Integrating Social Studies using an 'Enduring Human Issues' approach

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This article discusses the value of Enduring Human Issues as an organiser for an integrated Social Studies Curriculum. This paper argues that at present, the BGE Social Studies curriculum in many schools offers children a distorted view of what it means to study the past (Smith, 2016), leaving children questioning the value that the study of history holds. Driven by instrumental justifications for content selection, the curriculum children experience at the junior phase is often a diluted version of the senior curriculum, itself driven by SQA examinations (Smith, 2019).

This was never the intention, Scotland's *Curriculum for Excellence* energises teachers as agents of change (ibid) and following the announcement that the SQA is to be substantially reformed, it is time that considerations as to how an integrated approach to Social Studies may work in practice is taken more seriously.

THE SCOTTISH CONTEXT

Scotland's *Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE) was part of a wider shift in curriculum development, representing a movement away from explicit knowledge content specification towards a generic, skills-based approach to curricula (Priestley and Sinemma, 2014), where the intention is for learners to become 'confident individuals, successful learners, responsible citizens and effective contributors' (Scottish Executive, 2004). Within this context, CfE positions teachers as curriculum makers who are best placed to select the specific curricular content in their school contexts. For history curriculum-makers, such a positioning requires that teachers engage in difficult debates around which historical knowledge should be taught and why (Smith, 2019). The role of teachers as curriculum makers and broader agents of change (Priestley and Drew, 2016) is an encouraging concept for practitioners. However, this has become increasingly problematic within the context of the Scottish history curriculum. The problem arises from the lack of clarity surrounding the purpose and therefore 'place' of history in the school curriculum. Whilst recognised as a discrete subject in the senior phase, at the BGE phase, history holds a split identity; on the one hand it is offered as an 'organiser' contributing to the aims of a broader Social Studies course whilst on the other hand, history is intended to contribute as a unique subject discipline, providing children with insights on how we come to 'know' about the past and the interpretations we have about it (Smith, 2016). For Smith (2019, pp.453-456), this

lack of clarity surrounding the purpose and place of history in curriculum documentation has meant that schools tend to follow one of two paths, schools either:

1. Ignore purpose and concentrate on pupil engagement, selecting topics learners find most enjoyable or;
2. Reach for the SQA as the only available discourse for content selection

The above criteria for content selection in history has become common practice in our schools, with the overall result being a narrow and fragmented syllabus that offers children at the BGE phase a diluted version of the senior curriculum (ibid). Yet CfE's decision to avoid the word 'history' instead, opting for 'People, Past Events and Societies' alongside 'People, Place and Environment' and 'People in Society, Business and Economy' seems to implicitly encourage an integrated approach to Social Studies (Smith, 2016). Despite this, many schools tend to emphasise distinct subject boundaries by teaching these subjects on a rota basis (ibid) and do not consider the links between these subjects. Fortunately, in Scotland, a high-autonomy and high-trust approach to curriculum design means that teachers have the opportunity to implement the change required to resolve this.

THINKING ABOUT THE PURPOSE OF HISTORY

The current situation is not the fault of teachers, as Priestley et al (2015) affirms, it is one thing to expect teachers to be agentic yet another for this to happen in practice. Essentially, if teachers are not provided with the necessary support to become agentic, then it is very difficult for teachers to fulfil their curriculum making potential. In order for teachers to think about what they are trying to achieve before they think about the content they want to teach, teachers must be clear about what they are aiming to achieve, and this means engaging with debates around the purposes of history education.

There exist two main theoretical traditions on the purpose of school history: historical thinking and historical consciousness (Seixas, 2017). The tradition of historical thinking is dominant in England and Canada and influenced by the work of Schools History Project in the 1970s (Lévesque and Clark, 2018). This tradition places disciplinary concepts such as causation, change, evidence, and interpretation at the heart of the history curriculum and emphasises children 'getting better at doing history' where history is understood as a set of academic practices (ibid).

