

Making teaching a job worth doing (again)

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Abstract

Policy makers and the profession agree that we need to reduce teacher working hours, but doing something about it isn't as easy as it first appears. This lecture describes how government, the inspectorate, school leaders and the profession itself have, through seemingly unconnected decisions, created a toxic working environment for teachers. It will suggest a blueprint for how we make the job manageable again.

Acknowledgements

This lecture is based on a chapter in a book I have written with Sam Sims called 'The Teacher Gap', that will be published by Routledge in early 2018. The words are as much his as they are mine. Harry Fletcher-Wood suggested the DiMaggio and Powell paper might work as a framework for the piece and so I thank him for making me look cleverer than I am. Conversations with many teachers on twitter in the weeks leading up to the talk helped me arrange the arguments. In particular, I have drawn on remarks made to me by Andy Day, James Durran, Helena Marsh, Richard Spencer and Martyn Reah.

There are no footnotes and references in this transcript of the talk. You'll have to wait for the book to be published to get them.

Thank you, Melissa, and thank you to the Socialist Education Association for inviting me to give the Caroline Benn Memorial Lecture.

I am the product of an education system that Caroline Benn so passionately fought for. One that allowed me to be educated alongside my village friends from the age of five until I left home. And I am so relieved that the result of the General Election this year means that my own children will be free to enjoy the same education that I had. The comprehensive education.

It is now 17 years since Caroline Benn passed away. But, like so many in the room here tonight, I am determined we will preserve her legacy in education by continuing to make the case for comprehensive schooling.

But our schools can only thrive if our teachers can thrive in them, able to do a job that should be one of the most rewarding jobs imaginable. And yet, we seem to be in the clutches of a teacher workload crisis that nobody wants and that nobody will take responsibility for.

My talk tonight will be an exploration of how we got here. And how we make job of being a teacher worth doing. Again.

One of the advantages of having left teaching well over a decade ago is that I am able to hold in my head the memory of what the job was like back then, rather than gaze backwards through the lens of how the job feels today. I can also remember what the job of a teacher was like in the 1980s when my mum and many of her friends were teachers, alongside being primary carers and running all sorts of out-of-school clubs.

Teaching has always been a demanding job. It is a performance art, on stage for five hours a day, five days a week and 39 weeks a year. And add to that lesson preparation, marking, meetings and administration.

And yet...

Once upon a time teachers had spare time to spend with their families, friends and hobbies. Not part-time teachers – given poverty wages for that ‘flexibility’ we hail as important. Just teachers.

Once upon a time parents like my mother chose to become teachers because the job worked so well alongside raising a family, rather than giving it up at their birth of their first child because it feels utterly incompatible.

Life is very different for teachers today, working on average 55-59 hours in a week that regularly stretches into evenings and weekends. This is an hour a day more than teachers were working just a decade ago.

Workload is the problem we thought we had solved back in 2003 when I first entered the classroom. The then Education Secretary, Estelle Morris, told us:

A tired teacher is not an effective teacher. Nor is that teacher allowed to focus on what is most important – teaching.

[She said at that time...]

Teachers, on average, are expected to spend some 20 per cent of their time on non-teaching tasks that other adults could do just as well instead.

Twenty per cent? Teachers today would likely jump at the chance to spend just 20 per cent of their time on non-teaching tasks. Most report they spend a majority of their working week doing something other than teaching.

They are not doing the list of things that Estelle Morris and the unions declared teachers must no longer do on the posters in staffrooms across the country back in 2003: photocopying, processing forms for school trips, and so on. They are also now less frequently asked to cover lessons for absent colleagues, as DfE guidance requires.

Instead, somebody seems to have invented a whole new cadre of bureaucratic activities to take their place. Activities that teachers frequently complain are unnecessary or unproductive.

Let me introduce you to a teacher I will call 'Lucy' that I interviewed for a book on teacher careers that I have written with Sam Sims, who is in the audience tonight, and that will be published early next year.

