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Official Report

# EDUCATION, LIFELONG LEARNING AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

Wednesday 26 January 2011

Session 3

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## EDUCATION, LIFELONG LEARNING AND CULTURE COMMITTEE
**3rd Meeting 2011, Session 3**

**CONVENER**

*Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)

**DEPUTY CONVENER**

*Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

*Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP)
*Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
*Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab)
*Christina McKelvie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
*Elizabeth Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
*Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD)

**COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES**

Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Hugh O'Donnell (Central Scotland) (LD)
Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)
Dave Thompson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

*attended

**THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:**

Graham Donaldson (Review of Teacher Education in Scotland)
Graeme Logan (Review of Teacher Education in Scotland)

**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Eugene Windsor

**LOCATION**

Committee Room 6

# Scottish Parliament

## Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee

*Wednesday 26 January 2011*

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 10:00*]

## Review of Teacher Education in Scotland

**The Convener (Karen Whitefield):** Good morning. I open the third meeting in 2011 of the Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee. I remind all those present that mobile phones and other electronic devices should be switched off for the duration of the meeting. We have received no apologies, so I am sure that Margaret Smith will join us a little later—I think that she is in the building.

The first item on the agenda is the review of teacher education in Scotland. The Scottish Government commissioned the review, and it reported on 13 January. I am pleased to welcome Graham Donaldson, who was the leader of the review, and Graeme Logan, who was a professional adviser to the review. Mr Donaldson will make a short opening statement before we move to questions.

**Graham Donaldson (Review of Teacher Education in Scotland):** First, I thank the committee for taking the time to consider the report "Teaching Scotland's Future: Report of a review of teacher education in Scotland". It has been published at a very important time for Scottish education, because the decisions that will be taken in the current financial environment could have far-reaching implications for Scottish education. One of the things that I hope the report will do is help to inform the decision-making process so that the necessity of dealing with the financial situation also takes account of the need to build for the future rather than deal just with current issues.

I was asked an interesting question about halfway through the review by a colleague from the Netherlands, who said there is an awful lot to admire in Scottish education and that the perception internationally is that we have a very high-quality education system that has a great tradition going back centuries, and that we have a well-qualified teaching profession, for which the McCrone agreement has put in place a number of things in respect of the contractual position of teachers that many other countries would like to get into. With reference to my previous post, she said that we have an approach to inspection and school improvement that is world class: it is recognised across the world as being at the forefront of thinking about how to bring about school improvement. She also said that curriculum for excellence is absolutely setting the right agenda for our education system to move forward. Then she stopped and asked, "Why are your outcomes not better?"

We have in place most of the conditions that would suggest that we ought to have not just a generally high-quality education system, but one that produces the kind of high-quality outcomes that, for example, Finland, New Zealand and Australia produce. We should be in that company. We are not at the other end of the spectrum, but we are not in that company. One of the things that I hope the report and its recommendations will contribute is an answer to why we are not. We have perhaps given insufficient attention in recent years to how to support and develop the capacity of the teaching profession as individuals as opposed to doing so for schools in the abstract, or for teachers in general. The question is how we support and develop and build the capacity of each and every one of our teachers and school leaders.

I hope that the report will partly help to answer that. The report's recommendations are intended to deal very directly with the two big questions of how we ensure that the quality of our teaching force is as high as it can be, and how we ensure that it is led as well as it can be. In that sense, the report builds on the philosophy and practice of McCrone, and prepares the ground for, and works with the grain of, the philosophy of curriculum for excellence. I see this report as being designed very much to bring those two together in a way that can lead to the next step in Scottish education.

It is important for me to put on the record two points. First, a lot of what I say in the report is possible only because of existing strength, so I am not talking about a deficit model: the report builds on existing strength. Secondly, throughout the nine months of the review, the response that I invariably got from all quarters—not only in the education system, but more widely in the business and political communities—was significant engagement with the issues that I was dealing with and support for the need for us to examine the relationship between how we develop our teachers and the quality of education.

**The Convener:** Thank you. I am sure that a number of members will want to ask questions, but I will start. The report has a section on ensuring that we get the right people into teacher training so that we can have the best possible teachers. I think that we have all seen in our constituencies that lots of young graduates are waiting to enter

the profession and who are highly skilled, qualified and motivated and are ready to make a fantastic contribution, but many are struggling to find jobs. Could we do better at ensuring that we attract the right people and that we do not raise unreasonable expectations of their having a guaranteed job at the end of their education?

**Graham Donaldson:** That is starting with a tricky question. The report looks directly at entry to the profession in terms of both how we ensure that the right people are being brought into initial teacher education and what we can do about the young people who go through that education but do not go into immediate employment. Many of them may be lost to the profession because by the time jobs become available they have developed alternative careers or moved abroad.

On the selection process, the story there is really quite encouraging because there is an upside to where we are just now in Scotland, in contrast to a number of other countries. The Netherlands, for example, does better than we do in the programme for international student assessment—PISA—but it struggles to recruit high-quality teachers. We still have applications from across the board to enter initial teacher education, which allows us to select the best from an able set of candidates. At the moment, the process of selection varies quite a bit from university to university, but there is also a great deal of duplication. In many other walks of life, there would be a more sophisticated selection process for candidates than the one that we use to select, from a large group of potentially able people, those who will provide our best teachers in the future.

I believe that we should move to a process that is much closer to the kind of assessment centres that are used routinely in other occupations. That means that selection ought to be more broadly based than it is at the moment so that, in addition to academic qualifications, more weight is given to interpersonal, social and communication skills. Moving to an assessment-centre process will help to ensure that the people who find their way into initial teacher education are those who are most likely to succeed.

The media has given a lot of attention to what the report says about literacy and numeracy in the teaching profession. Some of that misunderstands what I am trying to say in that regard. The message is quite clear: our teachers ought to have the highest standards of literacy and numeracy; we should not have a teaching profession that does not model the highest standards of literacy and numeracy. For many in the profession, that is the case, but in the course of the review, a very consistent theme came through from a variety of different sources, which expressed concern about the existing level of competence in relation to the high bar that should be set for literacy and numeracy in the profession.

