The Wolf Report on vocational education

Professor Alison Wolf’s report into vocational education was published in March. AMiE welcomes the findings of the Wolf Report.

The purpose of the Government-commissioned review was: ‘to consider how we can improve vocational education for 14-19 year olds and thereby promote successful progression into the labour market and into higher level education and training routes’.

The underpinning values and principles are ones which the Association has consistently articulated.

In particular, we advocate and support:

- a broad curriculum for all young people up to the age of 16 that equips them not only for their future employment, but also for their civic, cultural, social and spiritual lives. As the Association said in its evidence to Professor Wolf: ‘It is unhelpful to place 14 and 15 year olds on vocationally specific programmes. They are generally too young to make such a significant decision. However, while education for this age group should offer a broad curriculum, it should also include opportunities for practical and applied learning and opportunities to consider the direction of their aspirations, inclinations and talents’.

Nadine Cartner, Director of Policy, AMiE
high-quality, relevant vocational qualifications that truly prepare young people for work in the modern economy, by developing the skills and personal qualities that are in demand by employers. Only vocational education of great quality will secure for our learners the progression, employment and life opportunities that we want for them – and indeed ensure their future contributions to our national social and economic well-being.

a student-focused approach by providers, funding agencies and government, ensuring that high-quality and relevant provision meets the needs of young people and is not distorted by vested interests, perverse incentives or disabling regulation and bureaucracy.

The recommendations of the Wolf Report are largely focused on making this last point a reality. For example, the report recommends that funding for 16–19 learners should follow the student and not be per qualification (as it is at the moment). The intention is to remove the temptation for providers to attach a student to a string of qualifications in order to maximise funding.

Positive measures

Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove has so far accepted four of Professor Wolf’s recommendations:

- to allow qualified FE lecturers to teach in school classrooms on the same basis as qualified school teachers
- to allow any vocational qualification offered by a regulated awarding body to be taken by 14–19 year olds
- to allow established high-quality vocational qualifications that have not been accredited to be offered in schools and colleges in September 2011
- to clarify the rules on allowing industry professionals to teach in schools.

These are positive measures towards system simplification and are welcomed by AMiE.

Quality and relevance

On the central issues of quality and relevance of vocational qualifications, Professor Wolf proposes introducing principles to guide study programmes for young people on vocational routes post-16, to ensure that they are gaining skills that will lead to progression into a variety of jobs or further learning.

In particular, she recommends:

- ensuring that all 16–19 year olds who have not achieved Grade C in English and mathematics GCSE continue to study those subjects
- evaluating the delivery structure and content of apprenticeships, to ensure that they deliver the right skills for the workplace
- subsidising employers who take on apprentices, in order to improve the availability of apprenticeships.

All of these recommendations are to be applauded.

Overall verdict

While we crave stability in the college sector – not least because evidence suggests that this is a characteristic of successful 16–19 systems – our overall verdict on the Wolf Report is that its recommendations on system change and simplification are likely to promote the important aim of encouraging a student-focused approach by providers, funding agencies and government, ensuring that high-quality and relevant provision meets the needs of young people.
The Teaching Schools model

Teaching Schools: a challenge too far?

Alison Ryan, Policy Adviser, ATL

ATL’s policy on teacher professionalism\(^1\) sets out our view of teachers as experts in pedagogy and curriculum, who understand equalities and broader political, social, economic and environmental factors and who are committed to their own continuing professional development.

Although this Government apparently believes in ‘the importance of teaching’ (see the recent White Paper\(^2\)), its proposals for pay flexibility, increased on-the-job training and an absence of qualification requirements for staff in free schools – along with prescribed teaching methods, continual additions to the school curriculum, and increasingly detailed uses of assessment data for measuring and ranking purposes – would lead to a very different teaching profession.

**Negative impact**

The Government’s emphasis on craft-like on-the-job training is particularly evident in its proposals around Teaching Schools. The proposals are at a very early stage and therefore lack detail, but ATL and AMiE members are concerned from the outset about the potentially negative impact of the model on:

- the professionalism of teachers
- the role of higher education institutions (HEIs) in initial teacher education and continuing professional development
- the core role of schools in educating pupils
- the workload of school staff.

For school leaders, the possibility of adding teacher training to the growing list of responsibilities for leading your own school and wider school leadership may be a challenge too far.

**Training on the cheap?**

If the principle of teachers as expert professionals is at the core of these proposals, then there is potential for strengthening school–HEI partnerships and school networks.

