

School quangos

A blueprint for abolition and reform

TOM BURKARD AND SAM TALBOT RICE





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GLOSSARY

11 Million:	previously the Office of the Children's Commissioner.
Becta:	British Educational Communications and Technology Agency.
CPD:	Continuing Professional Development
DCSF:	Department for Children, Schools and Families.
ECM:	Every Child Matters.
GTC:	General Teaching Council for England.
ITT:	Initial Teacher Training.
NCSL:	National College for School Leadership.
NPQH:	National Professional Qualification for Headship.
Ofqual:	The new regulator for exams in England.
Ofsted:	The schools inspectorate. Now includes inspections of children's services etc
PfS:	Partnerships for Schools.

QCA: The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. The regulatory body for public examinations and publicly funded qualifications.

QCDA: The Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency. This will replace the QCA when the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill is passed.

QTS: Qualified Teacher Status.

SFT: School Food Trust.

STRB: School Teachers' Review Body.

TDA: Training and Development Agency.

Teachers' TV: the state-funded television channel for teachers.

Note that the remit of all the quangos studied in this report only covers England. Similar bodies report to the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

SUMMARY

- While politicians have repeatedly called for reducing the size and influence of quangos, little has been achieved.
- This paper analyses the 11 quangos (with public funding of £1.2 billion in 2007/08) which have the greatest impact on schools.¹
- Most of these quangos have grown hugely in recent years (for many, their budgets have – in real terms – increased by between 10% and 15% a year). This has happened while the DCSF has published data to show that its own productivity has fallen by 0.7% a year.
- This report details how the functions of these quangos can either be abolished, or transferred to the Department or moved out of state control.

Recommendations

- The QCA (shortly to become the QCDA and Ofqual) should be abolished. Schools should be free to develop their own curriculum. A small, unpaid Curriculum Advisory Board should

¹ A central recommendation of this report is that the DCSF should be replaced by a Department of Education solely responsible for schools.

be created which would draw up a curriculum to reflect the standards required for success in academic, vocational and higher education.

- Ofqual should be only responsible for ensuring the validity, reliability and equivalence of examinations. It should be reconstituted so that it is comprised of university professors, leading head teachers and other leaders in academic disciplines.
- Ofsted should focus exclusively on inspecting failing schools. More attention should be given to classroom inspection and less to desk analysis.
- The TDA should be abolished. Teacher training should be employment-based. Trainee teachers should be funded through a voucher scheme.
- The NCSL (and the mandatory nature of the NPQH), Becta, 11 MILLION, Teachers' TV, and STRB should all be abolished, while the remit and funding of PfS should be reduced.
- The GTC and SFT should become voluntary organisations and should receive no government funding.
- The above recommendations would:
 - reduce government spending by £633 million;
 - liberate schools from much of the stifling central control that is currently undermining initiative;
 - reduce the bureaucratic burden on head teachers and teachers;
 - make the teaching profession more attractive to talented graduates.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report analyses the functions and responsibilities of seven of the nine non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) accountable to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)² and two of its three advisory NDPBs. It also considers the professional body for teachers – the General Teaching Council – as membership is compulsory for all teachers in state schools, and Ofsted, which is a non-ministerial government department. In 2007/08, these quangos cost the taxpayer £1.183 billion, a figure that has grown rapidly in recent years.

Politicians have repeatedly attacked quangos. Gordon Brown famously called for “a bonfire of the quangos” when he was in opposition. Tony Blair also pledged to “sweep away the quango state”. David Cameron has said that “we need to reduce the number, size, scope and influence of quangos”. The grounds of attack vary but often include their expense, their centralising

² Three DCSF quangos are not included in this report as their remit is focused more on childcare than on schools: Cafcass, which has a remit to look after the interests of children involved in family proceedings; and the Children’s Workforce Development Council, which is primarily “a workforce development agency” for people working with children (but not teachers); and the Independent Advisory Group on Teenage Pregnancy.

tendencies, their unaccountability, the bureaucratic burden they impose on others, their stifling of initiative and freedom, their removal of responsibility from professionals and their tendency to put their own interests ahead of those whom they are meant to serve.

Yet, despite these expressions of political will, quangos continue to grow. They now consume at least £34 billion of public money (a cautious estimate) a year.³ In the last year alone, the cost of quangos to the taxpayer increased by 12%.⁴ And there are simple reasons why this happened. Above all, creating a new agency always gives the impression that something is being done to solve the political problem of the day. Soon, though, the initial enthusiasm fades, while the cost and scope of the new bureaucracy entrenches itself and fights for new turf.

The burdens created by Britain's quango state are measurable not just in terms of cost to the taxpayer, or the empire building of more staff and new functions. They also involve the hidden impact which the bureaucracy has on frontline public services – including the vast number of requirements imposed from above on schools, for example, that divert teachers' time and energy.

Another problem with quangos is that they are not ideologically neutral. Irrespective of their original remit, they tend to assume the intentions and prejudices of the political classes of the time. So, for schools, Ofsted inspections now appear more interested

³ This is the official figure, according to the Cabinet Office. Yet it is difficult to scrutinise this properly as the Government has stopped publishing a detailed breakdown of these organisations' funding. Last year a report from the Taxpayers' Alliance estimated the true cost to the public purse to be £64 billion (*The Unseen Government of the UK*, May 2008).

⁴ The rise of the quangocracy', *The Independent*, 19 March 2009.

in pupil activity and involvement rather than in didactic teaching. The QCA now promotes citizenship. All school quangos are involved with the promotion of 'personalised learning', and the 'every child matters' agenda. And everything, in the world of the annual reports and websites of quangos, is improving all the time.

But all those who, despite all the glossy brochures, can still see that a quarter of children leave primary school illiterate or innumerate know that the truth is very different.

