

Open Policy Experiment I (UPDATE): School Direct & ITT

On 22 July, I posted a [blog](#) inviting comments on teacher training and school direct. Many replied.

Below is a summary of the comments and some thoughts from me. I have tried to simplify and cluster things together in order to make it easier for officials and spads to print and discuss. Something in quote marks - such as 'XXX' - means I am quoting a commenter; square brackets within quote marks [XXX] are additions by me. I think it is clear what is me and what is commenters.

I hope commenters feel I have done this in good faith. My only motive is to help teacher training improve. However, it is an inadequate document done too hastily (I thought a worse document now would be better than a better document in a few weeks). Further, teacher training is one of the policy areas I know least about. Please comment about further questions / corrections etc. I will have one more edit of this document, repost it, and I'll ponder suggestions on how the exercise might usefully be taken further, if commenters think it can.

I know that some junior ministers and many of the officials responsible for training *have* read all your comments. (I do not know whether Nicky Morgan or her spads have.) Of course this offers no guarantees that anything useful will be done but I know there are some very good and conscientious officials working on training issues and they will try their best to push things in a rational direction and correct flaws that have been clarified in this process.

I also know from talking to people inside Whitehall how much they wish they could run their own 'open policy' exercises. Hopefully, an effect of this experiment will be that departments do their own versions of this, with better tools than I can muster with my non-existent technical skills. It will be hard, though, for reasons I'll explore another time.

Obviously in no sense is this 'my' document. It is the product of the commenters and anybody is free to use it in any they wish.

Having written this, I am aware that on a number of occasions I have written things like 'the DfE cannot do this'. Now I know this is partly because of horror flashbacks to 2011. The DfE is a very different place than then, but it is still a government department and therefore fundamentally does not work in all sorts of ways. Also, there is probably some sort of rule of thumb whereby as the number of major SoS priorities falls, the capacity of the DfE to do any specific X rises as a square, so if NM intends to implement few new things (as Downing St says), the capacity of DfE to deliver on training sharply increases, if she were to make it a priority. I am sure I am not 'much' too pessimistic about Whitehall capacity, I may be 'a bit' too pessimistic, and I may now be overcompensating for a known bias!

I am very grateful to those who contributed. So please do not take this as a dig at you! But please note... Despite my pleas in the original email, while many people left *general comments* about 'bureaucracy', *not one person* left a comment along the lines of 'document X, pages A-B, should be scrapped', or 'regulation X, linked [HERE](#), causes us unnecessary work/expense and could be binned without loss'. *Nobody* gave a specific example such that a spad could get in officials and say 'unless someone comes up with a good argument, we're binning this specific X'. See below.

I first treat some issues thematically then list some miscellaneous specific comments.

Dominic Cummings
22 August 2014

Analysis

Open access for taxpayer-funded training materials, open data systems

A few commenters suggested that training providers should make their materials 'open access'. I strongly agree. I tried to push this through last year. I thought that transparency regarding the materials used by HE ITT providers would 1) help objective assessments of training quality and 2) encourage and enable people to replace bad stuff with good stuff.

I have not seen a good argument against this. In the DfE, the arguments amounted to: a) the HEIs oppose it and b) 'all sorts of legal issues' (this is constant in Whitehall and is occasionally a major problem, is usually not, but always soaks up energy). My conclusion, based on experience, was that these objections were easily surmountable and just needed some firm pushing from the 7th floor. Gove ordered this to happen last year and I expected it to be happening in the first quarter of 2014 after I left so it would be interesting to know why it did not happen.

One commenter said: 'Without wanting to sound rude, the DfE is still collecting data in word processing documents so I doubt there is much real understanding of how to build on-line communities there. It certainly isn't easy but you need a can do attitude to it rather than identifying all the reasons why it won't work... I only use open systems so when they send me something in a Word Document that won't open in eg Google Docs or Apache OpenOffice, I politely ask them to send it me in an open format in line with cabinet office policy because they should not be forcing me to use specific applications from one monopoly supplier (and send the the link <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-standards-principles/open-standards-principles>). Mostly they are getting the message. DfE VQ reform say they are moving to web based data collection next year. So we are getting somewhere even if it is glacially slow.'

I agree. I know some senior officials such as Leunig are aware of this issue and are pushing in the right direction. In general, the world understandably assumes that ministers control all sorts of issues like this and can 'just make it happen'. This is wrong. Many issues like this - and *everything* to do with websites - are effectively outside DfE ministers' control. Yes, if a SoS wanted to make this a top priority and fight over it for a year or more on a weekly basis they could probably make things improve faster - but there is no guarantee and the effort/reward ratio may be dire.¹ Many of these things are a combination of 'cross-Whitehall', therefore inherently nightmarish, or Cabinet Office controlled, therefore inherently outside DfE control.²

Recommendation. 1) If you are taxpayer funded, then you must make your training materials 'open access' under some sort of Creative Commons license. 2) The DfE, its agencies, schools, and HEIs must use 'open systems' for data wherever possible in accordance with DfE and Cabinet Office policy, and the DfE must stop collecting data in the form of Word and PDF documents.

¹ Always remember the DfE lifts. 2010-14, all spads, many junior ministers, one Secretary of State, three Permanent Secretaries, and two PPS tried to fix the permanently broken DfE lifts. All failed ignominiously.

² E.g. 2010-14 people complained constantly about DfE websites as if Gove controlled them. Many people invented conspiracies involving things disappearing from websites that they blamed on us. But we had almost no control over DfE websites or the mass migrations that involved many things disappearing. The default mode as of 2013 was that updating the DfE website on a request from SoS would take at least ~48 hours *if officials thought the request legitimate*. We could not even get full transcripts of Gove speeches on the DfE website (no such archive exists). The situation was so bad in 2013 I threatened to set up a WordPress blog and just use that as 'Gove's alternative website', which I would have done had I stayed.

Consistency of training and mentoring?

Many commenters said that even where courses are good there are issues of consistency. Many commenters stressed a) how important mentors are and b) how inconsistent the quality is. David Cameron (not the PM) also stressed the need for 'system leaders' to focus on mentoring quality and, surely rightly, the central role of Teaching Schools (I hope the DfE as well as Teach First has looked at his PhD on TF mentoring). As David Weston pointed out, this US report analyses the importance of high quality mentoring: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/07/23/teacher-turnover-rate_n_5614972.html?&ir=Education&ncid=tweetInkushpmsg00000023

David Weston suggested 'a qualification/accreditation either for mentors or, perhaps more practical, for those who oversee mentors'. My answer would be: yes, but WHO can do this reliably?

Nobody set out practical steps the DfE could take to improve mentoring. Teaching Schools seem to me the natural focus for this effort - not Whitehall.

