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Headteachers planning college of teaching to speak for profession and raise standards



Teaching unions have been criticised for strikes and arguments over pay David Bebbler Times photographer

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Leading headteachers are planning to set up a college of teaching to improve the reputation of the profession and rescue it from “fads and fetishes”.

Headteachers planning college of teaching to speak for profession and raise standards

The college would be independent from government and provide an alternative voice to the teaching unions, who normally speak on teachers’ behalf. It would be similar to the Royal College of Surgeons, from which advice for the new venture has been sought.

Michael Gove, the Education Secretary, has criticised the unions for their fixation with “pay, pensions and members’ ideological crusades [rather than] the curriculum, standards and support for children”.

Headteachers and academics attended a recent workshop in London, chaired by Sir Richard Lambert, the chancellor of the University of Warwick, to take the plans forward.

A report of the meeting said that it was agreed that the lack of a strong voice for professional standards in teaching “had led to a vacuum, and that as a result,

Government policy had strayed incrementally into areas that should be determined by teachers.”

The report says “it was generally acknowledged that the teaching profession is prone to fads and fetishes, which can spread through teaching like wildfire, without there being any evidence to support them. It was agreed that there is a need for the profession to take control of what is introduced into the classroom.”

The group agreed upon six purposes for the new college, including raising the status of the teaching profession and establishing an authoritative voice to defend professional standards.

According to the report, most of those at the meeting “pointed to the status of the teaching profession as a problem. Delegates agreed that there is a need to make teaching be seen as an aspirational profession.”

However, there were shared concerns about how teachers would receive the idea of a new training college. Some “were concerned that the current timing was not right for teachers, as the profession is in turmoil”.

The report said that there was broad agreement that the college would represent teaching, not teachers. Its remit would cover subject knowledge, pedagogy, professional development and setting high standards, not terms and conditions of employment.

The report said that there was a desire for a body that would absorb the best in new research, similar to leading medical organisations such as the royal colleges of nursing or surgeons.

The meeting was hosted by the [Prince’s Teaching Institute](#), which also raised the idea at an event for headteachers at the beginning of the year.

Jon Coles, a trustee of the institute, said: “The consensus at the meeting was that this [the college] is something important that needs to happen, and is the chance to achieve political consensus and get power back to the teaching profession.”

Asked if teachers had previously been fragmented, Mr Coles said: “There has always been that issue — the General Teaching Council never did win the support of the vast majority of the profession.

“The teaching profession has suffered in comparison with the medical profession, or engineers, by not having an institutionally strong voice and not connecting the best of research with professional training. As a consequence of that it’s been too easy for government to occupy that space, to the detriment of the teaching profession.”

The report of the meeting has been sent to Mr Gove, Stephen Twigg, the Shadow Education Secretary, and Graham Stuart, the chairman of the Commons’ Education Select Committee.