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Institutionalized Governance: The Case of the National College for School Leadership

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Abstract: The article is based on data from the *Knowledge Production and Educational Leadership Project* (funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council RES-000-23-1192) where we investigated the relationship between the state and public policy and knowledge in England during the New Labor governments from 1997. The relationship between the state and civil society is one of institutionalized governance where the public institution in the form of the national ministry and the establishment of Non-Departmental Public Bodies remain important in policymaking but is increasingly inter dependent with networks of advisors and private consultants who “enter” government as policy designers and deliverers. We intend to develop this through using the National College for School Leadership as a case study based on primary documentation and interview data.

Keywords: governance, public institution, school leadership, New Labor

INTRODUCTION

Following the initial announcement by the Prime Minister at the New Heads conference in 1998 (Passmore, 1998), a National College for School Leadership (NCSL) was proposed in the Green Paper, *teachers: meeting the challenge of change* (DfEE, 1998),¹ and subsequently Tony Blair made the following statement in his speech to the National Association of Headteachers on June 2, 1999:

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In the Green Paper we proposed to establish a National College for School Leadership. This proposal has attracted wide enthusiasm, as an opportunity to create a single focus for the training and development of headteachers. We are today publishing the prospectus for the new college—a £10m centre, with residential facilities and state-of-the-art ICT to spread its work nationally and internationally. The College will open next year, and we will begin immediately to seek a founding director and partners to take the College forward. New technology will be critical. The sheer scale of the College's audience, with 24,000 serving heads, probably twice that number aspiring to headship and many more in management positions, means that a major part of its operations must be available as a virtual college on the Internet. The College will develop leadership and management skills, taking on responsibility for the full range of school leadership courses. We also intend it to develop a strong international dimension, through placements and ICT, enabling school leaders in this country to build overseas links and set their work in a far wider context. (Blair, 1999)

The College was opened in 2000 and a decade on from the formal announcement there is an opportunity to put the creation of this state monopoly into perspective. The College building was opened in Nottingham in 2002, with nine regional centers.²

The College was set up as an executive Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) with a remit to: first, train and license teachers (particularly aspiring headteachers) to meet supply and demand requirements for middle leadership (e.g., curriculum/subject co-ordination/heads, pastoral roles), senior leadership (deputy/assistant heads) and headteachers; second, accredit training as a part of a new framework of credentials which redefined professional competence and practice

- (a) *Leading from the Middle* (LftM) for aspiring and serving middle leaders,³
- (b) the *National Professional Qualification for Headteachers* (NPQH) for aspiring headteachers,⁴
- (c) induction for new heads through HEADLAMP or *Headteacher Leadership and Management Programme* and then HIP or *Headteacher Induction Programme*,⁵ and
- (d) the *Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers* (LPSH) which has recently been replaced with *Head for the Future*⁶;

third, to establish the model of school leadership to be practiced in schools through the design of training, the use of conferences and discussion forums such as Network Learning Communities (NCSL, undated), and the promotion of particular texts and researchers as officially endorsed knowledge producers; and fourth, to fund and control research through the identification of priorities

and the tendering process with researchers (i.e., the identification of projects, selection of research teams, research design, and report structure and content).

After nearly two decades of the state being rolled back and the creation of the conditions for a quasi-market in education, the establishment of the NCSL is an interesting site to examine how the state retains hierarchical control in public governance. While political science has taken the field on an analytical and discursive journey from and between government institutions to governance through networks, the New Labor decade is illustrative of how in this particular case the state is not so much a referee or steering mechanism but remains a director and active player.

Whereas in 1983 when the then DES set up the National Development Centre (NDC) to coordinate and act as a clearing house for school management training, it did so through steering Local Authorities and sought to support, develop, but not directly replace what was there, not least by using specific grants, and designated courses provided locally (e.g., OTTO/One Term Training Opportunities) (Bolam, 1986).

By contrast New Labor did not investigate what was already provided locally through networks among schools, local authorities, and higher education, but took the national training developed under the previous Conservative governments, and located it in a College that directly replaced and often killed off much local provision. Through an examination of the decision to set up the NCSL we put forward an argument that the New Labor's approach is one of *institutionalised governance*, where the public institution in the form of Whitehall remains strong, and has increased its legitimacy and capacity for control through inviting in particular people and working through trusted networks.

THE ROLE OF THE INSTITUTION WITHIN INSTITUTIONALIZED GOVERNANCE

The *Knowledge Production in Educational Leadership (KPEL) Project* (Gunter & Forrester, 2008a) examined the relationship between the state, public policy and knowledge. The site in which this has been researched is successive government investment in headteachers as leaders of schools with a particular emphasis on the first decade of New Labor (1997–2007).

