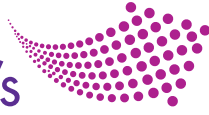




The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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



**Goodison Group**  
in Scotland

INFLUENCING LEARNING

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

**Scotland 2030: Future Education,  
Schooling and Learning**  
Secondary Education

**13 November 2018**  
The Scottish Parliament



## Background

The Goodison Group in Scotland 2018 programme focuses on exploring future schooling, education and learning approaches in 2030 and beyond. An outline of the project can be found at [www.scotlandfutureforum.org/scotland-2030-programme/future-schooling/](http://www.scotlandfutureforum.org/scotland-2030-programme/future-schooling/) 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

Chaired by Sir Andrew Cubie, chair of the Goodison Group in Scotland, this forum debate continued GGiS's exploration of schooling, education and learning in 2030. After sessions on the early years and primary education, the focus for this forum debate was secondary education. After three presentations, there was a roundtable discussion and space for personal reflection.

This paper summarises the presentations and the resulting discussion.

## PRESENTATION

### What is education?

Dr John l'Anson, Associate Dean, Social Sciences, the University of Stirling

To help attendees consider secondary school education in 2030, Dr l'Anson concentrated on the broader question: "What is education?" He started by making some initial observations:

- (i) Secondary schooling has increasingly become seen in instrumental terms, as the means of promoting a more entrepreneurial workforce, a more sustainable future, and a more inclusive society.
- (ii) There is an increasing tendency to want to measure schools' performance and to rank them – especially with regard to attainment.

Dr l'Anson suggested that, as Biesta put it, we end up valuing what we can measure rather than measuring what we value. In imagining secondary schooling for 2030 we could continue along these lines – identifying a series of important instrumental issues to which schools are expected to respond, such as closing the attainment gap and improving employability, and how schools might become more effective in addressing such challenges. Alternatively,

we could take a step back and frame things differently.

Dr l'Anson suggested that unpacking the implications of the question "what is education?" might provide an alternative framing for imagining secondary education in 2030 – not to provide a blueprint for secondary education but to suggest some contours to contribute to discussion, and to help identify key elements that education consists in and the possible barriers to them being put into practice.

The root meaning of education is to 'lead out', so along which lines might this leading out occur?

In the book "Schooling Indifference", Dr l'Anson and his colleague Alison Jasper argued that there are three key elements in a distinctively educational approach: the critical element, the ethical element, and the experimental element. Each of these elements inter-play in a fully educational leading out, even though one or other may predominate in any given situation.

**The critical element** encompasses the tools and practices that enable someone to critically engage and have the capacity to express their take on issues – so as to form a particular standpoint – but also to be able to see the limitations of this. This also includes becoming sensitive to the kinds of language that are used – such as the work that metaphors do, whether these be about ‘closing a gap’, the ‘rolling out of policy’ or an appeal for ‘clarity’ etc. The critical element includes a reflective aspect that is open and hospitable to the views of others, and as such connects with...

**The ethical element** acknowledges that education is profoundly relational and that this brings with it responsibilities in relation to others and the wider environment. This also has implications for educational practices – such as how we make comparisons: do we simply assume our own standpoint when we make a comparison, or might we try and see our own standpoint from the other’s point of view? Engaging ethically may involve having to work upon ourselves so that we become more attentive and more attuned with the values that we espouse and to ways in which broader reality talks back. This leads to...

**The experimental element** is concerned with trying things out in practice – and learning from that. Too often learning is taken to be a sort of abstract cognitive performance: only once we’ve grasped something in our minds do we have a ‘secure possession’ of something. But if, as John Dewey once put it, education isn’t for life, but is life, many things (perhaps the most important) will be known only once we’ve had an opportunity to try them out and to learn from that experience.

In practice all three elements will be present – but not always to the same degree.

## An Educational Approach in Practice

Dr l’Anson went on to illustrate how the three elements of the educational approach might connect with secondary schooling and how by beginning with a focus on education can enable us to think, imagine, and practice differently in future. Using three cross-cutting issues – Children’s Rights, Promoting Equity and Inclusion and Partnerships – Dr l’Anson shared the following examples of research projects and teaching he has been involved in at the University of Stirling.

### *Example (i)* **Children’s Rights**

Children’s Rights is directly concerned with the educational experience and developing critical capacities of young people, and taking an educational approach might offer a critique of current policy in relation to how children’s rights are enacted in Scottish schools.

