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Policy Eye



Highlights of week ending Friday 31 August 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.

There's an end of summer/back to school feel to things at the moment, even the weather has joined in. MPs return next week, albeit briefly ahead of the annual Conference season that sees them head off for much of the rest of the month. Elsewhere, some schools are already hard at it while an air of anticipation generally, some positive, some less so, hangs heavily over the start of another new 'academic' year.

So what lies ahead?

On the national stage, September brings the annual party Conference season, traditionally an important time for debating policies. The PM has declared a wish to focus on domestic matters including the big 2 Hs of housing and health, national and mental, and technical education but Brexit divisions may dominate. Labour hopes to bring its National Education Service to the table but here too other issues may dominate.

October is another big Brexit month as the EU Council meets to assess progress six months away from departure date while November will see the Chancellor take to the despatch box to present the latest Budget. Given this may well include an interim report from the post-18 review group, an update on the Industrial Strategy especially skills training, and some thoughts on future public service funding as part of the 2019 Spending Review, it's likely to be an important moment for education. As for December, this may bring the landmark White Paper on immigration and with it many further questions for education.

As for education itself, the agenda in England for this autumn looks fairly mundane. That may not be a bad thing with many, including it seems the Education Secretary, welcoming a bit of breathing space.

September tends to be a quiet month for policy making but we may well see school accountability in the headlines with the report from the NAHT Commission, further reflections on Progress 8 and updates from the Education Secretary who has the topic on his radar. The month will also see the Joint Council's Commission into exam malpractice start work; Ofqual itself will be releasing exam reports over the coming weeks. The interim performance tables tend to come out in October and we may well see some gearing up of T level activity around this time as well as the DfE prepares to launch its invitation to tender and Wave 1 providers submit their implementation plans. November is Budget and skills month with the AoC Conference and World Skills Show while December will bring us some important reports including those from the Chief Inspector, UCAS's End of Cycle report and the Timpson review of alternative provision.

Finally four headline stories from this week. They include: the government's [youth response unit](#); NESTA's fascinating [UK skills taxonomy](#); EPI's [report](#) on teacher shortages, and The Times story on pupil off-rolling.



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Top headlines this week

- 'University research projects at risk of collapse amid no-deal Brexit, union leader says.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Cut throat A' level season pushing some universities to insolvency.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Exam result details now available for free under GDPR.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'Schools face 'severe' teacher shortage.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'England faces school places emergency, say councils' ([Friday](#))
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People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [Tackling exploitation of young people](#). The government announced it was setting up a new national response unit from next year, to run initially for three years, and to support local agencies and bodies dealing with issues of child protection, abuse and gang activity
- [Good Childhood](#). The Children's Society published its latest report with the University of York using survey evidence to establish how children are doing and feeling, finding a continuing downward trend with many children struggling to fit in with expectations and grappling with the damaging effects of social commentary
- [Digital Skills Innovation Fund](#). The government reported that the £1m Digital Skills Innovation Fund, intended to help under represented people and groups in particular gain digital skills, was now open for bids from LEPs and Combined Authorities
- [Maximizing the benefits of immigration](#). The IPPR think tank called for a rethink on how we approach immigration, with a shift from a policy focus on targets to one of maximizing contributions through an integration strategy

HE

- [How do you solve a problem like tuition fees?](#) Associate editor Jim Dickinson outlined the dilemma facing the current post-18 review as it considered options between what was progressive and what was politically palatable with factors like tackling student residential costs as among the prerequisites
- [It takes two](#). Professor David Phoenix, V.C. at London South Bank University argued for a system of co-regulation for the HE sector in a guest blog for the HE Policy Institute

FE/Skills

- [UK skills taxonomy](#). NESTA published an innovative new skills taxonomy for the UK using data collected from over 41m adverts over the last five years to construct a framework that maps the demand and supply of skills to provision and salaries
- [Call for action](#). The Association of Colleges (AoC) came out fighting, calling for a week of action in October, after it emerged that unlike school teachers, college staff would not get a pay rise, instead their case and that of the sector as a whole would be considered as part of next year's Spending Review



