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## Making Sense of Language Shift in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Scotland: Politics, Education and Migration

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## **Abstract**

This master's thesis uses the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act as a focal point to discuss the role of direct political actions in language shift in Scotland. Scholars have not discussed the influence of political actions in relation to language shift, and to fulfil this gap, I have mixed the historical and the linguistic approach. Studying the Act as a cause of language shift enables insight into central influences, and the result shows that direct political actions is one factor that influenced language shift in the Highlands, but not the chief one. The indirect political factors educational institutions and migrations played a more important role. Creating the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act with the aim to repress Gaelic seems not to have been the focus by the British politicians, even though repression of Gaelic in the Highland culture is evident in earlier government policies.



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Our present is still decided for us in a centralised United Kingdom Parliament where our democratically expressed wish for Home Rule is constantly frustrated. Thus has it been for many years. What has this to do with language? Everything, for politics determines the way we view language and culture and in time that influences how we view ourselves (Kay, 1993, p. 11).

## **1. Introduction**

...“Backwardness”... “The vulgar tongue”... “Dead language”... “Jaw-breaking tongue”... “Barbaric language”. Every one of these phrases has been used to describe Scottish Gaelic, a language that was widely spoken in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland in the beginning of the eighteenth century (MacKinnon, 2010, p. 128). In the following century there was a substantial decline in the number of Gaelic users. The language development in the Scottish Highlands has been one for debate and consideration, because of the various opinions regarding the language, especially among politicians and people within the education system.

The 1872 Education (Scotland) Act provided the people in Scotland with a compulsory national education system, but due to the omission of Gaelic it has been regarded by scholars as an anti-Gaelic legislation. Several studies have been carried out in language shift, but what the inadequate provision in the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act meant for the decline of the language has not been studied. The Act is acknowledged by scholars as a crucial point in Scottish education.

### **1.1 Research Question**

Using the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act as focal point, I will discuss to what extent the decline of Gaelic was caused by political influence. The purpose of this thesis is to include new material in the discussion about language shift in Scotland, and study if there were any prevailing influences for the decline, if it was created by another significant element or interrelating elements that together had an effect. I have used the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act to assess if language shift in Scotland was caused by direct political factors, with a primary focus on the main research question:

*To what extent was the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act a direct political factor in the decline of Gaelic?*

It is generally agreed that the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act had negative consequences for Gaelic (Anderson, Freeman & Paterson, 2015, p. 166), but scholars have not studied if political involvement was the cause of the decline.



To enable a study of direct political actions it is necessary to assess other elements, and consider what influence they had on Gaelic. Consequently, I have included indirect and direct actions to study to what degree political decisions have contributed to the decrease. To provide an answer for the research question, I have studied some elements that influenced Gaelic to decline:

1. *To what extent was language shift driven by politicians and people within the education system?*
2. *To what extent was language shift driven by educational institutions?*
3. *To what extent was language shift driven by migration?*

Since language shift occurred earlier in the Scottish Lowlands, the focus will be on the Scottish Highlands and Islands<sup>1</sup>. The main focus of this thesis is to evaluate whether some factors can be ascribed influence on language shift in the Scottish Highlands, and analyse if it was based on direct political decisions. What is striking is that the indirect factors; educational institutions and migration had most influence of the decline of Gaelic and contributed to language shift.

## **1.2 Plan for the Thesis**

The thesis is divided into four main chapters. The first chapter includes historical knowledge of the political situation and its influence on Gaelic. It provides elementary understanding, for example a definition of language shift and the situation of Gaelic in the 1872 Act, which is important to understand the thesis as a whole. It indulges information on the language situation in Gàidhealtachd from the Union of the Crowns in 1603 to present time.

The second chapter studies to what extent politicians and the people within the education system influenced the decline of Gaelic. These opinions are regarded in relation to language shift and considered if there are any prevailing attitudes. The stance the politicians made in relation to the Gaelic language is discussed in relation to the Act, and not as an extension of it. Examining this tendency will help me to answer if the Act was based on direct political actions to repress Gaelic.

In the following chapter, I will assess how educational institutions worked to maintain or abolish Gaelic in the Highlands. Significant institutions are the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) and the Gaelic School Society. I will study how

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this thesis the term Gàidhealtachd will be used to define the Gaelic-speaking area in Scotland.

these societies influenced language shift, if they were established on a political basis and their impact upon the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act.

In the final chapter, I will discuss to what degree migration in the Highlands affected Gaelic to decline. I am analysing the underlying reasons that caused migration to happen, and their effect upon the language. In this chapter sociological theories will be included to support my argument that migration is a reason for language shift.

I have chosen these elements because they contributed to the decline of Gaelic, and they influenced language shift in the Scottish Highlands. The study of the attitudes among politicians and people within the education system, educational institutions and migration allows me to trace opinions from the past, and their effect on Gaelic. These factors have created a good case-study, because some of them are linked to political involvements, and contribute to answer the overall research question.

This thesis argues that indirect factors have a greater influence than direct actions made by the politicians. Direct pressure from the politicians and the 1872 Act played a role in the language shift, but was not the chief one. To achieve this result, I have used different methods and material, which will be considered in the next section.

### **1.3 Method and Material**

This study is a combination of historical and linguistic approaches. Incorporating these two enables a study of the relationship between linguistic and historical elements, which interrelate and influence language shift. Thus, I create an interdisciplinary perspective, including new material on the field of language shift in the Gàidhealtachd.

This study relies on primary as well as secondary sources. The collection of primary sources creates diversity; letters, government papers, reports, newspaper articles and statistical accounts collected from the National Records of Scotland and online. The sources are chosen due to their relation to Gaelic and their relevance for language shift in the Highlands. The various attitudes towards Gaelic are beneficial, because they illustrate divergence regarding the language.

The government reports are accounts by the Select Committee on migration studying various subjects during the nineteenth century. The Select Committee consists of a group of parliamentary members, who are chosen to scrutinise specific issues in relation to a purpose. These reports include minutes of evidence, which are informal notes with detailed information about their meetings, and statements from the appointed participants by the government to assess specific elements (Schwartz-Ziv & Weisbach, 2013, p. 350). Politicians'

opinions about Gaelic are included in these reports, which provide valuable information about the attitudes within the government, and what were proposed as changes in the Gàidhealtachd. It is important to note that these papers do not clarify all the opinions among the politicians, due to the selection of people during the minutes of questioning.

The other reports used in this thesis are presented by inspectors, for example at the SSPCK schools and the Gaelic School Society. These reports study the progress of the educational institutions and how they influenced the parish they were established in. Hence, stating the impact educational institutions had on the pupils who attended the school in the parish.

Letters are used to study the opinions regarding Gaelic, how the development from Gaelic to English occurred and to provide information about migration. Together with the *Statistical Accounts* they show the influence migration had on language shift. These primary sources are important to show that the movement of people was common in the Gàidhealtachd.

The interdisciplinary topic of this thesis uses historical elements to study a linguistic process. I use historical sources to study language shift in Gàidhealtachd, and discuss which changes were caused by political actions. Before studying the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act and the direct factors it is necessary with some background knowledge, which will work as a theoretical ground for the remaining thesis.

## **2. Background**

The purpose of this chapter is to give the reader a better understanding of my research, which discusses language shift in the Highlands. Hence it is necessary to understand what language shift is and reasons why it happens. The causes of language shift will be central when discussing the shift from Gaelic to English which occurred in the Gàidhealtachd, and if educational institutions and migration were contributing factors. I have included some of the political legislation prior to 1872 associated with the repression of the language. These acts will show the historical development Gaelic has undergone in relation to politics, which will be important when discussing if the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act was a direct action by the politicians to repress Gaelic. The result shows that the acts caused language shift, but it is not the main reason why it happened.

### **2.1 Language Shift**

‘Language shift’ in this thesis means the process when members of the community abandon their first language in favour for another one (Kandler, Unger and Steele, 2010). According to Kandler and Unger (2018) language shift is a process which is generated by contexts. Thus, it happens because of “deliberate suppression or because the speakers choose to shift to the other language on socioeconomic grounds” (Lohr, 2005). Often, the process of language shift occurs because one language is more prominent and has more users than the other one (Prochazka & Vogn, 2017). Other elements that produce language shift are; lack of literacy, language politics, lexical borrowings, close contact between two languages, migration, social mobility, institutions, demography, attitudes and values (David, 2017, p. 3; Charles & Isa, 2015; Kandler, 2009, p. 181; Stoessel, 2002, p. 94; Khemlani, 2006; Lohr, 2005). One typical reason for a language shift to occur is that one language is recognised as “more modern, useful or creates connections with a bigger network and better economic opportunities” (Kandler, Unger and Steele, 2010, p. 3855). In this thesis, one reason for language shift that will be discussed is language politics, and if the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act can be assessed as a direct action to repress Gaelic. To enable an answer for the political involvement, it is necessary to discuss to what extent English was regarded as more useful than Gaelic, and how the politicians made one language more significant. Considering how the government treated Gaelic prior to 1872 will provide knowledge, which will help me to assess if it was a direct political factor in the repression.

## 2.2 Government Attacks on Gaelic Prior to 1872

One event that contributed to repress Gaelic was the Union of the Crowns in 1603 (Corbett, McClure, Stuart-Smith, 2011, p. 11). Scotland and England shared monarch, but were separated by independent parliaments and policies. Since the monarch<sup>2</sup> represented two countries, the country that was given support is evident in Scotland's foreign policy of the seventeenth-century:

The Scottish Parliament had never managed to secure much influence over foreign policy before [...] 1603, and an independent foreign policy therefore disappeared over the Boarder with James after the Regal Union. [...] both James and his successor Charles I, [...] tended to favour the position of England, the senior partner in the dynastic union, especially when any conflict emerged between English and Scottish vital interests (Devine, 2003, p. 3).

To assimilate the two countries several laws were established. Accordingly, the Statutes of Iona emerged in 1608-9 (Furdell, 2001, p. 98; McGeachy, 2005, p. 114), which are seven rules that aimed to improve living standards in Scotland (Cathcart, 2009, p. 22). Some rules were concerned with religion, limit trade of wines and whisky and the use of firearms (Cathcart, 2009, p. 22). To promote cultural assimilation between Scotland and England, the Statutes of Iona forced all "gentleman or yeoman" in property of a particular number of cattle to send the oldest child to the Lowlands for education (Stroh, 2017, p. 65). Consequently, some children were sent to a place with a new language, religion and culture. The Statutes of Iona are an important symbolic landmark in the attack on the Gàidhealtachd, trying to repress its culture and language. According to Dr. Martin MacGregor (2006, p. 111), a historian with a particular interest in the Gàidhealtachd, the Statutes are often recognised as a critical point in the history of Scottish Gaelic, due to the repression of the Highland distinctiveness.

Less than a decade after the Union of the Crowns, the attitude among British politicians towards Gaelic and the Highlands' culture was negative. The foundation of the School Establishment Act of 1616, created on advice from the Scottish Privy Council, a council responsible for overseeing government in Scotland (Parliament, n.d.). The Privy Council considered "that the vulgar Inglishe toung shall be universallie plantit, and the Irishe language, which is one of the cheif and principall causis of the continewance of barbaritie and incivilitie amongis the inhabitants of the Heylandis and Islandis, shall be abolisheit and removit" (Privy Council, 1609-16, p. 671-2). As this quote illustrates the attitude towards Gaelic was negative within the Privy Council, and their aim was to root it out. The Council played a central role in relation to political, administrative, economic and social affairs in

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<sup>2</sup> In contrast to today, where the monarch has a representative function, during the seventeenth century the monarch had legislative power.

Scotland (FDCA, 2011), and was able to influence the Parliament in these areas. The quote establishes the prevailing negative attitude during this period of time, which was to assimilate the Scottish culture and language with the English one.

