



Pearson

Policy Eye



Highlights of week ending Friday 27 April 2018

(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

Four reports, two Parliamentary debates, one briefing analysis, and a number of blogs head the news this week and all pitched around a common theme: fitness or otherwise for the future. Ensuring the country is fit for the future is one of the straplines of government policy but when it comes to education, this week's offerings suggest we have some way to go.

Those reports first, from the NUS, the Resolution Foundation, Collab Group of Colleges and the Politeia think tank respectively.

The NUS [report](#) highlighted the barriers and incidental costs faced by many disadvantaged students battling their way through further and higher ed. Drawing on evidence from its Poverty Commission, it argued that class and poverty are linked and that disadvantaged students face 'a poverty premium.' The NUS is already in discussion with the panel reviewing the future fitness of post-18 funding to ensure that some of its findings are taken up. The Resolution Foundation [report](#) is part of its important 'Intergenerational' series looking at challenges facing young adults in the 21stc. This latest paper focuses on skills and has some important things to say on T levels, apprenticeships and support for the lower-skilled.

The Collab Group's [report](#) was the second of two looking at the changing landscape for technical and professional education. This particular report looked at what providers need to do to be fit for the future, coming up with a fitness chart of four organisational capabilities needed for success. And the third [report](#), by Politeia looked at a much debated area, whether our vocational education system is fit for purpose and whether others, in this case, France and Germany do it better. The answer was no and yes in that order.

Next those two Parliamentary debates, one on school funding and the other on the Office for Students (OfS,) both brought by the Opposition. Both raised important issues. On [school funding](#) the Shadow Education Secretary was keen to hold the government's feet to the fire over promises of annual per pupil cash increases and no school budget cuts. The School Standards Minister rounded the debate off arguing that 'no local authority is facing cuts' and that last year's settlement is delivering additional funding but the discussions will go on. As for the OfS, the government saw off an [Opposition move](#) to scrap the whole thing on the basis that it was 'a creature of government' but again strong views were aired.

On to the [briefing analysis](#) which came from the Education Policy Institute with a further dive into the issues around the teacher labour force market. A particular concern is teacher retention with many deciding early on in their careers that it's not for them. The Paper believes targeted funding at teachers in specialist subjects is an idea worth considering here but the professional associations seem less enamoured.



Pearson

Top headlines this week

- 'Education needs fairer funding not new institutions.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Minister vows to focus laser-like on vice-chancellor pay.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Government's post-18 review of education funding is not just about HE.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'Student complaints about universities growing says watchdog.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Sir David Carter to step down as National Schools Commissioner.' ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [Balancing the books](#). The DfE provided the Education Committee with an update on its budgets and spending priorities for 2018/19, offering a useful insight into how the (reduced) managed expenditure total of £87,065.1m for the dept will be spent
- [Public Sector Finances](#). The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) published a commentary on the latest official figures for public sector finances, which although still provisional, showed net borrowing down £3.5bn on that for 2016/17
- [Reversing decline](#). The think tank Politeia reflected on how the education and training systems in Germany and France compared with that in the UK, arguing that the UK had missed opportunities to develop similarly high-quality systems and calling for a more rigorous system in the UK built
- [Unpaid Work Experience](#). The Private Member's Bill prohibiting unpaid work experience beyond four weeks had its third reading in the House of Lords this week before heading to the Commons for further discussion
- [AI Sector Deal](#). The government launched the latest Sector Deal promised under the Industrial Strategy, this time for AI (artificial intelligence) outlining a range of funding and other commitments across government, business and education including for example the creation of a prestigious Turing Fellowship to attract global research in AI
- [By Design](#). The RSA published a new paper highlighting the importance of the design industry to the UK economy and making seven recommendations such as using design to help solve the Industrial Strategy Grand Challenges, for industry, education and government to consider