Lucy says she works every day, every evening and every weekend. I ask her why:

The planning and the marking burdens [that are placed on me by my head] are huge. If I plan one literacy lesson then that means differentiating the work in many ways to allow each child to access it. But marking is the bigger deal because every time they produce something then you are expected to mark it in different colour pens. Then the children respond to that feedback and then we respond again giving them "next steps", and so on. Their books have to look like this masterpiece of colour for every piece of work. And this is for six lessons a day. Every day for 30 children. So teaching is actually quite a small part of my job.

Now Lucy's school may be at one end of the tail of over-the-top demands but, in my experience, it echoes things that happen in a great many schools across the country. For example, in a survey of over 1000 teachers where we asked them how often they were required to centrally deposit data with the senior leadership team (a task that I was never asked to do 15 years ago):

- 80% of them said they did it at least termly
- Well over half said it was at least half-termly
- Almost 1-in-10 said it was more frequently than half termly

Lucy tells me she feels like she is in a hamster wheel:

We write reports three times a year, have a continuous schedule of assessments. And each time the students are tested, I am expected to mark it that night, take the data and input it into our management system.

For a teacher from the past, like me, the defining feature of teaching today seems to be the following:

Teaching may still take place in private in a classroom; learning may still take place inside a child's mind, where it is hard to see; but now teaching is no longer a private endeavour.

Now teachers are required to create a paper trail that proves learning has happened, for people who were not present in the room at the time. It is no longer enough, for example, for teachers to communicate with their students through conversations. The trouble with a conversation is that, after it finishes, nobody can check that it has happened.

This audit culture means that, in many schools, the teacher no longer gets to decide how to prepare and deliver lessons, mark pupils' work, and assess and record learning.

This audit culture has displaced the culture of trust and of teaching as a private endeavour, as Lucy explains:

There is simply a massive lack of trust. I don't ever feel trusted that I know my children and I know what to do for them. I feel I have to constantly justify everything I do. I want to be able to set tests for my children using my own professional judgement and at a time that is right for my class as an experienced and qualified teacher. But instead I am told "This week is test week and you will report back to us". This lack of trust. I don't know where it

comes from. I just feel there is a huge element of control where they want to know what is going on in my classroom at all times.

The results of this audit culture on teacher happiness are clear.

Over half of teachers say they are dissatisfied with the hours they work each week. Around 60% say they are unhappy with the balance between their professional and personal commitments.

I fear this unhappiness is escalating.

The number that say they are considering leaving in the next year has increased from 17% to 23% in the last year alone. And the number actually *managing* to leave before retirement has also increased, from 6% per annum in 2011 to just over 8% in 2016.

The problem is not simply the long hours culture in teaching in England, for long hours are reported in teaching professions in some other countries too. However, in many of these other countries it is not associated with feelings of work overload and stagnating pupil standards.

And, of course, in England there are so many teachers who see teaching as their hobby as well as their job, spending their evenings blogging, their weekends going to conferences, and so on. And that's great for them. When teachers like this invest considerable efforts due to autonomous motivations – that is, their natural, inherent drive to seek out challenges and new possibilities – these efforts are accompanied by feelings of vitality and energy.

Our problem is that the audit culture produces teacher effort from controlled motivations which result in teachers correctly perceiving a lack of control and ownership over their work. It is *this*, and not simply the longer hours, that results in a sense of being drained and exhausted.

Nobody meant to make our teachers so unhappy, so why have we developed this audit culture and who do we think we are doing it all for?

I think the origins of the audit culture are really rather complex, involving teachers and their sense of identity, headteachers, consultants and advisors, inspectors and government.

My own disciplinary background – economics – hasn't the tools to explain why thousands of schools, operating seemingly independently, have chosen to embark on a similar set of bureaucratic activities that were never mandated and cannot – as I hope to show – be explained by any sort of efficient drive to improve pupil learning.

For that, we have to turn to two sociologists - Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell – whose 1983 paper provides the perfect framework for making sense of the state we are in.