The 1707 Act of Union joined Scotland and England to one Parliament situated in London. Following this Act, English became the official language in the Union (Machañ, 2013, p.6), which spread English throughout the Scottish Highlands. The establishment of the Act of Union, changed the political power from the parliament in Edinburgh to the parliament in London (Davis, 1998, p. 6). As a result, charity schools were established in the Highlands, due to English involvement in the education system in the Gàidhealtachd (Cruickshanks, 2008, p. 45). The establishment of charity schools was a result of the lack of parish schools in many areas in Scotland, but it is examined by scholars, for example Kelly (2016) and Jones (2013), as a deliberate choice by Westminster. The SPCK (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge), an institution situated in England, created many voluntary schools in Scotland (Smout, 1972, p. 463), which used English as the medium of communication. Due to the establishment of the SSPCK, the Scottish society of SPCK, the two languages in Scotland, Scots and Gaelic, started to decline in usage.

Scholars regard the union of the parliaments in 1707 as an influence on Scotland's identity as a culture (Nihtinen, 2005, p. 127). However, Devine, a Scottish historian, challenges this view and states that the Scottish nationality adapted the new situation (Devine, 2006, p. 287). The Act of Union had a big influence on the decline of Highland culture and Gaelic, and consequently, the Scottish national identity changed. Nevertheless, there were acts that sought to repress the Highland culture, and made the Lowland and English culture more prominent in the Gàidhealtachd, for example the disarming act of 1716 and the Act of proscription, which abolished the use of the kilt (Carmichael, 1979, p. 63; Dziennik, 2012, p. 122).

Due to the earlier government attacks on the Highland nationality, it is interesting to discuss the influence of the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act, and if it was created as a direct political factor to repress Gaelic. Before discussing this Act, it is important to regard the decline of the language set in a historical timeline. Information as such will provide you with knowledge about the decline, and show that language shift was an ongoing process before 1872.

## 2.3 The Gaelic Language

In recent time the development of the Gaelic language in the Highlands is evident through the census figures. The most recent census figures from 2011 show that only 1,65% of the total population in Scotland had some knowledge of Gaelic, while 1,09% were able to speak it (Scotland census, 2015)<sup>3</sup>. In 1881 6,2% of the population answered they 'habitually' spoke the language (Campsie, 2017). There are two negative consequences about the question; Firstly, the question did not define 'habitually', which means interpretations of the question might differ among the responders. Secondly, the question regarding language does not distinguish age, therefore all ages were included. When studying the graph in Figure 1, it is interesting to note that there was an increase in the number of users of Gaelic in the decade following 1872. The increase was the change in the census question, which was changed from "habitually" to the actual ability to speak Gaelic, or Gaelic and English. The decline proceeded both for monolingual and bilingual users. Due to the unknown numbers prior to the 1881 census, Figure 2 is based on predictions of several numbers acquired by scholars, and estimates the negative development of the language in the Gàidhealtachd. Both Figure 1 and 2 presented in Appendix 1 support my argument that the Act was not the only cause, but a combination of many factors.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Gaelic was associated with backwardness. Therefore, it was regarded as positive that the education system provided their pupils with knowledge of English. The association with something unfavourable, for example poverty, made the language less popular and provoked decline. Although it was negative associated, historian John Lorne Campbell argues that there does not seem to be any correlation between language and poverty, as he stated:

There were plenty of impeccable monoglot English speakers in the United Kingdom who were just as poor as the Highlanders. It was no doubt true that ignorance of English made the insecure, impoverished Highlanders less fit material for the Lowland industrialist or the emigration to the Dominions; made him less "clearable"<sup>4</sup> in fact (1945, p. 59-60).

The belief that if they learned English, they would increase their personal wealth was central in relation to language shift. From a sociolinguistic perspective a language shift occurs because a community will change to the language that give them socioeconomic opportunities

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<sup>3</sup> During the eleventh century Gaelic was spoken throughout Scotland (Smith, 1968, p. 59). Two centuries ago, it was spoken by approximately 250,000 people in Scotland, including people with no knowledge of another language (Withers, 1984, p. vii). However, after the 1961 Census the question regarding monolingual use of Gaelic was deleted, due to no single user alone.

<sup>4</sup> The Highland Clearances were forced evictions of Highlanders from their land. It is discussed in section 6.3.

(Batibo, 2009, p. 23). As a result, it is likely that one would provoke language change to realise them.

In the Scottish historian John Smith's study about Gaelic's position in the society, he said that the spread of a national education system and the decline are interrelated (Smith, 1968, p. 50). Some scholars would go so far as arguing that the spread of compulsory education caused Gaelic in Scotland to decrease (ibid), an argument directed at the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act. By contrast, Durkacz (1983, p. 214) states that with a little research it is possible to establish that the education system is not the only reason for the decline in the Gàidhealtachd. Further, Durkacz says it is important to emphasise that this has been a historical trend since the eleventh century, and other scholars agree with this fact:

The suppression of Gaelic goes back a long way, in fact to the Middle ages. Briefly, since the invasion of Scotland by William the Conqueror and his followers in 1072 and because of Malcolm Ceann Mor's vassalage to William, Norman French became the language of the Scottish nobility. English became prominent later. Gaelic [...] constantly had to fight against repression [...] Thus began the sustained attack on the Gaelic language which, many would argue, continues today (Mulholland, 1984, p. 5).

Based on the different opinions this thesis will study whether the decline of Gaelic was caused by direct political action, or whether other factors must be taken into consideration. As the statistics suggest, there was a lessening of speakers, but it does not state what caused it. Even though the negative development started prior to 1872, I cannot abolish the argument of the Act being a contributing element.

Another significant contributor to the different explanations about the causes of language shift in the Highlands is Charles Withers. Withers is a professor of historical geography, and has studied the decrease of Gaelic (The University of Edinburgh, 2018). Even though the decline started prior to 1872, scholars, for example Withers and Smith, suggest that a factor in the development was political decisions like the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act. Withers does not believe that it was caused by a single element, and believes it was a result of "Gaelic's minor role in public life" (Withers, 1984, p. 241), which "is the result of a longstanding separation between the language and 'authority' — political control, cultural prestige, and social status" (ibid). In relation to the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act, Withers (1984, p. 156) explains that the lack of formal provision of Gaelic was harmful. He emphasises that another cause of the decline was the attitude among the Scottish people to use the language as the medium of learning.

Due to the uncertainty and the variety of opinions regarding the causes of the loss, I will add information by including new material on this field of study. Some of the sources introduced have not been used to study language change, hence creating original research. By



studying the impact specific elements had on the decline of Gaelic, I am able to discuss to what extent attitudes among politicians and the people within the education system, educational institutions and migration had an influence. By assessing how significant elements were influenced by political decisions, it will help me study if the government deliberately wanted to repress Gaelic, and if the 1872 Act was a central factor.

In this chapter I have examined to what extent the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act influenced the language decline in the Gàidhealtachd. The presentation of various scholars and their research on the influence of Gaelic and language shift show that there are many opinions. Hence, it is important to gain a good overview of the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act, to enable a discussion about its influence upon language shift in the Gàidhealtachd.

### **3. The 1872 Education (Scotland) Act**

The 1872 Education (Scotland) Act plays a central role in the discussion in this thesis. It is relevant to study the Act's importance in relation to language shift in the Gàidhealtachd. Questions that this chapter will try to answer are: was the Act important, intentional, qualitative shift in government policy that was decisive for Gaelic's fate, or was it simply a continuation of general policies? By discussing these questions, the reader will understand the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act's role in language shift. The result of this chapter is that the Act was not a direct action to repress Gaelic, but enforced to improve the education system in Scotland.

The Education Act of 1872 has been criticised for discouraging Gaelic (Durkacz, 1983, p. 178). The conventional understanding of many writers is that the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act was an anti-Gaelic legislation (Cameron, 2015a, p. 166), but I will argue that repression was not the aim and that there is no reason why the Act should be perceived in this manner. Several scholars have stated that the education system, and especially the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act was responsible for the decrease of the language in the Gàidhealtachd (Durkacz, 1983, p. 214). Even though the Act was not the "only cause of language to decline, banishment from schools triggered a fast shift to English" (Baker, 2011, p. 79). Furthermore, Baker acknowledges the Act as a significant contribution, because when a language is repressed from education it sends a message to Gaelic-speaking parents that the language lacks importance for employment or economic value. According to Richard Blaustein (2003, p. 68), the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act's aim was to legally repress Gaelic, because of the physical abuse the pupils who used it experienced. The main reason for this statement was the "absence of any mention of Gaelic" in the Act, thus it has been regarded by scholars as disregard toward the language (Cameron, 2015a, p. 166). Due to the uncertainty of the involvement in the oppression by the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act, it is necessary to consider what the aim of the Act was.

#### **3.1 The 1872 Education (Scotland) Act's Aim**

The 1872 Education (Scotland) Act set up a new school system, replacing the private, church and charity schools in Scotland (Fraser and Morris, 1990, p. 295). The new compulsory school system provided "elementary education" for all children between the ages from five to thirteen in the three R's: reading, writing and arithmetic (1872 Education Act, p. 397). The new system was organised nationally by the Scotch Education Department (SED) located in

London (Clark, 1997, p. 3). After the 1872 Act came into motion, SED overtook the responsibility the Church of Scotland had and the SED's main purpose was to work as the body responsible for schooling in Scotland.

Following the 1872 Act, 987 school boards were created to manage and regulate the schools in Scotland (McDermid, 2015, p. 190-1). The school boards consisted of local elected people, who were mostly people from the upper middle class (ibid). The reasons for establishing school boards were; to contribute to the local community, create a national school system, secure attendance, contribute to a connection between the schools and the Church of Scotland, develop a 'common culture' and create a school system for all social classes (ibid, p. 191). The main aim of the 1872 Act was to modernise the education system and make the pupils literate in English (Paterson, 2004, p. 45). Gaelic was acknowledged as outdated among many people within Scotland (McDermid, 2015, p. 200). However, the lack of encouragement for the language in the education system through the Act was not endorsed by all, for example the Gaelic Society of Inverness protested the exclusion.

The curriculum in the 1872 Act was based on literacy in English, and followed the Lowlands as basis, which used English as a medium in education (McDermid, 2015, p. 200). The Act included very little about what the curriculum should consist of, but it enforced compulsory education for all children between five and thirteen, including girls (McDermid, 2005, p. 1; 1872 Education Act, p. 397). Cameron (2015a, p. 166), a Scottish historian, argues that "[...] the 1872 Act had little to say about the content of the curriculum and so the absence of reference to Gaelic is not especially significant". It does not provide any more or less recognition of Gaelic in the education system compared to previous laws, for example the Education Act of 1696. It has been regarded as an anti-Gaelic legislation and scholars have considered the Act as: "Destroyed the movement towards Gaelic literacy [...] and producing generations of people, virtually illiterate in their own language and taught by the practice of the most pervasive institutions of their community that their culture was of no value" (MacAulay, quoted in MacKinnon, 1974, p. 54) Another explanation is that the Act "more or less systematically organised suppression of such traditions by a mono-ethnic state apparatus [...] by the elimination of minority cultures from state-run and centrally controlled system of education" (Smolicz, 1979, p. 9). Hence, the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act has been considered an anti-Gaelic legislation due to its influence on literacy and assimilation to the English culture and language.

### 3.2 Oppression of Gaelic

Researchers have examined the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act as one of the main sources of the decline (Durkacz, 1983, p. 214), due to the lack of Gaelic in the education system. In the Education Act there is no mention of any language, because English was the primary language in Scotland, and was the official medium of instruction (Smith, 1968, p. 63; Macleod, 2010, p. 26; MacKinnon, 2010, p. 129), accordingly interpreted that English should be the medium in education. Other scholars state that there were many forces outside the education system that had an influence on the language in the Gàidhealtachd (Smith, 1968, p. 64; Durkacz, 1983, p. 214). Scholars, among others Cameron (2015a, p. 166), have argued that one reason for the absence of Gaelic in the Act was a result of the inadequate pressure from educational institutions, which is discussed in section 5.3.

