

## Policy Eye: (Election 2015)



### Highlights of week ending Friday 10 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

The Lib-Dems brought the annual Party Conference season for the major Parties to a close this week with Nick Clegg promising among other things to protect education funding from 0-18, 'cradle to college' in any future Government. Adam Boulton of Sky News awarded Nick Clegg the silver medal for his Leader's Speech with David Cameron getting the gold and although the polls swung to and fro following each Party Conference, they are now pretty much back to their normal pattern. Before we leave the Conference season it's worth reflecting on what the key education themes have been namely: apprenticeships, teachers, youth unemployment, vocational education and a continued squeeze on public spending. The Conferences may have hardly changed the education world but they've confirmed a lot of suspicions not least about the operating climate after the election, whoever wins. A full summary can be seen in an accompanying Policy Watch.

For now though it's back to more practical issues and in particular future inspection arrangements and social mobility concerns both of which have been in the news this week. On the former, this week saw Ofsted launch its consultation on future inspection arrangements, FE complete its consultation on proposed new success measures and HEFCE announce a review of new quality assessment arrangements. Changes would be introduced in 2015, 2016 and 2017 respectively if all goes to plan, not always the case as today's headlines for instance indicate. Ofsted in fairness has frequently raised the issue of social mobility in its reports and this week the body which is leading the work in this area, the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, published a report setting out what schools could do to help. It's already looked at what employers and universities could do and for schools, five "key strategies" were suggested: building high expectations; employing the pupil premium strategically; raising the quality of teaching, engaging parents; and teaching kids about life as much as how to pass an exam. A salient reminder that the Conferences may have gone away but some of the challenges haven't.

#### Top headlines this week

- 'Schools must do more to help disadvantaged pupils' (**Monday**)
- 'Officials wanted to axe FE colleges-Vince Cable' (**Tuesday**)
- 'University inspections face overhaul' (**Wednesday**)
- 'Heads call for transformation of Ofsted.' (**Thursday**)
- 'Tough lessons to learn about how to improve literacy.' (**Friday**)

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

- Nick Clegg who included education funding and opportunity in his five key pledges as he carefully positioned the Lib-Dems between the other two Parties

- Vince Cable who in a forthright Conference speech pledged to raise the minimum hourly rate for the lowest paid apprentices
- Nick Boles, the Skills Minister who urged the FE sector to seize the opportunity and seek business opportunities
- HEFCE who announced a significant new review of quality assessment arrangements in UK higher education
- The Skills Funding Agency who outlined the new funding arrangements for QCF ESOL Skills for Life qualifications for 2014-2015
- Ofsted who launched a consultation on what it described as '*some far-reaching reforms to education inspection*'
- The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission who published a report looking at what schools could do to help improve social mobility
- The Education Endowment Foundation who with the Wellcome Trust commissioned six new projects to investigate how neuroscience might help improve teaching and learning including allowing teenagers a later start in the morning and using a 'Wheel of Fortune' to determine rewards
- John Jerrim, who in a comprehensively researched paper for the Institute of Education looked at why East Asian children do so well in PISA tests and concluded that factors such as a hard work ethic and recognition of the value of education helped
- UNESCO and the Global Monitoring whose latest report on primary education suggested that a further 4m teachers globally would be needed to achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE) by 2015
- The NSPCC who listed the top ten pearls of wisdom often imparted to children and carried on into later life, with '*practice makes perfect*' coming out on top

### Tweet of the week

- "Only 4% of students strongly identify with any political party." @NUSUK

### Quote of the week

- "We know from analyses of classroom observations that some teachers ask 200-300 questions a day. They speak a lot. Most teachers say they speak for 40-50% of the time. It is more like 80%." The respected academic John Hattie on the importance of listening and feedback in best classroom practice

### Number of the week

- 60,000. The estimated number of pupils each year who according to the Social Mobility Commission are missing out on 'good' exam results because of the continuing attainment gap between the best and worst performing schools

### What to look out for next week

- Work Experience week begins (Monday)
- Education Committee witness session with professional bodies on Academies and Free Schools (Tuesday)

- Education Committee witness session with Nicky Morgan on extremism in schools (Wednesday)
- AELP Autumn Conference (Wednesday)
- HEFCE Annual Meeting (Thursday)