Unfortunately, our current political and economic context leads our members to fear that this will be seen as training on the cheap, with little thought being given to the importance of strong HEI and theoretical input, resulting in the de-skilling of the teaching profession. Would your school be in a position to provide this kind of input?

**Your feedback**

It is vital that teachers continue to have a voice in the development of the Teaching Schools model. We need to hear from you. If you know of a school that is applying for Teaching School status – and particularly if your school has already applied or hopes to apply – please let us know, so that we can learn more about the process from the school perspective.

Also, if you or your school have been strongly involved in supporting initial teacher education, particularly through a school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) programme, it would be really useful to hear from you about the challenges and opportunities in these settings.

Your feedback is vital: please contact Alison Ryan at aryan@atl.org.uk.

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The Hutton Report: what it means for your pension

David Green,
Director of Employment Services, AMiE

The Hutton Report on public service pensions* was published on 10 March – and it isn’t good news.

As we expected, AMiE members in future will have to pay more and work longer, but will receive worse pension benefits. What's more, AMiE members, being among the higher paid in schools and colleges, look set to be hardest hit.

Phasing out final salary pensions

So what is Lord Hutton recommending? Overall, the Hutton Report has 27 recommendations – too many to discuss here.

On the plus side, Lord Hutton says the Government should honour in full the promise to protect accrued pension rights. In doing so, the final salary link for past service should be maintained. This means that service up to the date of any future changes will still be based on current scheme rules.

But if this recommendation is positive, the report goes rapidly downhill from here. For future service, Lord Hutton wants members of public service schemes to be moved into new schemes providing a pension based on career average revalued earnings (CARE). This will replace final salary as the defined benefit in the new schemes. Under a CARE scheme, the member earns an amount of pension based on the scheme accrual rate and their salary in that year. This is then revalued (or indexed) each year. At retirement, each year's pension is added up to give the total pension.

Moving to a CARE scheme would hit AMiE members hardest. CARE schemes benefit those whose earnings peak mid-career or who have a steady salary progression during their career. In contrast, our members, who tend to be further up the career ladder, will generally see their salaries rise more strongly with each promotion.

So, under CARE, they will receive a lower pension than currently expected. No surprise, then, that in our recent survey 85% of AMiE members opposed a move from final salary to CARE.

Higher contributions

If that weren't enough, Lord Hutton is recommending that scheme members pay more in contributions and that the higher paid carry the biggest burden. In the Local Government Pension Scheme, contribution rates are already tiered, but in the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) – affecting some 80% of AMiE members – this will be something new.

As for the amount of increase, we need to look back at the Government's announcement in their Comprehensive Spending Review. They said then that scheme members should expect to pay on average an extra 3% of salary towards their pension; and that they would like to start phasing this in from April 2012. After Lord Hutton's recommendation, this figure could rise.

An earlier attempt by the Department for Education to start raising the contribution rate in the TPS was delayed following pressure from ATL and other education unions. For a TPS member earning £40,000 a year, the increase would have meant paying an extra £113 a month; and a member earning £50,000 a year would end up paying an extra £141 a month. And under that proposal, the increases were not even tiered. So unless there is any softening of the Government's position, AMiE members look set to be paying proportionally more than everyone else for a lower pension.

Raising the pension age

Lord Hutton's other big recommendation is to raise your pension age. He says a scheme member's normal pension age (NPA) should be brought into line with their state pension age (SPA). Under current proposals going through Parliament, the SPA is planned to be 66 for both men and women by 2020, rising further to 68 in the future.

In his defence, Lord Hutton does say that the linking of NPA to SPA should apply to future service only. This means that benefits accrued for past service in existing schemes would still be payable at the member’s current NPA, albeit on service accrued up to the time of the change.
Independent schools

But those of you working in independent schools have further cause for concern. Lord Hutton is recommending that: ‘In principle it is not desirable for future non-public service workers to have access to public service pension schemes’. This would effectively mean closing the proposed new schemes to AMiE and ATL members working in some 1,400 independent schools.

Our advice

Of course, we do not know how much of the Hutton Report will be accepted by the Government and how quickly any change will be introduced. If the move to new schemes were to occur in 2014, then those current members of the TPS aged 57 or more will be largely unaffected.

We expect more details about timescales to emerge over the coming weeks, but current advice to all members is: don’t be hasty. In our survey, some 99% of you said that your pension was an important part of your overall remuneration package. Given this, it would be very unwise to react against these proposed changes before we know the full impact.