Many people in Scotland during the nineteenth century found the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act problematic, because they were unable to speak and/or read English, and this was especially the case in the Gàidhealtachd. Teaching literacy in two languages was not considered (Smith, 1968, p. 64), even though bilingualism was well-known in Europe. One of the most obvious reasons for this choice was the negative attitude towards Gaelic among the Scottish societies. Another reason was the absence of support from the politicians and people within the education system. To what degree these elements contributed to language shift in the Highlands will be discussed in chapter 4, with regards to the politicians and the people within the school system's impact on language shift.

After the Act the use of Gaelic was “discouraged and punished”, and one way to punish the children speaking it was by using the “maide-crochaidh” (MacKinnon, 1974, p. 130), also known as “the tessera” (Chapman, 1992, p. 103). This method of punishment was a “stick on a cord”, which was used to physically hurt children who spoke Gaelic (MacKinnon, 1974, p. 55). The punishment was designed to create fear among the children, and is described by William Mackay in his novel *Urquhart and Glenmoriston* as following;

He [Mr Daniel Kerr, the headmaster] made it his first duty, after the opening prayer, to hand to one of the boys a roughly carved piece of wood which was called “the tessera.” The boy transferred it to the first pupil who was heard speaking Gaelic. That offender got rid of it by delivering it to the next, who, in his turn, placed it in the hand of the next again. And so the tessera went round without ceasing. At the close of the day it was called for by Mr Kerr. The child who happened to possess it was severely flogged, and then told to hand it back to the one from who he had received it. The latter was dealt with in the same manner; and so the dreaded tessera retraced its course, with dire consequences to all who had dared to express themselves in the only language which they knew (MacKay, 1893, p. 403).

Chapman (1992, p. 103) recognises this extract as a humour retelling of punishment. However, this type of disciplining could be a direct result of the absence of Gaelic in the 1872 Act. Another explanation for the punishment could be that it occurred prior to 1872, because the extract only refers to the boys in the schools. Consequently, it is possible to regard that the punishment preceded the Act, and English was the preferred language, and the negative attitude and the repression of Gaelic started earlier than 1872.

Having discussed the situation of the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act, it is evident that there are disagreements among scholars. As a result, I will study to what degree the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act influenced language shift that occurred in Scotland. To enable an answer whether the Act played a central role in the decline of Gaelic, I will compare it to the attitude among politicians and the people within the education system, educational institutions and migration.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

Scholars have regarded the omission of Gaelic in the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act as a direct action to repress it. Due to the inadequate recognition for the language in laws prior to 1872, there is not enough support for this argument. The development of the Scottish education system had been an ongoing process, and the 1872 Act was a continuation of this development. The Act did not deliberately want to repress the language, and played a minor role in the decline, because of the limited information the Act includes about the content of education. Hence the Act cannot be perceived as an anti-Gaelic legislation, because the aim was not to repress Gaelic, but to educate the people in the Gàidhealtachd. To enable an even more precise answer of the research question, I will study other elements' influence on language shift in the Gàidhealtachd.

## **4. Attitudes among Politicians and People within the Education System**

The decline of Gaelic was a result of multiple factors contributing to repress the language in the Highlands. According to Withers (1998, p. 200), a reason for the decrease in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the association of Gaelic with something negative, for example poverty. One reason why this attitude was created was because people with a sense of power provoked language shift through their negative statements, influencing the remaining population. I will investigate whether politicians and people within the education system caused the decline, with a particular focus on the following sub-question: *To what extent was language shift driven by politicians and people within the education system?*

It is necessary to study the manner towards Gaelic, and if there was a prevailing attitude. Due to the chapter's exploration of opinions from selected politicians, it will have direct relevance to the research question whether the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act represent an explicit anti-Gaelic attitude from political actors. The result illustrates that the dominant opinion among the politicians was negative, however, it did not have a major function in the decline of Gaelic, because the direct actions did not play a central role in the repression of the language.

### **4.1 Political Attitudes**

Politicians are generally seen as important contributors in shaping public opinions. Therefore, it is pertinent to study if the politicians' position and attitude towards Gaelic could encourage language shift. Some people in Scotland, including Highlanders, were negative to the language as the medium of education (Withers, 1984, p. 156) and positive to English. However, Withers does not state how many people who expressed this negative attitude, thus it is hard to establish how widespread this standpoint was. Politicians have enforced direct actions to restrict the use of Gaelic, and advance English as the language commonly accepted. Consequently, it is interesting to explore the personal opinion among politicians, and if they deliberately wanted to provoke language shift. The negative position to Gaelic is apparent through statements of various politicians. In general one can regard "political and ideological debate [...]" as "[...] efforts to win acceptance of a particular categorisation of an issue in the face of competing efforts in behalf of a different one" (Edelman, 2013, p. 25). A central question in relation to this is; did the politicians actively encourage language shift or did they remain neutral?

During the nineteenth century the politicians was not neutral, and actively encouraged a language shift in Gàidhealtachd. One group that assessed the situation in Scotland was the Select Committee on emigration, appointed to regard the situation for the people in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, and examine how useful migration was as an aid for “people relief” (Select Committee, 1841, p. ii). Focusing on the aspect of language and the attitude towards Gaelic within the government, there were agreement among the people in the Select Committee that they wanted to abolish the language. As a result of these negative opinions, the Select Committee “[...] had circulated pamphlets in the Gaelic language among the Highland population, and [...] they [the Highlanders] tended to correct the mistaken feeling among the people” (Select Committee, 1841, p. 19). The mistaken feeling was the implication that Gaelic had a negative position within the United Kingdom, and that the language hampered development. However, the supporters contradicted with the negative belief and corrected the pamphlets (ibid). These pamphlets presumably had an impact on the decline, but there is restricted knowledge of these circulated papers and their effect, because it is “difficult to isolate causes” for language shift (Durkacs, 1983, p. 216).

One person who expressed his opinion on this matter was lawyer John Bowie, while under questioning of the Select Committee on emigration in 1841 he stated: “I do most anxiously desire how soon the Gaelic language may be exploded to this extent, that it may become a dead language, and that the English language may be the prevailing language from one end of the country to the other” (Selected Committee, 1841, p. 19). Even though Bowie’s attitude was negative, it is important to note that this was his personal opinion, and not the entire government in London or the Select Committee’s. Similar to Bowie, John Sinclair, a Scottish politician, recommended having English as the national language in c.1717 to create political advancement and “[...] a wish to mix the world, and particularly those whose object it is to have some share in the administration of national affairs, and the language of the Public. Old things must then be done away – new manners must be assumed, and a new language adopted” (Brown, 2006, p. 29). The quote is not directly towards Gaelic, but it is evident that he favoured English as the national language to unite the United Kingdom to one state. John Ramsay, a Scottish politician for the Liberal Party, realised the advancement of having English as language and stated that “I urge upon all the necessity that exists for teaching them [people in the Gàidhealtachd] English, and so placing it in their power more easily to improve their circumstances either on their native soil or in other lands” (Nicolson, 1866, p. 162). Ramsay’s view was not directly negative, but establish that Highlanders should learn English and having this knowledge was an advantage.

One reason for the lack of direct actions to repress Gaelic could be that there were people within the government who favoured the language. Mr. Chisholm, a former president of the Gaelic Society of London, recorded to his readers of *The Celtic Magazine* his impression of Mr. Ellice a Scottish member of parliament:

[...] Mr Ellice I may say, however, that he seemed to me to be the most humane and most favourable to Highlanders of all the Members of Parliament that gave evidence at the committee alluded to. During the two days he was under examination, not a word escaped his lips that could be constructed into slight or disrespect for Highlanders (Chisholm, 1878, p. 382-3)

Based on Chisholm's statement, it is possible to argue that not all members of parliament shared the same negative attitude. Chisholm's statement emphasises that there were people with a neutral or even positive opinion regarding Gaelic. As a result, one can contemplate that not all politicians shared Bowie's view, which could create disagreement among the politicians because of Gaelic. In order to promote English at the same level as Bowie's wish, it was necessary to have the majority or consensus among the politicians, and if this was not obtained, it was presumably more complicated to promote English through using the methods they wanted. There was divided opinions among the politicians, but the most prevailing was the negative attitude towards Gaelic.

Not everybody worked actively against Gaelic, but according to Stroh (2017, p. 26) to create an "autonomous and, if possible, single national language [...] the dominant voices agreed that this language was Scots or English, but definitely not Gaelic". Due to the absence of a definition for dominant voices, it is hard to define who Stroh includes. As established in section 2.2, it is evident that there were various attempts to increase government control in the Highlands and constitute a more homogeneous state affiliated to one culture and language. Accordingly, the Scottish government aimed to repress the language, and after the Union of the Crowns, the monarch tried to assimilate Scotland's and England's culture:

When the modern period placed a Scottish-English union back on the agenda, the need to bolster Scottish distinctness by reference to its Gaelic traditions declined. Increasing differences between Scotland's Highlands and Lowlands, the desire for intra-national homogenization, and inter-national convergence with England all contributed to a growing sense that Gaeldom was a disturbing internal Other which impeded national unity. Hence, both the Scottish and, later, the British mainstream wished to assimilate these Gaelic "barbarian Others" into a more homogeneous national collective, and launched "civilizing missions" to achieve this end (Stroh, 2017, p. 34-5).

The British mainstream includes people with authority, and is a combination of people from England, the Scottish Lowlands and the Highlands. Based on the political and economical dominance by people in the south, it is not unlikely that there was active encouragement to assimilate the Highlanders with the Lowlands and England (Kandler, Unger & Steel, 2010, p. 3857). Accordingly, the influence by the politicians was most likely negative.



Due to the political repression Gaelic experienced during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, John Murdoch, a Highlander who worked to improve the situation for the crofters, established *The Highlander*, a newspaper which “gave the Gaelic language revival movement a distinctly political and inevitably nationalist flavour” (Sobey, 1993, p. 6-7). Thus, Murdoch had a stake in the debate about Gaelic’s position and the Highlanders’ situation in the society, and wanted to improve their situation. In a meeting with Irish immigrants in America, they discussed the “drastic reform of the Irish land system”<sup>5</sup>. Murdoch was present to speak about the situation in Ireland and Highlands, and how the landlords treated the Irish and Highland people. In a retelling of the speech, it is described:

He stated that he knew the case of the Irish and Highland people [...] He added his testimony to the truth of all that had been said of the sufferings of the Irish people and added that the half had not, and could not, be told of the horrors of the Irish land system; but darker yet was the history of his native Highlands [...] The burning cottages over the heads of the unfortunate people, some too feeble to walk from under the falling, burning roof [...] He spoke in telling terms of the libels of the English press upon the Highland people, and the entire exclusion of Highland wrongs from the press everywhere (The Highlander, 30.01 1880, in Hunter, 1975, p. 179).

In the extract it is evident that the Highlanders were under pressure from the “libels of the English”, however he does not state who these people were. It might have been English politicians, or English people in general. The attitude towards the Highland people was often negative, and the “King, Parliament, and Privy Council considered Highlanders and Hebredeans as “wild savages” void of religion and humanitie” (Instructions Concerning the Isles quoted in Stroh, 2017, p. 37). The concept of “one nation, one culture, one language” in the Statutes of Iona created the desire to assimilate the Gaelic to the “mainstream” cultural norms.

