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Latin Challenges: Perceptions, Policy and Curriculum for Excellence. Barriers to Teaching Latin in Scottish Schools

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Abstract

Over the last decade, the number of Scottish learners presented for National Qualification exams in Latin has declined. There are a number of factors contributing to this decline. Some of these relate to the study of Classics generally, such as perceptions around the subject being socially and academically elitist, while others are specific to the study of Latin and the challenges arising from it being a language. Some factors are relevant to the situation of Latin internationally, for example the desire for education which is more explicitly relevant to the demands of modern societies, while others relate to specific features of the Scottish education system. Examination of the impact of Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and of the Scottish Language Learning policy on education will give context to the current position of Latin within primary and secondary schools. Significant institutional support for the learning of Gaelic and Mandarin and the challenges currently facing all language learning in Scotland in the senior phase of formal schooling must also be considered in any discussion of the barriers to the provision of Latin. The decision of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), the body responsible for the accreditation of educational awards in Scotland, to cease offering a National Qualification in Ancient Greek in 2015 was based on low uptake of the subject, making the provision of external assessment no longer viable. It is, therefore, crucial to examine the current status of Latin within Scottish education and to determine the reasons for its decline in order to better understand how to address those issues, where possible, so as to secure the sustainability of the subject in the curriculum as well as its accreditation through National Qualifications.

Keywords

Latin, Classical Studies, Curriculum for Excellence, Language Policy, Scottish Education, Elitism

1. Background

The Scottish school system, under the arrangements of the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) framework [1], is divided into two categories: Broad General Education (BGE), covering the period of education from age three to fifteen, from Early Years nursery provision to the end of the third year of secondary education (S3); and the Senior Phase, covering the final three years of secondary education (S4-6). Within the Senior Phase, across the three years, a range of qualification levels are available within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). These qualifications are arranged on a scale from Level 1 to Level 7, with Skills for Work qualifications, encompassing what would traditionally be referred to as Vocational subjects, available for certification from National 3 level onwards and with formal examination

required for certification from National 5 level onwards. Broadly speaking, National 5 exams will be undertaken at the end of S4, Higher exams (National level 6) at the end of S5 and Advanced Highers (National level 7) at the end of S6. Underpinning this system is the concept of progression evident in the course specification documents, within which there are clear statements on 'Recommended Entry', with previous experience of the subject expected, as well as 'Progression', outlining the next step available for further study of the subject.

This qualification framework replaced the previous assessment arrangements in 2013-14, one of the principal differences being the introduction of the National 5 exams in S4 instead of Standard Grade qualifications which had been in place since 1984. Nevertheless, much like in the previous system, the underlying principle remained that from the completion of the Broad General Education phase at the end of S3, those sitting National 5 exams at the end of S4 would maintain a broad base of subjects at the first stage of national exams (typically eight Standard Grade exams would have been take in S4), narrowing to five Highers in S5 and narrowing again to two or three Advanced Highers in S6 (or a combination of Highers and Advanced Highers). The increased hours of teaching at each progressive level which would allow for more specialised and complex study of a given subject, would naturally lead to the reduction of subjects studied. This is the same pattern to be found within the English system where, from a broad base of GCSE subjects, a student will specialise in a reduced number at A-Level.

Following the recent independent review of the Scottish Qualification system, 'It's Our Future- Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment in Scotland' (2023) [2], conducted by Professor Hayward and therefore referred to informally as the Hayward Review, a series of recommendations were made (including a reduction in the number of exams in the senior phase, with external assessment beginning at Higher (Level 6)) and a response from the Scottish Government on how these recommendations might be implemented is imminent. The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) will certainly be replaced by Qualifications Scotland (QS) but there has as yet been no more substantive detail of changes either regarding how learners will be assessed and receive certification[1], or which subjects will or will not be included within assessment provision.

2. The Position of Classics: Latin and Classical Studies

Currently in Scotland, SQA assessment and certification are available both for Latin and Classical Studies from National 3 level to Advanced Higher (level 7), with National 3

and 4 courses assessed internally within schools and National 5 to Advanced Higher assessed through external national exams. At National 5 and Higher level, the Latin course is assessed by means of a Translation paper (a passage of unseen prose with an accompanying wordlist) and a Literary Appreciation paper covering two texts in the original Latin from a choice of five (Catullus, Ovid, Pliny, Virgil and Cicero). The same authors are included in the syllabus at both levels, though the texts are different, allowing the option of delving deeper into a particular author over the two years or gaining a broader exposure to and appreciation of a variety of writers and genres by choosing different authors. For Advanced Higher, there is a Translation paper (prose and poetry), a dissertation and a Literary Appreciation paper, with two options arranged in genres, 'Letters and Letter-Writing' and 'Ovid and Latin Love-poetry.

