

2011/4

29 April 2011

Policy Tracker - 'Keeping track of what happened in the world of education for April 2011'.

Main talking points

Easter is an important staging post in the education year as it's the time when many of the teacher bodies gather to discuss current issues at their annual conferences. Politicians from all sides often hasten to such events to tap into the mood or to set out their latest vision and this year was no different. Andy Burnham was on hand for the Opposition to set out his approach to his Party's all-important 0-19 policy review while for the Government, Nick Gibb faced some difficult music as he outlined progress on teacher pensions. Elsewhere, April saw some important closing dates reached including those on the National Curriculum Review, the first round of UTC bids and the submission of university fees to OFFA.

Key headlines from the last month

- Education Bill. Completing its 3rd Reading
- National Curr Review. First stage call for evidence closes
- Academies. 629 now open: 547 secondary, 82 primary, 473 in the wings
- UTCs. Closing date reached in mid April for first round bids
- School science. Select Committee look to see if field trips and practicals declining
- 14-19 Diplomas. Ofqual to consult on changes to regulatory requirements
- HE fees. Apart from FE, most charging £8,000 + as OFFA starts to scrutinise
- Skills Funding. SFA Guidance Note 7 updates on adult skills and apprenticeship budgets
- Nat Minimum Wage. Goes up 10p to £2.60 an hour from Oct for apprentices
- Graduate premium. ONS claim graduates can average £12,000 pa more than non-graduates
- HE quality. QAA announce launch of new institutional review process for Sept 2011
- LEPS. British Chambers of Commerce to head a new national LEP network
- Regional Growth Fund. Bids for a 2nd round of funding begins
- Red Tape. The PM and Sec of State launch a new website to help business cut red tape
- Inflation. CPI figures fall 0.4 to 4% as supermarket prices apparently drop
- Unemployment. Down to 2.48m for last quarter but up to 963,000 for 16-24 yr olds
- Economy. Mixed views as small growth of 0.5% recorded for last quarter

Reports/Publications of the month

- '[Council budgets, spending and saving 2011.](#)' The Local Government Association surveys its members and finds central services being targeted for the biggest cuts
- '[The New GCE A Level Exams.](#)' Ofqual samples the new A level specs examined for the first time last summer and finds them "appropriately demanding"
- '[Tackling the challenge of low numeracy skills in young people and adults.](#)' Ofsted calls for more dedicated teaching and sharing of good practice in an effort to raise standards
- '[Review of Key Stage 2 Testing, Assessment and Accountability: Progress Report.](#)' Lord Bew's Review pauses for breath to outline some of the main issues coming through
- '[Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers.](#)' The Government's Social Mobility Strategy sets out a range of measures to be reported on annually as part of its social mobility strategy
- '[A New Approach to Child Poverty.](#)' The Government publishes its first Child Poverty Strategy with 15 key indicators but little new money
- '[Colleges at the core of the entrepreneurial economy.](#)' Enterprise UK examines enterprise education and finds colleges well placed to deliver

- [Treasury Committee Report on Budget 2011](#). The Committee remains unsure about Enterprise Zones but supports the broad direction of travel as it delivers its verdict on the recent Budget
- ['Review of Education Capital.'](#) The James Review completes its 10 month inquiry into capital spending and calls for sweeping changes to encourage simplicity and efficiency
- [Consultation on school funding reform](#). The Dept launches the first stage of its consultation process on a new, fairer, funding formula for a fast moving school system
- [Select Committee Report on the role and performance of Ofsted](#). The Select Committee completes its inquiry into Ofsted and concludes that a split is in order
- ['Profit-Making Free Schools.'](#) The Adam Smith Institute examines profit-making in schools and conclude that it can raise standards let alone extend opportunities
- ['School Inspections: what happens next?'](#) CfBT look at post inspection regimes in 17 different countries to ascertain some general principles
- ['Best Behaviour.'](#) The think tank Policy Exchange considers the Government's record so far on school discipline and puts the emphasis on early intervention
- [Annual Report on Education](#). The EU's annual stock take on progress by member countries finds one (STEM) target met but 'ongoing' progress in the other four key measures

Speeches of the month

- *Vince Cable's 6 April HEFCE Annual Conference speech* calls on the sector to "think carefully" before settling on its fee structure
- *The Chief Executive of HEFCE 6 April Annual Conference speech* sketches out how the sector let alone the agency should plan for a different future
- *Vince Cable's 7 April British Chambers of Commerce speech* spells out how the Government is stripping away bureaucracy in an effort to make it easier for business to operate
- *Nick Gibb's 20 April speech to the ATL Conference* makes the case for the Government's school reforms but struggles to win over support for pension reform
- *Andy Burnham's 26 April speech to the NASUWT Conference* sets out how Labour is tackling its policy review of 0-19 education and his personal commitment to comprehensive education

Quotes of the month

- *"We're in pretty lean form as a university and yet the calculation we do is: if we charge £6,000, we'll lose £26m. We can't do it."* One university Vice-Chancellor explains why they need to charge a higher rate
- *"I think being Minister of State for Schools is one of the best jobs in Government."* Nick Gibb on happier ground before being heckled over pensions
- *"If it has feathers, walks like a duck and quacks, it's a duck."* The Chair of the Select Committee suggests the EBacc is in reality an accountability measure
- *"I can't recall an idea being claimed as the answer to so many historic problems."* Estelle Morris suggests UTCs tick a lot of boxes
- *"Can you imagine being a reception teacher and trying to get on and off those little chairs at 68? I think not."* One teacher's reaction to the raising of the pensionable age

Word or phrase of the month

- *'Giffen Good.'* The principle developed by the Scottish economist, Sir Robert Giffen, whereby as price rises so does demand, a principle many suggest may apply to higher education in England

Steve Besley

Head of Policy (UK and International)

Pearson Centre for Policy and Learning

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Policy Tracker on what happened in March 2011

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