

PEARSON UK – Policy “Hot Breakfast” briefing on Schools, 9 March 2015

Transcript

PART 1

<http://youtu.be/f8o8W6ARHxs>

Steve Besley, Head of Policy, Pearson

Right. Good morning everybody. Good to see you all. Thanks so much for getting up early on a Monday morning. I was reading on the metro this morning, you probably saw it about how difficult it is to sleep on a Sunday night because of what's happening on the Monday morning. So perhaps like you, I certainly, I was waking every half an hour. So let's just try and keep things lively and awake. I've got just 4 slides. I tend to have slides. I tend to have a lot on my slides. But I've got just 4 slides, and I'm going to take you through broadly, a little bit about where school's policy is at the moment.

**SLIDE 3* Current policy picture*

So I'm going to start -- yeah so it's not very -- I'm going to start with -- I hope you can see it from the back -- with a little bit about the big picture. And I'll pose the first question is, is this going to be a big moment for education? Is it going to be one of those defining elections? Is it going to be seismic change election or not? Now 5, 6 weeks ago, I think the very last week of polling of voter intentions had education in as, I think it was, the 7th area of interest. Which, in between tax and pension. So at that point, education certainly wasn't appearing at -- very high at the electoral interests. Of course over the last 5 or 6 weeks, there's been a number of major speeches and a number of major developments. February, for example, started with the Prime Minister's speech on school standards. An all-out war on mediocrity. A good kind of appeal there. Followed very quickly by the Secretary of State talking about much stronger standards at Key Stage 2. It's followed up a couple of weeks later by Ed Miliband's Haverstock Schools speech, in which he spelled out the 5 broad features of labour party policy. And of course we ended the last month -- and I know this is further announcements today, but we ended the last month with the labour party announcement on higher education fees. So to some extent, education has begun to move up the agenda and become an important issue for many -- for both the parties. And to some extent the electorate. Having said that, is it therefore, one of the big moments? Now I think if you look back to perhaps 2010, or even further back, as I can go back -- 1997 we had major reports waiting in the wings. Which to some extent redefined education. We had of course Lord Brown's report on higher education fees in 2010. And perhaps less well known, but for the school's area, we had Sir Richard Sykes' report, which kind of instilled a lot of the thinking behind Michael Gove's reforms that ended up in the November 2010 whitepaper. In 1997 of course, we had Lord Dearing's report. It looks at the moment, as I

say, we don't have those kinds of major ear shifting reports around. And indeed, Nick Pearce, who many of you perhaps will be aware was blocking -- Nick Pearce who is Chief Executive of IPPR, and was working Number 10 of course, was blogging just recently, that it may be that the era of major government reports with a hefty list of recommendations, if you remember, Lord Dearing's report, I think 197 recommendations. That the era of government issue major reports with lots of recommendations is perhaps over. Think about it. Social media. Local determinism. We're all in it together. Whatever it might be. That kind of mantra has shifted the accessibility of government policy and made it available to all. And therefore I think it's much harder for government to orchestrate major change. So I think we're beginning to see a very different type of policy-making vehicle at the moment.

What we're left with, and you can see it to some extent here, what we're left with there is a fairly broad consensus on the key issues. Things like the importance of school standards. Core curriculum. English and maths. Apprenticeships. Closing the gap. All these sorts of things. And of course, while there are differences, and you can see, you know, there's less agreement on aspects like school brands. The approach to standards performance. And so while you can see the sum of differences I don't see that there's any major policy shift emerging from either side. One area, however, having said that -- so my first major point is not a major defining election for education. Having said that -- and just move on to the second point, when we're talking about how the policy affects the picture generally. And this is the about one third point up from the bottom. And this is about whether there is a growing momentum for a different approach to qualification reform. Now the current approach, of course, which is largely directly by Whitehall, albeit through you know, commission groups, or bodies, or whatever, have come under considerable criticism in recent years. For being too top down. Ignoring the views of experts. And being driven by the whims of politicians, rather than the needs of pupils and learners. Critics have argued that this has resulted in constant curriculum upheaval, and no great improvement in performance. When he launched the review of the national curriculum 4 or 5 years ago, Michael Gove argued that this might be the last time that major curriculum review is undertaken in this rather heavy-handed way. And it may be that he is right. The Lib Dems have been talking for some time about the need for an independent standards authority. A profession led body that might be able to advise the Secretary of State on education policy. The Labour party's been talking a lot about different ways in which public policy can be generated and advised, and presented to government. We've had of course in the past, curriculum bodies like SEAC, QCDA, QCA, and so on. So in many ways, this may not sound new, but the emergence of what would be a profession led body, able to act as an advisory body to the Secretary of State to the day, he's I think a new direction. And he's something that we and Pearce have been looking at, as indeed have many other people. So my second, general point is that this may be one area where we will see some changes. Third and final point, just some takeaway from the current policy picture, is the point at the bottom about a softer tone. The ministerial changes