Alongside Latin, Classical Studies is offered for formal examination at the same SCQF levels. Distinct from the language focus of Latin, this course covers 'Life in Classical Greece', 'Life in the Roman World' and 'Classical Literature' which uses translated texts as source material by which to learn about and evaluate the ancient world. At National 5 and Higher level there is an assignment as part of the final exam and at Advanced Higher level there is a dissertation.

Therefore, in terms of Classical subjects available for study with a view to obtaining a National Qualification, there are two options, a language course and a social studies course, both available at every level where external assessment is offered by the SQA. This compares with the Classical subject exams available within the English system where there are four available courses, two language (Latin and Greek) and two social subjects (Classical Civilisation and Ancient History). The SQA ceased to provide for examination in ancient Greek in 2015 since the small number of candidates made it no longer viable.

Candidate Numbers for Classical Subjects

In response to the recent publication of the SQA's statistics on the numbers of candidates sitting National Qualification exams in 2024, McEnaney (2024) identified a number of statistical trends taking place across various subjects between 2016 (six years after the implementation of the new Curriculum for Excellence and three years after the new National Qualifications) and 2024. He underlined the fact that for entries at Higher level, although a number of subject courses had experienced double-digit decline and figures demonstrated a significant drop for Modern Languages, "The largest drops have been in Care, Childcare and Development, and Latin (-49.3%)." [3]

This headline statistic is clearly concerning in itself as it marks in tangible terms the declining numbers of Scottish students being presented for Higher Latin exams over the eight-year period, supporting more anecdotal evaluations of the decline of the subject. The statistics merit some closer scrutiny, however, if a more accurate and comprehensive picture of the state of Latin in the senior phase in Scottish

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1 One of the recommendations is the introduction of a Diploma at the exit point with three components: Programmes of Learning; Project Learning; and the Personal Pathway.

schools is to be acquired.

In terms of Higher Latin, in the period from 2019-2024, the number of candidates presented fell from 255 to 145 (-43%). Between 2019 and 2023, taking into account some slight fluctuation from year to year (including an increase in 2020), the decline in numbers was 15.6%, whereas the drop between 2023 and 2024 was a more significant 32.6%. The general trend, therefore, since 2019 has been a reduction in numbers, with a much sharper reduction between 2023-24.

What is perhaps even more illuminating is when those numbers are separated into candidates presented from independent schools in the private sector and those from state schools. For the former, the overall decline from 2019 to 2024 was 28% (2019-2023 saw a slight increase of 3%; 2023-23 a drop of 30%); for the latter it was a much more significant 68.4%. This breakdown reveals that while the overall reduction of 43% across both sectors combined is significant, and the individual decline within the private sector is still over a quarter[2] [4], the decline in the state sector is much steeper over the same period with over a two-thirds drop in candidates.

While the overall trend is certainly downward, there are a few points to take into account in the face of such bleak statistics, particularly the sharp drop between 2023 and 2024. Firstly, when such relatively small numbers are involved, percentage fluctuations can appear more substantial and concerning. Secondly, the number of candidates presented at National 5 level is more positive, with overall numbers from 2019-2024 rising slightly by 2.7% (rising by 13% between 2023 and 2024) and numbers demonstrating a general stability in the independent sector (fluctuations but no overall change from 2019-2024) and an increase in the state sector (11.1% from 2019-2024). It may be that the increase in National 5 candidates will feed through and have some positive impact on the number of candidates at Higher in the 2024-25 exam diet.

In contrast to the decline in numbers which Latin is experiencing, Classical Studies has seen a significant rise in its popularity. At Higher level, there has been an increase of 25.9% between 2016-2024, Advanced Higher a 47% increase and at National 5 a staggering 358.9% growth in candidate numbers with potential positive impact of these increased N5 numbers (330) on future numbers of presentations at Higher and Advanced Higher. It is interesting to note that, also in contrast to the trends identified in relation to Latin, the vast majority of candidates entered for Classical Studies at National 5 level (84.8%) come from schools in the state sector[3] [5].

