

EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE

Tuesday 17 September 2002
(*Afternoon*)

Session 1

£5.00

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body 2002.

Applications for reproduction should be made in writing to the Copyright Unit,
Her Majesty's Stationery Office, St Clements House, 2-16 Colegate, Norwich NR3 1BQ
Fax 01603 723000, which is administering the copyright on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate
Body.

Produced and published in Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body by The
Stationery Office Ltd.

Her Majesty's Stationery Office is independent of and separate from the company now
trading as The Stationery Office Ltd, which is responsible for printing and publishing
Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body publications.

CONTENTS

Tuesday 17 September 2002

	Col.
SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION	3669
Sports Grounds and Sporting Events (Designation) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2002 (SSI 2002/382)	3669
Education (Disability Strategies) (Scotland) Regulations 2002 (SSI 2002/391)	3669
PETITION	3672
Health Education (Guidelines) (PE427)	3672
PURPOSES OF EDUCATION INQUIRY	3673

EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE

23rd Meeting 2002, Session 1

CONVENER

*Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
*Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
*Irene McGugan (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP)

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

*Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Fiona McLeod (West of Scotland) (SNP)
Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO ATTENDED:

Keir Bloomer (Adviser)
Sally Brown (Adviser)
Lindsay Paterson (Adviser)

WITNESSES

Shirley Ferguson (Office of the Solicitor to the Scottish Executive)
Kevin Lowden (Scottish Council for Research in Education)
Anne Pirrie (Scottish Council for Research in Education)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Martin Verity

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Susan Duffy

ASSISTANT CLERK

Ian Cowan

LOCATION

Committee Room 3

Scottish Parliament

Education, Culture and Sport Committee

Tuesday 17 September 2002

(Afternoon)

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 14:19*]

The Convener (Karen Gillon): I ask everyone to ensure that their mobile telephones and pagers are switched off. We have received apologies from Mike Russell and Brian Monteith. Murdo Fraser has indicated that he is substituting for Brian Monteith.

Subordinate Legislation

The Convener: Item 1 is consideration of subordinate legislation. We are considering two instruments that are subject to the negative procedure.

Sports Grounds and Sporting Events (Designation) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2002 (SSI 2002/382)

The Convener: The purpose of this order is to add to the list of designated sports grounds the stadia that Gretna Football Club and Inverurie Loco Works Football Club use, with the effect that the carrying and consumption of alcohol at those grounds will become a criminal offence. Members can find full details in the Executive note that is attached to the order.

Members do not have any strong views to express or comments to make on this straightforward instrument. Jim Hislop is here from the Scottish Executive. He will hope that all his visits to the Education, Culture and Sport Committee are as simple as this one. Do members agree that we wish to make no recommendation to the Parliament?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Education (Disability Strategies) (Scotland) Regulations 2002 (SSI 2002/391)

The Convener: The Education (Disability Strategies) (Scotland) Regulations 2002 (SSI 2002/391) might not be so straightforward. Members have the report from the Subordinate Legislation Committee, which raises a number of issues. Wendy Wilkinson, from the Scottish Executive education department, and Shirley Ferguson, from the office of the solicitor to the

Scottish Executive, are with us to discuss the regulations.

Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): The Subordinate Legislation Committee made one or two technical points about the drafting of the regulations. One of those was to do with the starting point of the accessibility strategies and the fact that the regulations seem to be imprecise. We have had explanations from the Scottish Executive, but I would like the witnesses to go over the ground.

Shirley Ferguson (Office of the Solicitor to the Scottish Executive): Questions 1 and 2 that the Subordinate Legislation Committee asked were tied together. The wording that the Executive used was considered carefully and was chosen to reflect the policy intent, which was not to place an additional burden on the bodies that are responsible for preparing the accessibility strategies. The wording in the Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) (Scotland) Act 2002 allows for the strategies to be "over a period". That wording was chosen to allow the strategies to be linked with other strategies. It was felt that the interpretation was consistent with the policy, which dictated the words that were used.

Ian Jenkins: The point that was raised was a technicality. The Subordinate Legislation Committee said that the act indicated that the strategy should be for a "period prescribed by regulations", but the wording in the subsequent regulation was rather vague and specified "up to" three years. That is reasonable, but the committee wanted to draw to your attention the technical point about the drafting, which is not perfect, although it might be practical.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): The answer to the fourth question in the Subordinate Legislation Committee's report mentions that the Executive will lodge an amendment. What is the state of play on that?

Shirley Ferguson: The amendment has not yet been drafted, because we wanted to wait until the committee had considered the regulations to find out whether anything else emerged. That said, we accept that that part of the regulations was too wide and we will lodge an amendment as soon as possible.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): What do you mean by "as soon as possible" or "at an early opportunity"? We have been here before. It would be helpful if the Executive could indicate its intentions.

Shirley Ferguson: The act contains the requirement to consult on any regulations. As a result, we will need to consult education authorities, independent schools and other

organisations that we consulted before on the regulations. I hope that, because the point is not substantial, we will be able to shorten the consultation period and that I will be able to start drafting the amendment straight away.

The Convener: If members have no other points, I ask whether they are happy to allow the regulations to proceed, with the caveat that amendments will be made as soon as is practically possible. Are members agreed?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Petition

Health Education (Guidelines) (PE427)

The Convener: The second item on the agenda is our consideration of petition PE427. Members have received a further letter from the minister in relation to the petition. Are there any comments?

Jackie Baillie: I must confess that I am not exactly clear about what the minister is saying. [Laughter.] Murdo Fraser should not laugh. We clearly asked whether Learning and Teaching Scotland would review the health education guidelines and when any such review would be undertaken. Although the suggestion that the committee's views should be conveyed to Learning and Teaching Scotland is valuable, the main question is whether the minister will review the guidelines or ask Learning and Teaching Scotland to do so. Maybe it is just me, but I do not think that the response is particularly clear.

Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab): It is important to review the guidelines regularly. I wonder whether it is worth writing to Learning and Teaching Scotland to ask for its view on the matter and about the timetable for any review.

The Convener: Are members content with that approach?

Irene McGugan (North-East Scotland) (SNP): Perhaps we should also copy the letter to the minister.

The Convener: Okay.

Murdo Fraser: I am sure that other members have received a communication from the petitioners to the effect that they are not satisfied and that further clarity is needed. As a result, we need to go back to the minister.

The Convener: So we will write to the minister and to Learning and Teaching Scotland to ask about the review and any proposed timetable for it. Are members agreed?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: Before we move to the third item on the agenda, we will take a two-minute break to allow the advisers to come in and get organised.

14:29

Meeting suspended.

14:31

On resuming—

Purposes of Education Inquiry

The Convener: Item 3 on the agenda is our inquiry into the purposes of Scottish education, which we have been conducting for some time. During the past week, members have been reading through the substantial documents that we have received from our advisers and from the Scottish Council for Research in Education, which relate to the evidence that has been accumulated from civic Scotland and from focus groups.

