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Policy Eye

Highlights of week ending Friday 5 May 2017



(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

Final Parliamentary activity, local and mayoral elections and manifesto wish-lists head the news this week.

The final knockings of the 2015-17 Parliament came at the start of the week and saw a number of important Committee reports rushed out before Parliament was dissolved. In many cases, the Committee hadn't been able to complete its inquiry, only set the groundwork for when Parliament returns later in June.

The two reports from the Education Committee, one on primary assessment and one on pupils' mental health, arguably stand out and not least because they end up on similar turf. That turf was pupil (and teacher) wellbeing, the end product of high-stakes assessment and constant change according to the first report and of relentless performance and social pressures according to the second.

The Committee in each case comes up with a number of recommendations, such as changing the way results are reported in primary assessment and more funding and support when it comes to mental health. Both topics are likely to be picked up when the new government is established particularly as further related work remains to be completed: a formal consultation in the case of primary assessment and a green paper in the case of young people's mental health.

Moving on to those local and mayoral elections, details are still coming in at the time of writing so further commentary will have to wait, which takes us on to manifesto wish-lists which have been in full flow this week. The big Party manifestos are due out in the next week or so but when it comes to education matters, the Parties will not be short of advice. This week alone we've had eight more education-related manifesto wish-lists published, adding to the three from the previous week. All are listed below. Overall a fairly familiar pattern of priorities is emerging.

For schools, where three of the professional associations have published their proposals, funding, teacher recruitment and retention, and curriculum balance provide the top three priorities. The Head Teacher's Roundtable has also focused on the first two of these priorities and helpfully provided a set of questions to ask prospective candidates. The NAHT has also singled out pupil wellbeing and the NUT have highlighted child poverty.

For FE, the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) called for a new target of 4m apprenticeship starts, commitment to L2/3 apprenticeships and the adoption of applied English and maths. The CBI and British Chambers of Commerce both focused on quality apprenticeships and stronger regional skill planning as part of the Industrial Strategy along with work experience and T-levels. Both are keen to see the status of high-skilled migrants settled, an issue that's also troubling HE.



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Top headlines this week

- 'Reform 'high stakes' primary tests, MPs urge.' (Tuesday)
- 'Call degree apprenticeships, career degrees, leading head urges.' (Wednesday)
- 'UK adult skills not aligned with industry, warns OECD.' (Thursday)
- '11-plus like rolling a loaded dice.' (Friday)

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- **Two parliaments of pain.** The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) published a further briefing note on potential general election issues, looking this time at UK finances since 2010 and concluding that further pain in the form of tax rises or spending cuts would be needed if the aim remained cutting the deficit by the end of the next Parliament
- **Gig growth.** The Work and Pensions Committee published its report on self-employment and the gig economy calling for better protections for gig workers and the balancing of National Insurance contributions across different types of worker
- **Skills for the Theatre.** The House of Lords Committee on Communications published its report into the skills and talent needed for the UK theatre business, unfinished because of the election but highlighting a number of concerns including a squeeze on creative subjects in schools and lack of careers advice
- **Business Britain.** The CBI published its Business Manifesto with a call for clarifying migration arrangements and avoiding Brexit cliff edges but also a heavy emphasis on skill development through the development of T-levels, stronger careers support and evolution of the apprenticeship levy into a wider skills levy
- **Brexit and Beyond.** The British Chambers of Commerce issued their Election Manifesto with pre-16 work experience, apprenticeship quality, skills-based immigration and a strong focus on supporting regional growth among the listed priorities
- **Manifesto for Change.** The think tank IPPR set out its thoughts on the sorts of policies political parties could consider for their Election Manifestos, featuring a number on education and skills including: replacing the apprenticeship levy with a skills levy, establishing a youth guarantee for 16-18 yr olds and removing overseas students from migration targets
- **Mobility Manifesto.** The Sutton Trust published its Mobility Manifesto, intended to make social mobility a core issue in the election with ten listed recommendations: including ensuring existing grammar schools attract more disadvantaged pupils before selective education is expanded further and opening up leading independent day schools to those based on ability not just ability to pay
- **Youth Manifesto Report.** Undivided, a campaign group for young people, published what it wanted to see in Party Manifestos including voting reforms, youth involvement with the Brexit debate, freedom of movement and jobs for young people, and a priority given to green policies
- **Spotlight on Britain.** Ipsos MORI published the results of its latest Global Trends survey carried out across 23 countries last autumn and showing Brits pretty gloomy at present particularly when it comes to the state of healthcare, owning a home and community cohesion



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HE

- **The four laws of higher education.** Martin McQuillan, Deputy V.C. at Kingston University wrote a comment piece in Wonkhe outlining four universal laws of HE that will be sorely tested during the general election, and arguing that there'll be a new minister for universities after the election
- **Student voting intentions.** The HE Policy Institute and Youth Sight published the results of their survey of undergrad voting intentions showing overall support for Labour although wariness about their fees policy, continued distrust of the Lib-Dems for their previous fees about turn, and the EU and NHS as the top two issues for students at present
- **Where are the part-timers?** The Education Guardian reported on the issue of part-time students where numbers have spiraled in recent years largely due to a lack of funding and flexibility

