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Policy Eye

Highlights of week ending Friday 14 October 2016



(Welcome to Policy Eye, a weekly service from Policy Watch offering a regular round up of UK education headlines and stories from over the previous 7 days.)

The week summed up

A lot of numbers this week, on everything from student exam performance and destination trends, teachers' working hours, college funding and university numbers to pension ages and mental health numbers in schools. Some details to follow but first, time to remember an important education landmark.

Next Tuesday, it will be forty years since Jim Callaghan delivered his seminal Ruskin speech which effectively ushered in the modern era of education reform. It was unusual in those days, as Sir Michael Barber reflects in today's TES, for Prime Ministers to make great speeches on education; education was 'a secret garden' and Sunny Jim was warned off from straying on to its lawn. But he had become so alarmed at some of what he had seen in parts of education, low basic skill levels, disaffected kids, dis-engagement from employer needs, that in a widely publicised speech at Ruskin College, he decided to speak out. As Lord Adonis has argued, other PMs have carried forward the torch of reform but it was Callaghan who lit it.

So back to this latest week and some issues that Jim Callaghan would have recognised.

First school performance and destination data. The government has now taken to releasing a mass of data on school performance in early autumn to help parents make secondary school choices later this month. The data is provisional but tends not to change much before final release early next year. There's been some excellent analysis of the data from the TES, Schools Week, Education Policy Institute and Education Datalab among others and some interesting points emerge. Education Datalab for example conclude that Progress 8 is driving up curriculum change more than the EBacc where state take-up is at 40%, some way off the 90% government is aiming for. That said more students are taking EBacc subjects which is raising average Attainment scores but as ever, there are variations by school and region. A lot to take in.

Second, a report from the Education Policy Institute on teacher workloads and professional development. The report examines OECD data to suggest as the headline below indicates, that many teachers are working a 40, 50 even 60 hour week. Few people outside teaching understand for example how long it takes to prepare the sort of enthralling lesson everyone now expects but the research suggests it can be half as long again as the average one-hour lesson. Try doing that week in, week out and burn-out isn't far away. Cutting some slack both internally and externally is what's called for.

Finally, a couple of other important numbers. One is an extra 0.5% of GDP which is what the Association of Colleges is calling for in its submission to the Chancellor ahead of next month's Autumn Statement. And the other is 75%, the number of adults in Britain who according to the latest survey believe that foreign students are good for the country. Understandably universities have been quick to seize on the findings.



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Top headlines this week

- 'Many teachers working 60-hour week' ([Monday](#))
- 'EU student funding guarantee extended.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Failing Academies not being taken over fast enough.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'Greening: excellence in particular subjects may be enough to get you into grammars.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Greening to reveal primary test changes in coming weeks.' ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [Labour education team](#). The Labour Party's latest re-shuffle saw the Shadow Education Secretary and FE/HE Minister remaining but changes made further along the bench
- [Dear Sir](#). Business leaders wrote an open letter to government highlighting three priorities (on the single market, world trade and transitional arrangements) that should form part of the Brexit negotiations
- [Pension posers](#). The Cridland Review published its interim review into the state pension age posing 26 further questions but hinting at moves that could see those that start work earlier or who work in manual occupations being entitled to their state pension earlier
- [University choice](#). The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) followed up its report last year on the growing numbers going on to university with a further report calling for the strengthening of alternative pathways into the labour market, better careers advice and high-quality vocational routes
- [Preparing for the 4th industrial revolution](#). The House of Commons Science and Technology Committee published its report on robotics and artificial intelligence calling among other things for greater government leadership particularly in the creation of a more flexible education system that could help young people develop the skills needed for an automated world
- [Choice, necessity and the gig economy](#). The McKinsey Global Institute reported on the growth of independent or gig workers across Europe and the USA suggesting that some 20% – 30% of people across the US and Europe now work this way (see details in section below)
- [Citizen Cameron](#). David Cameron announced he was taking up the role of chairman of the National Citizen Service as he continues to fly the flag for the Big Society in his post political career