Alternatively, Historical consciousness – a paradigm dominant in Germany and the Netherlands – emphasises how individuals in the present relate to the past, placing the individual learner and their relationship with the past at the centre, rather than disciplinary norms' (Smith, 2019). Essentially, historical consciousness according to Duquette (2015, cited in Seixas, 2017, p.63) is "the understanding of the present, thanks to the interpretation of the past which allows us to consider the

future", meaning that the past that individuals draw upon influences the futures they imagine. Both traditions have limitations. Historical thinking, being focussed on progression tends to marginalise the individual's relationship with the past, whilst historical consciousness is difficult to measure (Smith, 2019). What Lee (2004) proposes is an effort to meet in the middle, advocating 'historical literacy' as a goal of history education. Lee combines aspects of both traditions with an overall focus placed on the ability of the learner to orientate themselves in time in a way that is usable. The following three dimensions are outlined in relation to historical literacy (Lee, 2011, p.65)

> 1. An understanding of the discipline of history,
> 2. A set of personal dispositions based on respect; both for the notion of truth and for people in the past
> 3. A usable historical past on different scales which allows the user to orientate him- or herself in time.

As we plan curriculum, we need to consider what we are trying to achieve before we select the content that works towards achieving these purposes. In short, if we want children to be historically literate, we must organise our curriculum around the provision of the knowledge that allows children to not only understand how we come to 'know about the past,' but that also allows learners to develop their own relationship with the past, in a relevant and usable manner. Of course, this has significant implications for the way we go about curriculum planning however, if we consider educational purposes more carefully, our learners may well see the past as something more than a world 'dead and gone' (Van Straaten et al, 2018).

WHAT DO WE WANT STUDENTS TO ACHIEVE THROUGH A RIGOROUS STUDY OF HISTORY?

If the wholistic goals of our curriculum aims to prepare children for citizenship, the world of work, and 'lifelong learning' (Scottish Government, 2009, p.1) it is essential the history curriculum offers children a relevant and usable study of the past. Foster, Lee, and Ashby (2008) in their Usable Historical Pasts project found that only a small number of students in England referred to history when reflecting on contemporary issues, whilst in Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands, the majority of 14-year-olds thought of history as something 'dead and gone' holding no relevance to their present lives (Angvik and Von Borries, 1997, p.B26). The problem, therefore, (and probably a question that is asked too regularly in our classrooms) is that students have difficulty articulating why a study of the past matters which in turn has negative consequences for pupil engagement in our classrooms (Van Straaten et al, 2018). What we want to achieve is equipping children with what Lee (2011) coined a 'Usable Historical Past' (UHP) – we want children to understand that history is the product of constructing narratives that serve our contemporary needs; that the past is not 'fixed' with facts and dates about a world 'out there' that bears little relation to the 'real' world (Van Straaten et al, 2018). Children enter our classrooms under the hope that they will leave with

knowledge that is meaningful however, it is up to us to frame the past in a way that children perceive as valuable.

WHY IS OUR CURRENT PRACTICE FAILING TO EQUIP CHILDREN WITH A USABLE HISTORICAL PAST?

There is no doubt that equipping children with a past that is relevant and usable is already challenging since children are not inclined to connect past, present and future of their own accord (Van Straaten et al, 2018). However, the ability to construct a narrative from the past that serves our contemporary needs becomes doubly difficult when students study narrow, fragmented, and disconnected depth topics - the preferred approach in our schools - with Van Straaten et al (2019) finding that this inhibits a child's ability to connect past, present and future in comparison to those who have been explicitly encouraged to make these connections through pedagogy.

The way we think about and subsequently justify content selection needs to change; not only does the current method impact those who continue to study history beyond S2, but it also ensures that 50% of children who discontinue the study of history at this stage are left with a distorted vision of what the study of history looks like (Smith, 2019); to them, history is a study of disconnected topics that hold little relevance to the world we live in – these children are likely to be able to recall singular dates of events and battles through their snippets of Nazi Germany and the Great War, yet are unable to understand how diverse people in the past dealt with the same concepts such as power, conflict, racism and empire that we do today, and therefore, will struggle to understand how a study of the past can help us understand the present and prepare for the future. A historical education should provide children with the knowledge that helps them better understand and relate to their world (Nordgren, 2021), surely this in itself is a sufficient contribution to the four capacities?

