

## Policy Eye: (Election 2015)



### Highlights of week ending Friday 14 November 2014

*(Welcome to Policy Eye, a nearly weekly additional service from Policy Watch offering a regular round up of UK education headlines and stories from over the previous 7 days and introduced to keep a special 'eye' on developments in the build up to the 2015 election.)*

#### The week in a word

This is the time of year when skills matters come to the fore. The week began with employers raising concerns about EU policy and skill levels at the annual CBI Conference and is ending with the showcasing of skills talent at the annual Skills Show. Next week, it's the turn of the FE sector who will be addressed by the Business Secretary on the second day of its three day annual conference where the theme is 'Creating Futures Together.' The Conferences come as both the ONS and the CIPD have reported good news on the labour market, with unemployment down and wages up but, as Ed Miliband reminded listeners to his Senate House speech this week, not everybody's feeling the warm glow and while the Euro economy remains fragile, the economic recovery is, to quote Nick Clegg, "at a delicate stage." It's why skills matter; it hasn't always been fashionable to say so but learning a skill whether at school, college or university is fast becoming an essential prerequisite for both individual and national success as reports from both the CBI and OECD this week have indicated. When even a national newspaper takes a headline to lament the fact that no-one in this country knows how to make a sandwich anymore, then it's clear that skills and the vocational learning that provides for them, has gained a new, and significant, prominence.

#### Top headlines this week

- 'Labour will test teachers on pupil control.' (**Monday**)
- Social mobility and the millennials.' (**Tuesday**)
- 'Diversity key to London GCSE success.' (**Wednesday**)
- 'Are UK degree standards comparable?' (**Thursday**)
- 'Downton Abbey' world will lead to coding class divide.' (**Friday**)

#### People/organisations in the news this week

- The Education Secretary who helped launch the 'Your Life' campaign designed to raise awareness about the importance of STEM subjects for young people
- Nick Clegg who announced that a new UCAS style database of skills and training opportunities for 16–19 yr olds would be in place from Sept 2015
- The HE Minister who became the latest government Minister to head to India and encourage students and businesses to consider studying and researching in the UK
- The FE Minister whose latest newsletter for the sector outlined progress made in a number of policy areas and listed five areas where responses or reports are due shortly

- Cabinet Minister, Francis Maude who reported on progress being made in tackling the number of quangos and confirmed that 185 (out of 900) had been abolished and 165 merged
- Ed Miliband who said a future Labour government would put a new emphasis on vocational education and skills training in a speech to business leaders at the CBI
- Labour's John Denham who suggested shorter, mixed modes of study for HE as one of four funding principles when he gave evidence to UUK's Student Funding Panel
- Maddalaine Ansell who takes up post as chief executive at University Alliance in January
- Apple who announced it was considering setting up an R/D centre in Cambridge
- The CBI who set out proposals for improving the living, working and education standards of the nation in a report for its Annual Conference
- The OECD who called for a clearer focus on work-based learning and a simpler qualification system in its latest report on vocational skills
- Oxford University and Deloitte who published a joint study suggesting that a third of all jobs, particularly in areas like admin, sales and production, could disappear over the next 20 years as automation took over
- The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) whose latest labour market report indicated that on average, employers get 20 applicants per high-skilled vacancy and 60 per low-skilled vacancy
- The Skills Funding Agency who published the latest funding rules for Apprenticeship Trailblazers based on the proposed 2:1 (government to employer) contribution
- The Institute of Fiscal Studies who examined the costs and benefits of different initial teacher training routes
- The Sixth Form Colleges' Association who called for the AS level to be re-coupled as one of seven recommendations in its election 2015 manifesto
- Teach First whose Report this week highlighted just what impact the organisation has had over the last 10 years
- The Sutton Trust who published research to show that internships were in danger of becoming the preserve of the well-heeled
- The Open University whose latest research report into learning trends highlighted the growing (learning) shift from classroom to social network
- London schools whose feat in turning round low levels of performance was put down in large part to the high aspirations of children of immigrants in a report by Bristol Uni
- Pupil premium funding which will increase for 2015/16
- Cambridge Assessment's Tim Oates who published a video, previously presented to the DfE, explaining how assessing without levels could flourish in primary education
- Anne Longfield who was appointed as the new Children's Commissioner for England
- Waterstone's who announced the leading contenders for their Book of the Year which, for those with an eye on Christmas, included: 'H is for Hawk,' Thomas Piketty's 'Capital in the 21stc,' 'The Miniaturist' and 'Once Upon an Alphabet'

### Tweet of the week

- *'Mario Balotelli behaviour down to bad education claims former Barcelona manager.'*  
@Independent

- *"It's easier to relocate a cemetery than to change a school curriculum (Woodrow Wilson.)"* @brianlightman

### Quote(s) of the week

- *"Politicians like me cannot be allowed our grubby mitts on it."* Charlotte Leslie MP on the forthcoming plans for a College of Teaching
- *"If we win the election, our focus will be on a revolution in vocational education and apprenticeships."* Ed Miliband addresses employers at the CBI Conference

### Number(s) of the week

- £2bn. The amount the government claims to have saved over the last four years from its quango reforms
- £1,320. What primary schools should receive for each free school meal pupil for next year
- 6,000. The number of teachers Teach First has trained and supported since it first started placing teachers in schools in 2003

### What to look out for next week

- The Skills Commission report on 'The Skills System and the Changing Structures of Work' (Monday)
- Public Accounts Committee witness session on Academies and maintained school: oversight and intervention (Monday)
- The Association of Colleges Annual Conference (Tuesday-Thursday)
- The CBI's Future Possible Education and Skills Conference (Tuesday)
- BIS Committee witness session on Government support for business (Tuesday)
- Education Committee second witness session on PSHE and SRE in schools (Wednesday)
- London Mayor's Education Conference (Friday)