

Where we are now

Evidence

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Where we want to be

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Key Questions

What are the costs of procedure?

Can we combine fair with efficient and effective?

What would it take to make this happen?

In this scenario, different schools would decide to create a Trust by voluntarily making a joint commitment to one another, to pool resources, share services and develop a common education philosophy. This kind of Trust would be akin to a political federation such as the United States or the EU. Governance would depend on principles of subsidiarity, specifying the decisions taken at individual school level and those taken by the Trust on behalf of the whole.

Modes of communication and accountability would be akin to politics (organised around the electoral cycle) and could act for individual schools or be the same for the community as a whole. The key to a successful school would be its ability to mobilise commitment from multiple stakeholders – parents, teachers, children, service partners and other schools in the Trust.

Key to successful Trust-community would be combining democratic ethos with dynamic leadership of the whole.

Key Questions

How useful is branding?
Does it help to create an ethos and expectations?
What is the potential trade-off between efficiency and participation?

In this scenario, schools would be educational brands that deliver excellent, highly standardised educational provision across a large number of sites. Think of Starbucks or Tesco. Authority, which resides at the centre with a governing Trust and strong central executive team, could be delegated to other sites through a franchise or subsidiary scheme.

In order to ensure consistency across the system. However, key rules, working methods, branding and strategy would remain identical throughout. Parents and children would have little voice in the running of the school and local heads would act as no more than incentivised 'branch managers'. Governance would tend to be formal though not overly procedural.

Finally, while willing to enter into partnership with other public sector partners and community actors, these partnerships would be contract based and imply little integration.

GOVERNANCE

The nature of decision making process

Alliance Scenario

Key Questions

Is it possible to combine flexibility with long-term planning?
Is this system of governance more appropriate at times of transition?

Imagine an alliance of schools organised along the lines of NATO. An alliance might work within a locality, across a region or it could be a national alliance of schools specialising in particular subjects.

The members of the alliance agree to collaborate and pool resources, but for limited objectives and without compromising their capacity to act independently, with different educational philosophies, admissions policies and distinct governance procedures. A school might be in overlapping alliances, each focussed on a different issue. Alliance governance could take different forms.

However, to deliver real change, a diplomatic style of alliance leadership would have to be combined with “military” style leadership for the agreed objective on the ground.

GOVERNANCE

Purpose or focus of governance

Employee owned network scenario

Key Questions

How do we avoid becoming insular or inward looking?

How do we avoid stamping out diversity?

How do we take into account the views of other stake-holders?

In this 'partnership-Trust' scenario, senior teachers would form a partnership (as in accountancy and law) covering several schools. The partners would be akin to the equity holders. As in a professional service firm the partners would hire managers to administer the business.

The point of the partnership would be to allow skilled teaching professionals to focus on what they do best. The partnership model would succeed only if it proved able to attract and reward good teachers, by making them partners. Partners would enjoy a dividend in the form of money, time or freedom.

The governance framework should maximise their commitment. The key to governance would be the way partners made decisions. Parents and children would have a limited say in overall governance. They would buy into the "professional" partnership ethos of the schools involved.

GOVERNANCE

Purpose or focus of governance

Self Organising Network Scenario

Key Questions

How do we monitor practice?

Might this sort of governance lead to insularity?

Does leadership simply become arbitration?

How can comparability of standards be maintained?

Large communities of learning can self-organise. Imagine an eBay style Trust that operated a platform for sharing educational content and teachers, matching learners to providers. Such a model might be particularly relevant for children excluded from school or children home schooled by choice.

Simple design features (including a “commons” or shared platform on which collaboration can take place, ease of access for users and open methods of working) rather than procedures are key, since self-organising communities rely on a strong, shared ethos and limited but effective governance. Non-education partners could be involved, as long as they make contributions to the greater good.

Leadership would emerge from within the community, through peer recognition and would vary over time.

GOVERNANCE

Purpose or focus of governance

Consumer Governed Scenario

Key Questions

How do we avoid insularity?

Why would parents know best?

How do we involve busy or less committed parents?

How do we avoid one group of parents taking control?

In this scenario, parent owned and governed schools would come together in a larger collaborative, sharing resources and a philosophy of parental involvement in education. Parents would be directly involved in electing a board or governing council.

There might be common policies on parental commitment. For example, all parents might sign up to a contract setting out what they commit to put into the school. The parent Trust or Council would be responsible for making major appointments and deciding major educational policy issues – the framework of goals and values – within which the staff would work. The council would appoint the head who would report to the parent council.

The key to this model would be dynamic parental leadership

LEADERSHIP

CAPACITY: Cameo One

There are a few heads in the locality who are well informed about the likely future demands of current legislation. For most the immediate concerns of their schools, most notably and importantly, to raise standards, have been the overriding concern. Collaboration is seen by some as a way that the needy school and the needy student can be better supported. It is not clear how the knowledge of the successful can be transferred to the less successful, but the Local Authority (LA) has appointed Development Officers to each of the seven district collaboratives. There has been little significant activity in action research or enquiry undertaken by schools locally. Some solutions have been imported from nationally known providers, few have been devised by practitioners within the schools.

Some headteachers are aware of 'the likely future demands of current legislation'. Do you need to raise wider awareness? How could this be done?