What I have suggested in the report is not that we should have a threshold test that says that someone who is 1 per cent below the pass rate is not allowed to go into teaching, but that we should establish a clear understanding of what the competence threshold is, and it should be higher than we expect of the population a whole. Part of the assessment should be about where candidates are in relation to that threshold and then a decision should be made about how big and how bridgeable the gap is. It would then be the responsibility of the initial teacher education course to bridge that gap. That is all about ensuring that we select the people who are going to be in the best position to serve our children well in the future. It is not a denigration of what is happening now, but it is about making sure that we are clear about it.

A variety of factors influence the question of numbers of teachers, not all of which are relevant to what I say in the report. There is a disjoint between decisions that are taken about the numbers who enter initial teacher education and about how many we employ at the end of the day. The more steps there are in the process and the greater the gap from when they start to when they finish, the greater is the likelihood that initial assumptions will not match the conditions that finally apply. The report looks at two or three ways of addressing that.

The intelligence that is used in the current model needs to be more finely grained than it is at present. At the moment, the model uses national statistics. Universities and local authorities should provide more real-time information about what they know about projected retirements from the profession and the changes that are taking place in the local workforce, rather than operating historically by using the census and data on what went before. There are technical things that could be done to improve the model.

One of the recommendations in the report—which is not directly about numbers of teachers—suggests that we should move towards more concurrent degrees rather than a BEd. That will also shorten the timespan because, after two years on a concurrent degree, a student can decide not to continue training to be a teacher and to move into a more general undergraduate degree. They will be at a point at which they can take more responsibility for looking ahead and—if the employment market in teaching does not look all that good—for deciding whether they need to take a more general degree rather than take the risk of going into that employment market. The concurrent degree shortens the process and gives

students more of an opportunity to alter their career path, rather than leaving them locked into a degree that is designed to equip them for teaching only.

We also need to provide better intelligence. When prospectuses talk about what the university offers in the way of initial teacher education, it only talks about it for teaching. The prospectus for any other undergraduate degree gives a whole host of jobs that someone could do when they have the degree, but for a BEd or postgraduate qualification, it just says, "There will be opportunities in teaching". Why is a teaching qualification not seen as being more attractive in fields beyond teaching? Contrast it with a law degree. Less than 50 per cent of those who get an LLB become lawyers, but they are very marketable; the degree is seen as a high-credibility qualification. A teaching degree ought to be seen in exactly the same terms. That is partly about who is selected and the level of academic challenge of the degree course, and the changing perceptions in society more generally.

During the review, I asked representatives of the main business organisations the straight question, "If you have someone with an LLB and someone with a BEd, who is more likely to get the job?" and they said that they would go for the person with the LLB. The teaching degree is seen as being narrowly vocational rather than a broadly based undergraduate degree that equips people to do lots of things. It has a big focus on communication and interpersonal skills, and it should be challenging academically. That ought to make a person attractive beyond teaching and people who cannot get jobs in teaching ought to be able to get jobs elsewhere.

The other recommendation that the report makes is that the General Teaching Council for Scotland should have an element in its register that allows people to keep in touch with the teaching profession. The GTCS knows that there are people out there who have teaching qualifications but are not currently employed, and it knows how to get in touch with them and attract them back into the profession.

I am sorry; that was a long answer but this is a big and tricky subject.

10:15

**The Convener:** It was a helpful answer, too. I am sure that it will lead to lots of questions.

**Elizabeth Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Good morning, Mr Donaldson. You have done a first-class job in this report—not only in the way in which it has been presented, but in the way in which you have asked many of the very difficult questions that teachers have been circling around for a long time.

I want to pick up on a point that the convener has made. What struck me was the way in which teaching has to move forward at a fairly fast pace these days; the timescales are completely different from those of my teaching days, when things stayed more or less the same for long periods. That is now not the case at all; teachers have to move fast all the time.

You have spoken about attracting more people into teaching, and about ensuring that people who have gained a teaching qualification have other opportunities beyond teaching. How can we attract a more diverse range of people to the job? I think that schools need that; it would make them more ambitious when taking people on.

**Graham Donaldson:** In recent years, we have been fortunate in Scotland in that we have not had major supply questions in relation to teaching, but that has reinforced the situation of there being a relatively constrained set of entry routes into teaching—undergraduate, bachelor of education, or postgraduate diploma. Countries that have had more difficulty in recruiting teachers have created all sorts of different routes into teaching. In some cases, there is a bewildering range of routes; there are, for example, around 50 different routes into teaching in England. When I was down there, I asked what we could learn from those routes about ways that improve diversity but do not dilute quality. When there is pressure to get a body in front of a class, you might take all sorts of short cuts, if all else fails, to ensure that you get a body in front of the class. In Scotland, we have to be careful that we do not get pushed into that situation.

In the report, we make recommendations on trying to introduce additional routes into teaching that preserve the rigour and the academic integrity of what it means to become a teacher in Scotland. For people who want to come into the profession, but who are in mid-career or at other stages of their life, we want to provide opportunities that do not require enormous sacrifices. We have a little part-time provision just now, but that could be increased. The Open University could play a much bigger role in Scotland. Currently, it has an allocation of 15 places, not all of which are taken up. It has a bigger presence elsewhere in the United Kingdom and provides really high-quality support for people to study in the way that they choose and to come into teaching at different stages in their life.

The most controversial of the entry routes in England would be Teach First, which grew out of Teach For America. In various guises, it is now appearing in different countries. For example, there is Teach For Australia, and something

similar is being introduced in the Netherlands. There is a lot to be learned from Teach First in taking a fresh look at some of our built-in assumptions. For example, as part of the Teach First process, in the summer before embarking on the first year in teaching, there are six weeks of intensive preparation for teaching. During that time, there are links with universities, so there is an academic component. The graduates in Teach First have already been selected, through an assessment centre, both as being highly qualified and as having the skills that Teach First believes are necessary for teachers. It was not for me to say in the report that Teach First is automatically right for Scotland, but I saw enough of it to conclude that the GTCS here should be open to considering Teach First and its possible contribution to Scotland—while bearing in mind all the time that we must not lose the rigour of what we currently do.

We must not have a very short-term entry into teaching—it should not be a matter of getting somebody who can be with us for a couple of years and then leave. Our main methods whereby people come into teaching must build into the profession capacity that will last a lifetime.