Recommendation. ?? Teaching Schools to address the consistency of mentoring. How??

The QTS issue

Many commenters said this was central to ITT issues.

It would obviously be good if there were high quality standards that were broadly accepted to define with useful precision *what a trainee teacher should be able to do*. The old QTS standards did not do this and it is obvious that the QTS requirement itself is not a guarantee that someone is a 'good' teacher.

One reason we stopped writing into new Academies' Funding Agreements (from summer 2012) that they only hire QTS-teachers was to make it easier for state schools to hire good teachers from private schools.³ It seemed perverse to keep bureaucratic restrictions that *stop* state schools hiring, say, a great maths teacher from a top private school who wants to teach in a state school, particularly given various acute shortages in the state sector.

Another reason was that we wanted people outside the DfE to work on the problem of defining what good standards should look like. We thought that the school system and teaching profession would be healthier in the long-term if the debate about defining 'a good teacher' moved out of Whitehall.⁴ It seemed to us that progress would come from bottom-up evolution, amid the profession, of new versions of QTS that would actually signal worthwhile information. This process was something that the DfE could not do properly. It also seemed to us that the potential gain

³ Getting this through the DfE was hard. Ironically, after we did it officials said that changes we had made to implement the Wolf Report's recommendations on QTLS in 2011 had inadvertently driven a legal HUMVEE through QTS but 'nobody has noticed including the unions'. I can't remember the details of how the lawyers described the new situation but any new approach must grip these details. There is a good note by Marcus Bell explaining the situation and the press office has a 'line to take' drafted by me and a press officer in 2012 explaining the situation in simple terms.

⁴ I would argue that in general it has been a feature of the past few hundred years that progress has come with removing state-controlled 'licenses to practice', given that a) states are rarely able to define necessary qualifications well, b) even when they do they are very slow to spot how labour markets evolve, c) centralised processes are usually captured by powerful insiders, and d) competition has been generally good for the public (though not for specific elements of the labour market over short time scales who often are disrupted by innovation). The guilds of the Middle Ages complained but modern states generally over-ruled them, much to the benefit of the public (though at a cost to those granted privileges by the guild system). Removing the guilds was seen as an element of liberal progress in Enlightenment Europe.

from making this transition far outweighed what we saw as trivial/negligible risks in removing the existing QTS framework.

People in education and Whitehall tend to have limited experience of other cultures so they do not know how HR, training etc can be done differently and much more successfully. For example, last year I shared this article on Netflix and HR with various senior officials in Whitehall (in and out of DfE). It was much discussed in the private sector but made no dint that I could detect in public sector discussion. It was interesting how surprised many of them were - and also how they *all* said something like 'there is no chance of our culture moving in this direction', and how the better ones actually thought about the meaning of this. One of the most senior officials in Whitehall emailed me, 'The culture described here ... is not in the legal framework, civil service rules or the working culture here.' Quite.

<http://hbr.org/2014/01/how-netflix-reinvented-hr/ar/1>

The main argument against our view seems to be: *maybe QTS was poor but you should have replaced it not just abolished it.* This argument is often made. It assumes that the DfE can easily 1) create good policy, 2) implement it, 3) fix errors in (1) and (2). Wrong. Even when it can do the first, the second often is impossible for the same reasons that prevent (3). It must be considered that all policy-making occurred in an environment that was a) managerially dysfunctional, and b) highly, and from summer 2012 increasingly, politicised.⁵ Often the best we could do was scrap something bad, or implement an 80% solution, because trying to do more would have sunk the chances of doing *anything*.⁶

David Weston suggests that a new QTS:

'... should not happen at the end of year 1, it should be year 3 or 4, accredited jointly between HEIs and schools – both would need to sign off. Given the importance of subject knowledge and pedagogy there should be different standards in each starting specialism... ITT Standards need to include more specifics about the theory that teachers need to know and then we need more common mechanisms for ensuring that teachers understand these – e.g. move toward common exams. The content needs to be determined through debate, research and consensus and then each standard needs evaluating through, e.g., RCTs to ensure that having the standard does lead to improved outcomes. I'd tentatively suggest that we should be looking at areas such as:

- '– Some basic psychology (e.g. motivation, mindset, self-efficacy, attachment)
- Some basic 'learning science' (e.g. the basics of memory, retrieval, encoding, spacing, testing, etc)
- The principles of effective assessment
- The principles of effective research and evaluation – becoming research-literate, critical consumers who can start to consider how to evaluate effectively
- Common learning issues in the specialist subject area: e.g. misconceptions, proven 'best practice' models and approaches.
- The characteristics, diagnosis and approach to working with common SEND issues.'

⁵ A) No 10 did/does not work as a policy coordinating entity. B) Clegg was determined to scupper many DfE policies because, as he explained, attacking Gove played very well with LibDem core voters in their focus groups. To those who deny there were such focus groups, ask Clegg and Alexander why they told Cameron, Osborne, and Gove this in 2013?

⁶ My opposition to the DfE being involved with QTS and certification of teachers was strengthened in summer 2013 by a specific awful incident regarding ITT. I won't go into it now as it may cause more harm than good but at some point I will as it is an excellent case study in a) Whitehall dysfunction, and b) why DfE should not be trusted with things like QTS. If it leaks, I will blog.

Before I left, there were discussions about creating a new version of QTS that would, as DW suggests, come *after* a more substantial period of training than a year (which I think most people now support?). This was being held up by Clegg's office.⁷ Just before Gove was moved, I was told that Laws had prevailed upon Clegg to drop his objections and let the new scheme be announced, and Gove intended to announce it before the end of the summer term. I do not know what the current status of this is but I am sure that there is a plan ~95% ready to go sitting on DfE computers.