last summer -- and remember we had the change in of course the Secretary of State for education, the universities, and for FE and skills. So it was across the tier of education. Those changes seem to have introduced -- and maybe this was part of the move anyway -- seemed to have introduced a softer tone towards education policy. So we seem to have been hearing less about -- I was about to say, we seem to be hearing less about free schools. And then of course the prime ministers changed everything for me. But there you go. We seem to be hearing less about the crunchier items. Let's say like AS levels. And perhaps some of the school brands. And more about what I'm terming the softer topics. So there's been a lot of discussion the last few weeks; last few months about things like true grit. Pupils determine the pupil development/teacher workloads. A college of teaching. These sorts of things. So I think we've seen a significant shift of tone. And maybe this was deliberate politically to try and take some of the heat out of the rhetoric and to allow the government parties to reconnect with their core constituencies. Right. So that's the general -- disappearing behind the screen -- that's the general, broad picture. Having said that, there are of course a number -- there are of course a number of key questions -- key issues facing the school sector.

**SLIDE 4* Three current issues*

I could have selected a number of these, but I've gone for just those three. Firstly because this was worrying a lot of people in this school sector at the moment. What the hell's going to happen to the qualification reform programme which started in November 2010, gathered momentum in 2011, 2012, and then now of course is speeding forward albeit with the odd change, here and there. Ofqual of course has already warned of the perils of too much further upheaval. Many of you will have seen Glenys Stacey the Chief Executive of Ofqual. Or many of you would have seen/read a speech recently in which he -- and I quote -- "Asked any in coming government to consider carefully before tinkering under the bonnet of GCSEs and A-levels in the future. And Ofqual of course is on record as saying, you know, you want to re-couple the AS level, it would take anything up to 2 years and create further ways of change and upheaval. It may be that a change of education secretary, let alone a change of government would introduce this kind of change. But as I see it, and certainly our work here is driving forward, I suspect that the curriculum reform programme that we have at the moment will broadly continue as it is, albeit with the odd change on the way. A second issue then is about funding. Schools are clearly worried about funding. It became a political issue at the start of the month when the prime minister signalled that a conservative -- a future conservative government would not cut school funding, but would carry on with flat cash per pupil payment. Of course many people are then -- try to unpack that to see whether this is actually a cut over a period of years, or whether this is actually an increase. The Labour Party, and of course the Lib Dems have been saying this for some time, that they would reinvent or protect not just school funding for 5 to 16 like the Conservatives, but from early years to age 19. The slight difference is, and I'm just beginning to understand how all the funding stuff is working, but whereas the Conservatives are

proposing a per pupil funding protection, or sticking with that funding level, that the Labour party and Liberal Democrats are talking about ringfencing the overall schools budget. And this, for example, you then get a great increase in pupil numbers. That would add greater pressure and intensity onto the school budget. For anybody who wants to know a little bit more about school funding, first of all, let's talk a little bit about it. I would encourage you to look at Sam Friedman's blogs which have been very good on this and then itemise where the money might come from and where the issues would be. And the third question I think is what would the school system look like after 2015. There's been considerable change to schools in the last 4 or 5 years. Free schools, UTCs, academies. We could go through them. Careers. Colleges. Big debates going on at the moment about the grammar school model and whether that should happen in Kent and so on. So what would happen to the school system? Well, you'll be aware that in his Haverstock speech -- perhaps then you'll be aware then that his Haverstock speech Ed Miliband's said no to anymore free schools, and yes to spreading accountability freedoms that academies currently enjoy to other eligible schools. This is further being debated today. But I think the big issue around the school system for the future, and one that the Labour Party and that the Blunkett Review has done in great detail is about local accountability. How would that operate? And at the moment the Conservatives are talking, or the Conservatives have a system to reach the school commissioners. The Labour Party looks like it would be pursuing a system of directors of school standards who would be working out in the regions, working with local authorities, other agencies and headteachers, and the Lib Dems would have the system of headteacher boards. So we would have, I think, some change around the school system in the future. There's two more slides, very, very quickly.

MARTIN O'DONOVAN: Can you see those in the back all right?

**SLIDE 5* Current policy picture*

STEVE BESLEY: That's the one that has just a little bit of detail on. But this is the one that tries to capture then... So this is me just trying to capture what political parties have been saying pretty much since the conference season of last autumn on schools education. Okay? So it's sort of boiling down the key features over the last 6, 7, 8, 9 months. I'm not going to go through in any great detail, but let me just pick out two themes for you. I think one theme -- and this is one that Labour party's been talking about for some time. One theme, of course, is about teachers. The importance of fully qualified profession. Importance or not of a fully qualified profession. And how we can try and ensure that the teaching profession is supported, while at the same time performing at its national standards. This is something Labour's very keen on. And I think we have a policy divide here, between whether you have a managed system, which perhaps teacher MOTs is alone, or certainly a re-validation process and continues professional development kind of label model. Or whether you have a model that is led by the profession itself. Which is where the Conservatives would be more keen to see perhaps be led

to a college of teaching. So I think the whole nature of the profession, and the way in which public profession's changing the future is one area of great interest. And the second thing I just want to highlight is vocational education. I haven't mentioned it in any great detail up to now. So Michael Wilshaw made a very important speech on vocational education school some months ago. He took -- because he started avoiding the issues, despite the well performed, most of which have now been implemented. Vocational education is still seeing far too much as a consolation prize for those that can't do anything else. Our view is, and of course we're very committed to vocational education here. Our view here is, you know, a combination of the kind of growing economy, voracious for a skilled workforce. And growing economic and social concerns about a lack of growth and opportunity for young people in particular. And coming together to create a big momentum behind vocational education, the young people, more than perhaps we've seen for some time. Right.

