

2015/2

27 Feb 2015

## Policy Tracker - Keeping track of what happened in the world of education in February 2015

### Main talking points

It's been a month which has seen education power up the agenda as this month's listing shows.

### Key headlines from the month

- Baseline assessments. DfE lists approved providers
- Primary assessment. DfE launches new commission to review best practice
- Class sizes. Labour pledges to restrict to 30 for 5,6,7 yr olds
- School places. DfE puts in more money to cover next 3 years
- 11 yr olds. The Education Secretary plans new benchmark standards
- GCSEs/A levels. DfE and Ofqual publishes regs and guidance for 2016 batch
- Science practicals. Ofqual confirms new uncoupled arrangements at A level
- Maths. Cambridge Maths launch new manifesto to raise maths standards
- PSHE. Education Committee calls for the subject to be beefed up
- ALCAB. A level content advisory body stood down 'for the time being'
- Teacher Workloads. Debates continue about whether real issues tackled
- Academies. The government plans to extend to schools requiring improvement
- School funding. The government sticks to 'flat-cash,' Labour and Lib-Dems plan protection
- Inspections. Ofsted confirms shorter more frequent inspections from Sept 2015
- Sixth Form Colleges. MPs sign up to removing the VAT burden
- Work experience. Labour promise it for 14-16 yr olds as UKCES find it's drying up
- Apprenticeships. Labour pledges to create 80,000 more a year
- Voc Quals. Ofqual announces consultation on new post QCF framework
- FE. Further squeeze on adult skills budget signalled in latest funding letter
- North East. Gets a new Growth Deal
- UCAS. Gearing up to include applications to European as well as UK universities
- HE. HEFCE publishes latest Business Plan
- HE regulation. UUK proposes new statutory body
- HE tuition fees. Labour confirms plans to cut fees by a third
- HE participation. OFFA calls for faster progress on fair access at selective universities
- Alternative HE providers. Public Accounts Committee expresses concerns about quality and costs
- UKMoocs. Tops a million learners

### Reports/Publications of the month (in order of publication)

- **Claim your College.** The coalition of interests behind the proposed College of Teaching set out their thoughts for how to take the concept forward
- **Better inspection for all.** Ofsted reports on its recent consultation which confirms broad support for shorter more frequent inspections and use of a common inspection framework
- **What do I get?** The HE Policy Institute publishes a range of essays from different institutions setting out just what graduates do get in return from their investment
- **Business Plan 2015-2020.** The HE Funding Council for England publishes its latest Business Plan with a focus on research, teaching/learning, access, regulation and knowledge exchange
- **Workload Challenge.** The government reports on its recent consultation and draws up a list of actions intended to help generate a new deal with teachers
- **Funding Rules 2015-2016.** The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) summarises the changes, along with the rules, rates and formula that will apply from 1 August 2015
- **Catch 16-24.** The UK Commission for Employment and Skills reports on the Catch-22 trap facing young people trying to get work experience but finding little of it available
- **Quality, equity, sustainability: the future of HE regulation.** Universities UK's report calls for a new regulatory body, a register of approved providers and better protection for students
- **FELTAG Progress Report.** BIS looks for any progress in FE learning technology since last June
- **LEPs and their influence on skills budgets.** The Skills Funding Agency publishes guidance for Local Enterprise Partnerships on implementing Local Growth Deals
- **'A Better Plan for Britain's Prosperity.'** Labour sets out its plans to improve productivity and prosperity for all with an emphasis on apprenticeships, local planning and support for low paid

- **Life lessons: PSHE and SRE in schools.** The Education Committee reports on its inquiry in personal, social and sex education and finds a better approach is needed starting in primary
- **'Make or Break. The UK's Digital Future.'** The Digital Committee calls for digital literacy as a 3<sup>rd</sup> core subject in schools and for the internet to be seen as an essential utility service
- **Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth.** The Warwick Commission publishes its blueprint for cultural and creative success calling for a greater recognition at a local level
- **Global demand for English HE.** HEFCE publishes the latest figures for the period up to 2013 which show a modest increase on the previous year but a heavy reliance on China and Malaysia
- **Developing Resilient Local Economies.** The think tank IPPR examines good practice among Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and calls for some strengthening of local arrangements
- **The Wolf Report: final progress report.** The DfE issues the final progress report on the Wolf recommendations showing 20 now implemented in full and a further six nearly there
- **School and college Purchasing Behaviours.** Ofqual reports on the purchasing behaviour of schools and colleges when it comes to choosing which qual and awarding body to go with
- **Young participation in higher education.** HEFCE reports on the qualifications and backgrounds of young English applicants and finds a big increase in BTEC numbers
- **Progress 8 measure in 2016 and 2017.** The DfE issues latest guidance

### Speeches of the month

- Greg Clark's 4 February HEFCE Annual Conference **speech** acknowledges how important HE is to the country and what the government is doing to support it
- Gleny Stacey's 4 February Association of Colleges Examining officers **speech** explains what changes Ofqual is making to improve the exam system including the changes to practical work
- David Cameron's 10 February British Chambers of Commerce **speech** spells out how the government has been supporting business and pledges more of the same to help growth
- Ed Balls' 10 February British Chambers of Commerce **speech** calls for a new industrial policy, a competitive tax system and reform rather than exit from the EU
- Glenys Stacey's 12 February **speech** to the Skills Summit sets out Ofqual's approach to regulating adult voc quals and announces consultation on a new framework
- Ed Miliband's 16 February industrial plan **speech** pledges more apprenticeships as part of a range of measures to raise productivity and prosperity for all
- Glenys Stacey's 25 February Next Steps **speech** sets out progress being made in reforming GCSEs and A levels and warns against throwing it all away
- Nick Gibb's 25 February Reform **speech** sets out government thinking on primary assessment and what the government is hoping for from the current reforms

### Quotes of the month

- *"No one wants their child to go to a failing school and no one wants them to go to a coasting school either."* The Prime Minister on raising school standards
- *"I'm not saying that every Labour minister under the last administration was universally loved but..."* Ed Miliband promises a new beginning for teachers
- *"It is worth noting that the average college has made 105 redundancies since 2009/10."* The Chief Ex of the AoC on the pressures in FE as the latest funding letter brings more bad news
- *"I would ask any incoming government to consider carefully before tinkering under the bonnet of GCSEs and A levels in the near future."* The Chief Exc of Ofqual on sticking to plan
- *"We do not believe your proposals will get close to the root cause of the workload problem."* Teacher unions write to the Education Secretary about the workforce reforms

### Word or phrase of the month

- *'Polyanna creep.'* To try and show things in a better light

### Steve Besley

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