Before we begin our discussion, I will ask the advisers and SCRE to give us an overview of their papers and to identify any major points that they wish us to investigate in detail. I invite Lindsay Paterson to take us through the advisers' paper.

Lindsay Paterson (Adviser): I will speak on behalf of the advisers. First, I offer apologies for the fourth adviser, Malcolm MacKenzie, who is unable to attend the committee meeting because he is involved in examining duties at the University of Glasgow today.

I will not go through our paper in detail, because members have been able to read it. I will highlight the structure of the paper, which will allow us to discuss it with the structure of the responses in mind.

The first couple of pages are a summary. We divided the summary into three sections. The summary lists the key points that we take from our analysis of the submissions.

The first section of the summary lists 13 points of consensus, which we have extracted from the massive amount of evidence that the committee has received and from selected parts of the evidence that has been submitted to the Scottish Executive's national debate on education. There is a great deal of consensus, including consensus on the need for some quite fundamental changes. There is a smaller amount of consensus on the strategy for change—on how to get from here to there. There are many points about fundamental changes, which we can debate this afternoon.

The second section lists seven issues that need attention. We felt that if the committee wanted to recommend that some of the proposed changes take place, difficult issues would have to be faced. We have listed those seven difficult issues.

The third section of the summary has the heading, "From Debate to Practice". In our capacity as advisers, we offer suggestions on just two aspects of the practicalities. Those two points are the only ones in the paper that reflect our

views, as opposed to a summary of other people's views.

The rest of the paper comprises an analysis of the submissions under the headings that were in the original discussion paper that the committee issued. Not everybody who submitted evidence felt that the framework was appropriate, but the majority did, so we felt that it was appropriate to use the headings.

Before I pass over to SCRE, I ask the committee whether it accepts that the 13 points of consensus that we have extracted are a reasonable set of principles for advancing and reforming Scottish education. If it accepts a substantial number of the points, how will it recommend that the issues needing attention be addressed? It seems to us that those issues are inescapable. My final question is: how do we progress with the practicalities?

I add a small point, drawn from evidence given to the national debate by a head teacher in Banffshire. She pointed out that debating the purposes of education is not only a national issue, but a local one. In her summing up of the evidence from parents, pupils and teachers in her school, she said that even if the national debate did not take up what she and her colleagues had submitted, the process had been extremely valuable nevertheless in focusing their minds on what their school was for and what their local community wanted their school to do. There are other levels in Scottish education that need to take on the responsibility of seeing that through, not only at a national level.

What we have summarised represents the biggest debate that there has ever been—certainly in the past 30 or 40 years—on the nature of Scottish education. The national debate has received more than 1,200 submissions. The committee has received a further couple of hundred submissions. By any reasonable estimate, some 20,000 to 25,000 people have been involved in preparing the submissions, through local consultations with parents, pupils and teachers of the kind I mentioned a minute ago. By any measure, this is a significant exercise in public participation.

Out of that comes my second point. People have taken the two exercises seriously: they care a great deal about education. They have put a great deal of thought and many hours into preparing their views, which are seriously thought through and eloquently expressed. As a result of that, people expect their views to be listened to. It is not easy to say how they should be listened to, but people firmly expect that their views will impinge on what happens.

In reforming Scottish education, it is important to

remember the diversity of the views among the almost 1,500 submissions and 25,000 people involved. Many people are not part of what are often thought of as the established interests of Scottish education. Although it is important to respect the established interests, because many of them would be involved in the implementation of any policy changes that might result, it is important not to be overawed by the vested interests of Scottish education.

Anne Pirrie (Scottish Council for Research in Education): Members have seen a copy of our report, so I will not attempt to summarise it. I draw members' attention to the fact that the data were gathered from a total of 77 individuals in 10 focus groups, representing some of the most marginalised and vulnerable groups in society.

We, too, have organised our findings according to the themes outlined in the initial discussion paper. The most salient finding was that, although people had agreed to meet us and engage in discussion with us, education was tangential to their main concerns. Educationists find that unpalatable. For a majority of the population, life is simply elsewhere. Their main concerns are dealing with the consequences of social degradation that they see around them and so on.

It was striking that, although many of the individuals we spoke to had had negative experiences of education, they still agreed to talk to us. More important, they still believed that education could deliver. They had an innate belief in the system and its capacity to deliver despite their negative experiences. However, they did not present a vision for practical change. It may have been a tall order to expect that.

Those who participated in the study regarded the key purpose of education as being to enable individuals to develop a sense of self-respect and self-esteem. It was striking that the system had signally failed in that task, especially with regard to those who were not academically oriented and whose family circumstances made continuous attendance at school difficult. One young woman told us from the heart that everyone should be given a chance to shine. I would like to finish on that note.

The Convener: Members have had the opportunity to read both papers. I would be interested to hear their views and initial thoughts on the key findings of the two studies.

Irene McGugan: If we needed any further justification for carrying out a radical review of education, some of the findings of the SCRE report provide that. In the report we hear from people who have a negative view of the system and who have been failed to some extent. The system has not given them the self-respect and

self-esteem that they need to survive in contemporary Scotland. Given those deficits, it is clear that there is a need for change and improvement, so that everyone who goes through the system emerges from it having had a much more positive experience.

Anne Pirrie seemed to imply that, despite their negative experience, the people who took part in the study were unable to articulate how the system could and should be changed. The views that they expressed were quite conservative. Will she say a little more about that?

Anne Pirrie: On the surface, the views of those surveyed were quite conservative. They referred to the negative consequences of indiscipline in schools, the importance of school uniforms and so on. However, underlying what they said was a more radical agenda for change, especially regarding the locus of education. The implication of their comments about self-esteem and self-respect was that people should be equipped to respond to change at other stages in their lives. In their paper, the advisers make the point that not everything should be packed into the compulsory education system. The survey provides a strong endorsement of lifelong learning. It is important that we maintain the disposition to learn, to respond to change and to escape from fatalism and negativity.

Kevin Lowden (Scottish Council for Research in Education): It is also important to bear in mind that people were speaking about principles. It is difficult for people to imagine how to change something as large as the education system. That debate is outside many people's frame of reference. The people who took part in the study talked about principles such as inclusion and—as Anne Pirrie mentioned—self-respect. The report is a plea for the education system to embody those principles.

Anne Pirrie: The report raises fundamental questions about what we value in our society. Do we value academic achievement or a wider contribution to the fabric of society, which can manifest itself in many different ways? There is a covert agenda that is more radical than it may appear from people's comments.

Jackie Baillie: The papers make it clear that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work, as it does not reflect the diversity of our children or their experiences in society. I am concerned that society and the system within which we operate tend to value only academic learning and that, as a consequence, we send all sorts of negative signals to children.