Specifically, the Project focused on the production of New Labor education policy through the public institutions of the state and the knowledge that was drawn on to produce, legitimize, and operationalize policy. Attention was given to the way public institutions directly intervened in the construction and identity of teachers as a professional group, and did this by inviting and involving private interests in ways that enabled policy to be formed and implemented in the name of the public interest. Such private interests include individual entrepreneurs and philanthropists, consultants from private companies, and members

of HEIs who undertake entrepreneurial activity within leadership centres and/or as researchers in Schools of Education. Indeed, such private interests have helped to retain institutional control as a means of enabling product development and accessing public investment. The analysis confirmed a form of institutionalised governance where the state is adapting to the interplay among hierarchy, markets, and networks (Newman, 2001).

Our argument is that the public institution remains strong and a central feature of state activities. Public institutions (PM and No. 10 advisors, Department, Treasury) have secured top-down control of education policy conceptualization and delivery through, first, a combination of legal, economic, and cultural technologies (policies, funding, laws, green papers, guidance, training) and tools (rewards and penalties through performance-related pay and contracts), where national policy has directly intervened into schools, classrooms, communities and homes in ways that shape practice, discourse and imaginations about what education is about and for; second, a restructuring of Whitehall where the Department established units, such as the Standards and Effectiveness Unit, and the Innovation Unit, operating according to New Public Management methods, cultures and language, and staffed with selected pro-reformers drawn from HEIs and schools with a remit to secure the local delivery of policy outcomes; and, third, public institutions as an extension of Whitehall's direct control of policy design and delivery have been strengthened through:

- (a) expansion of regulation of private interests in the marketplace, e.g. the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) regulation of the new academies programme funded by private philanthropy (Woods et al., 2007),
- (b) redesign of provision, e.g., control of workforce supply and demand through the shift from a Teacher Training Agency (TTA) with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) to the Training and Development Agency (TDA) which now includes non QTS credentializing;
- (c) creation of a public monopoly in the design, delivery, evaluation, funding, and research of school leadership through the establishment in 2000 of the NCSL.

Formal hierarchical authority matters: first, the primacy of the national public institution remains where delivery is translated into targets, with the Minister linking resignation to outcome measures (Barber, 2007); second, intervention where NDPBs such as the NCSL were given remits to deliver government priorities; and third, alternative policy generating sites were closed down or marginalized through totalising structures, and the promotion of particular cultural tastes about what is seen as normalised good practice has permeated the discourse about school leadership.

This analysis goes somewhat to revising a shift from government to governance in policy science where it is argued that there are processes taking place

where government has been “hollowed out” (Rhodes, 1994) through the increased role of networks of private sector companies and quangos. However, education policy in England remains firmly in the grip of the London government: unlike Scotland responsibility has not been devolved downwards to an English parliament or to existing local government, and it is a policy that has not been relocated upwards to Europe. Hence while parts of government may have been hollowed out, other parts remain firmly filled in.

The New Labor decade shows that public institutions continue to matter, not least how Barber (2007) explains the delivery chain from Minister to school pupil in the implementation of national standards on learning process and outcomes in schools (Gunter, 2008). Béland (2005) argues that “political institutions create constraints and opportunities for those involved in policy-making” (3), and so histories matter in determining what might be done.

What Barber (2007) is clear about is how the institutional logics were such that he had to work on the reform of Whitehall structures, processes and attitudes in order to enable New Labour’s commitment to delivery to operate. However, while institutions do matter, there is abundant evidence of rapid restructuring in ways that show that certain institutions can matter more than others. It is the Department and the construction of NDPBs such as the NCSL that seem to matter most. Local government institutions have continued to be restructured and recultured as delivery and supervisory organisations through a combination of inspection, legislative requirements, and outsourcing to private contractors. Unions (with the exception of the National Union of Teachers) have been incorporated into a social partnership with government, where they are directly involved in policy delivery.

Hence governance in the form of public dialogue and political debate has been replaced by central government direction combined with contractual compliance. The reliance on contractual relationships between NDPBs and private sector consultancies in the provision of educational services means that the public in relation to the institution is circumscribed and essentially means that powerful private interests are able to act within a public institution in the name of the public. This is where governance in the form of networks fits in, and in particular, how institutions of the state have worked with private interests to help frame and deliver public policy. As Béland (2005) goes on to argue the focus on institutions alone cannot explain change, not least how certain ideas come to the fore and why others are prevented from reaching the agenda.