Some notes on the recommendations

This paper puts forward a programme of reform that considers which functions of the existing education quangos should be retained by an incoming government, which can be abolished and which can be transferred to other organisations in the voluntary or private sectors. The concept of 'integrated delivery' – where a range of organisations share responsibility for the implementation of policy or delivery of services – has created extraordinary pressures on schools and has blurred lines of responsibility. That, and the growth of policy-making and advising within quangos, is an area of particular focus for cuts. However, it should be noted that many of these quangos have parallel sections within the DCSF, and work closely with them. Abolition of quangos will be of limited effect if the functions they perform are merely transferred to the Department; this will be the subject of a separate CPS review,

Resistance to reform is a feature of the quangocracy. When in the past a quango has been restructured, all too often a new quango emerges which re-employs the same people. Equally, quangos tend to grow. It is striking that most of the quangos in this report have seen their budgets increase – in real terms – over the last 10 years. The following table shows the unsustainably high average annual real growth rates in the amounts of public funding received by some quangos:

			Average annual real terms growth rate
QCA	£54.8m (1998-99)	£157.4m (2007-08)	9.1%
TDA	£230m (1999-2000)	£777m (2007-08)	13%
NCSL	£27.9m (2002)	£83.3m (2007/08)	15.9%
Becta	£17.9m (2001-2)	£38.4m (2007-08)	9.7%
PfS	£6.6m (2004-05)	£12.2m (2007-08)	18.0%

There is no evidence that the performance of the quangos has matched the growth in their budgets. Indeed, according to the 2008 DCSF Annual Report productivity in UK education fell by 0.7% a year between 2000 and 2006.

The proposals made here are designed, as far as possible, to reverse permanently the trends of the last 12 years. Not only do they involve the abolition of most of these quangos but they are also designed to ensure that both spending cuts and eliminaton of central interference are lasting. Just as there is no point in cutting off one of the heads of the Hydra if two grow back in its place, there is little point in embarking on a substantial and probably painful programme of reform if, within a few years, the *status quo ante* is restored.

Implementing this programme will be hard. It is a characteristic of all organisations to fight for their own survival. Quangos are no different (indeed, their lack of transparency and accountability is likely to make them particularly aggressive in their self-defence). Vociferous opposition from both the quangos under scrutiny and from within the educational establishment is to be expected. Ministers will also have to accept that winding up organisations will entail immediate financial and practical difficulties. Redundancies will have to be made and assets disposed of. Abolition and reform of the organisations considered here will also require primary legislation. This could (given political

determination as well as political will) be enacted relatively quickly, certainly within the first term of a new Parliament.

The recommendations are founded on the principle that schools should be about education – that is, rigorous subject-based teaching, not agencies of government social policy. It is also assumed that the DCSF should be replaced by a Department of Education solely responsible for schools.⁵ Social care issues should be transferred back to a separate Department.

Any discussion of reforming quangos inevitably involves some assumptions on the role of the state and on the question of centralisation. However, this report does not try to impose a rigid ideological straitjacket on the quangos under consideration. Some proposals – such as making Ofsted focus more on classroom behaviour than on desk analysis – could be considered as imposing a centralist direction on quangos. Others – such as the abolition of the QCA – are the opposite. What has informed these proposals are the following four overarching principles which are held to be self-evident:

1. Schools should have more freedom: authority and control should be devolved away from the centre wherever possible. Diversity and local initiative are to be encouraged.
2. Parents should have greater choice; and that the exercise of that choice acts as the strongest influence on schools.
3. Transparency and clarity are virtues.
4. Accountability for public money is essential.

⁵ This would in all likelihood mean that responsibility for all education policy – including Further Education and Higher Education is brought back to one single Department of Education.

2. QC(D)A AND OFQUAL

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) is the regulatory body for public examinations and publicly funded qualifications including the curriculum for the under-fives, the National Curriculum, GCSEs, A levels, GNVQs, NVQs and higher level vocational qualifications.

Government control of the curriculum originated in 1988 with the creation of the National Curriculum Council and the School Examination and Assessment Council. Their functions were combined in 1993 with the creation of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, which was in turn replaced by the QCA (created by the 1997 Education Act). Responsibility for vocational education was transferred to a new body, the Learning and Skills Council in 2000 (soon to be re-formed). In 2004, the National Assessment Agency was created to oversee examinations, but this has been reintegrated with the QCA.

Its functions are now being assumed by Ofqual, currently a part of the QCA, but scheduled to become independent – answering to Parliament – with the passage of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill, currently going through Parliament. The QCA is to become the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA), “a new agency

which will create, develop and deliver the Government's programmes for the management and reform of qualifications, curriculum and assessment."⁶ It describes its remit:⁷

"Our job will be to develop the curriculum, improve and deliver assessments, and review and reform qualifications. We want to make sure that everyone can get the knowledge, skills and qualifications they need for life in the 21st century."

Growth of staffing and income

The QCA's public funding grew by nearly three times between 1998-99 and 2007/08 from £54.8 million to £157.4 million.⁸ This is equivalent to an increase of 119% in real terms, or a real compound annual growth rate of 9.1%.⁹

Staff numbers in this period increased from 473 to 581. Much of this increase is due to new initiatives such as the National Strategies (now facing the axe after a Government u-turn) and the development of new qualifications. Ofqual, once it is fully established, will have a staff of 150.¹⁰

Criticisms of the QCA

The intrusive nature of much of what the QCA does has been recognised by politicians on all sides. The DCSF Select Committee recently concluded that there was "far too much central government control over the National Curriculum", a

⁶ QCA website.

⁷ QCDA website.

⁸ QCA Annual report and accounts.

⁹ Real term increases throughout this report are calculated using ONS CPI inflation data for 2007/08 price levels.

¹⁰ QCA annual report 2008-09.

control that has been exercised through the QCA and is now being handed to the reconstituted QCDA.¹¹ The report also found that schooling had been turned into “a franchise operation more dependent on a recipe handed down by Government rather than the exercise of professional expertise by teachers.” The chairman of the Committee, Labour MP Barry Sheerman, said: “We need to trust schools and teachers more and empower teachers to do what they do best.”

This is right. Implementing this reform would make the current joint regulatory structure of the newly formed Ofqual and the re-structured QCDA redundant – as David Cameron also said in his recent speech on quangos.¹²

Two other developments have also highlighted the failure of the QCA: the Government’s recent announcement of the abandonment of the centralising and prescriptive National Strategies (developed by the QCA); and the repeated fiascos over SATs which have led to three separate inquiries and the resignation of one Education Secretary, two chiefs of the QCA, and, more importantly, disruption of both primary and secondary schools.

