

## **By 2025, Scotland will be regarded as a world-leading learning nation:**

**Key questions and provocations for business, government, the education sector and the Scottish Parliament to consider**

**global  
learning  
society**

**local  
learning  
society**

**market-driven  
learning  
society**

**divided  
learning  
society**

There are accompanying publications to this paper which can be found at <http://www.ggis.org.uk> or <http://www.scotlandfutureforum.org>.

We suggest that you approach the four papers in the order listed below:

- 1** *By 2025, Scotland will be regarded as a world-leading learning nation: **Key questions and provocations***
- 2** *By 2025, Scotland will be regarded as a world-leading learning nation: **Toolkit – Using these scenarios within your organisation***
- 3** *By 2025, Scotland will be regarded as a world-leading learning nation: **Scenarios for the future***
- 4** *By 2025, Scotland will be regarded as a world-leading learning nation: **Data workbook***

A compilation report of project events and individual event papers are also available on the websites.



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## Introduction

This short paper accompanies, and should be read in conjunction with, the Goodison Group in Scotland (GGiS) / Scotland's Futures Forum (SFF) publication, *'By 2025, Scotland will be regarded as a world-leading learning nation: Scenarios for the Future'*; available at [www.ggis.org.uk](http://www.ggis.org.uk) and [www.scotlandfutureforum.org](http://www.scotlandfutureforum.org).

The contents of this paper are based on the testing phase of the GGiS / SFF 18-month long project which explored the proposition *'By 2025, Scotland will be regarded as a world-leading learning nation'*. The project should be seen as a 'think-piece' and not a call for policy recommendations. The project is in no sense party political. Of course, there are any number of questions which arise from the four very rich storylines described in the above publication; it will be for others to consider the implications of the scenarios, and frame their own questions, from their own perspective. If some elements of the scenarios do not generate indignation to some readers, the process will have failed! There is also an accompanying toolkit which will allow groups interested in the future of learning and skills to actively engage with the scenarios in this way.

That said, the project community have spent some time reviewing the different scenarios and considering what they believe are the key questions which need to be addressed in the near and medium term either to meet or avoid any of the four possible world-views. We hope these questions are useful in prompting new thinking and debate within the Scottish Government, the Scottish education sector the business community in Scotland and society more widely. This has been and must continue to be a very open process.

The scenarios are predicated on the two key drivers of change which the project community believed will be hugely important in shaping society up to 2025: **increasing globalisation** and **greater social inequalities**. The possible outcomes of these two critical drivers form the main storyline within the scenarios. The outcomes of many other key drivers of change, such as the use of natural resources and the changing use of technology, and the relationship between these drivers, along with all the evidence collected during the project workshops and seminars, are also given critical treatment implicitly and explicitly within each story.

In producing the four scenarios we have been able to reflect on the kind of learning nation we hope to achieve by 2025 and an idea of what Scotland's place in the world could and should be like. We hope you find these questions and provocations, and the wider publications from the project, useful and effective in fostering debate, argument and consensus on how to prepare for Scotland becoming a world-leading learning nation by 2025.

**The Rt Hon Tricia Marwick MSP, Chair, Scotland's Futures Forum**  
**Sir Andrew Cubie, CBE, Chair, The Goodison Group in Scotland**

## Key overarching questions

- 1 Are the aspirations of ensuring learning opportunities **for all** within Scotland and being globally competitive as a country mutually exclusive? Can a learning society really promote social cohesion for all? Who will be the winners and losers?
- 2 How far should the learning system be required to heal or prevent social problems and inequalities, for example, pre-school disadvantage, juvenile crime, adult literacy, unemployment, social and geographical isolation and access to technology?
- 3 Can the Scottish business sector be encouraged to promote a deeper spirit of entrepreneurship with and for learners of all ages?
- 4 Should policy interventions concentrate finite public resources on further developing early years directly at the expense of higher and further education?
- 5 In principle, should Scotland be pursuing the commodification of higher education for export?
- 6 Should a higher premium be put on the development of critical thinking, knowledge management and learning skills in schools at the expense of more traditional and content-driven elements of the curriculum?
- 7 Should Scotland be seeking to invest more heavily in the teaching of foreign languages in our schools?
- 8 Do higher education institutions need to become private organisations as described in 'Market-driven learning society' to compete in the 21st century? What long term impact would that have on state schools?
- 9 Should the content of further education be driven and organised by regional business sectors?
- 10 Should teachers with specialisms be enabled to be more mobile, moving from school to school and between sectors?
- 11 Should there be more flexibility for school students to attend specialist classes in other schools or colleges?
- 12 Should a more asset-based approach to learning be encouraged within the learner journey with ability and not age being the determining factor?
- 13 How can teachers be encouraged, enabled, trained and retrained to develop curriculum material relevant to the technology routinely being used by students?

