



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Education and Skills Committee

Wednesday 22 November 2017

Session 5



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Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE

29th Meeting 2017, Session 5

CONVENER

*James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*George Adam (Paisley) (SNP)
*Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green)
*Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
*Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP)
*Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
*Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
*Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
*Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD)
*Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

*attended

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Roz Thomson

LOCATION

The David Livingstone Room (CR6)

Scottish Parliament

Education and Skills Committee

Wednesday 22 November 2017

[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:00]

Interests

The Convener (James Dornan): I welcome everyone to the 29th meeting in 2017 of the Education and Skills Committee. I remind everyone who is present to turn their mobile phones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

We have had a change of committee membership since the previous meeting. I warmly welcome George Adam and the returning Richard Lochhead to the committee. I thank Colin Beattie and Clare Haughey for their hard work in the committee. Colin Beattie had been on the committee, and its predecessor, for several years. Clare Haughey made a valuable contribution to the committee, too.

Item 1 is an opportunity for George Adam and Richard Lochhead to declare any interests that are relevant to the remit of the committee.

Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): I have no relevant interests to declare. I am pleased to be back.

The Convener: That is a good start.

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): Ditto.

The Convener: That is an even better start.

Decision on Taking Business in Private

10:00

The Convener: The next item of business is a decision on whether to take agenda item 7 in private. Are we agreed to take item 7 in private?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Teacher Workforce Planning

10:01

The Convener: The committee published its report on teacher workforce planning at the end of August. The report included recommendations on the workforce planning process, teacher training and different ways to attract and retain teachers both in the classroom and at senior management level in schools.

We have received responses to the recommendations, including from the Scottish Government, the General Teaching Council for Scotland, Education Scotland, the Scottish Qualifications Authority and the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland. The committee also agreed to consider, alongside those responses, research on the turnover intentions of teachers, which is in paper 2 from the Scottish Parliament information centre.

Before I invite comments from members on any further action that the committee might wish to take, I put on record that I think the committee's work on initial teacher education could lead to real progress on course content. Therefore, I reiterate the committee's thanks to the hundreds of people who engaged with us on course content and the other issues that are raised in the report.

In terms of action points, as set out in the report, the committee will highlight education authority and ADES responses to the Government. The committee will also take the responses into account as context for its work on proposed education reforms.

I suggest that we write to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, highlighting the support from the GTCS and Education Scotland for the assessment of the delivery of initial teacher education courses to be undertaken by one organisation—specifically the GTCS or, potentially, as is proposed by the Government, a replacement organisation called the education workforce council for Scotland. The Government does not comment in detail on that recommendation, so I would like to seek further clarification on its position. Do members have any comments on that suggestion or any suggested action points arising from the responses?

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I agree with what you have said, convener. It is important that we understand exactly what remit the new body would have and how that would impact on the existing roles that the GTCS and, potentially, Education Scotland, play. I draw members' attention to the fact that I am a member of the GTCS. It is important that we know exactly where the body would stand.

A second and important point is that an awful lot depends on good data collection. Maybe it is just me, but I am not yet convinced that we have a good understanding of what formula is used for workforce planning. There seems to be a bit of conflict in the evidence that we have received between those who have a slightly different approach to the national planning and those who want a bit of local input to the planning. I am still confused about what methodology is being used. It is difficult to set policy unless you are aware of exactly how the data is used.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):

I echo the important comments on the GTCS. The GTCS is often cited as an exemplar in terms of its status, and making sure that we retain its strengths is really important. I suggest that, when we write to the Government on the ADES response, we highlight in particular the comments that ADES makes on the teaching of science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects and the teaching of bi-level and multi-level course content. We have heard about the issue anecdotally but, for the first time, we have those comments in writing. It is a serious issue that the Government needs to look at. I also gently suggest that perhaps the SQA and Education Scotland should take heed of the issue. I want to know what all three bodies—the Scottish Government, the SQA and Education Scotland—think in response to what ADES is saying.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): I do not know whether we intend to go through the Scottish Government's response to the recommendations—we may not—but, to be honest, I did not think that it matched the seriousness of the report.

The Government's response starts by saying:

"Scotland is unique in that we have over the years developed a very robust model for workforce planning".

That did not feel like it matched the evidence. I do not doubt that a lot of work has been done, but I am concerned that there is quite a lot of push-back on the recommendations: "We are actually doing this," or "We don't agree with that." Across the piece, quite a lot of important bits of evidence came out of our conversations with people on the front line, and the Government's response is, "Well, we'll take that into account." There are obvious things that it does take into account, but the Government is saying that, basically, the model is working, yet it seems to me that the model is not working—for example, in relation to the level of vacancies.

