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## Policy Eye



### Highlights of week ending Friday 25 October 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.

A pretty mixed bag of education stories this week.

In Westminster, the EU Withdrawal Bill with clauses on citizens' rights, workers' rights and the recognition of professional qualifications was laid, then paused, with much now hinging on transition and Political Declaration arrangements. The government [responded](#) to the Education Committee's earlier report on funding. And the Education Committee itself released a profound [report](#) on special educational needs, ('right reforms, appallingly wrong implementation') and kicked off its [Inquiry into adult skills and lifelong learning](#), with some interesting witness evidence on how adult education provision is now looking – needing some resuscitation according to Professor Wolf.

In higher education, late last week the Office for Students published its '[Value for Money](#)' strategy. This week there's been a further foray into money matters with a [report](#) from the HE Stats Agency (HESA) and Warwick University comparing financial returns on degrees between two age cohorts and finding quite a drop. Elsewhere Universities UK has also been looking at money matters with a new [guide](#) for institutions on how best to brief students and others about how fee and other income money is used.

In FE, ahead of its Autumn Conference, the Association of Employment and Learning providers (AELP) has been looking at [reform](#) of the National Retraining Scheme while the CBI followed up last week's Durham Commission on creative subjects by highlighting in a new [report](#) the importance of the UK's creative industries now generating over £1bn for the UK economy.

For schools, aside from that report on special educational needs, Ofqual has launched [consultation](#) on proposed new design rules for Technical Awards at Key Stage 4, the National Association of Head Teachers has been looking at the pressures facing [middle leaders](#) in schools and Professor John Jerrim [published](#) a thought provoking blog about children's reading, suggesting a diet of good fiction helps.

In other news this week, there've been a number of fascinating reports. The consultancy group Capgemini for instance highlighted the importance of [emotional intelligence](#) (EI) as a skillset for AI while the National Cyber Security Centre's [Annual Review](#) listed the most hacked passwords among its survey of cyber challenges. Also the Office for National Statistics (ONS) [published](#) their projections on population growth over the next decade or so while Deloitte and the Reform think tank provided a fairly sober [assessment](#) of UK public services and social inequality.

But at least our average happiness ratings are up a little according to the latest ONS survey.

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## Top headlines this week

- 'GCSE resits: 2 in 3 students make no progress.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Reading fiction boosts learning by 10 months.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Unlawful practices and buck passing over special needs.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'Pay boost from degrees declined over 20 years, research shows.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Depth of school funding crisis revealed.' ([Friday](#))

## People/organisations in the news this week

### General Policy

- [EU Withdrawal Agreement](#). The government published its hefty EU Withdrawal Agreement Bill with key clauses covering the transition period, Northern Ireland, divorce payments and some matters affecting education such as the recognition of professional qualifications
- [In response](#). The government responded to the Education Committee's recent report on school and college funding, acknowledging some of the recommendations but equally pointing to some of the steps it was already taking including the recent funding commitments, review of high needs and transition to the national funding formula
- [The State of the State](#). Deloitte and the think tank Reform published the results of their latest annual survey of government and public services finding an obvious rise in concerns about environmental issues but also worries that inequality is worsening and that skills levels and educational standards are unlikely to improve
- [Education and an Election](#). The Nuffield Foundation announced that it would be funding and working with the Education Policy Institute on scrutinizing Party education policies in any likely impending general election
- [National Care Leavers Week](#). The government announced a package of measures to mark National Care Leavers Week promising more internships, better housing and healthcare
- [Mental Health at Work Commitment](#). Thirty major organisations signed the Mental Health Commitment, a framework of six core standards developed by businesses and charities intended to help and support mental health at work
- [Population predictions](#). The Office for National Statistics (ONS) published its latest set of national population projections indicating a rise from 66.4m last year to over 70m over the next 25 years with a notable increase in the proportion aged 85 and over
- [Feeling happy?](#) The Office for National Statistics (ONS) also published its latest annual report into personal well-being for the year up to the end of March 2019 showing average happiness ratings slightly up
- [EI for AI](#). The consultancy group Capgemini reported on the importance of Emotional Intelligence (EI) arguing that while Artificial Intelligence (AI) may transform work practices it will not be able to replace human cognitive capabilities, making EI not just a nice to have but an essential future skillset
- [Online gaming](#). The Children's Commissioner issued a new report on young people's gaming and gambling calling for new regulations and limits to protect children from some of the risks including notably running up big debts



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## HE

- **Value for money.** The Office for Students (OfS) published its value for money strategy which will rely heavily on student perceptions about four core features: high quality teaching, transparency on fees, employment outcomes and 'consumer' protection
- **Explaining where the money goes.** Universities UK published a new guide for universities on helping explain better to students and stakeholders where the fee and other money goes, suggesting a three-pronged approach of outlining income generated, income expended and how it's used
- **Degree returns.** The HE Statistics Agency (HESA) and Warwick University examined financial returns on degrees across a couple of age groups, those born in 1970 and those born 20 years later, suggesting while returns remain high, the financial return has dropped over time
- **Universities challenged.** The Equality and Human Rights Commission reported on its inquiry into racial harassment in publicly funded universities in Britain indicating that a lot more needs doing to tackle the issue calling for stronger procedures to support both staff and students, effective redress mechanisms and changes in university culture
- **Prisoner learning.** The HE Policy Institute (HEPI) and Open University (OU) published a new Briefing Note calling for the rule that prevents prisoners from accessing student loans until six years before released to be scrapped, arguing that it could greatly help the rehabilitation of long-term inmates
- **Brexit Readiness Checklist.** Universities UK and GuildHE created a checklist for institutions on how best to prepare for a no-deal Brexit with information on EU students and qualifications, Erasmus+ and structural funding among other things
- **Dealing with the media.** ExpertFile which works with organisations on reputational issues, reported on the benefits and realities of working with journalists using a number of high profile figures to reflect on their experiences and concluding with the recommendation to be bold
- **Next generation research.** The government confirmed its additional investment in AI and bioscience with new PhD places and AI centres in a number of universities
- **What's AI ever done for learning?** HE Policy Institute (HEPI) director Nick Hillman considered where we are with Artificial Intelligence (AI) where, with many claims still to be realized, traditional learning in groups still appears to have its place

