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## **Set us free! An argument for the removal of educational policy creation from government hands**

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### **Background**

The background to this paper comes from an analysis of literature of English educational policy in the past quarter century. This paper offers a comparison between the control and interference in English Education and the controlled economies of Soviet Russia. Whilst a maintained economy was once considered an effective model, it has since been discredited. The comparison here comes from the endless interference in education by competing government departments and the inefficiencies of a controlled economy. The author proposes that education, given its enormous value, should be removed from government control and given into the hands of experts as the Bank of England was 1997. The credit for this action, then given to the Labour Party, could be a prize given to any government bold enough to stop using education policy as a political football.

### **Research Questions**

This paper analyses a variety of research on policy in the English Education system, focussing specifically on the Post-Compulsory sector. The comparison is offered from a historical perspective, both looking at changes in policy as well as changes in controlled economic systems. The historical viewpoint puts forward depth and poignancy to the argument for a separation of educational policy and government whim. Interviews with policy makers and education specialists add warrant to the argument. This will explore the viability and practicability of such a bold move.

### **Methods**

The theory is based partly on Ewart Keep's 2006 paper on the English Education system being the biggest train set in the world. This is backed up by a number of Frank Coffield papers and publications (2006, 2008) looking at the damage being done by English education policy and the 'permanent revolution' teachers have had to live through. Stephen Ball's 'The Education Debate' from 2008 gives great clarity to defining the 'terrors' facing practitioners in post compulsory education. The book looks at 'controlled decontrol' in policy analysis that shifts the emphasis on control of staff from government agencies to the colleges themselves.

### **Frame**

The wide variety of research widens the argument from just a policy discussion to a framework for a major change to education policy creation in England. Spours et. al. (2007) look at the difference in application of policy in local settings around the country. With an independent education policy unit, these local allegiances and priorities can be mitigated if not removed. When policy is to be changed, it can be given the required time it needs to 'bed in', allowing practitioners the time and space they need to apply policy in a realistic manner and for the greatest benefit to their learners. Sarason (1990) discusses the difficulty of making successful policy change. This is partly from the resentment felt at government's expression of 'power' in this area. A government forcing policy on an education sector is a far cry from an expert panel advising the sector on best practice. This is similar to the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) which has become a far more respected sector advisory body for the sector rather than a blunt instrument of policy delivery.

### **Research findings**

Whilst the research here lies in interviews with policy figures relevant to the sector as well as a wide literature review, it still has strong relevance to policy and changes that can justifiably be made. The

theoretical basis of the work is well developed at the moment, but the interviews have yet to be done. Backing up the theoretical aspect of the paper with different views from the sector and policy makers will, hopefully, enhance our understanding of changes that can be made to this most important of sectors.

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