I suggest:

1. Do *not* launch a new QTS policy in a normal way. (Here's our new standards, let's have a consultation, here's the parliamentary statement, here's the exclusive to Paton etc.)
2. If there is a DfE 'announcement', invite Hunt and Brennan into the department to discuss it first.
3. A new QTS should be awarded after a few years - not one year as now - and be something that is regarded not as a basic 'can be allowed in the classroom' certificate but as a 'reliable signal that X is a good teacher'.
4. This requires credible institutions to put their reputations behind certification and de-certification.
5. The standards must not be drawn up in the DfE.
6. The standards must evolve bottom-up from the profession. If I were in DfE working on this now, I would try to involve Rob Coe and the EEF. NB. the profession is not synonymous with the unions. Let the unions have their say but do not let the unions dominate the process or it will not have credibility with the public.
7. The standards must go through exhaustive testing and refinement. A wiki-style process could easily support this (but NB. the DfE would not be able to run such a website). It would draw on *what the very best institutions do now and how other countries do it*. (This is something that the best companies do naturally and Whitehall struggles to do at all.)
8. The standards must respect the differing needs of different subjects.
9. The standards must prove their value because the most respected institutions support them *by choice*, not because the DfE forces them to.
10. Avoid the usual political 'search for consensus' - i.e. a stitch up between powerful incumbent forces that is imposed on everybody, and keeps powerful people happy because they can tell their gang that they were at the table.
11. A new QTS created like this would be something that the vast majority of teachers and schools would want to use but systems must be flexible enough to adapt to odd circumstances. E.g. extremely successful and venerable head of maths X wants to teach in a state school for two years before retiring - X must be allowed to do this without a stupid demand that X attends a course to get a certificate. Rigid rules that prevent intelligent flexibility are a sign of a failed system - not high quality.
12. I think most of the commenters - but not me - would, assuming such a process works well, then want the DfE to require all state school teachers to comply with these new standards. (I think such a move would lead to the rapid implosion of the new standards as a quality document as I do not think that Whitehall can be trusted with such things, but I am in a minority on this and it seems teachers would prefer Whitehall control. To me this is a sign of how de-professionalised teachers have become.)
13. The DfE could set out a roadmap for such a process and try to get support from Labour and the LibDems, so that whoever wins the election a new system will emerge bottom-up in way that genuinely reflects the distributed wisdom of the system.

⁷ Clegg's advisors said that he wanted to keep the issue on the agenda for the election.

14. Done like this, a new QTS process could be a model for other school policies.⁸
15. If it cannot be done something like this, the DfE should do nothing. A normal process would produce a normal result - failure.

There is a connected issue - judging the performance of teachers through their careers. It is obvious that while it *can* be done well, nevertheless a) Ofsted and b) many schools do a bad job of this. This is generally a hard problem in all fields. Private companies often get it badly wrong - but they go bust. Academia can get it badly wrong - the inventor of the arXiv was famously binned by his university because of its 'impact assessment' system - but there are self-correcting mechanisms.⁹ Public services lacking effective feedback mechanisms can get this wrong repeatedly and for a long time. I think this is connected to an issue regarding tests that I will deal with briefly below (and in a separate blog).

Recommendation. 1) 'The profession' [how to define?] needs to develop QTS standards that are robust and widely accepted, and which respect the different needs of different subjects. 2) Such standards need rigorous testing before there is any question of imposing them nationally.

How to improve School Direct?

Many complained SD was introduced badly. True. So was pretty much everything. That's Whitehall. Could we have done better? Of course. But only if five people had made it a much higher priority. If we had done that, then other things would have broken. This is an unsatisfactory answer but it should point to some fundamental issues about implementation. We did not have an option of an 'optimal introduction' any more than the captain of the *Titanic* had an option of an 'optimal response' to the iceberg. We were capsizing. The only real choice was - try SD sub-optimally or leave the whole thing alone. We chose the first. Now the ship is not capsizing errors can be corrected. This is not an 'excuse' - it is an explanation.

Someone who played a central role in training policy after 2010 emailed me and I pasted the email (tweaked only to hide identity) into the comments along with some replies [inside square brackets].

“1) SD needs a proper evaluation urgently. [Agreed.]

“2) It seems to work well for academy chains that have got their act together (ARK, Harris, Cabot, Outwood Grange etc...) – they have the capacity to recruit good people and hire decent people to do the training. [Agreed.]

“3) Works much less well for individual schools or small groups that don't have this capacity. This was inevitable the moment DfE decided not to have a central recruitment process. They find it hard/complex to recruit and end up handing back places. In addition quality of the training will only be as good as the quality of the school. So it is patchy.

[Mostly agreed. Some good individual schools are also happy and doing well but it's clearly true many aren't. Sam Freedman argued for a central recruitment process in his PX report pre-2010

⁸The approach we used 2010-14 was an odd specific thing - a product of particular odd historical contingencies and personalities - with limited general application to normal policy making and implementation. Cf. future blog.

⁹Someone, I can't remember who, said that the research impact assessment form obviously didn't have a field for 'totally revolutionised the way science is done'.

and in meetings with me and MG in the DfE. We explored doing this in 2011 but the dysfunction of the department made it impossible. A scheme was proposed but running something involving a new IT system was an obvious car crash. We therefore decided to go ahead without a central process and instead hoped/tried to encourage an organic approach entirely bottom-up. I think this was the right thing given the constraints. The other options were a) drop the whole idea, b) approve a central recruitment process that would have 1) delayed everything and then 2) been a shambles with >95% probability. It is the sort of thing that *could be done now in the DfE* given it is in much better shape though it would still be much harder to do than people outside realise, given inevitable nightmare arguments about a) EU procurement rules and b) Whitehall approaches to IT that separately and in combination would be a real pain. Two NEDs could help enormously though - Paul Marshall and Jim O'Neill, both of whom could help officials minimise the chances of failure.]

“4) The system is adjusting and we’re starting to see larger groups of schools come together to manage recruitment etc... but left to happen organically this will probably take too long to avoid a recruitment crisis over the next few years.

[The commenter has much better finger tip feel than me for likely dynamics of 'recruitment crisis' but I would make one point: the DfE's data is always late and bad and my experience confirmed me in the view that we must find a way of allowing supply/demand of teacher training recruitment to become a bottom-up process driven by schools/demographics rather than a top-down process driven by attempted 'wise central planning in the DfE'. Nothing I saw suggested to me that the latter will work, certainly without a transformation of Whitehall that is inconceivable regardless of whether DC or EM is next PM. Also, as Tom Bennett has pointed out, the DfE's central planning did not prevent previous 'recruitment crises'. To push the point to an extreme: nobody would suggest a central process to plan recruitment of different types of programmers in Silicon Valley: an adaptable ecosystem is the best solution. Teacher training needs to be more like successful models outside Whitehall rather than resembling a 1950s Whitehall process. I do not mean that the current system is right or that we could not have done it better - it obviously is not right and it could be much better. But the preferred evolution should be mechanisms that allow decentralised coordination/adaptability rather than more central planning based on bad data and the inevitably limited attention span of MPs.]

“5) So the system could be pushed by either introducing centralised recruitment or, perhaps more realistically, getting schools to cluster together in a slightly more brokered/organised way to do joint recruitment and training (unless of course they’re already in an academy chain or strong Teaching School alliance).

[For the reasons above I think the second option is more likely to work and the first option is more likely a) to blow up and b) be used to seize back control for Whitehall. But I also think that IF a SoS made it a top priority AND insisted on involving people from outside Whitehall in the design and implementation AND if noise from EU procurement etc could be minimised - THEN a central recruitment process could enable decentralised adaptability.]

