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A coherent curriculum? An exploration of early secondary curriculum provision in Curriculum for Excellence

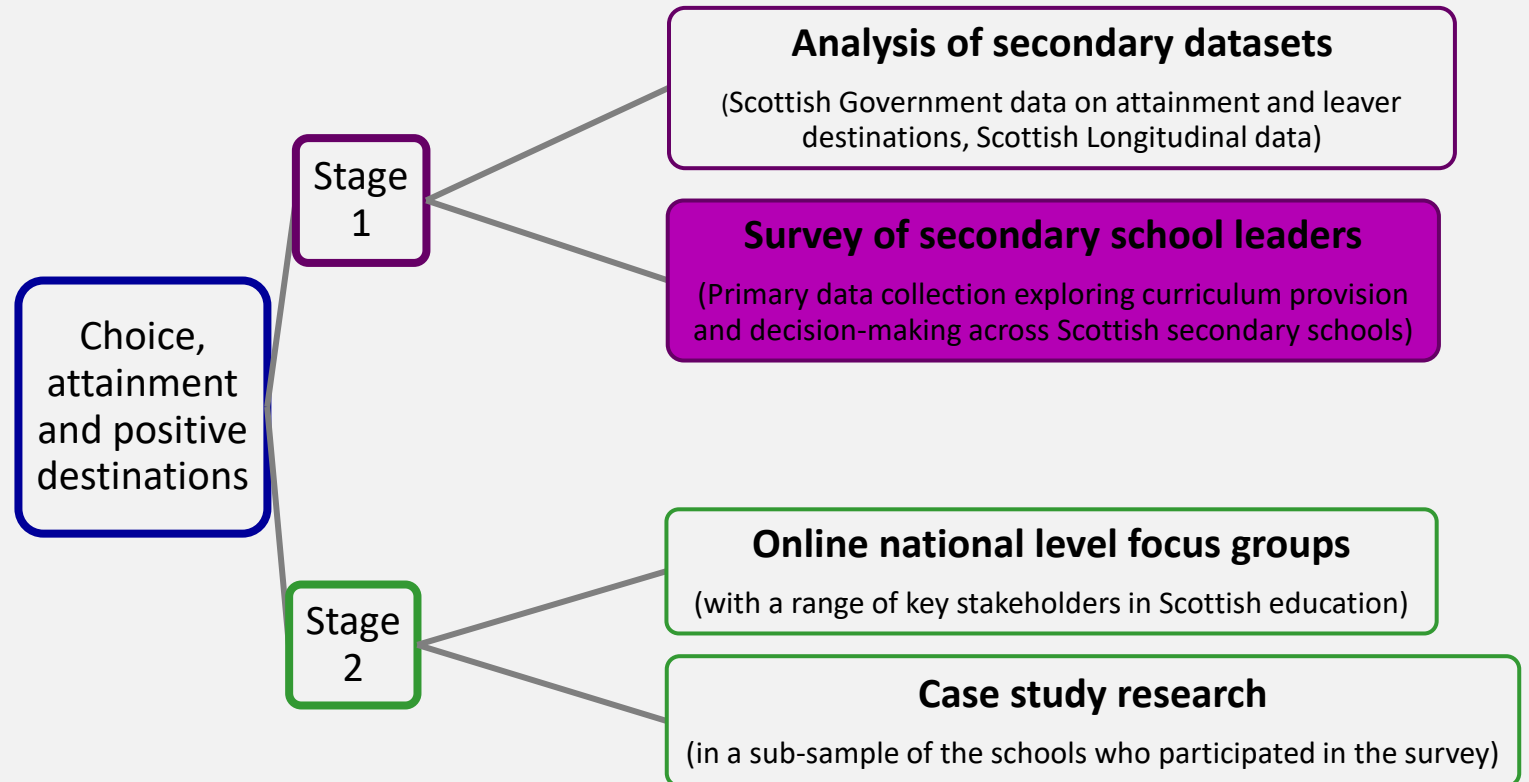
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Context