**Elizabeth Smith:** You raise an interesting point. You are absolutely right: we must have rigour, and I strongly defend the GTC with regard to the process. It is absolutely right to have a professional body that oversees the profession.

That said, people in other professions retire early because of the nature of their jobs, including the police, the services and the voluntary sector. Teaching could benefit from some of their skills, not necessarily in the classroom but through the extracurricular dimension. I am not sure that we are always good at bringing such people in to help with schools, and I worry about why that is the case. Is it a registration issue, or is it simply because those people do not feel minded to come into the profession? There is a host of valuable skills out there—there are people who have huge amounts of experience in dealing with young people who would be valuable to the school system. Would you care to comment on that?

**Graham Donaldson:** In principle, I agree with that. Of those who are engaged in helping young people to learn, the core will remain the body of the teaching profession itself. However, increasingly, the process of learning is not simply the province of the school, in all its guises. Change was being discussed earlier, and much has taken place in the 40 or so years between 1970, when I entered the teaching profession, and now. There is a great contrast. I suspect that, 40 years from now, however, that contrast will look like steady state—I think that we are now in for a period of change in how children learn that is driven largely by technology. The access that young people now have to sources of learning means that the school is no longer the sole place within which formal learning takes place.

It was sometimes said to me when I was an inspector that the best indicator of a school could be deduced by going to the local newsagent's window and seeing how many tutors' adverts were up in the window. That would tell us whether or not parents were confident about what was happening inside the school. In a sense, those tutors are now in Delhi or Los Angeles, for instance. Children have access to very high-quality support for their learning that is not confined to the school or to the area where they live. Schools and teachers and how we think about education will change in response to that.

In the report, I discuss a 21st-century teaching profession that has to go way beyond the capacity simply to cut it in the classroom. We now need a different kind of person to operate in this context, as the 21st century advances.

**Elizabeth Smith:** I have a further question, which I hope is relatively simple. When it comes to improving outcomes, what—among all your 50 recommendations—should we emphasise?

**Graham Donaldson:** The key is how we test what matters: we should always test by asking what impact something will have on children's learning.

Education can sometimes become a prisoner of fashion—various things become flavour of the month, and we find them popping up all over the place. I have described that in the past as snake oil. Things are adopted and supported that frankly have no academic credibility. Sometimes they are masked in terms of developments in neuroscience, but a lot of it is complete nonsense. If you want to ask the hard question about such things, that means asking whether they make an impact on children's learning—it should not be to do with whether something looks interesting, whether we just think something is a nice idea or whether the person proposing it is a good salesman.

Above all else, when I speak about professional development, hard questions should continue to be put. Time is precious, so we should ask whether use of time in the way that is proposed will make a difference to and have an impact on children's learning? It is crucial that we constantly ask that question of all that we do. You would expect me to say that, as an inspector.

**Elizabeth Smith:** Indeed.

**Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP):** I note your emphasis on literacy among teachers. My colleague and I were comparing notes—I should

not laugh—on teachers we had who had literacy problems. Is there evidence to show that that is still a problem today? What is the level of teachers' problems with literacy?

**Graham Donaldson:** That is extremely hard to quantify. My recommendation would give us the evidence. We would have a much better handle on the problem if we had better assessments of that end of the process.

In the course of the review, a highly consistent set of concerns was expressed. Headteachers, employers and evidence from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education all raised issues to do with the level of literacy in the profession in relation to the level of demand that the curriculum for excellence requires of teachers. If all teachers are to be teachers of literacy and numeracy, which is what the curriculum for excellence says, they must themselves all have high standards of literacy and numeracy.

I simply could not ignore the evidence that I received during the review, but I cannot give you a number. I cannot say that 20 per cent or 30 per cent of teachers have literacy problems because we do not have hard evidence. However, I was sufficiently convinced by what was said to me across the review from so many different sources that we need to address the issue.

If, in a few years, we find that the assessments that take place suggest that the problem is minimal, that will be great; I will be delighted if that is the case—we will have contributed to ensuring that all young people have teachers who have high standards of literacy and numeracy.

**Alasdair Allan:** Did a picture emerge of intervention where there are problems? If there are problems with literacy, is something happening to address them? I know that you would like more to happen. Is intervention the norm?

**Graham Donaldson:** No, intervention is not the norm; it is variable. I asked that question of staff in universities. Some said that they regarded it as being important and that they would deal with it when they had concerns. Others said that it is difficult to do and that they do not really engage in it. We get into issues of the relationship between formal literacy and dialect, which causes people to worry about what it is legitimate for them to comment on in somebody's formal literacy.

An interesting piece of work on numeracy was done at the University of Dundee. The university developed its own diagnostic assessments on numeracy for students on the course. Students sat the assessment, which let them know where they had areas for concern. That work produced some results that seem to be counterintuitive in that there was not a one-to-one relationship between the level of qualification in mathematics and numeracy. Students could have a good higher maths qualification and still struggle with bits of basic numeracy. If you think about that, it is not surprising, because if somebody is very competent in mathematics, they move on to tracks that consider maths much more conceptually, rather than using basic number skills, so they lose some of that competence.

The university gave the student the responsibility, with support, of addressing the areas that had been identified as weaknesses. That approach seems to be a constructive way of addressing the issue and a promising way forward. The approach that I recommend in the report takes broadly those lines.

**Graeme Logan (Review of Teacher Education in Scotland):** I echo that. The diagnostic approach seems to be the effective way forward. In some other countries that have literacy and numeracy tests, it is a case of passing or failing. In the report, we suggest that it is the individual's responsibility to be aware of their levels of literacy and numeracy and to access support to boost them. Throughout individual teachers' career-long learning, they need also continually to refresh core aspects of their competence, which include literacy and numeracy.

10:30

We need to debate the threshold. We expect our teachers to have a higher level of literacy and numeracy than the general population, so that they can continually model the highest possible standards of literacy and numeracy to address a fairly persistent issue in Scotland that we need to work to improve.

Secondary teachers have not been used to a core part of their job being to promote, model and apply literacy and numeracy skills in their subjects. It is important not only that literacy and numeracy are integral to initial teacher education, but that teachers have a career-long responsibility continually to refresh their skills and to model and promote those skills among young people.