THE ROLE OF GOVERNANCE WITHIN INSTITUTIONALIZED GOVERNANCE

The challenge for government in the policy implementation process is that policies “travel” to, enter and are interpreted and reworked in “embedded”

settings (Ozga, 2005), and confusion can be generated by “ensembles of policies” that contradict or generate tensions between what is being required and what is preferred (Ball, 1994: 25–26). Hence there is a “risk management imperative” (Hood et al., 2004) where policy needs translation, training, monitoring and measuring to make sure that government intension is delivered locally in schools and classrooms and so produces outcome data (e.g. student achievement) to prove that the government has done what it promised to do. New Labor, like other governments, realized that it could not develop and deliver policy without help, and so Ministers read particular texts, called people in, gave people jobs as advisors, and put contracts out to tender that enabled private companies to frame policy ideas and strategies (see DfES/PwC, 2007). In doing this New Labor connected with people and networks already operating in the education marketplace and constructed such roles and inter-connections through this intervention.

Our argument is that institutionalized governance is about networks *within* and *connected to* institutions where there is a need to give attention to “ideational forces” (Béland, 2005: 13) where the power processes which build “trust networks” (Tilly, 2005) around ideas is significant. There is no level playing field where all can join in, but a power process of involving particular individuals and companies who present themselves and are acknowledged as market leaders in knowledge production and delivery. This is what Kingdon (2003) identifies as “policy entrepreneurs,” and in education this is made up of Ministers, Civil Servants, advisors appointed from schools and HEIs to Units in the Department or NDPBs such as the NCSL, and private consultants as individuals and from large companies who are located in different institutions (Whitehall, Company) and in different places (UK and internationally) but who reveal harmonized dispositions regarding neo-liberal reforms (Gunter & Forrester, 2008b).

While Kingdon (2003) identifies the strategies and investment for gain within policy entrepreneurial activity, we agree with Moran (2007) that there is a need to understand the British state in relation to its historical origins, not least the endurance of “club government” and its reformation in the current configuration of regulation within a marketized system.

From Club to Contract

Elites in local government, Whitehall, and the profession that made the system work during most of the 20th century through, what Marquand (1981) identifies as “club government”, faced challenges to their institutional power, not least through influential ideas in texts such as Chubb and Moe (1990), Osborne and Gaebler (1993), and recently Bobbit’s (2002) thesis of the “market state” where choice, personalization, and consumerism mean that public education, and hence the traditional elites who have controlled this, is a thing of the past.

This rejection of what Bobbit (2002) calls the “nation state” based on security and welfare means that the “troika of providers” between the Minister, schools/Unions, and local authorities (officers, advisors, inspectors) based on “mutual regard, trust and commitment” (Williams, 1995: 4) fractured.

Club government only worked and survived many challenges as long as there was a deferral to “act sensibly” through professional networking (Bogdanor, 1979: 161). Indeed, as Gewirtz (2002) has shown such elites were seen to be the source of the problem based on the argument that the Department had to become more interventionist by ensuring government reforms were delivered, and the “inefficient” and “self-interested” in schools, unions and local authorities had to embrace reforms or be excluded.

Club government is being overlain and reworked with a form of what we call *contractual governance*, where some members of previous elites have positioned themselves in such a way as to remain actively involved in policy-making. This includes some former local government chief executives remaining close to policy; some members of the profession (particularly head-teachers) who have joined the Standards and Effectiveness Unit or the NCSL, or have remained in post but have led on reforms with honours following for many as a result; and some professors from HEIs who have remained close to policy, led on innovations and changes, and/or joined one of the Units.

In addition, elites from private sector companies, as individual consultants or as team members, have also been brought into Whitehall (and other parts of the system, not least to take over from failing LAs) to provide advice and models of good practice, help reforms to be communicated, and undertake research to support policy development (Gunter & Forrester, 2008b). We have framed this as contractual as distinct from club to illustrate the move that has taken place, where “. . . relationships have tended to shift towards the contractual, competitive and calculative” (Clarke et al., 2000: 9).

Current elites overtly interact in ways to demonstrate their disposition to enable reform design and implementation as a means of sustaining their involvement through contractual relations. Their power base is dependent on institutional legitimacy but is located in contractual renewal rather than in bureaucratic role or sustainability. Agenda setting is central to the game, where private interests can handle uncongenial policy by using a shrewd combination of waiting and shaping the discourse (Gunter & Forrester, 2008b).

In Bourdieu’s (2000) terms there is a game in play between private interest networks with Ministers and Civil Servants, with a symbolic exchange of capitals: for Ministers and Civil Servants it is access to private sector knowledge and know how that can increase the status of government as modern and relevant to economic security in a globalizing economy, and for private interests (heads, CEOs, private consultants, professors) it is access to the configuration of public provision of services as products that they can construct and provide together with the potential market opportunities therein.

