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Policy Eye



Highlights of week ending Friday 29 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

There's been a fair amount of future gazing going on in education this week.

The Labour Party looked to the future with its new National Education Service, Pearson, Nesta and others reported on how employment and skills are likely to change in the future, the Gatsby Foundation looked at how to improve practical science work in schools in the future and the government worked up a bit more detail on Institutes of Technology in the future. What have we learnt from it all?

Labour's National Education Service (NES) first, which according to one of the joint leaders of the new National Teachers' Union, is evidence that Labour gets it; it being the big issues that face education at present. The NES, which is intended to establish an NHS like cradle to grave system supporting everyone throughout their lives, is something that Labour has been talking about for some time. Jeremy Corbyn mentioned it soon after being elected Leader the first time, it featured prominently in the Party's Election Manifesto this year and now we have the core principles that will form the basis of the Service.

As the Shadow Education Secretary acknowledged in her Conference speech, it's not yet the finished article but with its principles of democratic accountability, high quality education for all, valued professionalism and integrated opportunities, the draft charter comes with high hopes. Paying for it and delivering on it, as critics have pointed out, may be a different matter but for the moment it offers new hope for many.

Next future employment and skills, or more precisely those in 2030, as identified in a major new report from Pearson, Nesta and partners. The report comes in the wake of a number of dire warnings about the march of the robots and the consequent impact on jobs but stands out for three reasons. First because it paints a more optimistic picture of the future with jobs changing rather than going. Second because it offers a fascinating calibration of the sorts of 'soft' skills likely to be in greatest demand in the future and third because it articulates a range of challenges notably for the education system in terms of training.

Science practicals next, under threat from recent exam and accountability reforms according to some and the subject of a specific report this week for the Gatsby Foundation. As with its work on careers, the Foundation starts by identifying a set of benchmarks of good practice and then assesses how far schools meet them. Not very well is the answer, with schools recommended to focus on benchmarks 1 (planning,) 3 (expert teachers) and 6 (technical support) accordingly. Many schools will welcome the checklist.

Finally Institutes of Technology, at last it seems emerging from the drawing board and moving cautiously to an eventual key role as high-skill providers. Further evidence of the future coming into view.



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Top headlines this week

- 'Third of state schools in cash deficit.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Shortage of specialist science teachers is biggest challenge facing schools.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Corbyn to tackle automation jobs threat with free FE.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'Head teacher turns rebel over funding.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Apprenticeship levy leaves business baffled.' ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [Leader's speech](#). Jeremy Corbyn used his Leader's speech at the Labour Party Conference to pitch the Party, with its policies on education, housing, public sector pay and industrial reform, as the Party of the mainstream and a government in waiting
- [PFI and more](#). John McDonnell, the Shadow Chancellor, highlighted a number of ways in which a future Labour government would seek to transform the economy, including re-thinking tuition fees, capping interest payments on payday loans and most significantly, taking over control of the current 720 PFI contracts
- [Cradle - grave](#). Angela Rayner, Shadow Education Secretary, used her Conference speech to outline the Party's proposed new National Education Service (NES) intended to mirror the NHS as a cradle – grave service with additional funding indicated for Sure Start, schools, pay and technical education
- [Future Skills](#). Pearson, Nesta and the Oxford Martin School offered a new set of perspectives on how employment and jobs might shape up in the future, suggesting a potentially more optimistic future with many higher-order cognitive skills and sectors like education and healthcare likely to be in demand
- [Taming tech](#). RSA Chief Exec and author of the recent government commissioned Employment Review, Matthew Taylor considered the impact of the current Uber case and outlined four lessons we can perhaps learn about adapting to a new technological age
- [World Learning](#). The World Bank expressed concerns that education, particularly in poorer countries, was failing to deliver the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in life, leading to increasing social and economic gulfs, and recommending as a result three things: assessing learning to clarify what works; making schools work for all; mobilizing the support of all stakeholders
- [Made in Wales](#). The Welsh government set out plans to transform education in Wales with reduced class sizes, career development for teachers and better support for learners among other things all due now to be phased in from 2022

HE

- [Sticky campuses](#). Universities UK responded to recent media stories about university drop-outs with a more nuanced view of the figures, pointing to the range of measures around guidance and support that most universities now provide to help students stay the course



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- [How was it for you?](#) The Guardian reported on how Clearing had gone in a number of different universities with social media, online conversations and the personal touch clearly important for those institutions looking to recruit
- [The bigger picture.](#) Former Number 10 adviser and current Director of Bath University's Political Research Centre, Nick Pearce looked at the politics of HE financing and why further reform may be on the cards
- [Think twice.](#) The Centre for Policy studies reflected on why, given the costs and the variability of returns, so many people remain keen to go to university and concluded that it's important to stop and think what you want first before following the trend

FE/Skills

- [Quality Apprenticeships.](#) The Institute for Apprenticeships set out its thoughts on what constitutes quality apprenticeships and invited comments in a brief consultation
- [IoT info.](#) The government, quietly, invited interested parties to register their interest in bidding to become one of the proposed new Institutes of Technology (IoT) ahead of a launch of a more formal application process due to start later this year, with the first IoTs set to open in 2019
- [Regulating Functional Skills.](#) Ofqual followed up the recent consultation on the content of English and maths functional skills by launching a consultation on the design, delivery and awarding of these skills as part of their regulatory responsibilities
- [What do we want?](#) The Learning and Work Institute published its submission to the Chancellor ahead of his Autumn Budget listing five priorities covering apprenticeships, in-work benefits, learning accounts, investment in adult learning and tackling the disability employment gap