¹¹ DCSF Select Committee, *National Curriculum*, April 2009.

¹² The Conservative leader has pledged to abolish the QCDA and bring responsibilities for the curriculum within the DCSF to increase accountability. He said that Ofqual would be retained but that “it is essential that the role of universities is enhanced” and that “Exam boards, working with academics and universities, must be free to design the exams based on the curriculum set.”

Recommendations

The Curriculum

The long-term aim should be to free schools from the centralising control exercised via the National Curriculum.

The QCDA should therefore be abolished and replaced by a small Curriculum Advisory Board. The remit of this body would be limited to drawing up a curriculum as a code of practice for schools. This curriculum would be voluntary for schools to use – either in part or whole. It would only be enforced on schools whose results show them to be failing.

The new Curriculum Advisory Board should not aim to produce a detailed, day-by-day curriculum. It should merely aim to set out the broad goals and topics to be covered in each subject. Once the curriculum is produced, the Board should have little to do as subsequent changes should, for the most part, be minor.¹³

This Board would report to the new Department of Education. It would require minimal resources for staffing and administration. These would be provided by the Department of Education.¹⁴

Initial appointments to the Board would be made by the Secretary of State. Thereafter, it should be a self-appointing body with its own constitution.

The Board should be composed of university professors and head teachers from the best performing state and private

¹³ Teachers, among many others, would welcome the idea of a stable curriculum.

¹⁴ The Table in the Appendix shows that a sum of £500,000 a year has been allocated as the annual cost of the Curriculum Advisory Board. This should be considered as extremely generous.

schools. Membership would be voluntary, part-time and unpaid. The National Strategies unit within the DCSF, which works closely with the QCDA, should also be wound up.

Examinations

Public tests of reading, spelling, grammar, punctuation and numeracy at 6+, 8+ and 11+ are vital, not least so that parents can see how schools are performing. Machine-scored tests with large banks of questions to select from would obviate the need for new tests every year, thereby saving large amounts of money and settling for once and for all whether standards were rising or falling. Since each child would have a different test paper, copying would be impossible. Teachers, if not their unions, will favour any arrangement which frees them from the onerous procedures involved in preparing for existing SATs and administering them. Tests should be developed by the Department of Education, advised by the new Curriculum Advisory Board and independent specialists in test design.¹⁵

A market should be allowed to develop for setting and marking other examinations (GCSEs and A-levels etc). Schools should be free to choose whichever providers they wish.

In order to safeguard against a race to the bottom, university professors, head teachers from leading secondary schools and representatives from relevant professional organisations should ensure that all A-level exams are of equal worth.¹⁶ The logic of this proposal should be extended to GCSEs.

¹⁵ As recommended in T Burkard, *Ticking the Right Boxes*, CPS, 2009. This approach is likely to extend to exams in secondary schools. See "Computerised testing likely to replace traditional exams, says head of board", *The Guardian*, 12 July 2009.

¹⁶ It is assumed that most leading academics can be expected to have an interest in ensuring that entrance examinations accurately reflect the

Ofqual should therefore be reconstituted on lines similar to the proposed Curriculum Advisory Board. Its remit should be to publish information about the validity, reliability, and equivalence to other exams; and to provide a list of approved examinations.

Ofqual should answer to the Education Select Committee and not the Secretary of State. Initial appointments to the new Ofqual Board would be made by the Secretary of State. Thereafter, it should be a self-appointing body with its own constitution. This Board should also be composed of university professors and head teachers from the best performing state and private schools, as well as representatives of relevant professional organisations. Membership would be voluntary, part-time and unpaid.

The resources needed for the reconstituted Ofqual are likely to be higher than for the Curriculum Advisory Board as it will need to commission rigorous evaluations of exams to ensure standards are maintained.¹⁷ Oversight of the logistical arrangements of exams should be carried out within the Department.

Primary legislation will be required to make these changes as the new structure of Ofqual and the QCDA is being enshrined in the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill.

quality of examinees. This proposal builds upon the proposals made by D Bassett et al, *A New Level*, Reform, June 2009.

¹⁷ The Table in the Appendix shows that a sum of £10,000,000 a year has been allocated. This should be considered as generous.

3. OFSTED

Before 1992, responsibility for school inspections was shared between Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools. Concerns over the consistency of standards, and the objectivity of local inspectors, led to the creation of Ofsted. Its remit was changed in 1998 to include the inspection of LEAs. The 2000 Learning and Skills Act extended Ofsted's reach to the Further Education sector, and the Care Standards Act of the same year did likewise with the inspection of nurseries and childminders. In 2006 Ofsted was combined with the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI), the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) to form the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills.

Ofsted's widened remit now means that it inspects:

- childminding and day care, children's homes, family centres and adoption and fostering services and agencies;
- the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service;
- maintained schools and some independent schools;
- children's services in local authorities;

- providers of teacher education;
- local authority funded further education work and inspection of education provision for 16 to 19 year olds;
- a wide range of work-based learning and skills training;
- adult and community learning;
- education and training in prisons and other secure establishments; and also monitors the work of other inspectorates of independent schools.

This expansion of Ofsted's remit means that it has moved far from being solely a school inspection body.

Growth of staffing and expenditure

Ofsted's budget in 2007-8 was £222 million.¹⁸ The amount Ofsted spends, year to year, on specific functions is hard to gauge as the way its finances are reported has changed. According to the most recent figures, however, the annual cost of inspecting maintained schools is £69 million.¹⁹

The move to self-assessment and shorter inspections in 2006 has cut costs. The number of staff has fallen by 48 since 2002. However staff costs have increased by £30.5 million over the same period and the average cost per member of staff has increased by 38.4%, from £31,000 to £43,000. The salary of the Her Majesty's Chief Inspector has increased by 70% since 2002 to £225,000-£230,000.

¹⁸ Ofsted annual report and accounts 2007-8.

¹⁹ Written Parliamentary Answer, 16 June 2009, col. 235W.

