



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Scotland's
Futures Forum
Fòram Alba air Thoiseach



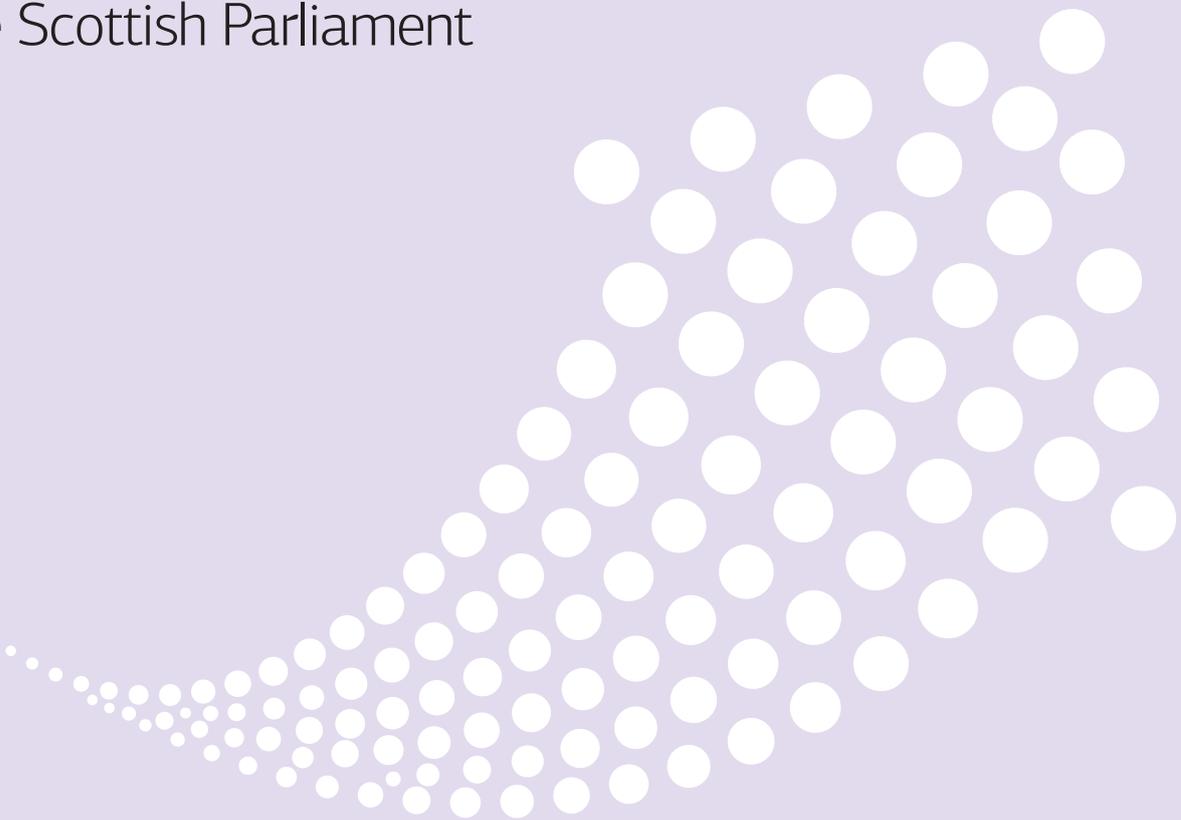
Goodison Group
in Scotland

INFLUENCING LEARNING

Scotland's Futures Forum / Goodison Group in Scotland **Forum Debate**

Tuesday 5 September 2017

The Scottish Parliament



Background

The Goodison Group in Scotland 2017 programme will focus on exploring future schooling, education and learning approaches in 2030 and beyond. An outline of the project can be found at <http://www.scotlandfutureforum.org/scotland2030-future-schooling.html>. The output from this work will contribute to Scotland's Futures Forum's broader programme, which is considering Scotland's aspirations for society and culture in 2030 and beyond.

Future Schooling, Education & Learning Approaches: 2030 and Beyond

As part of the Goodison Group in Scotland's Future Schooling project, this forum explored how the economy might influence, enhance or disrupt schooling, education and learning in 2030 and beyond. To stimulate the debate, Professor David Bell was invited to offer his views on the relationship between economic progress and lifelong learning. In addition to being Professor of Economics at the University of Stirling, David Bell is also the Principal Investigator at Healthy Aging in Scotland (HAGIS), a longitudinal research project which collects data on the health, economic and social circumstances of people aged over 50.