This article by DiMaggio and Powell explains how processes make organisations evolve (morph) to become more similar (iso-morph). They call this phenomenon *institutional isomorphism*. The theory tells us that these forces driving inefficient similarity are strongest in industries where every institution is dependent on the state for funding and accreditation, where we don't possess a strong evidence base to tell us how institutions should be run, and where institutions are not necessarily driven to become efficient because inefficiency is compatible with survival.

These circumstances perfectly describe our English schooling system today. Their theory nicely explains why schools have decided to adopt the similar (and yet inefficient) practices that have driven up workload without any gains in educational standards.

DiMaggio and Powell's first force they call 'coercive isomorphism' – this is where political influences and the problems of legitimacy force institutions to conform.

And this is the force on the tip of almost every teacher's tongue when you ask them who is to blame for the workload crisis.

Ofsted.

In our interview with Lucy it was certainly Ofsted she blamed.

There is so much work I could pinpoint over the past seven years that was just done for Ofsted and has since gone in the bin because it hasn't been needed. It was always just-in-case.

But what is amazing about her response is that in Lucy's entire teaching career she has never been inspected. Her school was judged as outstanding in 2008 and so, provided its data remains high and parents don't complain, it will not be inspected again. This doesn't seem to reduce the terror that the threat of an inspection has on her school's management team.

So much of what I do every day is about how we look. How we look when Ofsted come in, as well as when parents and others visit our school. So the displays have to look good and the books have to look lovely. Everything has to look just right, without regard for what is happening to the children on a day-to-day basis. In our school we can always pull out a book or pull up the data and show how amazing we are.

Ofsted and the threat of the inspection, with their particular preconceived ideas about what constitutes "good" teaching and leadership, is a prime example of a coercive isomorphic force – forcing schools to adopt similar, yet inefficient, practices against their will. The reason that Lucy has to mark her books in a way that leaves an auditable paper trail of "progress" is, in part, because Ofsted implicitly incentivised such behaviour. But Ofsted isn't the only player in this game. Local authority and multi-academy trust systems of monitoring, which often expect 'data drops' of a particular frequency and format, also force schools to herd toward certain workload-inducing behaviours. Each data drop generates its own sequence of assessments and preparations for assessments in order to satisfy the demands from on high.

What is crucial about all of this is that the political decision-makers – the inspectorate or middle-tier advisors – do not directly experience the consequences of the

demands they place on teachers. This is why poor trade-offs are being made with workload spiralling out of control.

What is strange about all of this is that Ofsted now claim they didn't mean for this auditable paper trail of teaching activities to be created. And even if they did mean it once, it is clear that they regret it and want it to go away. I don't think that auditable paper trails are intrinsic to all school inspection systems; they really originate – at least in their current form - in the changes to inspection that took place around 2005.

It was once the case that when inspectors paid a visit to a school it took a week and involved a large team with subject experts. And so they were able to use the inspection process itself to unearth all their evidence about school quality.

All that changed when financial pressures forced Ofsted to replace the long inspection with a short, small team, no-notice inspection. This change was largely welcomed at the time, not least because it promoted the idea that the headteacher, not the inspector, should monitor the detail of a school's strengths and weaknesses.

However, once this happened, it became impossible to do little more than use the inspection to check the headteacher had sufficient written evidence to support their own self-evaluation form. For headteachers who need to prove that they knew their schools' strengths and weaknesses, this resulted in a cascade of school policies to mirror what the senior leadership team estimated Ofsted would be looking for. And as part of this portfolio of evidence, teachers were required to submit their planning, marking and assessment data – data that was once largely private.

The shortened notice period – at as little as 24 hours – means that this kind of evidence can no longer be manufactured when it's needed. While this is a good thing in that a school at the time of inspection largely reflects its every day state; it does mean that inspection-compliant paperwork must ready at all times.

The coercive force of Ofsted isn't enough though, on its own, to explain how we got here because it doesn't explain how these ideas of what constitutes appropriate management and leadership have developed and spread across school.