I have now discussed how the politicians actively discouraged the use of Gaelic and making Highlanders a part of the British mainstream, and the negativity towards the language. The attitude among the politicians was mainly negative, and there was no active encouragement to maintain the language in the Highlands. Based solely on the political attitudes, it is possible to argue that the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act was a result of the negativity towards Gaelic among the politicians, and their belief that the language was not useful for the Gàidhealtachd. To consider if the Act was a direct action to repress the language in the Gàidhealtachd, I will now consider the attitude within the Education system.

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<sup>5</sup> As in Scotland, Ireland did not have any security granted for their tenants. After decades of famine, an economic and agricultural depression arose in Ireland. Due to an unjust treatment by the landowners, homeless farmers organised a land league, which resulted in mass migration (Clark, 2014).

## 4.2 Attitudes within the Education System

In this part I will discuss the relations between the attitudes within the education system and language shift in the Highlands of Scotland. Schools have always had an impact upon language shift, and in some cases they purposely encourage this sort of change (Hinton, 2014, p. 415). As a result, I will discuss Durkacz's (1983, p. 222) statement that the education system contributed to language shift in Gàidhealtachd.

As seen in section 2.2 the 1616 Act was unfavourable to Gaelic. In the eighteenth century the General Assembly<sup>6</sup> established the 1705 Act of Instructing Youth in the Principles of Religion. These two acts do not mention language policy in the minutes of the Society for the Reformation of Manners in the records of the General Assembly. According to Durkacz (1978, p. 36) the inadequate support for Gaelic in education is a reflection of the almost unanimously held view that Highlanders should be taught English. However, this view might be influenced by associating Gaelic with the Jacobites<sup>7</sup> and Catholicism. When the Act of 1707 was passed, it was the Jacobites' heyday, which created a connection between them. Because of this association, the politicians believed that they should not promote the language. If this was the case, the politicians of education did not acknowledge that "not all Highlanders were Jacobites, and not all Jacobites were Highlanders" (Stroh, 2017, p. 34). The association of the Highlanders as a remote and distinct part of the population, separated by language and culture from the remaining inhabitants, was an uncertainty for the government due to the military threat from the Jacobites (Ross, 2008, p. 236). To repress the culture the government enforced various acts, for example the disarming act of 1716, Heritable Jurisdiction Abolition Act of 1747 and the Act of proscription in 1747 (Carmichael, 1979, p. 63; Elliot, 1988, p. 247; Dziennik, 2012, p. 122). Therefore, the reliability of Ross' (2008, p. 254) argument that after the Acts of Union the Highlands voluntarily assimilated to the rest of the United Kingdom is questionable, due to the various legislative acts enforced. The promotion of the "mainstream" culture in the United Kingdom cannot be considered as

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<sup>6</sup> The General Assembly was the "highest governing body" of the Church of Scotland (Family History Library, n.d).

<sup>7</sup> Jacobitism was a political movement of people who wanted to restore a former king the "exile of James II and VII" in 1688 to the throne (Guthrie, 2013, p. 1). Many of the Jacobites lived in the Scottish Highlands, and to be able to get what they wanted they rebelled against the British government on several occasions between 1688 and 1746. In order to "put an end to that country's role as a breeding ground for disaffection Jacobites were willing to plunge Britain into anarchy and civil was to restore the Stuarts to the throne" (McGeachy, 2005, p. 13-5).

voluntary assimilation, because of the direct actions to repress the Highland culture after the Acts of Union.

In contrast to the situation in Ireland, Scottish Gaelic was not destroyed by an anti-Gaelic scheme of military conquest, however, there was external pressure from the government (Stroh, 2017, p. 59). Even though the language in the Gàidhealtachd did not meet similar opposition as Irish Gaelic, it is still visible that various acts oppressed it. This view is evident in a letter from Charles Neill, a schoolmaster of Dornoch, a town in the Southwest of the Scottish Highlands, to the Heads of Examination in 1865. Mr. Neill states that they did not succeed to anglicise the Highlanders: “The inhabitants are chiefly engaged in agriculture and fishing, and with the exception of those in the burgh, and the better class of farmers, are very deficient in English, and speak Gaelic as a rule” (Sellar & Maxwell, 1866, p. 233). The reactions of this letter could provoke the politicians to purposely repress the Gaelic language, and could enforce direct political actions.

In 1864 the Royal (Argyll) Commissions was set up to examine the Scottish education system (McDermid, 2006, p. 249). Among the commissioners there were negative attitudes towards Gaelic;

It would seem to be a great object for the country, that the means of teaching them English, and of promoting a voluntary emigration, should be introduced among them, and it probably would be the cheapest mode in the end, to give them a good English education, which would enable them to produce subsistence and high wages elsewhere, rather than to stay and starve at home (Argyll Commissioners, 1865 quoted in Durkacz, 1983, p. 217).

This quote establishes that there were opinions among the Argyll Commissioners that the language of the Gàidhealtachd did not create wealth for the Highland people. The Argyll Commission encouraged “[...] all other teachers in the Highlands [...] to use the English language in their conversation as far as possible” (Argyll Commission, 1865-8 quoted in Campbell, 1945, p. 63). The Argyll Commission suggested that only English should be the language for education. As a result of the study the Argyll Commission did in the Highlands, a report was presented to both of the houses of Parliament in London by instructions from Her Majesty (Sellar & Maxwell, 1866). The report presented the practice of education in remote Scotland, but the language of teaching seemed to vary according to the schools; some schools used Gaelic, while other solely English. Consequently, it is not unlikely that the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act was created with the purpose to make a central education system in Scotland.

The aim of the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act can be perceived as the attitude presented in the letter from the Argyll Commissioners to Mr. Neill. Even though there were various opinions regarding the Gaelic language, the negative ones were present among

education inspectors and commissioners in the Scottish Highlands. The inspectors were involved in planning and observing the state of the school system during the nineteenth century (Withers, 1984, p. 157). Mr. Sime, a school inspector in Ross, Sutherland and Caithness, stated in 1878: “I should regard the teaching of Gaelic in schools in any shape or form as a most serious misfortune” (Smith, 1968, p. 62). As a result of the negative attitudes towards Gaelic over several centuries, it can be connected with what scholars consider as an inadequate expression for the language in the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act. The sources that are obtained do not express any positive attitude regarding Gaelic among the politicians, hence it is possible that the negative viewpoints towards it was common among the people in the education system.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

As presented, both politicians and people within the education system played a role in the repression of Gaelic. The attitudes were negative, and through these they provoked language shift. Consequently, it does not seem like neither the politicians nor people within the education system did anything to prevent the decline. The government enforced direct political actions to repress the Highland culture and language, such as the Statutes of Iona, the 1603 Union of the Crowns, the 1616 Act, the 1705 Act and the 1707 Act of Union, working actively towards assimilation with the rest of the United Kingdom. The negative attitude towards Gaelic and the wish to assimilate it to the “mainstream” were deliberate choices made to hamper the language. Simultaneously, it is believed that after the Acts of Union, the Highland culture started to assimilate itself, but as this chapter presents, the assimilation was not voluntary. However, the spread of the negative attitudes did not play a central role in the decline, because the indirect actions had a greater significance as assessed in the following chapters.



## 5. Educational Institutions

Following the Jacobite 1715 uprising, the central government in London had had enough of Jacobitism (Ross, 2008, p. 225). One of the elements that contributed to achieve more political control was the introduction of voluntary education systems, providing the population in the Highlands with education. Two central societies in relation to this aim were the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (hereafter, the SSPCK) and the Gaelic School Society. These societies had strong language policies; the latter was pro-Gaelic, while the former was anti-Gaelic. Consequently, it is possible to believe that they had an influence on language shift in the Gàidhealtachd, hence it is interesting to study to what extent the decline of Gaelic was driven by educational institutions.

According to Withers (1984, p. 6) it is evident that the repression of Gaelic in the education system began in the seventeenth century, and was best indicated through the SSPCK's policy. The other institution, the Gaelic School Society, worked to reinforce Gaelic in religion. From around the seventeenth century the language in the Gàidhealtachd was regarded negatively. In the 1616 Act it was considered as “[...] one of the chief and principal causes of the continuance of the barbarity and incivility amongst the inhabitants of the Isles and Highlands [...]” (1616 Education Act quoted in Exploring Celtic Civilizations; Wolf, 2014, p. 120; Jones & McLeod, 2006, p. 24). Many societies in the Highlands, including the SSPCK, had a similar viewpoint as the state policy. It is widely understood by scholars, such as Cameron (2015a), Durkacz (1983) and McGeachy (2005), that the SSPCK wanted to repress Gaelic in Scotland. By contrast, the Gaelic School Society wanted to promote the language through religious knowledge.

There are numerous reasons why a study of the SSPCK and the Gaelic School Society is included in this thesis. The most prominent one is the influence these societies had on language shift and the number of students who attended the schools. Secondly, these societies worked as counterparts; The Gaelic School Society promoted Gaelic, while the SSPCK repressed the language. Thirdly, these societies were created on different grounds; the SSPCK was created by the government in London, while the Gaelic School Society was created on a voluntary premise in Scotland. Multiple organisations which sought a better education system in the Scottish Highlands could have been included, for example the Glasgow Auxiliary Society and the General Assembly Schools. The selected institutions were important for the education system in the Highlands, due to their influence on the society and the education in the Highlanders. The role of the institutions in language planning depended upon their status and structure (Langston & Peti-Stantić, 2014, p. 147), and if they had a significant position

for the Highland people. The societies' influence on language shift in the Scottish Highlands, and if they were able to provoke change will be discussed in what follows.

### **5.1 The Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge**

The Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) was established in 1709 by a Royal Charter<sup>8</sup>, with the aim to “eradicate error and to sow truth, to teach true religion and loyalty and to strengthen the British Empire by the addition of useful subjects and firm Protestants” (Black, 2008, p. 130). In the establishment of the society the Privy Council played an active role, which makes it evident that the government wanted to repress Gaelic. The creation was a consequence of the early society documents, which emphasised the ineffectiveness of the 1696 Education Act<sup>9</sup> (Kelly, 2016, p. 9). Hence one aim for the society was to improve the education system in the Highlands (MacLeod, 2010, p. 25), trying to fulfil the gap left by the 1696 Education Act. Furthermore, the government and other agencies, as the Board of Commissioners and the SSPCK created an attack on Highlanders' traditional life and the Gaelic language.

In the beginning of the eighteenth century the SSPCK was one of the main organisations providing education for Highlanders (Macdonald, 1997, p. 45). The society was “largely suspicious of Gaelic, associating it with Jacobitism and Catholicism, and thus initially attempted to ignore Gaelic” (MacLeod, 2010, p. 26). In general, the government wanted to punish the Jacobite supporters, and the aim was to demolish the Highland culture and language (McGeachy, 2005, p. 15). Hence, the institution has been identified as a significant contributor working against the Gaelic language and Catholics (Cameron, 2015a, p. 163). The distinct contrast between Protestants and Catholics in Scotland had a great impact on the Highlands, and Gaelic has been regarded as the language of Catholics, and in many primary sources the language in the Gàidhealtachd has been described as the “Irish language” (McCrone, 2002, p. 169). There are several reasons for identifying Gaelic as the “Irish” language; one reason is the linguistic similarities to Irish Gaelic, another reason is that the language was widely used by Catholics. The association of the language in the Gàidhealtachd with the “Irish language” is evident in the following extract:

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<sup>8</sup> “Royal Charters, granted by the sovereign on the advice of the Privy Council, have a history dating back to the 13th century. Their original purpose was to create public or private corporations (including towns and cities), and to define their privileges and purpose.” (The Privy Council).

<sup>9</sup> This Act established the schools run by the churches in Scotland.

Nothing can be more effectual for reducing these countries to order, and making them usefull to the Commonwealth than teaching them their duty to God, their King and Country and rooting out their Irish language, and this has been the case of the Society as far as they could (NRS GD 95/1/1).