**SLIDE 6* So the future is?*

Let me move to the 4th and final slide. Which is then just trying to sum it up. So we've looked at kind of 3 or 4 areas. The final slide then is a little bit finger in the air, what's going to happen to the future? And without going through in any great detail; of course the best things tend to come around again, and again, and again. So I'm going to do this fairly lightly and say well, I suspect that if pushed, I would go for the future of something old. Which I think would be a return in some form of some of you will remember the Technical Vocational Education Initiative -- TVEI. The Lord Adonis Report. The CBI Report. A number of major reports have talked about perhaps getting schools much more closely to the local economy. Giving young people the skills they need for small businesses, enterprise and so on. So perhaps a return of -- a return of the TVEI. That would be my something old. My something new -- something new would be perhaps a new form of careers engagement through a digitalised learning and skills record. This is where technology has yet to be fully exploited. And there is a lot of work to be done about creating a digitalised learning profile for young people that hooks it into the skills and knowledge that they have, and the demands and needs of the labour market. So that would be my something new. Something borrowed would be perhaps the challenge. Many of you will perhaps recall the London Challenge. Which was a vehicle that transformed London's schools. It's still a very popular model. It brings together experts, professions, teachers and so on to create an agenda of change. In the last performance, league table reports London schools did particularly well. So I think the impact of the challenge model is still held in high regard and will be my something borrowed. And something blue -- or perhaps pushing it a big now, something out of the blue perhaps -- would be a different curriculum kind of schools for the future. So there we go. That's a few thoughts as to the future. At this point, I'm going to hand over to Chris I think to take us through is perspective. Chris.

[Applause]

CHRIS HUSBANDS: Thank you very much.

[Music]

END OF PART 1

PART 2

<http://youtu.be/AKk1hwBjwIQ>

Professor Chris Husbands, Director of the Institute of Education

For my entire professional life, I've lived in awe of Steve's policy analyses, and now have to try and follow that today. It's not going to be anywhere near as fine grained. I don't have any slides. I have one visual aid, which is my tie, which is carefully chosen for any occasion that I talk about policy since as far as I can work out it features the colours of every political party. There's even, you should draw no conclusions from this - UKIP purple tucked away in there.

I'm going to say four things, and I'm going to say them all pretty generally. We are 58 days away from the general election, and the only thing that I think we can say with any degree of close certainty is that there will be a change of government. It is almost impossible that the current Conservative/Lib Dem coalition will still be in office on the 8th of May. So four points. The first is around party election policies, and if I'd gone back to Steve's previous slide, I think one of the things you'd have to say is that common ground between the parties is huge. So there is the common ground. The man on the mainlines are the largely academised, financially involved school system which are accepted by all parties, and I don't know of any intention by Labour if it comes in, to repeal the 2010 Academies Act. Secondly, common ground, the principles of a largely centralised examination and inspection led accountability system are accepted by both parties, and I think there are two different manifestations of that. Classic instance in the Haverstock speech from Ed Miliband a few days ago when he suggested that the way to drive improvements in arts education in schools, which are needed, was to put it into the inspection framework, and that's paralleled by the extent to which Ofsted have been seen by the Conservatives as the major tool in a battle against perceived Islamic fundamentalism in schools. Now you can take whatever you like, do you like about arts education in combating fundamentalism, but it's striking that both parties seem to see that inspection is one of the tools that you've got to drive it. A touching faith in Ofsted is deeply burned into the psyche of every politician. Third feature is that schools policy is in almost all cases still being developed separately from skills policy, and that's something that is deeply embedded in the English psyche. It goes all the way back to the 1944 Education Act, which saw the tripartite system separate academic from vocational education, and it's alive and well in the way that we all think about schools policy. There's also, I think, remarkable common ground in the identification of policy priorities, and you started to see that on Steve's previous slide. The focus on raising standards and attainment, especially for the lower attaining fifty percent, enhancing provision

for the most able, finding ways to trust the profession nor closing the attainment gap through the pupil premium. Pupil premium has been a very good thing in my judgement, although the policy weight that is laid upon it is likely to cut, undercut many of its positive features.