Given what you say in the paper, is your view that there should be a broad framework that is common to all, which allows children to find their

own level and which is built on a foundation of self-esteem and self-respect? Are you saying that, at some point, some children would go down an academic route, others would go down a much more creative route and the rest would go down a vocational route? I note that the second point in your list of points of consensus says:

"vocational training - in the sense of training pupils for specified employment - was not widely believed to have an important place in schools."

I would like to tease that out. The system neglects young people who do not have academic skills but who have practical skills. I am struck by the recent experience of Glasgow City Council, which is running a pilot project that allows those young people to use their skills in a vocational setting and gain a lot of self-respect and self-esteem. The pilot allows them to achieve something. Do such projects run against what you suggest in your paper?

14:45

The Convener: There are two different papers.

Jackie Baillie: I know. I am asking all the witnesses to respond. We have five experts—let us use them.

Lindsay Paterson: We are trying to reflect a consensus of views, and the point that we make about vocational training in schools is clearly the overwhelming consensus position. It includes the views of employers, who do not believe that the education system is particularly good at developing specific vocational skills, which are much better learned on the job. It was interesting to note that that was reflected in the responses and in the SCRE research—however, I will leave that to the side.

My personal answer to Jackie Baillie's question is that the situation depends on children's age. At some point, some people choose to go to university or into academic work. Others choose at an earlier age to go down a more vocational route, through further education colleges. Everyone would accept that, by and large, it is perfectly reasonable for people to have made those choices by a certain age—say 16 or 18. The question is whether it would close people's options in life inappropriately if secondary school children were to start making those choices at a younger age.

There is an age at which people are too young to be separated into academic and vocational tracks. How can we make sure that the choice is made at the right age? Historically, the age at which those choices are made has risen. If we had held this debate in the early 1960s, we would have said that, from the age of 12, 70 to 80 per cent of people would be better suited to the mainly vocational track. No one would accept that

nowadays, but where should we set that starting point at the beginning of the 21st century?

Keir Bloomer (Adviser): I am not sure that what I want to say is a direct answer to Jackie Baillie's question. My preliminary point is that the responses that we have received—similar responses have probably been submitted in response to the Executive's debate—move forward the terms of the discussion on Scottish education in at least a couple of significant ways. The respondents have moved us away from a fairly arid discussion about whether Scottish education is failing. They tell us that, although Scottish education has a lot of strengths, the world is changing and Scottish education must change with it. In other words, Scottish education should change not because it is failing but because circumstances are changing. That is an important point. The respondents also tell us that while that change may have to be radical, unfortunately they do not know what form it should take.

There is a second big shift in the terms of the debate. People recognise not only that there is a need for change—which may have to be significant—but that a gap still needs to be filled, which relates to the practical steps that such change might involve. For me, that means that there is a desire for a much broader approach to education that cultivates not only the academic side but many other aspects of people's development.

That may translate into a range of different kinds of educational experience, especially in the years of adolescence. We must recognise that much of the academic education that we have traditionally provided is, in its way, vocational education. It just happens to be education for a relatively narrow range of vocations. We should not exclude the possibility of broadening that education into other fields. However, if we were to do that, we would have to be careful—as Lindsay Paterson said—to ensure that we were not providing narrow, job-related training that would quickly be out of date, did not open up people's options and was not what employers were looking for.

Sally Brown (Adviser): There is a lot of unease about the way in which the examination system currently determines the whole of education. When we received evidence from young people from schools, they seemed aware not only of change, but of uncertainty in the world. It is important that we enable them to deal with uncertainty and insecurity and stop pretending that everything is as certain as our examination framework suggests. I was concerned that the adults who submitted evidence did not pick that up. Although they were concerned about change, they did not engage with the notion of uncertainty.

We need a system that enables us to deal better

with dissent. Many of the problems of modern life—not only in Scotland, but throughout the world—arise because people do not know how to deal with differing views on how things are or how things ought to be. It is important that we should be able to deal with that. Although many of the responses that we received were concerned with the idea of developing responsible citizens, they referred to a secure framework that identified all the beliefs that those citizens should have. The responses did not address the concern that one might have about dealing with situations in which there are different beliefs. If we can help young people to deal with dissent—their own and that of others—through our education system, we will have taken a massive step forward.

Cathy Peattie: Lindsay Paterson talked about people having the choice to go in one direction or another. I expect that many of the respondents to the SCRE report would say that they did not have a choice, but that they muddled along—successfully in some cases and not so successfully in others. We also know that 50 per cent of our young people are going into higher education. The issue is how we deal with those people who feel that they have not had a choice. People throughout the world are thinking about that issue.

In some areas, people have a fairly negative experience of education. They have the idea that, although it works for a lot of people, it does not work for them or prepare them for life. People often look back and think that they managed in spite of their education. We have an opportunity to get away from the five-to-16 block of education. Why do we expect people to be educated in such a short time? We all have to deal with change daily, but we are not prepared for that. The issue is how we can prepare young people for change.

There is consensus in the report on the issue of citizenship. Many in education are enthusiastic about citizenship, but if someone questions how a school or class is run, the answer is: “Citizenship for me, but not for you, because I know better.” We must question how we do things. If by citizenship we mean people feeling that they have a place in education or in the society in which they live, we need to consider what the respondents to the SCRE report felt about that. The issue poses a challenge, not just on citizenship, but in other areas.

I enjoyed reading the report and I am not surprised at some of the things that I read. However, where do we take it? A number of the issues are being discussed across the board, whether in the national debate or in the feedback from our inquiry. People have made statements such as, “Scottish education is fine, but we need to move it on. We need to consider lifelong

learning and what that means in communities. We need to move to a situation in which choice is available not only to a particular group of people.” How do we ensure that the wider community has access to education? How do we take education out of the five-to-16 block? I am concerned with the next stage. How do we develop the debate? I do not know. How do we engage the folk who were involved in the debate in our inquiry so that we can make progress?

Keir Bloomer: To expect that a widespread public consultation would yield answers was asking too much. I suggest that you decide that someone or some group examine the practical implications arising from the broad consensus—it really was a broad consensus—that emerged from the submissions that you received. In a range of areas, we can see things that require to be acted on. Respondents were critical of what they viewed as a narrowly academic focus and, as Sally Brown said, they did not like the excessive influence of external examinations.

Respondents were also disturbed by the subject-dominated nature of the secondary curriculum. We must acknowledge that that is not the only way of organising a curriculum, but we must also acknowledge that the notion that we could shift from content to skills, as a number of respondents suggested, is a misconception. Knowledge underpins skills. The relationship between knowledge and the capacity for thought and understanding is complex. However, that is the sort of idea that can be considered and curriculum models that fit it can be devised.

