OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Education and Skills Committee

Wednesday 13 June 2018

Session 5

The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Wednesday 13 June 2018

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EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE
18th Meeting 2018, Session 5

CONVENER

*James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*George Adam (Paisley) (SNP)
*Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab)
*Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green)
*Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP)
*Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
*Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
*Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
*Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD)
*Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Jennifer Craw (Opportunity North East)
Sir Ian Wood

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Roz Thomson

LOCATION

The Robert Burns Room (CR1)

Scottish Parliament

Education and Skills Committee

Wednesday 13 June 2018

[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:10]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (James Dornan): I welcome everyone to the 18th meeting in 2018 of the Education and Skills Committee. I remind everyone present to turn their mobile phones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting, please.

Agenda item 1 is a decision on whether to take item 4 in private. We will be considering a draft report of our inquiry into the attainment and achievement of school-aged children experiencing poverty. Do members agree to take in private item 4 and any future consideration of our draft report?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Young People's Pathways

10:10

The Convener: Agenda item 2 is the second evidence session in our inquiry into young people's pathways. Last week, we heard from a number of organisations that are involved in the delivery of the recommendations of the commission for developing Scotland's young workforce.

On Sunday, Monday and Tuesday of this week, we visited the Shetland Islands for a fascinating visit during which we looked at the experiences of school students and staff, college students and staff, local business and third sector representatives and apprentices in the workplace. I place on record my sincere thanks to everyone who made the fact-finding visit so worth while and enjoyable.

I warmly welcome Sir Ian Wood and Jennifer Craw to the meeting. Sir Ian Wood was the chair of the commission for developing Scotland's young workforce and remains involved with the DYW national advisory group. Jennifer Craw provided support throughout the commission's work. I invite Sir Ian Wood to make some introductory remarks.

Sir Ian Wood: Thank you for that opportunity. Jennifer Craw was not actually on the commission, but she was an incredibly valuable participant in the commission's work. Jennifer has worked with me on a number of projects and has provided support and advice throughout, so I am delighted to have her here. She will help in a range of areas.

The committee's paper for the meeting is very good, and I thank the committee for sending it to us. It identifies, fairly succinctly, the key issues and the progress that has been made, which is very helpful. It has been suggested that, initially, we might cover briefly the four or five key issues that the commission identified.

First, there is what I call the neglected 50 per cent. I wanted to call the report "The neglected 50 per cent", but I was told that that was not the right thing to do, so we called it something else. We visited a lot of schools, in which we were very well received and looked after. In essence, the first 10 minutes of those visits was taken up with the schools telling us all about their academic achievements and how well they were doing in, for example, achieving 80 per cent higher passes.

We would then say, "That's great. Can you tell us about the non-academic youngsters who are not doing highers?" We never found the right words—I do not like using "non-academic", but it is either that or "vocational". In a number of cases,

after we had asked that question, there was an embarrassed silence and we then asked whether those schools had any figures for how many qualifications those young people were leaving school with. That hit us straight away, and everyone has picked up on it.

Alongside that, there is a culture of university being the be-all and end-all, with anything that is not university tending to get secondary consideration. Early on, we had it in our heads that we need much more focus on providing meaningful qualifications for non-academic youngsters who are leaving school. There is no point in a kid staying on at school unless he or she has something to aim for. That was very much at the front of our minds, along with employability.

There is also the issue of parity of esteem. Parents are at fault, teachers are at fault and some schools are at fault—frankly, we are all at fault. My mother was desperate for me to be a professional person, and that was all that she really wanted. That involved going to university.

10:15

We went very quickly from there to the concept of college partnerships and the question of how we can get vocational teaching capacity as quickly as possible. It was not difficult to work out that the colleges had a lot of vocational facilities, resources and lecturers and that building a strong bridge between the schools and the colleges would be one way of expanding that capacity significantly. We got a number of things wrong, though. We thought that that capacity could expand into the first year of the higher national certificate and the first year of the modern apprenticeship, but neither of those expansions has come about yet. We were looking for meaningful qualifications that would take a youngster on some kind of pathway when they left school. However, I do not think that there are any youngsters in school right now doing an HNC, and I do not think that schools have graduated yet into doing modern apprenticeships with youngsters.

In fact, the focus just now is on foundation apprenticeships, which are a great idea but do not help the neglected 50 per cent. The qualifications and the level for foundation apprenticeships are above what the youngsters that we were concerned about achieve. Nevertheless, foundation apprenticeships are a great concept and I will not denigrate them.

We had a concern about careers advice, which is not easy to get on top of. The quality of careers advice is hugely mixed and the work experience provision is poor. There is no better way of preparing kids for employability than giving them some real work experience, but, frankly, for a number of reasons, that provision just was not there.

We greatly valued apprenticeships—particularly what are now called modern skilled apprenticeships—for a number of reasons, although we all need to understand that modern skills are changing fast in front of our eyes. The digital environment will change how we design the appropriate way to get youngsters ready for what is going to be a very different world. We therefore greatly value modern apprenticeships.

The second part of our report focused on business and industry. Reasonable progress has probably been made in that area, but there is still a very disappointing lack of youngsters being employed directly from education into business. There is very poor take-up of apprenticeships, and small and medium-sized enterprises have a particular problem there. We suggested that there should be some financial incentive for SMEs to take on apprentices. That is probably the only significant recommendation that we made that was not taken up; nonetheless, we felt that there are particular problems for SMEs in taking on apprentices. If 20 per cent of our SMEs took on apprentices, that would solve all kinds of problems. We thought that that would be worth while, but the suggestion was not picked up.

I will stop there on that look back. As the meeting goes on, we can give our thoughts on how much progress has been made on the various recommendations.

The Convener: Thank you for that. You said that a number of things still have to be done, but there seems to have been a fair deal of progress. One of the witnesses at last week's meeting talked about the wide support that the developing the young workforce programme has had from all sorts of sectors. What are your views on the challenge of co-ordinating a programme that involves so many different types of stakeholder? For example, distinct vocational pathways can be routed through colleges, training providers or businesses. Is there an additional challenge in ensuring that schools, pupils and parents know the benefit of those different pathways and what they present?

Sir Ian Wood: It is a significant challenge because there are a number of stakeholders with pretty different approaches and views. The key players are the schools, and it is important to recognise that, although it is not completely black and white, there is content in schools that is strongly academic and content that is largely vocational. The colleges have a very important role to play, because they are, if you like, the main training resource for non-academic youngsters who go on to further education. The universities also have a role to play, though.

