

Policy Eye: (Post-Election 2015)



Highlights of week ending Friday 31 July 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

Fewer announcements this week as the summer recess kicks in but some interesting developments all the same.

For schools, the Education Secretary continued her engagement strategy with teachers by focusing on teacher workloads, for FE the government sought to clarify what constitutes an apprenticeship while HE re-iterated its case for international students as part of its staying in Europe campaign. A week then which has seen the first supermarket advertise its 'Back to School' autumn range has equally seen a number of what will be big autumn policy issues also given an early airing.

Schools first where many are busy preparing themselves for the release of exam results which in the case of A' levels is now just a couple of weeks away. Head teachers have been lining up in the media this week to offer advice to both students and parents on how to cope with the big day: "Book a lovely breakfast for 10.00am. They won't eat much before. Neither will you." For teachers, however, the work on preparing for another year goes on and despite last year's 'strategy,' the workload issue remains as pertinent as ever. Speaking at the Teach First Impact Conference this week, the Education Secretary highlighted three further ways to ease the pain: new working groups to address the 3 biggest concerns (marking, planning and use of resources, and data management) new standards for CPD; and support for the College of Teaching. Teacher morale is a long-standing issue in the profession but equally now for the government as concerns rise about teacher recruitment and retention. Whether these latest measures will help, remains to be seen.

Over at FE, while BIS reviews its cost operations as part of the 2015 Spending Review and the 'bigger, better' college model gathers momentum, apprenticeships remain the big game in town. This week the government launched a short consultation to help clarify how to define a 'genuine' apprenticeship. This has been an issue in the past and could become one again with the push to achieve the 3m target but the hope is that by making it an offence to apply the term to non-standard training and adding the ultimate sanction of a fine, it will help deter further misappropriation. Final details will appear in the forthcoming Enterprise Bill due this autumn.

Finally HE where visas and restrictions on international students remain one of a number of concerns and where there's also been activity this week. The Home Affairs Committee has announced it will hold an inquiry into the Tier 2 visa cap, introduced 4 years ago but now feared to be preventing skilled workers from taking up important skilled jobs. And second, Universities UK has launched its campaign against a Brexit, arguing that leaving Europe could inflict lasting damage to UKHE research, student numbers and jobs. Another issue building up for the autumn.

Top headlines this week

- 'What do universities look for in a BTEC student?' (**Monday**)
- 'Councils to be scored on school dropout rates.' (**Tuesday**)
- 'Leaked levels report claims reveals testing concerns.' (**Wednesday**)
- 'Nicky Morgan vows to end needless bureaucracy for teachers.' (**Thursday**)
- 'Colleges must offer ESOL courses despite funding wipeout.' (**Friday**)

People/organisations in the news this week

- The Prime Minister who has been leading a big **trade delegation** including members of the Northern Powerhouse to South East Asia this week
- The government who promised to provide a progress report on its Digital Agenda this autumn as it issued its official **response** to the Lords Committee Report on Digital Skills
- The Home Affairs Select Committee who have announced it will hold an inquiry into the **Tier 2 Skilled Workers system** later this year
- The BIS Dept who launched a brief consultation to help formalise the usage of the **apprenticeships** brand
- Nick Boles, the Skills Minister, who announced that the government intends to push ahead with the publication of local council score cards each summer, showing how well councils were dealing with **16-19 NEETs**
- Education Secretary Nicky Morgan who announced three more working groups to try and ease teachers' workloads in a **speech** to the Teach First Impact Conference
- Labour leadership contender Jeremy Corbyn who called for the creation of a **National Education Service** which like the NHS could provide all-through education 'free at the point of delivery'
- John Pugh MP, appointed Spokesperson for Education in the new **Lib-Dem set-up**
- The Institute of Directors whose latest **survey** of business leaders found varying degrees of support for devolving powers to the regions with just over 50% supporting the devolution of responsibilities over skills
- The Social Mobility Commission whose latest commissioned **report** argued that many disadvantaged young people faced not only a glass ceiling but also a glass floor, as more advantaged families sought to ensure their offspring didn't fall too far behind
- The Independent Commission on Fees which published its final **report** calling among other things for the OBR to head a 'value for money' study into the whole fee and loan system
- Universities UK who launched its '**Universities for Europe**' campaign designed to ensure the HE sector provides a strong 'staying in voice' come the referendum
- The University Alliance who hosted a half-day seminar on the TEF (**Teaching Excellence Framework**) and its implications
- HEFCE who published its latest (2014/15) facts and figures **publication** covering main trends and developments in HE in England over the last year
- Anthony McClaran, who will leave his post as **Chief Executive of QAA** and take up a similar post in Australia in October
- Professor Chris Husbands, Director of the **UCL Institute of Education**, who has been appointed as Vice-Chancellor of Sheffield Hallam University from Jan 2016
- **Sheffield University** who has announced that it will open up for clearing two weeks earlier than usual so that it's ready for any influx of numbers following the lifting of the numbers cap on students this year
- The Guardian which offered a helpful guide to the government's new rules for **international students** in both HE and FE
- New College Nottingham and Central College Nottingham, the latest two FE colleges to **merge**, in this case from next August