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- Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) has been widely acknowledged as the most significant educational development in a generation (Priestley & Humes, 2010), with the potential to transform learning and teaching in Scottish schools.
 - The secondary education phase of Scottish education is split into two stages:
 - Broad General Education (BGE) (S1-3) – designed to provide breadth and depth of education across eight curricular areas.
 - Senior Phase (S4-6) – designed to build upon the BGE and enable young people to build up a portfolio of qualifications.
 - At the Senior Phase level, there is a wealth of research which highlights the social stratification of curriculum provision under CfE (see: Shapira & Priestley, 2018, 2020; Iannelli, 2013; Iannelli & Smyth, 2017).
 - However, at the BGE level, there is a lack of a robust evidence base for drawing conclusions about contemporary patterns of curriculum provision during this stage of Scottish secondary schooling. However, there is concern regarding fragmentation, lack of enactment across secondary schools and student equity.

Project Overview

Choice, Attainment and Positive Destinations: exploring the impact of curriculum policy change on young people



The Survey data

- In total, 116 secondary schools from 29 Local Authorities - about 1/3 of Scottish secondary schools.
- Data collected between June and September 2021.
- The respondents were members of the senior leadership team (usually the head teacher).
- We have linked our survey data with Scottish Government administrative data (consisting of data on school characteristics).
- We believe our sample is largely representative of the national picture, though some care must be taken when considering small rural schools in the north of Scotland.

	National Average	Sample Average
Urban rural classification ¹		
<i>Remote Rural</i>	14%	10%
<i>Remote Small Towns</i>	7%	10%
<i>Accessible Rural Areas</i>	5%	5%
<i>Accessible Small Towns</i>	9%	11%
<i>Large Urban Areas</i>	27%	26%
<i>Other Urban Areas</i>	38%	39%
Pupil Roll	804	871
Proportion of BME students	11%	10%
Proportion of FSM students	14%	14%
Proportion of ASN students	33%	33%

School curriculum models

- Variation in curriculum approaches.

Are you guided by a...?	Unweighted (school) <i>n = 107</i>	Weighted (pupil roll) <i>n = 86,935</i>
A 3+3 approach to your school curriculum	82%	81%
A 2+2+2 approach to your school curriculum	18%	19%

- When we start to explore the relationship between curriculum models and different school characteristics we start to see some patterns which require further exploration.
- For example, using logistic regression, the odds ratio for following a 2+2+2 model decreases with a school's geographical location (i.e. remote areas are less likely to adopt a 2+2+2 approach – falling by 15% with increasing remoteness).