In view of the flourishing of Classical Studies, though admittedly the numbers are still small in comparison with many non-Classical subjects certified by the SQA[4], it would be

reasonable to assume that there is an interest, indeed a growing interest, among young people in studying the societies and literature of ancient Greece and Rome. As will be discussed in the following section, a great deal of this growth can be attributed to the success of efforts by various Classics institutes, charities and projects in promoting and supporting the introduction of Classical Studies into schools with no previous provision and on the enthusiasm of those individual teachers involved. Nevertheless, external support in facilitating and funding the training of teachers and teacher enthusiasm do not guarantee uptake of a subject. It would also appear, therefore, that the simultaneous decline in the numbers studying Latin for National Qualifications cannot simply be explained as the consequence of a general disinterest in society for all things ancient.

3. Perceptions of Classical Subjects: Latin and Classical Studies

A great deal of discussion around the place of Latin in school curricula and the scope of accessibility to the subject at a Scotland-wide, UK-wide and global level, starts from or gravitates towards the role of certain limiting perceptions of the subject as elitist. These perceptions have been regarded as a significant factor in the difficulty of Classical subjects to have a more widespread appeal (Galinsky 1991 [6] and Hall and Stead 2014 [7]). Classical subjects have been regarded as elitist in two distinct ways. The first of these relates to class. As Hall and Stead explain, its elitist reputation as a subject for an upper social class stems in part from the elite nature of the content since "…classical culture was produced by and for the ancient elite in a hierarchical society" but also from its representation and use in later education with the effect that "The association of the Greek and Latin Classics with the maintenance of the British class system has left scars on our culture in this country which are still affecting debates over their place in schools and universities today." It is both about, and therefore exclusively relevant to the socially elite. That this perception continues to exist, particularly for Latin, is borne out by the fact that it is predominantly independent schools which continue to teach it. According to figures from the Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS), around 4% of Scottish pupils are educated in the private sector [8]. Therefore, the majority of those learning Latin are educated privately which would seem to indicate Latin's reputation as largely a subject for that privileged 4%. Embedded within this view of Classics being the preserve of the minority in terms of class (or wealth) status, a subject suitable only for gentlemen, is the notion of its essential uselessness. Mitchell (1994) [9] highlights that with the advent of universal schooling in Ireland in the 1960s, there was a widespread shift in attitudes to the purpose of education and that since this purpose veered increasingly towards utilitarian outcomes, subjects such as

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2 According to the Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS), the number of pupils enrolled in the independent sector in secondary schools has marginally increased over the period from 2018 (17,809) to 2023 (17,988).

3 The same situation exists in England.

4 There were 16,190 candidates for National 5 History in 2024, compared to 330

for Classical Studies.

Classics, which had no clear practical benefit, began to decline within the curriculum, having nothing to offer to the large numbers requiring practical skills for employment.

The second way in which Classical subjects have been deemed elitist is that they have long been regarded as too academic for the majority, inaccessible and exclusive on account of their difficulty. Again, this would appear to be especially true for Latin. Bracke (2016), in preparing to deliver a Latin course to primary-aged children, discusses the debate which took place at the planning stage around which ability group of children it ought to be delivered to, with some suggesting it would be most appropriate for higher ability learners [10]. Likewise, the government-funded Latin Excellence Programme [11] in England has overtones of this intellectual elitism.

In order to address these perceptions of Classical subjects being elitist in terms of class, content and academic difficulty, concerted efforts have been made to make it more socially, materially and academically accessible[5] [12]. A number of groups, such as Classics for All and the associated Classical Association of Scotland Schools' Network (CASN) have worked to make Classical subjects more widely available to learners in state schools through the provision of resources, guidance and funding both for start-up costs and to support teachers with subject-specific training in order to boost the presence of Classics on state school curricula. The situation is rather complex in Scotland where teachers must gain a formal qualification in the subject before they can be registered with the General Teaching Council of Scotland (GTCS) to teach it. The absence of any Classics Initial Teacher Education programmes in Scotland since (2004) means that this is usually done by already qualified teachers gaining extra university credits. While Classics for All has supported Scottish teachers to do this, nevertheless, the route to teaching Classics in Scotland is a less direct one.

Further attempts to shift the prevailing attitudes of social elitism have been made by groups and individuals such as the Network for Working-Class Classicists and Working Classicists (Scottish-based), established to promote Classics school subjects and Classics generally to a wider audience and to provide a forum for the working-class voices not traditionally represented in the field. In Higher Education, universities with Classics departments have developed access programmes to widen participation. Universities such as St Andrews and Edinburgh run outreach programmes which aim to foster good working relationships with local state schools to promote a more diverse interest in Classics.

