

***By 2025 Scotland will be regarded  
as a world-leading learning nation:  
An international perspective***

“ Benchmarking is not enough  
if you want to be the best  
– that’s for second best. ”

## **Seminar Report**

Friday 30 March 2012, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh

## Introduction

In the early 20th century Sir Patrick Geddes led us to think globally and act locally. However, in today's global village we surely must be thinking and acting globally. If we are to properly explore the proposition of Scotland becoming a world-leading learning nation by 2025, we need to be mindful of developments in other parts of the world and how Scotland can connect to those places. Very few of the problems Scotland faces are unique to us and we can learn much from countries where radical thinking is leading to new forms of learning, education and skills and to economic benefits.

A video conference was held at the Scottish Parliament on 19 March 2012 linking contributors from Canada, Finland, Sweden and the USA with members of the Goodison Group/Scotland's Futures Forum project team and guests. On 30 March the wider project community viewed highlights from the video conference, then debated the issues raised and considered their implications for the future of Scotland as a world-leading learning nation.

Grateful thanks are given to all the contributors at both events; this report captures the presentations and discussions that took place.

### **Sir Andrew Cubie**

Chair, the Goodison Group in Scotland

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*This was one of a series of seminars organised as part of the joint Goodison Group in Scotland/Scotland's Futures Forum project, **Learners in tomorrow's Scotland: Our vital resource.***

*More details on the project can be found at [www.ggis.org.uk](http://www.ggis.org.uk).*

*A full recording of the GGiS/SFF international perspective video conference can be accessed at: [http://www.ggis.org.uk/events\\_page.php?a=6](http://www.ggis.org.uk/events_page.php?a=6)*

## Presentations

Donald Jarvie, Head of Business at Scotland's Futures Forum, welcomed participants and set the scene for the morning. He explained that discussions would focus on the international contributions made in a video conference session pre-recorded a week earlier.

John Tibbitt, who took part in the video conference, gave the opening presentation; here is an excerpt.

### A worldwide perspective on local possibilities

by John Tibbitt, Head of Policy Analysis, PASCAL International Observatory

At Pascal International Observatory we like to bring 'a worldwide perspective on local possibilities'. We have built up an international network of associates around the world with a common interest in issues to do with the development of place and social capital, and particularly with the idea of learning cities and regions. It is not difficult to extend that to learning nations.

It is our belief that there is a wealth of experience out there which we can interpret in ways useful to ourselves in our own area. Before looking at the international contributions, it is worthwhile reminding ourselves of what we are aiming towards.

#### What are the characteristics of a learning nation?

- > **A high level of qualifications and attainment across the population**, with the skills and knowledge required for economic developments and for a broader range of benefits.
- > **Equality in access and progression**, with arrangements in place to allow people to progress in the way that best suits them, in accordance with changing economic and social circumstances.
- > **A culture of learning**, where learning is an expectation for all – a pervasive, normal feature of social activity – and where learning solutions are sought as a central part of improvement processes in society.

#### What is learning for?

- > **Support for economic development** – we need people with the skills to take forward aspects of development, enabling them to reassess their direction as personal needs, technology and the requirements of work change.
- > **Regeneration in community and cultural development**, where people are living longer and we have greater diversity in the population.

The international contributors provided interesting insights into the proposition: *By 2025 Scotland will be regarded as a world-leading learning nation.* The first striking point was the similarity of the issues that countries are wrestling with, albeit starting from different places and educational traditions, including:

- > **Social inclusion:** Society has become more diverse; it is important that learning embraces a wide range of people and takes forward processes of understanding, social cohesion and social inclusion.
- > **A 'thinking economy'** rather than a manufacturing or a knowledge economy: It is becoming more important for people to have thinking skills that enable them to use existing knowledge in creative ways to tackle ongoing problems.
- > **The explosion in the availability of learning:** In addition to the formal learning system, people can access learning and knowledge in all kinds of informal ways, particularly through the growth of social media. We have to think about how people are critically equipped to best use and make sense of what is available, and how the formal system relates to this growing informality.

