

CATALYSING A MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE: Learning for Sustainability in Scotland'

Background

In June 2023 The Scottish Government launched Scotland's refreshed Learning for Sustainability action plan - [Target 2030: A movement for people, planet and prosperity](#) ", which aims to 'build an inspiring movement for change so every 3 to 18 place of education becomes a sustainable learning setting by 2030'. At a time of economic, environmental and social crises, this refreshed and much-strengthened Action Plan has cross-party support, based on the original five strategic goals accepted by Scottish Government Ministers in 2013 and the subsequent, [Vision 2030+: Concluding report of the Learning for Sustainability National Implementation Group \(2016\)](#).

The Plan has been launched in the context of educational reform and system change in Scotland and offers a potentially ground-breaking opportunity to respond to the values, skills and knowledge that are required for learners to thrive in an increasingly complex and interdependent world.

On 30 August 2023, ahead of the Plan's national 'Call to Action' in October 2023, Learning for Sustainability Scotland invited a diverse group from within and outwith Scotland's education system to a creative round-table event to explore and uncover the essential ingredients which will catalyse this 'Movement for Change'.

Open Space questions were gathered, and small groups discussed the following themes:

- How do we create and maintain a learning system; both within and between individuals and settings?
- How do we balance voluntary and compulsory change: i.e. blending regulation and standards with enthusiasm and champions?
- What is the role of leadership in catalysing a movement for change?
- How do we create a shared understanding of LfS and change the culture in a setting? How do we engage everyone and make sure all voices are heard?
- What is the difference between learning *for* sustainability and learning *about* sustainability? How can we phrase the goal of the movement in simple and inspiring words?

OPEN SPACE DISCUSSIONS

1. SYSTEM and SCALE

How do we create and maintain a learning system, both within and between individuals and settings?

Summary

Learning does not start in the future. It starts now. Life- long and life- wide. It's about connecting schools and formal education with communities and how we join all of that up into one connected learning system.

Where do we focus our energies? Is it on teachers, learners, key decision makers and influencers, but also our young people and their voices; that moral courage and purpose of young people cutting through all the nonsense and just calling it like it is.

This is about harnessing what is already there; coalescing and pulling together with a common sense of purpose. Schools don't know how to reach out to their communities, we have an ageing population- we are going to have lots and lots of retired people-and this could be seen as a big opportunity.

'Learner-centred learning' could alienate people - or is this the way forward? Allowing teachers to frame the learning could be a really exciting experience. Could 'world- centred education' be used as a slogan?

Flipchart

- What is a learning system? Lifelong learning starts at birth. 'Life-wide Learning' captures ideas of place and space
- Coalesce and harness what's already there, don't create a new system.

- Need to reframe the education system to become a learning system

How?

- Focus on practitioners to make the greatest gains, not end users
- Need wider connections between communities, learning settings and systems
- Schools are too insulated and isolated: access retired population, learning in community, intergenerational learning
- Value in community collaboration, not in exam grade
- Schools don't know how to reach out and access the immense support and expertise available
- Involve multiple stakeholders eg how do we include Maths trainer and Maths community. Janitors are key people in settings.

Questions and ideas

- Use of the word 'setting'? 'Place' would be better
- Challenges, e.g. reduce energy use of the setting to Net Zero in 4 years
- 'World Centred education' as a slogan
- 'Learner Centred' can alienate
- Practical real-world learning.
- How do we work with people who are horrified by our conversations?

2. VOLUNTARY vs COMPULSORY CHANGE

How do we balance voluntary and compulsory change: i.e. blending regulation and standards with enthusiasm and champions?

Summary

Considering policy versus passion and policy versus 'the champion', how do we harness that passion? Is policy there for people who don't have that passion and to ensure it happens? Policy brings cohesion, coordination, coherence to any movement- and can enable passion to become action.

Train educators and give them time for this, so they know what they are leading on- and feel comfortable leading on it. Policy is crucial-but it can also hinder: it gives that feeling of being 'done to', but it can inspire passion in others.

Marketing is needed for those who are not yet engaged. Influencers include passionate champions but also social media, particularly for young people.

Project-based learning brings practise and passion together. The professional standards have a crucial role to play - and are seen as holistic. Also teacher training and the need for ITE to ensure that learning for sustainability is embedded in training for the next generation of educators.

Flip chart

- Policy:
 - Brings coherence and cohesion
 - Can enable passion to become action
 - Needs to be resourced to fulfil its ambitions
 - Provides an important framework for those that don't have a passion
 - Additional policy ideas: part of college lecturer and teacher training; capitalise on important role of qualifications at secondary level
- Passion
 - Passion means energy. Use passion to inspire others. Build on what's already happening in each organisation
 - Enable educator agency to allow flexibility and inclusion

- Provide 'carrots' for those that are passionate eg GTCS Professional recognition
- Inspire passion through influencers and motivators
- Make sustainability more accessible.

3. LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP

What is the role of leadership in catalysing a movement for change?

Summary

Leadership in the Scottish education system is at all levels in the whole system-and that's a much bigger thing. At the centre of that is the learner, and learners as leaders. Increased pupil voice should be an integral part of the way in which the educational system is moving. Beyond the educational sector networks and then networks of networks are important. For example the Cairngorms National Park, who have been working on reaching out beyond the school into the community, connecting to place and the caring for, - and sense of ownership – of place. People engage through 'head, heart, and hands' with parents and wider communities; understanding 'place' and 'sustainability' as something that connects to their present and future and building somewhere where they can thrive.

Creating the conditions for this to happen everywhere is about creating the conditions for everyone to have a sense of agency, passion at every level and amplify that passion. Peer support and networking between schools and in schools in partnership will catalyse wider change. Right across everything, you need people who are bees; cross-pollinating between networks and everybody has a role to play.

Flipchart

Who?

- Leadership at all levels: learners, educators, setting leaders, parents, community members, NGOs, businesses, local, national, international government and agencies
- Joining up beyond the education sector
- More focus on learners as leaders-pupil voice and agency

How?

- 'Head, heart, hand' is a cycle of engagement and different people will be engaged by different aspects
- Connect throughout the system, with the community
- Connection to place, collective leadership to create a better place to thrive
- Development of collective vision and new perspectives

4. MEANING AND UNDERSTANDING, INCLUDING ALL VOICES

How do we create a shared understanding of LfS and change the culture in a setting? How do we engage everyone and make sure all voices are heard?

Summary

Our young people need skills and competences such as critical thinking, problem-solving, not just knowledge, and to be supported to take action. In a system where attainment and achievement are valued, how do we get the message across to teachers, parents, and the wider community that LfS is important? This can be through improving educators' confidence; ensuring more joined-up working across transitions (e.g. early years, primary, secondary, college); encouraging young people to see themselves as global citizens; increasing understanding of interdisciplinary learning approaches. Many teachers currently feel under pressure and should be supported to develop understanding of how learning for sustainability can be interwoven across the curriculum, and use their own creativity.

Flipchart

'Don't fight the old, build the new'

Target Audience

- Internal and external audiences. All voices are heard, allow challenge
- Engage everyone
- Parents, children's leadership
- Learner progression – relevance in each curricular area
- Target leadership

How?

- Role of educators
 - Not font of all knowledge, but facilitators of learning
 - Allow autonomy and creativity
- Highlight curriculum flexibility
- Demystify and remove the jargon. Define interdisciplinarity
- Highlight the benefits (global citizen, transformative competencies)
- Teacher training
- Provide ease of access to collaborative partners
- Provide resources to show interwoven nature of LfS

Learning 'for' sustainability versus learning 'about' sustainability

1. Learning 'for' is about what we feel and do, not just what we know, and it has purpose. It involves heads, hearts, hands which has already been talked about.
2. Learning for sustainability is cross- curricular; you don't learn about 'kindness' in a 'kindness class', so you don't learn about 'sustainability' in a 'sustainability class'.
3. The implicit curriculum-we learn from actions not just words, and this relates to every activity in institutions..
4. Culture change requires 'being the change that we want to see'. There are lessons to learn from other culture change initiatives such as anti-bullying or LGBTQ+ and how they have been embedded into school/early years/community culture

FINAL WORDS AND NEXT STEPS Rehema White

It's not a case of should we do this or can we do this? It's just a case of **how** do we do this. The 'how do we do it at scale'- across individuals, communities, society - with a world- centred focus: creating these happy ecosystems for learning with our younger people. How can we engage and inspire those within our learning settings - but also those beyond our learning settings in communities, our partners in other parts of the world, and in other sectors? How do we balance aspiration and action - keeping that heart, that passion, and that desire for change - but yet make these practical changes and show people how it can be done in different kinds of ways? How do we enable and support those people who are taking these kind of actions already?

[What are the other next steps? What should happen next and how can we further support each other in catalysing this movement for change?](#)

- Keeping in touch: Exchanging email addresses? An e-mail thread? Slack? Existing networks (Kathrin Mobius/ Helena Good)

- Training for educators. Including youth workers who can play some of those connecting, cross-pollination roles; breaking down barriers between inside the school gates and community roles (Liz Green)
- Distribute a full meeting Report and brief Synthesis of discussions.