At present, children’s rights are largely enacted through the Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) policy, which has a series of indicators, Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included (SHANARRI) in regard to a child’s health and wellbeing.

Dr l’Anson argued that, whilst GIRFEC encompassed the ethical element with its concern for the wellbeing of each child, as currently framed it fails to develop the critical and experimental elements for children and young people. The critical element involves children and young people accessing the tools necessary to ‘read’ their current situation and to voice alternatives, to try out other ways of doing things, and to be meaningfully included in discussions about their education.

Omitting to engage in questions about education leads to children’s rights largely focusing on non-educational matters, which, though important, don’t impact upon the core business of the school.

Dr l'Anson was quick to point out he had no wish to undercut the importance of a child's health and wellbeing but to ask whether, and to what extent, this current policy promotes a sufficiently educational approach to children's rights.

*Example (ii)* **Promoting Equity and Inclusion**

The second cross-cutting theme, Promoting Equity and Inclusion, concerned some of the barriers that student and beginning teachers face in trying to become more inclusive and equitable in their practice. Research by the University of Stirling suggests that many student and beginning teachers struggle with translating values and theory into their practice. They confuse a particular strategy with theory, but whereas good theory can open up new ways of thinking and practice, if a particular strategy fails to work, they are left high and dry.

Only when the simple phrase 'theory into practice' is unravelled, does it become clear just how complex this process is. If, for example, a student teacher is reflecting on a teaching episode, they must first be able to:

- stand back and put this into words in a way that doesn't simply gloss over events
- identify a relevant theory to help reframe this and to imagine a different way of going on next time
- effectively translate this back into practice the next time
- repeat the whole process again.

Dr l'Anson suggested some student teachers grasp this intuitively but many do not. This, moreover, points to the need for more effective mentoring support to enable beginning teachers to practice in new ways. This is the focus of a new research project by the University of Stirling as part of the Scottish Government's Attainment Challenge. It involves 10 mentor teachers who are undertaking Master's level

study, with the aim of them becoming more confident in supporting beginning teachers to work educationally.

Such an approach is to take an oblique angle to the Attainment Challenge and to promote more equitable outcomes for young people. We need to look at the kinds of communities of practice that could be created in schools and how these might support those starting in the profession to become more critical, ethical and experimental in their practice. The objective being that teachers are able to engage more confidently with difference, and connect more effectively with the situations of young people in their classrooms.

*Example (iii)* **Partnerships**

The third illustration concerned schools building stronger links with other-than-school spaces. This could be a university, business or broader cultural arenas.

The focus of this theme is how such links might lead to re-thinking the school curriculum and the opportunities young people have to re-imagine their futures. In his presentation, Dr l'Anson focused on school-university partnerships, but he believed a parallel argument might be made for wider partnership, such as with business.

In recent years, there has been a strong emphasis on developing new learning approaches, such as active learning, with teachers being urged to include a wide variety of new pedagogies in their classroom practice. However, Dr l'Anson suggested that there hadn't been quite so much in evidence of innovation in regard to how the curriculum might be renewed, especially subject knowledge.

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At the University of Stirling, over their four years, the Initial Teacher Education students study their subject specialism at the same time as they work on education and their early professional formation. In their third year, students undertake a module where they work in small groups to consider how they would take some aspect of their subject studies at university - this could be a new topic or a new approach. They then consider how they might translate this into a school setting for young people at a particular stage. For example, in maths, one group explored how young people might connect game theory with decisions made in their everyday life, while some English students drew upon film texts to encourage a more multi-modal focus.

The students also have to consider how they would convince young people, colleagues, parents and professional bodies about the educational worth of their proposal. To make this a bit more edgy, students have to present their ideas in a dragon's den type scenario where they get critical feedback from teachers, tutors and fellow students.

Dr l'Anson suggested that having a clearer educational focus might in turn give schools the confidence to forge stronger partnerships with other-than-school spaces that are mutually beneficial. Such linkages, for example through digital means, would open up new opportunities for educational renewal going forward.

## Conclusions

Dr l'Anson suggested that the three brief illustrations demonstrate that even beginning with a simple question "What is education?" can lead out to a whole set of inter-related concerns. We do not avoid complexity, but the hope is that, in beginning from an educational starting point, there is an opportunity, and a provocation, to think again about what really matters in a way that builds the confidence of both young people and teachers.

