

Appendix M - analysis of social media contributions

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Appendix M: Social media analysis

The National Discussion also took place across a range of social media platforms, including Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. We have undertaken an analysis of Twitter activity tagged with #TalkScottishEducation to understand the extent and focus of the discussion on social media, and determine if any additional views were shared.

The purpose of this analysis is not to assess levels of engagement, but we provide an overview of social media activity on Twitter for context:

- in total 7,745 tweets up to 13 January 2023 included #TalkScottishEducation
- 6,140 of this sample were retweets, leaving 1,605 original tweets for analysis
- of these, 249 were original tweets from Professor Campbell, Professor Harris, or Scottish Government accounts; these were not included in the analysis, as they were typically calls to action, or messages of thanks to participants

This left a sample of 1,356 relevant original tweets for review by the analysts. Almost two thirds of these tweets did not contain any relevant information. They mainly promoted events, encouraged participation in the National Discussion, or thanked participants.

The remaining third contained some content of relevance to the analysis, typically expressing a view, raising an issue, or providing information about a point of discussion.

Tweets which contained relevant content were coded using the overarching framework which had been developed for the National Discussion. New codes were created for any additional themes which emerged; however, almost all tweets aligned with the existing overarching framework. While common themes were evident, the tweets often expressed a range of points and views.

The most prevalent issue discussed on Twitter was the need to engage with parents, learners and teachers and ensure their voices are considered as part of any changes to education in Scotland. Comments about workforce development, particularly professional learning for teachers, were also common. Other recurring themes included: concerns about whether or not the National Discussion will make a meaningful contribution to policy development; support for learners with Additional Support Needs; the curriculum; play and early years education; and wellbeing and support. Each of these themes is presented in the analysis below.

A small number of tweets included images of work undertaken by learners in schools or activity which took place as part of the National Discussion. A few examples are included at the end of this section.

Engaging with all involved in education

By far the most prevalent themes on social media concerned engaging with, listening to and working with those involved in education.

Most common was the need to listen to and work with parents and families. These were typically broad comments about the importance of engaging parents, though a small number of tweets from Scottish Union for Education were critical of activism in schools overriding parents' concerns, particularly about sexual education.

“Parents/carers voices must be heard, listened to respectfully and responded to. This all takes time. Is there time for this in busy #schools and #EarlyYears?” – Kate Johnson

“Many parents are concerned that schools are encroaching into areas that undermine their values and the trust between schools and parents.” – Scottish Union for Education

Three quarters of the tweets coded under listening to parents came from Give Them Time, who campaign for a further year of nursery funding for all children legally deferring their primary one start in Scotland. After Professor Campbell, Give Them Time sent the most original tweets tagged with #TalkScottishEducation – 108 out of 1,356, or 8%. This group repeatedly tweeted about the need for parents to be able to hold local authorities to account for how they implement national guidance about education, to communicate and engage with parents about decisions made in education committee meetings, and to publish accurate education data in a timely manner. This theme was not evident in any other parts of the National Discussion.

“How can parents make informed decisions, be engaged and involved in their child's education especially at the critical milestone of transitioning to P1 when communication and support fails at this early stage of their families educational journey.” – Give Them Time

“National Discussion must pick up these issues. There is NO accountability at local level. National guidance and even legislation is not enough to compel Local Authorities to provide accurate and timely info in a manner that is accessible to ALL parents.” – Give Them Time

Ensuring children and young people's voices are heard was the second most prevalent theme. These tweets either stressed the importance of listening to learners' views or noted how young people had been able to take part in the National Discussion.

“Great to have 26 of our Pupil Learning Team @knoxacademy @KnoxParents engaging and submitting a response to the National Discussion. Vital to have the pupil voice in the direction of education for future generations.” – Knox Academy Head Teacher

“P3/2 are excited to be having their voices heard as part of the National Discussion. One pupil reminded us that "we have the right to be heard so

we need to share our ideas to make schools better!" Please join the discussion and make your voice heard" - Livingston Village PS & ELC

Listening to teaching staff was the third most common theme in tweets. These comments often noted the importance of working with teachers to design and successfully implement any changes, expressing a view that teachers are most knowledgeable about the system and its challenges.