Lord Hutton argues that the changes he is recommending are necessary to deal with increased longevity, and to make public service pension schemes sustainable. But (as we pointed out in the February 2011 issue of ELM ) the National Audit Office said last year that public service schemes are affordable and sustainable in the long term. It begs the obvious question: is this degree of change really necessary?

If you are angry, and our survey certainly suggests that you are, then direct your anger at those responsible and at those who can do something about it. To find out more and to support our pensions campaign, visit the ATL website: www.atl.org.uk

Safeguarding: common sense at last?

The Coalition’s Programme for Government announced its intention to ‘review the criminal records and vetting and barring regime and scale it back to common sense levels’.

The parallel reviews of the Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS) and the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) were published on 11 February. On the same day, the House of Commons gave a formal First Reading to the Protection of Freedoms Bill that is intended to implement this scaling back to common sense levels.

Our Association has long campaigned for this to happen and there are signs that the Bill will indeed introduce a more proportionate scheme for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. However, the Bill is complex, and feelings on this topic both inside and outside Parliament are still running high. The final outcome is far from clear.

Shocking tardiness

The Bill received its Second Reading and was the subject of detailed debate on 1 March. It is envisaged that the Bill will receive Royal Assent and start to be implemented early in 2012. It is worth reflecting that this will be a full decade after the Soham murders brought to public attention the need to improve the sharing and use of police information to safeguard children.

This shocking tardiness on the part of legislators and administrators only serves to highlight the importance of our constant refrain that the creation of a safe learning environment is the best way to safeguard the children and vulnerable adults in schools and colleges – not the creation of a bureaucratic VBS.
Changes to the VBS

The most significant changes that are proposed to the VBS are as follows.

- There will not be a register of those working or volunteering with children and vulnerable adults in regulated activity.
- The range of tasks designated as ‘regulated activity’ will be significantly reduced and the category of ‘controlled activity’ will be abolished.
- Referrals to the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) for barring decisions will only have to be made where people are working or volunteering in regulated activity, or are intending to do so.

Changes to the CRB

The most significant changes that are proposed to the CRB are as follows.

- CRB disclosure certificates will be portable and there will be an online system to allow employers to check whether there have been any changes since the certificate was issued.
- Certificates will only be sent to the person concerned, not copied to employers, so that people can check and challenge their accuracy before they are seen by employers and perhaps unfairly prejudice people’s chance of employment.
- There will be additional safeguards about the non-conviction information that can be included in certificates.
- Certificates will only state that someone is on a barred list if they are applying to work or volunteer in regulated activity.

ISA and CRB to merge

In an attempt to simplify and improve the efficiency of the system, the ISA will merge with the CRB. The new agency will be responsible for both issuing CRB certificates and maintaining the barred lists. Until the new legislation comes into effect, all the new requirements that have come into force since October 2009 remain in force (see the February 2011 issue of ELM for details).

Areas of concern

However, it is worth noting a few of the issues that are already the subject of concerned debate. These have been raised in particular by the NSPCC (and I share their concerns). The areas of concern focus on the reduced scope of the notion of regulated activity and the associated limitation of the barred lists.

- Supervised volunteers will not count as being engaged in regulated activity; this will require the level of supervision to be high.
- CRB certificates will not include barring information on people not engaged in regulated activity and thus not on supervised volunteers.
- Work with 16 and 17 year olds will not count as regulated activity unless it involves health and personal care – an issue for sixth form colleges?
- People will not be put on barred lists unless they have worked, or intend to work, in regulated activity.

The above is the barest outline of what is proposed, as the proposals are still subject to debate. We shall follow, and contribute to, the debate as the Bill progresses through Parliament, and we shall certainly keep members informed of developments. Please don’t hesitate to contact me (johnjlowe@yahoo.co.uk), if you have any observations or concerns about the proposals.
Gill Davies, 
Director of Innovation, 
Gower College Swansea

Wikipedia defines innovation as ‘ideas applied successfully in practice’ and ‘people changing the way they make decisions, choosing to do things differently and making choices outside the norm’.

Since I became Director of Innovation at Gower College Swansea in 2003, these definitions have provided me with direction when rising to the challenges of my role, and have enabled me (and others) to meet those challenges in new and interesting ways.

It sometimes seems as if not a single day goes by without colleges being allocated responsibility for some new issue that they should resolve to improve society – adult literacy, the mismatch between the qualifications we deliver and employers’ needs, and NEETS, to name but a few. If the sector is to meet these challenges, then colleges should seek to find imaginative solutions by promoting innovation within their organisations.

