every adult to help children learn the habit of self-restraint and self-regulation. No more. In the past few decades, parents and teachers have come to believe that we can't expect too much from children, they're only kids after all. This goes hand in hand with the idea that children can't or shouldn't have to learn self-restraint. Particularly damaging is the concept that a child's poor behaviour is to be treated as beyond the control of the child, that they are somehow helpless. However, children of the same age in many other cultures manage to show respect to their teachers, listen attentively, and avoid hitting or otherwise abusing their classmates. In fact, until recently children of the same age in our culture used to be able to manage it.

The idea that children are unable to control their behaviour and that poor behaviour is just part of being young brings many negative consequences. By accepting it, we condone it. Every time we fail to hold children accountable for unacceptable behaviour, we communicate that it's ok to behave that way. However, there will come a time when society holds them accountable. Being from a deprived background or having a short attention span won't matter

when they are trying to hold down a job. They might get away with throwing a desk at a teacher when they're fourteen, but they certainly won't get away with throwing a chair at their manager when they're nineteen. We are doing children a massive disservice by not teaching them early on that breaking the rules has consequences. To do this, teachers firstly need to accept that behaviour is a matter of choice. When they accept this, they can begin to help their pupils to make good choices. And yes, this will at times involve giving out punishments for poor behaviour.

Another toxic belief that has gained traction in recent decades is that there is some mythical underlying cause of poor behaviour. From the 1960s onwards, our focus on children's behaviour has moved from *what* they do (particularly when this involves misbehaving), to the questioning of *why* they do it. For instance, eleven-year-old Jack deliberately trips up another child in the corridor, resulting in a bloody nose and a broken tooth. The educational psychologist and class teacher explore the possible reasons *why* Jack seriously injured another child. Jack's mum had recently had a new baby, maybe this was a desperate way for Jack to show his distress and need for love and attention. Of course, that must be it! Now Jack has been transformed into the victim.

Had this incident happened several generations ago, there would have been no deeper meaning behind Jack's behaviour. His teacher wouldn't have been interested in any of his excuses and he would have had to face the consequences of his actions. It's the very lack of accountability that Jack experiences today that is so harmful. Jack is

sent the message that he has legitimate reasons for hurting others and disobeying the school rules. The result is that Jack is emboldened by practices that seem perversely designed to reward misbehaviour.

Misbehaviour as an expression of need or a form of communication is now much more than just a theory. It is almost a consensus in education circles. It is usually implied that the 'message' being expressed by disruptive behaviour is 'I'm distressed' and occasionally 'I'm bored'. However, there is no empirical means by which such speculations can be verified and they therefore border on delusional. In addition, these delusions absolve poorly behaved pupils of responsibility for their actions and project responsibility onto their teachers. It's interesting that children only seem to express their 'unmet needs' to new teachers, supply teachers or teachers who tend to struggle with behaviour management and not with senior or experienced teachers who command respect.

Misbehaviour as an expression of need is a dangerous fabrication. Often, the reason for misbehaviour is much simpler – many children misbehave because it amuses or distracts them, or in an attempt to assert dominance. They want to see for themselves just what they can get away with, to determine the limits of permissible conduct. This is a normal way for children to work out what is acceptable. In the past, consistent correction allowed children to work this out quickly. Nowadays, the absence of clear limits and consistent punishments simply heightens children's curiosity, so they continue to push the limits. Teachers and educational psychologists wrongly see this escalating behaviour as a cry for help or an unmet need. The only

unmet needs are the needs for clear limits and consistent correction - the need to be shown what is acceptable. But it's doubtful these are the needs that educational psychologists had in mind when they dreamt up this theory.

With older children, a lot of the 'communication' conveyed by misbehaviour is intended for the other children in the class. A powerful driving force during human adolescence is the need to establish status among peers, thus communicating 'needs' such as: "I'm showing off in order to impress my classmates"; "I want to boost my status in the class hierarchy because of how it makes me feel"; or "I don't like you so I'm trying to make you feel bad". Older children will frequently 'act up' for peer acceptance. More often than not, misbehaviour is not a way for children to convey distress, it's just a choice. Moreover, given that children, especially adolescents, are profoundly influenced by their peers, most will behave badly if such behaviour has become the norm. The problem in many schools today is that disruptive behaviour *has* become the norm and more and more children are part of it. We are all capable of doing wrong for no reason other than we felt like it. I'm sure all of us can remember our own behaviours at school that had no deeper meaning behind them.