"Loved the opportunity to engage in the National Discussion. We all have the chance to be heard, let's demonstrate to our young people what authentic collaboration can look like and help to change Ed in Scotland to better meet the needs of future generations." – Natalie White

"We must have the lived experience of everyone involved in education taken into account.
#TeacherWorkingConditionsArePupilLearningConditions" – Robert Macmillan

"And my favourite quote from @Changingconver1 with @AlmaHarris1 - "so often policy is made separately from the people who live and breathe it... teachers should be at the heart of policy-making"." – Dr Anna Beck

"No wonder young people and parents are saying over and over again that effective caring knowledgeable teachers are a key to the future of Scottish Education #TalkScottishEducation We have an important role to play in this." – Professor Margaret Sutherland

Workforce development

The need for more and better teacher training, mentioned in several tweets, was the next most common theme. Much of this activity was driven by tweets from Stuart Farmer of The Institute of Physics in Scotland who highlighted the importance of Career Long Professional Learning in Physics and the positive impact on teachers and learners. Other contributors also called for more professional learning, time for training, collaboration across the sector, and training in neurodiversity and ASN

"Subjects Matter report calls for a minimum of 50% subject specific. There is still need for more generic CLPL, but it needs to be in a form that is easily transferred into teachers' classroom practice. Problem is lack of subject specific." – Stuart Farmer

"More coherent & sustained subject specific professional learning for teachers would make a significant difference to learners. Also need incentives for those in the wider system to maintain & deepen their subject expertise." – Peter Donaldson

Related themes mentioned in some tweets included teacher empowerment and teaching staff pay and working conditions. Issues around teacher retention and the

impact of temporary or zero-hours contracts were raised in a small number of tweets.

“It is through their knowledge of the subjects and how they can be introduced to our pupils that teachers have authority. Any change to education must have teachers playing a central role, drawing on that authority. Anything else is unsound.” – Stuart Baird

“We must ensure that teachers on supply and temporary contracts are not forgotten during the Cost of Living crisis.” - Scottish Teachers' Action Group for Employment

“I hope my remarks on teacher retention reach colleagues on temp or zero hours contracts who are feeling excluded from the profession just now. Teacher retention deserves a place in the #NationalDiscussion.” - Dr Al-Azzawi

Concerns about whether or not the National Discussion will make a meaningful contribution to policy development

Another recurring theme in some tweets was concern around the National Discussion and the wider reform of Scottish education. These tweets usually highlighted concerns that participants' views will not be considered, decisions have already been made, or that there has been little progress on implementing reforms which have already been recommended.

“We need debate and engagement, but do we run the risk of getting so involved in issues of vision and philosophy, grandiosity and generality that we are little closer to answering these hard questions when the hashtag expires.” – David Cameron

“I would love to have high hopes that the replacement would listen more, not just in this initial phase of consultation, but throughout its existence.” – Dr S

“And wouldn't it be lovely if policymakers in schools, local authorities and national government actually listened to the possible solutions coming out of the chat. Instead of thinking it's up to them to conjure 'solutions' out of the air?” – Upstart Scotland

More support for learners with Additional Support Needs

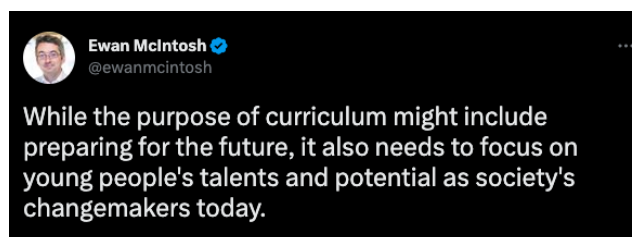
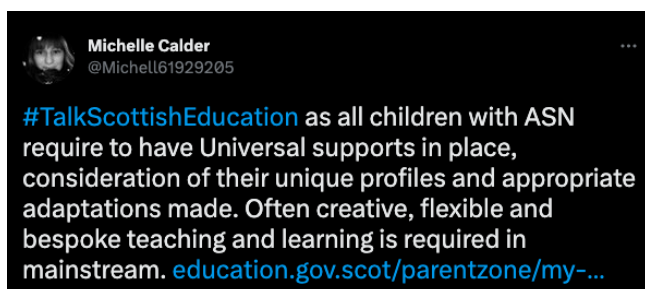
Some tweets focused on support for learners with Additional Support Needs (ASN). Much like the main sample, these comments called for greater understanding of a range of needs, and for a variety of adaptations to learning environments and teaching styles. Some tweets mentioned a need to focus on each individual young person's needs. Ensuring that inclusion works for all children was raised in a small number of tweets.