**Alasdair Allan:** I am thinking primarily of English teachers and primary teachers for my next point. I understand that, in most countries around Europe, a teacher is defined as being literate if they have some knowledge of their country's literature. When I was a member of the Government's Scots language working group, what seemed to emerge—I concede that the information was anecdotal—is that many teachers lack confidence in teaching Scotland's literature. Particularly for English teachers and primary teachers, should literacy in the future mean some willingness or ability to teach Scotland's literature?

**Graham Donaldson:** As Graeme Logan said, what we define as being relevant to literacy in a teacher needs to be discussed. I did not attempt to deal with that in the report, but if we are to establish a threshold, we must debate that. Many views will be held about what makes up that threshold, but it is important that we address the question, to which we have not given sufficient attention in the past.

**Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** I am a bit shocked to hear that we expect teachers to be above average for literacy and numeracy; I expect them to be well above average, although that is not always the case. I also expect teachers to be enthusiastic about their subject. When I was 11, my alleged history teacher belted me for correcting him on the date of the fall of Carthage—which was 146 BC, incidentally.

Children go through school only once and a good educational experience is fundamental. What happens at the chalkface is key to attainment. How should the GTC and schools deal with teachers who are highly literate, numerate and qualified, but are simply incapable of delivering in the classroom? Some of those teachers have been teaching for 10 or 20 years or more. They might have poor discipline, a lack of animation, an inability to inspire or a basic inability to convey information as they should. As we all know—although perhaps it is not said openly—some such teachers have traditionally been promoted out of the classroom. When I was at school, we used to say that bad teachers taught teachers. Alternatively, such teachers are given a glowing reference to go to another school.

How do we improve such teachers' effectiveness? Graham Donaldson said that the chalkface is not everything, but in my view, it is absolutely basic. If we are to improve and enhance children's experience and allow them to reach their full potential and maximum attainment levels, we must not have people in classrooms for years and years who, although they have been given so-called support, ultimately cannot deliver.

**Graham Donaldson:** Your questions have two aspects—one is relevant to the remit that I was given and the other is not. I have views on that other issue, but it is not part of the report; I was not asked to consider in the report how we deal with teachers who are insufficiently competent to deserve to stay in the classroom.

My thrust is partly that we need to put more responsibility on individual teachers to develop their competence in career-long learning. The notion that someone can leave university, attain the standard for full registration and progress very little in their learning for the next 40 years is unacceptable. As you say, all sorts of consequences can flow from that for children.

I believe that teaching ought to be a high-reliability profession. For example, we are not happy to say about air traffic controllers, "Well, most of them are fine and some of them are really very good—it's the odd one that's not much good. We get a few plane crashes, but that's just by the by." The children who fail because of bad teaching are our plane crashes.

There is a huge responsibility on the teaching profession and on each and every member of it to ensure that the quality of what our children receive is as high as possible. That is to do with professional standards, the way in which the collectivity of teachers enforces those standards in teaching in schools and the kind of support that is provided. Everybody ebbs and flows a bit in the course of their career. I think that what you are talking about is performance that has dropped below an acceptable level and which continues at that level across a career. Certainly, such issues must be dealt with. I say in the report that the profession itself must take more responsibility for quality, both individually and collectively, and that there must be more and higher-quality support and higher expectations to ensure that issues are addressed.

For example, the proposal in the report for a standard for active registration says quite clearly that as somebody progresses in their career, expectations of them should be different from when they qualified. The standard full registration will get somebody their ticket to enter the profession, but as they move forward there ought to be expectations about how they have grown and developed across their career. The General Teaching Council for Scotland ought to develop a standard that reflects that.

**Kenneth Gibson:** I think that my point follows on from your report. A lot of your report is about recommendations on literacy and numeracy, quality, training and so on, but surely the most important part of any teacher's training takes place when they are actually in the classroom, not when they are at university listening to lectures, doing essays and all that kind of stuff. Surely what is important is for somebody to be in front of children and finding whether they can control a class, impart knowledge, maintain an even temper and deal with children on the basis of equality rather than having favourites or children whom they ignore, or whatever. That is surely the key issue and absolutely fundamental to the training process.

I do not think that it is acceptable to say that teachers who have been in the classroom for donkey's years simply need support and so on, when there are so many young teachers out there

and teachers who want to come back to teaching after having a family or taking a career break. Surely we must be able to move the best teachers into the classroom and not have situations in which a teacher who has been teaching for 20 years has to have another teacher in the classroom continually to ensure that children—those who are going forward for highers, for example—get some education.

**Graham Donaldson:** You are setting up a straw man there. Obviously, somebody who is manifestly incompetent ought not to be teaching. I absolutely agree with that. We need to set standards and have expectations that mean that that is the case.

On initial teacher education, a number of recommendations in the report are intended to prevent the problem of incompetence from arising by trying to ensure through the selection and assessment processes that those who enter the profession have the interpersonal skills, the ability to communicate and the values that drive them to want to be a teacher.

I also suggest that in the course of initial teacher education the lead role in the assessment of how somebody conducts themselves during their school experience should pass to schools rather than to the universities. Again, that came through to me as a fairly consistent theme. Having different views in that regard is not a huge problem, but the issue is big enough and it creates a lot of difficulties when it arises. For example, schools sometimes say, "We were clear that that person shouldn't be passed," but then the trainee turns up again as a probationer. I recommend in the report that schools be given a much stronger say and, in fact, the lead role in determining whether somebody's performance in the school and inside the classroom is sufficiently strong that they should become a teacher.

**Christina McKelvie (Central Scotland) (SNP):** That leads on quite nicely to my question, because Kenny Gibson's question on the role of the teacher in leading their own learning is where I want to go.

You make a number of recommendations in the report about mentoring, continuous professional development and teachers having the same learning journey or pathway type of experience that we are always talking about for our kids. I note that you split the journey into "early", "accomplished" and "experienced". Can you expand on how you think that should work?

Earlier, you mentioned parity of esteem between teaching degrees and other degrees. How do you use CPD and accreditation to ensure that quality is built in so that we can achieve that parity of esteem?

