



**Investigating the appetite for and remit of a  
new member-driven College of Teaching:  
An exploratory workshop**

**REPORT**

24<sup>th</sup> September 2012





# 1. Workshop and discussion context

At The Prince's Teaching Institute (PTI) Headteacher Residential in January 2012 the idea of a College of Teaching was discussed. In the following May, the House of Commons Education Committee published a report entitled *Great teachers: attracting, training and retaining the best*, which made the recommendation for the establishment of a new member-driven College of Teaching, independent from government. Following this report, six Headteachers involved in the January conference asked the PTI to host an exploratory workshop to discuss the idea.

In keeping with the Minister for Schools' argument in the report that "a new College of Teaching would need to come from within the profession", the workshop brought together stakeholders from across the education spectrum, including Headteachers of secondary and primary schools, representatives from Unions, Higher Education, Subject Associations, the existing College of Teachers and school employers. The meeting lasted two hours, was moderated by Sir Richard Lambert, Chancellor of Warwick University, and was held at the Lansdowne Club in London on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2012. The roundtable discussion and plenary were minuted independently by the PTI and this report outlines the main themes and attendees' conclusions.

The meeting began with a short talk from Professor Jonathan Shepherd from the Royal College of Surgeons (RCS) on the roles and culture of a professional body, providing a view from surgery. He talked about the role of the Royal College of Surgeons and its benefits. Its chief functions are to set standards, approve training, publish a surgical scientific journal, maintain international links and unify surgical and dental specialisms. Professor Shepherd also delineated what the RCS does not do:

1. Research and evaluation, which are undertaken by medical schools
2. Regulate the service, as this is done by the General Medical Council
3. Intervene in Terms and Conditions of service, which is the purview of the Unions.

He outlined how the RCS is funded entirely from subscriptions, stating that it does not receive government funding, except for specific projects, ensuring its independence.

## 2. Is there the appetite for a new member-driven College of Teaching?

*The first question discussed by attendees was whether there was an appetite for a new, member-driven College of Teaching. It became clear that there was broad agreement amongst attendees that there is a need for a body that advocates for professional standards, although there were concerns over the appetite amongst teachers for one.*

### ***The need for a new College of Teaching***

Workshop delegates were in agreement that there is a role for a body that will raise the status of the teaching profession, and provide teachers with a greater degree of self-determination. There was a view that there “is a need for a body that will reflect the profession’s instinct for self-improvement” and promote “conditions that enable teachers to self-determine, self-regulate and self-improve”.

It was agreed that the lack of a strong voice for professional standards in teaching had led to a “vacuum” and that as a result, government policy had strayed incrementally into areas that should be determined by teachers. A well-respected College of Teaching that had the support of the teaching community would allow teachers to articulate their own standards, and “reclaim professionalism from government”. As one delegate phrased it, “government of whatever colour would go to the College because they are respected for sound ideas”.

Six areas of need were identified:

#### **1) Ensure high professional standards**

Delegates agreed that there is a need in the teaching profession to aspire to higher standards of practice. Some attendees pointed to the recent changes to requirements for teaching, such as the removal of QTS in Free Schools and the increased use of Teaching Assistants, as factors which have the potential to “dilute the teaching profession”.

#### **2) Provide stability through changes in political cycles**

The “five year cycle” of education policy was cited by attendees as creating a need for a point of stability in the education community. They highlighted the currently confusing situation of changing definitions of teachers’ professional standards and career progression options, and delegates identified a need for a common voice and informed counter-weight to government-dictated change.

#### **3) Promote evidence-based initiatives**

It was generally acknowledged that the teaching profession is prone to “fads and fetishes”, which can “spread through teaching like wildfire” without there being any evidence to support them. It was agreed that there is a need for the profession to take control of what is introduced into the classroom, based on evidence.

#### **4) Bridge the gap between classroom practice and research**

There was a shared feeling that research in education has become “compartmentalised”, with practitioners and researchers occupying separate spaces which should be merged.