In terms of content, again efforts have been made, within the field of Classics generally and specifically within Classics education, to diversify the topics and themes included. The Classical Studies national qualifications have updated their course documents to take note of some of the sensitive issues and terminology around enslavement [13]. The breadth of the Classical Studies syllabus, encompassing topics such as Eastern religious practices and Roman Britain, exposes learners to a more inclusive understanding of the ancient world. For language learning, a new textbook, *Suburani* [14], has been developed with a view to shifting the focus from the ruling elite in Rome to ordinary Romans:

"In *Suburani*, students meet characters from all corners of the Empire and all levels of society. … *Suburani* gives a voice to those who were marginalised in Roman society and are under-represented in archaeological and literary evidence."

This resource, with its extensive online support materials, has also sought to address the perception of Classical subjects, particularly the language element, being academically inaccessible for the majority of learners. Features such as a personalised vocabulary tracker and differentiated grammar and translation exercises aim to assist learners of different abilities access the language with greater success. The Cambridge Latin course, to a more modest degree, has also produced a visually attractive online textbook which offers interactive texts with easy access to the necessary vocabulary[6] [15]. Ross (2023) has argued that the potential of AI software to make the experience of learning Latin increasingly personalised and its ability to offer accurate explanations of grammatical concepts with examples will further contribute to enabling learners to gain access to a more extensive range of differentiated resources [16].

Patrick (2011) suggests that the traditional pedagogical approaches to teaching Latin have themselves contributed to its overly academic reputation and its inaccessibility [17]. He proposes a more communicative approach to teaching the language but acknowledges that the pressure of exam performance will continue to lead teachers towards using more traditional methods. This 'active Latin' has not so far been widely adopted, though it may prove a more suitable approach to the teaching of Latin in primary schools. For some learners, one of the attractions of learning Latin lies in there not being a requirement to speak it. Hill (2006) suggests that in fact Latin offers an opportunity to learn a language for those for whom the speaking and listening aspects of Modern Languages constitute a barrier[7] [18-20]. Research has also suggested that the study of Classics subjects have particular benefit for those from disadvantaged backgrounds and additionally, with particular reference to language learning, that Latin, rather than being academically exclusive, can be especially beneficial to those with Additional Support Needs (ASN) or with English

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5 Much research has also been carried out into the usefulness of Classical subjects in the curriculum. See DeVane, A.K. (1997) for discussion of the cognitive, communication and literacy skills developed through the study of Latin. Mitchell (1994) discusses the role of Classics subjects and Humanities subjects generally in developing well-equipped citizens.

6 Steps have also been taken in the SQA National Qualification assessments in Latin to make assessment more accessible through the provision of a complete word list for the Translation paper.

7 For discussion of the benefits of Latin being a 'read' language, see DeVane, A.K. (1997) and Nicoulin, M.A. (2019). The benefits of Latin being a 'read' rather than spoken language is relevant to learners with dyslexia and is discussed in Burbank (2024)

as an Additional Language (EAL)[8] [21, 22].

Any assessment of the impact of these measures within an educational setting can most readily be gauged by their effect on the numbers of learners studying the subject to National Qualification level. As already noted, in the numbers of candidates presented for Classical Studies, there has been an increase over all three exam levels (National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher) between 2016-2024, most markedly at National 5 level (increase of 358.9%). This has been the result of more state schools including the subject in their curriculum (the majority of learners sitting Classical Studies exams are from the state sector), making it more widely available to a more socially diverse group, and that in turn has in large part stemmed from the success of bodies such as Classics for All in supporting teachers in Scotland to gain GTCS registration to teach it. The same impact cannot be seen in the number of candidates sitting national exams in Latin. It would appear that, despite attempts to outline the ways in which learning Latin can be academically inclusive and suitable for a diverse range of abilities[9], the assumption that it is a subject for the most academically able still dominates general perceptions of it. This can be seen in the research of Bracke (2016) and Perale (2023) [23]. Bracke, in organising the delivery of a Latin course to Primary schools in Wales, identified the assumptions of staff in schools that the course should be delivered to a select group of more able pupils, the "Gifted and Talented". Bracke also noted that it was enthusiastically received by the learners but that some resistance to the project was experienced from the class teachers, with some teachers expressing concerns about the difficulty of the content and the ability of the children to progress with it once the project was underway.