The contributors also offered a range of solutions and innovations that we could recognise in our own context, including the need to take a systems approach to the education system:

- **The balance of resources** between the different conventional sectors of education – pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary – whilst not forgetting about the increasingly important continuing education sector.
- **Transition** between the different education sectors and between education and the economy and work, and other kinds of social participation. We need to better connect education and particularly young people with the world of work. This is not just a question of providing skills; it is also concerned with learning about and through work.
- **Valuing all routes through education** – how we break down traditional thinking about the different routes through our education system, to make it more flexible and to ensure we place greater value on all routes.
- **Partnerships** – considering the kind needed to improve transition and flexible routes through education.
- **Use of benchmarking and practitioner research** to better understand where we are and what is and isn't working, and to enable us to make sensible decisions about innovations and the benefits that arise. Several speakers pointed out that their databases are comprehensive in a way that ours are not, and that they have all sorts of initiatives to promote teacher research and benchmarking activities at different stages, helping them to draw comparisons with other countries.

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## International Perspectives

Delegates were shown short extracts from the video conference recorded at the Scottish Parliament on 19 March. The video conference was chaired by John Park MSP, Board Director of Scotland's Futures Forum. The following contributors took part (biosketches of the main contributors can be found in Annex 1 on page 10):

**Mary Jean Gallagher, Chief Student Achievement Officer, Ontario, Canada**

**Nancy Hoffman, Vice President and Senior Advisor, Jobs for the Future, Boston, USA**

**Ilpo Laitinen, Project Manager, City of Helsinki, Finland**

**Anders Olsson, Enterprise and Innovation Manager, Region Värmland, Sweden**

**Úna Bartley, Policy and Public Affairs Manager, The Open University in Scotland**

**Donald Jarvie, Head of Business, Scotland's Futures Forum, The Scottish Parliament**

**Michael Osborne, Professor of Adult and Lifelong Learning, University of Glasgow**

**John Tibbitt, Head of Policy Analysis, PASCAL International Observatory**

Here is a summary of the main points made by the international contributors in response to the following questions.

## What innovative practices are there in skills, learning and education which help support your country's overall economy?

### Ontario, Canada

Too many young people were not completing secondary school, creating a significant barrier to economic success. There are four traditional pathways through school, leading to higher education for the highest achievers, followed by college education, apprenticeships, and work, with those doing least well dropping out completely. Seven years ago 68% of a cohort graduated from high school within five years of starting; following a systemic development involving all 5000 elementary and secondary schools in Ontario this has now increased to 82%. The development includes:

- A focus on recognising and valuing all four destination pathways equally.
- Making schools more relevant to the world of work, involving a lot of partnership work with employers, for example:
  - Specialist High Skills Major Program: Normal school courses are set in the context of an industry sector connected to any of 16/17 economic drivers, such as health or engineering, and are relevant to all four destination pathways. High success rate – students on the programme achieve over 95% success in the credit courses attempted.
  - Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program: Students can complete their apprenticeship at the same time as their secondary school programme.
- Dual Credit Programs, enabling very vulnerable students from 'challenged' areas to take college and school courses at the same time, based at college with support from a school teacher. 70% are successful in their college programmes.

### USA

- Provision of real-time labour market data, 'scraping the web' to capture information about local, regional and national job openings (working with a database of 56 million jobs), which enables education provision to be checked against employer needs and skills gaps.
- Community college system becoming more of a direct pipeline from school into the workplace.
- Focus on closing the racial and income achievement gaps, for example in high schools:
  - A programme modelled on apprenticeships, involving six months in the financial sector.
  - A catholic high school network in which students share work placements.
  - Individualised work placement apprenticeships, mentored by those with expertise.

### Finland

“It's the attitude, not the money.”

The value of a homogenous and equal society that values education:

- Drivers over the last 30+ years have been education research and innovation policy, combined in a holistic manner.
- Promote student-centric approaches at all levels, with the focus on testing less and learning more.
- A positive culture is promoted towards education and lifelong learning; everyone in society 'buys in to' education. All education is free for everyone, and education is the basis for everything.
- The best schools are based in the most challenging areas, with the focus on inclusion.
- 95% of 16 year-olds are enrolled in secondary education – the aim is 100%; those who go to work at 16 are not eligible for unemployment benefit up to the age of 25.
- Generic skills – problem solving, analytical, critical thinking, knowledge management and interpersonal skills – are highlighted in all sectors of post-school education; entrepreneurial and management skills are also important.