In other words, rather than being positioned as responsive to a bewildering set of demands, a refocus on education might build confidence and create the conditions in which young people are encouraged to think critically and creatively about their present and future trajectories.

Dr l'Anson concluded by suggesting that by refocusing on secondary schools as educational – as leading out – for both young people and their teachers may in turn enable the kinds of creative dispositions that the various instrumental demands call for.



# PRESENTATION

## Futures research in education

Fiona MacLellan, PhD Candidate, Glasgow School of Art

Fiona MacLellan is a designer and researcher based between Glasgow and the Outer Hebrides. She is currently undertaking a practice-led PhD informed by over 10 years of design research in the public and private sector. Her approach is to explore emerging social phenomena through collectively built futures. Fiona's current project questions the status quo in educational reform through a rural lens. This builds on contemporary ideas of digital culture, island remoteness and community autonomy.

The focus of Fiona's creative study has been to explore how design can support learners and teachers in the Outer Hebrides to influence visions of their future. In particular, the focus has been to work with learners and teachers across the Outer Hebrides, and the work has provided robust examples of where the innovation in education is happening today – and how, interestingly, this has been happening from the edge. This focus on the peripheries has balanced the dominant idea of centralisation of power, along with post-colonial concepts of diversity and devolution of power.

To provide context, Fiona shared a map of Scotland noting the places of significance for the study, including the five secondary schools across the archipelago visited over two years of field-research. Across the Outer Hebrides archipelago, there is a trend of depopulation, apart from in Stornoway. The rationalisation of schools is particularly visible in the landscape, with a reduction from 49 schools in 2005 to only 29 in 2017, of which four are providing secondary education.

Fiona noted that, in August 2016, the local authority and Education Scotland launched an educational pilot, e-Sgoil. The project launched

a new model of learning for senior phase school pupils based in island communities. E-Sgoil provides a very different form of education, with learning and teaching opportunities via virtual classrooms. This is an example of how innovation at the periphery can provide lessons for others.

## Creative Interventions

Five school workshops were undertaken by Fiona between September 2016 and June 2017. This included 108 school pupils, aged between 10 and 18 years old, from schools across the Outer Hebrides.

Design practice is applied to materialise concepts. Futures research, with postcolonial theory, increasingly raises the need to formulate alternatives from the perspective of the excluded, exploited, disempowered, and the marginalised. One creative method used was to construct Futurescapes, a series of prints with accompanying short stories telling of future-based educational scenarios.

The Futurescapes depict visions of speculative futures through three lenses: hyper-globalisation, decentralisation of power, and lifelong learning. These prints and supporting fictions seek to visually represent and curate research findings while also raising questions around the physical experience of Scotland's educational futures. Illustrations and short fictions were authored by Fiona in 2018.

The work is inspired by visions from school pupils and teachers in the Outer Hebrides. These cautionary tales and conflicting visions invite the viewer to take part in questions around the implication of replacing small-scale islands school with centralised digital learning.

The three futures Fiona shared were as follows:

### **CENTRE OF LEARNING:**

Set in 2030, a concept where each learner is an island. Research hubs are contextually relevant to the local area, with briefs provided by, for, and with a global audience. This future vision builds on ideas of hyper-globalisation. Individualism and personalisation have increased and enabled decisions of settlement to move away from notions of metropolis. Technology and automation plays key roles in this way of life, with previously 'isolated' communities becoming equally connected to a world market.

### **GACH AON, TEAGAISG AON:**

Set in 2030, a concept for Gaelic resurgence, with the old population turned to for their wisdom and guided by the young who are taking control of their learning paths. Gach Aon, Teagaisg Aon is Gaelic for Each One, Teach One, which is an African-American phrase and movement created following the denial of education in the USA during slavery. This concept builds on the idea of decentralisation of power, and tells of a worldview that sees us return to our elders as the experts.