“6) In terms of ITT itself what ARK, Teach First and a few others are doing is at the cutting edge. Essentially building in more practice of specific technique/routines a la Doug Lemov alongside traditional theoretical/classroom based material. Lots of the university people hate this as they see it as ‘teaching tips’ and taking away from the intellectual value of teaching but it really is a false dichotomy...you can have both.”

[I strongly agree with this point and I think it is vital. The main hope of Sam Freedman, Gove, Zoete, me was to enable the Doug Lemov approach to be integrated in Academy chains so that direct empirical evidence of what works is built on and failure is quickly adapted to. This is consistent with Feynman's classic essay on Cargo Cult science and education research. It is very hard not to fool yourself about what works. Much education 'research' has spread errors - not knowledge. Physics has long-established tools to limit human propensity to fool oneself - tools that have developed the most accurate quantitative models of the world that we have. Medicine ignored this for a long time but has done better in recent decades. Teaching must now do the same. (Obviously neither medicine nor teaching can approach the accuracy of physics but that is not the point - mechanisms for not fooling oneself can be built.) Here I am very hopeful as I think things like Goldacre's report, ResearchED and all the other stuff that has grown recently is an unstoppable tide now, despite union opposition and wariness/recalcitrance from many in universities.]

Some other commenters suggested ways to improve SD...

'School Direct schools should either all offer a PGCE, or none of them should. Either we want this qualification or we don't. As it is, I believe the fact that 'PGCE' is synonymous with 'traditional teacher training in a university' puts prospective teachers off School Direct - when in fact they probably would get a PGCE with School Direct anyway.'

'Look again at the application process. From an applicant's point of view as well as that of the School Direct school, a single portal containing both the persuasive argument to choose teaching, the information on the routes and funding available available and the application system itself would make the most sense. This would mean taking the process away from UCAS and either placing it with an executive agency of the DfE or with a separate body such as the mooted 'Royal College of Teachers'. [This is the point raised above. It makes sense. The issue is who does it?]

'I am really concerned about how certain types of school get access to the very best trainees. This was very much previously at the heart of ITE delivery as part of a social responsibility to local schools. I fear the supply of high quality trainees to challenging schools may dry up.'

There was a very thoughtful comment by Christine Counsell which I encourage you to read. She runs a PGCE in Cambridge and is largely critical of SD. An exert: 'Whatever else 'schools-led' must mean, it must include some notion of 'schools-led at the subject level'. That involves building capacity in a subject mentor team. It means having leadership/coordination that regularly reviews the specifically subject quality of the training and outcomes, developing its own robust criteria. It is not enough to rely on a set of 'Standards' which are set at a low base line and which separate subject knowledge from everything else, encouraging an atomized assessment and ITT curriculum. As goals for trainees, it certainly isn't appropriate to rely on flawed measures of pupil progress such as Level Descriptions and current GCSE markschemes (in history, in particular, it would be madness to use either as measures of rigour, and diverse history teachers have long said this). A group of subject mentors needs to be constantly generating, reviewing and scrutinizing its own measures of quality in teaching that particular subject and in its definitions of rigour and excellence for pupils in that subject. They need to be doing that in conversation with wider research and practice in the subject... [W]e need a higher premium on (a) definitions of high quality subject-specific training construed in disciplinary, scholarly terms (not numerical outputs and not generic measures, untranslatable across subjects); (b) selection and nurture of subject-specialist mentors; and (c) communities of subject-specific mentors who consume and produce knowledge about subject and about subject mentoring, who are given time to do so, whose distinctive specialist knowledge is highly esteemed and who share in responsibility for all parts of a fully blended course.'

Even some of those like David Spence who are very critical of Gove and the way SD was introduced agree that it has had some very positive effects.

This comment is interesting from someone involved in a successful alliance using SD:

'We have trained 35 teachers through the School Direct route this year and we have recruited 51 for 2014/15. All receive a PGCE.

'We have had phenomenal success which I put down to several things:

'1 – the quality of the recruitment process. We have been conscious not only to consider academic ability along with subject knowledge but also to consider their passion for the profession, their ability to interact with children & young people and their resilience. We have not simply recruited to fill our allocation. We have recruited high quality graduates who want to make a difference.

'2- all our trainees are inducted throughout the summer term and this continues throughout the summer holidays. Feedback from trainees tells us this was invaluable and enabled them to feel more confident in their schools in September. We cover areas such as vision, behaviour management, professional conduct, including dress & lesson planning et al.

'3- all schools in our alliance who take trainees have to agree to their selected mentors bring trained by us. This allows us to QA the mentors and ensures consistency for everyone. This is non negotiable. We have experienced no issues from schools about engaging with this training.

'4 – high quality relationships with HEIs. We work in close collaboration and have an honest and transparent approach. All parties openly acknowledge what strengths they bring to the table and we work to these strengths. We are now looking to some joint appointments with Sheffield Hallam University to ensure we have a presence on university campus.

'5 – we have developed a tracking system for our trainees which allows us to intervene if a trainee is struggling in a particular area. This tracker is used across the alliance and we provide opportunities for mentors to meet each other to discuss progress of trainees. We have had 100% success rate this year with no trainee dropping out.

'33/35 of the trainees have secured jobs. Of the 2 who haven't, one has decided to travel and the other is relocating in the south due to family commitments.

'I suggest you access the NCTL 2014 Fellowship Commission Report. We covered a lot of teacher training and recruitment issues and made lots of recommendations.

'To finish, schools need to truly commit to teacher training. We are responsible for training the future of our profession & our children deserve the best quality teachers. I am an advocate of SD. We have invested time & effort in getting it right and we have worked in collaboration in order to do so.'

Recommendations. 1) Charlie Taylor and Tim Leunig should, if they aren't already, develop a plan for a proper evaluation of SD and get Gibb to sign it off. (The evaluation should have nothing like the usual 'do

you value it?' questions which characterise so-called evaluations of things like Sure Start but should be focused on the question: 'do the pupils taught by teachers via SD do better or not?', like the evaluations Charlie Stripp and I discussed for various maths projects.) 2) Charlie Taylor and Tom Shinner should discuss with Paul Marshall and Jim O'Neill whether it is feasible to consider a central recruitment process and how it would have to be done to avoid all the obvious Whitehall pitfalls. If they think it is feasible, then they can get the Perm Sec involved and Marshall might get Laws on board. 3) ?? Teaching Schools should have a greater role in coordinating the admin for SD.

Accurate data on School Direct?