It is not by chance that the term ‘innovation’ frequently arises in connection with funding or awards within the FE sector across the UK.

People in the FE sector have always produced creative solutions to meet changing needs. Historically, we have not been constrained by the tight curricular requirements of the schools sector, nor have we been driven by the research and development priorities of the universities. However, external drivers are constantly seeking to constrain the sector and oblige us to conform. As a sector, we should meet these obligations, but also strive to provide innovative, creative and imaginative answers that enable us to lead on the skills agenda while meeting all stakeholder needs.

Circumstances are combining to give the sector a unique opportunity to develop creative and novel solutions and to make colleges exciting places to work and to study.

Now is the time to open the floodgates to innovation, by providing our people with the freedom to think, to consider alternative approaches and to develop responsive, flexible and unique institutions that our stakeholders want and need.

There are, however, several questions we should ask ourselves if we are to become more innovative.

Should we do this?

College staff have the answers and, as college managers, we should provide the training and the opportunities to tap into this resource. We have everything to gain.

How do you train staff to be innovative?

Many people would argue that it is not possible to train staff to be innovative – that individuals are either innovative or they are not. Reflecting on 20 years’ experience in the sector, this has not been my experience. On many occasions I have been surprised by the imaginative responses developed by staff who have never participated in problem-solving exercises nor had their ideas seriously considered.

There are qualifications available to staff to develop and accredit these skills, but sometimes participation in an innovation workshop is enough.

As Director of Innovation, I have run numerous innovation workshops with businesses, to identify potential knowledge transfer projects between a company and the college. The projects that have emerged are based on a clear understanding of the challenges and have been developed by staff facing these challenges in their daily work. It occurred to me some time ago that this employer engagement strategy would work just as well with my own colleagues in my college.

How do innovation workshops happen?

Bring small groups of staff together and allow them to:

- identify a problem they wish to resolve
- discuss and consider potential solutions with an open mind
- come to a consensus about the way forward
- explore and develop the answer.
This should happen with no constraints or rules – other than those of respect for others and their opinions. The issue identified might not be the one that the manager wished to resolve, but could nevertheless result in tangible benefits for the college. Have an open mind.

Most importantly, if managers are to encourage innovation, then they should ensure that ideas are taken up and implemented, to demonstrate commitment to the process.

An ideal environment for innovation

In the current climate of college mergers it can be easy to limit opportunities for innovation, but I believe that the opposite should happen. Bringing together two or more colleges should provide more opportunities for increasing the mix. New staff groupings, new ways of thinking and the emergence of a new norm provide an ideal environment for innovation to occur. This approach can be useful in identifying innovative responses to the challenges faced by all colleges. Maximum benefits can be realised when applied to a wide range of issues, including learning, organisational development, quality management, strategic development, income generation and – most importantly – the challenges of merger.

AMiE is the leadership section of ATL, and provides specialist support for leaders and managers in colleges and schools. We are a student- and service-centred organisation that champions the interests of leaders across the sectors.

Our services

Our services include:
- representation, help and advice on all employment matters. Our casework service is recognised as simply the best offered by any trade union
- publications and best practice guides on curriculum and management issues
- policy influence in political circles
- education news updates
- pensions advice, including information leaflets on important topics such as improving your pension prospects
- good deals on insurance and many other services and products.

Our membership

We welcome college managers at all levels in further education colleges, sixth form colleges and adult education provision; school headteachers, deputy headteachers, bursars and heads of department. We also have many members in national organisations, training organisations and other areas of the education sector, including higher education.

To join

Join AMiE online via our website www.amie.uk.com or by calling 01858 411 541. For further information, please email membership@amie.atl.org.uk
Yvonne Fleming, National Officer for Leadership and Management, AMiE

In light of the recent changes in legislation brought about by the Equality Act 2010, the Government’s stance on equality was outlined at a recent meeting of the Diversity Group of the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children’s Services.

Government policy

An Interministerial Group on Equalities has been formed to steer Government policy in this area. It is made up of 13 ministers and chaired by Theresa May, Home Secretary and Minister for Women and Equalities.

The key driver for the group is economic waste and moral imperative, with the cost of not using the skills of people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds being calculated at £8.6 billion per year and the better use of women’s skills potentially earning Britain up to £23 billion a year. The focus will be on the individual within the nine key groups with ‘protected characteristics’ (race, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnerships).