I will give another example. The responses showed a lot of enthusiasm for lifelong learning. Practically everyone seemed to have understood the fact that a once-and-for-all injection of education at the beginning of a person's life is insufficient. Not many respondents went on to explore the implications of that for what was needed at school. It has two major implications—one positive, one negative. The positive implication is that we require those who leave school not merely to be able to undertake further learning, but to be enthusiastic about doing so—the attitude must be addressed.

I have said that the other implication is negative but, in a sense, it is not. It is that, if we assume that people will return to learning in different ways and in different settings throughout their adult lives, we do not have to assume that everything that they will ever need must somehow be squeezed in by the time they reach 16. That might help us to address the problems of curriculum overload to which many people directed our attention.

Perfectly practical issues could emerge from those considerations. Those issues could be

explored and an agenda for change could be proposed on the basis of those explorations. I am sure that any of us could go through the list of consensus points and extract such issues. That is the next step.

Anne Pirrie: There is also an implication for the age at which people make choices. It relates to Jackie Baillie's point about one size not fitting all. Perhaps people are asked to make choices at ages when that is not appropriate for them. We should think more of stage rather than age. However, that has many resource implications for the system.

Cathy Peattie: But does it have resource implications? I know that it creates all sorts of dilemmas. If we are talking about an education system that is not simply an injection at a particular age, but that produces confident young people with good self-esteem and prepares them for change and for the world before them, other changes and a sense of responsibility for one's own learning must surely follow. Perhaps such an approach might not be more expensive. It cannot be any more expensive than—

15:00

Anne Pirrie: Sorry. My point is that, although an individual might be able to make choices early in their secondary school career, another individual might not be able to do so until they are older. The current system is not flexible enough to accommodate those individual differences.

Cathy Peattie: I am sure that you would agree that confident young people who leave school are more likely to consider other options, change careers or deal better with the challenges that face them than are young people who leave school at 15 or 16 convinced that they are absolute failures. In fact, the system makes them out to be failures because they have not achieved everything that they were meant to and will simply muddle along. How do we give young people that confidence and self-esteem?

Kevin Lowden: As Keir Bloomer pointed out, many of the focus groups raised the issue of curriculum overload. Any difficulty, whether personal or medical, may mean that young people cannot participate fully in education. Once young people—especially, for example, pupils with special needs—start struggling, the system cannot cope and does not help them to catch up. That issue was raised by vulnerable groups time and again. The participants in the focus groups had a lot of sympathy for teachers, because they realised that teachers were up against it and faced such difficulties. The problem has a lot to do with the structure of education and the fact that there is insufficient flexibility.

Lindsay Paterson: I want to pick out three elements for a practical way forward. The first, which is not on the agenda, is that there was no support for the concept of selective or academically segregated schools from any segment of respondents. I found that very interesting. I acknowledge Cathy Peattie's comments about perceived failings, but I think that people also firmly believe that schools are an important socialising influence and are the way in which we create the community of the future. In fact, some parents involved in the SCRE research felt that school was a much more effective way of doing that than allowing their children merely to rely on them as they struggle on their own with a large family around. In short, the school is a community in miniature where we build up the citizens of tomorrow and where the whole community is educated together.

The second point of agreement, which has already been mentioned, is the domination of exams and the feeling that there is far too much assessment. An unfortunate consequence of that is that the school day does not have enough room in which to allow young people to build up personal confidence and in which to produce creative individuals who learn to deal with problems by themselves instead of having solutions handed down to them.

Thirdly, the curriculum should be far less centrally prescribed. Although the socialising role of schools means that it is necessary for everyone to learn the same things, we do not really require them to learn as many things as they currently learn. That obviously relates to exams, but it also filters back down into primary schools. Many respondents commented on how today's primary teacher simply does not have enough room within the bureaucratic guidelines to do the creative things that primary teachers used to do and that most primary teachers want to be able to do but find themselves restricted in doing.

Murdo Fraser: As a substitute committee member, I have not been involved in many of the previous discussions on this subject. However, I have read the paper. As the committee will have had many discussions that I have not been party to, members should forgive me if I speak out of turn.

I just want to echo a comment by Cathy Peattie that I very much agree with. The SCRE report strongly demonstrates that what is wrong with Scottish education is that, although young people who are above average tend to come out of the current system very well, a group of young people is being failed by it.

From the summary of points of consensus, it is clear that there is agreement about the need for radical change. However, at various points it is

suggested that we do not want to go down one road or another. I have difficulty with some of the points that are made, such as the statement in point 8 that

"There was no support for specialist schools".

I do not dispute the finding, but I do not share the view expressed in the paper.

How do our witnesses see the agenda moving forward? What is the next stage in the process? If we are saying that the 13 points should form the bedrock for that next stage, there will be dissenting voices. If we are saying that they are a body of opinion that we will take into account as we explore options for moving forward, we may be able to preserve a consensus.

Sally Brown: We must take account of the points on which there is consensus and build on those where possible. However, we must say that other issues that do not form part of the consensus should also be considered. Others have said that, in an exercise of this sort, we could not expect people to present great ideas for moving forward. We must take something out of this exercise, out of the original paper and out of the responses to the themes. That should allow us to identify, at least provisionally, a framework for developments in education.

There will always be curriculum development. There will always be school development planning at national and local level. We can feed into that a new kind of vision. Originally we talked about having a practical vision for the future—although perhaps not for next Monday. If we can fill out that vision using the points of consensus and ideas that we and those who have submitted evidence to the committee have put forward, we can say what needs to be built into planning for the future.

People who develop new curricula will be held accountable according to whether they have built in the things that form part of the vision—a notion of change and uncertainty and the ability to engage with ideas using higher-level skills than were previously required—instead of seeing education purely as transmission. Many of the developments that have taken place have encouraged transmission teaching. People are told that there is a set of targets, which must be met, and that there is a particular way of achieving them—they need only plug it in. We must encourage young people to think more critically and generally, using what we tend to call higher-level skills.

However, those are not necessarily higher-level skills. Young people use such skills to think about many things, but in different contexts. They may use them for shoplifting or for development on the football field. We still have a hierarchy of subjects. We still see music and drama as almost—although

not quite—extra-curricular subjects. Through involvement in creative activities, young people can develop the self-esteem to which Cathy Peattie referred. However, they must have ways of doing that.

Anne Pirrie: Physical education is one such way.

The Convener: One of the issues that I am considering on behalf of the committee is that of sport in schools. In some specialist schools in England, sport is used across the curriculum as a method of learning. We have some specialist schools in Scotland, such as St Mary's Music School and Bellahouston Academy.

How can we use what the education establishment might regard as lower-skill subjects, such as PE, sport, physical activity and music and drama, to broaden people's educational experience and to engage them more effectively with the core skills of numeracy and literacy? We are perhaps not using those subjects to their full potential. Young guys could use the back pages of the paper to learn to read rather than the front pages. There are other obvious examples from the past, such as using the bookies' line as a method of learning to count. However, the education establishment would have frowned on that and viewed it as demeaning the purposes of education. I am interested in how you think we can make progress on those issues.