“Get it right for every child. Ok, bit wide, and there are multiple parts to the plan, but above all pay (and train) Support for Learning Workers adequately, provide more supporting adults to every class - dedicated staff trained in ASN and teaching.” - Jennifer Lilley

“Great LfS discussions putting young people at the centre. ASN, profound/multiple complex needs learners have the right to be heard, educational resources differentiated for their needs and their ability to participate enabled.” – Mrs M Teachytweet

“We hear parents & disabled learners talk of negative experiences at school: not getting the right support to learn, curriculum not meeting needs, poorly planned transitions.” – Emma Whitelock

“Language matters: “If education is only about employment, then an effective contributor is only about the economy. What does that mean for the child whose biggest achievement that day is being able to smile at you?” ASN Educator” – Ewan McIntosh



The curriculum

Multiple comments about the curriculum were expressed, which strongly aligned with the themes outlined in the main report. Some reiterated challenges with CfE or advocated for reduction or reformation of CfE, and a small number argued both for and against a standardised curriculum across Scotland. In addition, a few tweets stressed the importance of literacy and numeracy, or shared suggestions about specific subjects, especially science, arts and Gaelic.

“A clearly mapped knowledge curriculum which ensures consistency across schools & authorities. Unbalanced professional autonomy leads to a spectrum of quality between schools. More specific WHAT to allow greater autonomy in HOW.” – Fiona Leadbeater

“Wholly agree that more time is needed but, isn't that battle partly won with changes afoot? For me, autonomy is the battleground. Some in Scotland are pushing for uniformity & set schemes - it would kill pupil voice & the type of teaching I deliver.” – Blair Minchin

“‘Skills are knowledge in action’ Great piece by Bruce who tackles a common misconception in Scottish Education. We have over emphasised

‘skills’ at the expense of ‘knowledge’. Having a knowledge rich, skills based, experiences infused curriculum is key.” – Darren Leslie

Play and early years education

The importance of early years education and play-based learning was also noted in some tweets; Kate Johnston, a member of the Board of Trustees at Upstart Scotland and the third most frequent contributor to the social media discussion, generated much of this activity. Specific points were also raised about the need for more training in play-based approaches, and a contributor called Dizzy posted multiple tweets about autistic play.

“To meet our children where they are, we need to change our start point. High quality play pedagogies support children to be ready to learn.” – Jen_McN

“Adding a kindergarten stage needs Autistic-led training so children can ‘play their way’”- Dizzy

“Here is hoping to a reformed Scottish Education that is suitable for all children and young people and follows up to date knowledge of child development, especially with regards to the @UpstartScot kindergarten stage.” – Sarahjwm



Wellbeing and support

Ways to support learners were raised in a small proportion of tweets. A few described the need for education to create confident and resilient young people who can contribute to society; a few others made general comments on the importance of pastoral care and wellbeing. A small number of comments explored the role of external partners, especially youth work, in supporting children and young people.

“So many times we reach out to partners; for various reasons (but primarily capacity) we get back ‘we don’t see a role for us’. Learning/wellbeing is so much more than schools. We are great at what we do but we can’t do everything for everyone.” – Mr Connell

“From Dalmarnock Primary - spearheading play as learning & secondary schools doing more in terms of vocational skills training, DofE, Youth Achievement Awards, & placements within youth/community hubs - it’s clear that Youth Work belongs in Scottish education.” – David Stewart

Examples of #TalkScottish Education activities posted on social media

