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 21 March 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

Taking on board feedback and suggestions from our final debate of 2016, the objective of this session was to put a 'stake in the ground' and very broadly start to identify our aspirations, a 'straw scenario' for schooling, education and learning in 2030 and beyond. This scenario will be debated and developed as the project progresses.

As a starting point, before being catapulted into 2030 and beyond, participants were asked to take a few minutes to reflect on 2017 and consider:

In 2017, what are the core factors, ingredients that make the education system and process function at its best, when it feels great to be a part of and/or experience?

The key themes identified are highlighted in Appendix 1

Before hearing from curriculum expert, Professor Mark Priestley, participants were asked to imagine it was 2030 and the educational processes, system and curriculum were positively contributing to our culture and society. In imagining such a future, participants were asked to consider the following:

- What's happening that makes schools vibrant and successful?
- What has changed? What has stayed the same?
- What are the external factors and drivers that have shaped, disrupted and influenced the education process and the curriculum?
- What are children and young people getting from the education process and the curriculum?

A vision, straw scenario of schooling and the curriculum in 2030 and beyond, based on the group discussions, is outlined in Appendix 2.

Future Schooling, Education & Learning Approaches: 2030 and beyond

Professor Mark Priestley, the University of Stirling

Ahead of his formal presentation, Prof. Priestley was asked to comment on the group discussions. He suggested that while we were unlikely to see radical change in the education system in 13 years, we could start to lay the groundwork for that transformation. He welcomed the discussions that recognised the importance of the curriculum. In his view, Curriculum for Excellence should have been future-proofed, with a cycle of evaluations built in, to enable change without the Scottish media referring to 'climb-downs'. Prof. Priestley also suggested Curriculum for Excellence appeared to be suffering from inertia in the system which was acting against the best intentions of its architects and those trying to deliver its aims in schools. Against this backdrop and the roll-out of similar curricula in different regions across the UK, he lamented the decline in Curriculum Studies.

Opening his formal presentation, Prof. Priestley began by questioning some of the dichotomies that are current in discussions about education: skills over knowledge; teaching for jobs that don't yet exist versus training for jobs that do exist; the teacher as 'guide on the side' rather than 'sage on the stage'. In his view, this rhetoric can lead to a narrow economic view of education which overlooks how we develop the human being and promote social cohesion.

Prof. Priestley advocated that the question of what an educated person looks like should be at the heart of the curriculum, and that overall, schooling should be about promoting citizenship, employability and nurturing individual talent while encouraging social cohesion.

He referred to three overlapping functions that Gert Biesta suggested should be the focus of education:

1. ***Qualification*** – the skills, knowledge and dispositions delivered through schools;
2. ***Socialisation*** – induction into the society that is, to enable us to engage with and challenge it;
3. ***Subjectification*** – the process of supporting individuals to become the unique individuals that they can be.

Prof. Priestley noted that too often schools are discipline environments which constrain agency and creativity, or exam factories with the curriculum driven by attainment data and/or narrowly defined outcomes. While he recognised that the Scottish education system had a great workforce with many schools that offer safe, nurturing spaces, he proposed that more teachers should be encouraged to engage with these fundamental issues.

In considering what we want from schooling in 2030, Prof. Priestley proposed three things:

1. **A *coherent and progressive curriculum***

   If teachers start with a shared understanding of the purpose of education, rather than moving straight to learning outcomes, fit-for-purpose practices will emerge. These would include powerful pedagogies which recognised that how we learn is as important as what we learn, with for example, greater thought given to the use of digital devices and the traditional timetable.

   Prof. Priestley suggested that Scotland had the makings of a coherent and progressive curriculum with Curriculum for Excellence but competing priorities in schools had led to a confused enactment of Curriculum for Excellence resulting in a loss of the bigger picture.

2. **Teacher agency**

   High quality teachers are essential to education, but we also need to create environments that foster teacher agency. Teacher agency requires teachers who can take initiative, work collegially, have expansive aspirations for education and know how to think educationally rather than which box to tick.