## FE/Skills

- **Creative industries.** The CBI published a new report on UK creative industries, highlighting the important role they play both to the economy and to wider society and calling among other things for creative subjects to be included in the EBacc and for government to include them in future trade policies and as part of the emerging digital economy
- **NRS redesign.** The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) called for the National Retraining Scheme (NRS) to be redesigned around the needs of both employed and unemployed adults with a clear set of outcome and progression measures and proportionate funding thrown in
- **Employer Satisfaction.** The DfE published the latest set of results from the FE Choices Employer Satisfaction Survey showing little change to the previous year with 88%+ of employers satisfied with their training provider overall



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## Schools

- **Special educational needs and disabilities.** The Education Committee reported on its Inquiry into the workings of the special educational needs system following reforms introduced in 2014, concluding that while the reforms may have been right, their implementation has resulted in confusion, buck passing and for some, despair
- **Exclusions and Knife Crime.** The All Party Parliamentary Group on Knife Crime called for more support for excluded pupils with clearer lines of responsibility and accountability as part of a new report on helping break the link between school exclusions and knife crime
- **KS4 Technical Awards.** Ofqual launched a consultation on proposed new rules, such as having a clear assessment strategy, for strengthening the regulation of Technical Awards listed in Key Stage 4 performance tables to be taught from Sept 2021
- **Life as a middle leader.** The National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) published the results of its survey into school middle leaders finding many under pressure with more responsibilities and less time, with managing data the most time consuming activity
- **Summer borns.** The DfE published further commissioned research on admissions for summer born children based on survey evidence from local authorities showing continuing variability between authorities in how they deal with requests to delay starting in reception
- **Reading matters.** Professor John Jerrim from the UCL Institute of Education (IoE) examined in a blog on the IoE website how far different types of reading matter might affect children's PISA reading scores, concluding that those who read more fiction scored higher than those who only read non-fiction

## Tweets(s) of the week.

- "Frequently, talk of 21st century skills causes people to install in schools lots of distracting low-level activities and technology that further fractures time and focus" - [@Doug\\_Lemov](#)
- "A little bugbear is the no. of depts that align topics with half term lengths - e.g. 1 half term = 1 topic. One of my first acts as HoD was to detach topics from h/t lengths. It seems to lead to 'filler' lessons in long h/ts and incomplete/rushed sequences in short h/ts" - [@mrwbw](#)
- "Employers judge you just seven words into an interview, study finds" - [@Independent](#)
- "Children five times more exposed to toxic air on school run than other times of day, shocking study shows" - [@SchoolsImprove](#)
- "Thinking of the time a kid I'd been teaching for nearly a year asked me what I did for a living"- [@JurassicArse](#)
- "Find out if you're Gen X or a millennial by trying to carry off the peace sign in a selfie" - [@MhairiMcF](#)

## Other stories of the week

- Are you sure you've read it? What do 'Great Expectations,' 'War and Peace' and 'Lolita' have in common? Apparently they're all books that people claim to have read but in most cases haven't according to a survey by Sky Arts. The survey which covered 2,000 people for the recent Cheltenham Literary Festival concluded that more than half of the people surveyed admitted to saying they'd read a particular book when actually they hadn't. The list of the top 20 books that people claim to have read but haven't, can be found [here](#)



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- ‘Don’t like Mondays.’ Not everyone can do it but flexiwork, working some days on some days off is growing in popularity as many individuals, let alone companies, seek a better work-life balance. But which day is best to choose if you’re free to choose? Clearly Mondays are the least popular and Fridays the most popular but other days have their virtues. A link to the research can be found [here](#)

## Quote(s) of the week

- “Parents and carers have to wade through a treacle of bureaucracy, full of conflict, missed appointments and despair” – the Education Committee reports on the workings of the special educational needs system
- “Value for money in higher education is a complex and contested concept” – the Office for Students (OfS) launches a new value for money strategy
- “Many told us that their own laptops or desktops were better than those provided by their employer and others said they used their own smartphones for calls, web access or checking emails” – Deloitte and Reform report on the use of technology in the workplace
- “You don’t know how long you’re actually playing for... sometimes it’s 5 or 6 hours” – young people relate their experiences of online gaming in a new report by the Children’s Commissioner

## Number(s) of the week

- 122. The number of explanatory pages accompanying the government’s EU Withdrawal Agreement Bill
- 3m. The increase in the size of the UK population over the next decade, according to latest figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS)
- 7.56. The average happiness rating in the UK out of 10, for the last year, up slightly according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS)
- 658. The number of ‘incidents’ that the National Cyber Security Centre has dealt with over the last year, according to the Centre’s latest Annual Review
- 37%. How many people surveyed expect to see a reduction in skills in Britain’s workforce, according to research from Deloitte and Reform
- 28%. The rise in the number of people applying for politics courses at university since the start of Brexit, according to research from the BBC
- 56. How many hours a week on average middle school leaders say they work, according to a survey from the NAHT
- 93%. How many children in the UK play video games according to new research from the Children’s Commissioner in England

## What to look out for next week

- Institute for Fiscal Studies event on ‘The Future of Education.’ (Monday)
- AELP Autumn Conference (Tuesday)