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Policy Eye



Highlights of week ending Friday 6 July 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.

Can education and training claim some credit for England's success with those penalties this week?

Some people think so. Researchers at UCL's Institute of Education for instance reckon that 'inhibitory control,' pausing, stopping and thinking before doing, and something the Institute has been advocating for classrooms for some time, was responsible. Others, such as the Sutton Trust have analysed the background of the team and suggested that given most hailed from the North of England, grit and determination were key factors. Either way, there may well be messages in there for education, not least the adoption of what psychologists call the cigar moment: stopping and thinking before acting.

Away from the football, two features have featured heavily this week, school system reform and apprenticeships. Elsewhere, MPs debated DfE spending, the LGA has been in conference where schools and future funding both featured, Wonkhe took a deep dive into HE fees and funding, the Education Committee heard evidence on provision for special needs and disabilities, and the Education Policy Institute rapped the DfE's knuckles over one of its most regularly cited claims. Some summary details below.

Schools system reform first where the Institute of Education (IoE,) the Education Policy Institute (EPI) and the Local Government Association (LGA) have all had things to say this week.

Standards not structures has been a mantra in education policy for some time but the reality has been different for many working in schools. Many of the latest structural changes stem from the 2010 White Paper which as the IoE report noted was intended to generate a system of more autonomous, self-improving schools. The result, in their words, has been 'chaotic centralisation' and as both the EPI and LGA identified, the push now is to remove some the layers and encourage innovation while allowing for informed accountability. The Education Secretary is due to offer further thoughts this autumn.

On to apprenticeships, never far from the news, and where this week the Institute for Apprenticeships set out its plans for the future in the form of a one-year Business Plan and five-year strategic Plan. It's a circumspect approach: 'agree by March 2019 a full implementation timetable with the DfE for transfer of T level responsibility,' 'develop over the next five years a well-established external quality assurance delivery system,' to cite just two examples. The performance measures in the Business Plan spell out the specifics.

Finally two interesting debates on funding this week. MPs **debated** some of the pressure points such as early years and FE on Tuesday with some calling for a 10-year settlement like the NHS, while Wonkhe hosted a fascinating session on HE funding with some alarming details.



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Top headlines this week

- 'EU students get post-Brexit fees promise.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Extra time red tape to be slashed around exams.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Institute for Apprenticeships T-level takeover delayed again.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'The battle over cyber security in FE.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'One in five grammar schools prepares expansion bids.' ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [Education spending](#). The House of Commons Library produced a useful primer in preparation for a debate by MPs on DfE spending
- [Feeling the strain](#). The Public Accounts Committee reported on its inquiry into the financial sustainability of local authorities concluding that after seven years of cuts they were feeling the strain, and calling on the Dept to offer its thoughts by the end of September 2018
- [Digital skills](#). The OECD reported on its second major Skills Summit, held in Portugal last weekend, with sessions on three key areas; the impact of digitalization; education policy and digitalization; and the implementation of skills policies
- [Vulnerable children](#). The Children's Commissioner published a second and wider annual report into the number of children growing up in England vulnerable to risks, concluding that one in six was in families in need of help and support

HE

- [Tuition fees 2019/20](#). The government confirmed that maximum tuition fees will be frozen for a second year while fees for EU students who start courses in England in 2019/20 will also remain unchanged, Brexit or no Brexit
- [Measuring the impact](#). The DfE assessed the impact on equality of the latest tuition fee freeze concluding that it should 'marginally improve the attractiveness of the loan offer'
- [Getting rid of a permafrost](#). BBC Education Editor Branwen Jeffreys offered her summary of what the Chair of the post-18 review had to say to wonkhe's event on fees and funding, and it was largely about ensuring a better deal for students across the FE/HE pitch
- [Mature applicants 2017](#). UCAS reported on its analysis of admissions patterns for mature students last year finding 21+ yr olds mainly home-based, varying by region and largely taking vocational programmes but with an overall fall in applications particularly in the 21+ age group
- [Understanding grade inflation](#). The Russell Group offered its thoughts on the grade inflation issue in a new blog, arguing that a number of factors could well be at play here including more students arriving with higher grades, access to better support and harder working students, all factors likely to be taken into consideration in the work on the matter being headed up by Universities UK