DiMaggio and Powell's second force that drives organisations to become more similar is that of mimetic isomorphism, or mimicking behaviour. Organisations across most industries frequently copy each other's good ideas, but what makes schools unusual is that *unhelpful* ideas frequently spread.

Remember brain gym? Learning styles? Triple marking? playing Mozart in class?
Demonstrating progress every 20 minutes?

DiMaggio and Powell contend that unhelpful institutional mimicking happens because:

1. we don't fully understand how our schools produce the outcomes they do
2. our educational goals can be ambiguous
3. we cannot easily measure the consequences of our actions in schools to know whether the things we try are worth continuing or not.

Mimicking is important for headteachers who are faced with inspectors that could ask them *anything* or hold any number of views on the activities and documentation they expect to see in a school. The safest response to uncertainty around "what Ofsted wants" is to simply mimic the behaviours of other schools.

It would be very difficult for inspectors to claim, for example, that the organisation of the school day around two breaks and a lunchtime is suboptimal, if it is the same in thousands of other schools.

It is equally hard for inspectors to argue that one of the now ubiquitous pupil tracking systems is damaging, not because of any concrete evidence that they enhance efficiency, but rather because nobody can criticise schools for doing the same as everyone else.

Schools, rightly choose to act as sheep because, even if the herd makes the wrong decision about which way to run, it is still safer to be nestled in the middle of the herd.

In this interplay between coercive and mimetic forces, Ofsted doesn't invent and then mandate practices that increase workload. Instead, having seen these managerial practices arise somewhere in the system, they latch onto them and encourage other schools to copy them through their famous case studies and the industry of Mocksteds, even though there's never good evidence that they are efficient. And the reason they did this for auditing policies more than others is that they fixed Ofsted's difficulty that they no longer have the resources to actually learn about school practices through a long inspection.

DiMaggio and Powell would argue that there is one final pressure that drives schools to act similarly, rather than to pursue distinct identities, and I think this force is critical to understanding the *perpetuation* of the workload crisis in teaching. They call this force 'normative isomorphism' and describe it as the collective struggle of members of an occupation to define the conditions and methods of their work, to control entry to the profession and to legitimise their autonomy as professionals.

For many teachers, their professional identity is bound up with the idea that their methods must be personalised to every child and that they must plan every lesson they do, in their own way, and in their own style. This professional identity, for better or worse, generates an enormous amount of additional workload. Those who conform with the prevailing ideas of what it means to be a teacher are more likely to become the next leaders of the profession, so reinforcing this dynamic.

But there has been a second, more recent, normative force that has shaped professional identity. It is an idea that was meant to lift up and empower teachers as agents of change, but in doing so I fear it might be crushing them.

It gradually became accepted that it was within the power of teachers, at least theoretically, to reduce educational inequalities and help all children achieve

success. And because teachers *could* potentially do this, they therefore *must* do everything possible to make this happen. This moral imperative created a sort of neurotic insistence on every possible intervention, however marginal the gain, because not to do so would be to ‘fail’ pupils, especially those most in need. Combined with the increasing pressures of accountability, it has created a toxic working environment for the profession where the failures of children, whatever their origins, became the fault of teachers.

Now let us turn to the normative forces that define what it means to be a school leader today. Today’s headteachers have often cut their managerial teeth in a period in which good leaders are those who regularly collect evidence that standards are being met in each of their classrooms week-in, week-out. Governors, parents, trades unions, professional development organisations and local authority networks all serve to reinforce these normative views of what constitutes high professional standards in leadership.

By contrast, many – though not all – of the headteachers who upheld very different conceptions of what it means to be a teaching leader have long since chosen to leave the profession. And the teachers who don’t want to subscribe to the audit culture find they cannot be promoted to leadership positions.

The data management culture that is resulting in high teacher workloads is justified through some unholy confluence of Assessment for Learning and performance management.