Research Design

The KPEL Project was a two year study based on an interview survey of knowledge producers in government, local government, private companies, and higher education in England together with the reading of primary and secondary sources (see Gunter & Forrester, 2008a). In this article we draw on some aspects of the interview data from Ministers and Civil Servants regarding what was said about the reasons for setting up the College. Notably, we interviewed two former New Labor Ministers, three Civil Servants, and a former advisor, all who had been directly involved in the decision to set up the College.

Our main focus in this article is on the debates recorded in documents obtained from the then DFES under the Freedom of Information Act. A total of 56 papers were released and comprise formal memos, letters, minutes and emails between Civil Servants, between Civil Servants and lawyers, and including Ministers, from April 1999 through to February 2002. Such documents are of value because as Shipman (1988) argues: “they have been compiled for other purposes than to provide information for social scientists or historians. They can be assumed to be a reflection of feelings undisturbed by the presence of the researcher” (113–114).

Hence, while we have access to public documents about the NCSL such as the Prospectus (DfEE, 1999) and Remit and Review letters and reports (DfES/NCSL, 2004, undated; NCSL, 2006), these primary sources are helpful because they enable the discourse about the purposes of the NCSL and the debates that produced its public character to be opened up to scrutiny.

We read these documents by asking questions about the production process by following Gunter’s (2005) method of analysis:

- (a) technical questions: what is being said, who by and what impact does it have?
- (b) illuminative questions: what meaning can be attached to what is being said, and what silences are there?
- (c) critical questions: how is power being exercised in the problem posing and solving taking place?
- (d) practical questions: what decisions are being made and what is the chain of events?
- (e) positional questions: what does the combination of events, people, decisions, and the exercise of power mean for how governance can be understood?

Such questions enabled us to not only construct a description of what was being discussed, who by and for what purpose, but to also to give recognition to the dominant voices and how decisions were controlled. We drew on Fairclough’s (2003) approach to textual analysis to examine the relationship between policy discourses, intentions and the wider context of public sector modernization.

The National College for School Leadership

The National College's Learning and Conference Center cost £28 million and was officially opened in Nottingham by Tony Blair on 25 October 2002. Comments made by Blair include:

. . . in any other walk of life where people who are leaders and are having to handle budgets the size of school budgets, or make decisions the size of school decisions, a leadership college would be something that everybody would simply take for granted

If we want to get our school system right in Britain we need the right leadership—that's absolutely critical.

Leadership is something that comes in part from natural ability but it's also something that is learned and developed. (NCSL, 2002)

This investment in a state monopoly for leadership training in England is illustrative of institutionalised governance through the interplay between the centralized control of the College with the contracting of particular private interests in the development and delivery of College activities.

New Labor focused on headteachers as deliverers of national reforms locally. Central to their policy process was a concern that reforms would be delayed, fudged or ignored by teachers, and so they needed to put in place, what Barber (2007) has called a "delivery chain" from Minister to pupil, and avoid any interference from those who were framed as potential saboteurs. Hence the public institution in the form of Whitehall controlling policy and practice dominated the discourse and enabled managerialist tools to be validated. Interview data shows that the perceptions of Ministers, Civil Servants, and advisors was that headteachers were key to the reform process, and there was a direct relationship between headteachers as leaders in securing change:

We always knew we couldn't do what we wanted in education unless we turned round leadership . . . we were good at gathering good leaders around us and making them feel special, we were good at recruiting good heads to be Civil Servants, you'll know that from looking in the Standards and Effectiveness Unit, they were ex-heads and I think we were good at pinpointing good school leaders and nurturing them in a way we weren't good within the profession as a whole" (Secretary of State for Education 3).

But I think we were also aware that whatever the quality of the teacher in the school, whatever the quality of staff in any organisation, whether

or not you get the best out of them, whether or not you manage them and channel their skills and talents effectively depends upon good leadership . . . (Civil Servant 1).

A direct causal relationship was forged among the headteacher, leadership, and standards, with the phrase “world class” being used to describe how the education system had to develop. Policymakers had read school improvement and school effectiveness texts, associated with researchers and commentators in these fields, and accepted the promotion of the causal link: “I don’t think we made a decision that we’d concentrate on leadership, there was not a point when that decision was made . . . it was obvious” (Secretary of State for Education 3). Such a focus fitted with their own professional knowledge as former educationalists and generic common sense assumptions about what makes a good school (Gunter and Forrester 2008b).