There are some hidden disadvantages. For example, it is unbelievably challenging for one teacher to teach at X number of levels across a

class. On the mentors, the Government's response says that it provides

"0.1 (FTE) per probationer as part of the teacher induction scheme",

the implication being that local authorities and schools are funded to support probationary teachers through the mentoring process. However, we heard that, very often, that is not the case and that, when teachers are mentoring, they feel that they are doing something extra. Theoretically, the school may have that allowance, but our evidence suggested that the system is not as good as it could be, because the teachers who are trying to do the mentoring also have other unbelievable pressures on them.

The Convener: There are a number of issues. With reference to what Johann Lamont has said, in particular, the Government will get the *Official Report* of this meeting, and we can add to our letter the issues that have been raised by Liz Smith and Daniel Johnson. We will also keep a watching brief, so we can always bring those issues up, particularly when we have people in front of us and we can hold them to account for the practicalities of what is happening on the ground.

Johann Lamont: I am not being disrespectful to the people who are managing the process. I am sure that they are wrestling with all of this. I am just a bit concerned that the Government's implication is that we have a good system that needs to be tweaked. We had some stronger concerns, and there remain problems even with everybody trying to make the system work. The support for probationers and initial teacher training is one issue, but the suggestion that the system is okay and just needs to be tweaked is at odds with the evidence that we got, which suggested that there are slightly more problems than that. That is not to say that the people on the front line, who are trying to make the system work, are not doing their best. The extra evidence that we got from local authorities, ADES and so on suggests that they are.

The Convener: Are we happy to add those concerns to our letter to the cabinet secretary? We have the opportunity, in following any progress, to make sure that those concerns are attended to.

Members indicated agreement.

EU Reporter

10:08

The Convener: The next item on the agenda is consideration of paper 3, which is from the committee's European Union reporter, Gillian Martin. The paper discusses the implications of Brexit for horizon 2020 innovation and research funding. I understand that Gillian Martin wants to say a few words.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): I have brought the paper before the committee in my role as the committee's European Union reporter. I bring to members' attention an issue relating to the EU horizon 2020 programme, which is a flagship programme that funds research and innovation projects in the EU. Between 2007 and 2014, Scottish organisations secured €572 million in funds. Since January 2014, we have been awarded more than €110 million. The next date for applications to the programme is December 2017.

As the reporter, I am concerned by the comment of the EU Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science that, in the event of a no-deal Brexit, any Scottish university that is successful in December

"will cease to be eligible to receive EU funding ... or be required to leave the project".

That brings a great deal of uncertainty to an important source of research funds. Yesterday, the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee looked at statistics showing the massive economic impact of having a Scottish research fellow involved in those projects.

I hope that fellow members of the committee will agree that we need to get more information on the issue from our university sector and then perhaps make appropriate representations on a cross-party basis to both Governments. I am open to advice from the committee on what steps to take, and I have set out my thoughts in the paper that members have.

The Convener: Thank you for the paper. I see the recommendations on page 3. Does anybody have any comments on the recommendations?

Daniel Johnson: I thank Gillian Martin for raising those issues. A large part of the University of Edinburgh is in my constituency, and those issues are of huge importance to that institution and all higher education institutions across Scotland.

Johann Lamont: I do not mean to be picky, but I would quite like us to make the representations as a committee. It is obvious that we are cross-party, and we should be doing that as something that we have agreed as a committee. In a sense,

the fact that we are looking at the issues as part of the committee's responsibilities—not on a party basis—might carry more weight. Thank you for the report.

The Convener: Are we happy to accept the recommendations that Gillian Martin has made on page 3 of her paper, as well as the change that Johann Lamont has suggested?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Subordinate Legislation

Section 70 (Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (SSI 2017/353)

Additional Support for Learning (Collection of Data) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (SSI 2017/355)

Additional Support for Learning Dispute Resolution (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2017 (SSI 2017/356)

10:11

The Convener: Our next item is consideration of three statutory instruments, which are listed on the agenda. They all relate to additional support for learning, and detail is provided in paper 4. Do members have any comments on the instruments?

Members: No.

The Convener: That brings us to the end of the public part of the meeting.

10:12

Meeting continued in private until 11:23.

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