The focus was to acquire English and use it in education. As the quote emphasises, the attention on Gaelic was limited or non-existent, and it made it explicit that the ambition was to root it out. The aim was to acquire the students with knowledge that was recognised as useful and significant to the future, such as religious knowledge, reading English and grammar.

The SSPCK wanted to develop the education system, and gave education instruction in English to the people in the Gàidhealtachd. Many societies trying to educate the Highlanders had a circular school system moving from one place to another (MacLeod, 2010, p. 26), while the SSPCK established schools that were located in one place. Its aim was to give the pupils a thorough education in the Bible and the three R's: "to Read, especially the Holy Scriptures, and other good and pious Books; As also to Teach Writing, Arithmetic [...]" (NRS GD 95/1/1, 1709, p. 1). These focus areas are prominent in the reports made by inspectors, who came to the schools to ensure sufficient progress for the pupils. These reports establish that some subjects were more focused upon than others:

The classification has been considerably improved since former visit, and in Religious Knowledge, Reading, and Arithmetic vary satisfactory progress has been made. Writing is still rather weak. In dictation the same proficiency continues. In Grammar and Geography there are many beginners and one boy is reading in Latin [...]" (NRS GD 95/9/10 p. 14).

The reports do not mention Gaelic, which enforced the aim of the society to repress it in the Highlands. Due to the focus on English and religious knowledge it made the repression of the language more significant.

In the beginning the SSPCK worked against the use of Gaelic in teaching, and promoted English as the medium for education (Smith, 1978, p. 4). However, this view changed when the SSPCK "realised the limitations of relying too heavily on English to achieve their aims, they admitted Gaelic as the medium of instruction in their Highland schools from as early as 1767" and in 1824 it was suggested to teach Gaelic before English (MacLeod, 2010, p. 26). Mr. Patrick Butter, a school inspector, recorded this change in his journal during his visit to the Society's Schools in 1824, he regards the rearrangement of their structure in teaching as following;

In Highland districts the scholars must be taught the Gaelic language first, and in no case shall be taught the English until they are able to read the Gaelic; but after having made sufficient progress in that language, they shall be taught English, gratis, for the first six months (NRS GD 95/9/3).



Patrick Butter believed that by using Gaelic as a foundation, it would be easier to acquire English<sup>10</sup>. The change of opinion within the SSPCK is prominent in a report from 1833 by the society's secretary, John Tawse, who wrote about the state of education in the schools:

For a great number of years after its institution, there was neither Bible, nor Catechism, nor any other religious books in the Gaelic language. But to meet this great want, at length in 1767 the Society printed at their own expense 10,000 copies of the New Testament in Gaelic; since which they have at a very heavy expense printed and circulated 50,000 copies of the whole Scriptures [...] (Tawse, 1833, p. 14-5)

To accomplish its goal; increasing Christian knowledge among their students, the institution printed the Bible in Gaelic, which was considered as a work of "great importance" (Tawse, 1833, p. 15). Tawse states that the society wanted to provide their pupils with knowledge about their religion in Gaelic before English to ease the development in learning.

Scholars for example Matheson & Matheson (2000, p. 214) have suggested that the reason for this choice was to make the pupils forget their native language, and their primary language would become English. However, support for this argument is weak, because it is mainly based on an excerpt from the Church of Scotland, and there is no evidence of this in the SSPCK reports (Durkacz, 1978, 15-17, 22). Even though Gaelic was not purposely promoted by including the language, it is evident that the SSPCK experienced limitations using English as the medium of education, and affecting advancement of the Scriptures in the Gàidhealtachd:

At about the time the Gaelic translation of the New Testament appeared, the SSPCK reversed its policy and recommended that in Gaelic-speaking areas both English and 'Erse' be taught. The reason for this was the realisation that many of the children who had been taught to read the Scriptures aloud in English hardly understood a word they were reading. Although this may have been an important motive for altering regulations, the Society could easily have discovered that this had been going on for years if its members had not so persistently closed their minds to the matter (Leneman, 1986, p. 127).

It was impossible for the SSPCK to reach its goal, if the pupils were unaware of what they read. When the knowledge was acquired in Gaelic, the pupils understood better what the Scriptures said in English. Through the teaching of the English New Testament, the SSPCK had given the Highland people "a greater desire to learn the English language than they [the Highland people] had ever before discovered" (Devine, 1994, p. 114). The society increased "the intelligence [of the student] by the possession of two languages, the comprehension and knowledge of English are increased by Gaelic teaching" (Craik, 1884, p. 4). Consequently, the SSPCK was able to spread English throughout the Highlands.

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<sup>10</sup> Only a restricted number of schools actually taught their children to read Gaelic, and the pupils who actually received instruction in their mother tongue got it after the ability to read English (Durkacz, 1978, p. 115).

Scholars, such as Withers and Durkacz (Withers, 1984, p. 120; Durkacz, 1983, p. 62), regard the SSPCK as an influential institution on Highland education, which promoted language shift. In 1795 the society had established over 300 schools (Jones & McLeod, 2006, p. 23) with approximately 15,000 students (Nash, 2012, p. 21), and at that time the population in the Scottish Highlands was estimated to be around 1,000,000 people (Kyd, 1952, xxix). In total, it is estimated that about 300,000 people attended the SSPCK schools (Withers, 1984, p. 120-37). Due to the large number of pupils who attended the schools, the society had an immense influence on the people in the Highlands (Bohls, 2013, p. 93). This finding reveals that the society had an extensive importance on language shift in the Highlands, and that it contributed to decline Gaelic. Hence, the political action through the SSPCK was a significant factor in the repression of the language in the Gàidhealtachd. Accordingly, the society had a great impact on language shift, which is the justification why scholars consider it as the most influential educational institution in the Highlands.

The anti-Gaelic policy in the SSPCK was a distinct choice by the Privy Council to repress Gaelic, but they still had to use the language to promote learning of the Scriptures. However, based on the arguments presented in this chapter, it is evident that the educational institution promoted language shift in Gàidhealtachd. Introducing English for the pupils acquired them with knowledge, and made them more acquainted with the language, creating closer contact between the languages, which sped up language shift, because the pupils got more knowledge of it. Hence, the SSPCK worked as an indirect political action to anglicise the Highlanders, established by the Royal Charter. Nevertheless, the influence by the society is ambiguous, due to strengthening of Gaelic with the overall aim to anglicise the Highlands. Thus it is interesting to study what influence other societies had, and if they had a similar stake in language shift as the SSPCK. In what follows, I will assess what influence the Gaelic School Society had on language shift.

## **5.2 The Gaelic School Society**

In the development of the elementary school system the first organisation to expand was the Gaelic School Society (Smith, 1978, p. 4). The society's aim was to teach people of all ages to read the Bible and explain the Scriptures in their mother tongue (*ibid*). It encouraged the use of Gaelic in different contexts, one of them being education. The Edinburgh Gaelic School Society promoted the monolingual use of Gaelic, and established schools in Gaelic-speaking parishes which did not have a school available. Similar societies were established in

Glasgow in 1812 and in Inverness in 1818 (McGeachy, 2005, p. 118). They promoted a bilingual approach of the use of Gaelic (McGeachy, 2005, p. 118; Withers, 2015, n.p).

Within the Gaelic School Society's system there were limitations, because the schools only focused on reading the Bible in Gaelic (Durkacz, 1983, p. 112). Consequently, the pupils got no training in writing in the Gaelic language. Another aspect that restricted the students' knowledge was the circulatory system; the schoolmaster stayed in an area, for example a parish, for not more than three years until he felt the pupils' knowledge was adequate (MacLeod, 2010, p. 26), by contrast the SSPCK remained in one place. In relation to language shift the students gained better knowledge through a permanent school system, rather than one that only stayed there for a limited period. Therefore, the SSPCK had a greater impact on language shift in the Highlands. Another limitation was the number of schools. Withers (1988, p. 146) states that in 1826 the society reached eighty-five schools with approximately 8,500 students. However, in 1860 the number of schools had declined dramatically to about fifty-five, with the total number of students being about 1,500 (Withers, 1984, p. 141; Withers, 1988a, p. 146). Withers does not state any reason for the decrease of schools, but Durkacz (1983, p. 114) specifies that the society got financial difficulties, especially the Gaelic School Society in Inverness. The limited number of pupils made the influence by the society very narrow, and clarifies that the possibility these schools had to maintain the language in the Gàidhealtachd was confined.

In relation to language shift and its bilingual attitude the influence of the Gaelic School Society and using Gaelic for education is twofold (Withers, 1988b, p. 154). Firstly, it reinforced the language as it created a connection between Gaelic and religion. Secondly, in a parish where the Gaelic School Society promoted bilingualism, it was necessary to employ a schoolmaster able to teach the students English in order to increase the pupils' knowledge in English literacy. In relation to Gaelic the education could only reach so far, because of the limitations of literature and material available. It is evident through primary sources that the Gaelic School Society played a central role in the enforcement of both languages in the Highlands. Reverend Donald Ross of Kilmuir in the Isles of Skye established that Gaelic and English had been promoted through the society schools:

The people here [...] though they have not had the benefit of Gaelic Schools long, are becoming anxious for English Teachers, which confirms a principle, the truth of which had some time ago been very much disputed: "that to cultivate the Gaelic language is a certain though indirect road to promote the study of the English" (Gaelic School Society, 1815, p. 25 in Withers, 1984, p. 147).

The teaching of the Gaelic Bible caused motivation to learn English, because of the English schoolmaster. Consequently, the spread of literacy in Gaelic and English was connected

(Withers, 1984, p. 147). This is similar to the argument by the SSPCK, because the Gaelic School Society also wanted the students to learn English. Through the Gaelic School Society the Highlanders gained knowledge of Gaelic, due to reinforced interest to learn English. It could be seen as ironic that the Gaelic language created a demand for English, as this was the opposite of the Gaelic School Society's aim.

The positive effect of the teaching of the Gaelic School Society is evident in a letter from Reverend Hector MacLean, received shortly after the establishment of a school in a parish:

I sincerely regret a school purely Gaelic is not stationed in this parish [...] where I see many instances of the absurdity of the idea that religious knowledge can be conveyed to our people with efficacy in any language but their vernacular. Not only have many acquired in your schools the ability to read the scriptures in their native tongue, but other collateral advantages have accompanied your labours. It is now a fact generally admitted, that to begin by teaching Gaelic is the speediest and most effectual method to excite in the Highlands a taste for English literature (Gaelic School Society, 1826, p. 1).

This letter emphasises the effect the Gaelic School Society had on the pupils' progress in literacy. MacLeod (1963, p. 316) states that the effect of these schools may be "overstated", and it is evident that there were positive attitudes towards the schools, and that the society increased general knowledge of Gaelic. Normally, the Gaelic School Society and the SSPCK are considered as opposing societies, but the differences are not that profound. The teaching of English in the Gaelic School Society provided the pupils with knowledge of Gaelic and English, similar to the SSPCK.

In 1872, when the formal education system was established, the school system that was based on religious knowledge was abolished (1872 Education (Scotland) Act, 1872, n.p.). The Gaelic School Society no longer had schools after the 1872 Act, which had a number of consequences. For the Gaelic-speaking population this meant the formal education in their native language would be unavailable in the Highlands. As a result, the Gaelic monolingual children had to go to an English-teaching school, which meant that literacy in English increased. Consequently, the Gaelic School Society, as the SSPCK, reinforced Gaelic through the connection with religious knowledge, but it also encouraged English in the Highlands. Due to the limited number of people attending the schools, the society had a restricted influence on language shift in the Gàidhealtachd.

Before discussing migration's influence on language shift, I must assess the societies' influence on the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act. The following chapter will clarify if the 1872 Act was solely established on political grounds or due to pressure from the societies.