Impact on schools

The current model of school inspection is of doubtful value. The emphasis on ensuring that paperwork is in order merely diverts teachers' attention from teaching. As any teacher will attest, Ofsted inspections are preceded by frantic form-filling and box ticking.

Ofsted is no longer merely interested in how well a school teaches its pupils. Its remit has been extended so that it now must, for example, inspect how well schools promote community cohesion. In the words of Adrian Grey, Head of Institutional Inspections and Frameworks at Ofsted:²⁰

“We must make sure community cohesion becomes part of every school's ethos to celebrate diversity and recognise common values. There'll be different challenges for different schools but it's now on the agenda for them all.”

These have served to dilute the focus on standards in the classroom. They also undermine the fundamental importance of what schools should be about: education.

The new inspection regime, coming into effect in September, reduces the number of inspections for good schools. This is a step in the right direction as it will be cheaper and less intrusive for good schools, while also doing more for failing schools.²¹

²⁰ Ofsted website.

²¹ Under the new proposals, schools judged to be good or outstanding will face inspection every five years, rather than three, unless parents demand one sooner. Schools deemed satisfactory or inadequate will remain on a three yearly inspection basis. For good schools, the Chief Inspector will be required under the Apprenticeships, Children and Learning Bill to issue an 'interim statement' once three years have passed

Recommendations

Ofsted should return to being a school inspection body and focus on educational standards. Its wider social care responsibilities should be separated out as part of a wider shift away from the DCSF having responsibility for all aspects of youth policy, and a return to a Department of Education focused on standards.²²

Inspections should be limited to those schools whose results show them to be unsatisfactory, or where requested by parents or local authorities in the event of malpractice.

Inspections should focus on poorly performing schools and should require more time in classroom observation, rather than desk-based assessments. The increased cost of this type of inspection should be offset by there being fewer inspections overall and a focus on inadequate, rather than all, schools.

Inspections should, wherever possible, be led by former head or deputy head teachers who have proven expertise in the area where the school is deficient. Inspections should not be a one-off affair where weaknesses are noted but a series of visits.

The 2002 Education Act requires that new independent schools obtain approval from Ofsted before opening. This barrier to entry should be abolished. All Ofsted's powers to inspect independent schools, should be abolished. In a sector where parents have full choice, there are no accountability issues.

since the last inspection, to confirm that another inspection is not required for at least another year.

²² The Table in the Appendix shows that the cost of inspecting schools is maintained at the current level of £69 million a year.

4. THE TDA

The Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) is, in its own words, the national agency responsible for the training and development of the school workforce.

The forerunner of the TDA – the Teacher Training Agency – was formed in 1994 to regulate and finance Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). In 2004, the remit of the TTA was increased by the Secretary of State to include responsibility for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and Every Child Matters (ECM). With the 2005 Education Act, the TTA was reformed as the Training and Development Agency.²³

Current remit

The remit of the TDA includes:

- securing a sufficient supply of teachers;

²³ The Secretary of State has given the TDA responsibilities for ensuring that provision of teacher training is geared to implementation of ECM. ECM is both expensive (£244 million at last count) and politically sensitive. It will be the subject of a further study.

- increasing the number and quality of science, technology, engineering and maths teachers;
- supporting the deployment of high quality teachers in challenging schools;
- providing training and development opportunities to support staff;
- developing the “new professionalism”.

In one respect the TTA has succeeded in meeting its remit: there is currently an oversupply of both teachers and applicants for ITT courses.²⁴ The TDA’s head of recruitment, Martin Dore, has said he thought it was “possibly becoming more competitive” to get accepted on a teacher training course.²⁵

In 2007/08, there were 38,000 initial teacher trainees. Each one cost the taxpayer almost £15,600 – but only 27,700 (73%) became teachers.²⁶ In other words, £160 million was wasted on candidates who never teach.²⁷

²⁴ It should also be recognised that, in a non-centralised state, a quango should not be needed to ensure that the right number of teachers qualify every year.

²⁵ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/7906311.stm>

²⁶ TDA Annual Report.

²⁷ This high wastage ratio has existed for some time. A survey in 2002 found that: “of every 100 final year students, 40 did not make it to the classroom... A further 18% leave during the first three years of teaching, so over half the trainees are soon lost. See www.teachers.org.uk/story.php?id=1832

Growth of staffing and income

The TDA's public funding increased from £230 million in 1999/2000 to £777 million in 2007-08. Of this, £590 million is spent on ITT.²⁸ This represents a two and a half times increase in its public finding over just seven years in real terms (a real terms growth of 166%, or a real compound annual growth rate of 13%).

Administration costs have also grown rapidly in recent years; between 2003-04 and 2007-08 they increased from £14 million to £25 million, a real terms increase of 54%. Staff numbers have increased from 54 in 1995-96 (as the TTA) to 329 in 2007-08.

Impact of the TDA on schools

The TTA, concentrating only on initial teacher training, did not add directly to the burdens placed upon schools.²⁹ However, the TDA, with its additional roles implementing CPD and ECM, has added considerably to the workload of both teachers and head teachers.

This is set to become much worse, as pilot programmes (such as the Personalised Learning Agenda or the Single Level Tests) are implemented in all schools.

²⁸ The rest of the TDA budget is spent on items such as continuing professional development and the Masters in Teaching and Learning. There will doubtless be scope for saving here and this will be the subject of future study.

²⁹ However, it could be said that schools were (and are) often burdened with inadequate trainees who subsequently fail to become good teachers.

Recommendations

The TDA should be abolished. Teacher training can be provided more effectively within schools, as an employment-based system, or via short courses like Teach First.³⁰

Reducing the cost of those who train but never enter the profession is essential. To achieve this, teacher trainees should be eligible for a voucher to cover the cost of their training. This voucher should have a value of £10,000 and be administered by the Student Loan Company. The voucher, which would cover the training costs for PGCE students – would be reduced for each year spent in teaching, and be written off completely after five years teaching.³¹ Should the trainee drop out before then, the voucher would be converted into a student loan on a pro rata basis.

The voucher should cover training costs and contribute towards living expenses.³² The trainee should draw the voucher by stages to pay training and living costs. The voucher would eliminate the main function of the TDA, which is supplying grants to providers of initial teacher training.