### Sweden

- > The 'Children's University' at Karlstad University, set up to tackle the low interest in natural sciences and technology. Young children and parents are invited to spend time with a professor to develop interest at an early age. There is also the Technical Hunt programme for older students.
- > Professorship in School Development, organising teams of teachers to carry out research into their own work with the aim of improvement.
- > Regional competence platforms, connecting employers and teachers.

## What do you imagine will characterise your country as a learning society in 2025?

### Ontario, Canada

“If we are not very quickly learning and developing, we will be passed by those who were once behind us.”

- > There will be an even greater level of diversity in schools.
- > A high focus on increasing participation in post-school education and increasing attainment.
- > Excellence and equity will be even more important.
- > Finding new ways to connect education with the world of work.
- > Focus on systemic improvement.

### USA

- > Increased diversity and inequality.
- > Mind brain and education developments.
- > The continued explosion of technology, creating 'anytime, anywhere' learning:

- Schools will no longer be the only sites for learning, which may produce a society divided by those involved in learning and those who are not, depending upon their access to technology. However, learning could be more cost effective, creating greater equality of access.
- Investment in blended learning for older people.
- > The standards and quality of technological tools and media will be made public – this is currently not possible.
- > A need for greater technical expertise than in the past, and need to be willing to invest in enhancing technical skills, including retraining older people.

### Finland

- > The long term aspiration is for prosperity and competitiveness.
- > Don't know the needs of the future, therefore concentrate on high level skills, and teaching people how to learn and to enjoy learning as a lifelong concept.

### Sweden

- > The use of IT will be a major influencer of change.
- > Knowledge of how the brain works is increasing, so learning based on how the brain works will become more relevant.
- > Teams of teachers working as researchers in schools, in partnership with the children and parents and researchers, creating a new innovation platform for developing, testing, delivering and disseminating new concepts and programmes.
- > Effective regional competence platforms, connecting teachers and employers.
- > Increased possibility for people to learn new jobs at various stages of their lives as people have to work until they are older.



## What advice would you give Scotland, in terms of the challenges and opportunities it will face going forward, if it too is to be regarded as a learning nation by 2025?

### Ontario, Canada

“ Do we really need to focus on lifelong learning, or on creating a learning society which focuses on having a higher level of critical, creative and innovative thinking? ”

- Focus on achieving equity, beginning in the earliest years of school.
- Promote higher levels of literacy and numeracy, and critical and higher order thinking.
- Engage students in customising their education.
- Teach connectivity of ideas – important for the flexibility of learning needed in future, and the key to learner engagement.
- Develop a very high regard for the capacity of teachers and leaders and translate this value into action, including encouraging collaboration between and within schools to leverage teachers' own learning and success.
- Give deep thought to how to focus on creativity in assessment practices in schools so that students see themselves as successful learners.

### USA

- The challenges:
  - How to raise the level of achievement, creativity and innovation without increasing inequality.
  - The cost of a learning society, creating the need to engage public private partnerships.
  - Dealing with the speed of change.
- Young people in school can benefit from learning about:
  - the brain, about the physiology of learning and achievement
  - the role of work – not just career counselling, but about the workplace, psychology, and through hands-on experience.

- Wouldn't look to the USA for answers, in spite of the innovation happening. Look instead to countries like Switzerland, with its innovative apprenticeship system, very low youth unemployment (<5%), very high upper schooling completion rates, and successful handling of its immigrant population.

### Finland

- Structures – organisational, operational and regional – should be reformed, avoiding fragmentation.
- Exploit and promote educational research extensively.
- Efficiency and effectiveness of business innovation service systems should be constantly assessed and improved.
- A long term policy should be created for the widespread use of public data. Funding for research and innovation should be diversified.
- International best practice and benchmarks should be recognised, and institutions and key people, the 'bridge builders', should be connected to enhance developments.