We tried to spell out what we saw as the developing relationship. We have established a relationship between schools and colleges, and it is important to develop that. We have also tried to establish the basis of a relationship between schools and business, and that probably has a 60 per cent pass mark. There has been significant progress on most of our recommendations, which is positive. However, there is no single, all-embracing measure that would bring everyone together, and there are a number of important dichotomies where we are trying to connect key players to do the right things.

The Convener: I am disappointed that you do not have a magic bullet, Sir Ian.

Sir Ian Wood: There is no magic bullet.

The Convener: There never is.

Sir Ian Wood: There very seldom is.

The Convener: You mentioned careers advice. Would it be helpful for companies, colleges and other organisations to go into schools earlier? The purpose of that would not be to point pupils to one industry, for example, but to set out what options they have. We have been visiting schools over the past couple of days, and it seems to us that pupils are making choices before they know what they want to do. They are heading down a path that they might later decide they do not want to follow.

Sir Ian Wood: By "earlier" do you mean at primary school level?

The Convener: Maybe. Someone recently told me that some organisations visit primary 7, but I do not think that that is a universal approach.

Sir Ian Wood: That happens. By chance, I know a little bit about the issue because the Wood Foundation has been looking at it. It happens in England to some extent, where there is a lively movement towards linking businesses into primary schools and getting people to go there and talk about careers. That approach is helpful, but getting the right involvement in secondary school is much more important, because there is likely to be an orientation towards a certain career in senior 1, 2 and 3. A lot of youngsters do not get careers advice even after they have left school.

Careers advice is not easy, but it is important. The computerised version is more user-friendly, and I think that it is well used. However, nothing beats a person, particularly a young person, whatever their chosen profession or job, going into the school, standing in front of the youngsters, telling them about their work and letting them ask questions.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): You talked about the influence of parents, which we have all heard about when we have spoken to young people about their choices at school. You mentioned your personal experience, which is similar to mine—indeed, university is the be-all and end-all for a lot of parents. What can we do to engage parents more and let them know a little bit more about the value of what is out there, so that they do not have tunnel vision when it comes to their children's options?

Sir Ian Wood: We are trying to change the culture and the long-embedded view that many parents have as their aspiration for their youngster: that the really worthwhile thing in life is to go to university. We had an interesting meeting with the national parents association. That is an enlightened group that is interested and involved, but even for some of its members the pennies were dropping in relation to their way of thinking at various stages in the discussions.

We need to make apprenticeships, trades and occupations more respectable. We need doctors and lawyers but also people to look at the plumbing in our houses. We need a whole range of different things, and we need to find a way to increase the prestige of those jobs. Our experience in the north-east of Scotland is that many of the youngsters who did not go to university but who undertook really good technician training are earning more than many of the professionals, although money is only part of it.

My dad had a fishing business, which I went into—I should not have gone into it, but I did because my dad was in poor health. My mum desperately wanted me not to go into the fishing business, because it was infra dig. Some of those old-fashioned ideas and concepts are still very much in existence. We need everyone to have a change in mindset and to understand that the vocational occupations are essential, worth while and the equal of the other things that we do in society.

Teachers in school are incredibly important. Parents are the root of the problem, but teachers are the next stage up, because many teachers believe that their success is tied to how many highers their students get. It is on the agenda, but we must change the way in which schools are appraised so that we no longer appraise them on the traditional measures of higher passes or academic passes. We need to highlight the importance of significantly enhancing the number of vocational youngsters leaving school with qualifications. That number has improved only very slightly, from 7 per cent to 10 or 11 per cent, which means that 40 per cent of those youngsters are leaving school with nothing.

Gillian Martin: You mention the need to change the reputation and prestige of such qualifications and the way in which they are reported by getting

the wider media to understand what is positive about all those destinations. When the reports come in about the number of passes at higher and so on, that seems to be the be-all and end-all, and that feeds into the narrative that leads parents to continue to think that apprenticeships are a lesser option.

Sir Ian Wood: It is my personal view that, although we can blame the media for a whole range of things, we cannot blame the media for that culture. The culture begins with parents and teachers, and that is where we have to effect change. There needs to be a big effort in schools, and the headteacher has a huge impact on the culture in a school.

When we had visited a number of schools, we could tell—it was not particularly clever of us; it was just a sense—almost within the first 10 minutes whether there was any serious attempt at vocational education in a school. It was not just about the facilities; it was evident from the way in which the headmaster or headmistress and the teachers spoke. We always spoke to the youngsters in the school, too, and it was not difficult to tell.

We are maybe four or five years out of date, and things have changed. I have been to a couple of schools in the past few years for the committee that I now sit on. The committee chose to visit good schools—enlightened schools where there was a clear shift towards recognising that vocational education stands alongside academic education. That is possible.

Jennifer Craw (Opportunity North East): The original work that we did reflects on the application process for university, which is also reflected on in some of the evidence that this committee has taken. There is a lot of focus in schools on the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service process, with parents being introduced to how it works and how the funding element follows. One of our key observations was how much more fragmented any education pathway outside universities can seem and feel—not just access to college, but also access to modern apprenticeships.

The simplicity of the UCAS process and the focus on it in the school environment is very difficult to replicate for the college, further education and modern apprenticeships pathways. The investment in that piece of infrastructure for university education has still not been replicated for the other education pathways or pathways into work.

Gillian Martin: Is it too complex and confusing?

Jennifer Craw: It is still not known. Particularly in Aberdeen, the two-plus-two degree route has become better known. That is one route, but the focus is still on a degree. We can introduce new pathways and the information on them can filter down, but it is not easy for people who are looking at apprenticeships to find that information, and it is more difficult to make college applications because there is not the same focus that there is on university applications. That is still a challenge for parents, careers advisers and teachers as well as for employers, who have to make it work.

10:30

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): Good morning. I want to pick up on parity of esteem, which my colleague Gillian Martin talked about. Sir Ian, you said in your opening remarks that university has been seen as the be-all and end-all. You also said that your mother wanted you to become a professional person, and you did not turn out too badly.