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FE/Skills

- **Five year Plan.** The Institute for Apprenticeships published its Strategic Plan with a number of objectives listed under three core priorities (efficient and quality services, productive relationships and building credibility) set over five years
- **Doing the business.** The Institute for Apprenticeships listed ten objectives as part of a new one-year Business Plan, sitting alongside the Strategic Plan and taking in T levels, apprenticeship standards, quality, people, influence and relationships
- **Apprenticeship Polling 2018.** The Sutton Trust reported on its latest survey as part of its Better Apprenticeships campaign, showing growing numbers of young people interested in apprenticeships but often struggling to receive careers advice on the matter from teachers
- **Pret an apprentice.** Pret A Manger invited applications to its new apprenticeship programme which will combine learning management and customer service skills on the 'shop floor' with a business management degree at Manchester Met
- **Skills budget.** Greater Manchester outlined its plans for skills development ahead of devolution of the adult skills budget from next year
- **Construction Sector Deal.** The government published the latest Sector Deal promised as part of the Industrial Strategy, pledging among other things an increase in the number of apprenticeships, the development of new technologies and the creation of a globally competitive sector
- **EdTech.** The Education and Training Foundation announced new work on developing a competency framework and set of standards for supporting digital skills in teaching and learning in FE
- **Making a difference.** Stephen Evans, chief exec of the Learning and Work Institute, argued in a comment piece in the TES that two objectives (a focus on the skills pipeline and the impact of local delivery) could help drive skills policy forward in the coming months
- **Work experience.** The Youth Select Committee began hearing evidence into some of the problems facing young people when they try and access work experience opportunities
- **Top slicing.** FE Week reported on the subcontracting figures for last year which were published at the end of last week and which revealed that nearly 30% charged above the mutually recognized benchmark of 20%
- **Reducing the burden.** The Joint Council for Qualifications (JSQ) confirmed that special support arrangements for students at exams, such as the use of extra time, can be carried forward without the need for further re-assessment when the student transfers to college as long as agreements are in place
- **BTEC Award Winners 2018.** FE Week and others reported on the winners of this year's BTEC awards which were presented at a ceremony this week hosted by Steph McGovern

Schools

- **School system reform.** UCL's Institute of Education, with support from Nuffield and the NFER, reported on its extensive study into how far schools have moved towards a self-improving system since 2010 concluding that the effects have been marginal with schools still facing traditional pressures of accountability and performance reporting



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- **Resetting the relationship.** The Local Government Association issued a new paper on schools as part of its Annual Conference calling for a new relationship with government and councils given a greater say in such matters as school standards, places and supporting vulnerable pupils
- **SEND Inquiry.** The TES set out the 5-point plan for special educational needs and disabilities (including more transparency, more partnership working, better teacher training) which Lady Warnock, a long-standing advocate for SEND outlined to the Education Committee Inquiry this week
- **Early years.** The DfE announced additional funds to help support local community groups working with disadvantaged families to improve their language and literacy skills
- **Inspection update.** Ofsted published its latest update on inspections for schools with among other things updates on inspection timings, safeguarding and the EBacc
- **Baseline assessment.** The British Educational Research Association (BERA) outlined their arguments against government proposals to apply baseline assessment for pupils in reception, claiming that it would be untried, expensive and unreliable
- **Factually speaking.** The Education Policy Institute challenged the DfE over its oft repeated claim that more pupils are now in good or outstanding schools, arguing that some of this can be accounted for by demography, some by changes to grading and some by the fact that a lot of schools haven't been inspected for a while
- **EBacc effect.** The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) examined what impact the EBacc had had on school timetabling noting a significant increase in hours given over to EBacc subjects with History and Geography gaining the most but a concomitant decrease in hours allocated to non EBacc subjects notably Design and Tech and PSHE
- **Testing, testing.** Assessment expert Daisy Christodoulou offered some thoughts on the frequency of testing in a comment piece for the TES arguing that fewer formal assessment points could pay dividends
- **Starting early.** The Education and Employers Organisation reported on more of its work with the TES and NAHT on when children should start learning about the world of work with many teachers in this latest survey suggesting from age five

