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Sue Webber MSP
Convener of the Education, Children and Young
People Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

12 February 2024

Dear Sue,

Thank you for your letter dated 10 January 2024, detailing the AI and education evidence session held by the Education, Children and Young People Committee on 13 December 2023.

The use of AI in education has been a topic of great interest over the last year. In line with views shared by speakers at the session, I agree that education cannot be immune to the influence of technology and that we must continue to support learners to thrive in a digital world.

However, as was also outlined in discussion, the integration of digital tools and AI in education raises critical questions about privacy, equity, and the future of the workforce. As we harness the power of data to enhance learning experiences, we must ensure the security and privacy of our learners. Their digital footprint, once created, is indelible, and it is our responsibility to protect it.

With regards to the ethical use of AI in Finland, I would be grateful if you could share any findings gathered through discussions with the Nordic Council.

I have provided information at Annex A in response to the questions raised by committee.

Yours Sincerely,

JENNY GILRUTH

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Annex A

1. The Committee would welcome details of how the Scottish Government is working with the education sector to improve AI literacy in schools and to ensure teachers continue to have up to date knowledge in this area.

Education Scotland provide ongoing resources and professional learning opportunities to support the development of educators' digital skills. In the second half of 2023 they delivered some initial sessions on the use of AI in education to both teachers and learners, with around 2200 participants. More recently, funding has been awarded to DayDream Believers to support the development of an AI handbook for teachers which will set out use cases for the application of AI tools in the delivery of teaching and learning.

From the 25th to 29th of March 2024, Education Scotland will facilitate Scottish AI in Schools week. This event will coincide with the Scottish AI Summit being held on the 28th of March. The programme of events will include live sessions for learners, opportunities for educators to share best practice, and professional learning sessions with a range of stakeholders.

Computing science is an important part of the Broad General Education and as part of this, pupils should experience computing up to and including the Third Level of Curriculum for Excellence. The societal impact of artificial intelligence is also relevant to the social studies curriculum. The Technologies Experiences and Outcomes were last updated in 2017, to ensure that children and young people are learning up-to-date computing and digital skills, but this landscape is fast changing. The Curriculum Improvement Cycle, announced in December 2023, will require consideration of the totality of the curriculum and will therefore need to consider key cross-cutting themes such as digital and AI.

With regards to qualifications and assessment, I am aware that the SQA has began an ongoing programme of communication and engagement with stakeholders to better understand the awareness of, attitudes towards and active applications of generative AI across Scotland. These activities are designed and delivered to inform and evolve their position on the role of AI in assessment, and to ensure this is reflective of the attitudes and applications already taking place across Scottish education.

2. In addition, the Committee asks the Scottish Government whether it plans to work with Education Scotland to produce guidance for educators on the effective and ethical use of AI technologies in Scotland's schools and whether it has any plans to establish a cross sector commission to look at AI and education.

Officials continue to work closely with colleagues in UK Government and the devolved administrations to identify opportunities for collaboration around the use of AI in education and the publication of guidance.

I have committed to debating the recommendations of the Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment in Parliament before providing a formal Scottish Government response to the Review. I remain keen to hear members views on all aspects of the Review's final report, including in terms of the proposed cross-sector commission on AI.

The SQA are already considering the impact of AI in terms of assessment and Education Scotland are examining the implications in terms of learning and teaching.

3. **The Committee asks the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to ensure that AI in education will be used to promote inclusion and equality within Scotland's schools with equal access to AI technologies and tools.**

I am aware that the development and use of AI has to potential to perpetuate or even exacerbate existing inequalities in Scottish society. Inconsistencies in data and badly designed algorithms can contribute to decisions which are either accidentally or deliberately inaccurate.

Through Scotland's AI Strategy, which was published in 2021, the Scottish Government has set out a vision for Scotland to become a leader in the development and use of trustworthy, ethical and inclusive AI, and to help limit the potential damage which these inequalities could cause.

To help deliver on this concept we have:
- worked with CivTech colleagues to develop and run challenges which help address inequalities in technology and access to public services – ConnectingYouNow.

- put in place the best practice and tools to ensure the use of AI is ethical and addresses issues of bias and inequality:
  - The AI Playbook, an open and practical guide to how we do AI in Scotland, launched in July 2022. It will provide a one-stop source of information and shared best practice which everyone in the Scottish AI community can use and contribute to.
  - The AI Register, ensures the transparency on the development and use of AI in the public sector.

- provided access to the learning opportunities to enable them to benefit from the opportunities AI offers:
  - The Living with AI course, a free online course aimed at the general public developed by the Scottish AI Alliance in partnership with The Alan Turing Institute, the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and the non-profit We and AI. The course will go live later in 2024.

Of specific relevance to the ask is the work on Exploring Children's Rights and AI delivered in conjunction with the Children's Parliament and the Alan Turing Institute. This project involves engaging with children to explore what they think about AI, how they would like to see AI developed in the future, and how children can become more involved in shaping AI innovation, policy, and governance. The related public engagement work aims to use the results of this to inform policymakers to support the development of child-centred AI.

Building on from Stage 1 of the Children & AI Project, the children have explored their chosen themes in depth during Stage 2. (Their chosen themes: **fairness & bias, safety & security, AI and education, AI and the future**)

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- Doune Primary explored fairness and bias in AI technologies.
- St Mary's in Leith worked with the Centre for Research in Digital Education to dream up their own AI systems for the future of education.
- Oakwood Primary in Glasgow had an interesting day working on personal data and how it is used online.
- Dunrossness Primary in Shetland this week worked with Silicon Croft to design their dream AI curriculum.

Stage 3's outputs are still to be defined by the children, but will be calls to action for policy makers from a children's eye view which centres the importance of children's rights within the implementation of AI technologies that impact them.

4. The Committee would be interested to know if the Scottish Government has given any consideration to creating legal duties or restrictions on the use of generative AI in Scotland's schools.

Given the fast rate of change and development within the AI space, the Scottish Government are currently advocating use of the UK Government guidance on the use of generative AI.

The guidance focuses on meeting key and relevant criteria within existing related frameworks e.g. GDPR, Data Protection and Cyber Security policies. We will keep the appropriateness of this guidance under review as Scotland's AI use develops.

5. The Committee seeks confirmation as to whether the Scottish Government intends to update Scotland's AI strategy and, if so, when. In addition, the Committee would be grateful if you could confirm that any future strategy will address the issues raised during the Committee's evidence sessions as outlined in this letter.

In the Scottish Parliament debate on AI on 1 June 2023, the Minister for Small Business, Innovation, Tourism and Trade, announced that he was commissioning the Scottish AI Alliance to lead an independent review to consider the changing AI landscape and to set out what Scotland needs to do in order to continue to maximise the potential benefits of AI while controlling the potential risks.

The Alliance Leadership Group subsequently formed a review project group, supported by officials from the Scottish Government Digital Directorate.

In keeping with the current strategic vision for AI in Scotland which is, "trustworthy, ethical and inclusive" they conducted a thorough review and analysis of the developing AI landscape, considering themes of People and Society, Public Sector, Business, Research, Leadership, Skills and Tech Infrastructure.

The project group considered key data and where possible, Scotland-specific, evidence relating to each theme. They then used this data to produce recommendations and to propose a route forward for the development and support of AI in Scotland.

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The final report and recommendations are expected to be shared shortly, with public views being sought in the months following, prior to the Scottish Government response being published in late March.

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