



Pearson

Policy Eye



Highlights of week ending Friday 22 September 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

Arts subjects, apprenticeships, pay, fees, Education Committee Inquiries, robots, all have been making the education news somewhere this week. Links below but here are some pointers.

The arts subjects story first which centres on the question of whether recent policy requirements such as Progress 8 and the EBacc have, in the words of ASCL Gen Sec Geoff Barton, 'been squeezing the life out of the arts.' The government in the shape of Nick Gibb have strongly denied this, citing for example New Schools Network research earlier this year which claimed that the introduction of the EBacc had had 'no discernible impact' on the popularity of the arts at GCSE. Others have begged to disagree.

Research from Education Datalab in the summer pointed to a downward trend and now the Education Policy Institute (EPI) has added its voice with an analysis of GCSE exam entries in subjects such as music, art/design and performing arts between 2007 and 2016. It concluding that entries had dropped. It's a worrying trend for a number of reasons. First because as the EPI report shows, it opens up further divides between those from different regions, social groups and backgrounds. And second, because as the CBI's recent report on London highlighted, the arts are an important industry in terms of economic growth. The report calls for further monitoring, the government has maintained a straight bat.

Apprenticeships next where concerns about another squeeze, this time on 16-18 year olds, were highlighted in a new paper from the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP.) The issue at stake here is what effect the latest apprenticeship reforms are having on social mobility. The AELP expressed concerns in a 14-point discussion paper with full funding of 16-18 yr old apprenticeships at the top of the list. The points are unlikely to lead to major policy change but do highlight some important issues.

Next pay and fees. On the former, as the government starts to lift the public sector pay cap, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IfS) has published a new Briefing Paper spelling out how much a pay increase in line with prices would cost (Answer: £6bn pa by 2019/20) but also how far average weekly pay in the public sector has fallen (Answer: 4% since 2017.) As for fees, the latest idea for helping with uni fees is that those who benefitted when the system was fully subsidised and are now in employment might pay a bit back through a graduate tax to help current students. The IoE's Research Centre think it's worth a shout.

Finally Education Committee Inquiries and robots – but not in the same breath. The new Committee has launched its first two inquiries, one on HE value for money and the other on alternative schooling; more to follow. And the RSA has published a new report on robots and automation, suggesting jobs in education will remain important. As for jobs in the future, look out for the Pearson/NESTA report out next week.



Pearson

Top headlines this week

- 'Proportion of teenagers entering university at record high.' (Monday)
- 'Most primary classes get less than two hours of science a week.' (Tuesday)
- 'Unions 'disappointed' by colleges' 1% pay offer.' (Wednesday)
- 'Teaching in England is not 'interesting' enough, says PISA boss.' (Thursday)
- 'Teachers spending hundreds of pounds a year on classroom supplies.' (Friday)

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- **Cable on education.** Vince Cable included a number of references to education in his first Conference speech as Lib – Dem leader including the commissioning of a review into the potential of a graduate tax for HE and a proposal to re-consider some form of lifelong learning account
- **Extremism Commissioner.** The government started advertising for a Lead Commissioner to head up the Commission for Countering Extremism which was announced in the Queen's Speech and which will include working with schools and colleges within its remit
- **Committee Inquiries.** The Education Committee added a second inquiry to the one announced last week on value for money in higher education by announcing it would also look into alternative provision in schools
- **Cyber challenge.** The Digital Minister Matt Hancock addressed the International Cyber Week event in Singapore where he outlined the three principles the government was adopting in the face of the cyber challenge including: openness to new ideas, adaption to change and future proofing
- **Between a rock and a hard place.** Paul Johnson, director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, reviewed the (limited) options available to the Chancellor in balancing the books while at the same time relaxing pay and other restraints as the build-up to the Autumn Budget continued
- **March of the Robots?** The RSA published the latest report on the potential of artificial intelligence and robots suggesting that the march was under way, that the UK was lagging behind and that automation is likely to lead to better, and not necessarily fewer, jobs especially in areas like health and education
- **Productivity bonus.** The Centre for Social Justice published a new report looking at how best to improve productivity, citing three main drivers including: innovation, human capital and regional dynamics and listing a number of recommendations on education and skills including re-investing in FE, supporting employer partnerships and providing more opportunities for re-skilling as part of the package