**Graham Donaldson:** The General Teaching Council for Scotland has responsibility for accrediting courses in initial teacher education. Nobody has any insight into what happens thereafter. At the moment, we accredit intention rather than experience and reality. The report recommends that the process of accreditation ought to take account of the student's experience in university, where there is variability in terms of what they receive, and their experience in school, where there is also variability in terms of what they receive. At the moment, the quality of the experience that people get from the university that they go to, the tutor that they get, the school that they are sent to and the teacher that they get there can be variable. The recommendations in the report are designed to ensure more consistency of quality.

At the moment, the relationship between a university and a school or a local authority is broadly complementary. Stuff is done in the university and stuff is done in the school, and a university tutor will go out and do an assessment perhaps only a couple of times in the course of the year. That separation is part of the problem. There must be much more explicit joint responsibility between the schools that the students are in and the university so that there is a collective commitment to quality in terms of the experience that the student gets during their initial teacher education. Instead of that complementary relationship, there should be a move to a real partnership. Some schools feel that they are doing universities a favour by taking students—they think, "It is not our responsibility, but we will take one if we have to." However, there should be no greater privilege than taking a student. It is a characteristic of medical professionals that they see it as their responsibility to train the next generation of professionals. Every teacher should feel that, too.

It is important that we get better intelligence into the process. Some of that intelligence should be provided by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education doing slightly different things when it inspects schools. Inspectors ought to question the way in which the school supports students and staff. Such questioning takes place at the moment, but not as much as I would like it to, and support for students—unless it is a dedicated task—is rarely part of the work of the inspectorate.

The issue of quality is vital. The situation is uneven at the moment, and there are a lot of recommendations in the report that are intended to address that.

**Christina McKelvie:** The structure that we have for kids in schools at the moment involves learning communities. You are talking about extending that so that the teaching profession is included as part

of that learning community, right up to the university level.

The report talks about the idea of a virtual college, which involves the idea of flexible learning and people taking responsibility for their own learning, key to which are technological advances and so on. Can you tell us more about that?

**Graham Donaldson:** The trick is to get much better flow than exists at the moment. Really good things are happening here and there across Scotland—in the 32 authorities, the seven universities, the Open University and the UHI Millennium Institute—but we do not have good alignment; we do not learn terribly well.

The education quality improvement agency proposed by the Government is probably the right place in which to vest responsibility for that. We need to have much more explicit responsibility for learning from what is working best, and we need a learning community that is Scotland-wide as well as one that is community-wide.

We have not yet harnessed the technology but it gives us opportunities. The thing that surprised me most during the review was that we have not really begun to realise the potential of technology for teacher learning. There is huge potential to use technology much more productively. The youngsters are engaging in social networking, for goodness' sake, as are many teachers, but that should be seen as part of professional learning and not as something that is separate from it. Technology ought to be central to how we learn.

10:45

**Christina McKelvie:** It is quite an exciting world out there.

In your opening remarks you talked about all the good things that are going on in Scottish education and you asked why we do not have better outcomes. We have talked at length about how we can enrich the role of the teacher. Will we automatically get better outcomes for children if we enrich the role of the teacher? That might be quite a tough question. Should we expect that, if the role of the teacher is more enriched, the experience and the outcome for the child are better?

**Graham Donaldson:** That is a powerful hypothesis. As an inspector, I have to be careful and say that nothing is automatic. At the end of the day, what matters is how we do it. If we move in the direction that the report is taking us, we will increase expectations of the teaching profession, build up the profession and give individual teachers more responsibility. I hesitate to talk about a magic bullet, but if we compare what is happening in Scotland with what is happening internationally, that could be what completes the jigsaw of quality.

It is frustrating. In Scotland, much of what we are doing is regarded internationally as leading—people throughout the world look to Scotland. For a country of 5 million people we punch well above our weight internationally in terms of perceptions of what we do. However, people look at the PISA results and say, "With all of that you should be a lot better than you are." PISA measures only what it measures—it is not a total measurement of an education system, although it is a significant indicator. We should be doing better in such indicators. I believe that we can do better, and that part of that rests on our doing the things that are recommended in the report.

**Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD):** I thank you and your team for an excellent report.

I concur with Kenny Gibson's comments about how we deal with teachers who should not be in the classroom. One of the good things about the report is that you have focused not just on the people at that end of the spectrum and the people who are in teacher training but on the blob in the middle—the people who are just bumbling along. We discussed the issue at a recent conference. I am talking about the average teacher, who thinks that once they have had five years in the profession, they no longer have to think much about how they teach because they know what they are doing. How do we ensure that individual teachers in that part of the profession are getting the right kind of CPD, and how do we assess whether that CPD is producing the right outcomes?

**Graham Donaldson:** I will say a little bit, on which Graeme Logan might want to enlarge.

Much of the professional development that takes place is mass development: if we think that there is a general need for something, we give all teachers a dose of it, whatever it might be.

I sound as if I am decrying CPD—a lot of it is good stuff, but it is not finely tuned. The professional review and development process is patchy across the country from the point of view of whether it is a ritual that is gone through or whether it really makes a difference to teachers' learning. We need to make the PRD process much more credible than it is at the moment. I think that the standard for active registration will help with that, because it will provide a reference point for discussions about what the expectations are as regards PRD. At the moment, there is a great deal of variation. If the standard for full registration is used as part of PRD discussions—it is not used all that much—a lot of experienced teachers say, "Wait a minute, that is what students got. Is it really for me?"

Having a reference point in terms of standards is important, but what is critical as regards the discussion that takes place on PRD is impact, which takes me back to the point that I made earlier. When a teacher is having a discussion about their development needs, a critical part of that discussion should be about the things that they need to do, the ways in which that can be taken forward and what they will look at to see whether it has made a difference. The business of impact is about going into the process of learning thinking about what you are going to get from it, rather than going into it because CPD is flavour of the month or is a good thing, or whatever. At mass events, there is a tendency for some people to sit with their arms folded, waiting to be entertained. They do not go in with the attitude, "I need to learn from this process, no matter how good or bad it is." Their view is, "That wasn't very good, so it doesn't count."

The focus on impact should be part of all that we do in CPD. We need routinely to ask questions about quality. A lot of that is already in place. We want a PRD process that has more credibility and is more personalised. I come back to the business of the currency in teaching being time—that is the thing that is at a premium—so we ought constantly to be costing what we do and relating it to impact through the CPD process. Graeme Logan may want to enlarge on that.