HE

- [A creature of government](#). Labour led a debate on the Office for Students (OfS,) condemning it as a creature of government and calling unsuccessfully for the provision setting up the Office to be annulled
- [Foot on the ladder](#). Chair of the Education Committee, Robert Halfon placed degree apprenticeships firmly on his legendary ladder of opportunities in a keynote speech on the matter in an event hosted by University Alliance
- [Class dismissed](#). The National Union of Students (NUS) reported on the work of its Poverty Commission into the sorts of challenges faced by poor and working-class students aspiring to progress through



Pearson

further and higher education, which often result in such students having to pay what amounts to 'a poverty premium' to cover costs such as childcare, accommodation and so on

- [Graduate Labour Market Statistics 2017](#). The DfE published the latest stats on employment rates and salaries for graduates, postgrads and non-grads showing the graduate premium still alive and well, with working age graduates on average earning £10,000 more than the average non-graduate
- [Accounting review](#). Loans 'expert,' Andrew McGettigan reported that the Office for National Statistics (ONS) was embarking on an international review of the accounting arrangements for student loans
- [I have a complaint](#). The Office of the Independent Adjudicator published its latest annual report covering students complaints for 2017/18 showing a slight increase in volume with most on academic issues
- [Making the most of Open Days](#). The Student Room published the results of its survey into how students viewed Open Days, reporting that over 90% found them useful and 65% went to three or more of them
- [Simply misunderstood](#). The Office for Students (OfS) outlined some of the top myths dogging the National Student Survey, the latest round of which completes at the end of the month
- [All verifiable](#). UCAS reported on the work of its verification service which checks student applications for authenticity, ahead of a report on latest trends due out next month

FE/Skills

- [Provider health check](#). The Collab Group published its second of two papers looking at how the landscape for technical and professional education is changing, focusing this time on the role of providers and identifying 16 organisational capabilities such providers will need in order to succeed
- [System abuse](#). The Policy Consortium reported on its survey of the FE and skills system and in particular the mass of policy changes in recent years, suggesting that a more collaborative approach would help ensure greater stability and success for the sector
- [Technical Fault](#). The Resolution Foundation published the latest in its series of Intergenerational Commission papers looking at the challenges facing young adults in the 21st c focusing here on the skills system and calling for some rigorous 'fixes' for the technical system and for switching funds to support lower-qualified young people
- [More on the levy](#). NFER added its voice to the current apprenticeship levy debate, noting in a new blog the limited take-up and reach of levy funding and the need to correct regional imbalances
- [All change](#). Keith Smith, ESFA Director of Apprenticeships, summarized the latest round of changes being made to the apprenticeship system, in a comment piece in FE News

Schools

- [School funding](#). The Opposition hosted a debate on school funding, calling on the government to stick to its pledge that no school should face a budget cut as a result of the new funding formula and citing constituency cases of funding shortfalls with the government defending its record
- [Data protection](#). The DfE issued new guidance for schools ahead of the new General Data Protection Regulation due in from May 2018, listing nine case studies plus support documentation schools may want to consider and inviting feedback on them by the beginning of June



Pearson

- [A perilous path?](#) The Education Policy Institute reported on the teacher labour market, highlighting some of the current concerns such as entry and exit rates and the lack of specialist teachers, arguing that teacher retention remained a real problem for many schools and calling for pay supplements for teachers in shortage subjects in the early stages of their careers
- [Assessment: what we're looking for.](#) Sean Harford, Education National Director at Ofsted used his latest blog to outline what inspectors were looking for when it comes to looking at assessment in schools (and it's not mounds of paperwork)
- [What next for edtech?](#) Former Education Secretary Lord Jim Knight argued that technology could help improve teacher workloads, pupil assessment and pupil data as he reflected on the future of edtech
- [School governors.](#) Inspiring Governance, the organization that helps encourage more people to become school governors or trustees, launched a new campaign to 'inspire' employers and others to consider joining up