Do you have the capable and aware people you will need to discover what skills and knowledge already exist in your area?

What are the opportunities for learning to be spread across all organisations?

CAPACITY: Cameo Two

The school federations in Lundshire believe that the key to successful collaborative working lies in the affective domain of a leader's work, which calls upon high levels of emotional awareness. Respect for individuals, open communication and conscious modelling of appropriate behaviours are the characteristics of collaborative effort. A great deal of time and effort has been given to the training and development, together, of leaders with these skills so that most schools now have at least two or three people who have benefited. School leaders have received comprehensive training in teamwork and group behaviour. The majority of staff, students and their families are seeing the benefits of collaboration between the schools.

What attention is given to the development of the interpersonal skills necessary for closer collaboration to be productive?

What might be the pattern of meetings between different parties? What are they for and what do they achieve?

How much attention is given to coaching as a way of advancing leadership skills?

CAPACITY: Cameo Three

This small urban community is a unitary authority, which has a clearly defined geographical, economic and social boundary. No school is far from any other and travel between them is relatively quick and easy, even across the town centre. The strong sense of urban identity has helped the various services to know and trust each other, because they have a shared focus on local needs in a national context. Already the new more coherent system is assisting students and families to access a wide range of coordinated services. There is some evidence of reduced rates of social disaffection in the community, although standards of achievement in schools have not yet shown any marked improvement. Lack of any substantial economic activity locally or regionally is severely hampering the efforts to raise aspirations.

What leadership skills do you need in order to establish, develop and maintain a local sense of belonging and shared identity?

Do those who are currently 'in charge' have the necessary competence to lead this effort?

COHERENCE: Cameo Four

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in Winterton has restructured the Local Authority (LA) team and allocated new roles with new titles in order to fit with national priorities. He/she has explained to heads that the primary schools have been clustered around particular secondary schools in order to achieve the goals of Every Child Matters. The LA officers are acting as facilitators in each cluster to spread the understanding of the purposes behind the clusters. At the moment schools see themselves as the central providers that will attach other services to the educational provision in due course. Though there are enthusiasts, staff in schools are generally suspicious, uncertain and fearful. Some feel that their cluster is not a natural partnership. Others see it as a Local Authority delivery structure rather than an educational and service partnership.

Who should devise the strategy? How?

What structures will be the best fit for your common purpose?

COHERENCE: Cameo Five

In Redshire the Local Authority (LA) supported those schools that decided that they wanted to work more closely together. The schools have been extremely enthusiastic and significant proportions participate in a number of network initiatives, particularly at primary level. The LA is keen to use this structure for delivery of Children's Services. Aware of the danger of losing the commitment and initial enthusiasm, the LA is seeking to influence its networks through joint working rather than impose new structures.

Have you established 'clear lines of communication and decision making'?

Are there sufficient levels of trust and belief for you to have generally agreed procedures across the sites involved?

How much independent action will be allowed and what is the Local Authority role?

COHERENCE: Cameo Six

Southland is a large and diverse area divided into four regions, which have been constructed strategically according to geography. Each group is an established network of schools and is being used as the unit of delivery for national initiatives, but each is adapted to the local context and vision. Each group has collective data sets and profiles. These help evaluation and support needs analysis, mapping and service development across all the schools and services involved to promote future developments.

What arrangements do you have in place which will create alignment between the various organisations?

What common evidence and data sets exist and how do they inform decision-making?

ACTIVITY: Cameo Seven

In the Extended School Steering Group in Borden there has been a considerable effort to bring schools into collaborative working arrangements over a number of years. The challenge now is to move to include all of the service partners to deliver Every Child Matters. There are some small-scale working arrangements in some schools, but little agreement generally about the level of risk. There is considerable fear of what might go wrong. Lines of control, maintenance of standards and a loss of professional status and identity are all of concern.

How can you get away from a blame or low risk culture?

What level of risk is best agreed for you to move forward?

ACTIVITY: Cameo Eight

The schools have agreed to a common framework for professional development across all the schools in the eight community learning networks in Crimton. This has emerged from the subject panels and as a direct response to 14-19 requirements. There has been a good deal of budget flexibility across schools thanks to the inventiveness of the headteachers and bursars concerned. Timetables are mutually agreed and staff move between sites to meet student need. The generosity of the founder heads has been formalised and a genuine spirit of cooperative effort engendered. The recent case of one school being given notice to improve prompted the network to respond with offers of subject expertise, financial assistance, coaching and joint working.

What should be the focus of your leadership effort – building capacity or creating alignment?

What are the immediate tasks?

ACTIVITY: Cameo Nine

This collaborative includes all of the providers of children's services, who have built up a high level of trust since the idea of a joint provision was first raised by a group of schools four years ago. The vigilant executive committee is continually rebalancing powers, acting to prevent cliques forming, making the common goals explicit and ensuring that resources are properly allocated. There continue to be differences in philosophy between partners but clear lines of communication and decision-making help avoid many problems. The benefits for children are seen to be a reduction in drop-out rates and exclusions, but standards are still stubbornly at the lower end of the national tables.

What does success look like?

What are the criteria for success?

How will you know that you are making progress?