At the Higher Education level, Perale conducted a survey of Classics undergraduate students at Liverpool University which asked students questions on a number of areas relating to class and perceptions, including the question as to why many of them had decided not to take up a Classical language option as part of their degree. The general feeling among respondents was that while the issue of class was not one that they felt deterred by, they still felt that there continued to be a certain elitism attached to the subject (76%), an impression based on factors such as the Classics lecturers on their courses having degrees from prestigious universities so that the face of Classics presented to them, remained a picture of exclusivity. Their reasons given for not choosing a language option varied from having no previous experience of learning languages, a consequent lack of confidence in their own linguistic skills, anxiety about being able to keep up and feelings of inadequacy, essentially the concern that it would not be aca-

demically accessible for them. In these two educational settings, Primary and Higher Education, the perceptions of Latin being not just difficult but too difficult, led to some resistance to and, for the Classics undergraduates, rejection of it. It may be the case, then, that this belief has also impacted the success of efforts to expand Latin into more state schools. Teachers themselves may be deterred from gaining the qualification to teach Latin based on their own attitudes to themselves as language-learners and by the perceived difficulty of it. To teach the language and Classical Studies also requires more SCQF credits for GTCS registration. (80 SCQF credits are required to qualify to teach Classical Studies whereas to teach Latin and Classical Studies, 80 credits are required in the language and an additional 40 credits in Ancient History, Classical Archaeology or Classical Civilisation). According to the Classical Association of Scotland Schools' Network, it has indeed been predominantly in Classical Studies that teachers have been supported to retrain. These same considerations mean that school leadership may also be reluctant to introduce Latin, its difficulty making it unsuitable for an academically diverse student body. This too could account for the falling numbers in schools where Latin is already offered.

4. Scotland's Language Learning Policy and Curriculum for Excellence

The fact that the Classical language option of Latin is faring badly in comparison to the non-language based Classical Studies, means that alongside the perceived difficulty of the subject, an appreciation of the position of Latin within the wider context of languages education in Scotland may further illuminate some of the challenges facing Latin existing in and entering the curriculum.

In 2011, as part of its manifesto commitment, the Scottish Government committed to "…create the conditions in which every child will learn two languages in addition to their own mother tongue." [24] Therefore, in 2012, the Scottish Government officially launched its new language-learning policy, Languages Learning in Scotland: a 1 + 2 Approach [25]. In 2014, the new Scottish curriculum, Curriculum for Excellence, divided the whole of the Scottish school experience into two broad areas, Broad General Education (ages 3-15) and the Senior Phase (ages 16-18). It further sub-divided the BGE years into five levels: Early (pre-school to P1); First (P2-4); Second (P5-7), Third and Fourth (S1-3). It identified eight curricular areas, one of which was Languages, encompassing both Modern Languages and Classical Languages. The 1+2 Languages policy was integrated into this new curricular design so that the provision of L2 (the first language in addition to the mother tongue) from P1 to the end of the BGE in S3 corresponded to First to Fourth Level on the Curriculum for Excellence framework, while the L3 provision (second additional language) from P5 to the end of S3 corresponded to Second to Fourth Level. Within each individual level, a

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8 For discussion of the benefits of learning Latin for learners with dyslexia, see Burbank, D. (2024). and Thomson, M. (2013). For discussion of the benefits for EAL learners, see Holmes-Henderson, A. (2023).

9 As well as the advantages of learning Latin for those with Additional Support Needs (ASN) or those with English as an Additional Language (EAL), Hill (2006) suggests that the fact that learners tend to have no prior knowledge of Latin before meeting it in a school environment fosters a certain equity in classrooms.

specified set of outcomes was identified to measure attainment and monitor progression, along with a set of experiences by which those outcomes should be achieved.

The difficulty for Latin within this new national curricular framework and language-learning policy is that its position and status has not been defined with sufficient clarity as to whether it qualified as an L3 option or was a distinct entity existing separately to the 1 + 2 policy. The Languages Learning policy, as found on the Scottish Government website, states that L2 should be:

"…one of the eight languages that pupils can take up to national qualification level, and is one of Cantonese, French, Gaelic (Learners), German, Italian, Mandarin, Spanish and Urdu. … L3 can be any language including a language from the L2 set."

It continues that

"… there is no hierarchy of languages in the 1 + 2 language policy. However, the L2 has to be a language available as a National Qualification and is therefore one of: French, Spanish, Gaelic (Learners), Urdu, Mandarin or Cantonese. The L3 can be any language, including British Sign Language (BSL), community languages (sometimes offered as GCSE qualifications) and Latin (available as a National Qualification)."