We look at parents and how we can use them as a driving force for change, but is there not also a role for the business world to go into education settings and tell young people about potential career paths, the prestige of different careers and potential earnings? Nine times out of 10, particularly for parents, it is the potential earnings that seal the deal.

Sir Ian Wood: Of course. I think that there are now 21 DYW groups around the country—the number is growing—and part of their responsibility is to build up partnerships between business and, in particular, secondary schools. We must get more young people into schools—it has to be young people, because the kids can relate to them—to talk through what they do and their earnings. Whatever they do, whether they are a doctor, a fireman or whatever, it is important that the kids get to hear the story as it is. We need to significantly enhance that. In my opinion, it is much better than careers advice. I know that the kids can ask some questions in the careers programme, but in the setting that I have described they can ask a whole bunch of questions. It is a no-brainer.

George Adam: We had the principal of the University of the West of Scotland, Craig Mahoney, here, and he said that, as he sees it, some young people who do not graduate from his university do not drop out but opt into new careers, which he sees as a success. University becomes a route into the vocational side of things. Should there be more ideas such as that in higher education? Do we need that balance to allow people to change their career? People change the subject that they are studying, but changing from an academic route to a vocational one is seen as a radical idea.

Sir Ian Wood: It is a funny, roundabout way to do it. I would much rather see—

George Adam: In all honesty, the institution that I talked about comes from a technical college background, which is probably part of the reason. It is probably historical, rather than anything else.

Sir Ian Wood: I would much rather that we put significant focus, effort and resource into trying to help youngsters to make the right career decisions at school, whether they involve university or whatever, and get them started off on the right path.

To be honest, I think that, because of the culture issue, a lot of youngsters go to university because their parents want them to do that. They have nothing against it—it is four years, and university is generally a good part of people's lives—but they are still not sure what they want to do when they come out and the qualification has not helped them an awful lot. We want to ensure that people who go to university, as well as those who do not, fully understand the implications of what they are doing.

George Adam: My final question is on that point. If I use my father's background as an example, it was a different and more brutal time, and we had the 11-plus. People either went down the grammar route or went to a secondary modern. He went to a secondary modern, but he ended up getting an apprenticeship at the local engineering firm and he became an engineer. He had his own business and we all had a reasonable lifestyle because of that work. In the modern age, that engineering business is no longer there in my local community, and that option would probably not be there. He would probably be encouraged to go down an academic route. How do we get to a similar but less brutal system?

Sir Ian Wood: Those opportunities are there. There is a growing focus on how we can maximise support for what are called "young entrepreneurs". That is what your dad was: a young entrepreneur, setting out on his own business. A lot of resources are being allocated to that.

Some of it is digital, because the world is changing and there is a lot of high-tech stuff, but there are a lot of what you call engineering businesses—although there are not enough—and there is the opportunity for a young person to get reasonable support if they are inclined to start their own business.

The Convener: You talked about peer support, whereby young people come in to share their experiences. Would it be worth while for local authorities, business organisations or schools to establish a group of people who can go into schools and talk about their experiences, for the benefit of pupils? Is that already happening?

Sir Ian Wood: I think that that is what some of the DYW groups are doing. They are encouraging their employer members to do exactly that. I am not sure whether there is a formal list of people, but I know that they are doing that in some areas.

Jennifer Craw: In our region, DYW is focusing on sectors, business links and partnerships. Across the key partnerships, what we tend to find is that there is one leader, who then tries to harness other companies to come in behind them.

With Skills Development Scotland, Scotland's Rural College and others in the north-east of Scotland, we are piloting a shared apprenticeship scheme in agriculture. If there are no small engineering companies any more, and large employers are important in providing apprenticeships, we might be able to develop more flexible models in a Scottish context to support SMEs. We are recruiting for the scheme at the moment and it will be interesting to see how it works. We are trying to attract people into agriculture and we are trying to address the problem of a single farm not being able to train an apprentice in all the areas that they need to learn about. It is an interesting model, which I am sure could be replicated in other sectors. The food and drink industry is certainly interested in the model.

The Convener: It would be helpful if you could give the committee some detail on the scheme.

Jennifer Craw: We are just recruiting now—give it a year.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I want to ask Sir Ian about the structure in schools. As you know, curriculum for excellence has eight areas that are fundamental to the education of any child. Should employability be added to the list?

Sir Ian Wood: I am considering the word "added". Employability should run through a number of the areas. We do not put youngsters to school just to get them a job; we put them to school for a whole lot of really good reasons. It is an essential part of developing into a successful, contributing citizen. However, part of education must be about trying to ensure that the person will be able to get a job, so whenever possible, in the various areas in curriculum for excellence, there should be a focus on that. We should not make that too blatant; we do not want to overwhelm youngsters, but part of the motivation of sending a young person to school is to make them a good citizen, and if they are to be a good citizen they must be employable.

Liz Smith: That raises an interesting question. In your opening comments you talked about the 50 per cent whom you feel are being let down. Do you think that being let down in school is to do with curriculum for excellence, because the curriculum is not focusing on the employability skills that we

would like people to develop, so that your ambitions can be realised?

Sir Ian Wood: I think that the answer is yes, but I would put it differently. I think that we are letting those youngsters down—or were letting them down; I hope that the position is improving significantly—by having no interest in them or focus on them. I honestly think that there was no interest and no focus. Youngsters were just filling places at school. Frankly, I wonder why some of them stayed on. Many of them would have been a lot better off leaving school whenever they could, at the end of year 4. When we asked what kind of education they were getting and what they were being taught, we found out that it was just a case of filling in.

Liz Smith: In that case, what do we have to do in schools to ensure that the qualifications—I stress that I am talking about qualifications rather than exams—are of sufficient quality to assist those pupils who will not go on to university? You mentioned the possibility of higher national certificates and higher national diplomas being taken in schools. Would that help in giving youngsters a better quality of basic training in school before they head out to college or work?

Sir Ian Wood: It will not just give them good basic training; it will give them a qualification.

I said that our work in this area has not been as successful as we hoped that it would be, but I understand that between 6,000 and 6,500 youngsters in school will go to college next year or the year after next, so the numbers are building up. The idea is that they will go to school, but they will spend two days a week at college. In our view, they could do the first year of an HNC or a modern apprenticeship in school by studying at college. That will mean that when they leave school, they will have a year under their belt. They will also have a year's knowledge of what it means to study at college, which will give them a better idea of whether they want to do it.