Lindsay Paterson: I have an example that comes from one of the submissions to the national debate. Penilee Secondary School in Glasgow used the debate as a learning device for foundation-level English students. The students spent a whole term discussing what education was for and what they wanted out of it and then articulated what they had found. Although the school predicted that the students would not gain particularly high academic achievements, they were perfectly able to engage with difficult ideas. There are ways of making that possible, but it was significant that a foundation-level class was engaging in that way. The class's teacher was probably under less academic pressure than was the teacher of its credit-level peers. That is really quite sad.

We should consider ways of bringing into the core curriculum activities that are not thought of as part of it, but which are, as Sally Brown said, thought of as optional extras. One of the incidental advantages of that is that it would give activities such as sport or music, which are not conventionally thought of as part of the core curriculum, a respectable status, because everyone would be learning them and students would no longer be seen as being shunted off into a ghetto if they were doing sport.

Keir Bloomer: Most of the young people who came to speak to the committee emphasised that point. The issue that emerged strongly from that meeting was that, although all the young people could point to memorable and transformational things that they had got out of school, not one of them referred to the formal curriculum—they referred to a range of other experiences. There is a strong suggestion that what we are rewarding most effectively is the capacity for deferred gratification.

People learn by becoming engaged. Although they become engaged by a wide range of experiences, they are not generally engaged by experiences with a strong structure that reflects the way in which people who already know things see them, rather than the way in which people who are coming to them for the first time see them. A lot emerges from the submissions about what, with our growing knowledge of how people learn, we can do in order to shape experiences that are more satisfying at the time and that are more likely to promote the kind of in-depth learning that will stay with people thereafter. A lot of the content of what is learned is quickly forgotten.

Sally Brown: Young people tend to refer to the formal curriculum with which they are engaged as working rather than learning. However, they refer to drama and sport as learning. It is interesting that the formal curriculum is seen as a set of tasks that have to be completed whereas activities in other areas are referred to as learning. When we talk about young people learning, we should not forget that they do not construe things in that way.

15:15

Jackie Baillie: I want to be practical for a moment. In my day, people went to school to learn a set of skills so that they could get a job. There is no doubt that the economy needs certain things from the education system, but that does not come through in the papers. Should this discussion take place at school level, or should it take place at FE and university level? Where does it fit in? We could easily end up with a generation of very creative people who are able to cope with change, but where will they receive grounding in the practical skills that they will need for specific areas of work?

My second question takes me back to an issue that I raised at the beginning of this process. The debate is about the people who slip through the net. You say that there is a welcome recognition that learning is a lifelong process, but the very people who would benefit most from lifelong learning will not be able to access it. Lifelong learning is not about equipping people with skills in school; a host of factors prevent people from learning. I want to step back into reality and say,

“This is very nice on paper, but it is not true in practice.” Is what you propose sufficient to stop so many people slipping through the net?

Once you have dealt with those issues, I will ask you another set of questions—if the convener indulges me.

The Convener: I will think about it.

You seem to have bamboozled the witnesses.

Jackie Baillie: I have not.

Kevin Lowden: The research—like much of the research that SCRE has done involving young people—reveals that a great deal is expected of schools. We need to be realistic. As Jackie Baillie says, many wider societal factors must be taken into account. However, it is important that we consider the role of schools and attempt to get out of the straitjacket of a compartmentalised curriculum. We should try to move to a more exciting and experimental curriculum that considers the needs of young people. I do not believe that there has to be a dichotomy between meeting the needs of society and the economy and meeting the needs of vulnerable young people. The social and economic costs to people of not participating in society are not to be underestimated.

Sally Brown: There is a dominant attitude in our society that makes for difficulties in this area: the notion that things are age related. That notion is not present in all societies. It is breaking down a little here, since the introduction of lifelong learning, but it is not breaking down in schools. The levels in the five-to-14 curriculum thump home the notion that at a certain age people should be able to do particular things.

People vary greatly in the age at which they are able to achieve things. However, except in very small primary schools, we do not countenance the idea of pupils working with other age groups. We could have made an enormous amount of difference in one case if we had been allowed to spend a year between primary and secondary school with a group of pupils who were not achieving and did not have high self-esteem. However, neither the teachers nor the parents were prepared to countenance that. We need to work on that attitude a great deal in future.

There is no easy answer to Jackie Baillie's questions. If, instead of having such an age-related system, we can give people the confidence to take more time to do things, that will be an important step forward.

The Convener: That relates back to the point that Anne Pirrie made about people making choices at different ages.

Sally Brown: It does.

The Convener: If children are not ready to make standard grade choices at the end of S2, why should they not do so at the end of S3? If they are sufficiently advanced, why should they not do so at the end of S1?

Anne Pirrie: We are dealing with a tiny percentage of people.

The Convener: Yes, but it is also a matter of changing people's attitudes and saying that someone is no less of a person for not making that choice at S2. That is where parents come into the equation. Parents expect their kids to do certain things and, for example, do not like it if their kids are not able to do what next door's kids are doing. I am a parent of young children myself. Although we should not compare our children with other children of the same age, it still happens. The question is how we change that attitude in parents who have been raised in a system that says that you have failed if you do not have X, Y or Z, if you cannot get a job and so on.

Keir Bloomer: I want to comment on Jackie Baillie's point about jobs and the economy. Almost no one in the study dissented from the idea that education plays an important role both in equipping people for working life and in contributing to the economy. That opinion took two forms. Before I expand on that, I should point out that the two ethnic minority groups that were involved in the SCRE research were different because educational standards in those groups were generally high. However, the other groups involved had not done well at school and took an extremely utilitarian view of education. They felt that school simply prepared them for employment and that it gave them some skills and qualifications to help them to get a job.

That said, even the people who made more general comments like, "Education ought to equip young people to face extremely difficult issues that the world will confront in the 21st century" were actually saying that school should do that among other things. In other words, they took it for granted that school had a role in equipping young people for working life. However, although I do not think that we should have included that in our points of consensus review, there was no doubt that it was a point of consensus.

In their submissions, the Confederation of British Industry and Universitas 21, which are representative of the two main end users of the qualifications system, said that they use the system because it is all they have. However, it is not really giving them the information that they need to make judgments. People need many other skills and personal qualities to be successful in life, particularly in working life. Incidentally, I think that we should also examine the sorts of supplementary information that we should offer end users.

Jackie Baillie also mentioned excluded groups. Motivation is crucial, especially in a society that is not especially authoritarian or which is not good at driving people to do what they do not wish to do. We must motivate people to learn, particularly in the context of lifelong learning, but we are not doing terribly well at exciting people or engaging their attention in that respect. That requires some practical work.