The ministerial group would like to see five themes permeating public life:

- equality for all
- devolution of power to local people
- transparency which includes access to data
- supporting social action
- embedding equality.

The Government sees itself as a catalyst in terms of giving local bodies – and particularly those in the voluntary sector – the means to bring about change in their regions.

The sum of £100 million is being set aside for this purpose. There is also an emphasis on global comparisons, as in so much Government policy, to ensure that best practice is being pursued and acted upon.

There will no longer be a legal requirement for an equalities scheme (to state what an organisation will assess and how) or for equality impact assessments. Instead, there is a general duty on all public bodies to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment
- advance equal opportunities between those who do and do not share protected characteristics
- foster good relations between those who do and do not share protected characteristics.

Public bodies with over 150 employees must produce an equality analysis rather than an equality impact assessment, as well as having equality objectives and plans to ensure equality.

The impact on schools

What this translates to in terms of schools is an emphasis on early years and the introduction of the pupil premium, to support better education for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Other initiatives could include a national citizen and scholarship fund, research on African-Caribbean boys and exclusions, an education endowment fund, and research into the bullying of disabled pupils. This is also within the context of the review of special educational needs and anything that may come from that review.

Concerns

While any moves to promote equality and diversity are to be welcomed, the Government’s approach raises some concerns.

- The emphasis on moral purpose to drive change (rather than more legislation) could be perceived as somewhat naive, particularly in the present climate of economic constraint and challenges.
- Access to data in itself does not lead to cultural literacy, nor is a plethora of data necessarily a useful tool in trying to produce effective outcomes.

1 www.equalities.gov.uk/equality_act_2010.aspx
Fragmentation in the schools sector should also be borne in mind. Where free schools and academies are, for example, working to different sets of rules, then it is more difficult to ensure consistency of standards.

Using other countries to set benchmarks is not without pitfalls, particularly when key questions of demographics, culture, traditions and social structures are ignored.

Now that the National College is an executive agency of the Department for Education, it has a key role in taking forward this equality and diversity agenda in our schools. It is again looking at a review of the National Professional Qualification for Headship with a view to ensuring that the leadership programme addresses equality issues, and will be targeting the new initiative of Teaching Schools (which are not without their problems in ensuring diversity, given the particular difficulties facing rural and small schools in both the primary and secondary phase).

**The way forward**

The way forward will be challenging for all, but AMIE will continue to provide a voice for school and college leaders in promoting good practice and overcoming the barriers to equality and diversity that persist in our society at large.
Two recent reports paint a gloomy picture of the state of vocational learning as it affects young people who do not progress through the traditional academic route from school or college to higher education.

The Wolf Report¹ (see also the article on pages 1–2) and The Forgotten Half² from Demos differ significantly in their respective analyses of the problem and possible solutions, but there are common themes suggesting that government needs to look to itself and its own management of education to understand the causes of the problem, and, by implication, possible answers.

It is not my intention here to analyse or review the content of these two reports. They each offer valuable insights into current weaknesses of the English education system as it affects young people, and each deserves close attention by politicians and educationalists alike.

I simply want to focus on one issue that these reports raise – the role of government itself – and to consider the implications of the views that emerge.

**Inherently ineffective**

Wolf argues that the micro-management of vocational education from the centre is ‘inherently ineffective’. In the Demos report it is suggested that some of reforms over the last 30 years have ‘caused more ill than good’. It is easy to agree with each of these views.

Anyone who has worked as a professional in education during the last 30 years will be familiar with the alphabet soup of initiatives, agencies, qualifications and frameworks that litter the vocational education landscape. Qualifications have come and gone, and the rules through which vocational learning has been funded have been modified or rewritten with each of the many changes in the organisational framework through which governments have opted to manage qualification frameworks and funding. The result is that vocational education is poorly understood, both by employers and by young people and their families.

By contrast, the academic qualification structure in England has been relatively stable for more than half a century. The General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) replaced the Ordinary Level General Certificate of Education (O Level GCE), and Curriculum 2000 made minor changes to A Level GCEs, but otherwise the traditional progression route to higher education (HE) has changed little.

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¹ Wolf Report
² The Forgotten Half
Perhaps the Government and its advisers in the two departments that shape policy on vocational education need to acknowledge that, after a generation of relative failure, it is time to consider alternatives. Central prescription has not worked.

An alternative approach

One alternative can be developed by learning from the way in which Access to HE courses developed and grew in the 1980s.