Many commenters point out that reliable consistent data on School Direct is hard to come by. This is clearly true. Who should fix it? An obvious answer is 'the Teaching Agency should set up a website to provide quality information'. Easier said than done unfortunately!

It is important to note that the central planning system now used by DfE to model numbers and determine allocations for ITT is based on a) terrible IT, b) bad data, c) assumptions about the ability of Whitehall to plan ahead that were consistently proved wrong 2010-14. (This is why, for example, we removed the number limits on the most high priority areas last year so that schools and HEIs could recruit as many candidates as possible.) It is not obvious to me how this could be improved given the reasons for a-c are systemic and not accidental, though I have confidence that Leunig will improve things.

UCAS were planning various initiatives in this area before I left in Jan 2014 - I do not know what's happening with these.

Recommendation. Make the information and data on School Direct more reliable and easier for everybody to access. [But: How exactly??]

Is university-based training good?

There is a clear difference in opinion among commenters on the state of traditional university-based training. Some think it is generally poor, others think it is generally good. This is a classic problem in education debates. There is no reliable way of deciding the issue.

Ofsted judgements are themselves, in my opinion, so dicey that I would not rely on them other than in the sense that a) something rated Outstanding won't be abysmal and b) something rated abysmal won't be Outstanding (I would say the same about its school ratings). I think it is clear that good heads do *not* trust Ofsted judgements (of ITT or schools). This is not surprising given that Ofsted stopped inspecting the content of PGCE courses (pre-2010, I can't remember when exactly) and this was only reversed after we asked Wilshaw to do it when he first took up his job. I very much doubt that this is done *well* by Ofsted. (I will blog separately on Ofsted's problems and what should be done. I regard Ofsted as one of the biggest menaces to the quality of English schools and an entity in urgent need of aggressive surgery including a purge of senior people.)

It is certainly the case that Gove's team was inundated (from 2007) by heads of good schools saying 'PGCE XYZ is rubbish, please do something about it, give us control of the money'. This is, of course, far from conclusive of anything. (ITT has a similar problem to A Levels - approximately 100% of those with negative opinions refuse to voice them publicly making it impossible for the arguments to be tested properly.) *The Good Teacher Training Guide* produced by Smithers has useful information about HEIs but not School Direct.

Unless there are more reliable methods of measuring training quality - methods that would be accepted in more high performing fields than teacher training - it is unlikely that there will be much progress. *What should these methods be?* Whatever they are, they need to evade the problem that people won't speak out publicly if it means making enemies.

A push to have more focus on practical training in schools and rapid empirical feedback about what works in classrooms is not inherently hostile to a strong role for HE. It is needlessly counterproductive for the two things to be seen in opposition. Facts on the ground must feed into theory and theory needs to provide a framework for understanding facts.

It is vital that HE courses reflect consensus in the hard sciences about how the mind works, how children learn etc - *not* forty year-old assumptions in social sciences with weak (or flaky) theoretical or empirical foundations. I do not think this is generally happening now given how widespread un-scientific views are on all sorts of subjects.¹⁰

There were a few comments bemoaning the lack of communication between the DfE and education departments. This is partly due to the division in Whitehall between the DfE and BIS. I could not claim this as a recommendation that flows from the comments in this exercise but I would argue on general grounds that a) BIS should be abolished, b) universities and science should go to the DfE, c) other bits of BIS worth keeping should go to HMT as part of d) a fundamental re-ordering of how HMT works (its centralising, power-crazed, and *wasteful* influence casts long shadows throughout Whitehall, but this is a separate subject). Whether this is right or not, it is a basic feature of Whitehall that so long as the DfE is not responsible for HE, it will struggle to communicate with HE over training.

I am persuaded by the argument of some commenters (and people like Adonis) that too many universities do teacher training and it would be better for some to stop. I don't think there's much the DfE, as now constituted, can do directly to improve HEIs. All it can really do is hold out pots of money and hope that choices made by good schools incentivise bad HEIs to reform or get out of teacher training. A lot of meetings between HE people and DfE officials will probably achieve nothing though everyone could email each other about 'welcoming dialogue'.

Recommendation. We need to assess training more reliably. But how exactly?? A 'Trip Advisor'??

What bits of experience should go into training?

Many commenters have views such as 'trainees should experience a great school and a struggling school and lead various projects' etc. While many of these comments might be right, again: these surely cannot be established centrally, at least unless rigorous research has identified reliable data about which are truly necessary. I would strongly oppose the DfE setting such obligations on the basis of a typical 'consultation'.

Surely the best way forward is for different entities to experiment with different approaches?

Recommendation. ???

What is the architecture for distinguishing between reliable research and the rest and then disseminating the most reliable to trainees and others?

¹⁰ I had quite a few emails about this including people from inside the Institute for Education unhappy with its approach to teaching basic psychology. I've no idea whether criticisms of the IoE are fair.

This issue seems fundamentally unresolved. In physics, there is a hierarchy of peer-reviewed journals and clear standards about what is needed to confirm a finding (e.g. for the Higgs boson, it was a five standard deviation signal). There are mechanisms like arXiv and a whole institutional architecture built painstakingly over a century. The academics themselves understand statistics so can make expert judgements about reliability. Similar systems, though necessarily messier, have been built over a few decades in medicine (cf. Goldacre's report).

There is no such reliable architecture for teachers such that they can easily look up and conclude 'mmm, ok X is clearly gold standard research, multiple RCTs, blah; Y is middling, looks promising but needs more confirmation; Z is Cargo Cult Science, ignore'. David Spendlove commented, 'education research is in a largely healthy state'. To me, education research is often Cargo Cult science, as it was when Feynman gave his famous speech. The view of science departments in universities is, I think, closer to my view than Spendlove's view.

A telling anecdote... When I arrived in the DfE in early 2011, I asked someone very senior in the research team - what is the status of Feinstein's graph [the one showing rich thickos overtaking poor cleverer 5 yr olds], are we sure it's right? Answer: absolutely, gold standard, no question. A few weeks later, Vignoles' paper came out saying Feinstein was the latest in a very long line to have been fooled by regression to the mean. Many people, including MG and Willetts unfortunately, referred to this Feinstein study as if it was definitely true for a few years prior to this.¹¹

I do not know what the current status of the Goldacre report and its implementation is inside the DfE. Unfortunately, momentum inside the DfE was lost post-Goldacre. This is partly because implementing Goldacre required lots of HR discussions, decisions, and implementation. HR is among the thorniest issues in Whitehall because it is where the real power lies. Progress was slow. Tim Leunig finally got the job of director of research earlier this year. He does care about this agenda and is an unusually honest person. He will try to push things in the right direction. Others in DfE will support him. (There is a danger that with the election coming, there will be dumb diktats from Downing Street (Tory and LibDem) demanding action particularly on childcare either without evidence or anti-evidence.¹²)

A few commented on how little the DfE spends on R&D. It should spend more *if and only if* it does so in a properly scientific - and not Cargo Cult science - way, that is also maximally open to scrutiny.