The relationship with training is directly connected to the normality of the headteacher as leader and the urgency through which reform needed to happen. Policy texts presented this rationale with narratives around the need for headteachers to be effective leaders, and argued for centralized training with a bespoke and flagship College to demonstrate a national investment in this elite group (DfEE, 1998). Notably the point was made that there was no clear training rite of passage with a common brand that would signal quality and status as a leader. The lack of a requirement to be trained as a leader was seen as problematic and so excellent school leadership by chance of signing up for training and poor school leadership by avoidance or ignorance of training had to be rectified:

“ . . . that establishing a College would be a clear tangible vote of confidence in the profession. It would show, would underline the importance the government attached to school leaders, and would . . . give you a sort of springboard for the profession developing itself to a different level” (Civil Servant 5).

Four models were sources of inspiration: first, the London Leadership Center led by former headteacher Pat Collarbone where NPQH training was undertaken within but separate from a University,⁷ second, the Open University model as a “virtual college” based on distant learning through the use of information technology; third, the Ashridge Management School of training and accreditation⁸; and fourth, the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst where the emphasis on leadership for the armed forces but increasingly for a range of customers in partnership with the private sector.⁹ The approach was not so much to replicate a model but to seek to understand the “kind of climate” being created, “that sense of building a cadre of leaders, and indeed it made us reflect at the time on the transferability of generic leadership skills across different professions . . .” (Civil Servant 5).

What was not investigated was the experimental and bottom up growth in training locally and also postgraduate programmes provided by higher education (Gunter, 1999). It seems that partnerships that included local authorities, higher education, and Unions were sidelined, and study through MBA, MA, MSc, EdDs, and PhDs in leadership were not thought to be appropriate means of upgrading the profession.

Prior to New Labour taking office strategising had taken place within the networks around government to position higher education as unacceptable partners in the provision of professional and *practical* training through the NPQH (Cummings, 2002). Many of those who had controlled and shaped this discourse continued under New Labor, and gained contracts to deliver and/or were called on to give advice. Hence, while it is difficult to unravel the exact origins of the idea of a College established by national government and directly funded by the taxpayer, it seems to be located in discussions between Ministers, Civil Servants, advisors, and particular school leadership training providers. Therefore governance through networks was not open but based on how members of a public institution invited in those who were seen as safe in the shaping and delivery of reforms.

What seemed to help was that the NPQH had been piloted prior to the change in government and aspiring headteachers had become involved, with some completing the program. To abolish it and start again was seen to be politically unacceptable. The idea of a College took off and was backed up by school effectiveness and school improvement evidence to justify the huge investment in headteachers as leaders.

Notably, while the use of ICT meant that all 24,000 headteachers could be directly connected to the College, the argument for a virtual online College or distance learning College like the Open University, was lost. A physical location in the form of an iconic building would not only allow virtual access through the internet but was seen as necessary to symbolize investment in headteachers as a place to visit and to be treated to a bespoke training experience. In Bourdieu's (2000) terms what New Labour sought to do was to dominate the field, give recognition to particular forms of professional capital through state branded credentials, and use symbolic capital to consecrate headteachers as reform delivery leaders.

Establishing the NCSL

While the idea of a National College had captured the imagination of New Labor, the actuality of establishing it had to be framed legally and politically. The College is an executive NDPB sponsored by the Department and so receives funding direct from government. It is a limited company, where The National College for School Leadership Limited was incorporated on June 14, 2000. It is limited by guarantee and has no share capital (NCSL,

2006). The construction of the NCSL as an illustrative case of institutionalised governance is evident in the memos and emails between key players.

Our reading of these primary sources shows that there are two main issues: first, how to ensure centralised control the College; and second, how to secure funds to build and establish the College. This second aspect did not take off as the plans for a Charitable Body to receive donations from benefactors did not happen and so the taxpayer funded the building and running costs of the College. There is no evidence in our data about why this was the case.

The first issue of centralized control of the people leading the College is a key feature that was secured. There are a number of issues that relate to this:

- Prompted by a discussion with a potential benefactor the Department discussed the issue of “mutuality” where they understood this to mean “an organization owned by its customers . . . the benefits are that the organisation is attuned more directly to what customers need and want, without having to satisfy other stakeholders.” However, the advice given by a Civil Servant is not to go down this route:

We certainly want to establish a vigorous alumni organisation for the College—this would be part of the important benefits of networking and sharing good and effective leadership practice and experience. In the longer term, it is an attractive model for the College to be owned and run by its alumni. However it is clear that we are not in that world yet and would not be for some time, perhaps as long as 10 years. But as an ultimate goal it may well be worth bearing in mind: if through the College and the leadership programs we have raised leadership practice and enthusiasm in the school sector to the point that the College could successfully be transferred to its alumni, we shall certainly have succeeded. (Memo April 29, 1999)

- What is interesting about this data is that mutuality is defined in terms of “alumni” rather than all headteachers as College members, hence control cannot be handed over to headteachers until they have been through the required training and co-option processes designed and delivered by trusted advisors and contractors.
- In a later memo the same Civil Servant confirms that the time is not right for such a model though in the future it could be a possibility, and the underlying concern is that “we would need to be satisfied that it was safe and sensible to hand the College over to its alumni and that they would run it properly for the benefit of parents and pupils, who as the Secretary of State says are the principal stakeholders” (Memo May 7, 1999). Consequently, what is deemed sensible and safe is the Minister who is in control on behalf of the stakeholders that are defined as parents and children.

