



## Developing the teaching profession to a world-class standard

SCORE's response to the Department for Education consultation

3 February 2015

SCORE is a partnership of organisations, which aims to improve science education in UK schools and colleges by supporting the development and implementation of effective education policy. The partnership is currently chaired by Professor Julia Buckingham and comprises the Association for Science Education, Institute of Physics, Royal Society, Royal Society of Chemistry and Society of Biology.

This response is constrained by the shorter than usual period of time respondents have been given to take part, time which included the Christmas period. In submitting this response we are concerned with only the questions on professional development rather than seeking to make an expression of interest in establishing a College of Teaching.

1. SCORE supports the creation of an independent professional body for teachers, as a means of recognising and enhancing the teaching profession. This body must recognise that teachers are part of broad professional and subject communities that extend beyond the school or college in which they work.
2. However, for such recognition to have value, it must operate at a subject-specific as well as general level. Professional bodies are ideally placed to support the development of teachers' subject knowledge and their expertise in this work should be central to the operation of any new independent professional body for teachers.
3. A new professional body should require, support and facilitate teacher engagement with and access to robust subject specific academic research. This research will be both academic and practice-based and of relevance to their teaching
4. Chartered status is already awarded to teachers by SCORE partners either as CBiol, CChem and CPhys or as CSciTeach. The science education community is open to discussing how these qualifications might align with a more general Chartered Teacher system within the body, but any new organisation should clearly communicate the value of chartered status and encourage teachers to obtain it.
5. A new independent professional body for teaching should recognise that technicians and teaching assistants belong to the teaching community.
6. Any system of professional development for teachers should be seen as a framework for on-going development and not as a series of discrete steps. A key role for the college will be to provide leadership and guidance on different forms of professional development to allow effective accreditation to be developed. Accreditation should relate to the professional development carried out by the teacher and demonstration of reflective practice.
7. SCORE is very concerned by the proposal that professional development should be led principally from within schools. The best professional development has the following qualities:
  - it should put the needs of teachers first
  - it should take a long-term view of an individual's or a school subject department's development

- it should form an integral part of teachers' professional lives rather than undertaken on a "one-off" basis
- it should be based on more than the professional development leader's personal experience, including national and international discussions and research on how best to teach a topic or ideas
- the leader of the professional development should have experience of working with and coaching adults
- It is informed by robust evidence

These features do not map well to a school-led model because it is not the main business of schools to provide professional development. Schools are encouraged to see themselves in competition with their peers, rather than as part of a supportive network. This militates against any proposal based on mutual support, building relationships or taking a long term view of the professional needs of a participant.

The consultation response refers to identifying the "best" schools. Those which achieve the best examination results, or value-added scores, may not be equipped to provide the best professional development or have staff with the qualities to make a first-class leader of professional development.

Teachers should be heavily involved in designing and leading professional development, but this should be carried out within the wider education community rather than in isolation.

8. There needs to be a community of providers of subject-specific professional development. They need to be engaged with changes in the subject and its pedagogy and be able to share and challenge their own approaches to leading professional development. Professional bodies, subject associations and other national bodies are well placed to build such networks and provide support, guidance and forums for those leading subject-specific professional development. They can provide access to genuinely expert knowledge, including the latest developments in the subject, something that is particularly pertinent for the sciences. They are also able to work with educational researchers to translate the most effective research to accumulate evidence of what really works, something that would be very difficult to do at school level.
9. The College of Teachers already exists for school staff in the UK. The success of a College of Teaching will depend in a large part on whether it is seen by teachers themselves as something that will benefit them as a profession, and whether it will provide something different to what is already on offer. Teachers will demand a clear reason as to why they should join. Research carried out by NFER on behalf of the Sutton Trust<sup>1</sup> suggests that there is some way to go in this regard. It also requires the Department for Education, in particular, to maintain the appropriate level of support, while granting the College of Teaching independence so that it is not seen as an agent of state control and interference. Involvement of the professional bodies at a

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<sup>1</sup> Carried out as part of NFER's Teacher Voice Omnibus Survey; results can be viewed at <http://www.suttontrust.com/newsarchive/royal-college-teaching-advocates-still-need-win-teachers-sutton-trust/>

subject level, organisations that already have established relationships with many teachers, would help to demonstrate this independence.

10. It will be important for those involved in any new independent professional body for teaching to learn the lessons of past attempts to create and sustain professional bodies, such as the General Teaching Council for England. Those involved in the new body will need to ensure it is seen by teachers as a positive organisation which they are willing to support.