

SYP Learner Panel - Special guest Ken Muir



At the latest Learner panel Professor Ken Muir CBE joined the learners to explain his role and the Muir consultation in more detail. Ken Muir was keen to hear from the learners directly about their educational experiences and their own consultations undertaken in their schools. The learners enjoyed the panel session and found Ken to be encouraging and transparent. Small summaries of what was discussed can be found below.

The Muir Consultation

Ken Muir explained his role as an independent advisor to the Scottish Government exploring education reform and the replacement of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). Ken stated that teachers and learners should have an infrastructure that gives them what they need and the way to do that is through consultation. The learners were encouraged to make suggestions and put forward their views of educational reform.

Assessments and qualifications

The learners agreed that assessments throughout the year are fairer and less stressful. They discussed their experiences of assessments last year during COVID and found that not having exams was better however the lack of structure last year made assessments difficult. Overall, the learners felt that education is and should be more than just exams. One learner stated that exams are a memory test and that exam timings are difficult. The learners agreed that continuous assessment would be better however one learner pointed out that continuous assessments have different meanings to different people. The learners discussed different ways of assessment like portfolios and class assignments but overall felt there should be a choice in which grading works best for individual students.



Additional support needs

The learners asked how the consultation will improve support for people with additional support needs and Ken explained that we are not starting from zero. There was a discussion into the fairness of people with additional support needs being put under the same pressure. One learner shared that for visually impaired learners support to gain qualifications has dropped by 80% in the last 7 years. Learners related a lack of support in school and exams to poor mental health.

Young people being listened to and involved

The learners agreed that the consultation is a good way to have their voices heard on the issues which affect them and emphasised the importance of youth participation. Learners also agreed that the incorporation of the UNCRC was an opportunity for youth involvement in decision making processes. However, one learner explained that not everyone knows what the UNCRC is and that there is a need for more education on it. Another learner also pointed out some of the barriers for youth participation such as meeting times taking place during school hours.

Curriculum

Learners felt that too much focus was upon assessments rather than life skills. They agreed that different subject could have life skills and well roundedness built in. Ken drew on his own experience of being a teacher and agreed that life skills should be a part of the curriculum. One learner proposed learning these skills in the early years at high school however another learner noted that student don't often remember their early years. Learners felt that the curriculum is too rigid and needs to be adaptable.