There is a bunch of other things that we felt that we could do in school with regard to attendance and so on. You might ask why those pupils should not just leave school and go to college, but it was clearly expressed to us that many youngsters are not ready for that and that, through a combination of enabling them to stay in the environment and culture of school and offering them a couple of days at university, we could give them a great insight into a future world. That is a really good combination.

Liz Smith: I do not disagree with you, but it is inevitable that that would mean a slight structural change for S3, S4, S5 and S6.

Sir Ian Wood: That could be done. We stumbled on the suggestion—fortunately, it was early on in the process. We had a meeting with the principal of a college, a member of senior staff and two people from the education authority, who were planning for the next year. They had started a pilot programme that involved kids in school spending one or two days a week at college. They were planning the extension of that programme into a second year. That was a eureka moment for me. It was in East Lothian. The idea was there, but it was being put into practice only on a tiny scale.

I think that the colleges have mixed views on the idea. Since learning that I was to give evidence today, I have spoken to two college principals about how they think that the process is going. They said to me that they were happy, that it was going well and that the numbers were increasing, but I think that there is a view among colleges that they would rather take those young people directly instead of taking them through school. When I asked one of the principals about that, they just smiled. However, the process is under way and the number of young people involved is on the increase.

We do not have the funds to make a big investment in vocational facilities in schools, and the colleges are pretty good at what they do. For some reason, we have missed out on HNCs, and it is not yet the case that that route is being used for a significant number of first-year modern apprenticeships.

Liz Smith: I want to push you a little further on that. Do you think that we would have to make some changes to the structure of S3 in particular, once subject choices have been made, and to S4, S5 and S6, to make sure that there is a clear pathway to the different routes once the pupil has left, whether that is at the end of S4, S5 or S6? You suggest that there is a lot more quality in the system than perhaps is being used. Can we push a little bit further as to—

Sir Ian Wood: Do you mean quality in the system from—

10:45

Liz Smith: You are flagging up that you think that things are getting better and there is some real quality in the availability of HNC possibilities and so on. It is all there, technically, but is it actually happening, given the current structure of schools in Scotland? When you came to the cross-party group on colleges and universities, you hinted that a little bit more had to be done to develop the school structure to create clearer pathways for some of our young people.

Sir Ian Wood: I think that the concept of pathways has really caught on. It is a very important concept for anyone who is studying. Even if a person is not sure what they want to do,

they should have a view of the way ahead—of even three or four different pathways, and then those can each be split into three or four different paths. Pathways are really important.

That was not raised as a problem. When we spoke to schools about the concept of two days a week at college, they said that it was practical for them to handle, and it actually gave them a wider choice. Interestingly, some of the academic youngsters were interested in experiencing college; the idea of a day out of school to go to college and experience a different environment was quite attractive.

I am not up to date, but I am sure that the potential is there. I do not think that there are insurmountable structural issues that would prevent us from getting a much better combination of school and college education, mainly for youngsters who take the vocational route, but on a wider basis as well.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): I am struck by some of what you are describing in terms of relationships with colleges. Those are things that we were doing 20 years ago in Glasgow. Perhaps one of the problems in education is that we do interesting things on a small scale but they do not necessarily get rolled out.

I am interested in what you said about the cultural mindset. I taught for 20 years, but that was 20 years ago. Our problem was that, to be frank, some folk in our profession and some families did not see their children taking an academic route. In fact, most youngsters—even those with good highers—cashed out at the end of their fifth year because they were wanting into work. That was in the 1980s.

I understand absolutely that schools ought not to be saying that the be-all and end-all is university education but, on the other side, is there concern that presumptions and assumptions are being made about whether youngsters should do academic work on the basis of where they live? How do we make sure that we do not end up in a position where the offer in some schools is vocational as opposed to academic because of where youngsters come from? That is my anxiety. I completely accept that vocational education should be valued properly—and those were the youngsters that I most enjoyed teaching—but one reason that people have made access to university into such an issue is precisely that, back in the day, it was seen to be only for those and such as those.

Sir Ian Wood: I am sure that you experienced what you have described, but that was not an obvious trend for us. We went to a range of different schools. In some schools in the more disadvantaged areas, the teachers or headteachers took pride in telling us about the eight or 10 or 12 youngsters, from quite a large number, who could go to university. We did not sense that there was a negative idea that everyone in their school, because it was in a poor area, was going to finish up doing a vocational course.

I suspect that time has moved on and the situation is probably better than it was. I would be very sad if we were still facing that situation.

Johann Lamont: It has definitely moved on and progressed. My concern is that we end up in a position where the fashion moves from one thing to the other. I am getting a very strong message from you that what matters is what is most appropriate for the young person, and the school should be offering the relevant support, whatever the young person's skills.

Are careers advice and support sufficiently tailored to young people? Although going on a computer is useful, some young people might require greater support. Do you have a view on what that should look like and what would be a reasonable expectation of careers advice in schools? I know that employers can go into schools. Last week, we had in front of us a guidance teacher who talked about the additional pressures on them because they have pastoral care responsibilities as well as careers advice responsibilities. Has sufficient progress been made in that regard?

Sir Ian Wood: We had the clear view that there was a huge variation in the quality of careers advice. It is clear that some of it fell short of what it might have been. However, we also recognised that giving careers advice is a very difficult thing to do. We had interesting discussions about careers advice with SDS and interesting discussions about work experience, which is a key part of that.

There should be a package of things that does not just involve sitting in front of a computer; practical experience should be involved, or someone should come to talk to the person. Sitting in front of a computer is not enough; a combination of things is needed. Some schools, which tended to be in the less disadvantaged areas, had a good package, but in disadvantaged areas there was not the same kind of support from parents and others in providing insight into career opportunities. We need to keep improving careers advice, and people need to keep getting more work experience, but there is definitely no magic bullet for that.

Johann Lamont: One of the biggest changes in my teaching career was when certification for all standard grades was brought in. That meant that we had foundation level, general level and credit level and, immediately, resources had to follow all

those courses. I previously taught non-certificate classes for which there was no resource and no course; it was simply a matter of whatever a teacher could magic up themselves. Do you share my concern about the decision that national 4s be internally assessed as passes or fails? In my view, that means that they will be less likely to be thought to be as significant as externally assessed qualifications. Would an HNC or whatever fill that space, as it would be externally assessed and would be seen as having credibility for that group of young people?

