

Policy Eye



Highlights of week ending Friday 23 October 2015

(Welcome to Policy Eye, a nearly 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

Half-term has arrived for many with education pretty much in full throttle.

This week, two important education-related Bills (the Education Bill and the Cities and Local Gov Devolution Bill) moved a step closer, the Education Secretary defended her position on new schools including grammars, the DfE launched further consultation on 'dealing with' coasting schools, the Education Committee examined the role and remit of Regional Schools Commissioners, the Public Accounts Committee examined FE finances, the BIS Committee looked into the government's Productivity Plan and Ofsted, the think tank Policy Exchange and LKMco/Pearson all published significant reports. In addition training providers and awarding organisations have been in conference. As they used to say in Private Eye: 'that's enough: Ed'

It means we reach the final quarter of 2015 with the world of education as busy as ever and arguably three issues prominent.

First, inevitably perhaps as the Chancellor's spending announcements draw nearer, funding where anxieties continue to build. There's been something for everyone this week. The Institute for Fiscal Studies issued a new briefing on the outlook for schools funding which boiled down to tough times ahead, colleges were told to expect more births, deaths and marriages by the Dept Permanent Secretary while HE faced the proposition, spelt out in a comprehensive report by the think tank Policy Exchange, that money should be switched from them to FE to help fund the tightly squeezed but much prized higher-level tech training provision. Almost exactly a month to go therefore before the Chancellor declares his hand on where the cuts should fall and education is waiting nervously.

Second, what about the workers, under pressure, underpaid but according to the LKMco/Pearson research today keen to make a difference; is there a recruitment and retention crisis as many have suggested? The Education Secretary waved school teachers off for half-term with a grateful thanks and a reminder that the latest Workforce Challenge groups are busy getting to grips with issues about paperwork, bureaucracy and so on but a seminar hosted by Policy Exchange this week also heard worrying evidence about a lack of specialists in some subject areas and concerns about replacement needs among heads and senior managers. The Dept has done its modelling but this looks like being an issue that will run for some time.

And third, skills training and provision, vital for the government's Productivity Plan and economic growth ambitions but underfunded at the higher level as Policy Exchange pointed out and still some way short of the full package when it comes to apprenticeships for young people as Ofsted pointed out. Again, we haven't heard the last of either.

Top headlines this week

- 'Cut HE funding to boost FE says think tank report.' (**Monday**)
- 'Private schools attack exam appeals smokescreen.' (**Tuesday**)
- 'Coasting school definition out for consultation.' (**Wednesday**)
- 'Apprenticeship drive has diluted quality, says Ofsted chief.' (**Thursday**)
- 'Fact or Fiction? The reasons teachers chose the job -and quit.' (**Friday**)

People/organisations in the news this week

- The Prime Minister who along with the Home Secretary launched the government's **counter-extremism strategy** with an emphasis on helping build 'cohesive communities'
- The BIS Committee who spent a morning this week hearing a range of **views** from different parts of the education and business world on the government's Productivity Plan
- The Education Committee who have announced that it will hold a **one-off session** to examine the issue of teacher recruitment and retention; no date set yet but it is calling for evidence submissions by 20 November 2015
- The DfE who updated its guidance on intervention strategies for schools causing concern and published an accompanying **consultation** on the definition of 'coasting'
- The DfE who following the publication last week of interim performance results for GCSEs and A levels have now added interim destination results as well
- The House of Lords Library who provided a useful **summary** of the Education and Adoption Bill as it reached its Second Reading stage in the House this week
- The House of Commons Library who provided an equally useful **summary** of the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill including an update on the 4 latest 'devo-deals' agreed as it reached its Second Reading in the Commons
- Go ON UK, the charity promoting digital skills, who along with the BBC, LGA and LSE have created a **heatmap** showing where digital exclusion is at its worst in the UK. (Spoiler: London and the S.E fares best, parts of Wales, Scotland, Northumberland, Shropshire and N.Lincs fare worst)
- Ed Balls who is joining the growing body of expertise at the Policy Institute at King's College London and becoming a **visiting professor** there
- Sir Anthony Seldon who has pursued his interest in 'learner mental wellbeing' from his new post as Vice-Chancellor at the University of Buckingham by publishing a **10-point plan** intended to help universities deal with such issues better
- Former Chair of the Education Committee Barry Sheerman who has been confirmed as Chair of the new **Sutton Trust Advisory Group** which will advise the Trust on its future research strategy
- Michael Davis, chief executive of UKCES, who will **leave** his post next March
- The think tank Policy Exchange whose **report** proposing a transfer of funds from HE to FE to help build a higher level professional technical route attracted considerable interest
- Ofsted who published a major **report** on apprenticeships critical of many aspects including the quality of some of the schemes, the failure to focus on the key sectors and the lack of careers guidance and support needed to encourage young people to take up an apprenticeship
- Chief Executive of Ofqual Glenys Stacey who gave a comprehensive overview of how the qualification systems and its regulation is changing in a **speech** at the Federation of Awarding Bodies Annual Conference
- Nicky Morgan who **updated** teachers on progress in the Workload Challenge (the latest 3 groups are just about to start a second round of meetings) in a half-term message
- Neil Carmichael, Chair of the Education Committee, who is one of a number of co-authors of a new **report** from the consultancy Wild Search looking at new models of school governance and calling for proper remuneration for governors
- The Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) whose latest **Briefing Paper** on schools funding in England suggests that despite protections, they (schools) "*will feel the pinch*"