# Commentary



The four scenarios to emerge, entitled **market-driven learning society**, **local learning society**, **global learning society** and **divided learning society**, portray four notions of Scotland as a learning society. None of the four world-views are predictions. They are perhaps more about values, and when we read and debate the scenarios we are forced to reappraise those values in relation to learning, education and to society more widely.

To achieve the goal of being a world-leading learning nation, we have to be 'learning as a nation', collectively and systematically as well as enabling or providing learning for individuals. It has been said more than once in this project that we need to remember who the customer of the education system is – the student and society. So who 'owns' the learning system – the learner, government, funders, society? And if you own it, should you also pay for it? One of the key points highlighted in all of the scenarios is the absolute need for partnership and collaboration. Can we really de-politicise education? Is it possible to expect politicians, educators and business to share a vision for the future and collectively enable progress towards those goals? We hope this paper prompts people into thinking about these questions.

During a testing period, the project team engaged with a number of stakeholders on the scenarios and the commentary below provides a sense of views expressed.

The following questions were used to engage stakeholders:

- **What do you like about each of the worlds described?**
- **What do you dislike about each of the worlds described?**
- **Which of the scenarios seem(s) most plausible?**
- **Which of these scenarios, if any, do you think the government is planning for now?**
- **Which of the scenarios describes what you consider to be a 'learning nation'?**
- **Which of these scenarios do you think the education system in Scotland is designed to lead to/achieve?**
- **What actions are required by i) government; ii) the education sector and iii) the business community to achieve or avoid any of the scenario world-views?**



## Market-driven learning society

There was some unease about the implicit impacts of this scenario. This scenario is business led and potentially centred on the needs of commerce. The fact that private schools have such a high profile suggests the 'market-driven learning society' has been very much to the detriment of state schools. This has the potential to develop into the 'gated communities' as described in the 'divided learning society' scenario.

In this scenario the Scottish Government has ceded learning direction to the business community. It is suggested that such an approach may be short-sighted and would lead to a polarised community. In this scenario, as much as in others, there needs to be a much more joined up and shared approach with industrial partners.

## Local learning society

There was an overarching sense that key characteristics of this scenario were more of a warning of what could happen and not something we would wish for. Others commented on this world-view as possibly the best we could hope for with the current policy levers when the focus is on ensuring everyone in Scottish society has the chance of increasing their learning potential.

Learning hubs have replaced colleges and while that may be felt to be a less complicated learning landscape for students, and resolve any duplication at SCQF levels, it would require a major shift in orthodoxy to become a reality by 2025.

There was a sense that because in this scenario employers are relied upon to drive learning, the outcome may be a severe narrowing of skills focused on the short-term needs of specific employers, plus a lack of broader learning and flexibility to enable people to move between jobs. There would need to be a national effort to encourage people to be motivated to learn (with online and flexible delivery); for many learners that would present a real barrier.

In this scenario, the benefits of using social enterprises in the delivery of financially viable, locally based education and learning services start to become apparent. This approach would be in line with the call for the third sector to be more involved in the delivery of public services.



## Global learning society

Many people so far have found this scenario to be very attractive and feel it should be regarded as Scotland's main aspiration in becoming a world-leading learning society by 2025. It was felt by many that the scenario imagines Scotland well placed to make genuine economic progress, with education right at the heart as 'an essential support for economic development'. The emphasis on early years interventions has been successful; educational technology has been harnessed to creative uses; the principles of Curriculum for Excellence are embedded in a learning system that respects individual learning styles; increasing budgets are fuelling research into educational methods; employers are an effective partner with colleges and Scottish universities are seen as global leaders.