**Graeme Logan:** Absolutely. I echo what Graham Donaldson said. We tend to evaluate CPD from the point of view of its provision rather than its impact, so a cultural change is needed. The professional review process—in other walks of life, it is known as an appraisal process—is a critical point of impact in ensuring that each teacher has the right balance of individual school-level and system-level priorities on which to focus. Some of the evidence that came to us suggested that there is too much emphasis on the school as the unit and not enough on each individual. We need to ensure that the blend of priorities is the right one, because nearly half the teachers who responded to our survey felt that the PRD process was not effective at present.

Margaret Smith asked about the quality of CPD. One of Graham Donaldson's recommendations is that a greater range of CPD should be accredited. That was a recommendation of the McCrone inquiry, but very little progress has been made on it. Of the teachers who responded to our survey, 39 per cent said that they would engage in a greater range of CPD if it were accredited. That is part of the model that Graham has recommended, which is about working towards a masters-level profession. That will involve opening a masters account for each newly qualified teacher in Scotland, who will already have some credits from initial teacher education. Through engaging in CPD, they will be able to get accreditation for what they do and build that up, which will lead to a masters-level qualification.

Having a CPD accreditation process will also increase the rigour and people's expectations of CPD because, for it to be accredited, it will have to meet certain criteria as regards having an impact, which Graham has talked about, being inquiry based and leading to sustained improvements.

Again, we found that teachers were able to talk about the impact of CPD in the short term, but what we really need to do is to look at the impact of teacher CPD on young people's progress and achievements in the medium and longer terms. The report contains a suite of recommendations that would increase the rigour and quality of CPD through accreditation, which will also help us to move towards the masters-level profession—there is lots of international research on the impact of that—while also ensuring that each individual has the right blend of priorities for themselves, their school and the system. Many of the teachers we spoke to did not see that what they do in the classroom from day to day actually achieves national priorities and translates Government-level initiatives into practice. It is aligning and connecting those different elements that will help us to move forward.

**Graham Donaldson:** I will make a further point that relates to an important comment that Margaret Smith made. There is a danger that the debate in Scotland focuses too much on the assumption that a chunk of what is happening in the profession or in schools more generally is of low quality and is unacceptable. In my experience, that is not our problem in Scotland. Our problem is exactly what Margaret Smith talked about. It is about how we take the groups of people who are, by and large, doing okay—they are not causing mayhem or damage, and in many cases they are doing quite a good job—raise aspirations and expectations and improve them. That is how we change education systems. The small number of more extreme examples of underperformance are relatively easy to deal with. That is not the problem. The problem is how we raise aspirations and move the broad mass of schools and teachers forward.

**Margaret Smith:** I agree that, as long as there is the will to deal with that small group of teachers, they are relatively easy to deal with, and they ought to be dealt with.

**Graham Donaldson:** They can have a disproportionate effect.

**Margaret Smith:** The big issue is the much greater number, whom we might call average teachers.

You asked how we raise expectations and aspirations in the teaching profession. I would have thought that one thing that will flow from a teaching profession that has raised expectations and aspirations is that teachers will see themselves as leaders. One of the other aspects of the report is that it looks at the question of leadership. When we mention leadership, most people immediately think of people who want to be headteachers, but there is actually a greater breadth to leadership. People can be a leader in their own classroom, in mentoring others, in a peer group, or through professional development and so on. Will you expand on what you found on the state of leadership in our schools and among teachers?

**Graham Donaldson:** I know from my previous job that, in general, for those who are in formal leadership positions, we have an improving picture in Scotland. We have some very fine headteachers leading schools in Scotland, but, as you say, the concept of leadership has to be rather more broadly based.

In a sense, leadership is an attitude and not a role. The formal role is important, and it is important that we have the right people in those roles, but the report argues strongly that we should build leaders from the moment somebody enters a university and initial teacher education. It is the way in which they think about themselves and their job, the way in which we prepare them and the challenges that we put in front of them right from the start of their career that build leadership into the system.

We have talked about the nature of what happens in initial teacher education, the nature of the relationship between theory and practice and the importance of considering the reality of the classroom but also being able to see beyond that, to see where things might be going, and being ready for that. If that is someone's mindset, they are already in a leadership mindset, because leadership is about how we move forward. It is about change and about building capacity. If we have a profession that is itself working collectively, teachers will be helping to build the capacity of the person in the classroom next door as well. They will be part of a collegiate approach.

11:00

On CPD, one of the useful by-products of a time of financial stringency is that people start to think about how we can do things better without throwing resources at them. We have seen a significant move in Scotland towards what the inspectorate has called learning together, which is an approach that it has been recommending for a number of years.

Some of the best CPD takes place when teachers are working in learning communities, working in teams, working locally, working with one another and learning through an active rather than a passive process. There is a lot more of that happening now than was the case in the past. We have to be careful that that does not become too inward looking—we are all prisoners of our own experience—so we need to put a stimulus into the group of people who happen to be together to broaden their horizons. However, fundamentally, people working together, reinforcing one another and pursuing something that makes a difference to them is the best kind of CPD.

I sometimes say that we should talk not about good practice but about good problems, because good practice is what arose from somebody solving a problem for themselves. It is how they solved the problem that matters—it is not about saying, "I'll do the same as them." It is the process by which one arrives at good practice that really matters.

**Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab):** I add my congratulations to those of my colleagues on producing the report. One of the most encouraging things is that it seems to have united the parties, which is very important as we come up to an election.

**Graham Donaldson:** I am delighted about that.

**Ken Macintosh:** Absolutely—and relieved.

However, some background issues—well, they are not background issues but current issues—need to be addressed. There is a big focus in the report on the quality and professionalism of teachers, but a number of moves are under way to unpick McCrone, particularly perhaps to end chartered teacher status, to reduce or downgrade CPD and to remove class contact time. What do you make of that?

**Graham Donaldson:** It is legitimate, in the current financial environment, for hard questions to be asked about what we currently do. We need to ask again whether the provisions in McCrone are still the best way to use the resource that is available. It would be wrong for us to say that something that was produced in 2000, or whenever it was, is automatically the right solution for now. The notion of examining McCrone, which I think is the current proposal, makes sense.