And, finally, there is considerable policy alignment around funding. For all the shadowboxing about how to defend or define the education budget, my overall conclusion from the exchanges two weeks ago is that the conservative promise to maintain per pupil funding in cash terms is something like a real term's cut of 10.5 percent over the next five years, and the Labour promise to fix the education budget overall adds up to a cut of about nine percent, and you can argue that that one and a half percent is huge, or you can argue that it's not very much, and I suspect it depends on the perspective that you take. So that's my point about party policy, those alignment. Much closer than in the elections of a generation ago. Second point is that England and English education policy. Now one of the interesting things about England is the extent to which it is an outlier. In few other countries is education administration so highly centralised. I know of almost, I don't know of any in which education is as centralised as in this country. In few other countries are the middle tiers, the intervening tiers of education so weak, and it's quite interesting to see policies grope their way to constructing middle tiers through regional commissions or directors of school standards. In few other countries is the accountability regime so closely focussed at school level. So I'm pretty old now. Not quite as old as I read this the first time around, but in 1965, E.P. Thompson, great historian, opened his essay on the peculiarities of English, which I'll come back to in a moment, by quoting Marx's view of Charles Darwin. He said Marx said of Darwin one has to put up with the crude English method of development, of course, and I think that looking at education policy, we are still putting up with the crude English method of development. England is an outlier. The often quoted highly successful East Asian school systems are far more directive and centralised. The Nordic systems have much stronger civic engagement. And my sense of policy agreement in this election and beyond is that that's not going to change very much, and I am going to go back to E. P. Thompson. Also in the peculiarities of the English, he quoted Charles Dickens' Mr. Podsnap. "We Englishmen, said Mr. Podsnap, are very proud of our constitutions Sir, Mr. Podsnap explained with a sense of meritorious proprietorship. It was bestowed upon us by providence. No other country is as favoured as this country, and other countries said the foreign gentleman, they do how? They do sir, returned Mr. Podsnap, shaking his head gravely, they do sir. I'm sorry to be obliged to say it. They do as they do," and I don't see any serious sense of aligning English structures with any other systems that are around.

So here's my third aspect, which is what I call the underlying educational problem, and it's an introspective aspect of English exceptionalism. While other countries are doing as they do, there's one feature that I spelled, I think is spelled out very starkly in the OECD PIAAC report.

We've looked at skill levels of older and younger workers. In some countries, Northern Europe is a good example, older and younger workers both do well. In some countries, Southern Europe stands out, both younger workers and older workers do very badly. In some countries, in South Korea is the supreme example, older workers do badly but younger workers do well. There's been a sharp upward projector. Only in England, only in England to older workers do well and younger workers do badly. We have neglected our schools system. Our school system has never been terribly good at preparing young people for work, but in the past, that was compensated for by a much better work-based training. The big problem of our education system for me remains its great challenge - providing effectively for low retainers and institutional curriculum and assessment terms. It's still the case that the gap between England's average PISA performance and Shanghai's is smaller than the gap you will find in any primary school classroom you choose to walk into. The re-gearing of assessment, of the assessment system, Steve's right about the issues of, the 2010 reforms. The re-gearing of the assessment system around high-stakes final assessment is a big challenge given the problems that we face for lower attainers. The development of University Technological College, and studio schools has been incredibly positive in the context of our fundamental educational challenge, but a much more rational approach to their location would make far better sense than the ad hoc approach that we have at the moment. So in all these cases, and this is also my fourth point on May the 8th and afterwards, in all these cases, our response is to policy challenge reflect the financially devolved, centrally accountable system that we've got. Haphazard and disarticulated. More haphazard and disarticulated since 2010, but, frankly, never particularly coherent. And it's not clear to me that the election is going to fix that. There is too much policy agreement and too much pressure from the media, I know Greg's coming after me in a moment to focus on the wrong problems. So I'll declare an interest. I'm not a member of the Labour Party, but I acted as an independent chair of their schools task force, and I think we've got the solutions broadly right. A refocusing of FE on high-level skills provision, a reinvigoration of apprenticeships, and the national baccalaureate framework for upper secondary assessment. But we've got a long, long way to go. The structural context for education puts real challenges in the way, and I suspect after the next election a new government with what looks like being a very weak electoral mandate, will find its intrade dominated by the flow of what Harold McMillan famously called the driver of government. Events, dear boy, events. So I think the new secretary of state will be dealing with the real crises of school supply, school places, real crises of teacher supply, the challenges of funding without a national funding formula, and the fallout from continuing assessment reform. So I'd never thought I'd get to end by saying this, Marx was right. One has to put up with the crude English method of development, of course. Thank you very much.

[Applause]