FE/Skills

- **Skills outlook.** The OECD published its latest report on adult skills building on earlier work in this area and focusing on the impact of Global Value Chains (GVCs,) showing for the UK at least a familiar tale of potential growth and innovation but coupled with continuing concerns about productivity, basic skill levels and balance of skill mixes
- **Manifesto for Skills and Employment.** The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) published its manifesto proposals calling for the Apprenticeship Levy to be restricted to apprenticeships training only, for guaranteed funding of at least £1bn a year for non-levy paying SMEs and for the apprenticeship target for the next Parliament to be increased to 4m starts
- **Skills Devolution.** The Collab Group examined the issue of skills devolution and based on discussions with various regions drew up a list of recommendations around vision and capacity for ways forward

Schools

- **Key Stage testing.** The Education Committee published the results of its inquiry into primary assessment arguing that its use in school accountability was having an adverse effect on teaching and learning let alone pupil well-being and calling among other things for a rolling programme of average results rather than single cohort league tables
- **Thanks but.** The government published its response to the Education Committee's earlier (Feb 2017) report on teacher recruitment and retention, acknowledging that 'significant challenges' remained but saying that it was working hard to understand the extent of specific regional and subject concerns and that overall numbers remained on course
- **Young people's mental health.** The Education Committee published an initial report, brought forward because of the closure of Parliament, on how education is supporting young people's mental health and well-being, acknowledging some of the pressures and welcoming the formal adoption of PSHE but calling for better support and resources generally
- **Preparing for the future?** The All-Party Parliamentary Group published its non-official report, which it hopes to pick up after the general election, on how well schools prepare young people for a changing workforce and concluding that teacher recruitment, resources, high stakes accountability and patchy careers guidance remain challenging barriers



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- **Two key issues.** The Head teachers' Roundtable Group highlighted two key issues, one on funding and one on teacher supply, with supporting evidence and questions that should be asked of candidates from all Parties standing in the forthcoming Election

Tweets(s) of the week

- "@Evening Standard exclusive for first edition: Tory candidates demanding new school funding formula is torn up ahead of Manifesto" - @George_Osborne
- "The class hadn't made flapjacks, they had written out the recipe for their writing evidence portfolios" @teshelen
- "Outstanding school put into special measures because it did not have a fence" - @SchoolsImprove

Other stories of the week

- The grammar school debate. As debate continues about selective education and the possible inclusion of more grammar schools in the Conservative Party Manifesto, the Guardian carries a fascinating account of what it was like to fail the 11+ for one individual 50 years ago and how it affected his subsequent education and life. The tone is perhaps set by this comment on hearing the news: "I went upstairs to my bedroom, drew the curtains and sobbed for days." Things may have worked out in the end in this case but the full read is [here](#)
- Space invaders. There's been much comment this week about personal space, what is acceptable between strangers, how to avoid it being invaded, whether for example in Britain we guard it more protectively and so on. The interest has followed some research on cultural differences. Apparently we Brits prefer to maintain a distance of a metre from a stranger, 80cm from someone we know and around 50cm from someone we know very well

Quote(s) of the week

- "In Britain we are generally feeling pretty gloomy at the moment" – Ipsos Mori's latest Global Trends survey finds the UK pretty down in the mouth at present particularly over issues like healthcare
- "Europe and immigration will now dominate the landscape for universities rather than the question of fees and funding" – the Deputy V.C. at Kingston Uni on the post-election landscape for HE
- "Access to skills and labour is critical for business, so firms want to see details of what a new migration system might look like by the end of the year" – the CBI's Director-General launches her organisation's Business Manifesto
- "A one pence rise in all rates of income tax could raise £5.5bn for education" – the Headteachers' Roundtable Group makes the case in their manifesto for a rise in school funding
- "When it comes to creativity, I think SATs sit like a dark spider all over creativity in the classroom" – the author Michael Morpurgo responds to the latest report on primary assessment



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Number(s) of the week

- 85%. The number of respondents in Britain in Ipsos Mori's Global trends survey who think a good work-life balance is more important than a successful career (in contrast with those in a lot of other countries)
- 5m. How many people in the UK are self-employed according to a new report from Parliament's Work and Pensions Committee
- 82%. The number of university students in a survey by HEPI/YouthSight who said they intend to vote in the forthcoming general election
- £1.06bn. How much was donated to UK universities last year in the form of gifts and philanthropy, topping the £1bn mark for the first time according to the latest survey of charitable giving to universities
- 4m. How many apprenticeship starts Political Parties should commit to in the next Parliament according to the Association of Employment and Learning Providers
- Around 70%. How many teachers remain in teaching five years after qualifying, according to DfE figures quoted in a government report

What to look out for next week

- Possible publication of Conservative Party Election Manifesto (Monday)
- QAA Annual Conference (Tuesday, Wednesday)