Recommendation. Implement Goldacre, bulldoze Whitehall and Westminster inhibitions about evidence-led education policy. Spend more on R&D but in parallel with massive openness about the DfE's research agenda and practices.

¹¹ The commenter David Spendlove, who dislikes SD and praises HE-based training, gives a presentation in which he says: 'Evidence is not a substitute for our values'. Nobody would say this at a conference for physical scientists - they would be more likely to say 'evidence is our value'. If he means 'we need values as well as evidence', of course all would agree - but the implication of the statement is 'we shouldn't let evidence be used to justify things we don't like', which is not encouraging.

¹² The DfE already spends billions on childcare without any proper RCTs and with Sure Start it is repeating the errors made by the US in spending billions on Head Start without proper evaluation. It is now clear billions were wasted on Head Start as it has done little to advance its purposes. Few seem willing to learn from this or the three best bits of evidence we have on childcare and early intervention, cf. p. 199 of my essay. Politicians treat 'early intervention' as a) magic and b) not something to be developed in a scientific manner.

Access to research journals?

A few commenters referred to this. Fields Medallist Tim Gowers (Cambridge) has been waging a campaign against the big academic publishers for a while with some success. Cf. Nielsen's brilliant book *Reinventing Discovery* for how the scientific world is opening up collaboration and the benefits of 'open access'. (This book's prior blogs were an inspiration for us opening up the league table data and NPD.)

If some sort of Royal College becomes a reality *and* is well-constructed (see below), then membership might bring free access to journals (as one commenter suggested).

Recommendation: all schools - and trainee teachers - should be able to access research articles for free.

A Royal College?

There were quite a few comments about a Royal College.

I think it could work but...

My fear about a Royal College is that it will be a classic political process. At its best, it will involve well-meaning nice people like David Weston who care about evidence and like to get on with everybody agreeing a structure and processes that lots of already powerful people (who will be focused tightly on political considerations of one sort or another because that's what ~100% of powerful people in Whitehall do) can agree on. It will then draft things like specifications for a new QTS that get 'buy-in' from the same powerful group of people, with some Potemkin consultations thrown in. It is conceivable that such a process would produce worthwhile things. However, I will bet a lot it does not - and that is assuming the best of some of the people involved.

A much more optimistic process is that a RC evolves from something like ResearchEd - i.e. it is genuinely from the profession and open enough that flaws are clear and can be worked out. Some of the leaders then present it to Whitehall largely as a *fait accompli*. Whitehall, MPs, and Unions have little influence over its initial form. Those responsible then have an epic behind the scenes battle in which they jujitsu the insiders using radical transparency and moral appeals to scientific process. The insiders cave in and agree a legal form for a RC on rational principles with clear goals and without any Whitehall HR built in.

Mmm. Well, this is possible. But I won't hold my breath. The most likely scenario is that not much happens before the election and Labour introduces something after the election that is a classic Whitehall creation with the Unions embedded and its credibility is blown on the launchpad. But perhaps I am too jaded.

An obvious question is: how would a RC deal with the psychologically and politically uncomfortable issue of *failure*?

In my experience, people in the education world (like the political world) *hate* talking about failure and prefer to assume systems could exist that practically eradicate it (if only people like them were in charge). The more that I look at the small fraction of things that are successful in the world, the clearer it is that they have a culture in which people ask questions about all the difficult and unpleasant things that most organisations skip over and do not want to confront. So my test for a RC proposal will be: *how honestly does it address issues of failure?*

Teacher training, measuring performance, and tests

There are fundamental problems with our exams. KS2, GCSEs, and A Levels are all seriously flawed. Reforms in the pipeline will correct some flaws but far from all. So long as schools keep using flawed exams as the basic measure of success, the system will struggle and teacher training will be distorted. (NB. the exams done by pupils that have the highest credibility are also the only ones that are *not* accredited by Ofqual and over which the DfE has zero control, such as Maths STEP.)

I have some ideas about this but I will blog on them separately as this doc is already too long. My point here is simply that we cannot divorce training from the fundamental issues of exams and accountability.

I would also point out that university physics departments have been experimenting with new teaching methods, new teacher training methods, and new tests of core skills. I think these have major lessons for English schools and offer a lot of hope but have been largely neglected. The reason? I think it is partly: a) the 'knowledge'/Andrew Old people dislike the newfangled methods which sound like previous experiments that failed (but actually are not like them), and b) the 'skills'/Fiona Millar people dislike the clear statements that standards are too low, many teachers are failing, and large improvements are possible if we innovate. When the former realise they are a route to *higher standards* and the latter realise they are a route to *group discussion not teachers lecturing*, then perhaps progress will come. I discuss some of these issues in [my essay](#) (CTRL+F Wieman or Mazur).

*

Some miscellaneous specific comments

[The below are summaries and some direct quotes of specific comments. My own comments are inside square brackets. Where I say 'Cf. above' this means the issue is addressed above in the 'general issues' section.]

'Allow and then directly encourage ITT in Special schools to place Primary trainees in Secondary age classes where there is curriculum content being delivered which falls into the Primary areas of teaching. This would significantly increase capacity to deliver training placements in Special schools and go some way to begin to alleviate the major recruitment problem in this area of education.' [I can't judge if this is a good idea and nobody else replied to it.]

[A single contribution from Debra Kidd, not direct quotes.] 1. Bring education research and teacher training closer in universities. This means thinking about the research funding processes and how we value the impact of research on the profession. 2. Improve access to research for teachers (e.g. journal access). [Cf. above.] 3. Consistency of standards between PGCE / non-PGCE. 4. Consider the impact that the NQT survey and Ofsted have on the behaviours of ITT providers in universities. 5. All teacher trainers should have recent experience of teaching. [A few commenters repeat this theme so I have not repeated it more than once.] 6. 'It should be a professional duty to take trainees into school. One of the biggest problems PGCE courses face is having to beg schools to take on students. This is not the case in the NHS – you must commit to training the next generation of professionals there. The same should be true of education.' [This would be a big deal but might it not force schools that are not up to it to offer training? Would this be an improvement?]

The 'Researchers in Schools' programme should use a Masters, not a Doctorate, as the relevant qualification. [This seems to be sensible.] I think one year secondments of the right kind of people

from the outside world, without qualified teacher status, would do schools the world of good.' [A DfE official tells me this is already allowed.]