Sir Ian Wood: I do not think that I have enough knowledge to answer that question. I am serious; our report is four years out of date and there has been a change in the process in that four years. I am afraid that your question requires more knowledge than I have of how the new system works.

Johann Lamont: Is it entirely legitimate to say that external assessments and qualifications give value to what a young person has learned? That is the message that I am getting from you on why bridging between schools and colleges works and why some of that assessment should not happen in schools. That same mindset would apply to the national qualifications.

Sir Ian Wood: On whether there is a value in assessments being external as opposed to internal, I suppose that it depends on the quality of the internal assessment and the school's reputation for making a good job of it. There has to be some advantage in external standards. People recognise that they are credible.

Johann Lamont: It transformed secondary education when youngsters finally left school with qualifications, as opposed to being able to get all the way through four or five years of school and leave with no qualifications.

Sir Ian Wood: The problem was that a lot of those youngsters did not just leave school with no qualifications; they left with no aspiration. There was no pathway. There is nothing worse than a young person waking up in bed in the morning and not having something to do. I have said that a number of times and I really mean it. That is the worst thing that we can do to a young person.

Part of the answer to that is to ensure that there is a pathway and that young people have an aspiration, from whatever age. Certainly, from the fourth or even the third year of school, they should have an aspiration to achieve something.

How meaningful is an internal qualification? It is better than no qualification but, yes, a first-year HNC or first-year modern apprenticeship—there are a number of other things that could be done—would be preferable and meaningful.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): Not only in this inquiry but in previous work that the committee has done, we have received a substantial amount of anecdotal evidence from young people who feel that, although they might nominally be presented with a choice of future pathways while they are at school, the choice has really already been made for them. That is a challenge for us. A school might have broadened the number of available options—a school that was previously focused on the academic routes to university might have started engaging far more with colleges for vocational options or with businesses for apprenticeship opportunities—but the teaching staff or, potentially, the parents might have, in essence, already made the choices for the young people concerned. The options exist nominally but, for the individual young person, there is no choice.

Sir Ian Wood: Are you saying that the school curriculum is restricting what the young people can do or that the parents and teachers are doing that?

Ross Greer: I am talking about the parents and teachers rather than the curriculum.

Sir Ian Wood: I am in no doubt that parents and teachers have a huge influence, but if you told them that, they would probably disagree with you.

One of the interesting things about the discussion with the national parents association was the question of how we discuss with kids what they should and should not do. In some cases, from an early age, the aspiration is the parents', not the kid's. If we told the parents that they were unfairly and unreasonably influencing their child, they would answer that they were not—they just do not believe that they are.

Teachers do not believe that they are doing that either. However, the situation with teachers is getting better. Younger teachers have a somewhat different approach and think differently, so I hope that the situation with teachers will get better over time.

The kids whom you are talking to are absolutely right. Perhaps they do not realise that they are getting a prejudiced view, because they do not have the insight to see when that is happening. We have to find a way to counter that by exposing them to work experience, by getting people into school to talk to them about pathways and by showing them films about different options. We can do it in a range of ways. There must be a choice and young people must be given enough information to make one.

Ross Greer: A moment ago, you mentioned something similar to an experience that I had recently. I spoke to a young person whose academic achievement would have allowed them

to go to university and whose school was very much directing them to do that but whose interest lay in taking a vocational route instead. How can we measure and assess the distinction between options nominally being available in a school and genuine choice being given to individual pupils? That is the challenge for us. The schools can present on paper the options that they offer, but it is quite a challenge for us to know whether the young people are getting a choice.

Sir Ian Wood: I do not know how you would do that. It would not be acceptable to do this, but we could have a bunch of clever and wise people talking to kids in schools independently. They could get an hour a week with the kids for three weeks to talk through what they really want to do and try to help them in a more organised way. That would not be acceptable, however, because parents would not want it. Teachers would probably not want it either.

Ross Greer: If we included criteria for that, could the existing school inspection regime try to capture some of it? The evidence would be largely anecdotal, but it might be quite informative.

Sir Ian Wood: It is about trying to get a child into a position in which the parent and teacher are not there, so that the child gets a chance to speak.

To be fair, kids do not have lightning-clear insight; that is something that you have to help them work their way towards. One of the things that I do is ask kids what they want to do, and I have to say that 80 per cent of them shrug their shoulders and say that they are not sure. On the few occasions when I have time to talk to them further, it turns out that there are things that they would like to do, but they have never thought their way towards that.

Any good professional independent counselling—call it what you like—whereby we try to help kids broaden out their thinking and develop their insight with regard to what is best for them to do would be helpful.

11:00

The Convener: We are just back from Shetland, where we did pretty much what you suggested. We talked to pupils in a classroom without teachers present and asked them about their preferred pathways. That approach worked. Obviously, we cannot have groups of 12 at a time for every pupil in the country, but there might be some other ways of doing that—using online methods or whatever—in order to get some of the information that Ross Greer was talking about and which we have been trying to get.

Sir Ian Wood: It would be most interesting to get the parents' views on that.

The Convener: Yes, well, we did not talk to any of the parents—perhaps that is why it worked so well.

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): I have a brief follow-up question about careers advice. Over the past few weeks, we have heard that there is a huge disparity across the country with regard to the quality of careers advice that people are given. There is also a view that the people who deliver the careers advice will tell you that they tick all the boxes and do everything that they are required to but that the young people will quite often tell you a different story.

I understand that it would be good to have a standard across the country. However, how can we assess whether careers advice is delivering what young people want?

Sir Ian Wood: With great difficulty. You would have to do it through some kind of independent assessment.

Frankly, the most important thing is to get across to the senior people in the school—the headmaster or headmistress—that they must be really committed to giving good careers advice and that it must not simply be left to the careers adviser or whoever the key person is in the school.

I do not think that we can measure the success of careers advice through any sort of external assessment; that would be quite a ponderous thing to do. What we have to do is persuade the people who are running the schools that the employability issue is one of the most important things that we can address and that it is every bit as important as the other things that they do as people who are involved in education. That is the way that I would tackle it. I would not want a bunch of inspectors going around watching how careers advice is given and so on.

Is it SDS that provides careers advice, Jennifer?

Jennifer Craw: Yes, it is SDS, along with the schools.