### **5) Establish an authoritative voice to defend professional standards**

The view of many was captured by one delegate who said that “although there are lots of different interest groups, there is no one place where [the teaching community] feel we have a strong and powerful voice”. It was agreed that although there were authoritative voices already present, an additional strong voice that represents a “common vision of what matters to the profession” would be beneficial.

### **6) Raise the status of the teaching profession**

All tables pointed to the status of the teaching profession as a problem. Delegates agreed that there is a need to make teaching be seen as an aspirational profession.

## ***The perceived appetite for a new College of Teaching***

Whilst the need for a College of Teaching was generally agreed upon, there were shared concerns amongst attendees about how positive a reception a new College of Teaching would receive from teachers. Some felt that the failure of the General Teaching Council had not been sufficiently examined to provide clear guidance on establishing another body. Others were concerned that the current timing was not right for teachers, as the profession is “in turmoil”.

There were also concerns about the economics of such a body, as the levels of subscription and examination fees levied by the medical Royal Colleges, for example, would be beyond the means of teachers. One representative from the Subject Associations voiced the opinion that a College of Teaching may struggle to attract members, as subscriptions to similar bodies like Subject Associations have fallen since May 2011 when they received a substantial funding cut from the government.

Many attendees, however, felt that a new member-driven College of Teaching would be welcomed by teachers, with one stating that “from experience, I think there are sufficient teachers who are genuinely interested and want to build it up”.

### 3. What should be the remit of any new College of Teaching?

*Following the discussion on appetite for a new member-driven College of Teaching, delegates were asked in the remaining time for initial thoughts on its remit. The outcomes of their discussions are summarised below.*

#### **Remit**

There was broad agreement across the room that the basic remit of a College would be to “represent teaching, not teachers”. A member-driven College of Teaching would be a “voice for teachers that isn’t about terms and conditions”; attendees agreed that its remit would need to cover subject knowledge, pedagogy and professional development. It was seen as equally important that it should “set standards high”, and would aim to “raise standards in education in a supportive but challenging way”. Attendees were also clear that it should concentrate on professional standards and lead on advancing teachers professionally. There was consensus on three areas of remit:

#### **1) Promoting teachers’ professional development**

There was wide agreement that a College of Teaching should have a key role in promoting professional development and ensuring high standards of Continuing Professional Development. Whilst attendees agreed that such a body would accredit CPD, there was disagreement over whether it should itself provide training. The existing Chartered Teacher schemes in some subjects were mentioned as a possible model. In any event, attendees were clear that any CPD provided should be of a high standard and should focus on subject knowledge and pedagogy – not the other skills which are required by school leaders, such as budgeting. It was also noted that at present there is no clear existing structure for professional development, which a College of Teaching might work towards correcting.

#### **2) Providing evidence to inform education policy**

There was also a desire in the room for a body that would act as a “rudder through choppy political waters” for the teaching profession. A new College could take on a crucial role in informing policy, including the curriculum, with evidence-based arguments and practice, placing a brake on the number of pedagogical “fads” introduced into classrooms. As one delegate said, “the curriculum of teachers should not be set by the government”. The role of the College of Teaching would therefore be to articulate informed opinion, based on research, on behalf of the teaching profession.

#### **3) Bringing practice and research together**

Attendees also articulated the need for a body which brings together research on best practice and uses it to advocate research-based solutions. The parallel to medicine was here seen as useful, with one delegate stating that a College “should be a drive for advancing evidence, not just being reactive”. It was felt that “professional standards [in education] should be grounded in experience” and that therefore it is desirable that practice and research are brought together, a role that could be played by a College of Teaching.

There was discussion about any potential role with respect to school inspections. There was broad consensus that a College of Teaching should not intervene in inspections, which are the rightful purview of Ofsted, but that it could have a strong voice in the formulation of the inspection

framework. However, one delegate reminded attendees that inspection had changed from its original role of being a guide for schools and Headteachers, and that an interface like a Royal College could assist a move back to this, thereby raising the status of inspection.