Professor David Bell, The University of Stirling

Professor Bell opened his presentation by suggesting that, in exploring our future learning, rather than asking questions about who, where, when and how we educate our children and young people, we should take a step back and consider our ambitions for Scotland as a whole in 2030. In his view that was a fair, just, stable social and political environment, as well as a strong economy.

In order to transition to that future, Professor Bell argued that we needed to review the available evidence and then use that evidence to adapt existing policies and incentivise behaviour change.

Based on evidence from the OECD on how Scotland is performing relative to other countries in terms of science, maths and reading, he suggested that Scotland is not currently on the right trajectory to acquire the necessary skills base for the economy we want in 2030. To back up his assertion, Professor Bell referred to the work of Eric Hanushek which demonstrates the strong correlation between such metrics and economic outcomes. He also highlighted that, although the attainment gap in Scotland is narrowing, it is doing so at a slow pace.

While the evidence states that teacher quality is the single most important determinant affecting pupil attainment, Professor Bell suggested that developing the skills needed to support a strong economy should not be the sole responsibility of the education sector, but must also consider the role of the family and wider societal factors.

He went on to highlight the example of Germany, where the apprenticeship system is a 'gigantic microeconomic management exercise' that involves all relevant stakeholders, including local employers and multinational companies. Moreover, in Germany far fewer people enter university while vocational training plays a critical role in shaping the national economic strategy.

In terms of where to target our resources, Professor Bell cited evidence that highlights how pounds invested early (i.e. in the early years) give far better returns with respect to skills development, than money invested later. He also referred to the field of epigenetics where the research suggests that adverse conditions in early life can severely impact on the developing brain. However, he warned that early years interventions should be designed after careful evaluation of the evidence to ensure they yield effective and additional benefits.

Professor Bell concluded by stating that, although thinking about 2030 now is a welcome development, he believed Scotland had yet to get on the right trajectory to ensure we have the right skills base for the 2030 economy.

Discussion

The discussion began with a comment that, in order for Scotland to develop the right skills base, communication had to be improved with the relevant key stakeholders, particularly employers who currently appeared to have no effective voice in discussions and skills. This was a significant loss. In contrast, it was suggested that universities had become better at being accountable for the employability of their graduates, although issues remain around the quality of jobs that some graduates enter.

The example of Germany was highlighted again as a country where employers pay towards three-year apprenticeships and therefore have a voice at the table. However, it was suggested that both SQA and the colleges in Scotland have had good relationships with employers, and that colleges in particular would be well placed to take forward the skills agenda if they received better support from the Scottish Government and other statutory agencies.

While it is a tough ask to predict a country's future skills base and economy, it was noted that the Scottish economy had been in a state of flux for some time, making economic forecasts particularly difficult, and that Brexit has brought a distinct challenge to predicting future demographics and migration patterns. Where there are data to help with such projections, it was suggested that they largely focus on the health and education sectors, although others countered that the Scottish public sector has good datasets but that they are not used effectively to inform policy.

It was suggested that Scotland needs to be able to offer a strong skills base if it is to attract inward investment, particularly given the decline of the oil and financial services sectors, both of which were big graduate employers. There was a suggestion that we also need to think beyond Scotland to the contribution that graduates can make to the global economy, and that equipping young people with the right cognitive and non-cognitive skills was the only way to address the intergenerational income gap.

Discussion *continued*

It was claimed that to get Scotland on the right trajectory we need to speed up and tackle some key challenges within our education system, including teacher quality. It was noted that the attainment gap within schools, as well as between them, demonstrates that this remains a real issue. It was also noted that 20-23% of the Scottish population does not have functional literacy skills, which is a drag on the economy as well as a series of personal tragedies.

The teaching profession in Scotland was contrasted with that of Germany, where teachers get more intensive training, are better paid, have higher status and deal with less bureaucracy. In this context, it was pointed out that a pay differential is also opening up between teachers in England and Scotland.

Concerns were raised about being too harsh about the situation in Scottish schools given that the OECD paints a relatively good picture of Scotland. Moreover, it was noted that the current levels of bureaucracy in schools are the result of a well-intentioned curriculum change to give teachers more freedom.