HE

- **The £7,500 question.** Wonkhe looked at the issues and implications around the Chancellor's purported interest in using his Autumn Budget to impose a fee cap of £7,500
- **Worth a few thoughts?** Sir Michael Barber, Chair of the incoming Office for Students (OfS), urged the sector to get to grips with the issue of top pay, suggesting offering up a pay cut and/or reviewing the powers of remuneration committees as possible options



Pearson

- **All in it together.** A new paper from the Research Centre of the Institute for Education proposed the interesting option of calling on those graduates now in employment who had benefited from subsidised education to contribute to the costs of current undergrads through a new all-age graduate tax
- **2017 Power List.** Wonkhe published its latest annual listing of top influencers and shakers in the world of HE in 2017 with Sir Michael Barber and leaders from UKRI, UUK and the OfS heading the list, Brexit making its presence felt and politicians generally in short supply as other players jostled for attention
- **Staying positive.** The HE Policy Institute (HEPI) published a new Occasional Paper on how to create positive and mindful universities co – authored by the University of Buckingham’s Sir Anthony Seldon and Alan Martin and listing ten ways in which to create the right vibes with an emphasis on better support, mentoring and induction
- **PQA2.** Laura McInerney, the editor of Schools Week, argued in a comment piece in The Guardian, that it was time to revisit the idea of a Post Qualification Application (PQA) system in which students applied to uni after their exam results were known, suggesting that this would be fairer all round

FE/Skills

- **14 points.** The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) issued a discussion Paper on how the current apprenticeship reforms were hindering take-up by young people and social mobility generally and calling among other things for the government to fully fund all 16-18 apprentices and re-consider the ‘rigid’ 20% off the job training and funding of English and maths
- **Little reward.** The AoC and the unions agreed to work together to campaign for a better deal for staff working in FE following the latest recommendation of a 1% pay rise for this year
- **Better together.** The Collab Group reported on skills issues facing the different nations of the UK and how working collaboratively on matters such as funding, apprenticeships and progression to HE could bring dividends

Schools

- **Entries to arts subjects at KS4.** The Education Policy Institute (EPI) investigated the take-up of arts subjects at GCSE and concluded that entries had fallen to their lowest level in ten years and that the pressures of funding, the EBacc and Progress 8 were largely to blame
- **Funding primer.** The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IfS) issued a helpful little explainer on the funding reforms announced last week by the Secretary of State
- **Thumbs up.** John Blake, Head of Education at the Policy Exchange think tank reflected on the government’s recent announcement on primary assessment suggesting that it amounted to good news for most teachers and schools
- **Short inspections.** Ofsted reported back on its summer consultation on short inspections confirming an improved conversion process and launching consultation on three further proposals
- **Dear head teacher.** Ofqual confirmed that the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) is about to start sending out letters to participating schools about next year’s National Reference Test which will take place between 19 Feb and 2 March 2018
- **Cutting down on waste.** Ofqual announced that it was working to reduce paper and excessive regulation as part of the work on its new handbook due out in preview form next month



Pearson

- **Mental health and wellbeing.** The Education Support Partnership, a charity providing support and guidance to education professionals, published the results of its latest research, using evidence supplied by YouGov, and highlighting a fairly bleak picture of stress and pressure in the profession
- **Bring back Becta?** EdTech ‘expert’ Tony Parkin called for a return to some kind of overseeing body to help guide edtech developments given the current rapid pace of change and the need for strategic planning
- **Appliance of science.** The Wellcome Trust launched Explorify, a new free digital resource to help teachers and pupils alike with all things scientific, as their latest survey revealed that many primary schools struggled to provide more than two hours of science a week
- **More maths.** The Director of the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Maths (NCETM) urged schools to re-consider their entry requirements for their A’ level maths courses so as to encourage more students to take up post-16 maths courses in a blog on this summer’s maths performance

