



Education Governance Review: Next Steps

Draft ADES Position Statement for Directors' Forum September 2017

A. Introduction

ADES accepts the need for change in the system to meet the demands of a changing public service and supports the broad principles which lie at the heart of the Next Steps document: the importance of effective collaborative work; and the case for empowering schools to make decisions which allow them better to meet the needs of their local communities. ADES has been promoting inter-authority partnerships since 2014, with informal partnerships and joint working arrangements which pre-dated that time, and has taken the lead in establishing Regional Collaboratives. There is much research that tells us that collaboration and partnership working is most effective when all layers of the system are attuned to achieving the same outcomes and willingly work together in pursuit of the agreed goals.

ADES has also consistently stressed how fundamental it is that the Governance Review should support the broader children's services and GIRFEC agendas, given our view that children and young people must be placed at the centre of everything we do.

The aims of the Next Steps paper will only be achieved if the resultant changes enable all parties to deliver fully the Scottish Government's priority policies on excellence and equity in education.

This position statement by ADES offers a constructive and informed view of the issues to be addressed in order to retain the integrity of the Government's drive towards greater school autonomy within a more collaborative culture. It also highlights the key issues which require to be addressed to ensure that the future direction is supported by all stakeholders.

B. Next Steps: Key issues

ADES has been actively engaged in the Steering Group on Regional Collaboratives which has been co-chaired by the Scottish Government and SOLACE and on which COSLA and Education Scotland are also represented. This group was scheduled to report by 8th September. However, a number of key issues remained unresolved at that time and further discussions were later scheduled. Moving forward, the core issues which ADES believes require to be addressed or clarified are as follows:

- There are a number of issues associated with the role, status and reporting duties associated with the post of 'Regional Director'. The proposed changes in their present form represent a significant shift in current governance and accountability roles; this requires further dialogue.
- Appointing a Regional Director from outwith the collaboratives would not allow the desired change agenda to move at pace. The establishment of "Regional Coordinators", from within each collaborative, would support the "bottom up" approach to collaborative working which research tells us has greatest impact. It would also reflect more accurately the nature of their role. The post holders would be better placed as senior officers drawn from and selected by the constituent local authorities, with appointments being made on a fixed term basis with reporting lines to the Chief Executives of the local authorities and to the Chief Executive of Education Scotland. Regional Coordinators would lead a collaborative team consisting of the Directors/Chief Education Officers of the local authorities within the collaborative, Education Scotland Area Lead Officers and other staff from the local authorities, Education Scotland and other organisations as required.
- The transfer of improvement functions and associated responsibilities to Regional Collaboratives, as currently proposed, would reduce the power and integrity of local authorities who would then be responsible only for, operational functions in relation to school education. Separating the operational from improvement functions may bring about the opposite outcome to that which is intended.
- There is scope to review the proposal and increase the balance of responsibility across regional and local areas. The proposal to transfer responsibility for improvement to centrally managed regional collaboratives weakens local democratic accountability for the key improvement function within education. It is important to identify more collaborative ways of working while retaining local democratic accountability for key aspects of education. If Regional Coordinators are appointed by the constituent local authorities and lead a team which includes Chief Education Officers and others, then local democratic accountability would be retained, since Chief Education Officers would report for scrutiny purposes to local authority Education or Children's Services Committees (or equivalent) on improvement activities and outcomes both within the relevant local authority and across the Regional Collaborative.
- The means by which local authorities will be required to "provide staff" to the regional collaboratives is not straightforward. Almost all local authority staff who currently contribute to the improvement and quality assurance agendas also have many other duties within their job descriptions given the nature of the Children Services' agenda.
- The nature of staff deployment and engagement with a collaborative (part-time or full time, long-term or short term) will require to be determined by the needs of the collaborative and the needs of the local authority. Issues of equity will require to be carefully addressed to reflect the different sizes of quality improvement resources across local authorities (some local authorities do not have distinct quality improvement teams).

the school and the community which it serves. In addition, it must be in partnership with the local authority, as the employer of the head teacher and her/his staff. Local authorities need to retain the ability to re-deploy staff in, for instance, circumstances where there are falling school rolls or when a welfare transfer of a member of staff is clearly desirable. Head teachers should also be expected to work, not only within national policy guidelines, but within local authority policies on, for instance, ASL and Pupil Exclusion.

- The future role of Education Scotland for raising standards, promoting quality improvement at regional and local level, for leadership development and for maintaining the Inspection programme is challenging. This is a significant time of change for Education Scotland and a reinvigorated agency will require to work in partnership with all stakeholders in order to achieve improvements across the system. The risk of a conflict of interest between the inspection function of Education Scotland and its responsibilities for developing the curriculum and quality improvement must also be mitigated.
- The proposed changes will pose significant leadership challenges for Scottish Education, at both school and regional levels. If SCEL is to be subsumed within Education Scotland, it is essential that a strong focus on leadership development is prioritised within a revitalised Education Scotland. It will be crucial that head teachers are properly equipped to assume greater levels of responsibility and that the leaders of and other staff involved in the Regional Collaboratives are sufficiently skilled to lead improvement across their regions for the benefit of Scotland's children and young people.

C Conclusion

ADES believes that systemic improvement in Scottish Education and Children's Services will only be achieved if all stakeholders work together in a spirit of collaboration. It is therefore essential that any proposals for significant reform have the support of those stakeholders. ADES believes that the position outlined within this document will not only attract widespread support across the system; it will also retain local democratic accountability for education while delivering the Scottish Government's policy aims of achieving greater school autonomy within a more collaborative culture. It also promotes the key strategic policy drivers of Excellence and Equity within the overarching principles of Getting it right for every child.

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