Should Teaching Schools have to be Outstanding (Ofsted)? Given the unreliability of Ofsted judgements, perhaps this restriction should be removed? [I agree that Ofsted is unreliable but I would worry about this, partly because I'm sure there are schools rated Good that are really Requires Improvement. But I'm not very confident about this partly because I don't have a good feel for how the TS system has evolved. Is an obvious solution to *test the proposition* by allowing some Good schools to become TS with a rigorous evaluation of whether it works?]

Using the 'Maths Hubs' model, could there be ~30 'Research Schools'? 'These Research School Hubs would be responsible for the dissemination of research evidence that feeds SD ITT programmes; leading on the knowledge mobilisation of the work of organisations like the EEF etc. These schools can each be linked to a HEI, openly and with a transparent bidding process and contract. They could train Research-leads (I am currently beginning an RCT for this very model: <http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects/research-leads-improving-students-education/>). They should marshal a corpus of educational evidence & theory that best informs ITT. This can be regularly updated and challenged.' [This seems like a good idea. The main issue would be: who guards the guardians, i.e. - how do we ensure that a) schools that are reliable are doing this, and b) the research they disseminate is reliable.]

'R&D is sixth [strand] in the list (perhaps symbolically!) [for Teaching Schools]. It should be number 1 – underpinning each other strand. I know many teaching schools are alliances and some are part of a larger chain, but even then the specialism of being a world class research school rarely comes to fruition. I know of no school doing this (neither do the DfE given their sharing of best practice document on teaching schools – it has only one exemplar school in the latest report). Clearly, the DfE values evidence led policy and practice (the EEF is perhaps the best legacy of the last decade IMHO). At this current point of systemic change, R&D gets relegated behind the exigencies of immediate action by teaching schools. Mandating Research School Hubs in the next decade would be a bridge to an evidence led system.'

The DfE should encourage an RCT (with some qualitative data) of SLEs, which are patchy. [Agree.]

'Ensure all core literature from ITT courses, such as lesson plan templates and course outlines, can be accessed publicly to ensure transparency and quality.' Use something like the Creative Commons system and TimeStamper to deal with IP issues. [Strongly agree. Cf. above.]

'Teaching schools are overloaded with too many strands alongside ITT... By too many strands I mean the big six of being a teaching school: ITT; CPD; school to school support; developing new leaders; SLEs; and research and development. One school doing all of these brilliantly and continuing to run a successful school is no doubt a stretch.'

[In the last quarter of 2013, we agreed to remove this requirement to do all six because of complaints from good schools that it is too much of a burden. I thought that this had therefore happened. Having spoken to officials, it turns out that, as is often the case, it seems the orders were given but it did not quite happen. I got an email (pre-Gove replacement) from a middle-ranking DfE official who works in this area saying: a) TS don't have to do all these six strands because, b) it's now treated as an "unenforced requirement" [his term], c) most don't do them all, d) the DfE IS still looking at removing it altogether, e) but it has been wrapped into the discussion about other ITT changes (such as 'new QTS')... This is obviously unsatisfactory and I'm still not sure why a clear decision by MG in 2013 to drop this requirement was not implemented. Question for commenters: if this requirement is scrapped, what if anything should replace it?]

'Schools who 'burn through' a huge number of teachers, sending them out of the profession, should be penalised even if they are achieving extraordinary results for their own pupils – the consequences for the rest of the system are far too serious to consider this acceptable.' [While this may have a lot of truth, I would strongly oppose the DfE setting such rules - it would get the criteria wrong, and apply them badly to anomalous cases.]

'The paperwork required to be completed by those in charge of School Direct / SCITT trainees within their schools is hideous. It really is!' [Where are the SPECIFICS?! *Officials cannot do anything with this* unless people say - here are the following regulations that cause needless bureaucracy and could be binned. Cf. below on The Process.]

'The market is over-supplied and over-regulated. There are approximately 80 university departments of education in England. By comparison, there are 25 medical schools. Current NCTL practice is to accredit more providers – with new SCITTs we are well on the way to 150. We are constructing a market which is simply over-supplied, and where the economics really cannot work. We should be seeking to reduce, not expand the number of suppliers. At the same time, tight regulation (e.g. on number of days in school) means that programmes all look very similar to each other: there is little scope for innovation. A far more radical approach would be to specify more tightly the outcomes (as in law and medicine) and competencies (David is right that the 2011 Standards are just too feeble) but then de-regulate on process... It should be possible to evolve relatively quickly to a future with 20-30 high quality university departments of education working each with a network of teaching schools, developing locally-structured programmes within a national outcomes framework. Delivery of the programmes would (rather like GP training) be managed by the university department but substantially delivered by 'clinical teachers' – essentially, practitioners with part of their FTE in the training system. This would be a much stronger CPD system, a much better ITE system and secure a stable structure with realistic economies of scale.'

[One of my hopes was that funding and other changes would mean a significant reduction in the number of HEIs offering training and more numbers going through the best ones. Before I left I was told that a number would leave the market in 2014. I have not kept on top of this so don't know if it is happening (apparently a few have gone and more are going). On the other hand, it seems to me that we want MORE great schools and particularly great chains involved in training people *beyond their own needs*.

This person suggests on [a blog](#) 'a background of declining funding, staff cuts, and increased workload for those who are left, isn't the best starting point for improving the HEI side of things'. This is a normal view. However, for people who have worked in the private sector like me, an alternative view immediately suggests itself - *that this quote is completely wrong*. Often things improve precisely when savings are made, staff numbers fall, and remaining staff have more to do. This sort of difference in perspective is, I would claim with all respect to teachers, one of the problems with education: the people in it are so dominated by conventional public sector thinking that they often make large assumptions about how systems work that seem clearly wrong to those from a different culture.]

I like this comment by Ian Lynch which seems to me to make a lot of sense:

'If you want ITT to grow from grass roots you need methods that enable devolved practice from a central set of standards. The internet shows how successful that can be. In fact everything exists to do it now... [We need] a competence based assessment model which defines baseline teaching competence that can be linked to academic and theoretical learning. Good teaching needs both so let's not get into a polarised either or debate. If we have a web-based assessment model that links

the defined outcomes to underpinning resources and guidance, the student can provide the evidence of what they have learnt from anywhere and the assessor can verify it from anywhere and external moderation can be formative too, providing constructive feedback across students. Extend it beyond ITT to have a manageable system of CPD. It does not mean we have to abandon university based training or school based practice, it simply makes it easier to compare standards and manage the information using common open systems based infrastructure. It's also a tried and tested method with similarly constructed school qualifications accredited by Ofqual and endorsed by the DfE in terms of league table points.'