The Assessment for Learning argument contends that managers, through centralising and standardising data, assessment and marking systems, are helping teachers use data for pupil feedback and to inform teaching.

Data has always played an important role in teaching – particularly for secondary schools teachers who cannot possibly hold information about 200 children in their heads. But where once the class teachers’ mark book data could take whatever form

the teacher felt most useful, now management information systems determine the frequency and the format of assessment and feedback.

I don't know how we got to the point where we thought this would be more effective for teachers – teaching and assessing necessarily takes different forms in different subject disciplines so how can standardisation help inform classroom practice?

Don't get me wrong – I love data and I love technology. I can certainly imagine a world where assessment data that is generated and stored by computers improves classroom practice. In some subjects it is already happening, but it is always growing out of the technological innovations of subject specialists and not large data tracking companies selling a single catch-all solution to schools.

School leaders have placed so many rules around how Assessment for Learning takes place in their school – via their data systems, their assessment schedules, their marking rules – that it is hard to believe it is effectively informing the next stage of teaching and learning any more.

I think teachers would say that the marking policy restrictions are more significant than the rest of these controls, simply because the associated workload is so onerous.

Last week I asked over 1,000 teachers how many hours a week outside the classroom they typically spend marking. Almost half said they spent over five hours a week doing this. Then I asked how much they would mark if they knew that no one – no heads, line managers, inspectors, other teachers, parents - would be monitoring and if all that mattered was balancing pupil learning and their workload. 60% of those who are currently marking over five hours a week said they'd slash it by at least half; 20% said they'd slash their marking time by three-quarters.

For many teachers with heavy marking loads today, they're not doing it for the kids.

Professor Dylan Wiliam – one of the architects of Assessment for Learning – said that if you price teachers' time appropriately, in England we spend about two and a half billion pounds a year on feedback and it has almost no effect on student

achievement. He describes marking as the most expensive public relations exercise in history.

The idea that marking books outside lesson time is a prerequisite for ensuring effective pupil learning can proceed is deeply embedded in schools. And it conveniently makes marks on paper, so can be audited. But its effectiveness simply doesn't stand up to scrutiny.

That's Assessment for Learning. The next argument school leaders would make is that they need to see the pupil data to action school-wide approaches to supporting a child.

Technology creates the illusion that a headteacher can meaningfully analyse 15,000 data points on pupil progress during the October half-term (that's just one point per pupil per subject in a typically-sized secondary school).

It is simply impossible for a human-being to do this. Let's pretend for a moment that this data is meaningful and does reflect true learning taking place in a school. What then is it realistic for headteachers to do with it?

At best, headteachers will take rough class averages and identify outlier classes, which begs the question why they didn't just ask for the class average in the first place. They might also be realistically able to act on a list of two-dozen students who are experiencing significant difficulties across all subjects – a list that could have been compiled in minutes by asking teachers to jot down the names of pupils causing concern on a list in the staffroom.

There is one final data cycle at work in schools that some claim raises efficiency. This is the data cycle that monitors differential performance of teachers and departments and takes action on them.

And this is a data cycle that I'm more sympathetic to, at least in theory. You see, its basic premise is sound. At any point in time we can observe significant variation in

how effective secondary school subject departments are. And we really do have very good evidence that there is considerable variation in how effective teachers are. If we could find a way to reduce this variation in teaching quality then overall pupil learning would rise considerably.

One possibility is that data could help us identify very poor teachers. Indeed, I think the audit culture is the offspring of an era in which even very bad teachers didn't lose their jobs. By very bad, I mean teachers who didn't even try to help pupils learn, for example. Don't try to argue they weren't there – remember I was schooled in the 1980s and early 90s.

The trouble is, this audit culture is unhelpful to almost everyone in organisations that rely on professional autonomy, as schools do. This point is eloquently made by the CEO of Netflix, Reed Hastings, and his colleague Patty McCord.