This policy statement, the second part of which omits German and Italian, presumably in error since both are available as National Qualifications, allows for the teaching of Latin as the L3 option from P5 (second level), though since it is available as a National Qualification, it is excluded from being considered an appropriate L2 language only because it is ancient rather than modern. Nevertheless, in this statement, however, it is clearly identified as an L3 option. However, in the documentation regarding this policy produced by Education Scotland (ES), the executive agency of the Scottish Government whose remit is the improvement of the Scottish education system, the language learning arrangements are presented in a different way:

"The Scottish Government's policy, Language Learning in Scotland: A 1 + 2 Approach, is aimed at ensuring that every child has the opportunity to learn a modern language (known as L2) from P1 until the end of the broad general education (S3). Additionally, each child is entitled to learn a second modern language (known as L3) from P5 onwards." [26]

Here the emphasis is on the entitlement to acquire two modern languages and all the guidance and resources available on the Education Scotland website relate to French, German, Spanish, Italian, Gaelic and Mandarin. The additional documentation with specific guidance on the L3 (updated 2019) provides no further clarification, operating on the expectation that it too will be a modern language. The Curriculum for Excellence framework documentation likewise reinforces this by replicating the exact wording in referring to the entitlement to two modern languages.

Within the Classical Languages section of the Curriculum for Excellence, moreoever, experiences and outcomes are available only for Third and Fourth level (S1-3), where for Modern Languages, there are defined experiences and outcomes for First to Fourth level. Scotland's National Centre for Languages, SCILT, is a government-funded body tasked with supporting "… high quality language learning and teaching in line with national priorities" [27] yet it too offers no reference or supporting materials for the teaching of Latin. These arrangements, then, effectively exclude Latin from consideration as an L3 option when there is clear expectation that it will be modern languages offered for both L2 and L3, despite Latin being explicitly named as an L3 option in the Scottish Government policy document.

This has led to uncertainty on the part of Latin teachers as to whether Latin can indeed be offered as an L3 language. This unclear position is not helped, moreover, by the remainder of the government's Language Learning policy which, after identifying Latin as a potential choice for learners in P5, goes on to state that

"We expect schools and local authorities to give consideration to teaching both modern European languages, as well as languages of the strong economies of the future and community languages within their approach to delivering the policy." [28]

In this context, the contradictory nature of official documents makes obscure the place Latin has within the languages curriculum and would appear to prioritise Modern Languages as the desirable options within this curricular area. This stems largely from the view that the purpose and benefit of language learning is primarily, if not exclusively, communication. Nicoulin (2019) argues that such a notion "… is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the rationale behind including 'World Languages' in a curriculum, and ignorance of the wide range of benefits of language learning." Placing the primary value of language learning on its use as a tool in communicating with native speakers effectively marginalises Latin and maintains the perception of Latin being an inferior language-learning experience for students because it is no longer a spoken language[10].

5. Competition for Language Space

There are two additional factors influencing the language-learning dynamic in Scottish education and which potentially impact the presence of Latin in school curricula and its uptake at National Qualification level. The first of these relates to the support of the Scottish Government for Gaelic and Mandarin; the second relates to the principles of flexibility and personalisation which underpin the Curriculum for Excellence framework.

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10 Patrick (2011) and Nicoulin (2019) discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a communicative pedagogical approach to teaching Latin through the inclusion of spoken Latin.

5.1. Gaelic

Scottish Gaelic is a Celtic language native to Scotland which was traditionally spoken throughout most of modern Scotland before being replaced by English as the main language by the 18th Century. Hancock (2015) explains that

"… in the decade leading up to the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 there has been a resurgence in the general interest in the interwoven relationship between language loyalty, heritage and an evolving sense of national cultural identity. As a consequence, a number of policies have been introduced and initiatives implemented to revitalise both the Gaelic and the Scots language in schools in Scotland. Meanwhile these languages have also benefitted from actions associated with the European Charter for Regional Minority Languages (ECRML) to target these languages for promotion and protection (Council of Europe 2010)." [29]

As a result, through the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, Gaelic became an official language of Scotland and was given parity with English. More recently, the National Gaelic Language Plan 2023-28 was launched and the Scottish Languages Bill was introduced into parliament which aims to give

"… the Gaelic and Scots languages official status in Scotland and makes changes to the support for the Gaelic and Scots languages in Scotland. This includes changes in relation to Gaelic and Scots education." [30]

Indeed Macleod (2015) refers to Gaelic's "… seemingly enviable institutional apparatus to promote and support its sustainable future at a national level." [31]

Macleod refers to The Gaelic Board, the statutory body tasked with increasing the number of people using and understanding Gaelic, which has an annual budget of 7 million Euros, 42% of which is spent on education (schools, teachers and post-school education). The political commitment to promoting Gaelic both in terms of reframing perceptions of the language as a unique and valuable part of our cultural heritage and expanding access to it in the curriculum along with the financial investment to support it, means that it is potentially more difficult for other languages in the curriculum to complete for attention[11]. The impact of this support may be gauged through the number of candidates sitting National Qualification exams[12]. The number of candidates sitting exams at National 5 level, over the 2016-24 period saw an increase of 60.9% for Gaelic (Learners) and an increase of 65.6% for Gàidhlig[13], though there was a decline at Higher level (-27.5%) and at Advanced Higher level (-37.5%). It is

possible that the increase at National 5 level will have a positive impact at Higher level in the future.