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- **GCSE resits.** Catherine Sezen of the Association of Colleges reflected on the issue of GCSE resits outlining the challenges they create for students and staff, pointing to the fact that continuing to retake such exams can be counter-productive and calling for a rethink on alternative options
- **Apprenticeship boost.** The FT reported that Brexit could well create a timely boost in apprenticeship numbers as companies look to recruit local rather than immigrant labour
- **Inspection handbook.** Ofsted published its inspection handbook for FE for use from this September
- **Skills Budget submission.** The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) published its wish list ahead of this autumn's Budget listing eleven areas in the skills system in need of support including non-levy employers, young apprentices, functional skills and SMEs
- **Skills for Londoners.** The London Mayor launched the second round of the Skills for Londoners Capital Fund inviting colleges and training providers to bid for a slice of the £82m available to provide training and support for apprenticeships and other programmes

Schools

- **Gaming claims.** The Times highlighted the growing issue of 'off rolling' in which schools exclude poorly performing students ahead of exam time to avoid a school's 'league position' being compromised
- **Off-rolling by numbers.** FFT Education Datalab examined the claims made by The Times and others about the numbers of young people being taken off roll ahead of exams suggesting that there was some basis to support this
- **Teacher shortages.** The Education Policy Institute called for salary supplements particularly for teachers in shortage subjects as it reported on a drop in teacher recruitment and an increase in the number of classes taught by non-specialists
- **Ofsted on nurseries.** Ofsted reported in its latest blog on the importance of having qualified staff working in nurseries and pre-schools and how this is reflected in performance and inspections

Tweets(s) of the week

- "My number one piece of advice for NQTs, in fact ALL teachers is: Never go to bed after 10 o'clock" - @Miss_Snuffy
- "My son is measuring his eyelashes to see if they are longer than the dog's. Bring on the start of term" - @lucymirandaward
- "5 things to do before you go back to school. 1. Stop reading lists of things to do" - @varndeangoats
- "A school in China is making their kids stand up to eat their lunch. It wants the meal over in 10 minutes so the children spend more time in lessons" - @bbcworldservice

Other stories of the week

- **What to take/not to take to uni.** The Student Room website has an extensive list for those starting to get their things together before heading off to uni this autumn. The list has pretty standard stuff on it from passports to pasta sauce but is a useful checklist all the same. The 'what not to take' list is a fascinating insight into how habits and lifestyles have changed: heavy electrical equipment and big suitcases for example are out. As are parents, at least those that hang around, with the suggestion being: 'they do



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not need to stay overnight anywhere 'just in case you need us'. If they want to go to uni, they can apply through UCAS.'

- **Coffee on demand.** The FT reported on a new technological development that may interest many people. Apparently IBM America has filed for a new patent for a drone that can spot when an employee is flagging and needs a coffee boost. By all accounts it would use sensors such as pupil dilation as well as personal data such as sleep habits to sense when the person is, and I quote, "in a pre-determined cognitive state requiring coffee."

Quote(s) of the week

- "I would say there are five or six universities who will run out of cash in two years' time" – the Guardian hears from those in the know on the importance of student recruitment to university finances
- "My lobbying for FE continues" – the Skills Minister commits to support the case for extra funding for FE
- "The abuse is the logical and inevitable result of an exam factory mentality that has damaged schools over the past ten years as much as it has benefited them" – Sir Anthony Seldon, among others, writes to The Times on the issue of pupil off-rolling
- "Children are living like battery hens during the summer holidays as they sit indoors glued to computers and smart phones " – the Children's Commissioner reports on concerns raised by parents
- "Long overdue" – reactions to the government's banning of some energy drinks to young people
- "It's dead time in a way so what it allows me to do is finish stuff and not work in the evenings" – one London commuter on why they work on the train as researchers examine the extension of the 9-5 day

Number(s) of the week

- £2,489. The average cost of the electrical gear such as smartphones and laptops, that students will be taking with them to university this year, according to a survey by NFU Mutual
- 4M. How many refugee children around the world are missing out on school, an increase of half a million over the last year according to a new report from the UN Refugee Agency
- 17. The national pupil-teacher ratio, up from 15. In 2010, according to a new report from the Education Policy Institute
- 13,000. How many teenagers last year were missing from school exam tables despite being on school rolls the year before, according to a report by The Times
- 16%. How many 14 yr olds reportedly self-harmed over the last year, according to a survey conducted by the Children's Society
- 93. The number of independent schools offering BTECs this year, nearly double over three years according to the HMC

What to look out for next week

- Parliament returns (Sept 4)
- ResearchEd National Conference (Sept 8)