In the late 1970s, the then Conservative Government invited eight local authorities to develop special provision to prepare adults from backgrounds under-represented in HE for entry to programmes in that sector. Seven of the eight local authorities, including Sheffield and the Inner London Education Authority, responded by asking their local further, adult and HE institutions to work together with their local communities to develop preparatory courses that would enable progression to HE.

The partnerships that developed were instrumental in creating access preparation courses in a variety of different models. While there were differences, the programmes that emerged had much in common. Principally, the preparatory courses were developed through a partnership between the communities they were intended to serve, the further and adult education providers that for the most part delivered the programmes, and the HE providers that provided the progression opportunities for those who completed the preparatory courses.

Another feature of the Access to HE development relates to the fact that, from the very beginning, these programmes involved demanding and appropriate quality assurance arrangements, with performance measurement linked to their prime purpose: securing progression to HE by students from under-represented groups.

In summary, Access to HE programmes were developed for the most part by practitioners and without the direct involvement of national agencies or awarding bodies. They remain strong and fit for purpose 30 years on.

Access to work programmes?

What would happen if today’s Coalition Government made a similar invitation to local providers – schools, colleges, training providers – to work with their community and local employers, to develop a range of learning programmes that would help to prepare young people for the world of work? The invitation would need to focus on something more than the local economy.

Programmes developed would also need to acknowledge the need to participate in an increasingly global economy and to facilitate progression to higher levels of learning for those who wanted to move into HE. There would also need to be a strong focus on the teaching of English and mathematics, neglected by the current arrangements for vocational learning but of central importance to the life chances of young people.

Employer engagement

In both the Wolf and Demos reports there is a strong argument for better employer engagement on the part of schools and colleges. Demos couches this mainly in terms of employer engagement in development and advice roles for people from business backgrounds. Wolf, by contrast, talks about employer involvement at college and school level in ‘assessment and awarding processes’. This does not go far enough: only if employers are directly involved with teachers in the design and delivery of vocational learning can we expect real change.

A bold step

It is possible to argue that after a generation or more of central prescription in the design of vocational learning, leaders and teachers on the ground do not have the curriculum development expertise that would be necessary for this model to work. It would, however, be naïve to take such a view. Anyone with recent experience of schools and colleges will be able to point to examples of curriculum innovation that work successfully to bypass the constraints of the current qualification and funding framework for the benefit of our learners.

Even if expertise in curriculum development for vocational learning is not regarded as sufficiently strong in our schools and colleges, there is no evidence to suggest that it is any stronger among politicians or national agencies. It is time to try a different approach: if schools and colleges were given the challenge to develop a vocational curriculum in partnership with local employers, parents, students and the community, we would doubtless end up with a variety of different models of vocational learning. They might just turn out to be more effective than the current set of arrangements.

There is only one way to find out, but I wonder whether central government has the nerve to take such a bold step. Given the legacy of vocational curriculum reform over the last generation, it has little to lose.
Adrian Prandle, Education Policy Adviser, ATL

As I write, we are eagerly awaiting from Ofsted the full details of their proposed new framework for school inspection.

By the time you read this edition of ELM, however, the plans will have been published, and some of you may even be engaged in the pilot arrangements.

The new framework is the outcome of the Government’s desire to streamline the number of elements that Ofsted focuses on during school inspection. Subject to the passage of the Education Bill 2011, currently working its way through Parliament, this will mean a core of just four judgement criteria:

- pupil achievement
- teaching
- leadership
- behaviour and safety.

While schools will generally continue to be subject to Ofsted’s gaze, Education Minister Michael Gove has said that: ‘the best schools will be freed from inspections, so Ofsted will now concentrate on what matters – teaching and behaviour’.

In this Union’s recent termly meeting with Ofsted, we were told that a short consultation period would take place either side of the Easter holiday, supplemented by a pilot of the new framework. The idea is that by speeding up the process before the summer holidays, there would be a greater chance of ensuring that the finalised framework would be available in September, for school leaders and teachers to absorb ahead of its formal introduction in January 2012.

In order to inform our written submission and meetings with Ofsted, we would like to hear members’ views on proposals and the principles that underpin them. We would especially like to hear from anyone involved in the pilot.

We want to take advantage of this window of opportunity to influence the new framework. Will these changes make things better or worse for your pupils and for your leadership work?

Please email your ideas, concerns and experiences to Yvonne Fleming (school leaders) at yvonnefleming@amie.atl.org.uk or Adrian Prandle (school teachers) at aprandle@atl.org.uk.

TWD

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The changing world of school leadership

The pace of change that is sweeping our schools in terms of leadership models is rapid – bolstered by the latest legislation on academies and free schools.