Finally, in response to a comment that Murdo Fraser made, I say that the summary of consensus points is neither a summary of our thoughts, nor a summary of what individuals think. Instead, it represents certain common ground that emerged from the research. As Sally Brown said when she replied to Murdo's question, the next stage of work will move from a summary of what people have told us that they want by and large—which we cannot ignore—towards a practical vision of the way forward, which is necessarily based on opinion rather than on summary.

The Convener: Before I indulge Ms Baillie, I will have Ian Jenkins.

Jackie Baillie: Aww. [*Laughter.*]

Ian Jenkins: You have put me off now.

Jackie Baillie: Who? Me?

Ian Jenkins: No, Jackie, you never put me off. Karen does, sometimes.

The Convener: Do not go there.

Ian Jenkins: Following on from what Keir Bloomer said, I am gratified that there is so much consensus. It is good that the universities are saying that they do not want to rely totally on an examination system that does what the present system does. Teachers worry about over-assessment and the overcrowded curriculum. The focus group says that there is a problem with the overcrowded curriculum and the lack of flexibility that the system allows. If we can draw all the views together and say that we are all sort of in agreement, it might be possible to overcome the innate conservatism of teaching.

Teachers say that there is innovation overload and that there should not be any more changes. However, if they thought that the changes would do good things for them and for pupils and that they would cut down overcrowding in the curriculum, we might consider including in the curriculum subjects that are not there at the moment—although that suggestion might be anathema to some.

I do not think that this is the end of the debate; it is a stage in the debate. We can say that there are points on which we generally agree, such as keeping PE in the core curriculum for primary schools. Although it is not clear how we should

proceed, let us see whether there are strands that we can work on so that we can deliver something that acknowledges the primary aims of primary education. There has to be a balance; bookishness is not superior to other abilities. The work has to stretch across the curriculum and it must involve the deliverers of education and those who are on the receiving end of it or, rather, who form part of it.

We have something that we can build on and if we do it properly we can take people with us. If we do not take people with us, we will be in difficulty. One of the submissions says that everybody acknowledges that changes have to be made. We have been talking about that for 30, if not 50 years, but no fundamental change ever seems to take place. We have an opportunity to build on what we have—not, as was said, on Monday, but soon—and to go somewhere.

Lindsay Paterson: Fundamental changes have taken place in the past 30 years. It is important to think about them before we think about how to proceed. For example, in the past 30 years the percentage of people who participate in higher education has increased from less than 10 per cent to 50 per cent. I doubt whether many people would target that as a bad thing, given that that would not be consistent with the principle of social inclusion, which is also a consensus point. We must think of ways of saying not that the efforts of the past 30 years have failed, but that one of the concomitants of expansion and new opportunities is that we have created new problems. For example, the excessively examined nature of secondary schooling is a consequence of the fact that nearly everybody stays on at school beyond the age of 16.

That is a step forward and our predecessors would have been delighted to know that 80-plus per cent of pupils would be staying on beyond the age of 16. Almost inevitably that has created a problem, because it means that virtually everybody is being assessed. We have just invented higher still to assess everybody, just as we invented standard grades to assess everybody, because we felt that the previous narrow O grades and highers were not allowing everybody's full potential to be assessed. By assessing everybody we have created a new problem.

The point is that all policy solutions to perceived dilemmas create new policy problems. I do not think that any policy creates a utopia. Perhaps we need to think beyond that, as Jackie Baillie said. Jackie Baillie asked what kind of practical steps we can take to ensure that the people who still slip through the net and who have not been embraced by the big expansion can continue to have opportunities.

A practical option is on the agenda. The Education, Culture and Sport Committee's sister committee, the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee, proposed in its interim report on lifelong learning—no one has yet seen the final report—the notion of an entitlement to learning beyond the age of 16 up to level 8 of the Scottish credit and qualifications framework. That is roughly the equivalent of the end of a higher national diploma. People could use the entitlement at any point in their lives in a variety of ways that educational institutions offer, such as modules, whole degrees or part courses. Such entitlement might cover academic learning, vocational learning or sport.

That sounds like a very creative idea that has considerable potential. It cannot, however, be implemented on Monday morning, because it has enormous resource implications. However, it is the kind of practical step that we can set up as a vision of how we should move forward in the next two decades.

The Convener: I refer the witnesses to point 5 of the SCRE report. On the top of page vii you state:

"These participants wanted teachers to treat them like people rather than as obstacles."

Could you expand on that? What was the thinking behind that point? How did the group aspire to be treated in the education system?

The report continues:

"Our findings suggest that minor adjustments of curricular content are unlikely to have a profound impact on the educational experiences and therefore, the self-confidence and motivation of the most alienated young people in our society."

What do we need to do?

15:30

Anne Pirrie: Another witness spoke about the effects of setting targets and about how anyone who hinders the class's progress towards achieving them is treated as an obstacle. The first passage that the convener cited relates to that.

What was the second question?

The Convener: You say that minor adjustments of the curriculum will not do anything for alienated young people. What do we need to do?

Anne Pirrie: The implication is that the problem of overcrowding in the curriculum needs to be addressed.

Kevin Lowden: The group of ex-offenders told us how they had struggled at primary school—at that point patterns were set. The structure of the curriculum was unable to cope with the children's difficulties, which were exacerbated at secondary

school. Because teachers were unable to deal with them, they were put to the back of the room—they were excluded in class. That built up their feelings of resentment and they fell further behind.

Anne Pirrie: The young people in that group were literally pushed to the back of the class. They described what happened in spatial terms.

Kevin Lowden: We were struck by the fact that there was not a great deal of water between the experiences of pupils who had recently left education and the experiences of others.

The Convener: I was pulled to the front, but for no better reason than that for which the young people to whom you refer were put to the back.

Jackie Baillie: I do not want to curtail the debate, but I am keen to talk about how we move on from here and the practicalities of what we do next. It strikes me that the 13 points of consensus provide us with a basis for broad agreement—taking into account Murdo Fraser's minority view. The 13 points set out fundamental principles that we can use as a starting point for constructing the kind of framework that people seek—a framework that charts the potential of a child's progression and the routes for that. We may also want to approach issues from the output end. What do the CBI and universities want? What do we need to do to equip children for life? What should be the balance between skills and knowledge, and between intellectual and practical skills? Those are obvious questions that we should seek to answer.

How do we build in, alongside the fundamentals that we agree should be included, flexibility that stretches across the curriculum, so that we do not have to pack in subjects as we do at the moment? It would be helpful for us to identify the key themes that have emerged, where they fit in and what follows on from them. Are we building on what already exists, or do we intend to start with a clean sheet?

Sally Brown: We can never start with a clean sheet. We have to start from where people are.

Jackie Baillie: Point 2 of the section of the analysis of responses headed "Issues Needing Attention" states:

"Most of the points in the consensus have been advocated in the past. However, despite the widespread feeling that the system is overburdened by innovation, it is widely believed that fundamental change does not take place."