### **ROOFLESS CLASSROOM:**

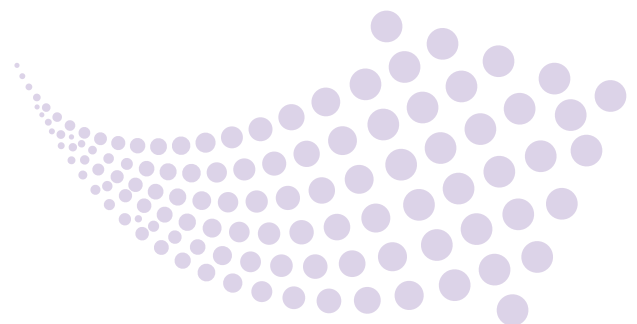
Set in 2030, a concept for the re-use of old learning establishments, providing mental health support and palliative care. Small scale schools becoming sustainable with newly enrolled elderly learners. Here a future is painted where the parental nature of education is increased. Traditional ways of schooling are revitalised and old buildings inhabited, along with a strong place-based ethos of itinerant survival. The school building is fully inhabited and mobile, run for the communities' wellbeing and moving with community migrations. This creates unique spaces of learning which show greater relevance for the local needs.

Fiona cautioned that the speculative concepts found in this text came with a disclaimer: they are produced from the position of what we know today, and with the intention of a more just emancipatory and inclusive future.

The speculative creations do not contain the evidence backing of future forecasting, and are not intended to be prescriptive – in other words, to inform policy change. However, the unpacking and shaping of visions develops better understanding of the multiple futures possible for education. This engagement with a broader diversity of 'ways of knowing' seeks to add to current discussion around educational reform from an island viewpoint.

Work is now being conducted to answer the following questions, and readers are invited to get in touch with any contributions:

- What are the possible futures ahead (from learners, teachers, and change makers)?
- What are the utopian promises and dystopian dangers of each separate vision?
- What are the preferred visions for the Outer Hebrides? How does this differ from that of the mainland/globally? Who is included/excluded in these visions?
- What do the visions teach us about the current day?



# PRESENTATION

## The Scottish Youth Parliament View

Shaun Cairns MSYP, Convener of the Scottish Youth Parliament's Culture and Media Committee

As background, Shaun explained that the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) is the democratically elected voice of Scotland's young people. It is made up of 160 members (MSYPs) who represent all 32 of Scotland's local authorities and 11 national voluntary organisations. MSYPs have a unique democratic mandate to represent the views of young people aged 12-25 across Scotland, from a variety of background and communities of interest.

The SYP's purpose embodies Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC): that young people have the right to express their views freely and have their opinions listened to in all matters affecting them. As a completely youth-led organisation, the words and sentiment of Article 12 guide all of the SYP's work.

As part of SYP's October National Sitting, Shaun together with Tina Livingston from GGiS facilitated a session with 11 MSYPs, all representing different areas of Scotland and communities of interest. The objective of the session was to discuss what high school education might look like in 2030.

In addition, questions relating to high school education in 2030 formed part of the SYP's pre-Sitting consultation survey called #WhatsYourTake. Some 500 survey responses were received and a wide cross-section of young people's views captured, with 31 of Scotland's 32 local authorities, and 10 of the 11 national voluntary organisations taking part.

Shaun went on to share what young people think and want high school education in 2030 to be.

### What

The first major theme to come out of the consultation was that a large number of the young people consulted felt that high school education would be a much more practical place in 2030, with emphasis being placed on real world application, rather than on traditional academia.

In the survey, over 79% of respondents said that they believed high school education in 2030 would offer them the tools needed to survive in the world, in terms of practical life skills, and less emphasis on traditional subjects currently taught. A large proportion of young people who responded wanted high school to be a place to prepare them for a job, with many saying that high school should be a place of foundation building for later life. Examples of what a school in 2030 would offer included support in CV making, job skills, financial stability (such as understanding tax and banking), and how to develop and maintain relationships by enabling emotional maturity.

Any comments on subjects focused on treating subjects with the same regard, with emphasis not being solely placed on the three R's – reading, writing and arithmetic. One respondent believed their love for music and art wasn't taken seriously as someone who was excelling in English. Shaun noted that this can be reflected in the recent local cuts to instrumental music tuition, which MSYPs have been campaigning against. Shaun believed that young people want to change in this approach in the future: placing emphasis more equally on all school subjects would encourage students to study what they love, perhaps pursuing it further and in turn making them happy and more engaged in society.



## Where and How

The second main theme was that over 85% of those surveyed felt that the rooms and places in which they learn would remain the same, and those delivering the lessons wouldn't change either, with teachers still taking lessons in school buildings. This is opposed to just over 10% who felt that education would have moved to a completely cyber environment.

However, many respondents felt that the school buildings themselves would change dramatically in 2030. One young person commented that buildings would be essential for the social aspect of high school education, as many social interactions, which can shape young people, occur in high school. Another respondent believed buildings create a feeling of unity and of everybody working together.