From Tom Bennett's blog that a few commenters linked to and discussed:

"My six recommendations to the [Carter ITT] review are:

1. Imbed a basic literacy about what research looks like in ITT, and the varieties of methodologies available to education researchers- including their limitations
2. Provide better guidance about best practise in teacher trainee research, rather than just say 'go do research'
3. Warn teachers of use perils of blindly conducting Action Research without governance from an established research body. 20 kids in your class for two terms isn't research. It's a punt. Which is fine, but a punt isn't research.
4. Encourage teachers to become research literate simultaneous to actually practising in a classroom. Real life often sobers us up when blind theory can obfuscate and intoxicate. And theory can illuminate experience.
5. Encourage teachers to plan their CPD on a research basis, so that even after ITT their powers of research literacy can be used to guide their futures.
6. While acknowledging the nuance and subtlety of what research actually says (for example, the front page of the EEF teacher toolkit makes easy reading, but the devil is in the details within), teacher trainers need to present the big picture of what the best research points towards- and most of all, what it insubstantiates. Or fails to substantiate. VAK, for example, isn't definitely untrue, merely unevidenced. So there might be something in it. But as far as we know, there isn't. Teach that."

An interesting comment from Ian Lynch on how problems with 'evidence-based' approaches:

'One ground breaking study on that basis in the 1980s was CASE (Cognitive Acceleration through Science Education) at Kings College carried out by science educators. It showed that children that went through the CASE programme improved all their GCSE grades, not just science. Now one would think that concrete evidence like that would take precedence but the National Curriculum scuppered it with retrenchment to a knowledge based syllabus. And more recently all the transferrable skills and knowledge stuff is being called into question by Willingham et al on the basis of the science of how memory works. So even when there is "scientific research", we end up with conflicting results and polarised politics. The problem is that most teachers and probably many ITT lecturers don't have the maths or science to know what is and is not scientific and how to work out how reliable their conclusions are. I did an error treatment of the data in my MSc dissertation in Education Management. My supervisor asked what all the complicated maths was about and said the final examiner wouldn't understand it so it was not worth including. Hmm.'

[I think that the 'knowledge' v 'skills' conflict is unnecessarily polarised because of unnecessary errors, imprecise language, a gang mentality, and ignorance about developments in universities. I am going to blog on this soon. [This physics project](#) shows how the fight could become *passé*.]

Crispin Weston and Ian Lynch: training, measuring performance, and IT. Crispin Weston and Ian Lynch had an extended and interesting discussion about education technology and its connections to training and measuring teacher performance. I won't try to summarise it all. IL thinks leveraging freeware (Google, dropbox, youtube etc) is the main answer; CW thinks it isn't. Cf. IL comment on 29/7 for a summary. CW thinks someone needs to create education-specific data standards on top of generic open data standards. I think they (and I) agree that: 1) the DfE responsibility is to allow both open and proprietary systems to compete on a level field, not subsidise or pick winners; 2) the DfE is not the organisation to develop technical standards; 3) IT *can* help many of our problems but there is not much Whitehall can do to help and its history is one of causing problems; 4) some sort of website that allows reputation feedback on products would be useful. Might EEF be the people to do this?

Ian Lynch is working with people on a project for computer science (connecting National Curriculum programmes of study, baseline tests, and Ofqual assessment criteria) that looks interesting and deliberately avoided the DfE: <http://thelearningmachine.co.uk/best-avoid-dfe/>

Lynch comment: 'In terms of ITT require new teachers to evidence their own learning using an IT system... This would give them the skills and knowledge to transfer the same workflow to their classrooms. It will save them time and they can transfer those skills to the pupils. So there is a strategy then to get everyone to routinely use cloud based technologies to support their work – much in the way the most productive businesses do now. Provide the incentives for on-going updating by providing certification of teachers every 3 years based on their evidence portfolio that is part of their day to day work (started in their ITT). After all, all teachers plan lessons and document stuff, just shift it to the cloud so they can be given credit for doing it. Make it voluntary, not an imposition, but obviously a teacher with evidence of keeping up to date is going to have a better chance of promotion than one that does not so I think you'd get a high take up at least from ITT.'

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The process and the issue of bureaucracy to be removed

Overall, this was an interesting experience. I am grateful to the commenters. However, there is a problem.

I said in my original blog that the DfE is inundated with general whining and not with specific, actionable advice and I sketched the ideal advice, from the perspective of a harried person on the 7th floor of the DfE. But few of the comments give advice of this kind. It is therefore not of the kind that hard-pressed spads can cut and paste, compare against existing documents, then say 'right I can see exactly what we need to bin / change', and go to ministers and senior officials with a concrete plan that can be swiftly implemented with minimal fuss.

In particular, *there is not one specific comment on what bureaucracy should be removed!*

I cannot stress enough, therefore, to those who want to influence policy: influencing policy is much easier than you realise IF you put your advice in the form I have suggested. The people you wish to influence are struggling daily to keep their heads above a tide of chaos and disaster. They are almost all badly managed. They are constrained by stupid rules and absurd practices. They operate within the nightmare world of Whitehall HR. Unless they are unusual, they do not have time and won't make time to spend ages on detailed policy, especially in an area of little political importance such as training. If you want to change things, you must *make it as easy for them as possible*, and this means presenting advice in the form of a specific roadmap.

NB. the people who were most successful in influencing policy did this - and sent me emails like this that I could simply cut and paste into official emails so I could run processes mediating between officials and (to officials) unknown people, thus saving huge amounts of time. I could scan what was going on but did not have to master all the specifics and could not have done if I'd tried - I could wait for the email arguments to resolve, then act. This meant that I effectively had a support network that allowed me to do much more than I could have done alone. This was particularly useful when it came to getting rid of unnecessary bureaucracy. The heart of this process was SPECIFICS allied to roadmaps in the service of goals. If you really want to change things *do the hard work on specifics for the people you want to influence.*

So, please give SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT BITS OF BUREAUCRACY TO REMOVE and I will add these to the next version of this document. I know from DfE emails that they want to see this. If you do not - then you forfeit your right to complain!

The form should be something like this...

This specific regulation XXX [insert weblink and precise page / para reference] should be replaced with YYY / nothing.

This piece of Guidance XXX [insert weblink and precise page / para reference] should be replaced with YYY / nothing.

This element of the funding system XXX [insert weblink and precise page / para reference] should be amended to YYY in order to have the following effects ZZZ.

Primary legislation XXX [insert weblink and precise page / para reference] should be amended in the following way YYY.

If you collectively manage just one suggestion, you will have done better than the NUT and NASUWT combined 2010-14, whose only answer to this challenge was 'well just abolish Ofsted and league tables'...

Thanks again...

DC
25 August 2014

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