HE

- [Funding lifeline](#). The government confirmed that EU students applying for a place in 2017/18 will continue to receive funding support as of now even if we exit the EU before their studies have finished
- [Understanding UKRI](#). The government published an information paper on UKRI, the UK Research and Innovation structure being set up under the HE Bill proposals that will bring together a number of bodies including Research Councils, Innovate UK and the research functions of HEFCE into one big tent
- [Negotiating Brexit](#). The Modern Universities Group Million+ published a report laying out a set of principles for Brexit negotiations for higher education that included continued support for research, a work permit scheme for EU staff and crucially, a temporary reciprocal residency scheme for EU students



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- [Getting to the bottom of the numbers](#). The Times (firewalled) published a lead article in which it challenged the government's figures on the numbers of foreign students who stay on after their course has completed, suggesting it was much lower than publicised figures
- [Helping the disadvantaged](#). Universities UK called for the setting up of an independent Impact Exchange group to help with monitoring, data sharing and outreach work as it published the final report from its Social Mobility Group
- [Protecting the public interest](#). Bill Rammell, former HE Minister and current V.C. at the University of Bedford argued that the market rather than the public interest, let alone reputation of HE, was driving the government's current reforms and outlined a number of reforms in a new pamphlet for the HE Policy Institute
- [The Oxford interview](#). Oxford University posted an explanatory video of its interview process and some sample questions to help guide this year's hopefuls
- [Healthy Hallam](#). Professor Chris Husbands, V.C. at Sheffield Hallam published a blog as part of World Mental Health Day showing how the uni was applying five ways to wellbeing (Connect; Be Active; Keep Learning; Take Notice; Give)

FE/Skills

- [Dear Chancellor](#). The Association of Colleges (AoC) published its 'wish list' for the Chancellor ahead of next month's Autumn statement listing 20 recommendations in all with the two top priorities being an increase in education spending and improved efficiencies to help spread any jam further
- [New Collab Group](#). The 157 Group confirmed its new name and strategy as it prepared to re-launch with a more commercial agenda next week
- [Genuine WEX](#). Ian Ashman, President of the Association of Colleges (AoC) welcomed work experience week with a blog about the importance of work experience (WEX) for young people

Schools

- [Test results in](#). The DfE published provisional 2015/16 results data for GCSE, A' level and other qualifications prior to the publication of formal league tables at the start of next year showing among other things the increasing importance of the EBacc and Progress 8
- [Destination known](#). The DfE published provisional destination data for KS4 and KS5 students in England for 2014/15 showing that most (94% at KS4, 88% at KS5) went on to 'sustained' education, training or employment but few (6% at KS4, 7% at KS5) went o to apprenticeships
- [At risk of burn out](#). The Education Policy Institute reported on its detailed analysis of the OECD's examination of teaching and learning across 35 member countries concluding that teachers in England face a high risk of burn out from a combination of long hours, low starting pay and limited access to professional development
- [More time please](#). The Schools Minister confirmed to MPs that the government needed more time and more data to avoid any gaming of the system before it could make a decision on more flexible admissions for summer-born children



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- **Top MAT.** Sir Michael Wilshaw used his latest monthly missive to report on multi-academy trusts (MATs) listing such features as strong leadership and a planned approach to expansion that make the top performing ones so successful
- **Top marks.** The National Centre for Excellence in Teaching Maths (NCETM) followed up its recent guidance for primary school teachers on marking by offering similar guidance for secondary maths teachers saying that it shouldn't take over time that would be better spent on lesson prepping
- **Financial and enterprise provision.** The House of Commons Library produced a briefing paper on the current arrangements for the teaching of financial and enterprise education in schools
- **SATs ballots.** Head teachers and professional associations confirmed plans to carry out a series of ballots that could lead to a boycotting of next year's SATs unless the government makes some of the changes rumoured to be in the pipeline
- **I Am Whole.** The YMCA helped mark World Mental Health Day with a report published with the #IAMWHOLE anti-stigma campaign, highlighting some of the mental concerns young people face where anxiety and depression featured as two of the most common
- **Well-being tables.** Sir Anthony Seldon, former head at Wellington College, called for school league table to include measures on well-being though not everybody agreed league tables were the best way forward

