



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Scotland's  
**Futures Forum**  
Fòram Alba air Thoiseach

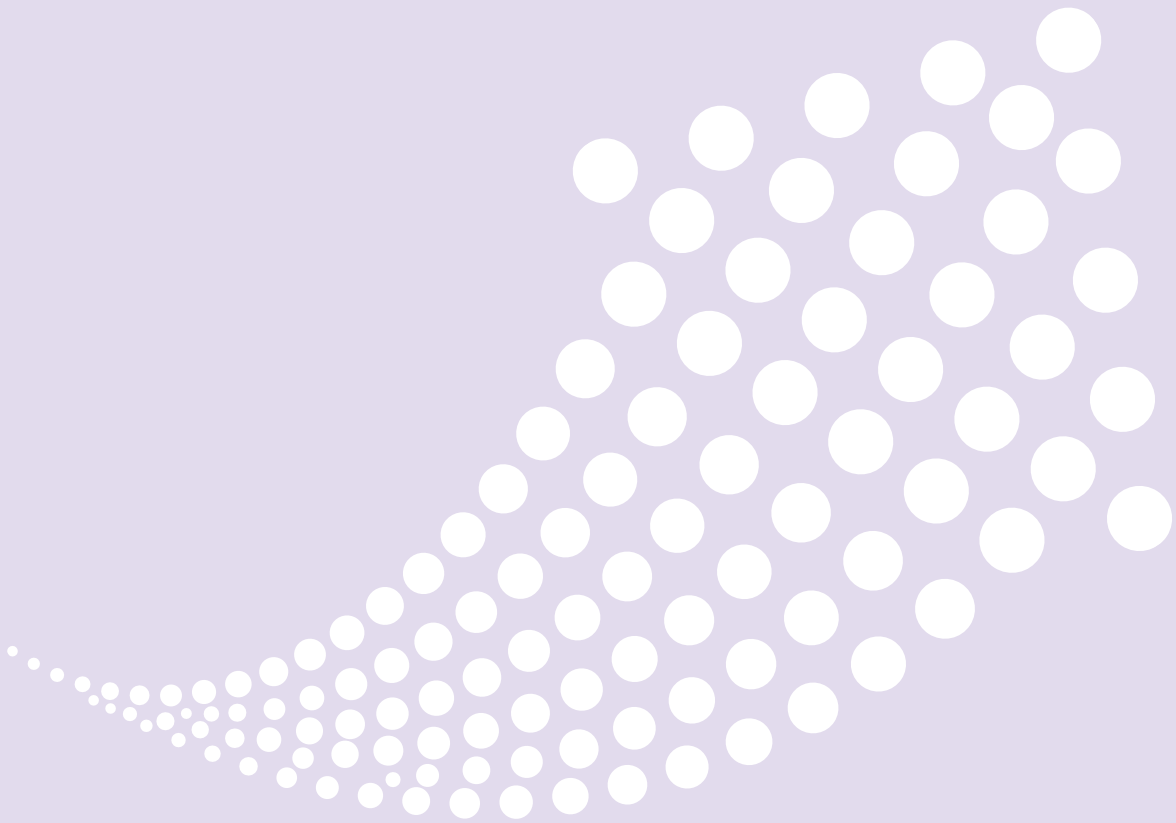


**Goodison Group**  
in Scotland

INFLUENCING LEARNING

# Scotland's Futures Forum/ Goodison Group in Scotland **Education in 2030**

**Draft Scenario - August 2019**



## Future Schooling, Education and Learning 2030 and Beyond

### Draft Scenario

#### About the draft scenario

With the Goodison Group in Scotland, the Scotland's Futures Forum has been contemplating the future for schooling, education and learning in Scotland, looking to 2030 and beyond.

In a series of interactive seminars over the past two years, participants from a wide range of backgrounds, including education, academia, government, business, children and young people, have been asked to consider our aspirations for education and learning in 2030 and beyond.

What could become a reality? What are the implications for education and learning when the future is uncertain and continues to change rapidly? What capacities will people of all ages need to develop to thrive in this type of environment? How will education and learning help shape our culture and society?

The scenario below is the current version. It is not a prediction; it is designed to be aspirational and to provoke thoughts, ideas and responses.