AN ALTERNATIVE: CONNECTING PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Whilst there have been attempts to develop a history curriculum that covers long time periods such as units like 'Medicine through time' and analogous 'big picture' approaches that encourage abstract thinking (Blow, 2009; Lee, 2005), these do not encourage children to make connections between past, present, and future (Van Straaten et al, 2019), nor do they encourage a curriculum where knowledge can be stretched across subject boundaries to help children better make sense of their world. The proposed recommendation aims to demonstrate an integrated approach to Social Studies, with Enduring Human Issues (EHI's) being used as an organiser for this integration. EHI's are issues that have been addressed by people in the past and present in similar (but also very different) ways (ibid); they are issues shared by humans of all times because they are essential to human existence (Van Straaten et al, 2018). There is no definitive list of EHI's however, Dressel (1996, cited in Van Straaten et al, 2018) distinguishes eleven basic human experiences: space and time, religion, food, family, dealing

with nature, the human body, sexuality, labour, conflicts, gender, and encounters with strangers; others might include migration, integration and settlement, power, trade and interdependence, nationalism, security, technology, industrialisation, and human rights violations (New York State Education Department, 2017). It is worth noting here that since there has been significant emphasis on providing children with a (UHP), the value of this recommendation will directly link to the achievement of this however, examples of curriculum design will demonstrate how this might look when integrated across Social Studies as well as how we can pedagogically cultivate connections to be made between past, present and future. The aim therefore, is to offer children at the BGE stage a curriculum which, through flexible boundaries across subject disciplines, equips children with the type of knowledge that helps them better understand and relate to their world (Nordgren, 2021), allowing children to:

a) Perceive the relevance of history
b) Increase their awareness of their own historicity, perceiving themselves as historical actors

(Van Straaten et al., 2016)

Such a curriculum would allow students to see that diverse people in the past were faced with similar issues that we are today, and by studying contrasting examples of dealing with the same enduring issue, may expand learner's frames of reference beyond what they have already witnessed (Van Straaten et al, 2019).