If the change is to be fundamental, does that mean that we need to start with a clean sheet?

Sally Brown: I still say that you have to start from where people are. Even if the aim is to persuade people that we have to do things differently, you do that by getting them to reflect on

how things are at the moment. It is no good being a heroic innovator who comes in and says, "Do it my way." That has been tried a lot in education, not only in Scotland but all over the world, and that approach does not work.

We must take account of how people construe the world at the moment and find ways of persuading them to construe it differently. However, we cannot whip it in as a new model or take a new sheet and say, "Right, we'll all do it this way." There are all sorts of ways of persuading people, such as by using evidence or argument or resources. If we were to introduce many of the things that we have been talking about, the teaching work force would be nervous. Teachers might say, "I don't know how to do that." In some sense, a gradual approach is required. However, as the paper points out, gradual does not necessarily mean very long-term.

The necessary support system must be provided and that support system is not simply financial. I do not say that finance is not necessary, but much of the support that is needed to make things move along is not financial. You cannot have a completely new sheet—there can be a new practical vision for the future, but implementation will need to take account of where people start from.

Cathy Peattie: Let me build on what has been said. It strikes me that there are things that we can do. We are starting to look at a vision, but there is an issue about how we change hearts and minds, so that those who are involved in education reconsider how they do things.

We also need to examine the question of when education starts and when it ceases—although we challenge the idea that it should cease. We need to examine the management of S1 and S2. There have been some experiments in that area, such as middle schools. We should look at how those have worked. We should use a different way and find out whether giving youngsters the same teacher throughout that difficult time affects their confidence.

We also need to consider teacher training and how we prepare our young teachers. I do not think that we give them the best start. At the moment, a person who has an honours degree and who goes into teacher training is in the classroom within six weeks. My goodness, is that the best way to equip our teachers for the future? We need to look at all of that.

We also need to consider whether it is always necessary to have kids cooped up in the classroom. If kids are thrown to the back of the classroom or have opted out, we must find other ways for them.

From my experience of working with people who

had opted out of school at 14 or 15, but who were able to go on to take degree courses, I know that there are other things that work. Those people had been able to achieve a degree because of the community activists who were engaged in work-based learning. I know that that works, but if the teachers at the time that those young people were at school had been told that those young people would go off and do a degree in such and such a subject, the teachers would have said that that was absolute nonsense. Some kids are written off from day one. We need to consider how we can change such things. Perhaps the system needs to allow some kids to take a different approach. Some youngsters might never be completely happy in the classroom environment. We need to consider how we make that kind of change safe without making it look like a failure.

Lindsay Paterson: Let me make a couple of constructive remarks. I return to my point about curriculum and exam overload. The necessary, but not sufficient, condition for any such change is that we reduce the amount that we expect schools to do.

Incidentally, although I read that Universities Scotland says certain things about the quality of school leavers, I am not convinced that the universities do not also need reforming. The universities are guilty of overvaluing academic performance, so it is a bit rich for them to have said what they did.

However, we have the beginnings of a positive agenda that could be put into the space that would be created by reducing the burden of curriculum and assessment. One of those beginnings is Learning and Teaching Scotland's excellent proposals on citizenship education. Those proposals are the product of a consultation that took about two years from beginning to end. That just goes to show how long it takes to establish consensus on such a fundamental change.

Reading citizenship, in its fullest sense, goes way beyond civics, as it would be called in America; it is about self-respect, which everybody here wants, and about how to engage with the community while engaging with political issues. Some of the most articulate illustrations of that sort of programme came from a recent meeting that was attended by students from Alva and Stirling. Such programmes are slowly being developed in many schools, but teachers and head teachers feel that they are having to add them on at the edges. They do not have the space to make them mainstream activities, especially in secondary schools and among groups of students who are about to progress into the labour market or university.

That is not to say that everything has been done; a whole lot of things, for example to do with

personal skills and emotional intelligence, are not there yet. Nevertheless, there is a line of development that we could build on positively once we create the space for it.

Keir Bloomer: I would like to make a simple, practical suggestion: if the committee is prepared broadly to endorse the consensus, that is what we think we should try to achieve. I appreciate that not everybody is prepared to sign up to every item; as a matter of fact, we would probably not be either, although we are here to report, rather than anything else. If the committee is further prepared to address the issues that arise from that, which are outlined on the second page of the analysis of responses paper, what is needed is for a group of people to answer a question for the committee. That question is: what could we be doing—not this Monday, but two or three years from this Monday—that would be realistic and practical and that would represent a significant departure from the status quo in the direction of that future agenda?

The Convener: I take it that that should encompass a fairly broad spectrum of opinion.

Jackie Baillie: I suggest that the three advisers who have been immersed in the matter take it forward—with a clean sheet or otherwise.

Lindsay Paterson: A number of issues occur to me, not to mention the fact that the national debate is going on. This is a cross-party committee and if there is broad agreement on the principles, that strikes me—as a citizen—as being extremely encouraging, although that is a private matter.

Jackie Baillie: Thank you for sharing that with us.

Lindsay Paterson: It would be odd and probably ultimately unhelpful to the education system if there were disagreement between the committee and the Executive over fundamental principles. That is perhaps a controversial point, but it would be interesting to hear other people's point of view.

Three or four of us can come up with ideas—we all have our hobby-horses. We have, as far as possible, tried in the paper to suppress our preferences and to report what people have said. We are just three eccentric individuals—we would be four if Malcolm MacKenzie were here—and I am not sure whether that is the most persuasive way of proceeding. I would be perfectly happy to contribute to the process, although I cannot speak for my colleagues. I think that a wider group is required.

The age-old way of proceeding, when Scottish education was under the authority of the old Scottish Office, was to set up a working party. I am not suggesting something as boring as that, but

the principle of the working party—of drawing on a variety of strands of opinion from the points of view of both practice and theory—has quite a lot going for it.

The Convener: In moving the debate on, I am keen that we do not just get into the same old vested interests and saddled with the same old hobby-horses—and I am not on about the advisers. I can just about guess what such a group might come up with. It is a question of how we develop consensus and move forward while taking people with us. Vested interests might be involved, but we must also involve some of the more excluded groups. I am not sure how we would practically do that, but I think that that should be our approach. If the folk who have been excluded from the current system are not included in helping to shape and develop the new system, we will just have a lot of nice, good people thinking about how we will improve the system for other people. Instead of that, we need to find how to take people with us and help us to improve the system. I do not know how we will form the group.

Anne Pirrie: There will be scope for us to revisit some of the people from whom we took evidence in the course of our research. That would be one way of moving the process forward.

The Convener: I will bring the discussion to a conclusion. I do not sense that there is huge dissent from the general principles or from the basis for a framework for future development. Not everyone has signed up to every dot and comma, but there is consensus about the way forward. Am I right?

Members: Yes.