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### The Draft Scenario

#### CONTEXT

Scottish education has been on its own learning journey over the last ten years. Now, in 2030, Scotland has a clear, long-term vision for education which encourages innovation, experimentation and change. The vision, drawn up in consultation with teachers, learners and their communities, has generated a strong, positive narrative around education as well as a shared understanding of its purpose, leading to high levels of trust in the system.

These changes began in early 2020 when it was recognised that a radical review of the whole system was needed to prepare our children and young people for the challenges they were likely to face as adults.

One key aspect of the review was the discussion on leadership in education, which started in 2019 and gained traction in 2020. This initiative, some say movement, advocated a new leadership paradigm, one that differentiated between leadership and management and was based on values, compassion, care and co-operation. The work was wide ranging including empirical research as well as considering existing approaches such as Complex Adaptive Leadership, Situational Leadership and Theory U. The conversations helped the whole system become open to experimentation, including consideration of different structures and career paths within the profession. Many of the ideas have

now been adopted and the ability to understand and lead simple, complicated and complex change is main stream throughout the education system. The Scottish College of Educational Leadership created in 2014 has evolved into a Leadership Academy, bringing together leaders from across the public sector, encouraging networks that promote real system change to engender a better and fairer society.

An economic downturn in 2022, coming hard on the heels of extreme disruptive weather, brought many of the challenges into sharp focus and provided the impetus to implement the review's more radical recommendations. This began a journey that has seen Scotland flourish as a country with an education system that both reflects and engenders the wider social values of: social justice; optimism; diversity; and inclusion.

## **VALUES and BEHAVIOURS - What values, behaviours and conditions have made the education system successful and sustainable?**

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was incorporated into Scots law in 2021, a move backed by educators who understood that children treated with human dignity have higher levels of confidence and learning. Scotland now holds a shared belief that the primary aim of education is to enhance a child's life; learning is valued over qualifications, and attitude is valued as much as skills.

Changes within the education system have been supported by wider policy changes and realise the aims and ambitions laid out in the National Performance Framework, announced by the Scottish Government in 2018. However, although policy supports change, it is not necessarily the driver or impetus for change. In 2030, there is open two way communication between stakeholders at grass roots and policy makers. Consultation, collaborative working and devolving power to a local level were vital enablers to achieve trust in the education system. Participation in consultation exercises from learners, parents and all sections of the community only became meaningful once power and adequate funding had been devolved to schools or 'learning hubs'. Devolving power has made for a nimbler system with the learning hubs now able to adapt quickly and make decisions that are appropriate for their local context.

Accountability within the system is to the people who matter the most: the learners. Children's views are routinely sought, alongside those of the community, and are acted upon. As the whole community has a stake in the system, there is a greater understanding that accountability requires learning and openness, rather than blame.

Government Ministers, policy makers are welcomed into learning hubs, they often drop in unannounced, allowing them to be immersed in how children and young people are learning.

The drive to reverse growing inequality has diminished the poverty-related stigma that previously inhibited some children's ability to learn. Learning hubs have also been able to take advantage of research from the Social Innovation Institute which has given them a fuller understanding of how to benefit from technological innovations. Funding for education, especially for early years, significantly increased as part of the preventative spend agenda, which was a key policy driver of the 2020s.

## **WHEN does education take place?**

**When** to educate children and young people changed as a result of evidence-based research. An adjustment of the old traditional stages of schooling led to the phasing out of the previous divide between primary, secondary and further education.

**3 - 8 year olds** attend kindergarten, where children learn predominantly through play. A kindergarten system of 'hubs' supports the development of well-rounded individuals who can go on to contribute to a more altruistic society. While there is no testing other than teacher assessment,

this stage links well to the rest of the education system and lays the foundation for a child's future learning.

Children can leave kindergarten aged 7 or stay on for another year until they are deemed 'ready'.

**8 - 15 year olds** undertake a broad general education during the 'GenEd' phase. In recognition of the research that shows that adolescents' attention spans and their ability to digest information can be adversely affected because their brains are still developing, teenagers, aged 15, are offered a gap year, with options to participate in community projects or work experience before transitioning to the senior phase.

**16 - 21 year olds** participating in the 'senior phase' are offered a range of flexible academic, technical and cultural pathways, which have been developed with key stakeholders, including industry. This phase encompasses, what was previously known as further and higher education.

In reaction to robust research, learning hub start times for children and young people have been adapted to be age appropriate i.e. the best learning times for each stage of education.