WHAT MIGHT THIS APPROACH LOOK LIKE IN OUR SCHOOLS?
An integrated approach to Social Studies has been badly conceived in Scotland (Smith, 2016), where in many cases, integration has been misconceived as multi-disciplinary teaching where, constituent subjects are taught by a single teacher but remain separate entities. This approach can be problematic with many non-specialist teachers delivering curricular materials devised by other teachers (Priestley, 2009).
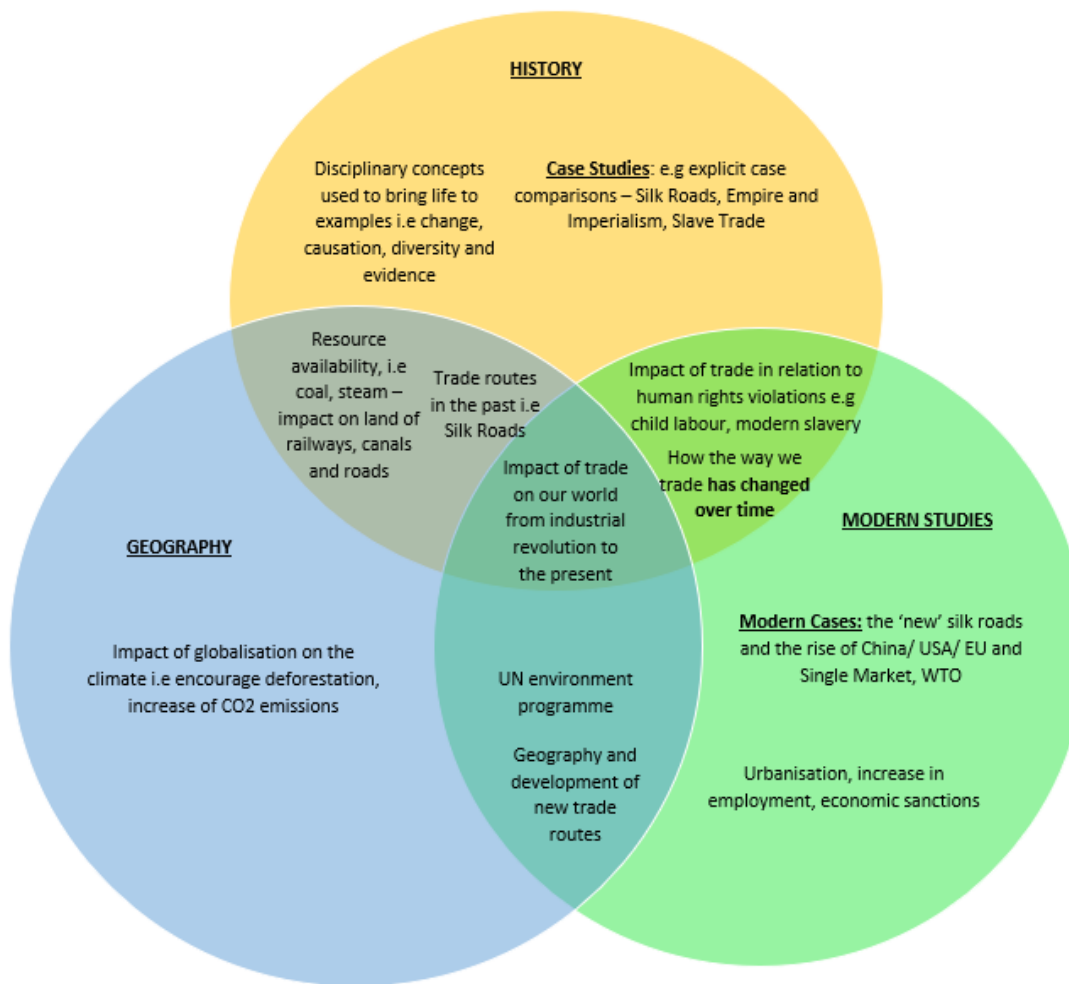
The goal of an EHI approach is to offer *interdisciplinary* rather than *multi-disciplinary* integration, where there is an attempt to blur the distinction between subjects however, not in a way that inhibits their disciplinary identities. Essentially knowledge can be transferred across disciplines however, not in a way that means access to disciplinary knowledge is denied. In pedagogical terms. This follows Fogarty's (1991, cited in Priestley, 2009) 'nested' model where a topic is placed in its wider theoretical context (in this case, its wider enduring issue). Suggestions for curriculum organisation around a nested approach to EHI's therefore, might look something like the following:

Trade and Interdependence: Why do countries need each other and how does this impact our world?	
Possible 'Nested' Issues	
Impact and development of trade, colonisation, empire, imperialism, impact of trade agreements, market forces, the EU and WTO, impact of consumption, cheap labour, child labour, slave trade, modern slavery, impact of trade on climate, new technology, changes in methods of production, working conditions, pollution, industrial revolution	

Migration, Integration, and Settlement: How have our communities become so diverse and what is the response?
Possible 'Nested' Issues
Reaction to immigrants, reaction to migrants, reaction to refugees, reasons for migration/asylum seeking, impact of migration on population density, problems faced by refugees and migrants, access to citizenship, cultural contribution, strains on housing, population growth indicators, influence of climate and land on migration, human rights violations of refugees, international organisations working to protect human rights of refugees, asylum seekers/migrants, geographic push/pull factors for migration, process of migration

Conflict and Cooperation: Why is there conflict, what are the consequences, and how can this be resolved?
Possible 'Nested' Issues
War, World Wars, Cold War, competition, resistance, disputes over land use, disputes over resource use, ethnic disputes, disputes over distribution of power, disputes over obtainment of power, terrorism, response to terrorism, disputes between social class, disputes over oil, disputes over land, geopolitics of oil, disputes over Middle Eastern boundaries, impact of global warming on oil production in Middle East worsening the conflict, climate-induced water shortages, role of international institutions in resolving conflicts i.e EU, UN

Power: How has power changed over time and what are the consequences?
Possible 'Nested' Issues
Lack of access to power, unfair distribution of power, power struggles, shifts in power and authority, access to free and fair elections, balance of power shifts, change in nature of power, how power has changed over time, kingship, monarchy, democracy, dictatorship, power in society, feudalism, warlords, Kingship, relationship of ruler to the ruled