Greg Hurst, Education editor at the Times

Thank you very much. Two very strong presentations. So I'll try not to repeat the points that have been made. When you come to talk about a general election, the thing people, of course, really want to know is who is going to win. What is the outcome likely to be, and Chris referred to this in his teasing references. Teasing prediction to a change in government. I just want to unpick that a little more. The guides to general election outcomes, the strongest we have is opinion polling. There's now much, much more opinion polling than has ever been the case, and you'll have noticed that the ranges in which the two big parties are falling are too low to form a majority government in either case. Both the Conservatives and the Labour Party are broadly polling with their range of between 32 and 34 percent, and you really need to be in the high 30s to be hoping to form a majority in the House of Commons. The reason for this is the disparate share of the vote between the minority parties and the strong showing in particular of UKIP and more recently in Scotland the Scottish Nationalists. So this makes it not only unlikely that there would be a single party majority government, but as Chris referred to, it's very unlikely on current projections that there could be a two party coalition, and the reason is the Lib Dem vote share is so becalmed, it's in a range of between six and eight percent at the moment, that there simply would not be enough Lib Dem MPs to make up the difference on current projections to a majority in the House of Commons. So we're in this very unusual position of people talking about a possible three-party alliance to form a government. I don't remember a similar situation to this or an election that's been so unpredictable. The only thing I would say about this is that the British electorate is very good at willing the outcome that it wishes to see, and I think before the 2010 general election, it was quite clear that the electorate didn't want either the Conservatives or the Labour Party to govern alone. But, they considered, looked at the proposition of coalition, and, ultimately, decided, okay, we'll go with that. That's, indeed, what happened, and if you compare that to the 1992 general election, we were in a broadly similar position with John Major struggling in his early years as prime minister without a mandate of his own, with Neil Kinnock as the leader of the Labour Party who wasn't, hadn't convinced the electorate that he ought to be prime minister. And during that campaign, there was a period when the polls weren't showing a majority to either of the main parties, and there was a strong focus in the latter stage of the campaign on the prospect of a coalition government. At that stage, it hadn't been widely discussed. The electorate, I think, took a good look at this, considered this, and decided no, and that meant that the polls began to move, and they moved back towards the incumbent government. John Major, who was returned with a majority, and I just say that because the electorate has an innate ability to will the outcome at which. So it maybe that people look at this unprecedented proposition of a three-party alliance of some form, try to form a majority government or a voting bloc in the House of Commons to allow one or two parties to rule and decide it doesn't wish to see that, and that might make the polls move. If there were to be a coalition or an alliance of some form, I think you could make one more prediction that, which is that coalition talks wouldn't be wrapped up in five days. There

were two reasons it was done so quickly last time. One was that the crisis in the financial markets meant there was an urgent need to offer some form of confidence and stability to the markets, and the electorate, again, hadn't, didn't, wasn't convinced that a coalition might work. It was very important to show that it could be done. I think this time there would be much more attention to the detail of any coalition agreement and a much longer time in all the parties involved in getting consent from their various members of Parliament, other sectors of their Party as well. So it would take longer.

So onto the policy. Steve gave a very accurate and detailed summary of the policy. I agree with his general proposition. I don't think schools will feature very much in the general election. Again, this hasn't always been the case. In 1997, Tony Blair was making education one of his top four, top five priorities in the Labour pledge card. A reduction in primary school classes was one of those top five pledges. Ed Miliband of course, revived that in his recent speech. In the 2001 election, schools and hospitals were one of the slogans for Labour, which is really a signal as to where extra funding would be prioritised, but I don't think this time we will see schools featuring much, and, again, I think the reason is that, as Chris alluded to, broadly the front benches of the major parties now largely agree on the thrust of school's policy. This isn't to say there aren't disagreements among elements of their grassroots. So, for example, in the Conservative Party, you'll still see this debate about grammar schools and selection. In the Labour Party, you'll see, and some elements of the Lib Dems, this push against academies, but, broadly, the front benches agree, and that's why the differences between them, the policy differences are largely symbolic. So the Labour Party's position on qualified teacher status, for example, is that there is a symbol, a proxy about the importance of teaching, the importance of high-quality teaching. The one difference I would highlight from the Labour Party's point of view is the recoupling of the AS level with the A level. That's reasonably big deal for the schools. That would make quite a big difference this summer and in the first couple of years, but if you consider what Labour could have done in unpicking all these changes to the curriculum, the GCSEs, A level content and structure, I think it's relatively a confined issue. So given that Steve and Chris have thoroughly unpicked the policy addition of schools open, just thought I'd highlight on things that aren't necessarily going to be flagged up in the manifestos of the parties that still could have a big impact on schools, and we've heard of reference to the funding settlement, which will be very, very tight, I think particularly for secondary schools, but there's another funding element which is I think that both the Conservatives and the Lib Dems may well promise to introduce a national funding formula for schools. This would be a very big deal. It's been tried a couple of times before, and each time the government of the day has run away because it's so difficult, so controversial because it means effectively transferring money from well-funded schools, which tend to be in urban areas, and redistributing some of this, a good chunk of this money away into schools in shire counties, etc. There are big winners and losers,

and you can see the political imperative behind them, why the Labour Party would be much less like to propose funding away from urban areas where it's strong.