In their view, bureaucracy and audit cultures don't work for those workers who are weak and lack the capacity to improve – if we can't help them get better then these people just need to leave teaching. Sure, the pupil-progress paper trail provides the very detailed evidence-base that leaders needed to go through the long, draining "capability procedures" necessary to manage them out. But by forcing all teachers to adhere to this paper-trail they are causing untold collateral damage to great teachers' lives in the process.

Hastings and McCord say audit cultures don't work for those workers who are poor and don't care – these people also need to leave teaching.

And they aren't necessary for those workers who are talented and well-motivated.

Rather, they only work for the small subset of people who are a little lazy and unfocused, but who with the right hard-edged accountability system will get stuck into their job and improve what they do. We train our school leaders to implement an audit culture that is probably raising the standards of a tiny percentage of teachers by forcing them to demonstrate the work they are putting in. But for the most part, this enormous 'effort' ends up coming from the good teachers – who were always good at teaching – but who are forced to plough their energy into

generating audit trails necessary to bounce the tiny number of lazy teachers into work and to help generate the audit trail necessary to support the capability process for the weakest.

I don't want to be dismissive of teacher underperformance. Where it happens it literally wastes days or years of children's lives.

But, my fear is that, in trying to fix this problem that I remember so well from a very small number of teachers who 'taught' me (or rather failed to teach), we have made life so intolerable for those that were always doing a great job. So much so that I fear that many of the teachers who taught me wouldn't dream of entering the classroom today. And my children are worse off because of it.

So, this is DiMaggio and Powell's theory of institutional isomorphism – a theory of three forces causing schools to adopt similar-but-inefficient practices. Returning to our teacher Lucy... It explains why Lucy's headteacher is asking to see weekly planning, sets marking rules, performs weekly book moderation and collects regular pupil tracking data. Her headteacher does these things because she believes Ofsted and others will judge her favourably if she does (coercive isomorphism). She does these things because she does not really know how best to ensure high standards of teaching and learning in her school, so copying other 'high performing' schools' processes seems the best response to uncertainty (mimetic isomorphism). And she does these things because she believes that the job of a headteacher is to put systems in place to be able to monitor the activities of staff and pupils to ensure that every child gets the attention they deserve and none of them fall behind (normative isomorphism).

What the theory doesn't do is explain why teacher workload has become so much more unmanageable from the mid-2000s onwards. I've already mentioned the change in how inspection took place in 2005, with the shift from inspection of school

activities towards school paperwork as a by-product of the need to find a cheap and quick way to monitor schools.

More controversially, I would argue that school leadership teams now ask teachers for lesson plans, marking records and assessment data because they can. And they largely have the Labour Government to thank for that.

You see, the first decade of the Labour government produced a 56% real increase in school budgets. I don't know what the Labour Government hoped the money would be spent on. But one thing headteachers chose to spend money on was expanding the teaching staff who rarely teach – the senior leadership team.

Gone are the days when a secondary school is run by a headteacher and their deputy. The number of assistant heads doubled over a ten year period in secondary schools; in primary schools they more than quadrupled. My rough calculations suggest that today about 30% of secondary schools have a senior leadership team greater than eight full-time staff. This is all very sensible if you are a head – why manage a whole school when you can simply manage the people you've delegated management to?

But having created these roles, what *should* junior management do with their time? Well, they can help compile evidence that pupils are really learning and that teachers in the school can teach.

Would the rise of managerialism and the audit culture in schools have been able to take hold in the same way without the increases in budgets that have funded expanded senior leadership teams? It's hard to believe it would have in quite the same way. And if Ofsted, having introduced shorter inspections, was unable to observe large leadership teams presiding over elaborate systems of audit then it would have been harder for them to develop the idea that this constituted good management practice.

My fears about the unintended consequences of the Labour Government's attempt to make the teaching job manageable go one-step further though.