Conversely, other respondents felt schools often enclosed them, almost prison like, and want them to change. This is why many young people felt that schools in 2030 would change to become more open-plan and much bigger, and afford students more individuality. Students would also have a hand in the design and creation of school buildings.

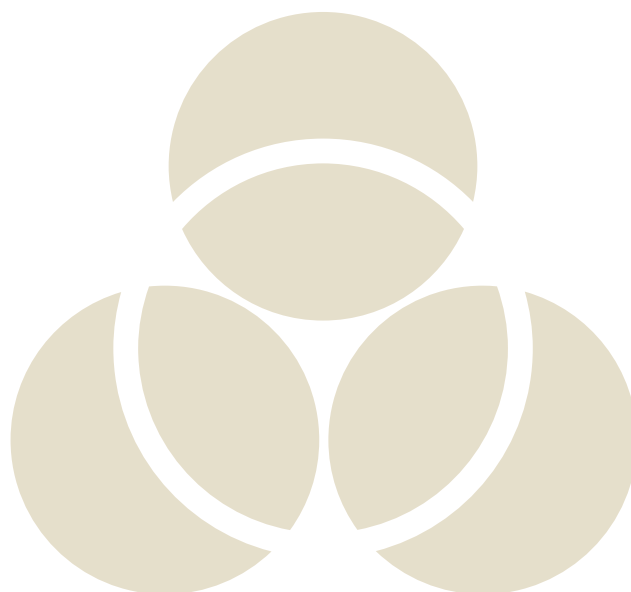
One young person felt teachers should be leaders: not the rinse and repeat lecturers that they feel they are today, but great thinkers in their subjects. They would not just deliver a speech, but encourage student-led research and deliver much more interactive lessons.

Shaun suggested high school lessons could be like university, with young people examining work together and sharing findings, rather than the teacher just talking.

This chimed with a recommendation SYP made early this year in response to the Education (Scotland) Bill. In line with the human rights based approach, all young people should be aware and empowered to exercise their right to participate in decisions which affect their right to education. Teachers should be responsible to ensure this participation and the right to effective education in line with the Getting It Right For Every Child policy (GIRFEC), which is based on the UNCRC.

## Measuring Success

One young person commented they wanted the current examination system to be replaced by a method of continuous examination, or 'formative assessment', so that it is not just learning for exams but "for learning and expanding your knowledge." Young people feel they are pressured to just remember things for exams, and not retain them after. In Shaun's experience, as someone 18 months out of the high school system, this was all too true.



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# ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

## **An unpredictable future and education**

One forum member suggested there was quite a high degree of congruence between the three presentations. They believed that we are at an interesting point in where we are going with education and the purpose of school. The challenge is to agree what young people will need to get from education to deal with a future we can only imagine. At present, we have a system where we want young people to do as well as they can in examinations and we try to make exams as predictable as possible. In fact, the ability to deal with the unpredictable is, arguably, the single most important skill future generations will need to have.

This point was reinforced by another contributor who gave an example of working with graduate students. The students found it difficult to recall a time in their schooling when they had been asked to be critical – i.e. form their own opinions or make their own judgements. One student said that, when they were studying Macbeth, the teacher gave notes on how best to prepare for the examination so they had the opportunity to go onto university. This was well meaning and aligned to school values, but it was a huge loss in terms of what education could be. What young people experience in school is a crucial part of their existence, and not encouraging critical thinking is a loss more generally for broader society.

Another forum member suggested that the young people themselves are close to identifying what matters – to build them as people, rather than a coverage-based curriculum. Looking internationally, the OECD's 2030 project is also highlighting that we need to build the capacities in young people, which, interestingly, is what Curriculum for Excellence was originally intended to do.

We require a radical way of thinking about education. Technology is going to drive a lot of change, allowing things to be done in a different way. This could mean young people are not dependent on where they are and can have access to quality learning, wherever they are across the world. We need to consider how we bring young people together in a community, not to teach but to assess what they already know and to support them in their learning.

## Preparing teachers

One attendee asked what changes we need to make to prepare teachers for the education that the presenters described.

A range of thoughts and ideas were shared in response:

- We need to recognise that one size doesn't fit all: each student is an individual and will respond differently from one another. The teacher should be a facilitator and coach, introducing a topic, providing background and a framework, and then letting students do their own research and learning.
- The intrinsic motivations in our young learners are brought out much further back than secondary education.
- Teachers should have agency in design to create their learning tools for the classroom.
- There should be a focus on mentoring which encourages teachers to be always questioning: "How do I reach these young people creatively?"