There's been reference to Ofsted as the, I think Chris' phrase was faith in Ofsted by both the main parties. I do wonder about this, you know. On the Conservative side, there has for the past couple of years been a great anxiety about the impact that Ofsted is having on practice in schools, and you only have to go into any school and look at literature that the school has produced in their internal management to see what Ofsted wants featuring so largely. And Ofsted has begun to drive practice in schools about marking, about all these practical ways in which teachers plan lessons, the pace of the lesson. How you measure progress during the course of election that I think there is a feeling that Ofsted has become too much a driver in what goes on in schools, and it's disempowering the teaching profession and schools themselves. I think there's also a great worry about what's seen as inconsistency of commentary within Ofsted reports. So some things that Ofsted reports keep highlighting about group work, about independent learning and this sort of thing are seen as contradictory to those comments of Michael Wilshaw, the chief inspector. And on the Labour side, Tristram Hunt wrote an article in the Observer two or three months ago when he was very, very critical of what he called a politicisation of Ofsted, and he called it the comments from the chief inspector with two, aligned with government policy in too many instances, and he also, as Chris talked about, has talked about having an inspection regime that's broader and measures cultural character building, aspects of schools, and extracurricular activities. So I think that even if this isn't flagged up in the manifestos of the main parties, I think you will see quite a significant change to Ofsted after the election. I think that it's the... breadth of its remit in looking at social work, looking at child minders, and looking at all these areas beyond the schools. It's potentially seen as a distraction, and there might be a case for unpicking Ofsted and having it as a standalone schools inspectorate. And I further think that given some of the criticism of which I'm aware in private of Ofsted, I think it will be quite difficult to see how the current chief inspector would or could wish to work with a new government with an agenda such as that.

To an audience with an awarding organisation, I think Ofqual is going to be of quite interesting relevance after the election. What I see of Ofqual is this. I see an organisation that's struggled in the first years of its remit. It was created in the dying embers of the last Labour government. Moved from London to Coventry, and lost a great deal of staff, and, therefore, capacity in that critical time when it was reformed in a new guise. I think that early it struggled to assert its independence as Michael Gove] was making very significant changes without much warning or consultation. For example, he announced on television the axing of modular structure of GCSEs without redesigning them. So you had modular, the design GCSEs examined internally, which is not an ideal situation. But I think gradually Ofqual has grown in confidence. It's recruited and rebuilt its capacity, and the critical moment for Ofqual was the judicial review over the awarding of GCSE English in 2012 when it won a fairly comprehensive victory against the alliance of local

authorities and teacher unions that brought a test case challenging its behaviour in the awarding, and since then I think Ofqual has been, gained in confidence, but furthermore has been hardwired in a rather visceral mistrust of teacher assessment within qualifications, and that's why you see in the redesign of and rewriting of the GCSE and A level content. Very, very little teacher assessment. This will mean I think much, much greater pressure and public comment on the quality of exam marking by exam boards. So between 20-30% has effectively been contracted out in the past to the teaching profession in schools. Now the great majority that will be the responsibility of the awarding bodies and there will be a greater volume of internal exams. So I think that will be a more difficult challenge for awarding bodies. I think parents and schools will be even more critical of what they see of as poor marking and awarding. And just a further little prediction. This isn't a big deal to policy makers, but I think the general election may be seen as a get-off point for the low level industrial reaction that's been going on in schools. Since, for the past two or three years, the NASUWT and more recently the NUT have been running a policy of non-cooperation with non-contractual obligations on teachers. The NUT have been running occasional national or regional strikes, and this hasn't been a big deal. It's been contained, but, accumulatively I think it has small impact on children's education, but much important, it has an impact on relations within the staff room. But I think given, it doesn't appear to me that that's going anywhere in terms of changing common policy. I've wondered whether the two unions will take a pew, as to the election and see whether it's worth going on. I would have thought they would conclude that they would quietly drop that action which would have an impact, as I say, on staff rooms in schools. So it is likely I think we'll have a new secretary of state for education. We may also have a new reformed government department. It's, and I think the Conservatives would consider if they were in a government bringing higher education into the Department for Education. The significance there is more that an incoming Secretary of State might have a great deal to do with higher education. It's a great deal to do in terms of new regulatory regimes for universities and private providers there that would be quite a priority if that would be. So those are my thoughts as to what maybe not in the manifestos but may impact on schools after the election.

END OF PART 2

PART 3

<https://youtu.be/8XamSEati8Q>

Martin O'Donovan, VP Government Relations, UK & Europe, Pearson

Greg. I don't know about you, but I thought that each of those presentations was fantastic, actually, in terms of the policy analysis we heard, and the political analysis, as well, so before we move on to questions, I think we should do another round of applause. I thought that was really great.

[Applause]

It's over to you. I'm going to ask one question of everyone. So that everyone would have a say in some way or another - do we all agree the common ground is huge? Hands up for yes. Yeah, I do as well. And no? Okay, so we've got lots of yeses and a few abstentions, but I think we seem to agree with the analysis from the top table. So thank you for that, and we've got time for a round of questions. Why don't we do sort of two or three, and then I'll come back to these people here. So can you show hands, please, if you'd like to ask a question? I can see right in the back, and then I'm going to come through to these two women here. So in the back. Why don't you say who you are, as well. If you've got a belting voice, fine. If not, I'll run over with this.

QUESTION: I've not got a belting voice, but, hopefully, you can hear. Alex Bingham from Ark. I'm just really wondering if you think an incoming government, with whatever parties are in there, would merge DFE and those bits from BIS that cover universities' skills, bring those two back together?