### ***Stakeholder relationships***

Delegates were clear that any new College of Teaching would need to establish “strong symbiotic relationships” with key stakeholders, such as Unions, Subject Associations, Higher Education establishments and government. The Royal College of Surgeons was seen as providing a good example of a positive relationship between the regulatory body (GMC), professional association (BMA) and a professional college. This was reinforced by one Union representative, saying that “distinctive and clear roles” would need to be laid out for Unions and a College of Teaching, but that they should be “complementary”.

A concern was raised over the reception of a new College by some Subject Associations, but the example provided by the Royal College of Surgeons, where nine specialist committees feed into the training provided by the Royal College of Surgeons, was highlighted as a possible solution to this concern.

### ***The way forward***

In looking forward, attendees were clear that the establishment of a College of Teaching would necessarily be a long process, to ensure buy-in from all levels of the profession and establish “clarity on function, [particularly] what it will do, and what the implications are for other structures”. However, as one delegate put it – “the fact that it will take a long time is not an excuse not to do it, but it is a reason to start now”.

It was agreed that there needs to be support from teachers’ Unions or else the idea would be “a dead duck”. The desirability of the unions forming a common position was raised, and many delegates were clear that if the unions could not wholeheartedly support a College of Teaching, it would be in the best interest of the profession if they were to at least “not stand in the way”.

A growth strategy in two parts, with short-term and long-term goals was viewed by several attendees as the best way forward. Initially, the focus should be on CPD, accreditation and drawing together best practice, with longer-term objectives to be defining standards, providing research and producing commentary on educational policy.

## 4. Next steps

Attendees were clear that the workshop had been a useful experience, but that clearly defined next steps were needed to ensure that the initiative was not lost. One delegate suggested that the PTI should continue its role as an independent “honest broker” and own the process going forward. The room was unanimous in supporting the proposal, and the PTI agreed to take on this responsibility.

It was suggested that a possible way forward would be to establish a commission drawn from representatives in the room to further the discussion, and to build upon the groundwork laid in the workshop. The PTI agreed to consider this proposal, to keep all attendees updated on progress, and to disseminate this report to the wider education community.



## Appendix A – Conclusions from tables in response to the questions posed

### Appetite for a new College of Teaching

1. How much need does this table believe there is for a new member-driven College, along the times of the member-driven Colleges and professional associations in other professions (e.g. Law Society/Royal College of Surgeons)?

Table A: From all the different perspectives there is an appetite for this and an excellent opportunity (political).

Table B: There is an appetite in the profession for conditions that enable self-determination, self-regulation and self-improvement. A Royal College of Teachers is one way of achieving this, but there are others (e.g. a professional council). It has to add value and be distinct from existing organisations.

Table C: There is agreement, in principle, for such a College which will bring value, but to succeed it would need the support of all stakeholders, crucially including the trade unions and subject associations.

Table D: Appetite on table, not so much amongst teachers because of current climate. Seeds need to be planted systematically and developed over the long-term.

Table E: To express and capitalise on the natural drive of teachers to improve the professional standing of teaching. To be a rudder for teaching through changing political currents ('choppy political waters'). To be:

- informed
- forward thinking
- advancing standards
- non-political.

Government of whatever colour will go to the College because they are respected for sound ideas.

## **Remit of a new College of Teaching**

2. *Teachers: What should be the remit of any new College?*

3. *Teacher Training: What should be the remit of any new College with respect to teacher training and professional development?*

4. *Education policy: What should be the remit of any new College with respect to curriculum formulation and review, and examinations?*

5. *School Inspection: What should be the remit of any new College with respect to school inspection?*

6. *What other areas of remit are desirable/essential? Examples: Independence from government; Governance of college managed by appointed members/teachers; School governance.*

Table A: If government is prepared to 'evacuate the space it currently occupies'. It must be led by teachers not people like us! In Initial Teacher Training it would have to play a role. Later in a career it would be more difficult, not so clear cut... The learner's curriculum should be set by the government as the funder. The 'teachers' curriculum' (i.e. CPD and standards) should be a College of Teaching responsibility. No direct/indirect responsibility for inspection, but ability to comment as Royal College of Surgeons does.