The McCrone report was entitled "A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century" and a lot of my review is about 21st century professionalism, so a lot of what McCrone tried to achieve in the original report is very much what I have tried to take forward in this report. The teachers agreement is not an exact match with the McCrone report, because a lot of negotiation took place between one and the other, so a lot of questions can be

asked in the review about the nature of what we currently do and how well it fits current circumstances.

On chartered teachers, if we move towards a masters-level profession, in which case we improve the routes by which people can develop masters degrees, we will have to ask what the relationship is between somebody who got a masters through the route that I am suggesting and somebody who got one by pursuing the chartered teacher route. That leads us to ask questions about what it is that is special about chartered teachers. The original concept in the McCrone report was that the chartered teacher would be the person whom a school would look to when times were tough. When it comes to the difficult things in a school, the chartered teacher ought to be the person whom you can rely on, whom other staff look up to as a leader of learning in the school and who has particular expertise. Not all chartered teachers have that; some do, but not all have it.

It is legitimate to think about whether everything in the original McCrone report and the teachers agreement that followed from it is right for the current times.

**Ken Macintosh:** The concern is that the driver behind the current review of McCrone is not to review its effectiveness but to save money. The focus is therefore not on the quality and professionalism of teachers and improving standards but on saving money.

Another example is the move in Renfrewshire Council to replace teachers with session workers, which is also being looked at by other councils in Scotland. Again, that does not seem to be a step in the direction that you outline in the report.

**Graham Donaldson:** Again, you are extrapolating from where we are and taking us into territory that is not covered by the report. To go back to an earlier point, we need to think broadly about the ways in which children's learning can be supported. The argument in the report is that the core of that should always be a highly qualified and committed teaching profession. However, we must be careful that that does not lead to restrictive practice, with the result that someone who does not have GTC registration cannot be engaged in children's learning.

The world that we are moving into is going to be much more fluid and flexible than has been the case during my career as a teacher. We have to be open to thinking of different ways to support children's learning. As the report argues, the core of that should be even better qualified teachers than we have just now.

**Ken Macintosh:** I agree that I am moving into territory that is slightly beyond the review, but if we want the review to have influence, it requires political actions and decisions. I am suggesting that there is no point in us agreeing the report if all the decisions that we take in public life work counter to it. Some of the decisions that local authorities are taking are very worrying indeed.

In answering the convener's earlier questions about matching demand and supply, you came up with a number of recommendations on increasing the flexibility of the teaching workforce. Those were sensible recommendations, because you are looking at teachers, but the employers also have a responsibility to provide stability. It could be argued that the problem with an oversupply of teachers is that it is not the teachers' problem; it is a problem with local authorities cutting money. I accept that your report does not look at that, but it is worrying. There is no point in us agreeing your report if we do not follow it through and we take decisions that run counter to it.

I have one other area to raise. You have not mentioned nursery education. The number of nursery teachers in Scotland is in decline. Nursery education used to be seen as a specialised profession within teaching. Within nursery education, there is acute concern that in some authorities there are no longer nursery headteachers, so the idea of a separate, specialist profession of nursery education is seen to be being denuded or undermined in some way. Did you look at that issue? Are you worried about it? Should we address that issue through initial teacher education by encouraging people to specialise at that stage?

**Graham Donaldson:** My remit covered primary and secondary education. Pressure was put on me by those in the early and further education sectors to go beyond that remit, but I had to confine it.

Given what we know about the critical importance of the early years of life to life chances and how youngsters develop, we must think carefully about the nature of the experience that we provide for young people and the nature of the people who should be engaged in the process. That was not part of my review—there might be a case for another review—but there is a need to think about the qualities and capacities of the people who are engaged in that vital sector.

In Scotland, of all places, we know about the impact of deprivation from the work of Harry Burns and others. We have a clear policy direction that emphasises intervention in the early years of life. I can do nothing more than say that we need to redouble our efforts on that, because it is critical. However, it is not germane to what I was asked to consider.

**Ken Macintosh:** Another issue is the content of teacher training, if I can put it that way, and the division of course time in particular. We have mentioned literacy and numeracy, but public concern has been expressed about science and modern languages.

To take modern languages as an example, there is a lot of concern that many teachers who are entering the profession do not have enough competence or confidence in their ability in modern languages, despite the fact that modern languages will be a core element in the curriculum for excellence. You have suggested that we could address that in teacher training by

"reducing or rephasing expectations of how much will be covered and when, increasing the available time ... expecting more of students themselves"

or

"a combination of all three."

How should the argument about how much time should be devoted to each part of the course content be taken forward? Should the standard of initial teacher education be revised? Is that how we should revisit or resolve the issue?

**Graham Donaldson:** It is about how we interpret the standard—that is what is leading to the issues just now. There is a quart-into-a-pint-pot problem; there is no question about that. It is very difficult to match the amount that we expect to cover in preparing someone to be a generalist primary teacher who can range across the curriculum with the depth of understanding of what they are teaching in the time that is available. That is partly why we say in the report that we must think about training not just as something that happens in a one-year postgraduate diploma or in a four-year initial teacher education undergraduate degree. We have to extend it beyond that.

We can conceptualise the postgraduate diploma as the point at which the issue is at its most stark. Someone who enters primary teaching has done 36 weeks of the postgraduate diploma: 18 weeks in school and 18 weeks in a university. Instead of thinking about that simply as 36 weeks, we must take the point at which someone applies and is accepted for an initial teacher education course—in the summer before they start—and the point at which they go through the probation period and achieve the standard of full registration, and think about that as the total amount of time. We must conceptualise it in that way rather than viewing it as different chunks, some of which will be dead time, and think about development across that period of time and what happens thereafter. In that way, we will get a much more coherent set of expectations, and begin to provide ways for people to learn through supported self-study and better use of down time.

I have had some students say to me—Graeme Logan will remember this—that when they teach in school they are exhausted, and they go back to university for a rest. We need to be exhausted all the time. [*Laughter*.] No—we need to get much more even demand in terms of what is expected. A lot of what happens in the school experience just now is over the top. A lot of stuff that is associated with assessment is putting too great a demand on students to do paperwork of one kind or another, which is not productive. At the same time, we are not using university time as well as we should, and we are not clear enough about what really matters in terms of core subjects.