Scarcity: How do we meet our basic needs for living?
Possible 'Nested' Issues
Lack of food, lack of human resources, lack of natural resources, lack of industrial resources, lack of housing/shelters, lack of clean water, drought, infertile land, lack of medical treatments

Impact of Humans on Environment: How have we changed our world and what might this mean for our future?
Possible 'Nested' Issues
Deforestation, global warming, destruction of the ozone layer, pollution, desertification, climate change, genetically modified crops, over-mining, impact of climate change on basic resources for living, melting of icecaps, loss of habitats, consequences of industrialisation/industrial revolution, process of globalisation and its consequences

Human Rights Violations: How are human rights violated and what can we do to protect them?
Possible 'Nested' Issues
Injustice, inequality, discrimination, slavery, exclusion, modern slavery, human trafficking, lack of freedom, censorship, genocide, restrictions to movement, persecution, threats to cultural identity, denied access to earning a living, death penalty, child soldiers, child labour, unfair working conditions, lack of access to basic living resources through for example, climate change

(Based on New York State Education Department, 2017; Van Straaten et al, 2019)
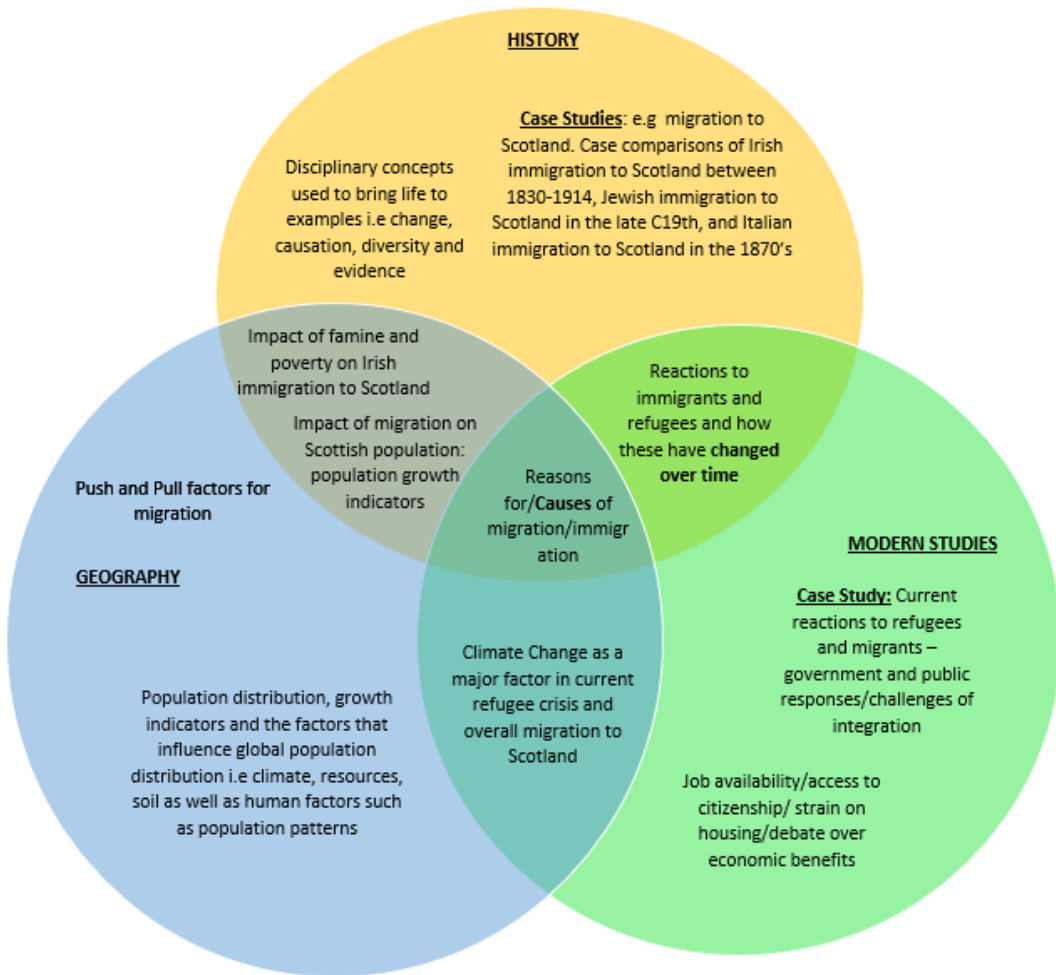
The above issues are not intended to be prescriptive however, might be used for inspiration for implementation of a curriculum organised around EHI's. Whilst subject specialists can discuss which 'nested' issues they might want to cover in detail across disciplines, two examples of what this might look like in practice are offered below.