The vision of technology as a tool may be underestimated in the scenario. Certainly colleges and increasing numbers of courses in universities are not far away now, in 2013, in terms of the scenarios' assumption that mobile technologies and online materials will predominate. Large numbers of face-to-face teaching hours are currently being replaced or complemented by independent learning in many forms.

That said, it was felt that the whole scenario presupposes a return to economic growth and would require a greater share of gross GDP being invested wisely by government in an improving education service. Is it reasonable to suggest that government will be willing or able to commit to this kind of investment? Would the redistribution of educational resources, as would be required, impact upon Scotland's ability to be competitive in adversely affected areas? Would the idea of privatisation of higher education institutions as suggested in the 'market-driven' scenario help in this regard?

Also, the investment envisaged in teacher education, and the expectation that Masters level would be a standard requirement, is laudable but does not reflect the reality of the many routes that teachers take to end up in classrooms, particularly in colleges.

It is important that Masters level activity revolves around practice-based learning – this may also appeal to people in industry who consider moving into teaching. It was the opinion of business representatives in this project that inspirational teachers have often had practical experience of the world of work outside teaching, enabling them to expose their students to the realities of the world beyond academia.

Crucially, in this scenario the required levels of investment in research and development in education are not currently evident. This would have to be addressed in the near term to ensure a pathway to this kind of scenario.

There was also a sense that assessment of the global reach and power of our university sector was unlikely to be realised. Are we likely to see the form of international cooperation envisaged in this scenario, or will our separate, independent institutions try to compete alone and face the inevitable challenge from the United States and the rapidly emerging university sectors in China and India? There is evidence that things are moving in this direction in some parts of the sector, with new collaborations and partnerships announced every month involving institutions at home and abroad.



The depiction of lifelong learning in action with ageing learners working in schools and colleges will require a significant change in direction from the current orthodoxy that has colleges focusing on 16 to 19 year-olds within a strict regime of vocational training.

There was also a view that the world market place also offered Scottish further education organisations the chance to be more commercially active internationally, selling their products and services.

Many people felt that the attractiveness of the 'global learning society' scenario should be a call to action to address these issues. The prize in terms of social cohesion and economic growth would be well worth the significant investment in education that would be required to make the scenario any kind of reality.

## Divided learning society

Most people saw this world-view as a dystopia; a vision of a dysfunctional society, and almost unimaginable in the timescale. However, a number of others saw this storyline, and in particular the metaphor of 'gated communities', as the current reality for many even if not yet described as such. Some people recognised signs that society is already moving further in the direction of this scenario. There was a strong feeling that there was a real absence of 'hope' in this narrative – it did not seem a very 'hopeful' world. There are certainly few examples in this scenario of excluded communities taking it upon themselves to become more effective learners almost in spite of the world around them.

One key emphasis in avoiding this world-view is the important role played by further education in providing opportunities for young people and for adult returners to acquire a range of life skills as well as the vocationally-specific skills that obtain and sustain employment. The question is raised then that if we are to avoid this kind of scenario, would Scotland be required to significantly increase expenditure on further education and adult education?

Another important focus in avoiding this world would be to ensure that schools really do implement the total Curriculum for Excellence philosophy of developing the whole person and the whole school population, that they do not get side-tracked into focusing too narrowly on the new qualifications that accompany it and become stymied by the constraints of the existing system and structures.

## Provocations for discussion

### Market-driven learning society

Scotland's colleges should become a network of 'learning centres' staffed by itinerant tutors.

Without a strong SME sector Scotland risks a 'brain drain'.

Scotland cannot afford the consequences of 10 years of under-investment in early years.

The focus on lifelong learning should be based upon vocational learning – required for an ageing working population.

With an expected reduction in natural resources, Scotland should adopt at the heart of its education policy 'redesigning, reusing, reducing, recycling'.

The business sector must be encouraged to help steer vocational education in the absence of a clear national strategy.

New forms of support must be provided to workers to support and enhance 'portfolio working' – a growing reality for the workforce. For example, flexible working spaces, regular retraining, IT support facilities and tax incentives.

The 'commodification' of higher education is not in the interest of Scotland's learners.

Further education staff, on six-month contracts, and reliant on their specialisms and mobility will lead to better-prepared learners for the workforce.

