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Pocket Watch – A College of Teaching?

Introduction

The idea of a College, even a Royal College, of Teaching has been kicking around for some time and particularly so since the demise of the General Teachers' Council (GTC) a couple of years ago. Many, including the Prince's Teaching Institute who this week launched a **blueprint** for such a College, believe that it is now "*an idea whose time has come.*" Certainly it's a time when a battered profession is keen to establish its own sense of worth and when as a recently commissioned Pearson report indicated, fundamental questions are being asked about how curriculum reform should be led. So what's the idea and just what role would a College play?

What's the idea?

Broadly the aim is for an independent professional body, supportive rather than regulatory or lobby-based in function, with voluntary membership and a strong commitment to mentoring, research and professional development. The Royal College of Surgeons and similar professional bodies are often seen cited as role models and the recently established FE Education and Training Foundation provides another example.

What would it do?

The Paper suggests three core functions. First, the creation of professional standards typically in five areas including: subject knowledge; pedagogy; professional skills; contribution to the profession; and leadership. Requirements for entry to the profession would remain the Government's preserve "*at least initially.*" Second supporting members' professional development in those five areas using a variety of mentoring and support activities. Members would expect to progress through three levels: Associate; Member; and Fellow. Third, researching, developing and disseminating good practice where the emphasis would be predominantly on what works. The College would host as well as commission research.

How would it be organised?

Membership would be voluntary and the projection is a take-up of 80,000 teachers but given that the College needs over time to become self-financing, there would be a fee structure with Associates paying £70-£90 a year, Members £90-£110 a year and Fellows £110-£130 a year. These are on the low side when compared with other professional bodies and mean considerable start-up funding would be needed, indeed it's reckoned that it would take some 10 years to reach break-even depending on membership numbers. In terms of structure there would be a Board, Executive Team and Trustees.

What happens now?

That's the big question. This Paper is the result of some serious discussions and consultation over the last year and ties the whole thing up nicely. Both major political Parties have expressed degrees of support, the Education Committee is behind the idea as is some of the profession but as the Paper recognises things get a bit harder now with answers needed to such questions as: "*Where would the funds come from for it to get started? When would it be launched? Who would lead it?*"



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A College of Teaching Feb 2014