- What is not evident in the written texts is how parents and children might be networked with headteachers through local schools in regard to professional training or even represented on the formal governing body of the College. Hence the Secretary of State is the person who is deemed able through the electoral mandate to operate in ways that are “sensible” and “safe.” While the potential for hollowing out was there through network development by the profession and/or the community taking control it was not evident in the written discussions.
- In relation to the legal status of the College the direct emphasis was on the ability of the Secretary of State to be in control:

In terms of formal constitution, the preferred option which Ministers are moving towards is to set the College up as a limited company. They want the College to be at some distance from the Department, so it cannot be set up as an Executive Agency. However, since the College needs to be rooted in Government, giving it authority and a sense of being written into the national landscape, Ministers are clear that they want to appoint the Director and all future Directors, and the Governing Council. I understand that this level of control over appointments means that in formal classification terms the College will be an Executive NDPB. (Memo May 6, 1999)

- The emphasis on controlling appointments means that the Secretary of State can ensure the College can be controlled “at some distance” by having appropriate appointees who can be trusted to operate in preferred ways.
- This issue of control is also evident in discussion about whether the College should have Royal status. This could be in two forms: first, a Royal Charter, and second, the use of the Royal title. Evidence in the documents shows that a Royal Charter was not deemed appropriate because “the Privy Council Office prefers bodies with Royal Charters to be free from external control” (Memo November 23, 1999) and a Charter would mean that a body would not be bound by *ultra vires* or the constraint in law to remain within the powers granted by the Charter. Consequently, the Department would have “to be very careful to get the terms of the Charter and by-laws right if we want to pin down what the College can and can’t do” (Memo November 23, 1999). Therefore, the setting up of a limited company seemed the simpler thing to do, and that the College could be kept under control through the courts if necessary.
- The use of a Royal title is also dismissed, not only logistically in regard to the convention of awarding this to longer established bodies, but also in terms of branding. The Department is concerned with image and that the College should be seen to be new: “we are looking to set the College up as a modern, forward looking organization rather than tying it to a more establishment image. Certainly when (name) touched on the possibility of Royal

status in much earlier discussions with Ministers and No 10 there was little enthusiasm” (Memo November 23, 1999).

- Control continued once the College was up and running with a major intervention in 2004. Operationally the College was set up from 2000 and its work controlled through an annual Remit Letter from the Secretary of State together with funding plans. The first two Remit Letters (Blunkett 2000; 2001) outline the role of the College in relation to training, networking with heads, and leading on research. Following an *End to End Review of School Leadership Policy and Delivery* (DfES/NCSL, 2004) of the College in 2004, the official DfES/NCSL strategic response suggested “adopting processes that strengthen mutual confidence and provide a well-structured relationship between NCSL and DfES” (DfES/NCSL, undated). The Third Remit Letter (Kelly, 2004) provides a much more detailed list of requirements regarding focus and activity though the Secretary of State says it “is not intended to reflect on my part to be over prescriptive about the College’s work” (Kelly, 2004: 2). However, the Department’s policy agenda is directly linked to how the NCSL should frame its work, not least the opening of the letter with: “Inspirational leadership in school is crucial for delivering the government’s educational agenda . . .” (Kelly, 2004:1). The NCSL is directed to develop stronger links with the then Teacher Training Agency (now the Training and Development Agency) and the Specialist Schools Trust (now the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust), but at the same time is clear on the need to control activity, where the Secretary of State sees the need for “greater precision, discipline, outcome-focus, and depth in the future work of the College” (Kelly, 2004: 2) and cautions, “we will need to exercise restraint and ensure you do not face unmanageably large burdens, spread across too wide a front” as “not every priority can be addressed at once” (Kelly, 2004: 2).

Focusing on the framing and scope of the NCSL suggests that New Labour’s theory of the state is clearly one of direct control, but the approach to public institutions is somewhat ambivalent. While concerns remain that public institutions are sites of establishment interests that could undermine radical change, and hence Monarchy, Local Government, Professional Groups/Unions are either characterized as outdated and/or not directly engaged with as institutions, it is also the case that New Labor has actively used certain public institutions to deliver their reforms.