EHI: Trade and Interdependence

HISTORY

Disciplinary concepts used to bring life to examples i.e change, causation, diversity and evidence

Case Studies: e.g explicit case comparisons – Silk Roads, Empire and Imperialism, Slave Trade

Resource availability, i.e coal, steam – impact on land of railways, canals and roads

Trade routes in the past i.e Silk Roads

Impact of trade in relation to human rights violations e.g child labour, modern slavery

How the way we trade has changed over time

MODERN STUDIES

Impact of trade on our world from industrial revolution to the present

GEOGRAPHY

Impact of globalisation on the climate i.e encourage deforestation, increase of CO2 emissions

UN environment programme

Geography and development of new trade routes

Modern Cases: the 'new' silk roads and the rise of China/ USA/ EU and Single Market, WTO

Urbanisation, increase in employment, economic sanctions

HISTORY

Case Studies: e.g migration to Scotland. Case comparisons of Irish immigration to Scotland between 1830-1914, Jewish immigration to Scotland in the late C19th, and Italian immigration to Scotland in the 1870's

Disciplinary concepts used to bring life to examples i.e change, causation, diversity and evidence

Impact of famine and poverty on Irish immigration to Scotland

Impact of migration on Scottish population: population growth indicators

Reactions to immigrants and refugees and how these have **changed over time**

Push and Pull factors for migration

GEOGRAPHY

Reasons for/**Causes** of migration/immigration

MODERN STUDIES

Case Study: Current reactions to refugees and migrants – government and public responses/challenges of integration

Population distribution, growth indicators and the factors that influence global population distribution i.e climate, resources, soil as well as human factors such as population patterns

Climate Change as a major factor in current refugee crisis and overall migration to Scotland

Job availability/access to citizenship/ strain on housing/debate over economic benefits

HOW CAN WE IMPLEMENT THIS APPROACH IN OUR SCHOOLS?

The examples above can be used for inspiration for a wider integration of Social Studies around EHI's. What we are also interested in as teachers of history as well as Social Studies is how we can use pedagogy to implement a curriculum that encourages children to make connections between past, present and future, for the purposes of a UHP. Van Straaten et al (2019) recommends that for connections to be made across significant time frames, analogous case comparisons should be used where children are explicitly encouraged to draw

similarities and differences between cases. This works on learners' abilities to generalise and recognise the wider mechanisms at play (ibid). An example of how we can achieve this in our classrooms based on the EHI Migration, Integration, and Settlement outlined above is detailed below.

Aim: Comparing refugee/migrant cases in Scotland from the past and using them to reflect on present day issues (**SOC 3-03a**) (Education Scotland, 2017)	
Lesson 1: Introduction	Pupils pull their knowledge from modern studies and geography to discuss present day refugee crisis and migration Class discussion of groupwork used to derive a 'key questions' framework which will be used for case comparison and drawing analogies with the present. (See **Appendix A**) Apply framework to current issues
Lessons 2-4: Analogous Case Comparisons	Pupils study the three cases of immigration to Scotland: Irish immigration to Scotland between 1830 and 1914, Jewish immigration to Scotland in the late 19th century, and Italian immigration to Scotland in the 1870s. As each lesson progresses, pupils will use sources of evidence to add to their 'key questions grid' as each case is explored. Teachers should focus on explicit similarities and differences to be drawn between each case by an exploration of the wider mechanisms that frame the 'key questions' grid.
Lesson 5: Assignment/Assessment	Assessment might represent a learner's ability to use what they have learned through case comparisons about the wider mechanisms embedded within Migration, Integration, and Settlement. For example, they might be provided with a source about the Migration and Settlement today and be asked to identify at least two of the wider mechanisms that shine through from their key questions table (i.e people's concerns in the host country that they are being economically disadvantaged) Pupils might then be assessed on these wider mechanisms and how they operate in the present. For example, they might be asked the question: "What might the new Brexit policy which requires people from outside the UK to have a UK visa or work permit, mean for immigration to Scotland?" The issue at stake therefore being, the impact of employment on immigration to Scotland. This would require children to consider the role of push/pull factors and by looking at past examples, how influential they are on the process of migration.