Sir Ian Wood: I think that SDS realises how important this issue is, but I do not know whether it has enough resources. We need SDS and the senior teaching people in the school to be really committed to getting the approach right.

Mary Fee: We also have to ensure that whatever careers guidance is given is fully inclusive and allows young people who might have additional needs or disabilities to get the right advice with regard to helping them to pursue a career. I am not confident that the current system does that.

Sir Ian Wood: You are absolutely right. In most schools that we visited, we got a sense that the really capable kids were just left with the computer

but special attention was given to kids who needed some help. However, I think that that help might have been more along the lines of giving them advice about how to work the computer as opposed to giving them different insight into their career choices.

I will say it again: we need to sort career choices through providing work experience, maximising the impact that we have in schools and having young people go into schools and share with the youngsters what they do.

Mary Fee: Something that surprised me and other committee members who talked to young people in Shetland was the lack of preparation for work experience. The young people to whom we spoke had no idea what was expected of them when they went into a workplace. They did not know that they were meant to be there on time. They did not know how to talk to anyone. They did not know what they were meant to be doing. One young person told us that they had spent two days following someone around, because they did not know what was expected of them. Surely that is a huge gap, and we are setting young people up to fail in their work experience, which could be crucial for their career choice.

Sir Ian Wood: What you describe reflects badly on the school and on the company that provided work experience. Schools could run a very simple module—it could take a couple of hours or so—to prepare youngsters for work experience. If a business is to contribute fairly to the process it should absolutely have an induction process whereby it tells the youngster what it expects them to do. Otherwise, we are wasting everyone's time.

Mary Fee: I was struck by recommendation 20 in your report, which was about financial support for SMEs, and I am interested in what impact you think that it would have in rural areas. In Shetland and many other rural areas in Scotland, there are very small organisations that simply cannot afford to take on and support an apprentice. That has a wider impact on the sustainability of the business—and indeed the sustainability of the community, because if businesses fail or go elsewhere, young people might be forced to leave the area. What more can be done to support small organisations to take on young people?

Sir Ian Wood: SMEs have two problems in that regard. One is that they have no process or resource to enable them to handle the administration and planning that is required in taking on an apprentice. That is a big issue—it is as big as the money issue—but we can sort it out. The various local DYW groups could easily have a resource that could hold SMEs' hands when they get engaged in the process of taking on apprentices.

The second issue is money. Some support is given—I have forgotten whether it is in the first or second year of the apprenticeship—but we thought that support should probably be given for three years. I am not talking about a huge amount of money. If we could get a bunch more SMEs to take on apprentices, we would help the SMEs, we would address the employment problem and we would undoubtedly increase the number of people who are being trained.

There is a third problem. We have to ensure that in a small company there is support, so that the young person is looked after while they do their apprenticeship. We cannot just cast a person adrift in a company. A bit of work is required there, but, goodness me, there will be a huge, positive result if we get it correct.

Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con): Do young people get enough variation in their work experience? The young people in Shetland told us that they do a week before they leave school. One placement is all the work experience that they get. They might like it or not like it, but they have nothing to compare it with.

Sir Ian Wood: This is a trite answer, but I do not think that we can give young people too much work experience. We also have to ensure that their educational requirements in school are met, but the more work experience that we can give them, the better. The problem is that only about half of those youngsters get work experience. However, if we had a good system that gave young people three work experiences in different companies and environments, that would be great. Frankly, though, even going to college is helpful because they get to handle plumbing or joinery tools there, for example.

With regard to the question of youngsters not turning up on time and so on, they can learn such basic things from work experience. We heard some horrific stories from employers—we fell out with employers more than we fell out with the schools—who took on kids to do things who turned up an hour late and so on. It was depressing to hear about that, but I do not think that it was the norm. However, we have to get youngsters used to some basic things regarding work.

Oliver Mundell: The more substantive line of questioning that I want to pursue is around rurality and the consistency of approach across the country. Obviously, having 21 different regional groups is a strength, but there is quite a lot of variation within that. The college model has been regionalised and it is more difficult for some youngsters, particularly in the area that I represent, to access college courses while they are at school. Is that something that you recognise?

Sir Ian Wood: There definitely were—and I am sure that there still are—logistical issues and problems. There is the cost of transport, for example. It is worth getting round such problems, but I am not saying that we will get round them on every occasion. Generally, that was not the number 1 concern; we were dealing with other concerns before that.

Oliver Mundell: Do you think that enough resource is going in to make those relationships possible at the moment?

Sir Ian Wood: Are you asking about the business-school connections?

Oliver Mundell: Yes, the business-school and the school-college connections, which are significantly more challenging in remote parts of Scotland.

Sir Ian Wood: A bunch of people are working very hard on the wider delivery of the DYW programme. They have seven years to do it and they know that it is being measured—they have some clear measures. I am sure that that is not enough, but it is probably as much as we can reasonably make available.

Oliver Mundell: One local concern is the shortage in the working-age population. A lot of young people tend to leave rural communities and gravitate towards more urban areas. Is there a kind of conflict of interest between the needs of employers and young people's need for individual choice? If we are going to address some of the skills shortages, maybe something has to be done to encourage some of those young people to pursue a path that is not their choice.

Sir Ian Wood: I guess that they have to make a choice between a job and where they stay, which is not easy. I do not think that it is reasonable to say to a youngster "This is what you are going to do." As I said, that choice between a job and where they stay is not easy for youngsters.

Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP): I want to ask you about a couple of points that you just raised. You said that it would be great for young people to have a wider choice and maybe have three options when they are doing work experience. Certainly, when I was at school, many years ago, I had that option, because I had three work experiences.

Sir Ian Wood: How did you manage that?

Gordon MacDonald: I have no idea. I can say that the work experiences that I had in three different places had no relevance to what my career was before I entered politics, but that is a different matter. How do we encourage SMEs to realise the benefits of taking on a young person to gain work experience or of taking them on as a modern apprentice?

11:15

Sir Ian Wood: Here is the problem: most SMEs are working like mad to keep themselves viable and keep their businesses going—that is their priority and we must respect that—and their first thought when we knock on the door and ask them to take on a modern apprentice is that they have 101 other issues on their hands, there is no one to deal with it so they will have to deal with it themselves and it will be a drain on their financial resources for the first year or two, even with some kind of reasonable subsidy.