### **5.3 The 1872 Education (Scotland) Act among the Education Societies**

Due to concern among politicians in London for the Scottish education system, the Royal (Argyll) Commission was set up in 1864 to investigate the education system in Scotland (McDermid, 2006, p. 249). Even though the societies worked to educate the people in the Highlands, it was recorded by Assistant Commissioner Alexander Nicolson that in particular women's education in the isles was concerning (Nicolson, 1866). Through the report it is evident that literacy in Gaelic was not adequate, however, literacy in English was even worse. As an example, Nicolson uses the Parish of Knock, a part of Stornoway, to emphasise the lack of literacy in parts of the Highlands, where "[...] out of 2159 inhabitants, while 403 men and 463 women can read Gaelic, only 208 men and 46 women can read English; and of that large population only 170 men and 26 women can write" (Nicolson, 1866, p. 14). The societies were unable to provide sufficient education for the people in the Highlands, which is why the government in London had to make changes, and as a result Nicolson put pressure on the government to enforce a new education system in the Highlands. The government in London agreed that the voluntary education system in Scotland was not able to provide satisfactory education, and it was necessary to make changes. Another reason was that a society school was not established in all parishes, providing only a restricted number of people in the Highlands with education. Because the societies were not able to accomplish what they had aimed for, the government established a compulsory national school system in Scotland. The result became the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act, which sought to improve the necessary knowledge in the Highlands.

When the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act was set up, there was limited attention from the societies. However, in 1871 the Gaelic Society in London requested to Lord Advocate<sup>11</sup> to include Gaelic in the Education Act (Durkacz, 1983, p. 178, O'Hanlon and Paterson, 2015, p. 305). Even though Lord Advocate agreed that Gaelic would be beneficial for learning English, it was not given a place in the Act (Durkacz, 1983, p. 178). After the legislation of the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act, there was more pressure to include Gaelic. Institutions worked actively against the Act, for example the Gaelic society of Inverness, which started to lobby to include the language of the Gàidhealtachd in the curriculum (Cameron, 2015a, p. 166). The Gaelic Society of Inverness and the Gaelic Society of Edinburgh stated that including reading in Gaelic for one or two hours every week would increase the pupils'

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<sup>11</sup> Lord Advocate is "the government's chief legal officer in Scotland" (Barrier & Broomhall, 2016, n.p).

abilities in English (Withers, 1984, p. 158). To establish the demand for Gaelic in education, the societies sent out 103 questionnaires to schools in the Gàidhealtachd in 1876 (O'Hanlon & Paterson, 2015, p. 305). Out of these 103 schools, ninety returned the questionnaire, where sixty-four were in favour and fifty of these had staff able to teach Gaelic (O'Hanlon & Paterson, 2015, p. 305). In spite of these objections, the Scotch Education Department (SED) made no provision for Gaelic in the education system until the 1918 Education (Scotland) Act.

According to MacLeod (1963, p. 319), the schools that had the greatest result in English literacy were those that first taught the students Gaelic, and English afterwards. However, even if this was true, the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act made no provision for the language. Durkacz (1983, p. 178) states that one reason for the repression of Gaelic in the Education Act of 1872 was limited protest from the institutions promoting the language within Scotland, before the Act reached the statute book. The Act was unpopular among many Gaelic organisations and activists, and the support was not enough to persuade the politicians to make provision for it in the Act (Jones and McLeod, 2007, p. 23).

## **5.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has established that the SSPCK and the Gaelic School Society wanted to achieve opposing goals from the outset; one society wanted to promote Gaelic, while the other society wanted to promote English. When the SSPCK changed its policy, both societies used Gaelic to give instructions in English, hence provoked change of language in the Highlands. This fact suggests there was consensus among the societies that English was a useful language, which the inhabitants of the Gàidhealtachd should know. Out of these two institutions, the SSPCK had the biggest impact on language shift, due to the large number of pupils who attended the schools. Through the SSPCK the government was able to provoke language shift indirectly by repressing Gaelic in the Gàidhealtachd. The Gaelic School Society promoted Gaelic and English, but provided literacy in English for its pupils. The society connected the language in the Gàidhealtachd with religion, but it had limited influence on language shift because of the small number of pupils who attended. The Gaelic School Societies worked actively to influence the government to provide a place for Gaelic in the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act, but the language was not included until the 1918 Education Act. Hence, the SSPCK had the biggest impact on language shift in the Gàidhealtachd. Even though the societies had opposing goals from the outset, it is evident that both societies used Gaelic to promote

English. Consequently, the educational institutions, in particular the SSPCK, played a central role in language shift in the Highlands.

## 6. Migration in the Scottish Highlands

Processes which create contact between two languages increase the need for a common medium in communication (Kandler & Steel, 2017, p. 4851). Migration enforces language shift through closer connection between two languages. Therefore, migration is a central factor in the process of language shift. In the Scottish Highlands migration was persistent from the early eighteenth until late nineteenth centuries. From the Highlands both temporary and permanent migration occurred, which had a number of consequences for the population. Not only did migration cause depopulation, but it also influenced Gaelic. Furthermore, there are several indications how migration affected languages, which this chapter will assess. The following chapter will discuss: to what extent the decline of Gaelic within the Highlands was driven by migration.

To build my arguments upon theoretical grounds, I will closely link them to sociological theories. Firstly, I will describe migration from the Scottish Highlands, and study how it influenced Gaelic. Subsequently, I will regard how economic migration and the Highland Clearances provoked language shift. The difference between them is that the latter was forced while the former was voluntary. As a result, I will be able to study two causes of migration, and assess their influence on language shift.

There is limited research on how migration influenced Gaelic, therefore, the results presented here will be very interesting. I will use *the Statistical Accounts* to add information about the language situation in the Highlands and what language was spoken by the inhabitants in Scotland. The sources include information on significant processes which influenced the language in Scotland. Through these sources it is prominent that migration from parishes in the Highlands was common, and during harvest time women and men went to the Lowlands to find employment (Old Statistical Account, n.d. p. 267).

There are two types of migration; temporary migration and permanent migration. The prior lasts for a limited time, and includes circulatory migration and seasonal labour. Permanent migration is when people move from one place to another without plans to move back. There are several reasons why people in the Highlands decided to migrate, for example employment, the Highland Clearances, the crop failure, potato famine and poverty. All these factors have a connection with the decline in population and the use of Gaelic. In what follows, I will show that migration played a significant role in the oppression.

Before proceeding, the term migration needs to be defined. In this context migration will be used as movement of people from one place to another, both within one's own country



and to other countries. Migration often includes only international migrants, but in this context the term will involve intra-national migration.

Migration will work as a counterpart to the discussion about direct actions, and will contribute to answer the overall research question; *To what extent was the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act a direct political factor in the decline of Gaelic?* I will consider if there was political involvement in migration, and the causes of the movement. The result shows that migration was not influenced by direct political actions, nevertheless, temporary and permanent resettlement had a significant impact on language shift, and caused the Gaelic language to decrease.

## **6.1 Depopulation**

According to the *Old Statistical Account* (1791-1799) and the *New Statistical Account* (1834-1845), there was extensive migration during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and migration often affected individuals, families and whole communities. Migration from the Highlands to the rest of the United Kingdom and other parts of the world influenced Gaelic, and caused depopulation. People moved from the Scottish Highlands to places where their language was little or not used, which caused Gaelic to decrease.

One consequence of depopulation is language shift, and in some cases it creates language death (Yakpo, Berg & Borges, 2014, p. 171). When someone migrates the pressure to assimilate the mainstream culture is strong, accordingly migrants start using their native language less, both at home and in the community (Montrul, 2010, p. 294). Based on this, depopulation and language shift in the Highlands were parallel trends that repressed Gaelic. Due to limited use of the Highlanders' native language in the host country, the Gaelic-speaking migrants were forced to acquire the native language (Chapman, 1992, p. 109).

Depopulation and the movement of people across borders are causes of the decline of languages. The language involved in heavy depopulation often experiences language shift (Smith-Christmas, 2012, p. 50), because migrants acquire the host language. In contrast to international migration, internal migration involves less social readjustments in relation to language and culture, which makes it easier to maintain traditions (Lownthal & Comitas, 1962, p. 199). This would normally be the situation, but due to the differences in language and culture between the Highlands and the Lowlands, this movement is equivalent to international migration. Studying Table 1 and 2 reveals that the total population in Scotland increased, but the proportion of people speaking Gaelic decreased. However, whether this loss

is caused by migration is unclear, because the numbers do not show how many people migrated.

Intra-migration to the Lowlands and international migration caused depopulation, which decreased the use of Gaelic, but the depopulation was not the main reason for language shift, because the people who remained in the Highlands still had the opportunity to use their native language. Furthermore, people from the south brought English to the Highlands, and created closer contact between the languages. Due to the heavy influence of language contact, the following part will study to what extent language shift was driven by migration.

## **6.2 Migration in the Highlands and its Effect on Gaelic**

Little research has been done on temporary migration, and its effect on the remaining people in the country (Moran-Taylor, 2008), and through my research I aim to fill this gap. Further, I will assess what effect migrants who permanently settled in the Lowlands had on the people, and what reasons the migrants had to change their language.

Temporary migration is return migration, which is migrants who have spent a significant period abroad who return to their native country (Dustmann, 2000, p. 7). There are several reasons why migrants return home, for example climate, friends, language, family, food and culture (Dustmann, 1999, p. 299). When assessing language shift and temporary migration a decisive factor is the duration of the stay in the host country. Naturally, people who migrated and remained in an English-speaking area or country for a longer time were more influenced by English, than people who stayed there for a limited period. Withers (1998, p. 78) claims that there is evidence that temporary migration affected Gaelic, and contributed to language shift. He uses parishes with a strong Gaelic-speaking tradition as an example, and their development to include English words in their repertoire.

Seasonal migration occurred from the Highlands in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Devine, 1983, p. 141). One prominent reason for migration was job opportunities and employment, but in relation to the research question it is more relevant to discuss the effect seasonal migration had on language shift in the Highlands. Migration during harvest time was an important economic source, and an extensive number of people from the Highlands went to the Lothians during harvest time to work (Whyte, 2005, p. 47). Movement of people from areas in the Highlands to the Merse and the Lothians was prominent (Peebles work records, 1910, p. 87 & 98 in Whyte, 2005, p. 57). However, seasonal movement of people from other places in the Highlands to the Lowlands has been recorded. According to the *Old Statistical Account* from 1796, the minister of South Knapdale acknowledges that,

through temporary migration, English became “[...] the prevailing language spoken in the parish. The English has of late spread considerably, owing, in a great measure to young people travelling to the low country, and returning home after they acquired the language” (OSA, 1796). In the Isle of Skye, an island in the Highlands, temporary migration was prominent: “Early in summer there is a regular migration of the able-bodies of both sexes in quest of field-labour in the Lothians” (Nicolson, 1866, p. 47). In the sources it is evident that the hiring of labour to the Lowlands was common for “multitudes of young men and women from the north” (Whyte & Macfarlane, 1811, p. 248-9). Evidence like these suggest that English gained grounds through the seasonal migration of younger people. The importance of English in the work place could have influenced the young migrants, and the language differences between the Highlands and the Lowlands became more prominent, because of the emigration of Highland people to the Lowlands (Withers, 1998, p. 23). Based on the quote above, it is evident that seasonal migration spread English in the Highlands. People acquired English while working in the Lowlands, and when returning the migrants brought the language. They contributed to spread English in the Gàidhealtachd, and played an important role in the development of English in the Highlands.

