

FRIENDS OF THE SCOTSMAN / EDUCATION

Lessons learned from building the same schools with shared knowledge

The magnificent Queensferry Crossing over the Firth of Forth has been viewed as a structure changing the landscape of Scotland. But allow me to suggest another Scottish project which also connects communities and provides opportunities for future generations.

As the Education Design Director within Scottish Futures Trust (SFT), which manages the Scotland's Schools for the Future programme on behalf of the Scottish Government, it seems an appropriate time to reflect on what we have achieved and learned as construction starts on our 100th new school, Bertha Park in Perth.

SFT's role is to encourage efficient, effective, excellent solutions through increased collaboration and commonality of design.

It is obvious that everyone involved in the schools programme – from councils, teachers, pupils and communities through to designers and construction companies are passionate about creating modern learning environments which support better learning outcomes.

In working towards this, I would like to acknowledge the foresight of two councils, East Renfrewshire and Midlothian, who made a bold bid to the Scottish Government to develop their projects in parallel, proposing to be part of an innovative pilot project and work collaboratively.

This was the first time two Scot-



Grant Robertson reports on an impressive collaboration which is producing more new facilities for Scotland's pupils

tish councils had come together to procure and deliver two schools simultaneously using similar designs. This innovative approach proved so successful that it has been used by other councils to achieve benefits and savings.

The result of the pilot initiative led to the creation of two new schools, Eastwood High and The Lasswade Centre, both built using the same, highly efficient 'block' design concept, yet both are unique design solutions looking completely different, which are specific to their local requirements.

This commonality of approach provided education, design and financial benefits. From then on, and in subsequent buildings, it has been about evolution and fine-tuning. Most users are unaware their new learning environment shares common elements with many other projects in the programme, because each is individually tailored.

These pilot schools became showing the design approach has been tested and proven. Once the main projects were

underway we shared the knowledge gained and lessons learnt to help inform councils with the development of all future projects.

When the schools programme was launched, we set out to build 55 schools from the original £1.25bn budget. Thanks to our interventions, focusing on collaborative working and on sharing design principles, this brought about significant savings which led to 12 more high-quality schools to be built using the same budget.

Based on this work, the Scottish Government extended the programme to £1.8 billion increasing the number of schools to 112. SFT's work has allowed four additional schools to be built taking the total in the programme to 116.

So what kind of facilities have we created? The schools of today and tomorrow are substantially different from even a generation ago. Learning environments need to be bright and welcoming spaces, where staff, learners and the community at large are included and feel a genuine sense of ownership. The classroom still has



↑ Eastwood High School in East Renfrewshire was built in tandem with The

place but increasingly there is more open plan learning space with glass walls improving connection and collaboration between learners and different curriculum areas supporting the delivery of a blended learning experience.

Many of the new facilities are

encouraging even more use during evenings, weekends and holidays.

These are vibrant community assets where we have seen pensioners enjoy a reading group in a café run by students, or where community groups can undertake classes simultaneously with other learners.

Lasswade Centre in Midlothian, using common designs which were tweaked to meet local requirements

Really, it is up to the community and the teaching professionals to decide how to best use their facilities.

The schools programme has been a concerted effort by all involved that is now positively impacting on communities across Scotland and we feel a real sense of pride in

what has been achieved. While the Queensferry Crossing connects across the Forth, these projects are making connections which support learning across the whole of Scotland.

Grant Robertson, Education Design Director at the Scottish Futures Trust.

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Students are now a whole lot more engaged with building excellence in the workplace

Dr Miles Weaver details how business is changing its thinking

Turn on the news and you get Brexit, America First, "building walls", "civil unrest in other parts of Europe", "profit over people and planet" and even rockets! Whatever you think of the political and economic climate, it feels as if the world around us is becoming ever more protectionist and isolated. In the workplace, many of us are faced with cuts and constraint, while 'need' exists. The problems don't simply go away, the cogs just keep turning, albeit with some grinding.

What we need is for organisations to question 'purpose', its 'soul', and realign business goals with those of society. This requires holistic thinking, the bringing of people together to see the 'whole' and not just the

subsequent 'parts'. At the level of the individual, the organisation, their interactions and relationships with stakeholders and the wider world around us. We must avoid "not seeing the elephant in the room".

In the classroom, Quality Scotland has acted as a real client, getting our postgraduate business students excited about their role to make excellence a national characteristic of Scotland.

The students are learning about the importance of continuous improvement and the approaches that can be adopted to build a truly excellent organisation.

Quality Scotland has considerable reach into the private, public and third sectors in Scotland and are open to new ways to engage with

organisations to help them stimulate continuous improvement and be recognised for their efforts, benchmarked against the best in Europe.

This has helped the students to engage and apply learning in the real world and to bring about results for people, customer and society and at the same time deliver real business success. We often hear the term a "unique Scottish approach" which incorporates the building of a fairer, more inclusive society while simultaneously stimulating growth. Our students and the organisations that adopt the EFQM model and work with Quality Scotland – "see the elephant" from multiple perspectives and vistas.

Our students are forming new perspectives and questioning the

artificial boundaries that we place around us. They are applying relevant models and concepts, learning from successful companies which have adopted the EFQM Excellence Model and have supported the embedding of excellence as a national characteristic of Scotland.

Adopting the EFQM model in your organisation will pay dividends – not only will participating organisations be part of a vibrant community and get recognition, the model brings people together around a common purpose. It enables you to question what you do in a supportive environment and identify best practice in your sector both nationally and beyond.

Quality Scotland draws on a range of approaches and tools, such as

international standards for quality management systems Lean and Six-Sigma. This learning and practical application will best place our students in the workplace to apply as well as to develop solutions and analysis that matters.

The EFQM Model places significant focus on enabling partners and resources and processes that transcend the business. Organisations are only as strong as their supply chains and must constantly assess need and design business processes that deliver for customers. The new value proposition is in realising the potential in what Martin Christopher, a professor at Cranfield University, stresses – that it is supply chains that compete, not companies, and the benefits of co-creating solu-

tions with customers and key business partners. To "see the elephant" our students need to understand the parts and how they make up the whole. Holistic thinking is needed more than ever in our current and turbulent environment.

In our classrooms, Quality Scotland have renewed our purpose and connection to real world application, not only as a valuable learning experience, but to meet a real client, offer new ideas and solutions that will be bought to action.

Also, in the spirit of recognising excellence the best performing students will have an opportunity to see for themselves the importance and benefits of excellence frameworks and to be engaged in the annual Quality Scotland Scottish Awards

for Business Excellence, an additional benefit to get engaged with hundreds of organisations across Scotland who are also celebrating their success.

Dr Miles Weaver, associate professor in Sustainable Business & SCM, Edinburgh Napier University Business School.



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