Tweets(s) of the week

- "HE funding has become a Danny Dyer-esque mad riddle. And it has taken exceptionally clever politicians and wonks to come up with a system so spectacularly impenetrable, misunderstood and illogical" - [@CharlesHeymann](#)
- "Lots of talk about ditching (school) reports. I've written before about how unwieldy they can be but not persuaded that we should get rid. There're often treasured for years. Just cut back the nonsense" - [@MichaelT1979](#)
- "Having seen what kids choose when they have freedom over what they have for school lunch, I can only imagine what intellectual harm they would do to themselves if they were to have the freedom to choose their own curriculum" - [@Trivium21c](#)
- "Phone ban came into our school today and it was so good to see the students actually having conversations with each other rather than aimlessly scrolling through timelines. Such a positive move" - [@mrsjw93](#)
- "It's official: (British) coffee drinkers live longer" - [@SkyNews](#)



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Other stories of the week

- **Counting the cost.** An interesting survey this week about student finances. Apparently, parents are contributing an average of £138.50 a week to their uni offspring with, interestingly, those families earning less often contributing more and male students getting more than females. Rent appears to be the biggest outlay followed somewhat behind by food. Apparently 65% of students had saved up to go to uni, many (15%) saving as much as £2,500 in advance.

Quote(s) of the week

- “The number of connected devices in and around people’s homes in OECD countries is expected to increase from 1bn in 2016 to 14bn by 2022” – the OECD Secretary General opens last weekend’s OECD Digital Skills Summit
- “I will continue to ensure that FE is not allowed to be forgotten when it comes to the allocation of funding” – Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn offers his support to college members
- “It would be better if the government stopped using this statistic” – the Education Policy Institute challenges the government over its claim that more pupils are now in better schools
- “I welcome the report’s publication in part because we should be wary of the sniffiness evident in higher education towards learning lessons from schools” – HE Policy Institute director, Nick Hillman, reflects on the think tank Reform’s recent report on grade inflation in higher education
- “If A’ levels need multiple exam boards, why don’t T levels?” – Pearson President Rod Bristow asks the question in an article in Schools Week
- “I work in education and I love it” – the departing Love Islander Zara McDermott

Number(s) of the week

- £7.8bn. The funding shortfall facing English councils by 2025, according to evidence presented to the Local Government Association Conference this week
- £9,250. The maximum tuition fee announced for full-time undergraduate courses in England for 2019/20, meaning no change for another year, according to the government
- 2,550. How many people aged 26 and above applied for full time undergraduate courses last year, a drop of 9.8% on the previous year, according to figures from UCAS
- 64%. How many young people surveyed would be interested in taking an apprenticeship rather than going to uni, up 9% since the last survey four years ago, according to the Sutton Trust
- 29%. How much teaching time for non EBacc subjects was reduced on average between 2010 and 2017, according to research by the NFER
- 100+. How many different suggestions have been made so far this year for what else should be on the school curriculum according to Mark Lehain, director of Parents and Teachers for Excellence



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- 2.1m. How many children in England are growing up in families at risk, according to the latest report by the Children's Commissioner

What to look out for next week

- SATs results published (Tuesday)
- Learning and Work Institute 'Employment and Skills Convention' (Tuesday)
- Andria Zafirakou, the winner of the Global Teacher Prize 2018, gives a lecture on the arts at the Institute of Education, London (Wednesday)