We have to do something financially, and the DYW groups have to be prepared to have local resources available to spend time with SMEs and help them to do it.

Gordon MacDonald: How much of this is a cultural issue among small businesses? I have used the example of the hairdressing industry before. It is made up of small businesses that have no human resources department, yet it takes on an awful lot of apprentices. How does the hairdressing industry manage it, yet plumbing, electrician or joinery businesses are not able to provide the same opportunities?

Sir Ian Wood: I am not an expert on hairdressing salons.

Gordon MacDonald: Neither am I.

Sir Ian Wood: In a hairdressing salon, there are maybe five or six people working in one big room and they can all see what is going on. Joiners, plumbers and what have you move all over the place and there are safety issues and so on. There is a different bunch of challenges, although those should be surmountable.

It is interesting. We got a lot of feedback that company employees really like companies to take on apprentices. They like to train people and to have young kids coming in with their stories of Saturday night and what have you. Most of the SMEs employ about five or six people—a decent-sized SME has maybe 10 people. It is a big event for them to take on an apprentice.

We will make some progress there, but I do not have huge hopes. How many SMEs are there in the country?

Jennifer Craw: Thousands—it is the biggest part of business.

Sir Ian Wood: There are thousands upon thousands of SMEs. If you could get 5 per cent of them to take on an apprentice it would have a big impact.

Gordon MacDonald: Is there a role for the trade associations, such as the Federation of Master Builders, plumbers associations or

SELECT—the Electrical Contractors Association of Scotland?

Sir Ian Wood: They are all active in the apprenticeship programme.

Gordon MacDonald: Are they members of the regional groups?

Sir Ian Wood: Yes. The regional groups are widely representative.

Gordon MacDonald: There are 21 regional groups, but only seven of them are currently using the marketplace, which is the matching tool for young people and employers on My World of Work. Is there a particular reason for that?

Sir Ian Wood: I do not know. It is bad news. I hope that it is just a question of time, but I agree that seven out of 21 is a pretty poor figure.

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): I thank the convener and the committee for coming up to Shetland in the past few days. In particular, I thank you for your contribution to the local economy—I am not looking at Gillian Martin and her contribution to Shetland knitwear in particular. [*Laughter*.]

Sir Ian, you will not be surprised to hear that, when using the bridge simulator at the North Atlantic Fisheries College on Monday, two of my colleagues—who shall remain nameless—managed to crash the 12,000-tonnes Shetland to Aberdeen ferry. All kinds of political metaphors come to mind, but I will refrain from using any of them.

I have three quick questions. My first question is on the kind of work experience that Oliver Mundell and Gordon MacDonald were talking about, and it also relates to Liz Smith's question about school structure. I am interested in your reflections a number of years after producing your report. We, too, heard strong evidence that more work experience is a very good thing. We have had curriculum for excellence for a long time now. Is there a connection? Is there a challenge relating to two plus two plus two and how the senior phase of our secondary schools is structured that creates difficulties in scheduling time out of school? The issue is about timetabling another week in the busy life of our pupils. Do you have any reflections on whether that is the block to there being more work experience?

Sir Ian Wood: I hate dodging questions, but—

Tavish Scott: We do it all the time.

Sir Ian Wood: I am not a politician.

I do not know enough about how the school planning system works. I know that there is a bunch of challenges in getting all the timetables working—we are continually told that—but I do not know enough to say whether it is relevant.

Jennifer Craw: One of the good examples that we shared in the report was Alfie Cheyne's business, Ace Winches. It was offering work experience on Saturday mornings, which it was able to do because it was open on Saturday mornings. The key thing was to move away from the model of having a young person turn up for just one week of work experience. Pupils should not have to rely on their parents' networks; there should be school, company and industry relationships that are facilitated through DYW. It obviously takes time to build those things up.

Employers do not have to see work experience as being for one week only. It is an opportunity for them to get to know young people in their region and area—which goes back to how to retain young people in the region and area—and through that they can start to identify future employees. The benefit is mutual. The idea that work experience should be for only one week was not widely seen as best practice. The best companies do more than that, offering opportunities outside school terms and at weekends, although that clearly does not work for all young people.

As a parent experiencing curriculum for excellence, I saw the whole idea of how people develop as individuals and how work experience maps across to that as a huge opportunity, as pupils move from the junior to the senior phase of school. The commission took place while the first of the senior phase were moving through curriculum for excellence. It was still unclear how it was going to work as pupils moved from primary into the first phase and then the later stages.

The way that pupil outcomes are mapped across is a science in itself, so how do pupils and individual young people do that? The science of using work experience as a developmental tool within their personal journeys of education through curriculum for excellence should become easier. Work experience has to reflect that, and that needs an intermediary who can explain and understand how curriculum for excellence is trying to build the young individual through the whole education journey and how that fits into what employers are looking for. There should be a perfect match, but the language is different.

I am not an expert, but one of the key things that we heard from employers in the external validation of education was that they found it really difficult to understand education qualifications. That was before national 4s and 5s had been introduced—they were due to come in. The language that is used by education and employers in relation to both what work experience offers for the pupil or young person, the school and the employer in the future and how the education qualification system

works is critical. All those things need intermediaries to translate across—

Tavish Scott: From one language to another.

Jennifer Craw: Having one language would be good, but that would probably be impossible. That is understandable. However, a translator and manager of that process is needed, and that is where, with the right resources, DYW can help in the early years until it becomes embedded—assuming that the education system stays fairly stable.

Tavish Scott: We politicians do not help that, with exam changes and things like that. That was a very powerful argument.

My second question is about a young apprentice whom we met yesterday at Malakoff in Lerwick. He is 27 and has just finished a three-year apprenticeship. Lewis told us that he took on that apprenticeship at 24. His boss, Dougie Stevenson, said that they could do with the system being more adaptable, to allow young men and women to start modern apprenticeships a little bit later in life. Do you have a perspective on that?

Sir Ian Wood: What had Lewis done before that?

Tavish Scott: He was semi-skilled and he said that he would have gone on being a semi-skilled young man working for Malakoff.

Sir Ian Wood: Did he start at Malakoff?

Tavish Scott: No, he started in a garage as a mechanic.

Sir Ian Wood: Okay.

Tavish Scott: He did not want to be a mechanic.