New Labor, like previous governments, used the authority and legality of a majority in the House of Commons to push through change. Key to this is the hierarchy of a mandate to do what they said they would do, and such resolution is in continuity with the previous Thatcher regimes where the approach was to deliver rather than allow the interests within club government “to retain the essentials of the *status quo*, while changing appearances” (Marquand, 1981: 30).

The shift from powerful people by virtue of location in an institution to powerful people who work inside and outside of certain institutions, by virtue of their perceived relevant expertise and contractual commitment, means that hierarchy could operate to secure change through regulating knowledge production. In Bourdieu's (2000) terms those who had a track record of delivery (for the previous Conservative or New Labor governments), and who shared the New Labor disposition for functionalist reforms, entered into a symbolic exchange of capitals.

Government needed the modernizing respectability of the private sector, and the private sector could penetrate deeper in to public provision, combined with the image of working with the profession by bringing in a few selected headteachers. Hence, the Secretary of State for Education need not provide education directly but could do so through trusted people appointed to key roles in the NCSL. Harmonized habitus combined by central direction on purposes and performance reviews could control the NCSL, and hence the unmodern in the form of Royal status could be jettisoned in order to fabricate the new futuring of schooling. Additionally, a form of "mutuality" where training was handed over to the profession could not be tolerated as such a form of governance would limit the scope, direction, and penetration of centralized intervention.

Putting the NCSL into a contemporary historical perspective also enables the dynamic construction of institutional governance within context to be recognised. Thatcher and Blair both wanted radical change, and while they both have developed anti-state language and policies, they did create the conditions in which forms of bureaucracy could be used effectively, though Barber's (2007) deliverology is about a process that required bureaucratic methods and cultures rather than a direct rehabilitation of it. Centrally funded and directed interventions into professional practice in the form of training and knowledge production began under the Conservatives, but the NDC was distinctive in comparison to the NCSL because the former had a co-ordinating role regarding the type, take up and quality of provision whereas the latter provided the type of training, made the take up compulsory and determined what quality is.

While Bolam (1986) identifies the controversy about the Thatcherite "interventionist stance" (p. 253) through setting up the NDC, he does show that provision had to be localized due to the strength of Local Authorities as providers, but nearly 20 years later the situation had changed, with central government under New Labor prepared to marginalize weakened LAs and take direct control of training through a separate College (Bolam, 2004).

Whereas forms of governance through networks where developing through the hub role of the NDC as a "clearing house" for knowledge and training opportunities, this was curtailed through the nationalization of training by New Labor, and indeed networking tendencies that grew in the NCSL, in the form of Networked Learning Communities (NCSL, undated) were relocated.

What the case of the NCSL illustrates is that forms of institutionalized governance are historically located, and “is about redesigning governments to cope with scarcity and devising complex solutions to problems which defeat simple-minded nostrums of both free markets and national plans” (Rhodes, 1994: 151). Consequently, the “multiple centres” of a “polycentric state” that Rhodes (1996: 657) talks about is fluid and can develop rapidly but can also be disciplined through legislation, through a lack of funding, the non renewal of a contract, and even the exclusion and ridicule of the people involved. Significantly, the ongoing tensions within the centralising and decentralising, insider and outsider, approach to institutional governance generates contradictions for those who live and practice within education, and so not only is hollowing out or deregulation (or what is called “earned autonomy”) a feature of aspects of reform in education, but also there is a filling in of the space as new interventions take place into areas of previously professional and local discretion.

CONCLUSION

The establishment of the NCSL is an illustration of how the state has safeguarded the importance of hierarchy and indeed has made interventions into a professional group and professional practice that demonstrates centralized control. While private interests have been used by government to deliver, and those interests have shaped that provision, this has been through contractual arrangements where particular people and/or companies can be retained or dispensed with.

Institutionalized governance in our view best describes what has taken place in education policy over the last decade: the public institution in the form of the Treasury, the Department, and No. 10 remain strong, and networks of advisors and consultants provide ideas, status, and a workforce to generate approved policy ideas and to deliver reform strategies. Such networks have their origins in the remnants of club government where elites as selected trusted people from LAs, HEIs, and Schools, have determined through their various power bases how to retain power or to concede as and when is necessary. Contractual relationships have enabled other elites to enter and play the game, not least how private sector consultants and companies have brought the symbolic capital of neo-liberal practices and distinction.

Finally, while this article is not directly concerned with a formal evaluation of the NCSL (see Bush, 2004), there are consequences developing as a result of the workings of institutionalised governance. The production of future headteachers through training programs combined with the raising of the status of the profession is not taking place. Notably professionals may have accessed the programs but this is not translating into headship

applications, with reports at the beginning of the 2008 autumn term of schools without permanent headteachers (Gunter & Forrester, 2009). This could be an example of how the filling in is incomplete and hence the NCSL needs to capture and control the profession in a more secure way.