This will also have the effect of encouraging students to choose the shortest and cheapest training courses. A major study by the US Department of Education, published in February 2009, found that pupils taught by teachers with minimal teacher training performed just as well as those taught

³⁰ About 20% of all teacher trainers currently take the EBITT (Employment-based Initial Teacher Training) route.

³¹ Students loans should also be available to cover living costs etc.

³² The Government has recently indicated that it will shift more teacher training funding from grants to loans.

by conventionally-trained teachers.³³ This follows studies in 2006 by Stanford³⁴ and in 2008 by Harvard³⁵ which found that pupils taught by uncertified teachers performed just as well as those taught by teachers with certificates. Many existing employment-based routes under the Graduate Teaching Programme are already far cheaper than PGCE and BEd courses (and are over-subscribed). With the TDA grant removed, more expensive and less practical courses will quickly be eclipsed.

Lowering the barrier to entry will have a further significant benefit: the ability to enter the profession quickly (together with the general reduction in central control proposed throughout this paper) should be attractive to high-quality graduates. Hence the pool of potential teachers will be greatly improved.³⁶

There may be some concerns about how quickly the TDA can be closed down. However, there is already a considerable over-supply of teachers at the moment, a situation likely to continue during the recession. Education blog sites report the difficulties experienced by both newly qualified and experienced teachers with up to 400 applicants for some posts.³⁷ The difficulty of

³³ www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/pdfs/education/teacherstrained09.pdf

³⁴

www.businesswire.com/portal/site/google/index.jsp?ndmViewId=news_view&newsId=20061120005320&newsLang=en

³⁵ www.hks.harvard.edu/pepg/PDF/events/colloquia/KaneOnCertification.pdf

³⁶ The Teach First programme has already shown that high-achieving graduates can make a big difference in inner-city schools. In addition, countries which recruit teachers from their top graduates have the best results in international tests of pupil achievement.

³⁷ See for example community.tes.co.uk/forums/t/330471.aspx

attracting good teachers to underperforming inner-city secondaries is independent of the overall supply of teachers.³⁸

Qualified Teacher Status

Following the abolition of the TDA, Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) should be administered within schools, by head teachers, according to minimal common standards approved by the Department of Education.

The existing commitment to make teaching a masters-level profession should be reversed. This will add significant costs (potentially more than £1 billion), as courses will be offered free of charge to England's 440,000 serving teachers in 2009-10. Recent evidence has found that teachers with an MA in Education are no more effective than others.³⁹

It is hoped that these reforms will also refocus teacher training on subject knowledge. Most teachers would welcome up-to-date training in the subjects they teach. Existing subject-enhancement courses are not always aimed at the objectives desired by universities and employers. However, with suitable input from the proposed Curriculum Advisory Board, subject-based course could eventually replace existing theory-based training in both initial teacher training and continuing professional development.

³⁸ The Table in the Appendix shows that the proposed budget for the TDA is reduced to £422 million. This comprises £250 million a year allocated as the annual cost for Initial Teacher Training (on the basis of 25,000 newly qualified teachers being eligible for vouchers worth £10,000 each) plus the current £172 million for continuing professional development. The latter will be the subject of further review.

³⁹ See "Report urges halt to extra pay for Master's Degrees", *Education Week*, 21 July, 2009.

5. THE NCSL

The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) is an executive non-departmental public body established in 2000, partly in response to the growing body of research drawing attention to the important impact of school leadership on pupil outcomes. Leadership training programmes had been the responsibility of the Teacher Training Agency between 1995 and 1998, and the DfES in 1999.⁴⁰ Plans for a national college had been announced in 1998. The College has also been charged by the Government with “a central responsibility in respect of the recruitment, development and deployment of effective school leaders”.⁴¹ Its strategic goals are, in its own words, to:⁴²

- transform children’s achievement and well-being through excellent school leadership;
- develop leadership within and beyond the school;
- identify and grow tomorrow’s leaders;

⁴⁰ OECD, *Improving School Leadership: country background report for England*, 2007.

⁴¹ Letter outlining NCSL remit from Ed Balls MP, 3 February 2009.

⁴² NCSL website.

- create a 'fit for purpose' national college that is more strategic and offers school leaders even more leadership support.

The remit of the NCSL has recently been extended to provide training for directors of children's services. From September 2009, it will be known as the National College for School and Children's Leadership.⁴³

The NCSL organises seminars, conferences and professional development training programmes as well as online resources and forums.

The NCSL also runs the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), which is now a mandatory qualification for all first-time heads in the state sector. This give the NCSL effective control over entry to headship for all state schools. Concerns have been expressed over the strong adherence to progressive teaching methods expected of those applying for this qualification.

Budget and staffing

The NCSL's grant-in-aid from the Government has increased from £27.9 million in 2002 to £83.3 million in 2007/08, a real terms increase of 174%, or a real compound annual growth rate of 18.3%.

Over the same period the number of staff has gone up from 58 to 248.⁴⁴ Its baseline budget in 2009/10 is £85 million.⁴⁵

⁴³ NCSL website.

⁴⁴ Annual reports and Hansard Written Answer 22 October 2008 col. 461W.

⁴⁵ Letter outlining NCSL remit from Ed Balls MP, 3 February 2009.

Total staff costs in 2008 were £11.5 million (up from £2.3million in 2002) with the Chief Executive earning a salary of £150,000-£155,000.⁴⁶

Recommendations

The NCSL should be abolished. It seems that the main purposes of the NCSL are the implementation of specific Government policies such as the Every Child Matters agenda and the 'personalised learning' agenda. As the Secretary of State's remit letter states:⁴⁷

“The College's work in 2009-10 *needs to be clearly linked to the Department's and the Government's wider aim for a society where all children and young people are able to achieve their full potential.*”

In addition, the NCSL's first goal, outlined in its Corporate Plan, involves “reflect[ing] the goals set out in the Children's Plan.”⁴⁸

The organisation has also failed to resolve the difficulties of recruiting head teachers, particularly in primary schools.⁴⁹ an NCSL survey in 2006 found that 43% of deputy heads and 70% of middle leaders did not want to move in to headship.⁵⁰

Indeed, the NCSL has probably exacerbated the shortage of good head teachers as the NQPH effectively limits the pool of potential head teachers to those who adhere to progressive

⁴⁶ Annual Reports and Accounts.

