

How could the English education system better integrate the views and experiences of the broad range of stakeholders it serves when developing, implementing and monitoring a long-term plan?

Key questions to consider during St. George's House consultation:

Reaffirming the case

- Why is it important to integrate the views and experiences of a broad range of stakeholders when developing, implementing and monitoring a long-term plan for education? Is anything currently playing this role?
- What will the benefits be of a National Education Assembly?
- What could go wrong?

Membership

- Who should be in the assembly?
- How should they be appointed?
- How long should a term of office be?
- Should membership be about sharing perspectives, or more about representation? If the latter, what happens when there isn't a national figure who represents a particular stakeholder group - e.g. learners?
- Is it enough to have regional representation in the national assembly, or should there be regional assemblies too?
- How do we ensure a true diversity of voices are heard and included and given equal weight?
- Who else should be part of the meetings?

Format:

- How often should the assembly meet?
- How long should the meetings be?
- How should the meetings be chaired and by whom?
- How should the meetings be facilitated best to inspire and support critical thinking (safe/brave spaces)?
- How to reduce power dynamics & have parity of voices?
- How can they be made as accessible as possible?

Moving from idea to implementation:

- How will this be funded?
- Who will it be accountable to?
- How will it knit into the current and proposed systems?
- How could we experiment ideas and prove its worth?
- What are the risks of setting up something like this?
- Anything else?

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What's the problem?

Government education policy suffers from over-centralised power. Over 300 organisations exist to influence government education policy, the majority of which are focused on the Department for Education, including ministers and advisors - because this is where so much policy management resides. This results in a number of serious issues:

- Consultation is ad-hoc and can be bias confirming
- The most prominent voices are not necessarily the most representative or best informed
- Those with lived experience, including learners and parents, are not necessarily consulted
- Evidence can be squeezed to the margin
- Most are caught up in the same short-term policy making cycle
- All these influencers target a narrow policy making centre that is under enormous pressure to deliver quickly, often leading to consultations which are not representative or long-term in their perspective.

What could a better solution look like?

Broad input into the development of a long-term plan for education, and the feedback on how it's being implemented needs to be:

- Informed by wider consultations of the diverse range of stakeholders the education system serves
- Critiqued by independent, well-informed and diverse perspectives
- Informed by open and honest dialogue
- Multifaceted, accessible and inclusive

This would lead to:

- Increased transparency, inclusivity and accountability
- Increased trust and confidence in the system

Practical ideas on how this might be achieved:

1. Creating a **national education assembly** for widespread stakeholder involvement and input, akin to the NHS Assembly, to help drive ongoing dialogue about our education system and how to improve it
2. Regional assemblies, akin to citizens assemblies could inform the national assembly
3. Online consultations and surveys could bring even broader perspectives to the table
4. A structured programme of research could ensure decisions are informed by the latest evidence alongside lived experience.

Where can we look for inspiration?

- The NHS Assembly
- School Citizens Assemblies
- Education policy making in New Zealand
- Do you know of other examples across sectors?