Attainment

1. The Bill would appear, in its current format, to be unable to deliver on its stated goal of ‘reducing inequalities of outcome’. Using the term ‘giving due regard’ is meaningless as we can all say that we have given due regard without taking any substantive action.

2. The idea that the drivers for change should be those individuals or groups the ‘local authority’ thinks appropriate is woolly and ineffective. It is prone to asking questions of those individuals or groups that are, in some way, directly responsible to that authority. This could be construed as a conflict of interest with Head Teachers, in particular, unable to express concerns about how successful (or not) their local authority is in achieving reduction in inequality of outcome.

3. There is no statement within the Bill of the Government’s role in achieving a reduction in inequality of outcome. There should be mention of the resources being made available to implement any scheme that a local authority deems appropriate.

4. The use of the term ‘have regard to the desirability’ is innocuous. There are many things which are desirable without ever taking effect. If Government is serious about reducing the attainment gap then the use of the phrase ‘desirable’ should be changed to ‘essential’.

5. ‘Inequalities of Outcome’ is an appropriate term to highlight the attainment gap between wealthier and poorer sections of the pupil population.

6. Local authorities will be unable to deliver any reduction in inequality of outcome without radical Government intervention. That is because the culture in Scotland is to focus entirely on the quality of teaching (and learning). We have this very narrow focus on driving up attainment by delivering better lessons. That is the stuff of nonsense. Teachers in Scotland are, by and large, excellent practitioners. Focusing on a narrow set of performance indicators will produce no tangible reduction in the inequality of outcome. It is not the teaching that is the issue; it is the culture, ethos and environment in which learning takes place that needs addressing.
Registering Teaching Staff

1. I can think of no good reason to require independent schools to ensure that all teachers are GTCS registered. All independent school teachers go through rigorous vetting procedures vis-à-vis the PVG scheme. Many teachers within independent schools come from England or further afield. It is not possible to register these teachers with the GTCS on appointment. The effect of this would be to stop any school in Scotland from employing anyone from outside its borders. I suspect this is an infringement of European Law in terms of the mobility of labour. In addition, what this Bill would do would stop an independent school from employing Stephen Hawking from teaching Physics or Damien Hirst from teaching Art. That is a ludicrous waste of talent, ability and resource.

2. I attach the experiences of my Director of Performing Arts, who joined us from a school in England:

“I decided to relocate to Scotland after my partner secured a permanent research post in Edinburgh in 2009. I began applying for jobs as a teacher of music, but was initially unaware of the impact that not having GTCS registration would have on this process. Jobs were advertised with the statement, ‘teachers should be registered or eligible to register with the GTCS. At this point, I had been teaching in England for 7 years and thought that I would probably be eligible as I had registration with GTC in England, had been teaching for a substantial amount of time and had been a Head of Music or Faculty, for 5 years. I had trained to be a teacher at Cambridge University and secured a first class honours in Music.

When I began applying for posts, I was surprised that one school stated: ‘as I was not currently registered with the GTCS, it would not be possible to move forward with my application,’ furthermore, they recommended that I got on with registering as a starting point before applying for jobs. I thought this was strange and I started to wonder if I would need a VISA too? I had no idea Scotland had a policy that effectively said, on the off chance you might get a job here, register with a teaching council that you might not require and go through a fairly demeaning process, where you begin to doubt the quality of your training thus far. I felt the policy in Scotland was telling me that simply stating that one was a qualified teacher was not good enough and that I needed to go through a process where they would tell me at the end of it, whether they assessed I was a ‘teacher of music’.

When I began the process of registration, I was charged £50 from the outset in order for the application to move forward. It was then when I realised that simply being a trained teacher in music was not enough to register in Scotland. I was asked to provide a breakdown of my degree, with the marks awarded for each module, to prove I had studied ‘the right content’. After doing this, I was required to provide additional proof I met all the requirements of section b below as the module titles of
my degree where not enough. If I had taken grade 8 Piano, then they would have accepted this:

Applicants must meet all the requirements of a and b.

a. the study of harmony, counterpoint, arrangement, orchestration and composition, together with a broad study of music in its social and historical contexts within traditional, ethnic and non-western musical cultures.

I CAN PROVE THE ABOVE

b. keyboard studies including sight reading, playing by ear, accompanying, harmonising and improvising in traditional and contemporary styles

Applicants must meet all the requirements of a and b.

We require clarification of b. This information should come in the format of an official letter from the University of Liverpool.

I felt a bit embarrassed that they didn't feel I met their criteria. I didn't want to have to go back to much admired University Professors and ask them to help me in this situation. I notice the GTCS no longer ask for section b. When I asked other teachers in Scotland if they met the criteria of the above or if they had grade 8 piano, I was surprised to find that quite a lot did not. I began to feel like I was being tested on something because I was coming 'from the outside'.

Needless to say, one of my old Professors came through for me and in the middle of a busy day, wrote a letter on my behalf to the GTCS and after a period of about four months, I became registered in Scotland. However, during this process, I was lucky enough to find a school that would take me on face value and did not care about whether I was registered or not and I still work there today.

This experience is very similar to a number of non-Scottish teachers in my school. The GTCS are thoroughly incompetent and intransigent in dealing with such issues. I know of one recent case where a Head Teacher, recently employed by an independent school in Edinburgh from England, sought registration with the GTCS to be informed that he may have to 'take a maths test' to secure his registration.

If this Bill is 'progress' I for one am puzzled. I can see no justification for this change and it would appear to be politically motivated and very anti English/non-Scottish nationals.

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