5.2. Mandarin

In 2012, the Chinese government invested in the creation of twelve Confucius Hubs in Scottish schools with a view to supporting the teaching of Mandarin at both primary and secondary level. The Confucius Institute for Scotland acknowledged the support of the Scottish Government, support which stemmed from the fact that the establishment of the Institute "… chimed with the ambition of the Scottish government to develop more strategic engagement with China. The Institute's focus on education, business and culture is helping to deliver the ambition for Scotland expressed in the recent 5-year plan while the increase in the number of Institutes in Scotland to five means that Scotland has one of the highest densities of Confucius Institutes in the world." [32]

Specifically, in the 'Working with China: five-year engagement strategy (2012), the Scottish government identified as one of its priorities the ambition to

"Double the number of teachers of Mandarin working in local authority schools in Scotland, based on 2011/12 levels... Double the number of school students attaining recognised qualifications in Chinese language, based on 2011/12 levels." [33]

This promotion of the learning of Mandarin relates to the section of the Scottish government's Language Learning policy which recommends teaching the languages of strong economies of the future. Hancock (2015) likens this to

"... the promotion of Russian in the 1980s and Japanese in the 1990s, once viewed as fashionable and prestigious world languages."

It would indeed appear that the main impetus behind this language programme from the Scottish government's point of view is an economic one and in fact Mandarin, currently taught in twenty-one of the thirty-two local authorities (and one grant-aided secondary) has seen an increase in the number of candidates between 2022 and 2024, with a 21.4% increase at National 5 level, 3.4% at Higher and 38.5% at Advanced Higher[14].

Therefore, for a combination of heritage, political and economic reasons, the Scottish Government has actively supported the inclusion and expansion of Gaelic and Mandarin in Scottish schools and both subjects have received significant funding and access to the curriculum. The cultural framing of these languages as useful, part of Scottish national identity (Gaelic) and potentially lucrative (Mandarin) may contribute to them being regarded as preferable language options in schools.

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11 Mitchell (1994) argues that the promotion of Irish Gaelic for heritage reasons ignores the wider linguistic and cultural heritage of the country. The same is true for Scotland which has a traditional linguistic heritage associated with Latin and a landscape (the Antonine Wall, for example) which still reflects that.

12 Another measure of impact might be the Scottish census with data referring to those identifying themselves as Gaelic speakers or able to speak/ understand some Gaelic.

13 Gaelic (Learners) refers to students learning Gaelic as a second language, L2) while Gàidhlig refers to those for whom it is their mother tongue or those who are fluent (L1).

14 At Higher and Advanced Higher there is an almost equal balance between independent and state school entries, whereas at National 5 level, the number presented by state schools is almost double that of the independent sector.

6. Curriculum for Excellence: Unintended Consequences

Hancock (2015), referring to the introduction of the new National Qualifications designed to complement the new Curriculum for Excellence, predicted

"... that the element of flexibility and student choice embedded within the new National Qualifications starting in 2014 will see a further dip in the numbers who study languages after the second year of secondary school."

Writing five years later, Shapira and Priestley (2020), in an examination of factors impacting subject choice in the lower secondary, noted that

"... the senior phase curriculum is becoming narrower. There is a trend since 2013, the year when new qualifications under Curriculum for Excellence were introduced, for fewer subjects to be taken in school year S4 for level 5 National Qualifications." [34]

In practical terms, what this means is that whereas under the previous National Qualification system, learners in S4 would typically sit exams in eight subjects, many schools, taking advantage of the flexibility which is at the centre of the new arrangements, are now offering fewer than eight, with a number offering only five or six subjects at National 4 and 5 levels. This narrowing down in S4 has two implications. Firstly, since the SCQF assessment arrangement is regarded as a progressive framework, when only five or six subjects are chosen in S3/4, that National 4/5 choice is tantamount to choosing subjects which will be taken for Higher, where typically five subjects would be taken. Secondly, it means that 'borderline' subjects which may have been picked when there was a choice of eight, are no longer chosen. Shapira and Priestley's research found that the impact of this narrowing of choice in S4 has most significantly affected the proportion of entries for Modern Languages, which dropped by almost a half between 2011 and 2017 and that this drop in the uptake of Modern Languages was most likely to take place in schools in areas of high deprivation and with higher numbers of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds[15] [35].