⁴⁷ Letter outlining NCSL remit from Ed Balls MP, 3 February 2009.

⁴⁸ NCSL Corporate Plan 2008-09.

⁴⁹ See the Association of School and College Leaders and The National Association of Head Teachers (2008), *The State of the Labour Market for Senior Staff in Schools in England and Wales, 14th annual report, 2007-08.*

⁵⁰ OECD, op. cit.

teaching orthodoxies. The NPQH should therefore no longer be a mandatory qualification for head teachers. The governing bodies of schools should be free to judge which qualifications are needed by their head teachers. Appointments should be made on the basis of aptitude and experience.

It would, in line with the recommendations for the TDA above, be preferable for the training budgets for teachers and head teachers to be controlled by schools themselves.

In some areas, specific training is important. For example, many aspiring head teachers would benefit from a clear understanding of relevant aspects of finance and education law. Training in areas such as this should be provided by the private sector or by universities and FE colleges.⁵¹

⁵¹ The Table in the Appendix shows that a sum of £42 million a year has been allocated as the annual cost of in-school training for Head Teachers. This is half the current budget of the NCSL.

6. BECTA

The British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (Becta) was formed in 1998 through the reconstitution of the National Council for Educational Technology. It is an Executive NDPB and is a registered charity.⁵²

In the words of the Secretary of State, Becta's principal aim is to "provide leadership to the educational community in all aspects of the application and embedding of new technology... to take forward an outward-facing communication and engagement strategy to involve school leaders and practitioners in developing their own approaches and plans for implementing the e-Strategy on the ground, encouraging the transfer of the most effective approaches across networks of institutions across the system."⁵³

Becta describes itself as "the government agency leading the national drive to ensure the effective and innovative use of technology throughout learning. It is our ambition to utilise the benefits of technology to create a more exciting, rewarding and

⁵² Annual report and accounts 2007-8.

⁵³ Remit letter from Secretary of State for Education, February 2007.

successful experience for learners of all ages and abilities, enabling them to achieve their potential.”⁵⁴

The organisation’s strategic objectives in 2007-08 included a number of specific targets, including.⁵⁵

- 88% of secondary schools and 50% of primary schools providing access to a personal online learning space;
- all local safeguarding children’s boards having a plan in place that covers e-safety;
- increasing the numbers of teachers who can exploit technology to personalise learning from 14% to 19% in primary and 7% to 10% in secondary schools.

Becta has also been given the lead role in the Government’s ‘e-strategy’ – “a system-wide approach to the application of ICT in education, skills and children’s services to achieve a more personalised approach.”⁵⁶

It also has sought to save the education system £100 million over three years through “committed contracts” and “the adoption of Becta-endorsed standards by all major building investment programmes.”

Funding

Becta received £38.4 million in government grants in 2007-08, up from £17.9 million in 2001-2 (an average annual real terms increase of 9.74%).⁵⁷ The recent remit letter for 2009-10 from the

⁵⁴ Becta website

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Becta annual report and accounts 2007-08.

Secretary of State outlines a much larger baseline budget of £108.79 million that includes funding for the Government's Home Access IT scheme for low income families. £62.6 million is stated as Becta's programme and running costs.⁵⁸

Staff costs in 2008 were £16.7 million (up from £3.9 million in 2001), with the Chief Executive paid a salary of £148,200. Full time equivalent staff numbers were 270 (up from 136 in 2001).⁵⁹

Recommendations

Becta should be abolished. The development and use of technology in schools should no longer require a central, publicly-funded organisation.⁶⁰

IT has become a mainstay of schools. Teachers should be trusted to develop their own plans as to how best to use technology in the classroom. If there is demand for a body of this kind to exist, it should make use of its intellectual property and expertise and operate as a private business; or as a charity. Becta currently has the structure of all three types of organisation (public, private and charitable), yet its funding sources show that it is reliant on Government grants.

Opportunities for innovation – such as greater use of open source software – should be left to schools to take up. Funding for IT projects should go directly to schools themselves rather than via a quango. Nor should there be a one size fits all approach to IT.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Remit letter from Ed Balls MP, June 2009.

⁵⁹ Becta accounts 2003-04 and 2007-8

⁶⁰ The Table in the Appendix shows that no government funding is proposed for these activities.

⁶¹ Last year, for example, Becta issued a report advising schools not to upgrade Windows operating systems to the new Vista software.

7. 11 MILLION

11 MILLION (previously The Office of the Children's Commissioner) was established under the Children Act 2004 as a Corporation Sole, "to promote awareness of the views and interests of children and young people in England."

The justification for this new body was put forward in the *Every Child Matters* Green Paper of 2003, where the Government stated its aim to involve children in the "planning, delivery and evaluation of policies and services relevant to them."

The Commissioner has limited powers to act independently of Government. He must, for example, consult the Secretary of State before holding an inquiry into a particular issue of policy. However, the powers the Commissioner does have exceed those granted to parents under the terms of the legislation. Parents are not mentioned in Part One of the Act, so although the Commissioner is required to consult organisations working with children in the discharge of his functions, he is not obliged to consult parents.⁶² Similarly, he has the power to conduct interviews, or authorise someone else to do so, with a child in

⁶² Children's Act 2004, Part One, Section 2(4).

private, subject only to the child's consent.⁶³ In addition, the advertisement for the next Commissioner states that:

“Around 11 million children in England need someone to depend on. Someone who will listen to them and put their concerns across to the people who matter. They'll trust you to take what they tell you and give it a platform, changing children's services policy right from the top.”

Yet it is self-evident that the Commissioner cannot represent the diverse concerns of 11 million children; nor can this quango provide 11 million children with someone to depend upon. This is an expensive and misleading public relations exercise.

Current structure and funding

The organisation employed the equivalent of 27.5 members of staff in 2007-08 and receives public funding of around £3 million a year. The Commissioner, Sir Al Aynsley-Green, is paid a salary of £135,000-£140,000.⁶⁴ The DCSF is currently advertising for Sir Al's successor to be appointed for a fixed five year term.

