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Policy Eye



Highlights of week ending Friday 24 November 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

Budget week of course but more besides.

Let's start with the Budget as it's been the main talking point of the week. Most of the details are fairly well known by now but here are four summary thoughts from an education standpoint.

First, apparently over 30% of the Emojis used on social media in response to the Budget were of smiley faces but what about the reaction from the world of education? The general consensus here seems to have been thanks But, as in thanks for the extra money for maths, T levels, digital skills and so on but we need more and for other areas as well. The absence of anything on teacher's pay has also aggrieved many.

Second, according to the Resolution Foundation, we've had 'the mother of all downgrades' on matters like growth and productivity while earnings look set to remain in the IfS's words 'stagnant' and dept spending restricted and in some places, cut. The Chancellor talked positively but if the figures are accurate, it makes for a continuing difficult economic climate for education as for many sectors.

Third, there were some interesting proposals in the Budget document which await further details but which may yet prove significant for many in education. These include a pilot to beef up GCSE maths resits, further possible developments to the apprenticeship levy and the creation of a National Retraining scheme. And fourth there were a few things in the small print which may be worth noting. They include a new Teacher Development Premium, changes to the Tier 1 'Exceptional Talent' rules and future responses to the Barber 'Public Value' Framework and Taylor 'Employment' reforms. Each may have impact in varying forms.

The Budget is about to give way in terms of headlines to the Industrial Strategy where a White Paper is being published. The hors d'oeuvre to this was served up by the Prime Minister at the start of the week when she announced an increase in R and D spending along with a new transport fund. The narrative around the government's industrial plans is beginning to take shape ahead of intended Brexit opportunities and has been given added urgency by reports this week from BT/Accenture on digital skills training for young people and from the Institution of Mechanical Engineers on engineering in schools.

Finally this week, a couple of other developments. First, and a follow-on to some of the above points, the government outlined procedures for ensuring that 12-18 year olds in schools get to hear about apprenticeships and other training opportunities. This starts in January. And secondly, the OECD published the 'test' results from its 2015 PISA exercise on collaborative problem solving where the UK came 15th, better than our performance in some of the other tests, so a positive note with which to round off the week.



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Top headlines this week

- 'Teaching is brutal: Now Teach founder reflects on first months in classroom.' ([Monday](#))
- 'UK teenagers better at working together than they are at maths.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Chancellor announces £20m for T level preparation.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'Schools will be forced to promote technical education from January.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Call for changes to apprenticeships as numbers fall by 59%.' ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [Build up to Industrial Strategy](#). The government announced a scaled increase in investment in R/D over the next few years along with a Transforming Cities Fund as part of its build-up to the forthcoming Industrial Strategy
- [Gig Bill](#). The BEIS and DWP Committees outlined plans to amend current employment laws and strengthen the rights of 'gig' workers as a way of taking forward the Taylor recommendations on creating a framework for modern employment
- [Leaving no one behind](#). The International Development Committee called on the government to meet overseas aid commitments particularly in the area of education where UK contributions have dropped from 9% to 7% in recent years
- [From Ostrich to Magpie](#). The CBI outlined proposals to help companies become more magpie like and able to adopt new technologies and management practices and less ostrich like (and ignoring such changes) as a way of tackling great variations in UK productivity
- [Tech know-how](#). BT and Accenture became the latest to publish a report on digital skills in the future highlighting the importance of skilling up the next generation, especially the most disadvantaged, given the potential returns on such skills to the economy let alone to individuals
- [How we work](#). The Education and Skills Funding Agency published operating and governance arrangements for how it'll work with the DfE
- [Vision for Business Literacy Pledge](#). The National Literacy Trust called on businesses to sign up to its national literacy campaign for 2018 which will focus on early years among other areas

HE

- [Budget bits](#). The Chancellor announced processes to tackle student loan over payments, changes to Tier 1 rules and support for new technology and digital skills provision as part of his Autumn Budget
- [Student support North of the border](#). Wonkhe reported on the latest recommendations for student support in Scotland, presented as 'a new social contract for students in Scotland,' which would see among other things students in both FE and HE entitled to a minimum allowance of £8,100
- [Our Plan](#). The Edge Foundation set out its thoughts on higher education in a new report, claiming that many graduates now feel they haven't had value for money and calling instead for a system of higher education that is diverse, employer-focused and offering better value for money



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- **Commuter students.** Nick Hillman Director of the HE Policy Institute (HEPI,) blogged about the issue of home-based or commuter students and how more could be done to develop the concept
- **Time to reflect.** Maddalaine Ansell, Chief Exec of University Alliance offered her thoughts on what sort of year it had been for UK HE and what might lie in store for the sector next year
- **Policy wonk podcasts.** Wonkhe and the UPP Foundation announced that they will be launching a series of podcasts, starting at the end of this year and running through to 2018, reporting on a range of HE issues and people, that can be listened to apparently 'on the way home or when doing the washing up'
- **'A University Education.'** The HE Policy Institute (HEPI) reported on the launch of David Willetts's new book on universities as well as posting a review of the book by Prof Andy Westwood

