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Ref: PL/SES/240909

24 February 2010

(To Ed Balls, Michael Gove and David Laws )

Dear Sir

Moves to dismantle the national strategies are welcomed by the Association of Teachers of Mathematics (ATM). Suggestions that the critical decisions about teaching and learning may shift back to teachers, rather than remain with a large number of expensive QUANGOs give a clear signal of intent to re-professionalise the teaching workforce.

This is all good news to a subject association which has no political affiliations but has a single purpose to engage with teachers to improve the mathematical experiences and outcomes for all those learning mathematics, regardless of age and location.

For over fifty years our Association has brought together those teachers who share this ambition. We develop learning resources, publish a bi-monthly journal, provide training and work closely with fellow subject associations. Our annual conferences draw mathematics educators together from across the UK and beyond. Unlike the QUANGOs and their 'teacher reference groups', we survive purely on our members' subscriptions and the modest profits made on the sale of our learning resources.

As the QUANGOs recede we believe that the professional subject associations will be seen more clearly as those points of professional interaction and development. Teachers will need them, and so indeed will the Government central administration that will be able to touch base with the profession through these bodies. Being apolitical and funded by membership the dialogue will be honest and businesslike.

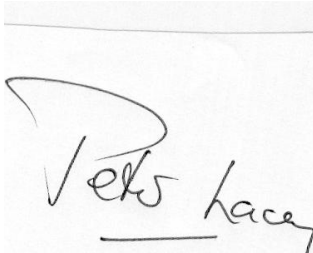
The money saved by dismantling the QUANGOs will be significant. Would you consider donating a small proportion of this money to teachers and lecturers for the sole purpose of sponsoring their membership of a subject association of their choice? Of course, Government would have an approved list of subject associations, and should a teacher or lecturer choose not to join any subject association then the money would remain with the State. All teachers in the maintained sector currently have an amount paid into their salaries equivalent to their subscription to the General Teaching Council (GTC), so the practice is not without precedent.

This proposal makes good political, economic and educational sense – a rare alignment of positive outcomes. Restoring teachers' professionalism would be seen as a purposeful and positive move, rather than by the default of taking the national strategies and their associated QUANGOs away. Dismantling the QUANGOs would save millions and, for a small cost, the reinvigorated and independent subject associations would be well placed to liaise with government on strategy and to undertake national evaluations and developments. With access to professional hubs that focussed on empowerment and research rather than compliance and competence, teachers would flourish.

Of course, the winners in this proposal are all those engaged in learning mathematics who are inspired and motivated by a teaching profession confident in its own knowledge and pedagogy.

We ask you to give this matter your serious consideration. We are willing and able to meet with you should you think this may be helpful. In any event, we look forward to hearing back from you soon.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a white background. The signature is written in a cursive style and reads "Peter Lacey". The name "Peter" is written above "Lacey", and there is a horizontal line under the "L" in "Lacey".

**Peter Lacey**  
**Chair of the General Council of the Association of Teachers of Mathematics**