## **WHAT skills and values have children and young people developed?**

As the overall aim of the education system is to develop a child's capacity to thrive in an ever-changing environment, the four capacities of the Curriculum for Excellence (successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, effective contributors) have been retained and re-energised. The curriculum is underpinned by these capacities with emotional literacy, resilience, creativity, empathy, leadership, enterprise, and critical thinking seen as key.

Numeracy, literacy (including digital literacy), health and well-being and developing a range of knowledge remain important but the curriculum now facilitates learning in broad areas rather than offering specific subjects. Inter-disciplinary learning has been particularly successful in addressing sustainable solutions to the biggest challenges facing Scotland: climate change, automation and changing demographics. There has been a renewed emphasis on the arts, humanities, social sciences and global cultures including Scottish culture. There are many opportunities to learn through other languages which has both been influenced by, and boosted by, Scotland's global position. 'Extra-curricular activities' is now seen as an arcane term as the curriculum encompasses all types of learning.

By building on the consultation exercises with learners that emerged 15 years ago, children are now seen as leaders and co-creators of their learning, and staff as facilitators of that learning. The curriculum is revisited annually by educators, learners and other stakeholders including parents and employers, as well as the wider community. These discussions draw on local practitioner enquiry, national and international research, published and disseminated by the Curriculum Communities of Practice (CCoP's) that were established in 2025. The CCoP has evolved over the years to ensure a balance of views on education reform.

Children are also regularly consulted on inclusiveness and what it means for them, in recognition of the fact that learning takes place when children feel safe and not stigmatised.

The devolved nature of learning hubs means systems and behaviours can be changed to address any concerns. It also allows for experimentation and enables the curriculum to be adapted quickly to accommodate new technology and take account of the latest research or new trends.

In the Senior Phase, young people are encouraged to build on their skill set and to develop their own individual learning pathways. In the first year, young people start to explore different options - academic, vocational, or a combination of both - by speaking to employers, entrepreneurs and learning hubs that offer degree courses. Individual pathways, which can last between one to five years, have transition and exit points into employment, self-employment or further learning. During

this stage, young people also learn about the practicalities of life post-education, including the processes for gaining employment, running your own business and the tax system.

With a shift in societal attitudes towards risk and failure, the education system supports learners to learn and unlearn. Pupils visit the National Museum of Failure to encourage them to experiment and learn from their mistakes and failures as well as their successes, and to understand that “having a go” and making an effort are an important part of learning.

Behaviour is now less of an issue as pupils have their own reasons for learning based on what interests them. Learning hubs are much better at engaging parents about the behaviour of their children, and where situations escalate restorative justice models are used to negotiate a resolution that is satisfactory to all involved.

## **WHERE does learning take place?**

The terms, ‘nurseries’, ‘schools’, ‘colleges’ and ‘universities’ have largely been abandoned in favour of ‘learning hubs’, ‘learning hives’, ‘learning communities’ or ‘learning environments’. Learning and socialisation now takes place in a much wider range of settings, including virtual spaces. As education is no longer strictly defined by ‘age and stage’, the learning environment is permeable to allow children and young people to learn, wherever feels appropriate to them.

In the early 2020s, grants to local authorities encouraged collaboration with companies and local architects to transform empty commercial space into flexible, innovative learning spaces. This benefited both the companies and the communities. By turning empty properties in town centres into flexible learning spaces, learning hubs also became pastoral centres for the wider community, which in turn engendered a greater sense of shared responsibility for the education of children amongst communities. All the learning environments, physical and virtual, have been developed to encourage peer-to-peer and intergenerational relationships and learning. As part of the local re-development programme, many local authorities built retirement housing alongside learning hubs to actively encourage intergenerational learning.

Around the hubs there is plenty of outdoor, wooded space, where students spend a lot of time learning in, and from, nature. Learners are regularly consulted about their learning environment to gauge what they need to further enhance their learning experience. As a result, buildings and outdoor spaces are easy to navigate, so learners can easily find the right learning activity.

**Kindergartens** have a ‘buzzy’ feel and emanate a sense of fun. They place particular emphasis on outdoor space where children are encouraged to spend the majority of their day, building dens to imitate homes or to hide. They are also encouraged to build and unbuild temporary structures, designed with the help of adults. These types of learning in the outdoors foster resilience, encourage risk taking and help children develop relationships with their peers.

Inside kindergartens, there is a lot of colour; spaces are clean, though they can also be very messy at times.