- LKMco who in a **report** commissioned by Pearson surveyed teachers to find out what motivated them to go into teaching in the first place and what some of the issues were that helped and/or hindered them
- The Institute of Physics who published a **report** looking at how gender can affect the choice of subjects such as Physics in school and who called for 'gender champions' to be appointed to help overcome any bias
- The Education Endowment Foundation who is launching a series of new **learning packages** this week designed to help those working with disadvantaged pupils particularly in areas such as numeracy
- Laura McLInerney whose **article** in The Guardian this week raised a number of interesting points about best to attract teachers especially in so-called tough areas
- The NUT who led the handing in of a **petition** to the DfE this week arguing against the introduction of baseline assessment for 4 and 5 year olds at the start of primary

Tweet(s) of the week

- *"When Lemsip just isn't enough. 16 tell-tale signs that half-term is just around the corner."* @tes
- *"What those pen colours mean. #Red: I work in the independent sector."* @tombennett71
- *"Nicky Morgan01 says: there are no applications for new grammar school expansions sitting on her desk right now."* @SchoolsWeek
- *"It'll be like Ofsted on speed when the area-review teams visit (colleges)"* @tesfenews

Quote(s) of the week

- *"At the end of the day let's be frank about this, we need everyone to work on this together."* The Prime Minister appeals for help as he launches the counter-extremism strategy
- *"It's likely and it's my personal view that there will be significantly fewer of them."* BIS's Permanent Secretary **tells** the Public Accounts Committee what might happen to colleges after the area-based reviews
- *"I realise there has been significant interest in the outcome of this case, including from MPs, but I would like to take this opportunity to confirm that the government has no plans to change our policy on grammar schools."* The Education Secretary on where the government stands on grammar schools
- *"In my opinion there are 3 guilty parties: schools, further education providers and employers."* The Chief Inspector takes a wide aim when it comes to tackling apprenticeships
- *"What it isn't OK is to come in at 9 until 4-it isn't that sort of job-but my teachers do 8 to 6."* Government adviser and practising headteacher Sir Andrew Carter describes what's required to be a teacher in his school
- *"They may not be a pleasant thing to do but they are a necessary thing."* Government behaviour adviser Tom Bennett on the case for school detentions
- *"If you're arguing with teachers and principals, coaches and umpires all the time, it's a sign you're a little too invested."* The Washington Post on **how to avoid** being a helicopter (or over-zealous) parent

Number(s) of the week

- 8%. How much the IfS reckon school funding per pupil will fall by in real terms over the next 5 years
- 4. The different teacher 'types' identified in a LKMco/Pearson survey into 'Why Teach?' (*Practitioners; Moderates; Idealists; Rationalists*)
- 71%. The number of students in continuous education, training or employment six months after completing Key Stage 5 according to the government's latest provisional stats
- £2577. How much it would cost a family of 4 to fly to Larnaca this half term as against £970 the week after according to the Local Government Association who is **calling** for more flexibility over family holidays in term-time
- 83%. The number of 16-24 year olds who rated their life satisfaction as high or very high in the last ONS **stats** on children and young people's well-being (although 17% reported high levels of anxiety)
- 64%. The number of higher education providers who in a recent sample by Which? had failed to provide updated information about next year's fees on their websites

What to look out for next week

- Pearson Teaching Awards ceremony broadcast on BBC2 (Sunday)
- Education Questions in the Commons (Monday)