Tweet(s) of the week

- "You're really good at maths? Then you should become a chimney sweep, online careers service tells student" - @tes
- "When kids find out coding is really boring, it's all gonna kick off" - @tstarkey1212
- "When did learnings become a word? Press release with 'the learnings from this year's pilot' ..." @seanjcoughlan
- "@bernardtrafford on pupil wellbeing: we need children to be able to bend in the wind not snap in the hurricane" - @tes

Word or phrase(s) of the week

- **Gig economy.** McKinsey's latest survey of this phenomenon, essentially people who work or earn flexibly via digital platforms such as Airbnb and Uber rather than a traditional 9 – 5 model, offers a valuable insight into changing work practices. The report notes how quickly the trend is spreading, subdividing it into four types of 'worker:' casual earners (40%), free agents (30%), financially strapped (16%) and reluctant (14%). Interestingly it's not all dominated by cash-strapped millennials, many older people also choose to work this way
- **Karoshi.** The FT reported this week on karoshi, a recognised accepted term in Japan referring to death driven by hard work. It's a big concern there particularly in sectors like social services and construction. The Japanese government has just published a landmark report on the subject reporting for instance that 44% of IT companies admitted that some employees worked 80 hours of overtime a month and that long hours were seen as a virtue. At a 280 pages, not everyone may have the opportunity to read the report but its headline messages are clear



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Quote(s) of the week

- “It should not be read as implying that we will be definitely be taking any particular course of action in November or indeed next March” – the Chancellor warns against raising expectations about loosening budget strings in either his forthcoming November or March Budget statements
- “Science fiction is slowly becoming science fact and robotics and AI (artificial intelligence) look destined to play an increasing role in our lives over the coming decades” – the Chair of the Science and Technology Committee looks into the future
- “We can’t say we weren’t warned” – the Director of the HE Policy Institute reflects on the latest Home Office proposals for cracking down on international students
- “What exactly do you think is involved in blaming someone?” – one of the sample questions used in the interview process for Oxford (in this case for a PPE courses) released to guide applicants this week
- “Show me the problem, show me the person in charge” – Lord Heseltine on school management and accountability
- “Deciding between going to the toilet during break or finishing off work before the children come back after lunchtime is a choice for every teacher daily” – just one of the challenges in the daily life of a teacher in England reflected in the latest survey by the Education Policy Institute
- “It’s no longer for the cherry on top of the cake, we’re now looking for funding to do basic fundamental things” – a head teacher describes why they’re pursuing alternative funding sources

Number(s) of the week

- 170. The number of questions on Brexit that the Labour Party have tabled for responses from the government, one for each day of the week before the negotiations begin at the end of next March
- 5.5m. How many private sector businesses there were at the start of 2016 according to latest government stats
- 89%. The number of health and safety reps working in education who cited stress as a top workplace hazard according to a survey by the TUC (making education along with central government and health services, one of the three top public sector professions experiencing stress)
- 60%. The number of women currently in employment, double the number of 65 years ago according to a poll commissioned by the BBC to mark the 70th anniversary of Women’s Hour
- 38%. How many people in the UK understand inflation according to a report on financial literacy from the OECD
- 78%. How many employers are satisfied with the quality of training and assessment from FE sector providers
- 38%. How many state school teachers tend to deter their students from applying to Oxbridge for fear they wouldn’t get in or if they did would be unhappy, according to a survey from the Sutton trust
- 250,000. The number of applications for the 200 places at one of the top boarding schools in India, (putting some of our titan schools into perspective,) according to the BBC Education Correspondent Sean Coughlan
- 24 minutes. How much time teachers in England spend on average preparing for a one hour lesson, according to analysis from the Education Policy Institute



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- 38%. The number of young people (11 - 24 yr olds) who felt stigmatized at school because of a mental health issue according to a survey to mark World Mental Health Day

What to look out for next week

- CMRE Launch event: 'Assessing the future of qualification and assessment market' (Tuesday)
- 157 Group Re-launch event (Wednesday)
- HEFCE Annual Meeting (Thursday)
- FAB Annual Conference (Thursday, Friday)