Kindergartens operate a flexible timetable and are open every day including at weekends. However, younger children do not have to spend all day at kindergarten as support is available for parents who do not want their children to spend long periods outside the home.

**GenEd** takes place in a network of connected learning hubs. As some learning is delivered remotely, learners attend learning hubs mainly for discussions, assessing learning and socialising. Local businesses and charities also offer learners placements and other projects that encourage teamwork and allow for the application of learning, which gives education more meaning.

In the **Senior Phase** there is a much stronger connection with employers as students explore and develop their pathways which might include employment, self-employment or further learning. Young people at this phase also access virtual workplaces to learn about different sectors, and tailor their pathways accordingly.

## **HOW are children and young people educated?**

In **kindergarten**, learning is via play-based pedagogy which is delivered by high-quality staff, who understand what children need to thrive. Much of their training has been practice-based rather than university led. There is no divide between education and care, and there is much closer working with health and social work. Early years teams are encouraged to develop individual responses to each child, based on an understanding of relevant research. For example, if a child shows an interest in books or numbers, this is encouraged. Careful profiling in the early years was pivotal in closing the attainment gap by encouraging learners' interests and strengths as well as identifying areas for development.

Children are adept at their own independent and enquiry based learning, facilitated by expert pedagogy and they are encouraged to tidy up at the end of the day - an activity which is made fun through the singing of songs. Staff are viewed as kind and friendly by the children; when necessary, the staff encourage children to do better rather than labelling them as naughty.

There is a balanced number of male and female staff, and one member of staff in each kindergarten is nominated as the 'safety officer', with a remit to encourage children to take and assess risks.

Scotland's economic, social and employability policies encourage intergenerational learning by giving parents, grandparents and carers the flexibility to spend time at the kindergarten hubs. They work alongside staff to read stories, to sing songs and to talk about the games they used to play. The adults also undertake their own activities, such as crafts, which children can join in with.

### **GenEd**

The focus at this stage is on encouraging young people to develop their skills, knowledge and interests. While the school day is largely unstructured with a flexible curriculum, learning is encouraged at any time through critical reflection.

Learning is largely seen as fun, but 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. The ability to research information, solve problems and fact check is built into all stages of learning. All skills, knowledge and attributes, including literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing, are studied in a real-life context which provides a depth to the learning. In addition, learners are encouraged to see beyond the here and now and imagine how different things might be in the future.

Young people are supported to try different approaches to learning with the assistance of expert hub leaders, guides and mentors, all of whom encourage creative thought and give children the time to think before they respond to questions. There are many opportunities to learn through multi-age and multi-ability teams which offer mutual support and encouragement. For example, learning through project work as an individual, in a team, or as a learning hub is very popular. Learners choose a topic of interest and work with a facilitator or guide to identify the skills and knowledge required to complete the project and the curriculum areas covered. If they need to learn a new skill to deliver the project, different options allow them to experiment to deliver the project's objectives.

Through this kind of learning, learners become motivated problem solvers who can survive in an ever-changing world. However, there is much less focus on employability during the GenEd stage.

The premise at this stage is that if children and young people develop core skills, strong physical and mental health, and a love of learning, they will have built solid foundations for entering the senior phase.

*“My learning experience has been personalised around the priorities, which I have selected. Mentoring is the way I get a lot of understanding about myself and knowledge in the world. The system is shaped around me rather than me being shaped by the system.” Amy aged 13*

Technology has been harnessed to further the common good and to enhance, rather than drive, learning. Knowledge is accessed via different mediums, including variations of traditional methods such as virtual libraries (where learners download books onto tablets), and online seminars or 'ask the expert' sessions. Each pupil has a tablet linked to a facilitator who helps structure their learning and supports any individual needs. Recent technological innovations allow learners to interact more directly with the topics they are exploring through, for example, stepping into an historical event. The Global Virtual Hub recently launched its second phase of cross-cultural projects, which allow Scottish learners to work - virtually - with students across the world. While technology plays a role, children understand the importance of face to face learning in addition to screen time.

During this phase children and young people actively sign up for the Education Incubator where new technology and learning techniques are tested and piloted.

### **Senior Phase**

In the first year of the senior phase, career support is available in different media - virtual, online and face to face - to help young people develop their pathways by identifying relevant people, the resources and data. Career and skills coaches from different occupations, industries and academia help learners design their pathway by exploring their interests and passions, and then support the development of their employability and life-skills. In addition to regular career fairs, there are also opportunities to meet people working in different occupations, both in person and virtually. As the pathways are developed they are shared with parents/carers and teachers.

