

The emerging Regional Schools Commissioners system

And some thoughts on its
implications for state education

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First DfE paper: November 2013

- Eight to 12 Headteacher Boards
- Not based in government offices, but schools
- Each board to work with a “Chancellor”
- “Softly, softly” approach to communications

Next DfE paper: January 2014

- “There is still a lot to be worked out – at every level”.
- Functions to include:
 - Checking performance of open academies
 - “Promoting and approving academy conversions”
 - “Approving and managing sponsors”
 - “Identifying sponsors for brokerage projects”
- RSCs/HTBs to be “the next stage in the evolution of the academies project”.

3rd DfE paper: March 2014

“Future academy system”, 40-page document

- “Ministers set policy and national frameworks. They remain accountable and deal with issues escalated by RSCs”, it said.
- “RSCs will take decisions on academies in their area, involving HTBs in their decision making.”
- And “HTBs will be advisory but will operate as an executive board and be involved in key decision making”.

3rd DfE paper: March 2014

- So RSCs take decisions on academies in their area, HTBs advise, but “operate as an exec board”
- RSCs’ detailed roles:
 - Monitoring academy underperformance
 - Recruiting and approving new sponsors
 - Take on sponsor performance, though no intervention powers
- and...

3rd DfE paper, continued

- Recommend sponsor matches for new sponsored academies
- Approve or reject schools' "converter academy" applications.
- Approve or reject "significant changes" to schools.
- Involved in free schools application process

Weaknesses of new system

- Lack of transparency
- Most education stakeholders get no say
- Conflicts of interest and cronyism
- Comparison with the system that ministers and their advisers have decided we can do without.

Conclusion: what have we lost?

And given its obvious weaknesses, can this system survive as it is?