Shapira and Priestley refer specifically to Modern Languages but the process of narrowing subject choice at S3/4 level could also be meaningful for the numbers choosing Latin, since after the 'core' subjects are accommodated, there is less room for manoeuvre to choose a more marginal subject such as Latin and may account to some extent for the sharp decline in the number of candidates being presented from state schools in which the narrowing of the curriculum in S3/4 is more likely to occur. However, as Shapira and Priestley (2020) acknowledge, although the sharpest decline took place in 2013-14 and 2014-15, "... the reduction in the proportion of Modern Languages entries started before the introduction of the new qualifications

and continued at least until 2017." It cannot, therefore, be solely attributed to the new arrangements of the Curriculum for Excellence and the new National Qualifications. The challenges facing Modern Languages are longer-term and more deep-rooted. The same would seem to be true for Latin.

7. Conclusion

While Classical Studies continues to grow and to expand into state schools in Scotland, Latin is struggling and numbers are falling even within schools in the independent sector. The enduring perceptions of Latin as being elite both socially and academically have made it more difficult for it to replicate the success of Classical Studies in being introduced into the state school curriculum. This is partly due to the challenges of supply: with no Initial Teacher Training in Scotland for Classics, Scotland is not producing any Classics teachers through the normal route to qualification and GTCS registration; and in the retraining of already-qualified teachers, it ihas been more likely that they will choose to qualify to teach Classical Studies. It may also be partly due to decisions on curriculum-planning made at senior levels in schools, where subject preferences and preconceptions of decision-makers could come into play and budgeting constraints may make lower-uptake subjects more vulnerable.

Latin also sits in a unique position within the Scottish languages-learning landscape. It is a recognised language within Curriculum for Excellence but one that sits apart from the main corpus of languages, which are exclusively modern. Latin has perhaps suffered from the absence of a spoken element or any useful purpose for speaking it, as this has been regarded as a deficiency rather than a strength which may account for the lack of clarity around its position as part of Scotland's language offering. Research has shown that learning Latin can lead to improvements in literacy and cognitive ability and can be of particular benefit to learners with additional needs. The fact that it is predominantly a 'read' language makes it a more suitable language-learning experience for those for whom the speaking and listening aspects of Modern Languages makes them inaccessible and could give such learners a viable language option in the curriculum.

Greater clarity regarding Latin as an L3 option in the Scottish Languages Learning policy and the creation of a fuller set of experiences and outcomes to reflect this would demonstrate support for the subject at an institutional level and may give teachers greater confidence in choosing this as a language option from P5. Teachers may be more likely to take this up if a bank of resources could be provided centrally for them to draw on. Inclusion of Latin in the language-training part of the Primary Teacher Education would also raise the profile of the language and again give teachers greater confidence to deliver it.

The forthcoming reform of Scottish National Qualifications, with a potential redesigning of the Latin syllabus, may be the opportunity to diversify the content through the inclusion of

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15 Shapira and Priestley (2020) discuss the barriers facing learners who do not choose 'facilitating subjects' such as languages from entry into the more prestigious universities. Reform Scotland, an independent charitable think tank, has termed this 'The Accidental Attainment Gap'.

authors not traditionally studied. The poems of Sulpicia, for example, might be included alongside Catullus; the letters of Cornelia alongside Pliny, though these women are certainly still figures from the ruling class. Similarly, some of Tacitus' writing about Agricola's conquest of Britain could help bring closer to home the impact and cultural relevance of the Roman world. Any redesign of the syllabus is also an opportunity to emphasise the ways in which Latin contributes to the Scottish Government's priorities for education such as their commitment to Learning for Sustainability and Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work. Latin, on account of its decades-long attempts to justify its place in the curriculum, would seem particularly well-placed to promote the flexibility necessary to adapt in a fast-changing world.

Abbreviations

ASN	Additional Support Needs
BGE	Broad General Education
CASN	Classical Association of Scottish Schools Network
CfE	Curriculum for Excellence
ES	Education Scotland
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ECRML	European Charter for Regional Minority Languages
GTCS	General Teaching Council of Scotland
SCILT	Scotland's National Centre for Languages
SCIS	Scottish Council of Independent Schools
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
QS	Qualifications Scotland

Author Contributions

Mary O'Reilly is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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Biography

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