### Sweden

Take measures both from top down and bottom up to create an education system where innovations from teachers and students lead to better schools, and to more efficient and relevant learning. To achieve this, there are eight recommendations:

- 1 Create degrees of freedom for schools and teachers to experiment and innovate in how to learn and how to organise learning.
- 2 Reduce rules and regulations, whilst remembering to follow up and provide feedback.
- 3 Encourage those who want to contribute and succeed.
- 4 Form partnerships with industries that want to contribute with their technology to developing the learning process, e.g. Apple, Ericsson.
- 5 Recognise and support research in relevant areas, e.g. brain based learning and school development.
- 6 Establish innovation platforms as arenas for teachers, researchers and industry to meet.
- 7 Create mechanisms for disseminating new findings and methods.
- 8 Use innovation procurement as a method for developmental schools and tools.

## Café and Plenary Discussions

Delegates took part in two group discussions, and a plenary session facilitated by Donald Jarvie. The detailed outcomes of the discussions are being collated along with the outcomes from all project seminars, and will form a key part of the scenario planning process to follow.

Here is a flavour of key learning points that emerged.

### “ How do we inspire people to think less locally and parochially? ”

Scotland is moving in the right direction, although...

- > best practice is patchy
- > we need to increase the pace of change
- > we need to make sure it happens systemically across all sectors
- > we need to stop focusing only on students going to university and get a much broader approach
- > we need to start at the very beginning of life
- > we need to build in more flexibility to our systems
- > we all have a role to play – companies need to give their time and education needs to be receptive
- > development of skills for learning, life and work is a crucial element of Curriculum for Excellence which needs to be revisited and highlighted for all education sectors.

“ Although it is possible to learn from the successes of different countries, there is a danger of latching on to one or two interesting new ideas or policies, in isolation from creating a vision for society as a whole. ”





## References and Further Reading

Speakers and delegates quoted from or suggested the following publications, resources and programmes to enrich the debate.

- 1 Hoffman, N. 2011. *Schooling in the Workplace: How Six of the World's Best Vocational Education Systems Prepare Young People for Jobs and Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- 2 *Building the Curriculum 4: Skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work*, Scottish Government 2009.
- 3 *Degrees for What Jobs? Raising Expectations for Universities and Colleges in a Global Economy*. National Governors Association Center for Best Practices 2011.
- 4 *Pathways to Prosperity: Meeting the challenge of preparing young Americans for the 21st century*. Harvard Graduate School of Education 2011.
- 5 *Understanding Employability Skills*, Conference Board of Canada 1999.  
<http://www.conferenceboard.ca/e-Library/abstract.aspx?did=178>
- 6 *Employability Skills 2000+*, Conference Board of Canada 2000.  
<http://www.conferenceboard.ca/topics/education/learning-tools/employability-skills.aspx>
- 7 PASCAL International Observatory  
<http://pascalobservatory.org/>
- 8 SocialLearn, The Open University  
<http://sociallearn.open.ac.uk/public>
- 9 Specialist High Skills Major program, Ontario  
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/morestudentsuccess/SHSM.asp>
- 10 Dual Credit Programs, Ontario  
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/morestudentsuccess/dualCredit.html>
- 11 Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program  
<http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/apprentices/oyap.html>
- 12 *How can ICT shape the future of learning?* The Ericsson Networked Society Forum (NEST) conference, Hong Kong 2011. <http://www.ericsson.com/nestforum/>

## Annex 1: MAIN CONTRIBUTOR BIOSKETCHES

### **Mary Jean Gallagher, Chief Student Achievement Officer and Assistant Deputy Minister of Student Achievement in the Ministry of Education, Ontario, Canada**

Mary Jean Gallagher was appointed to her current role in 2008/09, bringing to it a deep knowledge of teaching, learning and leading. She began her career as a teacher of mathematics and has experience leading schools and school systems as a principal and superintendent of schools and staff development. Mary Jean served as Director of Ontario's southern-most school district for more than 10 years, and as Chair of the Council of Ontario's Directors of Education in 2006/07. From 1997 to 2000, she was Chief Executive Officer of Ontario's Education Improvement Commission. Mary Jean has a deep commitment to community. She has served as Chair, Director or member with various organisations, including the Arts Council of Windsor and Region, the Essex County District Health Council, the Essex County Health System Reconfiguration Project, the United Way, and the Steering Committee for Leadership Windsor-Essex. Internationally, she spent a month in the Amazon Region of Brazil in 2000 as a Rotary Volunteer in Action, establishing a new university in the region, with a special focus on serving the poor. In 2010, she travelled to India with Rotary and helped with a massive immunisation effort which saw 172 million children vaccinated against polio within two days.