New 'vocational centres' replacing colleges will attract older learners.

## Local learning society

Community 'learning hubs' should replace further education institutions and should form integral partnership and management arrangements with schools.

Teleconferencing and distance learning should be a standard part of the learning experience.

Business education, supported by SMEs, must be an integral part of school education with frequent and long term 'work placements' offered to school students.

Employers must be incentivised to further support workers' part-time study.

Local 'wisdom councils' should take on the role of setting education policy for their area and spending priorities for the 'learning hubs'.

A 'Children's University' model should be established to encourage interaction of academics with children, particularly encouraging interest in natural science and technology.

Personalised individual learning records should travel with the learner covering extra-curricular activities and experiences.

Personal responsibility skills should be a standard part of the learning experience from primary school encouraging good decision-making and financial skills.

Pursuing local jobs and employment must be a priority for the individual at the expense of higher education.

Unemployment benefit should be reduced monthly if the individual fails to take up work or training options.

'Learning hubs' should be open 24/7 to allow people to learn at a time and pace that suits them.

A learning hub ethos should enable young and old to combine study, work and family circumstances.

Public and private organisations should 'donate' any spare broadband capacity for general use to the local area.

Employers, through the 'learning hubs', should support the creation of social enterprises, relevant to their local priorities and needs.

A lifelong learning charter between local authorities, local businesses and central government should be established and should include the ability for workers to take up to a three-year sabbatical in their 40s.

How to create and sustain an SME should be better promoted within the education system.

Specific learning hubs should be established to support family businesses.

## Global learning society

Parenting skills, entrepreneurship skills and educational aspirational programmes should be commonplace within primary education.

Teaching should be a totally Masters level profession.

New teachers should not be allowed to enter the profession straight from university. They should have a minimum of five years' experience doing non-teaching work.

Scottish teachers must be more aware of learning developments in other countries and encouraged more to define their professionalism in terms of how successfully their students learn.

Teachers must be more mobile and encouraged to offer their specialisms to more than one school.

Teachers should put greater value on different learning styles, including the increased use of mobile technology to support learning.

Pupils should be encouraged to travel to different schools and make use of new 'centres of excellence' promoting learning in specific subjects, along with adult learners.

Schools should employ technicians to work with teaching staff to develop virtual learning.

Schools should introduce pupil-to-pupil virtual twinning programmes with pupils from other countries to encourage new forms of international learning.

Local businesses should provide entrepreneurs-in-residence in schools to help encourage innovation.

Additional support should be given within the education system, most notably to renewable energy, information technology and microbiology.

Early years language learning must be encouraged more, integrating with modern language learning throughout primary and secondary education focusing on, for example, Mandarin and Arabic.

## Divided learning society

Preventative action is urgently needed to support those with mental health issues and substance abuse issues within the context of health and social care.

Areas of deprivation must receive urgent investment in technology infrastructure, including broadband.

Local authorities must be more enabling of communities who wish to create community resources for learning, in whatever form the community wishes.

Informal, empowering, learning networks within local communities must be given financial support for a sustainable period.

Urgent further investment must be made available in early years programmes in deprived areas to reduce deficit spending on, for example, police and the NHS.

Fully funded, tailored, community leadership development programmes must be supported and become widespread in areas of deprivation.

A culture of parent councils must be supported in deprived areas.

Scottish universities must become more visible and active in areas of deprivation.

Those regarded as inspiring teachers should be financially rewarded for choosing to teach in areas of deprivation.

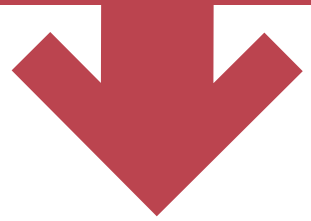
State school funding must be protected and sustained to avoid dwindling resources for learning support.

A strong college sector is vital in areas of deprivation to support learners into the jobs market.

Dual credit schemes are essential – supporting students to study at school and college simultaneously – to support the most vulnerable students receiving support from both teachers and college staff, and should be fully funded and resourced.

Social enterprises are growing in Scotland with a well-developed support infrastructure which, arguably, provides one of the best environments for setting up social enterprise in the EU. We should celebrate and invest in Scotland's leadership in this area.