Some of the coaches are employed by the learning hub while others volunteer their services, providing a flexible and cost-effective resourcing model. This approach to careers has been embedded since 2025, leaving teachers to focus on their areas of expertise and experience.

## **WHO provides education for children and young people?**

A radical overhaul of the teaching profession in 2020 saw a change in mindset around the qualities required to be a good teacher. Since then, teachers are no longer viewed as educators delivering knowledge, but as facilitators of learning.

Teaching is a highly valued and desirable profession, with society valuing pedagogical skills, the right values and attributes as well as knowledge. Teachers have a passion for what they do, with many entering the profession after spending years in industry which allows them to share their insights of the wider world with learners. As well as teachers with different life experiences, pupils are exposed to teachers from a wide variety of backgrounds.

Educators are now highly trained in a wide number of techniques and knowledge in relation to child development. However, the word 'teacher' has been dropped from common parlance in favour of 'hub leader/facilitators' or 'education enablers', as many members of staff are sourced from the community. The hub leaders encourage learners to direct their own learning by independently accessing subject experts and/or through peer-to-peer or intergenerational mentoring. Educators are also adept at nurturing and building on the learning that takes place within the family and other community settings, and through online forums. Given that so much learning takes place outside

learning hubs, a lot of emphasis is placed on equipping parents and adults with the knowledge, skills and confidence to support their children.

Investment in initial educator learning and continuous professional development has led to much greater flexibility within the profession, and has allowed staff greater autonomy to tailor learning to the needs of individual children. Educators also have a sound understanding of children with additional support needs, such as dyslexia and ADHD, and a better understanding what inclusion means in practice.

The 2020 review looked at power within the education system. Recommendations from the review subsequently led to a more respectful relationship between teachers and pupils; the use of teachers' first names has become commonplace and practices such as children being required to raise their hand before they speak and teachers shouting at children have long since been ditched. This rebalancing of power between teachers and pupils became much easier as teachers and pupils began to gain a higher degree of autonomy.

Different pathways into the profession allow teachers to play to their strengths. For example, some are involved in designing learning environments for delivery via artificial intelligence or virtual reality. Others have become national online stars, delivering expert content in certain areas of the curriculum through videos, online seminars and 'meet the expert' sessions.

Hub leaders who have spent more than 10 years in the profession are obliged to take a gap year to widen their life experience and retain passion for their subject. They work into their late sixties but there are opportunities for part-time employment. The media recently reported that a scheme for retired hub leaders to coach and mentor student hub leaders has been oversubscribed this year.

Technology has removed basic administrative tasks for hub leaders. For example, a report of attendees is automatically sent to a tablet from the face/retina recognition systems at the hub's entrance.

Overall, any perceived challenges relating to educator agency within the profession have been removed and educators are empowered to support children with their learning, encouraged by parents, who trust them to do their job.

## **SUCCESS - How is learning measured and assessed?**

The attainment gap has been closed through raising the educational standards of all pupils: 100% numeracy and literacy, including digital literacy, was achieved in 2028.

There is no perceptible gender imbalance within the system; girls are as likely to embark on engineering apprenticeships as boys, and males are as likely to train to work in kindergartens.

While success in education is no longer evaluated through testing, there is an ongoing debate about whether measurement matters and what purpose it serves. However, at all stages there are measures around: learners' happiness; self-regulation; resilience; confidence; and relationships with others.

Standards have been raised to such an extent that moving to a particular catchment area is a rarity. The former HMIE now has a remit to support hubs as learning organisations and has been renamed, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Learning.

In terms of assessment, students are fully able to identify and articulate the skills and knowledge they have acquired from their learning. Learners are asked what they believe has made their learning successful, select the way they wish to be assessed and tend to demonstrate what they can



do, not only what they know. Changes in assessment practices have impacted positively on young people's motivation, creativity, and wellbeing, and have led to a significant reduction in mental health problems.

Artificial intelligence enables students' e-portfolios (passports recording their achievements and experience) to be checked by employers reducing the need to submit job application or CVs.

A common language is used in all areas of education as well as within business to describe what people have gained from formal education and other forms of learning. While employers report that the workforce has the necessary skills and qualities to meet the demands of a fast-changing environment, education's contribution to the prosperity and sustainability of local communities is seen as just as important as its contribution to economic performance.

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