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Policy Eye



Highlights of week ending Friday 15 November 2019

(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.

Education and skills moved into the election limelight early on this week with some headline announcements on adult education, education reform and children's mental health respectively and largely from the Opposition Parties. More on all this in a minute.

Away from the election, other developments this week have included a [think tank report](#) on campus free speech, a clutch of reports on skills and progress report on the College of the Future, an [update on teacher wellbeing](#), [proposals](#) for improving the system of school exclusions and a new [survey on bullying](#).

Here's a few details on the last three of these starting with teacher wellbeing courtesy of the latest Teacher Wellbeing Index, where the charity Education Support and YouGov highlighted an all too familiar picture of work-related stress. Heavy workloads, an inability to switch off and a feeling of constant pressure seem to have contributed to what the report called 'a concerning picture.' Equally concerning was the survey on bullying, released in this case as part of this week's anti-bullying week, which revealed some of the extent of the problem with verbal abuse seemingly on the rise. Finally briefly, school exclusions, where a report from the all-party law reform group, Justice, made some useful recommendations on how to improve the system, including the use of an independent reviewer.

And so back to how education is featuring in the election campaign where as indicated, three aspects have been highlighted this week, here's some of the key points.

First, children's mental health where the Labour Party this week pledged a 'qualified' counsellor for every secondary school in England with regular visits for primary schools. The Party has promised that costings and further details will be in its manifesto but has at least recognized that the key issue lies as much with system reform and getting all agencies to speak together, as anything else.

Second, education reform and in particular the emerging shape of Labour's much vaunted National Education Service. Again we'll have to wait for costing specifics from the manifesto but in his Education speech this week, Jeremy Corbyn spelt out ten principles. Most have been under discussion for some time and include scrapping SATs, ending the academy and free school programme, introducing an arts Premium, and scrapping tuition fees.

Third, and arguably most significantly given the lack of interest in this area in the past, a big boost from both the Lib-Dems and Labour on adult learning in the form of a £10,000 lifelong 'skills wallet' from the former and an adult entitlement to six years funded study from the latter. We await the small print.

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Top headlines this week

- 'Huge rise in teachers welling up at work.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Labour pledges six years of free study for adults.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Bidding war over schools' extra billions.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'One in 50 'children in need' are not yet born.' (Thursday)
- 'Ofsted: campus grades on the cards for 2020.' (Friday)

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [National Education Service](#). Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, laid out what was in the Party's proposed new model of education, in a campaign speech on education
- [Lifelong learning Report](#). The Labour Party published the final report from its Lifelong Learning Commission calling among other things for an adult entitlement of six years study at L4 and above and free access at L3
- [Lifelong learning](#). Shadow Education Secretary Angela Rayner acknowledged the launch of the Party's plans on lifelong learning in a campaign speech and spelt out what such learning had meant to her in the past
- [Living Wage](#). The Living Wage Foundation announced an increase in hourly rates for those on the so-called real living wage, the voluntary scheme which pays a higher rate than the government's statutory National Living Wage
- [Feel poor, work more](#). The Resolution Foundation examined UK employment trends over the past decade noting that rising employment is often a common response to economic crises and has clearly been the case in the UK where more people have been wanting to work or work longer for a given wage
- [LGA Business Plan 2019 – 2022](#). The Local Government Association launched its latest business plan listing six areas including funding and schools that councils will focus on over the next year
- [EdTech](#). The innovation foundation Nesta confirmed which organisations had been awarded funding from its EdTech Innovation Fund, set up earlier this year with the DfE to help develop high-tech solutions in learning, assessment and the use of technology generally in the English education system
- [Facing the Future](#). The Education and Employers organization launched a new international online survey to hear what 14-19 year olds think about the future, what jobs they aspire to and what concerns they have, with the results due to be published with the OECD at January's World Economic Forum

HE

- [Living away from home](#). The HE Policy Institute (HEPI) and the University Partnerships Programme (UPP) examined the issue of the residential campus model in UK HE, looking at why it's come about and some of the costs and benefits, concluding that it's time to think about the whole concept and how it might operate in the future for the benefit of all



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- **Free to speak.** The Policy Exchange think tank published an introductory report into campus free speech suggesting that this was currently being stifled, calling among things for a clear set of principles and institutional champions to be created
- **Latest manifesto.** The million+ group of universities launched their election manifesto with six 'asks' including: restoring maintenance grants, reforming the student visa system, and improving financial support
- **HE in election manifestoes.** Nick Hillman, director of the HE Policy Institute (HEPI) reported on how higher ed had fared in previous election manifestos pointing out that often commitments are not delivered and actually some of the biggest policy changes had not even been in manifestoes

FE/Skills

- **Training support.** The Labour Party pledged to bring back Education Maintenance Allowances, provide free training at L3 and support six years of study at L4/5 as part of a skills training offer to be included in their forthcoming manifesto
- **Skills 'wallet.'** The Lib-Dems announced further details on their skills accounts, now known as skills wallets and potentially worth £10,000 at different points throughout adult life to help with education and lifelong learning
- **College of the Future.** The Independent Commission looking into the college model of the future issued a progress report at the half-way point of its deliberations, listing the five key themes that have emerged and the follow-up questions that still need tackling
- **A manifesto for apprenticeships.** The Collab Group of colleges launched a manifesto on apprenticeships with four asks including reviewing the way in which higher level apprenticeships are funded, increasing the base rate for English and maths for 16-18 yr old apprentices, and ring-fencing the budget for non-levy paying SMEs
- **Skills shortages in the UK.** The Edge Foundation published its latest report into skill shortages in the UK looking on this occasion at the construction industry in particular but also summarizing some of the top messages from the previous half a dozen bulletins in the series
- **What about the workers?** The Resolution Foundation examined the nature of the workforce in an analysis piece for the BBC, pointing out that most people work in the service sector, more women and older people are now working and a traditional full-time job is still the norm for many
- **Support for young people.** The Learning and Work Institute published its latest Youth Commission report looking in this case at education and employment support for young people and concluding that while there are some helpful policies, overall the system lacks integration and coherence
- **The value of VQs.** NFER published commissioned research looking into the value, both personally and professionally for those taking defined vocational qualifications, finding strong evidence of benefits particularly for those achieving higher level qualifications



