

## Policy Eye: (Post-Election 2015)



### Highlights of week ending Friday 29 May 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 and currently keeping a special 'eye' on developments following the 2015 election.)*

#### The week summed up

The Prime Minister called it "*challenging but doable*," the CBI said it was "*jam packed*," the Times said '*it was the moment where Cameron finally got real*.' Either way the legislative programme outlined in the Queen's Speech this week, with its spread of over 20 Bills, means that the new Parliament will escape the fate that befell the last one of being described as a zombie Parliament.

The new legislative programme runs to a clear theme and for anyone in doubt, it was repeated six times in David Cameron's accompanying introduction. That theme is '*One Nation*,' an epithet long associated with the Conservative Party, briefly snatched by Ed Miliband and now reclaimed by the Conservatives as they seek to claim leadership of the heartland of the electorate, the roofers and retailers and hard-working families that David Cameron referred to when he launched his initial pitch earlier this year. It is to their aspirations, a word incidentally derided by John Prescott this week as being meaningless, that the legislative programme is intended to speak to with its Bills on an EU referendum, Housing, Immigration and Education. The challenge will be balancing the big ticket items such as the EU referendum and a British Bill of Rights with the more fundamental issues of schools, housing and the minimum wage but as the Guardian put it, in education as in the other two big public service areas of health and welfare, "*the overall tone is steady as she goes rather than a change of course*."

Current thinking is that the 'steady as she goes' approach for domestic policy will last for at least the next couple of years partly to allow in education at least for the current reform programme to be implemented and bed down and partly because the government has bigger fish to fry most notably in the early commitment to an EU referendum.

A period of calm may be no bad thing, it's what many in the profession have called in the past and Nicky Morgan recognised as such in her TES webchat yesterday. But of course as this week's reports from the OECD and Boston Consulting show, the challenge of preparing and supporting young people for a fast moving and changing world remains. The evidence is telling. According to the OECD, the gap in literacy skills between our young people in work and those not is one of the biggest in any Western country. And as for using that education to support health, wellbeing and growth, according to the ranking used by the Boston Consulting Group Report, Britain comes well down the charts. Whether more academies, more apprenticeships and so on will do the trick remains to be seen but we should have some sense over the next couple of years.

#### Top headlines this week

- 'Guardian Uni tables: Coventry slip past Russell Group peers to enter top 20.' (**Tuesday**)
- 'Britain's graduates are bottom in maths.' (**Wednesday**)
- 'UK behind Poland in key education indicators, report.' (**Thursday**)
- 'Points plan for degree grades.' (**Friday**)

## People/organisations in the news this week

- The government who lined up 26 prospective Bills under its new **legislative programme** announced by the Queen
- Former Prime Minister Gordon Brown who in a **speech** to the UN called for urgent action to help the increasing numbers of refugee and displaced children in what he dubbed 'a year of fear' for them
- Former Education Secretary Estelle Morris who outlined **three areas** where Labour could start to offer some alternative thinking on education
- Professor Louise Richardson, currently vice-chancellor at St Andrews University who from next year will take over as Oxford University's first female vice-chancellor
- Neil McIntosh, former CEO of CfBT, who has been appointed as the first President of CMRE, the Centre for the Study of Market Reform of Education
- The Guardian who published its **2016 University Guide** showing how universities had performed in any one of 53 taught subject areas
- The HE Academy who **reported** on its recent two year pilot of a new honours degree classification system using a national grade point average system
- The Enterprise Research Centre who published the first **innovation map** of the UK showing that Oxfordshire has the most innovative economy in Britain and that many areas in the North actually outperform those in the South East
- The OECD who published an updated **report** on the skills outlook and employability prospects for young people and painted a pretty depressing picture for those with low skill levels
- The **157 Group** of colleges who got together with economic modelling specialists (EMSI) to demonstrate the economic importance of colleges to learners, communities and taxpayers
- The Skills Funding agency who published the latest **data** on success rates and learner satisfaction in FE under the FE Choices data platform
- Ofqual who published the latest **data** on exam entries for summer 2015
- Professor Chris Husbands who **highlighted** some of the practical issues in the government's plans to raise school performance
- The commentator **Gifted Phoenix** who published a useful blog trying to make sense of the government's manifesto commitment that only secondary schools offering the full EBacc range of subjects could be awarded a top inspection grade
- '**Hashtag**' which emerged as children's word of the year in a competition run by the BBC and summarised by Oxford University Press who noted that words like 'email,' 'television,' 'mobile' and 'Facebook' were also being superseded by new technology-based words

## Tweet(s) of the week

- *"Coasting schools still not defined but they've been around since at least 1999. Is that a coasting description?" @seanjcoughlan*
- *"@Nicky Morgan. There's a certain confidence that is the hallmark of outstanding schools." @tes*
- *"Time to stop tinkering with school structures, invest in teachers instead." @TeachForAll*

- *"Erasers are instruments of the devil and should be banned from the classroom because they shame mistakes."* @Telegraph
- *"Want proof of what's possible in education? You'll find it in Korea."* @SchliecherEDU
- *"I am changing the staff room so that it is a place to drink coffee, chat and relax. No school timetables and rubbish."* @Oldprimaryhead1

### Acronym(s) of the Week

- GPA. Grade point average, a degree classification system providing a more rounded picture of HE student performance that is used abroad and which has been piloted here over the last couple of years
- SET. The Society for Education and Training, a new membership organisation for practitioners working in the FE sector launched this week

### Quote(s) of the week

- *"Our school reforms in the last Parliament were bold...in this Parliament they will bolder still."* The Prime Minister in his introduction to the Queen's Speech
- *"Recent evidence suggests that standards of literacy and numeracy in our schools are falling. That is unacceptable."* Nicole Sturgeon announces a campaign to raise standards in Scottish education
- *"We're challenging the system. We're bringing in new forms of pedagogy and listening to students."* John Latham, vice-chancellor at Coventry University which has risen to 15<sup>th</sup> in the latest Guardian University rankings
- *"Where the needs of the world and your talents cross, there lies your vocation."* The OECD's Secretary General invokes Aristotle's famous definition of vocationalism as he launches the OECD's latest Skills Report

### Number(s) of the week

- 35m. The number of 16-29 yr olds currently neither in education nor training across OECD countries according to the OECD's latest Skills Report
- 8.6m. The number of children worldwide thought to be in slavery according to UN figures
- 12%. The drop over the last year in the number of people applying to teacher training courses according to latest UCAS figures
- 67%. The number of intermediate apprentices who were already employed by their company when they were granted an apprenticeship according to research commissioned by the Local Government Association
- 11.2%. The average return on investment in terms of higher future earnings for FE learners according to research commissioned by the 157 Group
- 5. The number of state funded secondary schools who entered the whole of their KS4 cohort for all EBacc subjects last year according to a blog by Gifted Phoenix

### What to look out for next week

- Education debate following the Queen's Speech (Wednesday)