I recently asked a retiring primary teacher if she could pin-point the moment when things got considerably worse in primary schools and her response surprised me. She said it was the day that the government gifted her 10% of her actual timetabled teaching time to be reserved for Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA). At first, I couldn't understand how she could argue that a *reduction* in her teaching load made things worse. But she said the following:

The day they gave me that time they made it management's business how I planned, how I prepared, and how I assessed. Because it was timetabled, it was now legitimate for a headteacher to ask me to do anything in that time. And they didn't just ask for anything, they asked for everything.

I don't mean to suggest we remove PPA time in primary schools. It is simply an anecdote to show how things rarely turn out the way politicians intend.

I hope you get the idea by now that I think the long working hours of teachers is a problem we *must* fix. I say this, in part, because serious shortages of high quality teachers are the greatest constraints on the system's capacity to deliver a decent education for all children at the moment.

I am making this argument, not because I am pro-teachers, but because I am pro-education.

I am not saying all teachers will do a brilliant job left on their own.

I am not saying that teacher hunches and habits alone are the ideal way for us to organise learning in schools.

What I am saying is that trusting teachers is surely better than our attempts to homogenise classroom practice and monitoring in entirely un-evidenced ways to suit an audit culture that is demotivating and burdensome for teachers.

And because we lack scientific evidence on how to systematise teaching and learning we need our teachers to be first-class practitioners. We need this to be a

prestigious profession with competitive entry and sufficient teacher supply so that headteachers can choose employees in which they have confidence.

I want to turn to resolving the situation we are in.

Just as it took multiple initiatives and institutions to increase teacher workload to current levels, it will take a plethora of initiatives to undo this mess.

Where the theory of institutional isomorphism succeeds in explaining why schools have created large bureaucratic audit mechanisms, it also points the way as to how we must solve the workload problem, and ensure it does not spiral out of control again.

All we need to do is simultaneously re-purpose these coercive, mimetic and normative forces to ensure that the system holds manageable working hours in place.

Let me start with three ideas to pin in place a lower workload culture in through ‘coercion’.

1. We legislate to ensure that curriculum and assessment reforms have at least 4-year lead-in times. There is no doubt that the pace of change in recent years has crippled teachers. Longer lead-in times give teachers greater time to prepare; more importantly, they make these reforms less attractive to politicians looking for ‘quick fixes’. If something can’t happen within the lifetime of their government, then it’ll encourage them to think really hard before deciding the reform is necessary.
2. We should look again at replacing ‘directed time’ contracts that only specify maximum teaching hours, with ones that specify teachers’ daily working hours like normal workers. The explicit 35-hour working week is the way that normal employers and employees negotiate the terms of their job. It makes explicit the opportunity costs of requests – whether they come from government, inspectors or headteachers – because the person making them must specify what it is they would like teachers to stop doing. There is not so unique about

teaching that it cannot be specified within a standard contract; even professional development and preparation that takes place during holidays can be accommodated. This is not about banning those teachers who enjoy working 70-hour weeks – we have those people in every profession – it is about creating a job that can be done within 35.

3. We need to wean Ofsted off its dependence on managerialism to justify its paperwork-based fleetingly short inspection. I'd like us to reconsider whether short inspection itself needs to be reviewed, perhaps replacing it with longer inspections again – but this is a complex conversation that is beyond the scope of this lecture. In the meantime, if we take the view that more autonomy-supportive management practices would benefit the teaching profession, then Ofsted must train their inspectors in how to identify them. Headteachers must feel safe to report that they trust their staff to do a good job, if exam results show this trust is justified. And since inspectors won't now be flicking through paperwork during their visit we can ask them to do other things such as monitor teacher workload and teacher turnover.

All this will help at the margins. But the main impetus for change has to come from school leaders themselves since they have been the agents through which the audit culture has taken hold in schools. Asking headteachers to reverse years of learnt behaviours, without any guarantees that we can protect them from rogue inspectors, requires considerable bravery and self-exposure on their part.

They will only do this if we can help them learn our new norms of autonomy-supportive leadership through a number of important lessons.