Recommendation

11 MILLION should be abolished.⁶⁵ This would provide a clear statement on the part of an incoming Government that rather than attempting to implement an overarching strategy for every child in the country, the remit of state intervention should focus on those children at most need.

Abolition will require primary legislation, as the quango was created in the Children's Act 2004.

⁶³ Ibid. Part One, Section 2(8).

⁶⁴ Annual Report and Accounts 2007-8.

⁶⁵ The Table in the Appendix shows that no government funding is proposed for these activities.

8. PFS

Partnerships for Schools (PFS) was set up in 2004 as a non-departmental public body and is the delivery organisation for the Government's Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme of renewing or rebuilding secondary schools. In 2006 it took on responsibility for the Academies programme. Its website states that:

“The key role for PFS is to ensure that investment in secondary schools is based on robust educational strategies and that BSF schools and Academies are well designed, are built on time at a reasonable cost to the taxpayer, and are properly maintained over their lifetime.”

PfS employs 111 staff and received funding of £12.2 million a year in 2007-08, up from £6.6 million in 2004-05 (an average annual real terms increase of 18.0%).⁶⁶ It was recently given additional responsibilities and from October 2009 will manage all school building and refurbishment programmes (the total value of these additional programmes is £15.5 billion up until 2011).⁶⁷

⁶⁶ PFS Annual Report 2007-08.

⁶⁷ DCSF press release, 16 June 2009.

A recent Public Accounts Committee Report on the BSF programme criticised the DCSF and PfS as having “wasted public money by relying on consultants to make up for the shortfalls in its own skills and resources.”⁶⁸ In addition, another recent report has accused Partnerships for Schools of bullying local authorities and of “empire building” and “mission creep” as the organisation “takes on more and more responsibility from the DCSF.”⁶⁹

Recommendation

PfS should be abolished. The current system has not succeeded in helping new providers setting up schools, as the slow progress of the Academies model shows.

The replacement body for PfS should be a small organisation staffed by building specialists and focused solely on the remit of helping the creation of new schools.⁷⁰

A small, specialist central body within the DCSF will also still be required to provide advice and guidance on planning regulations, building design and other practical issues, especially for those setting up new ‘Swedish model’ schools.

The future of BSF and above all the controversial Public Private Partnership scheme are outside the remit of this paper. However, the medium-term aim for a new Government should be the direct funding of schools themselves so that schools take control of both refurbishment and new build projects.

⁶⁸ Public Accounts Committee, *Building Schools for the Future: renewing the secondary school estate*, May 2009.

⁶⁹ K Quarmbay et al, *Building Blocks? An Investigation into Building Schools for the Future*, Policy Exchange, July 2009.

⁷⁰ The Table in the Appendix shows that funding for the replacement body is cut by 50% to £6 million.

9. TEACHERS' TV

Launched in 2005 Teachers' TV is an advisory non-departmental public body. It is a state funded television channel for teachers available free to air via digital terrestrial television. Its remit as laid out by the DCSF is to:⁷¹

“...provide a service to help head teachers, teachers, governors, teaching assistants, school support staff and other people who work in schools to deliver education to the highest possible standard.”

In 2007 the channel received £16.7 million from the DCSF, down from £19.9 million in 2005 (an average annual real terms fall of 9.29%).⁷² It is operated by an independent media consortium, Education Digital, which was selected by the DCSF during a tender process in 2004. In 2008, the channel was watched by 110,000 members of the schools workforce on average each month.⁷³ The total target audience of the channel is 915,000.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Hansard, 25 November 2008, col 1424W.

⁷² Hansard, 10 November 2008, 901W.

⁷³ Hansard Written Answer, 21 April 2008, col 1573W.

⁷⁴ Teachers' TV Board of Governors Annual Report 2008.

Recommendation

Teachers TV should be abolished. If there is demand for a channel of this kind (either operating via free to air television, or more realistically, via the internet) it should be left to the private sector.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ The Table in the Appendix shows that no government funding is proposed for these activities.

10. SFT

The School Food Trust (SFT) is both an NDPB and a charitable company limited by guarantee. Established in 2005 following Jamie Oliver's school food campaign, it receives funding from the DCSF and the Big Lottery Fund (BLF). In 2008 the SFT received £7.7 million funding from the government and £1.2 million from the BLF. It employs 51 people (up from 27 in 2007).⁷⁶ The Chief Executive's salary is between £90-95,000 a year.

The Trust's function is "to promote the education and health of children and young people by improving the quality of food supplied and consumed in schools."⁷⁷

Increased Government regulation of school food can make it harder for schools to produce hot meals. As *The Times* has reported, stringent new requirements on nutritional content.⁷⁸

“...could bring about the demise of hot meals in secondary schools, as caterers struggle to cope with the

⁷⁶ Financial Statements 2008.

⁷⁷ SFT website.

⁷⁸ 'Regulations put hot school meals at risk', *The Times*, 25 March 2009.

expensive and time-consuming restrictions. From September they will have to buy costly computer equipment to calculate the nutritional content of every meal. Each dish must meet 14 standards, including calorie content, fat, proteins and vitamins.”

The most recent schools meals survey shows that take-up of school lunches is still below 40% of both primary and secondary schools.⁷⁹

Recommendation

The SFT should be abolished. While its aims may be laudable (few would dispute the link between children’s diet and performance), imposing a uniform dietary standard on all children cannot be justified either medically or ethically. There is no reason why a central public body, or central funding, is required to deliver the goal of improved food in schools and there is little evidence that the SFT has succeeded in achieving this.⁸⁰

The SFT could seek to survive as an independent charity. It could then apply for National Lottery funding or seek other sources of funding from the public.⁸¹

⁷⁹ LACA, *Take-up of school lunches in England 2008-09*.

⁸⁰ It is worth noting that children vary greatly in their dietary requirements, and that received wisdom on optimal diet is both hotly contested and constantly changing. These factors suggest that the assumption that the “man in Whitehall (or even Jamie Oliver) knows best” is misguided.

⁸¹ The Table in the Appendix shows that no government funding is proposed for these activities.