Following the suggestion that more resources need to be put into schools to bring about meaningful change, it was noted that the teacher development budget has remained unchanged at £11 million for the last four years. However, it was suggested that to bring about real change head teachers needed budgetary autonomy more than extra funding. In addition, it was suggested that head teachers could be better supported through school councils which had representation from feeder primary schools, parents, employers and pupils.

The current focus on early years in Scotland was welcomed, although it was noted that evaluations of early year projects undertaken in England suggested caution is needed in how resources are targeted if such interventions are to bring additional benefits.

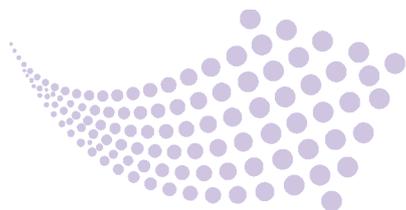
Valuing children (as well as teachers) was deemed a precondition to bringing about meaningful change in schools and to get us to where we want to be in 2030. It was noted that, for effective learning, children need a safe environment both at home and at school. There was recognition that the named person legislation was intended to support that agenda, although challenges remain in providing the necessary training to ensure it is successfully implemented.

Following the discussion, participants were invited to add comments and views to the 'straw scenario' for schooling, education and learning in 2030 that has been developed over the course of recent forum debates. The updated scenario is outlined in Appendix 1.

Next steps

This forum formed part of the Goodison Group in Scotland's long-term programme to explore future schooling, education and learning approaches in 2030 and beyond.

The next forum in this phase of the project will take place on Tuesday 14 November 2017 at the Scottish Parliament.



Appendix 1

School, Education and Learning in 2030

A vision of how education is positively contributing to our culture and society

WHEN

The education system

Politicians and policymakers have set out a clear, long-term vision for education, which was drawn up in consultation with teachers, learners, the voluntary sector and businesses. This has led to a shared understanding of the purpose of education, in addition to greater trust of learners and educators. Power and funding have been devolved to a local level to allow schools to deliver that vision, with the willing support from all sections of the local community. There are regular and transparent reviews into how the vision is being delivered; while teachers and learners have a stake in that process, there is a society-wide understanding that accountability requires openness and not just blame.

There is a strong, positive narrative about education. There is balance within the system – structures, values and behaviours – which allows space for innovation, experimentation and change.

The education system is fully funded and easy to navigate and there is parity between vocational and academic learning. Lifelong learning is strongly supported, though it is recognised that education has greatest impact in the early years.

High quality, early years provision links to the rest of the education system and lays the foundations for effective lifelong learning. As part of their pre-school education, children are regularly taken into nature and the community, which fosters their resilience and responsiveness. Outdoor and non-standard activities are valued throughout formal schooling to encourage risk taking.

Parents trust the system and are actively signing up their children for the Education Incubator where new learning techniques and technology are tested and piloted.

The attainment gap has been closed through maximising the potential and raising the educational standards of all pupils. 100% numeracy and literacy, including digital literacy, has been achieved. Standards in all schools have been raised to such an extent that moving to be in a particular school catchment area is a rarity.

There is no perceptible gender imbalance within the system. Girls are as likely to embark on engineering apprenticeships as boys, and there are as many male teachers in nursery schools as females.

In recognition of research that shows that adolescents' attention spans and their ability to digest information can be adversely affected because their brains are still developing, teenagers are offered a gap year, with options to participate in community projects or work experience.

The system offers significant flexibility, particularly after compulsory education. There is an understanding that individuals will want to participate in different stages of education at different times and that many adults need short (6 month) career-change programmes from universities and colleges.

WHAT

The curriculum

The curriculum is revisited and shaped annually by teachers, learners and parents as well as the wider community, including employers, colleges and universities. As part of this process, changes in technology, the workplace, and the political and economic situation are taken into account. Children and young people's views are sought in effective and genuine ways and their views are acted upon.

The purpose of learning is understood, and there are many opportunities to engage with the real world which gives education more meaning. The involvement of local business and charities in the school leads to work placements and projects that build teamwork and work skills.

While learning is often seen as fun, pupils and students also develop a work ethic and a desire to succeed at 'the hard stuff'. There is an understanding of the importance of knowledge rather than subjects. Pupils are encouraged to see beyond the here and now and imagine how things might be different in the future. The ability to research information and to be able to fact check is built into all stages of learning.