In relation to seasonal and circulatory migration, it is important to study to what extent the Highlanders returned to the Gàidhealtachd with English knowledge. Two methods have been considered as reasons for acquiring the Highlanders with English: firstly, Highlanders gained English knowledge through trade. Secondly, temporary migration increased the population’s knowledge of English, because seasonal migrants brought back English to the Highlands, and acquired the remaining population with knowledge of the foreign language (Durkacz, 1983, p. 156; Withers, 1984, p. 108-110). Prior to the famine<sup>12</sup> 1846-1856, it was mostly younger adults who worked as seasonal migrants, however, in the aftermath older males got involved (Devine, 1983, p. 141). Hence, more people got implicated, and brought English back to the Highlands. When discussing migration in general, one of the most significant reasons for language shift is that “families that are traditionally monolingual find, after migration, that they are at disadvantage when they lack English proficiency” (McCarty, 2014, p. 87). As a result, I assume that it was an advantage for migrants from the Highlands to acquire the host language, as it would be easier to get a job and social opportunities. Due to

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<sup>12</sup> The Highland Potato Famine was a period in the nineteenth century when the potato crop in the Gàidhealtachd was destroyed by the failure in the crop, due to potato blight. This created hunger and poverty in the Highlands, which resulted in migration (Richards, 2008).

the benefits of acquiring the host language, it was profitable to learn the new language for the migrants.

According to Christopher Harvie (2004, p. 56-7), a Scottish historian, those who remained in the Highlands got more familiar with the English language. One of the manners English could have spread in the Highlands was through the in-movement of people from the south with better knowledge of English. The increase of English in the Highlands is evident in reports that study the development over a longer period. In-movement of people from the south is apparent in Helmsdale, a city situated at the east coast of Sutherland in the Highlands. At one point this city was mainly Gaelic, but in c.1830 “in the streets of Helmsdale, for instance, little but English was heard [...] Amongst the persons speaking only English are many sheep farmers and their shepherds, who immigrated from the south. Their children, in many instances, are said to learn Gaelic” (Ravenstein, 1879. p. 593). Ravenstein, a German geographer who worked for the Royal Geographical Society in London, makes it explicit that immigration of monolingual English-speaking people to the Highlands made the people in the Gàidhealtachd more familiar with English. At the time Ravenstein’s statistical survey was written, it was said that along the east coast in the Highlands, Gaelic was losing grounds and English was increasing in usage (1879, p. 593). Ravenstein does not mention what caused this increase on the east coast, but one reason could be the improved transport system in the Scottish Highlands, which created closer contact with the Lowlands (Harvie, 2004, p. 56-7). The Highland people no longer lived in geographical isolation, which created closer contact with the rest of the world, and increased mobility for the people in the Highlands.

Gaelic was reinforced in the Lowlands through migration, however it was at one point deserted (Withers, 1984, p. 260). The development of language abandonment is described in New Lanark, a city in the Scottish Lowlands, where “[...] a great proportion of the inhabitants were Highlanders mostly from Caithness, Inverness and Argyleshire. Few of those from the West understand English” (Statistical Account, 1795, p. 40). At the Highlanders first arrival “[...] the role of the Gaelic language loomed large. Highlanders’ continued use of Gaelic would have acted as a cultural marker, demarcating them from other New Lanark migrants, and providing a boundary for their community” (Nicolson and Donnachie, 2003, p. 26). Based in these quotes, it is evident that Gaelic was widely used by the migrants at first arrival to New Lanark. However, the attitude among the English-speaking population and the economic benefits of knowing English, it is possible to assume that the Gaelic-speakers assimilated English rather quickly without a deliberate language policy (ibid). Therefore, it is

likely that migrants acquired the Lowland culture and language, and abandoned their mother tongue, because it was easier and more useful to acquire the new language.

During the nineteenth century, many people from rural Scotland moved to more urbanised areas (Whatley, 2000, p. 2), which could offer jobs. Due to absence of jobs and opportunities for improvements in the Gàidhealtachd, an extensive number of Highlanders decided to move to the lowlands or other parts of the United Kingdom (Withers, 1984, p. 108). According to Hornberger and Coronel-Molina (2004, p. 24), it is normal to seek economic and social mobility through migration and education. Further, the most prominent reason for migration is increased economic opportunities (Hornberger and Coronel-Molina, 2004, p. 24). Many languages have experienced language shift because of migration, one language is Quechua, a language spoken by approximately ten million people in South America, which has undergone language change to Spanish (Hornberger and Coronel-Molina, 2004). The influence migration has on language shift is significant not only for Gaelic, hence I can regard migration as an influential factor for language shift, not only in the Gàidhealtachd.

The change of generations made language shift that occurred more prominent. It was especially prominent when city-born children with Gaelic-speaking parents became more familiar with English than their parents' own native language (Withers, 1998, p. 199; Macleod, 2010, p. 27). In relation to this, one can question why did migration of Highlanders not lead to increased use of Gaelic in the Lowlands? Learning the host language was beneficial for the immigrants to achieve economic growth, social mobility and assimilation to the host country (Zhang, 2010, p. 45), therefore, migration to the Lowlands caused language shift among the migrants. As discussed, even people who remained in the Highlands were not able to maintain their language, due to influence from temporary migration and immigration of people from the Lowlands. Withers (1998, p. 23) acknowledges that there were separations between the Highlands and the Lowlands in relation to language and culture. Migrants changed their language when they arrived in the Lowlands, and Gaelic was limited or not used, hence it is unlikely that the language would survive in that area (Ingham & Ingham, 2012, p. 1). Gaelic underwent substantial decrease in usage, for that reason temporary and permanent migration played a significant role in the decline.

I have now assessed how migration, both temporary and permanent, affected Gaelic and it is evident that people changed their language to English due to the benefits. However, I have only discussed voluntary migration. In what follows, I will discuss how forced mass-migration, the Highland Clearances, had an influence on Gaelic.

### 6.3 The Highland Clearances

The Highland Clearances were forced evictions of tenants by landowners from the Highlands between c.1730-c.1880 (Cameron, 2015b, p. 67). Scotland's landed elite tried to create improvements by introducing new industries and develop agriculture, creating a new system of landholding, abandoning the Clan<sup>13</sup> system in the Highlands (McGeachy, 2005, p. 14). During the collapse in the kelp industry, Highland landowners experienced economic difficulties, which resulted in the change in agriculture (Ross, 2008, p. 270). The Landowners wanted to make room for deer and sheep, due to the increased economic opportunities. The lairds forcibly evicted inhabitants to cities along the coast to increase their own profits (Ross, 2008, p. 270-1). As the price for wool decreased further, the lands were increasingly made into deer forests, and landlords wanted to keep people away from their land (Ross, 2008, p. 271). During the 1850s, emigration became an industry, and mass migration occurred from the Highlands to other parts of the world (Ross, 2008, p. 271). Therefore, it is interesting to regard how mass-migration influenced language shift, and if migration was an indicative of anti-Highlander policy in general.

The influence of mass-migration on language shift is evident in a letter to the editor in the *Scotsman* from Donald MacKinnon (25 Dec 1874), the Clerk and Treasurer of the School Boards of Edinburgh, who emphasises that English has grown rapidly;

[...] it is frequently said, English had made such rapid progress of late years in the Highlands that if you allow matters to take their course it will cover the country in a generation or so – what need, then, to disturb our educational arrangements? If I believe what is frequently said upon this question, I would not have taxed your kindness with this long letter. That English had made progress in the Highlands for the last forty years – greater progress than it did for a hundred years previously – will, I believe, be admitted; but I do not anticipate such progress for the next forty years through the same agencies.

Even though MacKinnon was not absolutely correct in his predictions about the decline of Gaelic in the next forty years, I think that he shows a positive attitude towards the language development in the Gàidhealtachd. Regarding the Highland Clearances, evictions were carried out prior to this letter. Therefore, I assume that he took this into evaluation, but why did he not predict the same progress for English the next forty years? MacKinnon believed in a better future without influence by the Highland Clearances, and foresaw a more stable Highlands. One reason why he was positive towards the future in the Highlands was because

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<sup>13</sup> The clan system was a financial system (Macleod, 2010, p. 23) where “a set of men bearing the same surname and believing themselves to be related the one to the other and descended from the same common stock [...] but all agree in owing allegiance to the Supreme Chief of the clan or kindred and look upon it to be their duty to support him at all adventures” (Prebble, 1961, p. 35 quoted in Hunter, 1974, p. 13).

of the low economic standards could only be improved. Following this period, every effort to induce the economic situation in the Highlands gained little or very small benefits (Richards, 2012, n.p.). Through the inadequate economic growth and migration, English gained more ground through the Clearances.

The Highland Clearances happened in various forms, some evictions involved few people, while others involved a whole parish. As a result of the Highland Clearances communities became deserted, as described in the *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*:

Some years ago I remember reading, I think in the *Inverness Advertiser*, observations made by tourist or a traveller who passed through Glencanaich, on the number of broken houses and crumbled walls he saw in the Glen. The writer concluded from such unmistakeable signs that there must have been a considerable number of inhabitants at one time in Glencanaich. He was quite right in his conclusions (Chisholm, 1878, p. 387).

The Clearances and the decline of Highland culture, including the Gaelic language, were parallel trends (Richards, 2007, p. 3). The disruption in the Highlands increased migration and thus the decrease of the language. The Highland clearances caused “dislocation and disruption” which “[...] contributed to longer-term trends by which Gaelic was devalued and gradually abandoned” (McLeod, 2005, p.178). The Highland Clearances played a central role in language shift, and due to the extensive number of people who migrated to other parts of the world, they abandoned their native language in favour of another one.

The government played a limited role in the Highland Clearances, however, the government did minimal to stop them. Withers discusses that due to the consequences migration had on language, it is possible to regard migration as an element that “was actively encouraged by some as a means of driving out Gaelic” (Withers, 1984, p. 110). Withers does not state who “some” are, which makes it unclear whether he contemplates it as a force from the politicians, the people in general or the landed elite etc. Even though the Clearances had a significant effect on Gaelic, because of the disruption and depopulation, they are no indicative of policy that specifically targeted repression of any language. Thus, the government played a limited role in the Highland Clearances, which gave the politicians an inactive role in the consequences of the mass-migration.

## 6.4 Conclusion

Migration played a significant role in relation to language shift in the Highlands. Temporary and permanent migration increased the level of language abandonment, and brought English to the Gàidhealtachd. Many people who spoke Gaelic moved to other places, for example the Lowlands or to other parts of the world, and in many cases they changed language. Due to the

limited economic opportunities in the Highlands, people from the Gàidhealtachd had to move to the Lowlands to enhance their opportunity to find work, which in many cases involved a change of language. The Highland Clearances caused mass-migration from the Highlands, and to assimilate the new country it was necessary for the people to learn the language. Closer contact between Gaelic and English was created through the in-movement of people from the south moving to the Gàidhealtachd, and brought English with them. Even though migration was not enforced by direct government decisions, the politicians did nothing to prevent movement and language shift. Moreover, migration cannot be considered as a direct political process to intensify language shift, but was a significant contributor.





## 7. Conclusion

I began this thesis stating that the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act has been regarded by scholars to play a central role in the decline of Gaelic. The Act provided people in the Gàidhealtachd with compulsory national schooling for all children between five and thirteen, however the education Act in 1872 omitted Gaelic, which is why it has been considered as an anti-Gaelic legislation. Therefore, this thesis has studied *to what extent was the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act a direct political factor in the decline of Gaelic?* Using the Act as a focal point to assess if the repression of Gaelic was a direct political factor has enabled a more nuanced understanding of the decrease.

The aim of this thesis is to establish if the repression of Gaelic can be ascribed to direct political factors, or if there were other significant elements involved. By combining historical elements to study a linguistic process, I have established that direct political factor was one element that influenced the decline, but not the chief one. Prior to 1872 there were several acts that directly targeted Gaelic, but the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act does not directly state that its aim is to repress the language. Therefore, it is unlikely that the Act desired to oppress it, even though scholars mainly consider it as an anti-Gaelic legislation from the government. The absence of support for the language by politicians and people within the education system contributed to spread the negative attitudes towards Gaelic in the Highlands. Studying other factors reveal that there were other influencing elements, which had considerable effect on the decline in the Highlands.