Schools

- [See me later.](#) The Statistics Regulator wrote to the DfE expressing concern about its publication and use of statistical data, citing two recent examples and calling on the Dept to revise procedures
- [Force for improvement.](#) Ofsted published a new 5-year strategy based on using its powers of inspection as a force for good and operating through the three principles of 'intelligent,' 'focused' and 'responsible'
- [Contact us.](#) Ofqual launched a call for evidence for its inquiry into issues of teachers working as setters of exams following some concerns this summer about some questions being leaked in advance
- [Still in crisis.](#) The National Association of head teachers (NAHT) published a range of flyers and listed activities issued as part of the continuing campaign to convince the government about the need for more money for schools
- [Ten out of ten.](#) The Gatsby Foundation published a new report on practical science highlighting ten costed benchmarks to help schools determine what makes for good practical science, and ten recommendations for policy makers and professionals to help ensure the benchmarks are acted on
- [Learning Away.](#) LKMco examined the state of school residentials for the Learning Away group reporting that while 21% of the school population derive benefits from them, a lot of disadvantaged youngsters miss out



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- **Chartered status.** The Chartered College of Teaching invited applications for its pilot chartered teacher programme due to start next year and to involve a demanding 14 month package of projects, research and assessments
- **Don't be a hero.** Professor John Hattie blogged about different types of school leader in the latest edition of ASCL's magazine for school leaders, arguing that the right type of leader can have a transformational effect but that hero leaders – prepared to take the world on – are the ones to avoid

Tweets(s) of the week

- “The future of work is brighter than conventional wisdom suggests. It won't be human v machine but human and machine” - [@johnfallon](#)
- “Student financial situation has got so bad it appears that 50% are having to come to uni in ripped jeans” – [@robdrummond](#)
- “Obsessive compulsive PISA - envy. Do our ministers suffer from it?” - [@TeachTalks](#)
- “British people are happiest in the pub, scientists find” [@Independent](#)

Other stories of the week

- **Celebrating in verse.** This week has seen the launch of the latest National Poetry Day for which the theme is Freedom. This is the 23rd in the series of National Poetry Days and is being marked with events and readings in numerous venues and cities including notably Hull as the 2017 City of Culture and even Virgin Trains where announcements may include rhyming couplets. It all comes, according to the blurb, at a time when poetry is flourishing and more and more people are either reading, writing it or finding comfort from it. This one rather strikes a chord:

Roses are red

Violets are blue

You're not as unhappy

As statistics tell you

Quote(s) of the week

- “The tide of automation and technological change means re-training and management of the workforce must be centre-stage in the coming years” – Jeremy Corbyn on how the Labour Party will help the workforce cope with the fourth industrial revolution
- “If they bring forward effective proposals we will support them” – Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell throws down the gauntlet to the Conservatives on tuition fees
- “Not just another structure. Not just another new sign on the school gate” – Shadow Education Secretary Angela Rayner explains what the Party's proposed National Education Service will be
- “So while the rest of the world deals with big stuff around creativity and learning, we fixate on little stuff – and continue to squeeze too much joy out of the classroom for pupils and teachers alike” – ASCL Gen Sec Geoff Barton on the need for a new vision in education



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- “They are up for breakfast and there is no sick in the bins” - a perspective on how students have changed, from someone who should know, namely a halls of residence cleaner
- “I was proud that I did not cry in front of her” – President Obama experiences the emotions of many parents as he dropped off his eldest daughter at uni (Harvard) for the first time this week
- “But be under no illusion, in this process I’m the one who decides who’s going to remain and I’m the one who decides who’s going to leave – simple as that” – Lord Sugar heralds the return of The Apprentice on Oct 4
- “Ofsted does not, and should not, have preferred styles of teaching or care provision” – Ofsted makes it clear in its new strategy plan

Number(s) of the week

- One-tenth. The number of people in the workforce in occupations that are likely to grow in the coming years with a fifth in occupations likely to shrink in the light of automation, according to research from Nesta
- 74%. The number of working mothers in England, up considerably in recent years particularly for those with children aged three or four, according to figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS)
- 49%. The provisional initial participation rates for HE for 2015/16, up 1.4% according to the latest stats
- £592. The average overpayment in student loan repayments by UK graduates last year, according to data revealed by The Times
- £8,100 pa. One of the sums under consideration as a living wage for Scottish university and college students in radical plans for Scotland, according to the Sunday Herald
- £1bn. How much Labour proposes investing in T-Levels according to the Shadow Education Secretary
- £178,321. How much the average secondary school is likely to lose per year (£52,546 per primary school) as a result of the government’s latest funding statement according to the Schools Cuts website
- 55%. The % of schools where at least half of all KS4 chemistry lessons involve direct practical activities according to a survey conducted for the Gatsby Foundation’s report on Practical Science
- 81%. The percentage of pupils who met the expected standard in their phonics screening check at the end of KS1 this year, up 1% on the previous year according to the latest figures
- 25%. How many people in the latest survey of generation Z (16 – 22 yr olds) are optimistic about their future, higher for example than those in Generation Y (23 – 37 yr olds) or X (38 – 51 yr olds) according to Ipsos MORI

What to look out for next week

- Conservative Party Conference (Sunday – Wednesday, with the Chancellor on Monday, Brexit on Tuesday and the Prime Minister on Wednesday)
- Education Britain Summit. (Wednesday)
- HMC Annual Conference (Monday – Thursday)