(Based on Van Straaten et al, 2019, and Eliasson et al., 2015)

The above example intends to demonstrate how explicit case comparisons of analogous cases can be used to draw similarity and difference, and teach children about the wider mechanisms at play within an EHI over time. It offers a chance for teachers to explore concepts like evidence, diversity of people in the past, whilst assessing change and continuity across large time frames. Whilst the above example explores the substantive concepts of *refugee* and *migrant* through time, if teachers were exploring the EHI of for example, Power, concepts such as *feudalism* and *Kingship* and present-day *warlords* in Somalia could be analogous comparisons as they both share the wider mechanisms of e.g personal allegiance

in exchange for someone stronger (Van Straaten et al, 2019). This allows children to see how past concepts have evolved over time, assess how they operate in the present and predict outcomes for the future.

A curriculum that in practice encourages children to draw connections between past, present, and future undoubtedly requires sound planning. This would require subject specialists to team up across disciplines to discuss which 'nested' topics coincide with each other, and offer the opportunity for knowledge and skills to be stretched across disciplines to provide children with a better understanding of the world around them. Resourcing, although an issue, should not be the biggest concern as many 'nested' issues invite an exploration of topics that may already be covered in school. For example, Migration and Empire (EHI of Migration and Settlement) and The Creation of Medieval Kingdoms (EHI of Power with concepts like *Feudalism* and *Kingship*) (Scottish Qualifications Authority, 2021) are likely to have resourcing already available. Essentially, the most important concern for implementation is how we can re-assess our approach to these topics and frame them in a way that is usable for children. This might require an adaptation to the timetabling of Social Studies where pupils would be required to visit the department for three periods a week, with one period visiting each discipline where knowledge is spread across the subjects to explore 'nested' issues. Although this would require a significant amount of time, department meetings, and discussions with schools who may have already implemented an integrated Social Studies course, a curriculum of this nature is not unattainable and surely, a curriculum which helps children understand their world beyond the classroom is one that prepares them to be citizens, contributors, learners and individuals?

CONCLUSION

School history should not just be about getting better qualifications. Whilst this is important a historical education has much more to offer children. A Social Studies curriculum framed around EHI's allows children to understand their own temporality through exploring how people in the past have dealt with the same issues that we are faced with in the present. This approach allows children to trace issues like race, empire, and power through time and by exploring the variety of approaches taken by those in the past expands possibilities beyond a child's own imagination. If we want our children to leave our classrooms prepared for the world beyond school, we hold the ultimate responsibility of equipping them with the knowledge that helps them better understand and relate to it. Whilst issues of implementation and resourcing cannot be resolved overnight, an education that places children at the heart of change in society is one of immeasurable value.

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APPENDIX A

	Case Study 1: Irish immigration to Scotland between 1830 and 1914	Case Study 2: Jewish immigration to Scotland in the late 19th century	Case Study 3: Italian immigration to Scotland in the 1870s
Why do people seek to live elsewhere? (are they escaping conflict, persecution or natural disaster, or are they fleeing for economic reasons i.e employment, welfare, or future perspectives)			
Are these people planning to settle permanently in the host country?			
Do human rights or humanity play a role in the reception of these people?			
How do they provide economic benefits to the host country?			
Does the population of the host country feel economically disadvantaged?			
Do religious differences or similarities between immigrants and the host country play a role?			

(Adapted from Van Straaten et al, 2019, p.533)

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