MARTIN O'DONOVAN: Okay, so that was ... also throwing skills into the mix as well. Why don't we take a couple more.

QUESTION: Katy Theobald, Future Leaders. It strikes me none of your presentations touched on primary or early years. I just wondered why that was and what you expect to see happening there?

MARTIN O'DONOVAN: Great question on primary, thank you, and then nearest to me, yeah.

QUESTION: Okay, Steve said there were, suggested four things that might make a comeback. I wonder if Greg, particularly, thinks Michael Gove might make a comeback in terms of education minister?

MARTIN O'DONOVAN: And on that entirely non-controversial note...

[Laughter]

MARTIN O'DONOVAN: We go back to our speakers. Does that work?

GREG HURST: Can you hear? Shall I take that last one first? Yes, I certainly do think that Michael Gove wanted to go, and personally, I think removing him was a mistake because it will make him very unpopular in many staff rooms, but I think it sent a signal, unconsciously, that David Cameron wished to backtrack on the government's programme with school reform, and I think opponents of school reform read that signal very loud. It became involved, and it think, very certainly, without anyone consciously deciding to, may have taken that signal as an implication just to ease up on implementing some of those reforms at that critical moment when the policies had all been decided. The emphasis had shifted to school-level implementation, and it was the wrong time to do it, I think. Would he come back? I think it's very difficult to call. It

would only be in that Conservative-lead government, and it's very difficult to explain to the electorate why you removed somebody through this sensitive election period and then brought them back again. So it's an interesting question where he might go, because I don't have the answer to that, but I don't he'd come back from that, and I'll just refer to those other questions very briefly. I think the question was about merging higher education with the Department for Education, which I think certainly has been considered by conservatives. I think that moving skills into a reconstituted Department for Education would be more difficult because of the important alignment with the business community, and quite a lot of the funding, too, goes through these business-led groups. I think the Labour Party would be less likely to merge the Department for Education with higher education. It was under Labour that the two were separated, and Peter Mandleson was the first, the Secretary of State for business with the responsibility of the university. So I think that depends on the outcome of the election, and there was a question about primary schools. Yes, the reason, I think, I didn't talk about primary schools, is that primary schools, in particular, have so much to deal with at the moment with the new national curriculum having come in, with having just dealt with the free school meals for infants and all that sort of thing, that the issue there is implementation of things that have already happened, and, of course, the new accountability measures, they new Key Stage Two testing regime means that there's already a great deal of work until at least halfway through the Parliament to bite off and chew all that's been given them. So I think the issue there is one of digestion rather than new meals.

CHRIS HUSBANDS: Well, I'll try and answer incredibly briefly each of the - so merging BIS with the education skills is with DfE and would be incredibly unpopular with the universities. Vice chancellors, if they get the opportunity, will kick and fight against it. Why? Because it makes whatever the residual funding for research vulnerable to being incorporated into the school's budget, and that's tricky. However, particularly if you're a conservative-led government, getting rid of a government department is a really good way of demonstrating that you're in for cutting some things. So I think it's likely that it will be necessary. Primary years, I have two or three reasons for not talking about them. My wife's an early years specialist, and so I'm very used to showing her things I'm intending to say, and she says, "That's complete rubbish." So I tend to stay clear of it. I think that the issues are early years funding, and particularly, funding the qualification levels of the work force that we desperately need. On primary, and agree with Greg, the bit that's messy in primary is governance. Many primary schools, we cannot have 20,000 high-quality primary governing bodies, given the flow of quality talent that's available to us. I think there'd be lots of people who would like to see really hard primary federations on the government's grants, and I agree with Greg. I think it's highly unlikely that Michael Gove will be returning to education.

STEVE BESLEY: Okay, and finally, very, very quickly. So the three question on the DfE and so on, on that one, personal view, this, but I know a lot of people are saying this. There is a

thought, and I think this is quite political. So I think, as you were suggesting, Greg, I think if it were the Conservatives that would take over, there's quite a strong body of thought that would suggest that if we want to grow the economy, if we want to develop it, with, for example, the skills that are needed, the talent funnels and all the rest of it, that you could actually, because the Treasury manages much of the skills agenda, you could actually hyper much of what BIS does, which is declined in the department in terms of funding, but increasingly important department in terms of delivery. You could hide much of that off into a growth unit. This takes us back to the 60s, of course, as a kind of model for skills developed in the future. Now there is some thought around that. Both parties, as I understand it, are looking at downsizing parts of Whitehall, not least for cost reasons. So would be, had this had some logic to it, but we'll have to see where that one goes. On primary, okay, and I think, pointed out, we didn't say too much about that. I appreciate that. I go with what's been said. My view would be that there is one area that is quite critical in primary at the moment, and it was signalled, I think, by the commission that was announced the other day on assessment, and my view is that there is a big issue about assessment. Where to start, you know, the kind of starting point. Do we have a baseline assessment of reception? How do we measure progress? How do teachers in primary school, with all the different things that they've got to do, how do they monitor and measure progress, and how can they help young people up to the Key Stage Two tasks? So I think there's a big issue around assessment and where that goes in primary education and a big area of support leading there. In terms of Michael Grove, I think most of us have suggested, he's unlikely to come back. I think the cricket teams needs a bit of help. Maybe the football team, as well, but we won't go into that area, but I think it's very, very unlikely that it would work a second time around. I think the interesting thing is that quite where education goes after the elections is the point that we're all beginning to wonder what will happen.