- AELP whose [Briefing Paper](#) on the Apprenticeship Levy urged the government not to rush implementation and instead develop the proposition over a 3-4 year period
- [Academy chains](#), the subject of a blog by the Institute of Government arguing that five questions about governance and accountability need answering
- NFER who have started advertising for [English and maths markers](#) for the new National Reference Tests
- ['Rise To,'](#) one of the new innovative career sites which aims to help match young people to companies and opportunities and which secured launch funding this week
- Journalist David Nield who described some of the latest wearable technology devices for use in the classroom both now and the future in an article in [The Guardian](#)
- '1984,' 'To Kill a Mockingbird,' and 'Animal Farm,' the top 3 books recommended by teachers for KS3/4 students in a TES survey. Full listing of the top 100 [here](#)

Tweet(s) of the week

- *"The more networked a country the more successful and prosperous it can be."*
[@RCorbettMEP](#)
- *"Academics lack understanding for business-university links. They obsess about shiny things, ignore business needs."* [@timeshighered](#)
- *"Easy degrees are fuelling drunken laddish behaviour"* [@telegraph](#)
- *"Schools cannot magic away bureaucracy' - unions respond to @NickyMorgan01's suggestion to stop working at 5pm"* [@tes](#)
- *"The average person changes career 7/8 times. I want teaching to be one of those career changes."* [@educationgovuk](#)
- *"Discussion: the essential relationship isn't between exam boards and schools. It's between exam boards and markers."* [@tes](#)
- *"We do homework, but I don't insist teachers mark it because we don't really know who's done it. @natedtrust."* [@RealGeoffBarton](#)

Quote(s) of the week

- *"As autonomous organisations it is up to colleges manage their own budgets."* The FE Minister responds to a Parliamentary question on FE finances
- *"There's not a single one of the 39 LEPs that hasn't put skills and productivity at the heart of its strategic thinking."* Ann Limb, chair of the S.E. Midlands LEP, on the importance of local skills planning
- *"Ban e mails after 5.00pm to help teachers cope with workload."* The Secretary of State's latest thoughts on how to reduce teachers' workloads
- *"No one should criticise parents for doing the best for their children. That's what we all want. But Britain is a long way from being a meritocratic society when the less able can do better in life than the more able."* Alan Milburn, Chair of the Social Mobility Commission, introduces the Commission's latest research
- *"A rule of thumb is: would I be happy for anything I post on Twitter or Facebook to be on the front page of the Daily Mail?"* Head teacher and tweeter Geoff Barton on the 'rules' of social media for teachers
- *"To help teens develop a sense of independence and financial responsibility, one especially valuable holiday activity is enabling your son or daughter to manage the family budget for a*

week- making them responsible for the food shop and planning and cooking dinner for the family. " A brave head teacher suggests one way to help develop life skills in young people

- "We always recommend that our students have a Plan A and a Plan B." Head teachers offer their top tips for A level results day
- "Special measures school improves after banning slang words including 'coz' and 'innit.' " How one all-girls school raised performance

Number(s) of the week

- 0.7%. Economic growth for the UK in the last quarter (April – June,) up from 0.4% in the previous quarter, leading to optimistic forecasts for the remainder of the year
- 75. The number of employers on the government's latest name and shame **list** for failing to pay the National Minimum Wage
- 125,000. The number of EU students in British universities (and whose numbers could reduce if we exit the EU according to Universities UK)
- 46%. The percentage of parents in the UK who questioned the value of higher education in a **survey** conducted by HSBC
- 45,010. The number of **fixed-term pupil exclusions** from primary school last year, 'considerably' up on the previous year
- 60%. Average percentage of teachers reporting moderate-high training needs to be able to teach ICT skills according to the **latest OECD TALIS survey** (Spoiler alert: the UK's figure's half that)
- 7 years. How far ahead of their peers pupils can be by using the internet according to latest **research** from Professor Sugata Mitra

What to look out for next week

- MPs on summer recess