First, that auditing teaching and learning isn't really possible. The links between what they observe through auditing activities and the quality of learning is simply unproven. A headteacher cannot know what is going on in a classroom, unless they are there. School leaders need to learn to live with this uncomfortable truth and stop asking for lesson plans, performing book scrutiny, reviewing marking and collecting tracking data. All of which means learning to trust teachers again.

Second, we have to persuade them that a trust culture is *necessary* to give teachers the professional autonomy that they need to grow and develop in an environment where we simply don't have the tools or evidence to mandate how they should work. It isn't enough for leaders to learn about autonomy-supportive management practices; we also need to think about how we train professionals to handle this autonomy.

Not all teachers can and will thrive under the trust culture. This may not be a message the teaching unions want to hear, but I'm going to say it anyway: Most teachers can learn how to work effectively without undue monitoring and those that can't must be managed out to maintain a strong professional culture for everyone else. Once teacher shortages lessen, we should help these teachers find more appropriate careers.

And remember those mimetic forces that cause silver bullets and managerial ideas to ripple through schools via Ofsted 'case studies', consultants' training courses, articles in education magazines, and so on? We should harness them to promote the many schools out there that are already using autonomy-supportive leadership practices and those schools who are already finding ways to materially lower teacher workload.

But the only way to guarantee that good advice is given out in the system – advice that maximises the trade-off between teacher effort and pupil learning – is to develop a decent scientific evidence base on how best to lead schools, on how best to develop and motivate teaching staff and on best classroom practice. The Education Endowment Foundation has made an important start in helping us learn what doesn't work (and occasionally what does). It is tempering the merchants selling the hope that we can easily transform schools. The broader educational research community has a duty to make crushing silver bullets a priority and putting in its place straight-forward, scientifically-proven advice on how to teach.

The march towards an improved scientific understanding of schooling and a more evidence-informed profession will of course be long and gradual. But if we can

tackle the coercive and normative forces herding schools towards the high-workload culture then we can at least provide cover for educators looking to make the trip.

I know I have some tough messages for school leaders, who themselves are experiencing their own workload crisis for even more complex reasons than those I have talked about tonight.

I certainly don't blame them for the job they feel they have to do in a system of blunt accountability where, ultimately, they are the ones losing their jobs when the system decides, rightly or wrongly, that standards of teaching need to improve.

I don't for a minute think that school leaders enjoy doing the job the way they do right now. I like to think they'd prefer to:

- trust their staff to get on with their jobs;
- defend a decent work life balance;
- concentrate their energies on supporting the professional growth of colleagues.

But that's not where leadership in many schools is today.

And it is our headteachers who are now facing the headache of chronic teacher shortages that mean they cannot recruit the kind of the staff they would ideally want to fill posts.

Barring an economic catastrophe through Brexit that decimates other industries and forces graduates to apply for teaching as their only option, making the job do-able in shorter hours so it is compatible with seeing your own family and friends is our only option. The Government won't fund reduced contact time for teachers to make workload more manageable that way. Nor will it raise teacher salaries so that we can compete with other high stress, long-hours culture professions, such as law and banking.

It is too late for us to save Lucy, who since we interviewed her has left the profession. I asked her why she was leaving:

I want a life back. I'm now in my early thirties and I just feel like I've missed a huge part of my life with my head in my laptop or a pile of books. I don't feel like the amount of effort I've put in has changed how well my kids would have done. I feel like they would have done well without all the hours I put in.

Right there in Lucy's final words is our answer – the audit culture isn't there for the children. Standards didn't rise. So, we can go back to that world where teachers taught, and then they went home and saw their friends and family. We can do it without compromising pupil learning.

This has been a long, hard decade for the teaching profession. A cross-Party project where everybody now seems upset at where we have ended up. Between us all – government, inspectorate, school leaders, unions, teachers – we have created a job that has mutated so much from the thing we meant teachers to do – teach our children to the best of their abilities.

No single person, government or establishment *should* take the blame for the current crisis; equally, we all have a responsibility to step up and make teaching a job worth doing again.