The four capacities of the Curriculum for Excellence (successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, effective contributors) have been retained and are being realised by learners, who all speak at least one other language. Pupils are also taught emotional literacy, critical thinking and the ability to determine what's important and what's to be valued.

In general, societal attitudes to risk and failure have dramatically changed. The education system allows people to learn and unlearn, and pupils are taken on visits to the National Museum of Failure to encourage them to experiment and fail.

WHERE

Schools

With power now devolved to a local level, schools have become pastoral centres at the heart of the community with the responsibility to raise children seen as a shared one by all stakeholders. Children can access green space where a lot of time is spent learning in, and from, nature. Children are routinely involved in decisions that influence the school environment including the selection of teachers.

The labels of 'schools', 'colleges' and 'universities' have largely been abandoned and have been replaced by the terms 'learning hubs', 'learning communities' and 'learning environments'. There is much sharing of resources between these different places which offer flexible, innovative spaces for all ages as education is no longer defined by 'age and stage'.

Technology has been harnessed to further the common good and enhance, rather than drive, learning. The Global Virtual Classroom launches its second phase of cross-cultural projects, where Scottish students work with students across the world on specific areas or projects – virtually.

Teachers are adept at nurturing and building on the learning that take place within the family and other community settings such as libraries, local associations, workplaces and online forums. Given the above, there is a lot of emphasis on equipping adults with the knowledge, skills and confidence to support children's learning.

HOW and WHO

The teaching profession

Teaching is a highly valued and desirable profession. Teachers have a passion for what they do and many have entered the profession after spending years in industry enabling them to share their insights of the wider world with pupils. As well as teachers with different life experiences, pupils are exposed to teachers from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds.

A high degree of trust has led to minimal bureaucracy, allowing teachers able to get on with delivering society's vision for education; head teachers have sufficient power, funding and flexibility to adapt the curriculum to meet the changing needs of society.

Within the classroom, teachers have more of a facilitation role, encouraging learners to access experts independently and/or to learn through peer-to-peer or intergenerational mentoring. Much learning is delivered remotely, and as pupils and students are only present at 'learning hubs' for discussions and socialising, there is minimal classroom disruption. Care is taken by teachers to encourage creative thoughts and to give children and young people the time to think before they respond to questions.

Technology has given students greater control of their learning and has enabled the removal of basic administrative tasks, including marking, from teachers.

Teachers who have spent more than 10 years in the profession are obliged to take a gap year to enable them to widen their life experience and retain their passion for their subject. Teachers work into their late sixties but there are more opportunities for part-time employment. All media networks have reported that a scheme for retired teachers to coach and mentor student and new teachers has been oversubscribed this year.

Within schools, there is a vibrant leadership culture, where leadership is not defined by role. The quality of teaching is consistently high throughout the education system.

SUCCESS

Qualifications and competences

A common language is used to describe what people have gained from formal education and other forms of learning, in all areas of education as well as within business and across society as a whole.

Success is no longer evaluated through testing or by focusing solely on numeracy and literacy.

Artificial intelligence allows assessment on demand, and students' e-portfolios (passports recording their achievements and experience) are held online. Businesses can check these e-portfolios, reducing or eliminating the need for application forms or CVs when applying for jobs, although students understand, and are fully able to identify and articulate the skills that they have acquired from their learning.

There is a healthy debate about whether measurement matters and what purpose it serves within education.

VALUES and BEHAVIOURS

The values and behaviours at the 'heart' of the education system are embedded and form part of Scotland's DNA. These values include: social justice; optimism; diversity; inclusion; multi-culturalism; and open-mindedness.

The beginnings of a new enlightenment can be seen following a renewed emphasis on the arts, humanities and social sciences, with learning valued over qualifications and attitude valued as much as skills. Society sees itself as in control of and not controlled by technological innovations.

There is a belief in children and young people's potential, instincts and emotions, and a collective desire to draw out an individual's potential throughout their life. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as children's digital rights, are understood and upheld with an understanding that children treated with human dignity will have higher levels of confidence and learning. In addition, the following qualities are encouraged within the education system: emotional intelligence, resilience, leadership, aspiration and empathy.

In higher education, less emphasis on targets has led to a greater freedom to explore and go deep. The higher education system provides an outward-looking, culturally diverse learning environment and is leading the way globally in encouraging open research, open data and open educational resources.