In many schools, when a child behaves poorly, instead of being held to account and being given a consequence, teachers ask children why they did it and what feelings led them to do it. Teachers, instead of being supported in taking disciplinary action, are asked how they minimised the potential for the child to misbehave. As a teacher in

Scotland today, if a pupil deliberately walks into you in the corridor, you are likely to get into trouble for not moving out of their way fast enough. If a child is a victim who is only misbehaving in order to communicate a need, then punishment is barbarous and discipline is inhibiting and dictatorial. Not surprisingly, none of these new beliefs have slowed the rise of the major behaviour challenges seen in most schools. When teachers are prevented from issuing sanctions, behaviour inevitably breaks down and all that teachers are then left with is appeasement. Thus, behaviour management becomes bribing, begging and ignoring.

With the kinder, gentler approach having obviously worked so well in the past few decades, what we need now is more of the same! That seems to be the prevailing view. Another new permissive discipline policy that is all the rage in Scottish schools is Restorative Practice or Restorative Justice. Everybody wants to jump on the bandwagon when the newest fad comes along and so assertive discipline is firmly out, restorative practice is in.

In theory, this approach involves those who have been harmed communicating the impact of the harm to those responsible, while those responsible are allowed to acknowledge the impact and take action to make it right. In practice, misbehaving pupils are given mini counselling sessions with the teacher and/or Headteacher. Some questions that would typically be asked during a session include 'What were you thinking at the time?'; 'How were you feeling?'; 'What have you thought about since?' and 'How can we (as in the school) make sure it doesn't happen again?' In reality, children learn

very quickly that all they have to do is tell the adults what they want to hear and they're out of trouble. For example, it doesn't matter that Leo has repeatedly sworn at his teacher and classmates. He sits down with the Headteacher for a restorative chat where he explains that he was feeling bored during the lesson and upset because the teacher was picking on him when it wasn't his fault. He also says (after significant prompting) that he now understands his behaviour is stopping others from learning and has promised he won't do it again. Half an hour later he's back in class and his teacher has been warned to stop her negativity and to better support poor Leo.

This all-too-common scenario severely undermines teacher authority and emboldens pupils, who now know they will get a hearing when they have clearly misbehaved. Of course, proponents of restorative practice will argue that schools are just "doing it wrong". The reality is that, in practice, this approach is extremely time consuming, demoralising for teachers and, most importantly, has utterly failed to have any positive impact on behaviour.

While in the past, children were terrified of being sent to the Headteacher, the restorative approach means that many Heads have taken on the role of pseudo-councillors. Well-intentioned school leaders, who put children's emotional wellbeing at the forefront of everything, want to uncover little Harry's reasons for persistently disrupting learning in his class and then hurting another child in the corridor. However well-intentioned, this approach is destined to fail. If a pupil has worked their way up through the sanctions systems, got to the top and discovered that the top is a cushy chat with hot

chocolate and biscuits (this is a genuine example), then everything else has been undermined and his teachers are left an impossible task.

Some of the most powerful proponents of the harmful concepts discussed above are teacher training providers. As such, teacher training is often woefully ineffective at preparing new teachers for the realities of the job. Many providers lack a focused behaviour management training objective, with most only providing a short outline of the topic. Instead, the responsibility for learning behaviour management skills is placed on the trainee, who is expected to pick it up during placement. The implicit message is that if they don't, they are failing. This leaves student teachers at the mercy of their placement school's competency.

Some lucky student teachers have good placement schools where they learn the strategies for managing a class. Some may be placed in schools in leafy suburbs with polite, civil children. They may well excel during their placements but will seriously struggle when they discover the hard way that the same 'strategies' don't work in a deprived inner-city school. Other trainees are placed in challenging schools with struggling mentors and a woefully incompetent leadership team. Expecting them to 'pick up' and implement good behaviour management practices under such circumstances is a fantasy. Many will drop out or fail. In effect, trainees' success is often down to the luck of the draw. This is clearly unacceptable, particularly when facing a teacher recruitment crisis.

Today's children are being let down in a multitude of ways. On most measures, contentment in children and young people has plummeted in recent decades. While the finger has been pointed at many potential causes (social media, bullying, poor self-esteem or drugs), the failure of adults to teach children good behaviour, responsibility and accountability undoubtedly continues to play a massive role.

Children have the best chance of reaching their full potential in schools where the norm is good behaviour, and where antisocial, self-destructive or selfish conduct is minimised. Such a school culture also improves staff working conditions, wellbeing and retention.

Unfortunately, over the course of a few generations, the Scottish education system has gradually been falling apart, often because of good intentions gone awry. Classrooms have become chaotic and children are not learning how to be responsible for their own behaviour. One day these children will be adults and life will hold them responsible. If they haven't learned how to cope with following rules, being respectful to others and taking ownership of their own actions then they will struggle to succeed as adults. The current education system is creating a situation in which everyone loses - children, teachers and society.