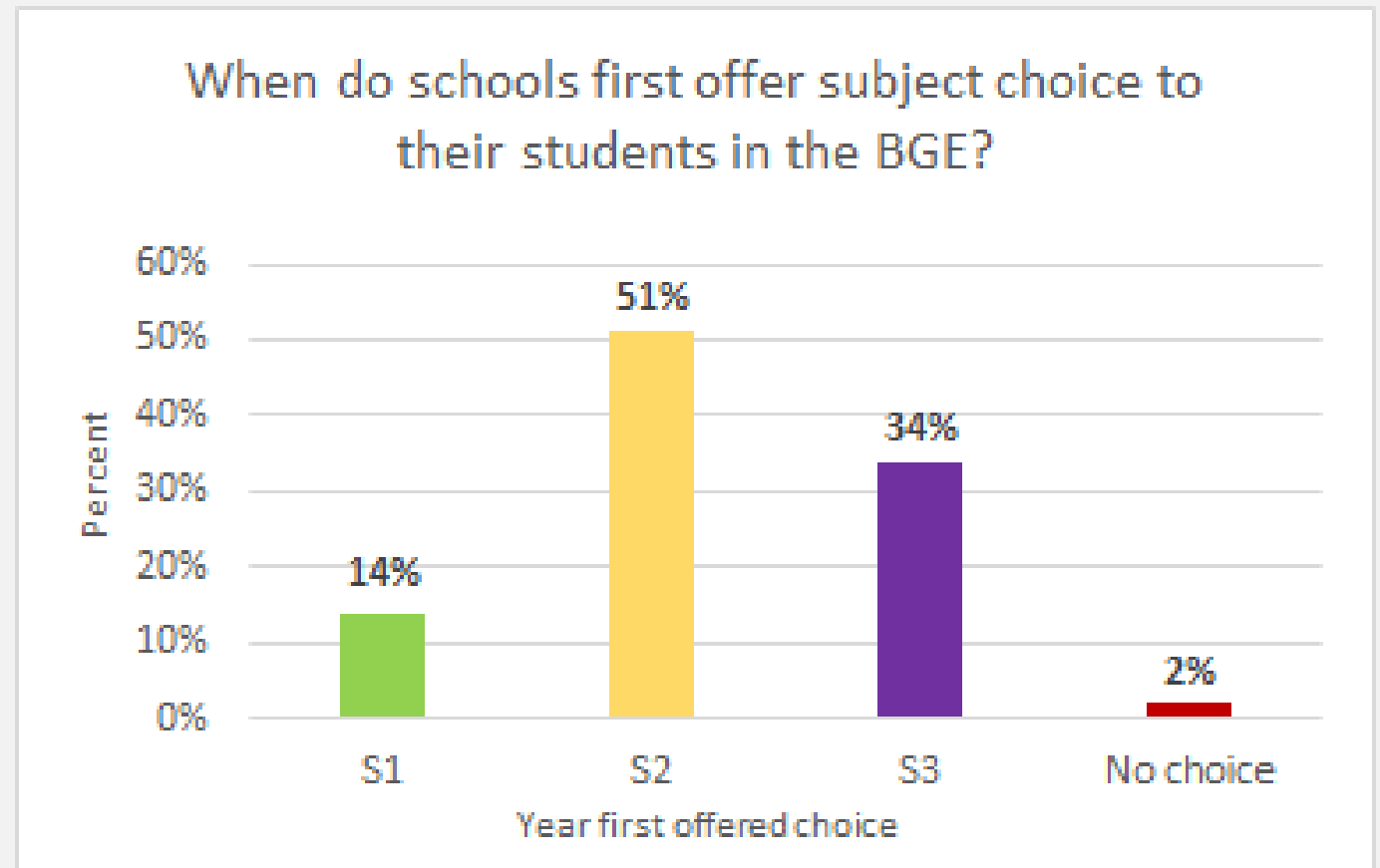
Maximum number of subjects studied in the BGE

- Wide range of subjects studied concurrently in a typical week in the BGE
- The range is 7-40 subjects – with 40 being an outlier.

	What is the maximum number of subjects and courses a student will study at any one time in a typical week in...?
S1	15
S2	15
S3	12

