

PE1840/B

Petitioner submission of 8 December 2020

On 3 December, the Freedom Walk campaign was made aware that the Scottish Government issued a response in relation to our petition currently being considered by the Scottish Parliament. As such, we are submitting correspondence to Committee for consideration considering the Scottish Government's response to Committee. We are also calling on the Committee to call witnesses to ensure the full evidence has been identified and considered before a final decision is reached.

Tackling Racism in Scottish Education

Noting the issues raised by the Scottish Government in relation to racism in Scottish education, the following questions must be asked and explored:

1. How are all Scottish Teachers developing their practice in response to tackling racism in Scottish Education?
2. How is the status quo being challenged in order to hear the voices of those who are marginalised and often forgotten about?
3. Does every school and local authority have a specific published policy and strategy to tackle racism in the educational environment?
4. What does the anti-racist training to teachers and school support staff look like – how long is it, who delivers it, is it deemed effective?
5. How is the whole school community being involved in tackling racism in Scottish Education?
6. Who is being held accountable for tackling racism in Scottish education?

There is nothing within the Scottish Government response that demonstrates that anti-racist training is being provided to qualified teachers in a consistent and mandatory way. The response highlights the need for existing teachers to be proactive and have a willingness to seek out this training, *in addition* to having sufficient resources that may be out with their control (e.g. protected time).

Given that the definition of racism clearly acknowledges that racist beliefs may be held unconsciously (in such cases there would be no recognition of a need to seek out such training or challenge one's belief system) *and* that racism is embedded by structures, the education system being one such structure, we do not believe that simply providing optional training resources is enough to dismantle longstanding systemic structures of oppression.

The Difference Between Racism and Bullying – ensuring effective recording

All racist incidents can be classified as bullying but not all bullying incidents can be classified as racism. There is a difference and this must be made clear. Noting the issues raised by the Scottish Government in relation to recording and reporting racist incidents in Scottish schools, the following questions have to be asked and explored:

1. As racism is a hate crime, are schools recording and reporting racist incidents to Police Scotland to record as hate crime?

2. Does every school and local authority in Scotland use the SEEMiS System to record and report racism? The Freedom Walk campaign has heard evidence from practitioners that states this is not the actual case.
3. How effective is the recording and reporting of racist incidents on the SEEMiS system? The Freedom Walk campaign has heard evidence from practitioners and parents that there are gaps with how different schools and local authorities are reporting which contradicts the guidance provided by the Scottish Government as mentioned in its response to committee.
4. Do all schools and local authorities have A) a Tackling Racism policy B) an Equalities Policy that reflect latest legislation and guidance?
5. When were these policies published or recently revised? The Freedom Walk Campaign has heard that local authorities such as Falkirk do not have a Tackling Racism Policy and its Equalities Policy was last revised in 2006.

Further Evidence and Witnesses

The Freedom Walk Campaign has engaged with a range of anti-racism campaigners and activists who have shared their own experiences and knowledge with regards to what our petition calls for.

One of these groups in representatives from the Tackling Bullying in Scottish Schools Campaign which was established in June 2010 and called on the Scottish Government to introduce a tri-level recording and reporting system for all bullying and racist incidents. The campaign conducted an audit of all Scottish local authorities and produced a report in 2011. In 2016, the campaign, working with teachers, parents, young people and communities developed and published a set of 5 principles which were also shared with the Scottish Government, Respect Me and others to inform policy and practice.

Recommendation

The Freedom Walk Campaign calls on the Scottish Parliament's Public Petitions Committee to call for any witness who wants to testify about their experiences on the issues raised by the Scottish Government, or anyone who wishes to submit additional evidence in support of this petition.