

2011/2

28 February 2011

Policy Tracker - 'Keeping track of what happened in the world of education for February 2011'.

Main talking points

Ken Clarke's widely reported comments this month that the (economic) pain is only just beginning was a timely reminder of the sharp context within which education development is taking place and in many ways sets the tone for the month as well. It was a month when the Chancellor invited comment in the build-up to the Budget, the Deputy Prime Minister used his latest regional visit to outline the Government's growth strategy and the Treasury confirmed a tax surplus for the previous month. Yet it was also a month when over 90 Lib-Dem councillors wrote to the Times to complain about the speed of the cuts, the Governor of the Bank of England spoke about tightening household budgets and concerns deepened about youth unemployment. By the end of next month we shall know what universities intend to charge from 2012, how much individual institutions will have in their budgets for 2011/12 and what was in the Budget and also, perhaps, whether Ken Clarke was right

Key headlines from the last month

- Education Bill. Bill passes 2nd Reading stage and heads for Committee scrutiny
- Reading test. Consultation closes and plans continue for summer piloting
- Music. Gove confirms funding for school music as Henley Review completes
- EBacc. DfE Select Committee launches new inquiry
- 14-19. Andy Burnham confirms Labour education policy review could revisit Tomlinson
- BSF. Ball back in DfE court as councils 'win' their legal challenge
- Apprenticeships. Alumni network announced as part of National Apprenticeship Week
- National Citizen Service. David Cameron launches a new Facebook site for the NCS
- FE. Tribal reveal big shift towards shared services
- HE Funding. HEFCE Circular 5/2011 confirms Board decisions on 2011/12 funding
- Tuition Fees. Imperial first to announce £9,000 rate as Gov worry about clustering
- Student Visas. The Government tighten up the study route
- Adult Numeracy. NIACE recommend a new 7-point approach
- NSAs. New National Skills Academy for Environmental Technologies approved
- Benefits. Current pilots suggest new benefit eligibility testing is reducing claimants
- LEPs. 3 more approved including pan London model
- Labour Party. New policy review will include parental involvement in schools
- Economy. Latest figures see tax revenues and inflation up and growth slow
- Employment. Latest figures see unemployment up to 2.49m and worries for 16-24 yr olds

Reports/Publications of the month

- [*The Munro Review of Child Protection: Interim Report*](#). Professor Munro's 2nd Report calls for more attention to be paid to children and less to meeting targets
- [*The Green Budget*](#). AN IFS Paper suggesting growth will be slow and recommending a review of the Spending Settlement in 2012 rather than waiting the full four years to 2014
- [*Behaviour and Discipline in Schools*](#). The Select Committee support proposals to improve the lot of teachers but worry that too rigid a curriculum will turn pupils off
- [*Geography: Learning to make a world of difference*](#). Ofsted's latest subject report finds a very mixed picture and some worries about a drop in numbers taking the subject
- [*Informed Choices*](#). The Russell Group and Institute of Career Guidance identify the best combination of subjects needed for entry to leading universities
- [*Project Merlin*](#). The big banks confirm, as part of their agreement with the Treasury, to provide an additional £1.2bn to support regional growth and the Big Society

- [Trade and Investment for Growth](#). The BIS Dept pledge to remove barriers, support SMEs and focus on emerging markets in their latest strategy on trade and investment
- [Fair Access to HE](#). The Secretary of State publishes details on the new Access Agreements needed by universities intending to charge more than the standard £6,000
- [Welfare Reform 2011](#). The Welfare Reform Bill enters Parliament with proposals to make work pay and to simplify the benefit system
- [2011 Reform scorecard](#). The Reform think tank assess Government progress in reforming public services and call for 'braver' action in areas like health and education
- [Technology and Innovation Centres](#). The Select Committee give an initial thumbs-up to these emerging Centres and suggests calling them Turing Centres after the famous codebreaker and early computer scientist
- [Diverse provision in HE](#). HEFCE's 2010 report to the Dept on the case for different forms of provision in HE, is published six months on
- [State of the Nation](#). The Royal Society's fourth and final series Report calls for more young people to be encouraged to take STEM courses

Speeches of the month

- [David Cameron's 5 Feb Security Conference speech](#) calls for a society that has less passive intolerance and more 'muscular liberalism'
- [Nick Clegg's 5 Feb economic growth speech](#) identifies a specific four-pronged approach in an effort to foster a new model of economic growth
- [David Cameron's 15 Feb Big Society speech](#) announces a range of measures including Big Society ISAs and a new 'army' of volunteers to help maintain momentum
- [Sir Alan Langlands' 17 Feb Annual Dearing Conference speech](#) identifies 5 key principles for the future success of UK HE: opportunity, quality, diversity, sustainability and impact
- [David Willetts 25 Feb UUK speech](#) sets out latest Government thinking on HE and moves the forthcoming White Paper to the summer to allow for more number crunching

Quotes of the month

- *"I'm going to fight for it every day because the Big Society is here to stay."* David Cameron comes out fighting for the Big Society
- *"I'm really excited by it. I'm the first Labour education spokesman for 15 years to have the chance of refreshing Labour Party policy."* Andy Burnham relishes the chance to re-think Labour education policy
- *"The potential for variation is skewed to the downside."* The IFS remain cautious about the economy
- *"More than perhaps any other form of learning, Apprenticeships say to people 'aspire whoever you are, whatever your background'."* The Skills Minister reaches for the sky at the start of National Apprenticeship Week
- *"If you plan to take more than one perceived 'soft' subject, some caution may be needed."* The Russell Group spell out which subjects help get you into university
- *"The English Bacc is designed to leave ample time in the curriculum for other subjects including vocational subjects."* The Schools Minister defends the EBacc in Parliament
- *"Physical graft and grunt is something this generation is struggling with."* As his new TV Dream School series launches, Jamie Oliver expresses concerns about modern youth

Word or phrase of the month

- *'The dance of the lemons.'* The Secretary of State explains the American syndrome of moving allegedly incompetent teachers around the system in response to questions during debate on the Education Bill

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Policy Tracker on what happened in February 2011

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