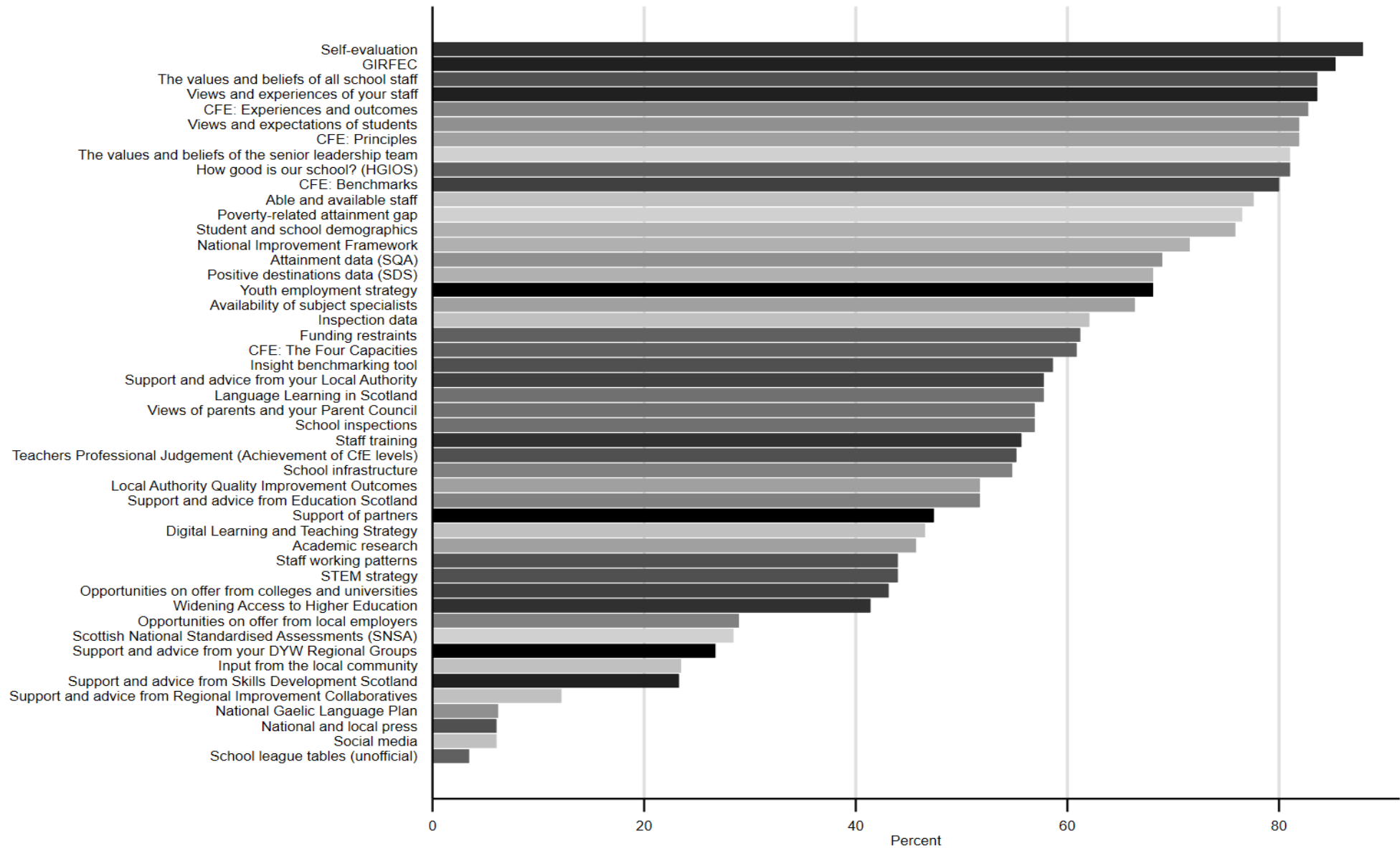
Subject choice in the BGE

- Variation in when BGE students are first given subject choice.



To what extent does each individual factor influence and inform the design and provision of your school's BGE?

Proportion of schools rating each variable very or extremely influential on design and provision in the BGE



Implications for future curriculum making

- The influence of policy
 - Policy (mis)alignment – disconnect with the core purposes and principles of CfE.
 - Policy (mis)enactment – tensions within/between policies – mixed messages
- Equity across schools/for students regarding curriculum narrowing in S3, choices, personalisation and educational experiences.

Further data collection and analysis under way:

- Regression analysis using the survey data to explore the effects of school characteristics on curriculum making and provision.
- Secondary data analysis
- Qualitative data collection



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Thank you for listening.

Project website: <https://curriculumproject.stir.ac.uk/>

Twitter: [@CAPDStirling](https://twitter.com/CAPDStirling)