That was the message that came across loud and clear at a conference of school leaders in February, hosted in York by the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children’s Services.

In an opening presentation, Liz Talmadge, one of the College’s Models and Partnership Associates, illustrated just how different the landscape has become in the space of a year.

From a situation where there were some ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ federations and the beginnings of trusts, there is now a complex and overlapping landscape of traditional and new academies, partnerships, collaborations, clusters and companies, chains, federations of many sorts and growing trusts. The ‘single school’ is becoming more difficult to identify – and its survival as such appears in doubt.

New configurations

The rest of the day gave ample opportunity to look at some working examples of these models. A good example was the local authority approach in Northumberland. Changes were needed here, due to the particular problems of a large, rural county with many very small schools in the primary phase – the median number of pupils is 85, but many schools have 12 pupils or less – and the difficulties of recruiting heads in these circumstances. As a result, there are growing examples of hard federations, with up to five schools combining in some cases. Trusts and academies are becoming popular too, and the role of executive head is becoming the norm in nearly 17% of schools.
These new configurations, plus an active ‘Tomorrow’s leader’ programme to nurture aspiring heads, is the way forward in Northumberland.

Brigshaw Co-operative Trust near Leeds provided an example of an effective and successful trust model. This is based on the firm conviction of its members that local solutions have the potential to provide better provision for children and staff. The idea is that a group of schools should work together to share best practice, supported by a range of partners. Brigshaw’s work is based on five key themes:

- Transition, curriculum collaboration and pupil participation
- Leadership development and continuing professional development (CPD)
- Achieving better value and greater efficiencies through strong partnership commissioning and procurement
- Supporting vulnerable children with a multi-agency partnership and extended services approach
- Working through children’s centres with families and the wider community.

Although all the schools still have autonomy, they also have the overall umbrella of the trust working on their behalf in the areas outlined.

A model with a ‘softer’ approach is the Peterlee Partnership, with some 25 schools joining together to reap the benefits of a joint approach, particularly in the area of CPD.

As a result of pooled resources, joint training days covering nine different workshops for supervisory and teaching staff have been possible, as well as systems leadership that can respond to crises (such as the long-term illness of a headteacher) and ensure effective succession planning.

Whatever the approach, it was clear that successful outcomes had been achieved for pupils, staff and communities, and that working in isolation may not always be the best course of action.

**Planning ahead**

Of course, not all collaborations are equally successful, and there are inherent dangers in schools joining groups and not being treated as equal partners. Examples of this can be seen in some chain schools and federations.

However, whether we welcome it or not, it is clear that the trend is towards a future based on a partnership approach – whether in chains, trusts, academies or other alternatives. Planning for such an eventuality must therefore be borne in mind, taking advantage of the examples of good practice that are available.

In this respect, the National College website (www.nationalcollege.org.uk) and membership of the National College itself can be a useful starting point.

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**AMiE Council elections 2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14/04/11</td>
<td>Letter to be circulated to members, advising of election timetable and seeking nominations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/05/11</td>
<td>Nominations to be sent to the Returning Officer by this time and date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/05/11</td>
<td>Nominations checked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/05/11</td>
<td>Ballot papers compiled and printed for those membership categories where a ballot is required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31/05/11</td>
<td>Ballot papers, including election addresses, distributed to appropriate members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24/06/11</td>
<td>Ballot closes. Voting papers to be sent to the Returning Officer by this time and date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/07/11</td>
<td>Results declared.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/09/11</td>
<td>New members of AMiE Council take up office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27/06/11</td>
<td>Voting papers counted.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

September 2011

New representatives of AMiE Council published in ELM.
A series of free practical guides to education leadership and management is available to members. Some are still available as a hard copy and all are available as a PDF. To receive these publications, please contact Neha D’Souza at ndsouza@amie.atl.org.uk.
Farewell to Nadine

Nadine Cartner, Director of Policy at AMiE and Editor of *ELM*, retires in April. Here, Reg Chapman pays tribute to Nadine.

I was on the panel which appointed Nadine as Education Officer at ACM in 1999. As a small organisation, this appointment was a major commitment for ACM at the time. As the Association grew under the leadership of John Mowbray and Peter Pendle, Nadine helped to make it the success it is today. She is one of the reasons why ACM (and latterly AMiE) is widely viewed as ‘punching above its weight’.