11. THE GTC

The General Teaching Council for England (GTC) is the professional body for teachers in England and was set up in 2000. Although it is not a non-departmental public body, the GTC is a Public Corporation, established in legislation (the Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998).⁸²

Membership of the GTC is compulsory for all qualified teachers working in the state sector. It had 538,500 members in 2008.⁸³ The subscription fee of £33 is taken directly from teachers' salaries, which were increased by the exact amount to cover the levy.⁸⁴

In 2007-08 the GTC's income was £19.05 million (97% of which was from registration fees) up from £9.3 million in 2001-02 (an average annual real terms increase of 8.9%).⁸⁵ It also received funding from the DCSF to fund the processing of teaching

⁸² GTC Annual Report 2008.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Teacher Support Network website.

⁸⁵ Note that in 2001-02, in its first year of operation, the income for the GTC came from the DCSF.

qualifications and from Becta, for a specific programme. The Chief Executive's salary in 2007-8 was £128,000.⁸⁶

The GTC's statutory responsibilities are to "maintain a register of qualified teachers in England and set out and enforce standards for the teaching profession, in the interests of the public" and "to provide advice to government and other agencies on important issues that affect the quality of teaching and learning." It is the statutory awarding body for Qualified Teacher Status.⁸⁷

Arguably the most important role of the GTC, or an equivalent body of this kind, is its disciplinary functions. In 2007-8 it held 154 disciplinary hearings.⁸⁸ It is currently very difficult, however, to get rid of poor teachers. Just ten teachers have been struck off for incompetence in ten years.⁸⁹ In response to these concerns the Government recently announced plans to assess teachers every five years as part of a 'licence to teach' scheme – an implicit acknowledgment of the flaws in the current system, both in terms of teacher training and the current disciplinary structures.⁹⁰

Its remit has grown markedly. It now includes professional development programmes for teachers, advising Government on policy and influencing new developments in pedagogy. Many of these areas duplicate the work of other quangos. An

⁸⁶ GTC Annual Report 2008.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ 'Just 10 teachers struck off for incompetence in 10 years, says General Teaching Council', *The Daily Telegraph*, 9 January 2009.

⁹⁰ Ed Balls MP, 'Teachers to be "licensed" to work in schools', *The Daily Telegraph*, 1 July 2009.

example is the Teacher Learning Academy (TLA). This organisation, which describes itself as “a core strategic initiative for the GTC”⁹¹ was said, by the Secretary of State, to be a “unique national system for recognising teachers’ practice-based professional development.”⁹² Its stated aim is “to help improve standards of teaching and the quality of learning in the public interest.”⁹³ It is not made clear how these aims are not already being fulfilled by the QCA or the TDA.

Recommendation

Membership of the GTC should be voluntary for teachers, rather than a compulsory levy. This would ensure it was a genuinely independent, professional body, rather than a *de facto* public body dependent on a compulsory teaching ‘tax’.⁹⁴

On the issue of discipline, schools should have the primary responsibility for dealing with complaints against teachers. However, a higher ‘court of appeal’ function could be carried out by a unit within the Department, answerable to the Secretary of State. It would also be worth considering whether this unit should be advised by Ofsted, as part of its inspection process in the event of notable issues arising in particular schools.

⁹¹ TLA website.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ TLA website.

⁹⁴ The Table in the Appendix shows that no government funding is proposed for these activities.

12. THE STRB

The School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) was established in 1991 in Section One of The School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act. Its remit is to advise Government on the statutory employment conditions of teachers in England and Wales, including duties, working time and pay. Its legal status was then reaffirmed in the Education Act 2002.

The Government has undertaken to implement the recommendations of all pay review bodies "unless there are clear and compelling reasons to the contrary".

The Chair of the Body is appointed by the Prime Minister and the members by the Secretary of State. The Chair is paid £350 per day and members £300 per day for attending STRB meetings and undertaking school visits.⁹⁵

Recommendation

The STRB should be abolished. All schools should be given the freedom to set teachers' pay rates as they wish.

⁹⁵ TeacherNet website.

APPENDIX

SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

QUANGO	NO. OF STAFF	INCOME FROM GOV'T 2007-08	PROPOSED REFORM	PROPOSED INCOME	SAVING
QC(D)A & OFQUAL	581	£157m	Abolish. Transfer to voluntary body.	£11m	£160m
Ofsted*		£69m*	Separate school inspection from social care.	£69m	–
TDA	329	£777m	Abolish. Schools to have responsibility for training.	£422m	£340m
NCSL	248	£83m	Abolish. Half the current budget to be devolved directly to schools.	£42m	£42m
Becta	270	£38m	Abolish	–	£38m
11 MILLION	28	£3m	Abolish	–	£3m
PfS	111	£12m	Reform	£6m	£6m
Teachers' TV		£17m	Abolish	–	£17m
SFT	51	£8m	Transfer to voluntary sector	–	£8m
GTC	206	£19m	Transfer to voluntary sector	–	£19m
The STRB	n/a		Abolish. Devolve powers to schools	–	–
TOTALS		£1,183m		£550m	£633m

Note that, although some quangos have published more recent accounts, employment and income data for 2007-08 are used to ensure comparability. The data for both the Proposed Budget and Savings are only indicative and are based on savings on the actual 2007-08 income of quangos. GTC income includes compulsory levies on teachers.

* Data for Ofsted relates only to school inspections.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is the first report of the Centre for Policy Studies working group on quangos. School quangos were chosen as the initial focus for the group as it was felt that this was an area where a radical reduction in the scope and functions of quangos, and the heavy-handed state regulation that goes with them, could yield great benefits for both schools and children.

We would like to thank the education experts and policy specialists who have provided invaluable help and advice during the preparation of this report. They include Richard Hamilton and Simon Webley whose original inspiration this is, Tom Cleford who undertook most of the original research and drafting, as well as Theodore Agnew, George Bridges, Nigel Fletcher, John McIntosh, Ian Moore, John Nash and Nick Seaton who all made numerous wise and helpful suggestions to the policies suggested here.

None of those listed here, however, should be held responsible for any of the report's content. That burden lies with the authors, as does responsibility for all errors and omissions.



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