15:45

The Convener: We also need to consider how we will address the issues that require our attention. Jackie Baillie suggested that the advisers should do that. It may be that the advisers and the Scottish Council for Research in Education should work together to facilitate further discussion with a wider spectrum of people, if possible.

Sally Brown: Yes. That would be a good way forward, although it might be difficult to widen out the discussion in the first instance, because we could end up with the lowest common denominator. We need to have something to put before a wider group—something that it could react to. We might not be able to get that “something” unless we begin the process with a relatively compact group, which could act as a drafting group.

The Convener: You have talked yourselves into a job.

Lindsay Paterson: We will put together a short paper on the process. That might sound awfully academic, but we should put a short paper before the committee that suggests ways in which the committee can do what the convener has outlined.

The Convener: Could you liaise with SCRE? I would be interested to hear SCRE's view of how we can draw more alienated groups into the process. SCRE has worked with such groups.

Sally Brown: Absolutely—although it would be helpful if SCRE were kept independent and slightly detached from the process. We are the committee's advisers and, as such, we have a commitment to our proposals. If SCRE is to undertake some of the larger consultation work, it is important that it is independent of the process.

The Convener: Perhaps SCRE could also feed in some ideas from its experience. Are members happy with that suggestion?

Jackie Baillie: That is fine. I return to the point that Lindsay Paterson made earlier. He said that we did not want to have two education systems developing in parallel universes. I agree that that would not be helpful. I always understood that our process was also aimed at influencing the outcome of the Executive's national debate. I understood that we would suggest ways forward to the Executive, which it may choose to adopt in their entirety or not. At this stage, we need to keep an eye on the timetable for that additional work. We do not want to run outwith the Executive's timetable.

Sally Brown: Can you remind us what that timetable is?

Jackie Baillie: I cannot remember. I was hoping that someone could tell me.

The Convener: I think that the Executive is looking to produce its initial report in October or November.

Jackie Baillie: That is very tight.

The Convener: The Executive will produce a more full report in the new year.

Jackie Baillie: Is the first report the report on the consultation?

The Convener: Yes.

Lindsay Paterson: The Executive has commissioned Pamela Munn at the University of Edinburgh to supervise a team of researchers who are to prepare the summary of the 1,200 plus submissions. Would it be advisable for us to have a discussion with Pamela Munn and her colleagues?

The Convener: I do not have any difficulties with that.

Lindsay Paterson: They are not in the Executive. They are the independent evaluators of the Executive's exercise. Their position is analogous to ours.

The Convener: Let me clarify where we are and what we are going to do. We accept that there is consensus on the points of principle and the framework on which we will move forward. We agree that the advisers will draw together a framework for development including the key things that we need to do. In the process of doing that, our advisers will consult with SCRE as to how we can best include people from the most disadvantaged and alienated parts of the education system. Our advisers will also consult with the Executive's advisers in order that we can fit into the Executive's time scale and offer input to the Executive's deliberations, thereby facilitating change through the process that the Executive has in place. Are members content with that approach?

Ian Jenkins: The 13 points in the advisers' paper are important, but they are not a blueprint and the rest of the document raises questions that are not easily answered. However, the action that the convener suggests is right. As long as we acknowledge the fact that we are working in parallel with the Executive and that we need to take everyone with us, over a period, that will be a sensible step forward.

The Convener: It is most important that we are seen not to be putting the responses into a vacuum. We have asked for people's opinions, so it is important that something concrete comes out of our inquiry: not just an airy-fairy parliamentary discussion, but positive change. The respondents must feel that their effort has had an impact. People are honest enough to realise that not every idea that they suggest will be taken up; however, I hope that they will be able to see that we have moved the process forward as a result of the inquiry.

Lindsay Paterson: It would be appropriate for us to comment on matters that are not necessarily the national responsibilities of the Executive or other national agencies. There are also implications for what local authorities and schools do.

The Convener: Absolutely. There are implications for what pupils and parents do, too.

Lindsay Paterson: That is true.

The Convener: We should not see education as a system that does things to people. That is what was wrong with education in the past. Unless we engage pupils and parents in the process of education, especially in the primary years, the system will not work effectively.

I thank the witnesses. That was a useful discussion and another step in the long process of reforming Scottish education. I thank everybody for their input and look forward to speaking with you all again in the near future.

Meeting closed at 15:52.

Members who would like a printed copy of the *Official Report* to be forwarded to them should give notice at the Document Supply Centre.

No proofs of the *Official Report* can be supplied. Members who want to suggest corrections for the archive edition should mark them clearly in the daily edition, and send it to the Official Report, 375 High Street, Edinburgh EH99 1SP. Suggested corrections in any other form cannot be accepted.

The deadline for corrections to this edition is:

Friday 27 September 2002

Members who want reprints of their speeches (within one month of the date of publication) may obtain request forms and further details from the Central Distribution Office, the Document Supply Centre or the Official Report.

PRICES AND SUBSCRIPTION RATES

DAILY EDITIONS

Single copies: £5

Meetings of the Parliament annual subscriptions: £350.00

The archive edition of the *Official Report* of meetings of the Parliament, written answers and public meetings of committees will be published on CD-ROM.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT, compiled by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre, contains details of past and forthcoming business and of the work of committees and gives general information on legislation and other parliamentary activity.

Single copies: £3.75

Special issue price: £5

Annual subscriptions: £150.00

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS weekly compilation

Single copies: £3.75

Annual subscriptions: £150.00

Standing orders will be accepted at the Document Supply Centre.

Published in Edinburgh by The Stationery Office Limited and available from:

The Stationery Office Bookshop
71 Lothian Road
Edinburgh EH3 9AZ
0131 228 4181 Fax 0131 622 7017

The Stationery Office Bookshops at:
123 Kingsway, London WC2B 6PQ
Tel 020 7242 6393 Fax 020 7242 6394
68-69 Bull Street, Birmingham B4 6AD
Tel 0121 236 9696 Fax 0121 236 9699
33 Wine Street, Bristol BS1 2BQ
Tel 01179 264306 Fax 01179 294515
9-21 Princess Street, Manchester M60 8AS
Tel 0161 834 7201 Fax 0161 833 0634
16 Arthur Street, Belfast BT1 4GD
Tel 028 9023 8451 Fax 028 9023 5401
The Stationery Office Oriel Bookshop,
18-19 High Street, Cardiff CF12BZ
Tel 029 2039 5548 Fax 029 2038 4347

The Stationery Office Scottish Parliament Documentation
Helpline may be able to assist with additional information
on publications of or about the Scottish Parliament,
their availability and cost:

Telephone orders and inquiries
0870 606 5566

Fax orders
0870 606 5588

The Scottish Parliament Shop
George IV Bridge
EH99 1SP
Telephone orders 0131 348 5412

sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk

www.scottish.parliament.uk

Accredited Agents
(see Yellow Pages)

and through good booksellers