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Schools

- **School counsellors.** The Labour Party promised to ensure that a qualified counsellor would be made available for every secondary school in England with regular visits put in place for primary schools as well as part of its proposed Healthy Young Minds plan
- **Teacher wellbeing.** The charity Education Support along with YouGov published the results of its latest Wellbeing Index of teachers showing that most find it hard to switch off and over a third had experienced a mental health issue over the last year, calling as a result for much more support to be made available and healthy work practices adopted
- **Constituency school funding.** The National Education Union (NEU) published further analysis on school funding indicating that despite the latest funding announcement, the majority of schools would still have less money per pupil next year than they did five years ago
- **Annual Bullying survey 2019.** The anti-bullying charity Ditch the Label published its latest annual survey into bullying, focusing on the theme of prejudice, and reporting that one fifth of young people reported suffering from bullying over the past year
- **Challenging school exclusions.** The all-party law reform group Justice explored the issue of school exclusions finding a number of 'inadequacies' in the current system including a poor understanding of legal requirements, and recommending the creation of an independent reviewer and a specialist appeals body to sharpen up each stage of review

Tweets(s) of the week.

- "Calling all maths teachers. Trying to help with kids' homework. If you multiply two pieces of cake by zero, the answer is clearly zero. But how do you answer the question, 'what happened to the two pieces of cake?!' - [@nickhillman](#)
- "If the 2010s were the decade of death by a thousand cuts for colleges, the 2020s need to be the decade that delivers a thriving college in every community" - [@AoCDavidH](#)
- "A big problem with any government backed training voucher, or skills wallet or individual learning pot or whatever, is the risk that it will turn into a honeypot for providers who will inflate fees to whatever is maximum value of subsidy. Then wait for the fraud stories" - [@seanjcoughlan](#)
- "'95% of those who played Mary said they were happy compared with 83% of former Angel Gabriels sheep'. Thrilled someone researched the career outcomes of each nativity role. I was Narrator which I hated (wore school uniform rather than exciting costume). Who did you play?" - [@DaisyEBlack](#)

Other stories of the week

- Getting ahead. Hillary Rodham Clinton has been in town this week and one of the events she attended was the launch of the King's College London's World Questions events series looking into global perceptions on women's equality. An accompanying survey by Ipsos Mori offers some interesting perspectives, suggesting for example that women need to work harder and demonstrate more intelligence than men if they want to get ahead. A link to the survey can be found **here**
- How are you feeling about the election? And in another survey this week, YouGov polled voters to gauge their feelings about the election; were they feeling, excited, angry or just confused? Unsure, fearful, and confused seemed to be the most common reactions. A link to the survey can be found **here**



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Quote(s) of the week

- “As we leave the EU we will insist that all big new public sector projects must hire British apprentices so that they can learn new skills on the job” – Boris Johnson talks up skills training in his first major campaign speech
- “It’s one of the policies I’m most excited about” – Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn introduces his Party’s proposed National Education Service
- “Adult education changed my life. It gave me, and so many others, a vital second chance, but too many others today are missing out” – Shadow Education Secretary Angela Rayner vouches for the importance of adult education
- “The fact remains, however, that to really get to grips with our national productivity and social mobility challenges we need to be doing a lot more to help individuals progress from levels two to three, or three to four” – the Collab Group of colleges responds to Lib-Dem proposals for a Skills Wallet
- “Learners rate highly the excellent facilities and the experienced and welcoming staff” – the Newcastle and Stafford College Group become the first FE college to gain a top rating under ofsted’s next inspection framework
- “Kids are kids. It is what makes them so adorable. But a good parent needs to trust their school if the child is to succeed” – Katherine Birbalsingh, headmistress of Michaela Community Schools sparks debate about how far parents should back their offspring in any dispute with a teacher

Number(s) of the week

- 0.3%. How much the UK economy grew in the third quarter of this year, according to the latest figures
- 32.75m. The number of people employed in the UK in the third quarter of this year to September 2019, down 58,000, according to the latest official figures
- 34%. How many public sectors workers surveyed fear that their jobs might go in the next 3 years, according to a survey by UNISON
- £9.30. How much the Living Wage Foundation is proposing its hourly living wage should be, up from £9.10 with £10.75 in London, according to the latest figures
- £1.8bn. How much capital funding the Conservative are promising FE colleges
- Nearly 1m. How many pupils in England are in class sizes of 31 or more, according to figures from the National Education Union (NEU)
- 74%. The number of teachers and education professionals who find it hard to switch off according to the latest Teacher wellbeing Index
- 20%. How many young people have been a victim of bullying in the past year, according to the latest annual survey of bullying in the UK

What to look out for next week

- CBI Annual Conference (Monday)

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- AoC Annual Conference (Tuesday, Wednesday)
- 2019 election activity