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**The Open University in Scotland**

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## About the Goodison Group in Scotland

The Goodison Group in Scotland (GGiS) was formed in 2005 by its Chair Sir Andrew Cubie CBE and Brian Stevens. The establishment of GGiS was inspired by the work of the Goodison Group, set up in England by Sir Nicholas Goodison and Brian Stevens as a programme of FEEdS Consultancy Ltd.

GGiS has continued to operate long after the original Goodison Group ceased to operate in England in 2006. In August 2011 GGiS moved into a new phase, constituted as a company limited by guarantee with charitable status, registered as GGiS (Network) Ltd.

### Our vision:

Lifelong learning within a community that treasures the capacity to learn should be the normal expectation of every individual.

### Our aim:

To influence debate and practice in business, government and education on the changing nature of learning in the 21st century.

### Our purpose:

To bring together experienced people from the worlds of business, government and education to focus on particular themes to do with learning, skills and productivity.

### Our objective:

To act as a premier learning network for its members to come together to explore the changing nature of learning in a spirit of open inquiry and to produce high quality research, events and briefings on different aspects of learning suitable in 21st century Scotland.

Our work is guided by five long-term aspirations for learning:

- > Every individual citizen should have the opportunity to learn at every age, and should expect to do so.
- > The treasure of learning throughout life should be part and parcel of every community in the country.
- > The advancement of every individual citizen, through both formal and informal learning, should be the test of all policies and practices.
- > There should be constructive debate about lifelong learning between business, government and education and a means of sustaining it.
- > The countries of the United Kingdom should make sure that they learn policies and practices from each other.

### Who are we?

GGiS has an active, growing network of over 130 individuals and organisations from a range of backgrounds, including business, public service, education and the third sector.

GGiS Board of Directors

- > Sir Andrew Cubie (Chair)
- > Mark Batho
- > Dugdale Bradley
- > Professor Graham Donaldson
- > Brian Stevens (Company Secretary)

## About Scotland's Futures Forum

Scotland's Futures Forum was created by the Scottish Parliament to help its Members, along with policy makers, businesses, academics, and the wider community of Scotland, look beyond immediate horizons, to some of the challenges and opportunities we will face in the future.

Looking beyond the four-year electoral cycle and away from party politics, the Forum seeks to stimulate public debate in Scotland, bringing fresh perspectives, ideas and creativity on how we might prepare for the future now.

### SFF Board of Directors

- > The Rt Hon Tricia Marwick MSP, Presiding Officer to the Scottish Parliament
- > John Park MSP (2009 – 2012)
- > Aileen McLeod MSP
- > Alex Johnstone MSP
- > Lady Susan Rice, Managing Director, Lloyds Banking Group, Scotland
- > Anne Douglas, Prospect National Secretary for Scotland and Chairperson of the Scottish Union Learning Board
- > Sir Andrew Cubie CBE, Chair of the Goodison Group in Scotland
- > Professor Sir Ian Diamond, Principal and Vice Chancellor of Aberdeen University

Paul Grice, SFF Company Secretary and Chief Executive, Scottish Parliament

Donald Jarvie, Head of Business, Scotland's Futures Forum

## Supporters

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“ The Royal Bank of Scotland are again pleased to support the work of the Goodison Group in Scotland. We believe that it is vital for all parties involved in Lifelong Learning to engage in debate to ensure we optimise our Learning activities. Only by working together can we create the environment where we can all compete. ”

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BANKING  
GROUP



“ Lloyds Banking Group recognises the important contribution the Goodison Group in Scotland continues to make in the field of lifelong learning and we are very pleased to play our part in assisting their work. As employment patterns change and both individuals and businesses need to become more flexible and more adaptable, the need for access to education and training throughout life increases. The Goodison Group in Scotland is making a significant contribution in this arena. ”



Supported by BP.

This project has been undertaken in a genuine spirit of open inquiry as a think-piece, designed to stimulate debate and allow individuals and organisations to question their strategic approaches around learning, skills and education.

For more information regarding this project contact either [info@ggis.org.uk](mailto:info@ggis.org.uk) or [event@scotlandfutureforum.org](mailto:event@scotlandfutureforum.org)

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