On the other hand, the strategic inclusion and exclusion of particular groups over the past decade may mean that the filling in is under tension. The reform of education has taken place through an attempt to create an elite cadre of headteachers in ways that have excluded the active participation of a lot of heads and the majority of teachers. Governance by contracted private interests has treated teachers as “an absent presence” (Ball, 1993: 107) where they have been the object of reform rather than participants in reform design.

Hence, teachers have been put off and have not supplied the required number of headteachers. Consequently, insider networks of politicians, Civil Servants, advisors, and consultants have made institutionalized governance work in ways that have rewritten professionalism around generic leadership. This is known officially as Remodeling the School Workforce (see Butt & Gunter, 2007) where both heads and teachers with Qualified Teacher Status are being marginalised in favor of those with generic skills. Hence, institutionalized governance remains through how particular interests are being eradicated, while others remain powerful players within particular public institutions. This is an important learning outcome for other parts of the public sector where the leadership imperative in the reform of social work, police, health, and other public services remains strong.

The death of Baby P. in Haringey has generated questions about leadership (Curtis & Carvel, 2008) that could lead to calls for national training in the way that has happened in the school sector. However, it seems unlikely in the current climate that such national investment in sector specific training will take place, not least because nearly a decade on from its launch, the NCSL is now showing through centralized direction on workforce reform that the leadership of schools is generic. The growth in bespoke leadership training for a professional or organizational group is therefore up for review, and government has realized that current concerns about workforce modernisation can be dealt with through generic leadership training located in private sector partnerships with government rather than through an expensive college where impact has been contested.

The NCSL may be abolished after the next election, but this will not threaten hierarchy or reduce centralized direction, as control of the workforce will continue to be through trusted and contractually controlled government agents and agencies. For example, alternative leadership programs to those provided by the NCSL are being developed by the SSAT, and by private philanthropists who have funded Academy Schools (e.g. Harris Foundation), and so while control from the center remains a stable feature, how it is secured through new products continues.

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NOTES

1. When New Labor came to power in 1997, the national ministry in London was called the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) after reorganization had taken place in 1995 (prior to this the title was Department for Education, DfE, and before that the Department of Education and Science, DES). In 2001 the DfEE became the DfES or Department for Education and Skills. In 2007 the DfES was split into two: Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF)/Department for Innovation, Universities, and Skills (DIUS).
2. The NCSL has nine regional (government region) affiliated centers (some housed in universities):
 1. Eastern (Eastern Leadership Center)
 2. East Midlands (Northamptonshire County Council)
 3. London (London Center for Leadership in Learning, Institute of Education, University of London)
 4. North East (North Leadership Center, Newcastle University)
 5. North West (The Center for Education Leadership, University of Manchester)
 6. South East (Education Management South East)
 7. South West (Plymouth LEA)
 8. West Midlands (HTI Leadership Center)
 9. Yorkshire and Humber (CCDU Training and Consultancy Ltd.)
3. Leading from the Middle (LftM) is a 10-month professional development program for middle leaders. Groups of between two and four middle leaders from primary, secondary and special schools are supported by one leadership coach. See www.ncsl.org.uk
4. National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) was formally launched as a “qualification” (therefore different to a program) in September 1997 having undergone trials from January 1997 to July 1997. It was

continued by the New Labor government and has gone through several reviews. The NPQH is for aspiring headteachers and is underpinned by the National Standards for Headteachers. It is mandatory to hold or have a place on NPQH in order to apply for a headship in the maintained sector. See www.ncsl.org.uk

5. The Headteachers' Leadership and Management Program (HEADLAMP) was established in 1995 by the TTA to meet induction needs of newly appointed headteachers. The scheme offered school governors an induction grant of £2500 to spend on professional development of newly appointed heads within the first 2 years in post. This program has been discontinued, and the NCSL now has in place Early Headship Provision of which New Visions is a year-long personal and professional development program for all new headteachers. See www.ncsl.org.uk
6. The Leadership Program for Serving Headteachers (LPSH) was introduced in September 1998 for headteachers with three or more years experience. This has now been replaced by Head for the Future. See www.ncsl.org.uk
7. The London Leadership Center was located at the Institute of Education, University of London. This has been reorganized into the London Center for Leadership in Learning, Institute of Education, University of London. See www.ioe.ac.uk
8. Now the Ashridge Business School which has direct links with public sector, not least the National School for Government. See www.ashridge.org.uk
9. Sandhurst has a partnerships regarding public sector and corporate leadership training. See www.sandhurst.mod.uk/partners/idc.htm.

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