How are we doing?

MARTIN O'DONOVAN: We are just past 9'o clock. Can we take one more round of questions? Is that all right with everyone? I've seen a few nods. I'm going with that, because that were vigorously shook their head. I see question over here. Any more questions? Oh, yeah, two. No, there's three. Those three we will take final questions, comments, and wrap up.

QUESTION: Nicole Swan from The Publishers Association. It's a question for Jeff [sic] and Chris, really. Jeff, you thought the government department might inform after the election, and Chris, you said that you had no sense of aligning the infrastructures with other systems internationally. Thinking of the current preoccupation with the quality of textbooks in our current administration, I was wondering if you thought this would survive the election?

QUESTION: Hi, Vanessa from the ICAEW Chartered Accountant. In relation to the skill shortages our employees are facing, I wanted to ask how you think we can build stronger bridges between our businesses and the schools we've adopted.

MARTIN O'DONOVAN: And one last one.

QUESTION: Hi, I'm Peter Lee from Pearson, you talked a bit about sort of how the, sort of, different parties stand qualifying teachers in classrooms. Do you see any changes to teacher training? Particularly to looking at school-centred versus university level?

MARTIN O'DONOVAN: Greg I think you were just called Jeff Hurst.

[multiple speakers]

GREG HURST: I'll be very brief. The question on textbooks. This, as you know, it's very much a preoccupation of Nick Gibb, the Schools Minister. Will it survive? I think the issue may survive. Whether it's with the same urgency if there was a change in the ministerial team remains to be seen. So I think you may have some respite there, if there's a change in government. Business and schools. I think this is a very important question. The one thing I can say is I don't think you can leave this to teachers. So I think teachers, if they have a free period, can sit there with a telephone and a phone book and the clock ticking, you cannot expect them to find and manage good connections with local businesses. I think we need an intermediary body, at least one to broker that sort of support, and personally, I've, a few times, been approached by teachers, asked to come and speak in schools. I didn't mind doing it if I could do that, and every time, when that teacher's moved on, been promoted, gone to another school, that link has been lost because that sort of institutional mores, in which the school is not shared, and I don't think schools are really good at that. So I do think you need someone else to help and not schools, and teacher training. I don't have a particular insight in. I think the conservatives would want to keep pushing at this and pushing and expanding schools direct, much to Chris's chagrin, no doubt. But I think that may change with a change in the composition of the government, because clearly, there have been recruiting shortfalls in the schools' direct model, and so that would be very much depend on the outcome of the election in my guess.

CHRIS HUSBANDS: Okay, so, like, Greg, I don't think that the preoccupation with state-approved textbooks will survive a change of minister, let alone, a change of government. I simply think it's one of those little preoccupations. I don't think it's seriously going anywhere. The big issue on engaging businesses and schools is the issue about engaging SM needs. The vast majority of businesses are small and medium sized. The lack capacity to do educational liaison. So I'm with Greg. You need intermediary bodies. They need to be employer-like. They need to be flexible. It's all in the second report that I did on the Independent Skills Task Force. On teacher training, just a little bit. The key drivers here, I suspect, after election will not be ideological. They will be about numbers. They'll be about supply and school direct. So actually I'm not, it's not chagrin, we are working very closely with a number of school and schools direct. It's quite interesting. It's catastrophically failing to deliver on supply, and the thing that will keep the next Secretary of State, whoever he or she is, awake at night will be the prospect of schools closing, sending kids home. It happened in 1999. It's why the TTA was abolished,

and it's on prospect again, given the numbers, and it's going to be one of those things, actually, which is events deploy events that drives. I don't see a massive shift away from a school-led approach to teacher training, but we have to do something on the numbers in recruitment, because we're already into a very, very serious problem.

STEVE BESLEY: Okay, just very, very quickly because time is short now. I mean, I agree with one and agree with three on those two questions. I think, yes, the business engagement one, because that is quite close to our hearts, and it's a very good question. I think you just need to read Chris's report, but also, the CBI report followed it up, talked about local skills brokers, and I think it'll be one of the mechanisms for a reformed school system. I was talking a little bit about TVI as an example. I think I better move on quickly on that point. Martin.

MARTIN O'DONOVAN: Thank you once again to all panel. Yeah, go, give them a round of applause, go on!

[Applause]

Just say thank you very much to everyone for attending this morning. We will be doing a couple more of these in the near future. One in the sort of skills FE/HE space between now and the election. We are pencilling into our diaries the Monday after the election for a bit of a wash-up/post-match analysis. So get that one in your diaries as provisional, as well, and we'll send around some more details. Thank you very much for coming along for this very early session and conjugating so helpfully. Thanks one more time to our fantastic panel, and have a good day.

END OF PART 3

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