3. **Schools that educate**

   Schools need to educate rather than 'school'. Prof. Priestley expressed a desire that, by 2030 we had moved away from a narrow focus on exams and employability skills, and environments that discipline and constrain. Instead he hoped to see schools that were fit-for-purpose, with knowledge-rich curricula, which are vibrant civic societies where the focus is on education not 'learnification' and students learn citizenship.

Discussion

In the ensuing discussion, it was suggested that the importance of knowledge over subjects had yet to emerge from Curriculum for Excellence. Prof Priestley agreed and suggested that if we wanted to hybridise subjects, as had been achieved in Finland, then we needed to do the groundwork with teachers who still see themselves as coming from particular disciplines.

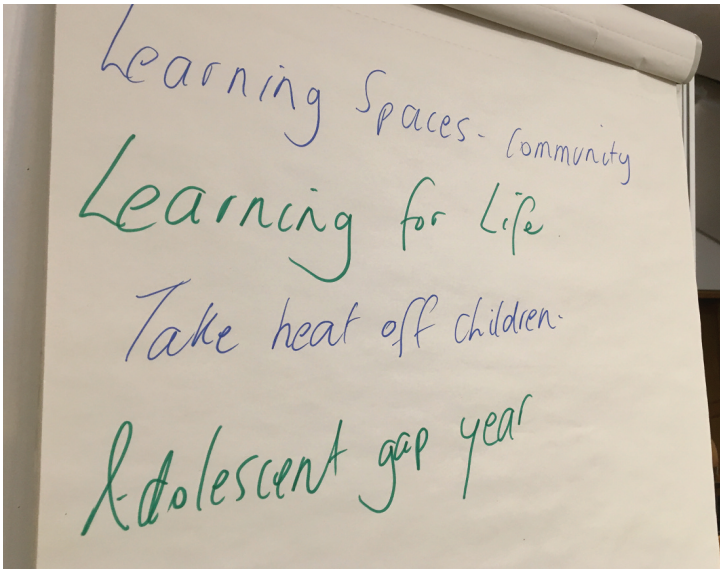
It was highlighted that while we might want to broaden the focus of education, children emerge from school into a society that is judging them on a narrow set of criteria. Prof Priestley acknowledged that there was a need to have some kind of leaving certificate but a wider discussion was required with parents as well as teachers about different types of assessment to overcome resistance to coursework.

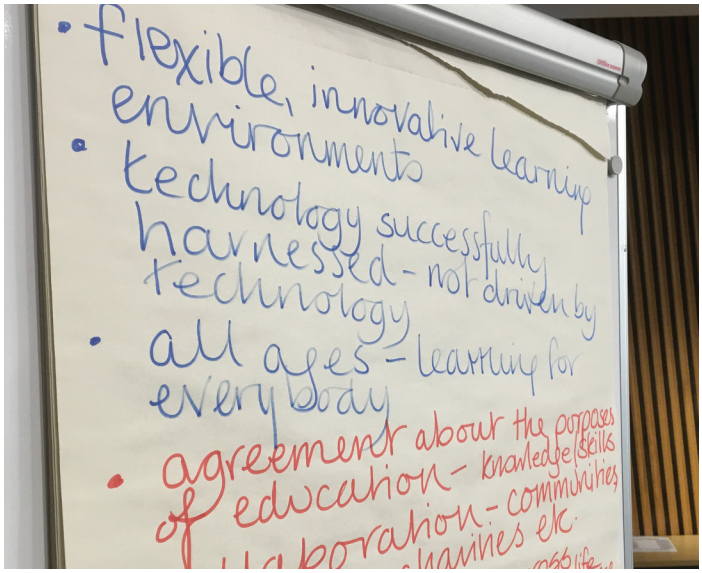
There was agreement that Scotland may have missed a trick by not introducing a baccalaureate alongside Curriculum for Excellence, particularly given the current threat of a narrowing of opportunities and subject choice at S4. However, it was acknowledged that introducing a baccalaureate was a high risk strategy.