### Table B:

- Defining teaching quality
- Accreditation of CPD (internal and external)/training
- Entry levels: fellowship and membership
- View on career progressions
- Using evidence to define good practice.

Table C: The most basic remit is the over-seeing of all aspects of subject knowledge, pedagogy and general professional development and overseeing standards of professional development and a national system for validation of those standards. It is important to have a unified voice on policy supported by evidence-based practice.

Table D: Remit for advanced standards initially. These will, in time, influence standards lower down. No immediate remit for teacher training. Royal College should be the first port of call for policy-makers, advisory role on curriculum and assessment. Interface with regulatory body on standards being assessed.

Table E: Remit would be about being a voice... It should be involved in setting standards but defining the mechanism is far trickier. Also:

- Career of profession
- Elected governance – public accountability
- Must be clear that it is not imposed – by teachers for teachers.

## Appendix B – Workshop attendees

Professor	Robin	Alexander	Director of the Cambridge Primary Review	University of Cambridge Faculty of Education
Mr	John	Bangs	Senior Consultant	Education International
Mr	Adrian	Barlow	Chair	English Association
Professor	Derek	Bell	Professor of Education	College of Teachers
Professor	George	Berwick CBE	Executive Principal	Ravens Wood School
Mr	Oliver	Blond	Head Teacher	The Henrietta Barnett School
Dr	Mary	Bousted	General Secretary	Association of Teachers and Lecturers
Ms	Amanda	Brown	The Union's Assistant Secretary for Employment Conditions and Rights	National Union of Teachers
Mr	Jon	Coles	Chief Executive	United Church Schools Trust/United Learning Trust
Mr	Jerry	Collins	Principal	Pimlico Academy
Ms	Rebecca	Curtis	Head of Education Support	ARK Schools
Sir	Paul	Grant	Head Teacher	Robert Clack School of Science
Mr	Michael	Griffiths	Headteacher	Northampton School for Boys
Professor	Peter	Gronn	Professor of Education at University of Cambridge	Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge
Mr	Russell	Hobby	General Secretary	National Association of Head Teachers
Dr	John	Hopkin	Past President	Geographical Association
Professor	Celia	Hoyles OBE	Director	National Centre Excellence in Teaching Mathematics
Professor	Chris	Husbands	Director of the Institute of Education and Professor of Education	Institute of Education
Sir	Richard	Lambert	Moderator	Chancellor, University of Warwick
Mr	Barnaby	Lenon	Chairman	Independent Schools Council
Mr	Vaughan	Lewis	Director of Communications	Myscience
Mr	Brian	Lightman	General Secretary	Association of School and College Leaders
Professor	Peter	Main	Director of Education and Science	Institute of Physics
Mrs	Bernice	McCabe	Headmistress	North London Collegiate School
Mr	Harvey	McGrath	Chairman	The Prince's Teaching Institute
Mr	Reuben	Moore	Senior Associate Director	Teach First
Mr	Darren	Northcott	National Official for Education	National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers
Mrs	Alison	Peacock	Headteacher	The Wroxham School
Mr	Chris	Pope	Co-Director	Prince's Teaching Institute
Dr	Christopher	Ray	Chairman	The Headmasters' and Headteachers' Conference
Mr	Martin	Roberts	Academic Steering Group	The Prince's Teaching Institute
Professor	Jonathan	Shepherd CBE	Professor of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery	Cardiff University
Mrs	Delia	Smith OBE	Principal	Ark Academy
Dr	John	Steers	Chair	Council for Subject Associations



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