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### **Nancy Hoffman, Vice President and Senior Advisor, Jobs for the Future, Boston, USA**

Jobs for the Future is a national non-profit focused on improving educational and workforce outcomes for low-income young people and adults. Nancy Hoffman works with the Early College High School Initiative, a network of over 270 schools in 28 states blending high school and two years of college and with states on aligning and integrating high school and college and developing new pathways to degree completion and careers. Nancy has held teaching and administrative posts at Brown, Temple, Harvard, FIPSE, M.I.T. and elsewhere. She co-teaches a course on philanthropy, non-profits and school reform at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. She serves as a consultant for the education policy unit of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Her most recent book, drawing on the OECD's Learning for Jobs initiative is *Schooling in the Workplace: How Six of the World's Best Vocational Education Systems Prepare Young People for Jobs and Life* (Harvard Education Press 2011). Nancy holds a BA and PhD in comparative literature from the University of California, Berkeley. Other recent publications include *Women's True Profession: Voices from the History of Teaching* (2003), and, edited with Richard Kazis and Joel Vargas, *Double the Numbers: Increasing Postsecondary Credentials for Underrepresented Youth* (2004), and *Minding the Gap: Why Integrating High School with College Makes Sense and How to Do It* (2007), edited by Hoffman and Vargas with Andrea Venezia and Marc Miller. Nancy serves on the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education.

**Ilpo Laitinen, Project Manager, City of Helsinki, Finland**

Ilpo Laitinen received his PhD (administrative sciences) from the University of Lapland, and MBA from the University of Jyväskylä. As project manager (City of Helsinki) he focuses on employee driven innovation and service innovations, and is a lecturer at different universities. He has previously been a Research Director of the University of Lapland & City of Helsinki (evidence based management), affiliated with the Universities of Tampere and Glasgow. Ilpo held several other posts in the City of Helsinki prior to that, including chief strategy manager for Helsinki social services and division director.

**Anders Olsson, Enterprise and Innovation Manager, Region Värmland, Sweden**

Anders Olsson has more than 15 years of experience in the area of regional sustainable development. Anders has worked with learning processes and policymaking for regional development together with OECD, The PASCAL Observatory, Nordregio, Nutek, Swedish Ministry of Enterprise and in the region Värmland together with Karlstad University, industry, the cluster organisations, the county administrative board, the county council and the municipalities. During 2007/08 he was in charge of elaborating the regional development programme. In 2009 he formed a joint research programme between Region Värmland, Karlstad University, the regional cluster organisations and the municipalities of Värmland. During 2009 and 2010 he formed a broad based, systemic, public-private entrepreneurship programme for Värmland. In 2011 and 2012 he established a broad based agreement on cluster development between the cluster organisations, the public sector and the academy in the region. Some of his specialties are planning and development processes in systemic perspectives. He has grades in physics, mathematics, geography, chemistry, biology, computer science and teaching from Karlstad University and Gothenburg University.

**John Tibbitt, Head of Policy Analysis, PASCAL International Observatory and honorary Senior Research Fellow at the University of Glasgow School of Education**

John Tibbitt has held research posts in universities, local and central government and has a wealth of experience as a researcher and policy analyst in policy environments. He has worked mostly in the fields of personal social services, lifelong learning and community issues, in all of which he has undertaken research and commissioned and managed substantial research programmes and major statistical surveys to support government policy-making and review. John has a long-standing interest in developing the research contribution to policy-making. He has co-edited *Building Stronger Communities: Connecting Research Policy and Practice* (NIACE 2008), in addition to other research reports and papers on other aspects of social policy. John is now involved in PASCAL's work on place-making and building stronger communities, with a particular interest in the contribution of learning and social media. He is also developing work on benchmarking the engagement of higher education providers with their regions and communities in many parts of the world, and has a particular interest in the concept of the regional university.



*The Royal Bank of Scotland Group*



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.



## LLOYDS BANKING GROUP



Lloyds Banking Group recognises the important contribution the Goodison Group 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 is making a significant contribution in this arena.



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### Contact Details

To register your interest in the project email [info@ggis.org.uk](mailto:info@ggis.org.uk)  
For more information log on to [www.ggis.org.uk](http://www.ggis.org.uk)

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