Next steps

We anticipate this discussion will be the first of many as we consider this topic over the next 12 to 18 months.

The next seminar in this series will take place on Tuesday 13 June 2017 at the Scottish Parliament





Appendix 1

Suggestions of the core factors and ingredients that make the current education system and process function at its best in 2017

Political support

- The political support for education and the value placed on education
- The commitment to and focus on early years
- The Scottish College for Educational Leadership and the increased awareness of the importance of leadership across the system
- Short communication lines

The curriculum

- Curriculum for Excellence particularly the flexibility and adaptability it offers
- The groundwork in the past 10 years for new approaches to teaching and learning
- Schools that engage with the 'real world' to give education purpose and link learning together in challenging projects

Schools

- Vibrant primary schools, geared up for Curriculum for Excellence, and offering a positive environment
- Parental and community engagement
- Collaboration between different sectors and partnerships with business
- The dedication, passion and commitment of teachers
- Growing awareness of children's rights and the importance of their participation in decision-making
- For children who 'do well', they can do very well

Tertiary education

- Co-production of learning particularly in higher education
- Colleges as diverse environments that can offer learning to a wide range of age groups
- The range of opportunities for young people
- The establishment of the Commission on Widening Access
- Five top global universities
- Multiple pathways of learning
- Four year degrees

Appendix 2

School, Education and Learning in 2030

A vision, 'straw scenario' of how education is positively contributing to our culture and society

WHEN

The education system

Across society as a whole, there is a shared understanding of the purpose of education. The education system is well-resourced, easy to navigate and puts a strong emphasis on lifelong learning. An equal value is placed on all types of learning including vocational education and apprenticeships.

There is a strong, positive narrative about education.

There is balance within the system – structures, values and behaviours, allowing space for innovation, experimentation and change.

Parents trust the system and process, 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 raising the educational standards of pupils from deprived backgrounds. Standards in all school have been raised to such an extent, moving house to be in a particular school catchment area is a rarity.

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 out into nature and the community which fosters their resilience and responsiveness.

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 the option of a gap year. There are a number of options including involvement in community projects and work experience.

DRAFT

WHAT

The curriculum

The curriculum is regularly revisited by those directly involved in education as well as parents and the wider community, to agree what knowledge and skills should be at its core. A desire for ethical education forms part of those discussions in addition to an acknowledgement of changes in the available technology, the work place, and the political and economic situation.

Learning is seen as fun and offers opportunities to engage with the real world which gives education more meaning and purpose. There is an understanding of the importance of knowledge rather than subjects, with a blurring of boundaries between different subjects.

The four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence (successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, effective contributors) have been retained and are being realised by all learners. The potential of each pupil has been maximised in a system that allows people to learn and unlearn. Pupils are also being taught emotional literacy and critical thinking skills.

WHERE

Schools

School buildings look the same but are now pastoral centres at the heart of their local community offering flexible, innovative learning spaces for people of all ages. Peer to peer and intergenerational interactions are encouraged within these spaces, where technology has been harnessed to enhance, rather than drive, learning. There is acknowledgment that much learning takes place outside the school building and teachers are adept at nurturing and building on that knowledge.

Children are routinely involved in decisions that influence the school environment including the selection of teachers.

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.

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 range of ethnic backgrounds.

Teachers who have spent more than 10 years in the profession are encouraged to take a gap year to enable them to widen their life experience and retain their passion for their subject.

All media networks have reported that the programme 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

There is a common language used to describe what people gain from the education process, which permeates through all areas of education, business and society as a whole.

Student portfolios/ passports, recording their achievements and experience are held on line. Businesses can check these on line portfolios, reducing or eliminating the need for application forms or CV's when applying for jobs.

VALUES and BEHAVIOURS

The values and behaviours that are the 'heart' of the education system and process are embedded and part of Scotland's DNA.

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