

## Policy Eye: (Election 2015)



### Highlights of week ending Friday 24 October 2014

(Welcome to Policy Eye, a new 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

Workloads have been in the news this week particularly for those in the public sector like teachers. Nick Clegg announced a series of measures to help "stop the runaway train of bureaucracy," Education Secretary Nicky Morgan helped launch a Workload Challenge intended to weed out some of the worst excesses for teachers, while Shadow Education Secretary Tristram Hunt weighed in with a set of four principles also to try and help 'nail the problem.' It's just over ten years since the professional associations shook hands with the then Education Secretary, Charles Clarke on a new Working Agreement but the pressure remains and there may be a certain irony in the fact that the government, who many regard as the authors of much of the bureaucracy, is picking up the issue again, but an election can concentrate minds. Either way, the new Workforce Challenge will collect evidence from teachers over the next month via a TES website and the government is hoping to discuss the outcomes with professional bodies and other agencies and launch a new deal with teachers early next year.

Two other stories have grabbed the headlines this week. One was the latest progress report from the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission. Social mobility has become an article of faith across the political classes but concentrated progress is proving hard to come by and the Commission is keen to see education at every level play its part. It too is setting its sights on the future, identifying 12 challenges for 2020, over half of which such as ending long-term youth unemployment, have an education flavour. And the other story concerns the release of the provisional stats on exam results for 2013-14, the first to be affected by the 'Gove' reforms and where the fall in the numbers gaining the 5 A\*- C benchmark has attracted attention. Whether it says more about the old qualification system than the new is causing some debate.

#### Top headlines this week

- 'David Cameron vows to create 3m apprenticeships,' (**Monday**)
- 'Child poverty set to rise, says social mobility commissioner.' (**Tuesday**)
- 'GCSE and A level results changed for 45,500 on appeal.' (**Wednesday**)
- 'Drop on headline GCSE results 'reflects toughening up of standards,' says Minister (**Thursday**)
- 'Schools angered by decision not to count iGCSEs in league tables.' (**Friday**)

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

- Nick Clegg who used a major speech on the public sector workforce to launch a new Workforce Challenge intended to ease the admin burden on teachers
- Tristram Hunt who joined in by calling for a period of curriculum stability as one of four principles for easing the pressure on teachers

- Yvonne Fovargue MP who was appointed as Shadow Minister for Young People as part of a mini reshuffle by Labour
- Professor Alison Wolf who was granted a life peerage for services to education and labour market research
- The BIS Dept who announced a further wave of employer groups helping to design apprenticeship standards as part of the trailblazer scheme
- UCAS who published the first set of figures in the 2015 university application cycle, covering at this stage applications to Oxbridge and specialised courses such as medicine and revealing at this stage a 3% drop, notably from the home market
- Academics in HE who in a survey reported in the Times Higher have raised concerns about 'a pack em in, stack 'em high' culture in universities
- Ofqual who published a provisional set of figures showing that there had been a significant increase in the number of enquiries about GCSE and A level results this year
- The CBI who called for more STEM apprentices and graduates and more commissioned skills funding in a paper issued at its latest Industrial Strategy Breakfast attended by Ministers from all three major political Parties
- HEFCE who launched a consultation on a new business plan due to be operative from 2015-2020
- The Institute of Economic Affairs who added to voices calling for reform of the HE tuition fee system by proposing a system whereby universities established payback agreements with their students based on future earnings
- Skills funding which for both adult skills and 14-19 provision, would be handed over to key city regions or metros under the latest proposals from the City Growth Commission
- The Edge Foundation who in its manifesto for the next election listed seven measures to help strengthen vocational learning and eliminate the number of NEETs
- The FE Commissioner who published his third open letter to the sector highlighting ten factors that can help strengthen provider quality performance
- The DfE who published the provisional stats on 2013/14 exam performance in GCSE, A level and equivalent qualifications
- The Institute for Fiscal Studies and others who published a research paper questioning the value of extending the entitlement to free early education for 3 year olds in England
- The Social Mobility and Child poverty Commission who published its second major Report into the state of social mobility in this country and called for a new set of measures to be achieved by 2020
- The Sutton Trust and Esme Fairburn Foundation who have got together to launch a £1m Parental Engagement Fund to help bridge the attainment gap in early and primary years
- Barclays who along with the National Skills Academy for Financial Services and other partners, announced the launch next year of their Prepare for Work programme for college students
- 'Overshare,' announced by Chambers Dictionary as the Word of the Year and meaning apparently: *'to be unacceptably forthcoming with information about one's personal life'*

## Tweet of the week

- "We hate maths say 4 in 10 – a majority of Americans!" @RealGeoffBarton

### Quote of the week

- *"We estimate on the current trend it will be at least 30 years before the attainment gap at GCSE between pupils who are entitled to free school meals and the rest is even halved."* The Social Mobility Commission in its latest 'State of the Nation' Report

### Number(s) of the week

- 38. The average number of hours a teacher works a week according to recent OECD research
- 50. The average number of hours put in by teachers in England according to the Education Secretary
- Nine and six. The number of extra hours a week put in by teachers in primary and secondary education respectively in England according to the Shadow Education Secretary

### What to look out for next week

- Education Questions to the Secretary of State (Monday)
- BIS Committee evidence session with the Minister on HE-Business collaboration (Wednesday)