Some politicians actively worked to repress Gaelic, and to assimilate the Highland culture to the mainstream. Neither politicians nor people within the education system did anything to prevent the language from declining. The negative attitude and the aim to assimilate the Highlanders with the remaining people in the United Kingdom are evident in several laws, and to achieve this goal it was necessary to repress the language of the Highlands. As a result, the negative attitude towards Gaelic spread, which ultimately caused language shift. However, these acts cannot be considered as the main reason for the decrease, because there were elements with considerable more effect.

The educational institutions, the SSPCK and the Gaelic School Society, were established with different purposes. A Royal Charter established the SSPCK to teach the Highlanders the Protestant Scriptures and to anglicise them. The SSPCK had a big impact on the people in the Highlands, and it is estimated that as many as 300,000 pupils attended their schools. The society's influence contributed to anglicise the Gàidhealtachd and was able to expand its anti-Gaelic policy. By contrast, the Gaelic School Society was created to teach the

pupils to read the Bible and explain the Scriptures in their own native language. Hence, creating a connection between religion and Gaelic. Both of the societies used Gaelic as a medium to improve English literacy, and to increase knowledge through this method. The societies are in most cases regarded differently, but these are not that profoundly unlike, because both of them spread English knowledge throughout the Gàidhealtachd.

The element with most influence on the decline of Gaelic was migration. Temporary migrants from the Highlands brought English back, and made the native Highlanders more familiar with the language. Permanent migrants created a better opportunity for themselves by acquiring the host language and culture, which made it easier to obtain employment. It was not only highlanders who moved to the Lowlands, also people from the south moved to the Highlands and brought their language with them. This created language contact, which was a reason for language shift. Mass-migration from the Highlands caused depopulation, and was the most harmful process. Ultimately, migration became an industry in Scotland, moving people overseas. Hence, the Highland Clearances played a central role in language shift, and an extensive number of people abandoned their language in favour of another one. The limited political involvement in migration establishes that it was not a result of direct political actions to repress Gaelic. Simultaneously nothing was done to prevent migration from occurring.

Overall, there are two elements that played a significant role in the decline of Gaelic. The first one is the educational institutions, mostly the SSPCK, because of its profound influence on the people in the Gàidhealtachd. The second one is migration, which created both voluntary and forced movement from the Highlands, acquiring migrants with a new language through closer contact with a more dominant one. The SSPCK and migration are not direct political actions, but they may be considered as indirect political actions, because the SSPCK was sanctioned through the Royal Charter, while nothing was done to prevent the Highlands Clearances or migration. Therefore, it is impossible to state that direct political actions were the chief reason for the repression of Gaelic, however, indirect political actions played a more central role.

For further research on this topic, I would have liked to explore the relationship between Gaelic and Catholicism, and its connection with the SSPCK's anti-Catholic aim. Did the people who attended the SSPCK actually change their language, or was the knowledge acquired through the society only used in education? Another element that could have had a positive influence on my research would be to study if politicians discussed the influence of migration on Gaelic, and create a connection between them. Consequently, it would have

helped to strengthen my argument that indirect political actions were more significant than direct actions. Therefore, I can state that political involvement was not the chief reason for language shift in the Gàidhealtachd, and that educational institutions and migration played a more central role provoking language shift.



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## Appendix I

**Table 1**

| Year | Population              | Scottish Gaelic    |                      |                                |                                  |
|------|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|      |                         | Speakers of Gaelic | % Speakers of Gaelic | Speakers of Gaelic and English | % speakers of Gaelic and English |
| 1851 | 2,888,742 <sup>14</sup> | unknown            |                      | unknown                        |                                  |
| 1871 | 3,360,018               | unknown            |                      | unknown                        |                                  |
| 1901 | 4,472,103               | 28,106             | 0,63%                | 202,700                        | 4,53%                            |
| 1931 | 4,842,980               | 6,716              | 0,14%                | 129,419                        | 2,67%                            |
| 1961 | 5 179 000               | 974                | 0,019%               | 80,004                         | 1,54%                            |
| 1991 | 5 083 000               | — <sup>d</sup>     |                      | 65,978                         | 1,3%                             |
| 2011 | 5 295 000               | — <sup>d</sup>     |                      | 57,602                         | 1,09%                            |

Table 1 - Population of Scotland, numbers of monolingual Gaelic speakers and numbers of bilingual English and Gaelic speakers in Highlands from 1851-2011.

**Table 2**

| Date | Total Gaelic speakers in Scotland | Proportion of total Scottish population |
|------|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1500 | 150,000?                          | 50?                                     |
| 1755 | 129,000                           | 22,9                                    |
| 1806 | 197,823                           | 18,5                                    |
| 1891 | 254,415                           | 6,3                                     |
| 1951 | 95,447                            | 1,9                                     |
| 1981 | 79,307                            | 1,6                                     |
| 1991 | 65,978                            | 1,3                                     |
| 2001 | 58,652                            | 1,2                                     |
| 2011 | 57,375                            | 1,1                                     |

Table 2 Historical demography of Gaelic (McLeod, 2014, p. 4).

<sup>14</sup> Numbers collected from different Census from the National Records of Scotland



Figure 1

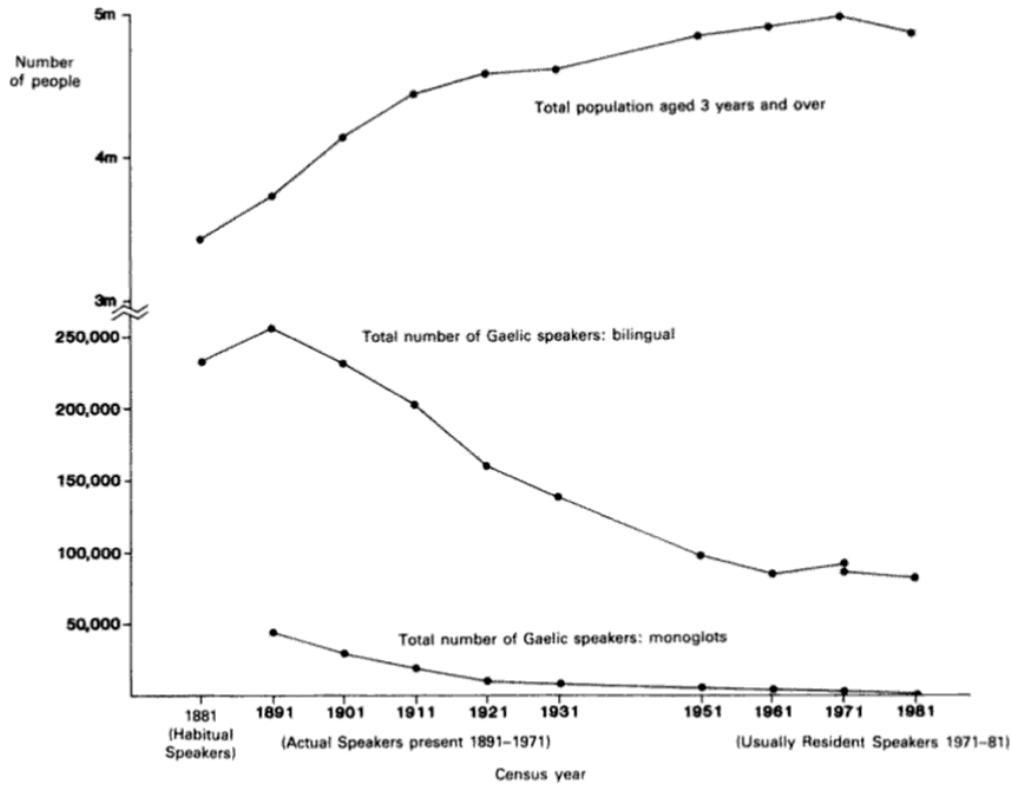
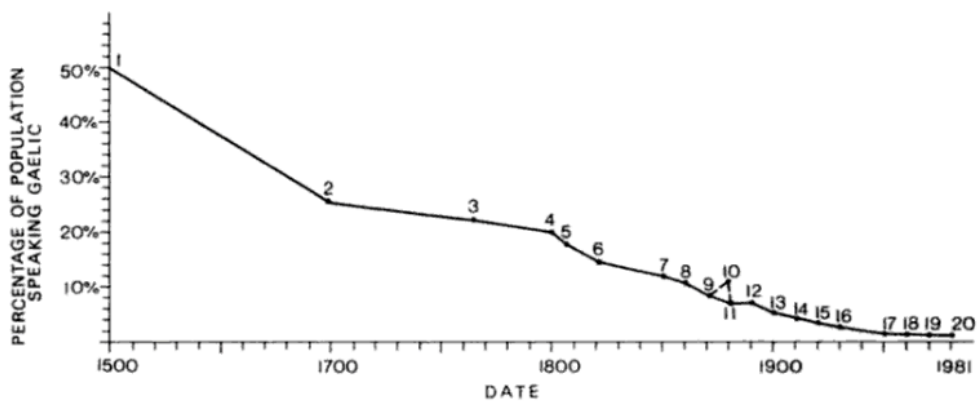


Figure 1: Numbers of Gaelic speakers at successive census

(MacKinnon, 1990, p. 123)

Figure 2



1. From Campbell 1950. 2. Estimate based on Hearth Tax, Poll Tax and 1698 MPLH.P. 3. J.Walker c.1765-c.1769.  
 4. From Campbell 1950. 5. Earl of Selkirk 1806. 6. Estimate based on Moral Statistics 1826. 7. Estimate based  
 on 1851 Edinburgh Almanac. 8. Estimate based on 1861 Edinburgh Almanac. 9. Estimate based on 1871 Edinburgh  
 Almanac. 10. E. Ravenstein 1879. 11. 1881 Census and C. Fraser-Mackintosh 1881. 12-20. Census evidence 1891-1981.

Figure 2: Gaelic speakers as a percentage of Scotland's population, 1500-1981

(Withers, 1988, p. 137)

## **Appendix II**

### **The Master's Thesis' relevance for the Teaching Profession**

This master's thesis was written as a part of the Lektor programme at NTNU, Trondheim. Hence, it is relevant to reflect upon how this project can be relevant for my work as a teacher.

Even though the topic of my thesis is "dated", the spread of English is still an ongoing process, and a language that influences many countries. By focusing on one country where English has become the first language, I have gained greater understanding of the process of language shift.

One competence aim after VG1 focuses on my field of work "discuss and elaborate on the growth of English as a universal language" (Udir, 2013). In this context my thesis can provide information, which can be necessary for the pupils to understand how English has become the universal language. How English gained grounds in Scotland, can be similar to how it became a well-known language in many other countries. By providing the students with specific examples of how this has happened in a country can be valuable, because it will enable them something specific to relate it to.

In order to understand how a language intervenes with other elements in the society, I have acquired knowledge about migration, institutions, political development etc. This information will be useful in relation to other subjects, for example social studies, sociology and history. Hence, I have created a thesis that has relevance for other subjects than English, and I can state that the information I have gained will have an interdisciplinary value.

It will also be important to know that when a language shift occurs, there are always more underlying reasons. There are a great number of languages that are experiencing decrease in users, for example the Sami language in Norway. Today, most Sami people know Norwegian, and have the same level of knowledge of it as a native Norwegian speaker. Therefore, it will be important to know the factors which contribute to language shift, and know that people do not automatically omission a language, because they do not find it unnecessary.

While working with my thesis I have acquired necessary skills. The process of the study has thought me how to structure a thesis, which is something I will value when teaching my students how to structure a text. The work has also acquired me with knowledge about sources, mainly how to rely heavily on sources to create a piece of work and to be critical reading a source.