The move towards concurrent degrees will, in time, make a difference. If someone does modern languages as a substantial part of their undergraduate degree while they are preparing to be a teacher, the school that they are in will have a real asset—a teacher who has significant competence in a modern foreign language and more general competence in teaching.

We could make better use of what is currently available, for example by using all the time that is available and minimising down time, and thinking about career-long development so that it does not stop at the point at which someone achieves the standard full registration. We also need to provide better 24/7 resources, so that there is more opportunity for individual students to work with resources—and a greater expectation that they will do so—outwith the more structured time that they spend in front of tutors or writing essays. We can learn a lot from the OU in that regard.

I thought seriously about whether we should lengthen the postgraduate diploma—some think that we should. My judgment was that, given the current financial pressures on individuals, we would lose a lot of graduates who would not go into a two-year rather than a one-year experience. My view was that we should use the things that we suggest in the review to try to address this quart-into-a-pint-pot problem.

There may also be implications—although this was not part of the review—for what we think about what happens in a primary school, given that the level 2 experiences and outcomes in the curriculum for excellence are in many regards more demanding than is currently the case with the five-to-14 curriculum. What we expect to happen in primary education by the end of primary 7 in areas such as modern foreign languages and science is more demanding. That may have implications for the way in which we organise primary schools.

To go back to an earlier question, the kind of skills that are required in the early years of primary education may not be the same as the skills that are required in the later years of primary

education. There are bigger questions about how we think about primary education, which relate to the issue that you raise, but we can do a lot more within what we currently have, and that is what the report recommends.

11:15

**Graeme Logan:** I echo that. Those in the profession raised with us the need for more opportunities for subject-specific CPD. A lot of the CPD that is on offer is generic. We need to ensure that teachers in all sectors have more opportunities to refresh and develop their knowledge of disciplines and subjects. Some of them talked about the concept that has become acceptable in some cases of just-in-time teacher learning—in other words, the teacher being a page ahead of the children. We need to ensure that our teachers have not only the opportunity to develop their awareness of pedagogy—teaching skills—in general, but high-quality opportunities to develop subject-specific content knowledge.

In the report, we signal a wider role for universities, not just staff in teacher education faculties. Subject specialists across universities have a huge potential to help our teachers to boost and continually refresh their subject content knowledge. We know the speed at which scientific knowledge, for example, develops. So, as well as the package of measures that Graham Donaldson mentioned, a greater opportunity for subject-specific CPD is a core recommendation of the review.

**Ken Macintosh:** I have a final question on the subject. My false expectation was that you would look a bit more at the competency of all teachers to teach across specialisms, such as modern languages. A few years ago, there was a move to teach modern languages from a far earlier age and stage. My perception is that, although children now have access to modern languages at an early age, there is little progression. The children are exposed to modern languages at nursery, if they are lucky, or early in primary school, but they then get the same teaching in primaries 5, 6 and 7—they are repeating, not progressing.

That is partly because of the limit of the teacher's ability, but it is partly to do with the teacher's confidence. If the teacher does not have a master's degree in languages, they rely on CPD that is delivered through the modern languages in the primary school course. That course is run by local authorities and is cut at times of economic constraint. Also, visiting language students from abroad are not very expensive, but they are the first thing to go when times are tough.

You have not focused on the issue at all in your report. Do we need a separate study of it? How can we get to the bottom of whether, in relation to subjects such as modern languages and possibly science, we have got it right across primary schools? It is all very well saying that CPD is encouraged, but if the structures are dependent on funding that local authorities do not have, it is wishful thinking. We can all agree on it, but it is not going to happen. It is almost deluding ourselves and misleading teachers and parents to suggest that it is going to happen. Do we need something very specific on individual issues such as modern languages?

**Graham Donaldson:** Yes. You will understand that, in the context of the review, the profession raised a number of areas—individual interests and all sorts of things—that it believed I ought to pursue in terms of why things are not happening, as they perceive it, in the current situation.

There is a recommendation in the review that refers to modern languages. Where we are committed nationally to a policy, there is a need to stand back, look directly at the professional development implications of that policy and follow through on them. It is not a wing-and-a-prayer approach to whether things happen. Modern languages are at the core of the curriculum for excellence, and the level 2 outcomes will require significant progression across primary education, so we must ensure that we provide the kind of support that is required or we must modify the policy.

**The Convener:** That concludes our questions for you today. Thank you very much for your attendance. I suspend the committee briefly to allow Mr Donaldson and Mr Logan to leave.

11:20

*Meeting suspended.*

11:21

*On resuming—*

## European Union Legislative Proposals (Reporter)

**The Convener:** I reconvene the meeting. The second item on our agenda is for the committee to agree to nominate a European Union reporter for the purposes of a six-week pilot that the European and External Relations Committee is running. I am sure that you will be delighted to hear that it will not involve any foreign travel, so whoever gets the job will not be travelling around Europe at the Parliament's expense. The purpose of the reporter will be to sift through any EU legislative proposals that fall within our remit on behalf of the committee and to refer any to the committee if they consider that they should be brought to members' attention. Further information on the pilot is set out in the paper provided by the clerks.

The European and External Relations Committee felt that this might be a role for the deputy conveners to take on. I understand that Kenneth Gibson has indicated that he is happy to be appointed. I am not sure how happy he is—

**Margaret Smith:** He is not in the room.

**The Convener:** Indeed, so we will do this quickly. Are members content to appoint Mr Gibson?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** He was not here, but he has been appointed.

**Kenneth Gibson:** Oh great, my fans have voted for me by acclaim. Thank you very much, convener. I am happy to do that.

**The Convener:** You are welcome, Mr Gibson. You will no doubt be weighed down by some paperwork from Europe to sift through over the next six weeks.

## Witness Expenses

11:24

**The Convener:** The next item of business is to delegate authority to me, as the convener, under rule 12.4.3, to arrange for the payment of expenses ahead of next week's round-table discussion on the future of schools management in Scotland. The expenses are for one of the academic witnesses, who lives in the south of England. Are members happy to agree to that?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** The committee will now move into private session.

11:24

*Meeting continued in private until 12:08.*

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