Tweets(s) of the week

- "I'm delighted to be here today to discuss my two favourite words in the English language – degree apprenticeships" - [@halfon4harlowMP](#)
- "Robert Halfon MP. A' level students should be given at very least a grounding in technology before leaving secondary skills. A wider curriculum is needed" - [@PoliteiaUK](#)
- "But here I am. Against all odds. Further education transformed my life and gave me the second chance I needed" - [@tesfeneews](#)
- "It's frustrating how much easier it is to write well about things you hate. Acid flows more smoothly than syrup" - [@helenlewis](#)

Other stories of the week

- [Quit-lit.](#) The annual World Book Night, when books are given out particularly to those who may not get a chance to read regularly such as those in homeless shelters, hospitals and so on, took place this week. As part of this year's celebrations, the Reading Agency looked at which books people have found most difficult to read. According to their survey, the book that most Brits have started but never managed to finish is 'Fifty Shades of Grey' followed by J.R.R. Tolkein's 'The Lord of the Rings.' Apparently over 50% of us have been stuck reading the same book for nearly three months and according to the Reading Agency, if you suffer from this sort of book block, you should quit and find a book more to your taste. A link to the story, which is easy to read, is [here](#)
- [Further march of the robots.](#) The recent news story that robots have been able to put together an Ikea chair in 20 minutes without any of the tantrums that often accompanies human effort has led many people to appraise their views of robots, particularly those that might be able to help out in the home. Guardian writer Stuart Heritage even went so far as to suggest five other domestic tasks that robots should take over if they really want to earn our appreciation. A link to the story is [here](#)

Quote(s) of the week

- "Our ambition for AI (artificial intelligence) must match the Apollo programme that put man on the moon" – Ministers reach for the stars as they launch a new Sector Deal for AI



Pearson

- “It’s not a review of tuition fees. It is not a higher education review. It really is a review of post-18 education funding” – Panel member Alison Wolf on the purpose of the post-18 review
- “Education has taken a backseat because the government is completely fixated on Brexit” – former Chief Inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw bemoans the Brexit effect
- “Since we can have various virtual personal assistants in our home, why wouldn’t we have those in the classroom?” – former Education Secretary and current Chief Ed office at the TES, Lord Knight looks ahead to the future possibilities of edtech
- “You’re just talking into a blank screen, it’s really unnerving” – one respondent’s reaction to the growing practice of companies interviewing candidates via webcam
- “In the decades after World War 2 the opportunity to develop the system of vocational and technical education was missed” – the think tank Politeia reports on a missed opportunity
- “Affordable accommodation should be that offered for rent at a rate no higher than 50% of the maximum student loan or grant available” – the NUS highlights the issue of expensive accommodation in its report
- “Inspection is above all about human judgement” – Ofsted Director Sean Harford puts inspection in context
- “Almost all recent figures suggest the teacher labour market is in trouble” – the Education Policy Institute offers its prognosis of the current state of the teacher workforce

Number(s) of the week

- 291. The number of MPs who voted against the Labour Party’s motion to scrap the Office for Students as against 211 who voted for, according to the figures in Hansard
- 1,000+. How many university students have now signed up to a scheme to ensure compensation for lost teaching time during the recent pension strikes, according to the law firm Asserson
- £23,115. How much on average it’s costing a full-time undergraduate student in England this year in fees, rent, travel and so on (£27,015 in London,) according to research undertaken for the National Union of Students
- 0.07%. How many application forms were rejected by UCAS last year for being false or misleading according a recent update by its verification service
- 200 miles. How far most students are prepared to travel to visit a university for one of its Open Days, according to a survey by The Students Room network
- 2.8%. How many people were employed on a zero hours contract for their main job at the end of last year, slightly down on previous figures according to the latest data from the ONS
- 16 and over. How old youngsters in Europe will need to be to register for WhatsApp in the future, according to a blog on WhatsApp and reported in the BBC’s technology news

What to look out for next week

- Closure of the Call for Evidence for the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding (Wednesday)
- Public Accounts Committee Inquiry into converting schools into Academies (Wednesday)
- Local Council elections (Thursday)

Policy Eye

Week ending Friday 27 April 2018



Pearson

- NAHT Annual Conference (Thursday – Saturday)