Tweets(s) of the week

- “Emotional day dropping young man at university. I ‘accidentally’ phoned 2 hours later...he was in the pub! 3 kids down, 1 to go” - [@black_dug](#)
- “Mixed messages! A degree which doesn’t lead to high pay is no good: but earning lots of money esp if more than the PM, is bad” - [@MaryCurnockCook](#)
- “Flying out of Heathrow today. Striking how many UK unis – even ones from far afield have teams here to welcome arriving int’l students” - [@CHavergalTHE](#)
- “I’ve just heard that Finland is experimenting with standing classrooms due to too much sitting (thanks to mobile phones)” - [@lucy_crehan](#)
- “BBC to give staff ‘youth mentors’ to teach them how to be in touch with the under 30s” - [@TelegraphNews](#)

Other stories of the week

- **Class of ’92.** Five team mates (the Neville brothers, Ryan Giggs, Paul Scholes and Nicky Butt) from Manchester United’s renowned team of the ’90’s have joined together to help create a new University Academy. The Academy, launched in consultative form this week and due to open in Sept 2019 brings together not just the Man Utd stars but also Lancaster University, Trafford College, Trafford Council, Lancs County Cricket Club and Microsoft among others. The aim is to create an HE Academy that can appeal to a non – traditional audience and can blend the development of personal skills with leading qualifications. A link to the story is [here](#)
- **No Theresa or Jeremy.** For teachers wondering what names might be on their class register in a few years’ time, the latest listing of most popular baby names for 2016 by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has attracted interest this week. They vary a bit by region but the top three boys names perhaps unsurprisingly were Oliver, Harry and George in that order and for girls, Olivia, Amelia and Emily. The Daily Telegraph had an interesting insight into the changing trends in names [here](#)



Pearson

Quote(s) of the week

- “The idea that you spend all your time teaching is still an industrial model” – the OECD’s Andreas Schleicher on the need to make teaching especially in England, more interesting
- “What have we done to create a system where a school felt it needed to exclude pupils because they didn’t get the required 3Bs in their mock A-levels?” – Lib-Dem Shadow Education Secretary Layla Moran fires the questions in her speech to the Party faithful
- “Too often the sector can look detached and complacent” – Sir Michael Barber urges the HE sector to be more transparent about top level pay
- “I’m rather unenthusiastic about this new thing about teams of monitors and evaluators” – Lord Sainsbury reflects on 50 years of charitable work through the Gatsby Foundation and elsewhere
- “We can always learn from experience but ultimately you can’t teach an old dog new tricks” – Charlie Mullins, MD of Pimlico Plumbers, takes issue with the government on apprenticeships for the over 60’s
- “She makes a strong case in a readable and relevant style” – former Shadow Education Secretary Lucy Powell reviews her old sparring partner Nicky Morgan’s new book on Character Education in this week’s Schools Week

Number(s) of the week

- 1.6%. The projected growth for the UK in 2017 slowing to 1% in 2018 according to the latest economic forecast by the OECD
- 59,950. The number of people accepted for an HE place through Clearing one month on from A’ level results day, similar to last year, according to the latest figures from UCAS
- £6bn pa. How much it could cost to increase public sector pay in line with prices or private sector earnings over the next two years according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IfS)
- 28%. The number of secondary schools failing to offer any RE (religious education) provision according to a new report by the National Association of RE teachers
- 53.5%. The number of KS4 pupils taking at least one arts subject, the lowest for ten years according to a new report from the Education Policy Institute
- 1 hour, 24 minutes. The average amount of classroom time a week primary schools dedicate to science, according to research commissioned by the Wellcome Trust
- 24% and 9%. The number of 14 year old girls and boys respectively reporting that they suffer from depression according to latest figures from the Millennium Cohort Study
- 75%. The number of teenagers surveyed who use the internet to do their homework compared to 44% of 25 – 34 year olds when they were the same age, according to new research from Barnardo’s

What to look out for next week

- Labour Party Conference (Sunday – Wednesday)
- Launch of Pearson – NESTA ‘Future of Skills: Employment in 2030’ report (Thursday; Facebook Live from 9.00 am)