



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Education and Skills Committee

Wednesday 30 October 2019

Session 5



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Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE

28th Meeting 2019, Session 5

CONVENER

*Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)

*Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)

*Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab)

*Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green)

*Alison Harris (Central Scotland) (Con)

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)

*Gail Ross (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)

*Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Roz Thomson

LOCATION

The Robert Burns Room (CR1)

Scottish Parliament

Education and Skills Committee

Wednesday 30 October 2019

[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:00]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Clare Adamson): Good morning, and welcome to the 28th meeting in 2019 of the Education and Skills Committee. I remind everyone present to turn their mobile phones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

Apologies have been received from Beatrice Wishart and Rona Mackay. Gil Paterson is expected to substitute for Rona Mackay today.

Item 1 is a decision on taking business in private. Is the committee content to take agenda item 3 in private?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Petition

Literacy Standards (Schools) (PE1668)

10:00

The Convener: Item 2 is consideration of petition PE1668, on behalf of Anne Glennie, on improving literacy standards in schools through research-informed reading instruction. Details of the petition, including its scrutiny by the Public Petitions Committee, are set out in paper 1. I invite comments from members on our possible courses of action, which are listed in annexe A.

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): It is an interesting petition. There is a fair bit of evidence that we do not impose a methodology of teaching literacy—that is not how we organise our schools. However, there is also quite a lot of evidence that, in some cases, that particular methodology is not taught in initial teacher education, meaning that a lot of teachers do not have it at their disposal.

The issue is worth pursuing. However, as we have expressed concerns about other aspects of initial teacher education, I am not sure whether I am suggesting that we pursue it in the context of the petition or as part of a broader look at ITE in our work programme.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I agree with what Mr Gray said. An evidence-based approach is important for raising attainment and narrowing the attainment gap, and different methodologies will suit different schools.

It is important that teachers who are being trained to teach literacy know what all the methodologies are. Therefore, I support pursuing the issue further. Mr Gray made a good point when he said that we could do that in relation to wider issues around initial teacher training. The petition makes a strong point about the need for awareness of the benefits of different methodologies.

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): I have had similar representations made to me, in a constituency capacity, about the subject that is addressed in the petition.

I do not pretend for a minute to have the answer to the question that has been raised here—and elsewhere—about how many of the different methods that exist for teaching literacy and identifying phonemes we should try to teach to one child at the same time. A range of methods is available, but that question is unanswered—it has been put to me from a number of sources, and it relates to the petition. I agree that there is a question to be discussed and that it is worth discussing it at some stage.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):

I broadly agree with the comments that have been made. Considering the options in front of us, it would make sense to keep the petition open and to write to stakeholders, in particular, asking for views. A short evidence session at which to hear from the petitioner and other people with a perspective on the issue might also be useful as we examine how to take the matter forward.

The Convener: I suggest that we agree to keep the petition open and move the discussion on how we should take it forward into the later discussion of our work programme. Are members content with that?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: That concludes the public session for this week. Next week, we will have two panels to give evidence on the Disclosure (Scotland) Bill.

10:04

Meeting continued in private until 10:52.

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