Sir Ian Wood: So then he became semi-skilled—

Tavish Scott: He got a job with Malakoff and they plugged him into an apprenticeship.

Sir Ian Wood: That was great for him. What was the question? [*Laughter*.]

Tavish Scott: You are very good at this. Should 24-year-olds have an equal chance of getting modern apprenticeships compared with the younger boys and girls—or men and women?

Sir Ian Wood: My ears pricked up at the mention of Malakoff. For a long time, we partly owned Malakoff. That was many years ago.

Tavish Scott: I remember that.

Sir Ian Wood: I absolutely do not see why 24-year-olds should not have the same chance. I guess that I would worry about a 55-year-old wanting to do a modern apprenticeship. I am not going to say where the dividing line should be, but for any person with a reasonable career time ahead of them, I see no reason why they should not be allowed to do an apprenticeship and get the same support as young people get.

Tavish Scott: My final question is about how modern apprenticeships are structured. The other telling evidence from the fisheries college in Scalloway was from the lecturer there, who told us that employers are looking to the college to provide courses that include teaching young boys and girls not just about lathes and milling on a lathe, but how a 3D printer works, because on an oil rig in the future, or in a ship's engine room, they will not be waiting for a part to arrive. Sitting in the corner will be a 3D printer that will build the piece of kit that is needed after the information has been downloaded.

Are modern apprenticeships adaptable enough in their design and how they change to reflect modern technology and the changing world of work?

Sir Ian Wood: Honestly, it does not matter how hard we try to get apprenticeships up to date; in five years' time, they will be out of date. We must have a really good apprenticeship that takes account of as much as possible of the new technology and equipment—it is mind-blowing to see how things are being done—and we must also have continuous development and training.

I think that we are going to have a bunch of expert digital companies that will make good money by going around other digital companies and normal companies and updating them about what they can do with digital technology. Every company must be as up to date as possible. Things will keep changing.

Tavish Scott: And the employer has to follow that or has to try to lead that to some extent.

Sir Ian Wood: Yes.

Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): First, I will pick up on some of the issues that were raised in relation to SMEs. Sir Ian was talking about the need for SMEs to take on modern apprentices. I visited a small business in my constituency of Moray on Monday—SFB Consulting. Leah Fraser is a young woman who has just started there as an apprentice in marketing, which is what she wants to pursue.

Small businesses seem to be able to take on apprentices, so I am trying to work out what the obstacles are to SMEs taking on apprentices.

Sir Ian Wood: How many employees does the business have?

Richard Lochhead: I think that it has four or five employees.

Sir Ian Wood: Then it is an SME.

Richard Lochhead: Yes, but it is at the small end of SMEs, yet it can afford to take on an apprentice. What are the obstacles for SMEs generally? You were saying earlier that they may not be able to afford to take on apprentices.

Sir Ian Wood: We got very consistent feedback on that. I made the point that people who own SMEs are usually up to their ears in trying to run the business and then they are faced with the administration and the hassle, including whatever they have to drop to take on a modern apprentice.

They are occupied with the question of how to develop the SME. They might think, for example, "I have four employees and they are all pretty busy—am I going to lose a quarter of their time in the next 12 months because they are focused on training the apprentice?" It is all very selfish stuff but, to be fair, they are trying to run a small business and frankly, the finances are not necessarily top of the list. That is why I have said that we have to find ways of giving SMEs some kind of support to do these things.

Richard Lochhead: There are great examples out there of small businesses taking on apprentices, and that is good news, particularly in areas such as Moray in the north-east of Scotland, which I am very familiar with.

What are your reflections on some of the challenges facing more rural areas? Clearly, there are additional challenges, particularly for different types of career options, because if you want a particular career option, you may have to travel to a community elsewhere in Scotland.

I made the point during last week's committee meeting that in Moray, for example, there are fewer young people compared with the national average, but the number of young people who want to leave the area is above the national average, so there is a double whammy. Do you have any reflections on the challenges around opportunities for young people in more rural areas?

11:30

Sir Ian Wood: Have you got a good college in Moray? Sorry, that is my ignorance showing.

Richard Lochhead: We have Moray College.

Sir Ian Wood: North East Scotland College in Aberdeen, which is one of the so-called rural colleges, has a superb college in Fraserburgh. I am sorry that I have not visited Moray College, but I am aware of it.

Having a good college is important for planning skill and careers development. It is more difficult to do that in rural areas, because there are probably fewer choices of employer—there simply are fewer employers to take on apprentices. I do not see how you get around the so-called negatives of being in a rural area. It is just a fact of life that you do not have the same proximity to companies, subcontract machining and all the other things that you need to do to grow and develop a business, but some have adapted and do that successfully.

Richard Lochhead: Your comments were—quite rightly—about the need to ensure that we are up to date with 21st-century needs. You mentioned the digital revolution. You will be familiar with the various skill shortages in the north-east of Scotland. More and more employers are saying that they cannot get the staff for X or Y roles in their businesses. Do you have any reflections on the bigger picture in relation to what we are talking about and whether educational institutions are attuned to the needs of the economy in the 21st century and the skill shortages that we are experiencing, particularly with Brexit coming and the potential for even more skill shortages? Are our colleges and schools taking that into account in what they are doing? Do they match the skill shortages?

Sir Ian Wood: We do not do this well. Universities do not do it well—a whole lot of kids are going to universities to study subjects in which there is a high chance that there will not be a job at the end of the day. I do not think that we have, anywhere, the criterion of the likelihood of getting a job at the end of the day as a result of your education. Is that right?

There will be a significant change in the content of the skills. The so-called modern apprenticeships, whatever they will be known as, will be ultra-technical apprenticeships.

We should match. That is not easy, because we could be apologising to a youngster for their not being able to do what they want to do and telling them what to do instead that would give them a better chance of getting a job. Frankly, that is what we should be doing, because we are spending a lot of money and, worse than that, we are possibly wasting that youngster's time in letting them study something in which they have a low likelihood of getting a job. However, we live in a democratic society in which people do not necessarily like such an approach. People like to be unconstrained and able to do what they want to do. From an ideal planning perspective, however, we should make a much better attempt to match our training input to the output required.

The Convener: I thank Sir Ian and Ms Craw for their attendance and for answering our questions so fully. That has been very helpful. I assure you that we will keep you up to date with our inquiry findings and how things go.

11:33

Meeting continued in private until 11:54.

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