Two further major contextual points were made. First, we have to address the challenge that we are influenced by our own experience of education. When we observe our children going through their learning journey, our reference point tends to be our own experience of the education system, which may or may not have been the best. Teachers need to be the bridge and conduit to help parents understand why their child's education journey needs to be different.

Finally, we should not graft new ways of thinking on to traditional foundations. A Children's Rights approach is not only about the school but also engaging children in dialogue about their learning. For example, lesson planning is very teacher centred, as teachers set out what counts as success and then 'graft on' Children's Rights to what is essentially teacher-centric approach. We need to understand the implications of what children say, and practices need to change quite radically so that children are involved in educational conversations on topics such as lessons, teacher education and the design and culture of schools.

## Relationships, Physical Structures and Connecting

Another series of questions was asked: how do we protect what is happening really well in terms of relationships between adults and students and how do we develop these into great relationships? How can we base the system on people and their interactions, rather than place or what we are teaching? Should a future education system be about relationships? Are great relationships a key enabler of a successful education system?

In response to these questions and reflections, some attendees thought the closed architecture and locality of school buildings affected the natural flow of relationships, arguably making all those in a school, including teachers and students, feel institutionalised. It was suggested that informal or spontaneous relationships are managed to the point of killing the relationship.

It was therefore interesting to hear 85% of young people surveyed wanted schools to exist in the future. However, it was recognised young people were looking for school, as a physical structure, to be the focus of socialising and peer-to-peer relationships rather than student-teacher relationships. For the majority of 12 to 18 year olds, high school is their world for six years. When some young people can't access opportunities outside the classroom, school provides the space to engage.

For other attendees, the key to better relationships was young people being involved in discussions about all aspects of their education, from national policy to what and how they learn. Although it was acknowledged that young people are becoming more involved in debates about their learning through organisations such as the Children's Parliament, SYP and Young Scot, this should be the norm in 2030. Consulting young people will make them more receptive to learning and schooling.

Perhaps there is a need to revisit the question: what is the purpose of education? The default tends to be about skills and knowledge, but maybe it is about saying education is fundamentally about relationships, exploring our relationship with place: our place in the world, our relationship with others and our relationship with self. If this is the case, it requires working through the implications, rather the focus purely on attainment. This connects with young people being involved in this conversation so they can share their thoughts and opinions.

One contributor suggested connectedness with the world outside of school should be an intrinsic part of a young person's learning journey. Activities outside of school that promote talents and motivate passions and interests should be connected with what is happening in school. Are we missing a trick by not bringing these learning opportunities together? After-school programmes and the opportunities to connect remain important and provide an anchor to children's learning.

Providing physical space within our communities for these types of activities is vital. Whilst the school is sometimes the only asset available in that community, in others there are may be spaces that are not perhaps open to the community. This, arguably, links to the concept of the roofless classroom. Should we be exploring how existing spaces can be utilised to not only connect learning activities inside and outside the school classroom but also engage with the wider community?

## Employability

The discussion on employability was linked to measures of success in education. One attendee was an advocate of continuous assessment and struggled to understand why a young person's educational attainment boiled down to taking exams on a particular day. In this attendee's opinion, people's working lives are not based on an exam they take when they first go into the workplace, so why should this be the case for a young person's educational attainment?

There was a suggestion that employers believe young people are not coming to them with the necessary skills they need for the workplace. So is academic attainment redundant? One attendee argued that employers were looking for a package of skills and attributes including academic attainment, whereas others shared the view we need to review pathways for young people, looking again at non-vocational and vocational routes. One contributor suggested there may be learning from New Zealand as they have a more natural learning journey.

But what will be required from a workforce in 2030? How do we use a mix of evidence and intelligence to inform and allow the curriculum and methods of assessment to change organically to meet the needs of all stakeholders?

## What if the status quo remained?

One of the final provocations at the session came in the form of a question: what would the future look like if there was no change in the education system and the status quo remained?

There was a sense from the attendees that the status quo isn't an option if our young people are to be equipped to navigate the challenges the future is likely to bring. If we agree our future world is complex and unpredictable, and we are committed to driving change in the education system, what leadership is required to 'lead out?'

**We will explore leadership, particularly leadership of change, as part of our 2019 programme.**