FE/Skills

- **Budget bits.** The chancellor announced funding for L3 maths, T levels, digital and construction skills training along with a new National Retraining Scheme as part of his Autumn Budget Statement
- **Presentation pack.** The Association of Colleges (AoC) published a helpful set of presentation slides from its recent Annual Conference
- **Route panels.** The Institute for Apprenticeships published the full listing of members of its industry panels who will oversee standards and assessment plans for each of the proposed 15 sector routes
- **Qualification landscape.** Ofqual published a series of reports on the technical and vocational qualifications system as part of an event intended to raise wider awareness of the changing vocational qualification landscape
- **Devo deal.** A second devolution deal for the West Midlands was announced which will generate a local industrial strategy that will include planning for T levels and skills development
- **Smart Skills.** The IPPR think tank rounded off its major 'New Skills at work' programme undertaken with J P Morgan by hosting a major event looking at the skills issues facing the country and possible future options

Schools

- **Budget bits.** The Chancellor announced funding for maths, computer science and professional development as part of his Autumn Budget Statement
- **Open Doors.** The government set out guidance for schools on what procedures and arrangements need to be in place from this coming January to ensure that education and training providers can come in and talk to pupils in Years 8-13 about progression and training options
- **Collaborative problem solving results.** The OECD published the results of its first major 2015 PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) exercise in assessing collaborative problem solving with UK teenagers coming in at 15th out of the 52 countries participating
- **The Leaky Pipeline.** The National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) published the findings from its latest recruitment and retention survey pointing to continuing concerns about both issues with workload and work life balance listed as factors



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- [Engineering in Schools](#). The Institution of Mechanical Engineers raised concerns about a lack of attention being paid to engineering in secondary schools calling for a new vision, strategy and Champion to be created to help remedy the situation

Tweets(s) of the week

- “Fees should have been called university fees not tuition fees to reflect the whole experience. @Beer2J” - @QAAtweets
- “£1k extra per teacher for CPD for some schools as a pilot? Beware the CPD vampires currently rubbing their hands. You know who they are” - @LeeDonaghy
- “Millionaire entrepreneurs literally have no idea what they are talking about when it comes to education. They imagine a world where no one needs school because everyone can become a rare statistical outlier, just like them” - @JohnKenny03
- “Apparently the trouble with driverless cars is that the driver can’t sit back and relax but has to stay alert to potential danger all the time. So basically how my husband acts in the passenger seat when I’m driving” - @JuliaHB1

Other stories of the week

- Just what is collaborative problem solving? This week, the OECD published PISA ‘test’ results on young people’s collaborative problem solving but just what is collaborative problem solving and can it actually be assessed? According to the OECD, collaborative problem solving can be defined as:

‘the capacity of an individual to effectively engage in a process whereby two or more agents attempt to solve a problem by sharing the understanding and effort required to come to a solution and pooling their knowledge, skills and efforts to reach that solution’

As for assessing such a competency, the OECD report applies a matrix of 12 specific skills embracing four processes (exploring and understanding, representing and formulating, planning and executing, monitoring and reflecting) and three competencies (establishing and maintaining shared understanding, taking appropriate action to solve the problem, establishing and maintaining team organization.) Details can be found in chapter 2 of the report, link [here](#)

Quote(s) of the week

- “Don’t let anyone say I don’t know how to show the nation a good time” – the Chancellor announces more maths classes as part of his Budget Statement
- “A drop in the ocean” – the National Education Union reacts to the funding offered for schools in the Budget
- “Universities should be places of intellectual and personal discomfort” – Sir Michael Barber reflects on the challenge of free thinking on university campuses
- “We are not just a funding agency” – Eileen Milner takes up the reins as Chief Executive of the Education and Skills Funding Agency
- “Cooking and dishwashing” – the only two job categories in the US that don’t require digital skills, according to a report by BT and Accenture



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- “Ask yourselves how ‘50% of our students go on to apprenticeships’ might sound in your school’s marketing materials after generations of saying ‘100% go to university’ – the President of the Girls Schools Association (GSA) asks a big question at the Association’s Annual Conference this week

Number(s) of the week

- 1.5%. Forecast GDP growth figure for 2017, dropping to 1.4% in 2018, 1.3% in 2019 and only picking up in 2022, according to figures given by the Chancellor in his Budget
- 0.9%. Projected productivity growth for 2017 rising to 1.2% in 2022 according to figures from the Office for Budget Responsibility
- 86.5% of GDP. Forecast debt for this year, expected to fall gradually over the next few years reaching 79.1% in 2022, according to figures given by the Chancellor
- 2025. The year in which average pay is expected to have recovered from its 2008 pre-crisis level according to economic commentators
- 263m. How many children and young people globally have no access to education according to a new report by the International Development Committee
- 2.4%. How much of their GDP OECD countries on average spend on R/D, something the Prime Minister is pledging to match by 2027 (we currently spend 1.7% of GDP,) according to an announcement from Number 10
- £8,100 pa. The minimum allowance being proposed for FE and HE students in Scotland in a new report
- 17,942. The number of schools facing cuts according to education unions on the schoolcuts website
- £11bn. The amount by which the economy as a whole could benefit over the next five years if young people’s digital skills are improved, according to a new report from BT and Accenture
- 3.8%. The drop in participation over the last year of adult funded participation in FE, according to latest official stats
- 13.3%. The number of 16-24 yr olds classified as not in education, employment or training (NEET) for the period July – Sept 2017, down slightly but within that, up slightly for 16-18 yr olds, according to latest official stats
- 66%. The percentage of primary teachers expected to mark English work at least weekly with 18% daily, according to the invaluable Teachers Tapped this week

What to look out for next week

- Industrial Strategy White Paper published (Monday)
- DfE Employer Skills Summit (Thursday)
- Launch of Pearson/LKMCo assessment report (Thursday)
- Policy Exchange seminar with Nick Gibb on teaching resources (Thursday)
- SSAT National Conference (Thursday, Friday)