First and foremost, Nadine personifies the values and passions of the Association. She has a love of learning and a strong belief in the power of colleges to transform lives and communities. She is committed in arguing the case: just as much for talented students taking HE programmes in colleges as for people needing ESOL support; just as much for ambitious apprentices starting to make their way in life as for older learners wanting to enrich their lives and communities through learning; and just as much for young people who want to study full-time in colleges as for older workers who want to enhance their work skills and prospects through college training.

Nadine expresses the commitment to excellence and inclusion that is at the heart of ACM/AMiE. In pursuing these values and the interests of members, Nadine is an excellent networker with policymakers, agencies and the media. She makes her voice heard where others would struggle to get a hearing. Her many articles, especially in the *TES* and the *Guardian*, are always clear, purposeful and constructive, and she is not afraid to tell it as she sees it.

Nadine has represented ACM/AMiE on many bodies and committees, when her calm but passionate voice expresses the best in FE. She is also a great interpreter, translating policy documents with their often (deliberately) opaque language for busy managers with too little time to read them. She has helped them to keep up to date through *ELM*, through the information service and through the various conferences and seminars that she has organised over the years.

A lasting legacy will be the superb *College Manager* series offering best practice advice to members. Nadine wrote some of these guides herself, edited others and was a terrier with authors, ever challenging them to be concise, jargon-free and practical. Nadine always ensured that the messages within each publication reflected the values of ACM/AMiE as a trade union and a professional association. She has a fantastic feel for the concerns of members, which is clearly demonstrated throughout the series.

Nadine has been a great advocate and servant of the Association, and has shaped its image and reality. She will be greatly missed, but all those who know her will wish her well in her retirement and will always remember how she fought the good fight. Thanks and best wishes, Nadine.
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If you would like to contribute an article, book review or letter, or if you would like to see pictures of your students on the cover of ELM, please send these to the editor.

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Representing leaders and management in education
Peter Pendle, Deputy General Secretary, ATL

It seems to be open season on leaders and managers in education at the moment.

Every time there is a less than perfect inspection outcome or a crisis with a college or school budget, there are calls for the principal or headteacher to resign. If that weren’t bad enough, now the pay and conditions of leaders and managers are under scrutiny.

Recently we have seen Michael Gove demand that headteachers should not be paid more than the Prime Minister. Why headteachers should be singled out for this treatment is not clear. I imagine that many headteachers wouldn’t mind the perks that go with the PM’s job – residence in central London, country home, chauffeur-driven car, domestic staff, armed protection officers (handy for disruptive pupils or parents), and the rest. Maybe we should turn the question round and ask whether the Prime Minister should earn as much as headteachers? What qualifications are required for the job? Do PMs have to achieve a national qualification in prime-ministership before they can apply for the job? Or undergo an Ofsted inspection in good governance? The performance of recent incumbents suggests that these might not be bad ideas.

But now it is leaders’ and managers’ pensions that are in the firing line. While all public sector workers’ pensions are under attack by the Government, leaders and managers in education could face a triple whammy.

As part of the previous budget announcement that £2 billion must be saved from public sector pensions, the Department for Education is seeking to find £800 million. It proposes that employee contributions for those in the Teachers’ Pension Scheme (TPS) should go up to 9.8% – and this at a time when there is a pay freeze for school employees and a paltry 0.2% pay increase for those in further education.

It gets worse for leaders and managers: with the publication of the Hutton Report on pensions (see also pages 4–5), it is proposed that employee contributions should be tiered, with those paid the most making the highest contribution.

This could mean contribution rates as high as 14% for leaders and managers.

And then, on top of that, Hutton proposes that final salary pensions should be replaced by career average revalued earnings (CARE) schemes. So leaders and managers could see their contribution rates doubled, while the benefits they receive are slashed. Many FE college principals find their pensions already being capped by existing TPS regulations.

In a sector where it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit to senior leadership positions, one must be pessimistic about the impact of these proposals on succession planning in schools and colleges. For all employees, the pension proposals will mean pay more, get less and work longer. For leaders and managers, there will be negative implications for aspiring to reach the top.

I have often said that being a college principal or headteacher is a little like being a Premiership football team manager: two or three bad results and you could be out on your ear. But at least football managers get well paid for their troubles and don’t have their terms and conditions slashed halfway through the season.

If ever there were a time for leaders and managers in education to be in an association that is prepared to speak up for them, it is now. And it looks as if the only association that is going to rise to that challenge will be AMiE in partnership with ATL. It’s time to speak out on these issues. AMiE, in partnership with ATL, is doing just that.