

2011/3

31 March 2011

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

Main talking points

A big month for Reports, some 20 in all released over the last four weeks, all listed below and sweeping over many aspects of the education and skill system from early years learning to the nation's finances. Two stand out. First the 2011 Budget Report which with accompanying economic forecasts and Growth Plan sketches out the Government's recovery path for the future. And second, the Wolf Report which sets out a possible vocational path for young people.

Key headlines from the last month

- Education Bill. Day 9 of the Committee stage and plenty of amendments to contend with
- Free Schools. Toby Young's now formally approved but DfE tighten the rules generally
- EBacc. Muted enthusiasm from witnesses questioned by the Select Committee
- EMAs. The DfE launch rapid response consultation on its new bursary scheme
- 16-19. YPLA receives grant letter and issues institutional allocations for 2011/12
- Skills funding. The new £50m match funded Growth and Innovation Fund is launched
- Skills Inquiry. The Skills Commission start an inquiry into technician level skills
- Technology and Innovation Centre. The first TIC opens for High-Value Manufacturing
- HE funds. HEFCE confirms final allocations for 2011/12, average 4% cut to teaching grant
- HE fees. Just 4 universities so far coming in below the £9,000 maximum
- Student Visas. Government tighten the rules, raise the bar on English and limits stays
- Unemployment. 16-24 yr olds up to 974,000, overall total up to 2.53m
- LEPS. David Cameron and Nick Clegg host the first meeting of the 31 approved partnerships
- Quangos. Government agrees to leave out the 'Henry VIII' powers in the current Bill

Reports/Publications of the month

- ['Shared Necessities.'](#) The New Local Government Network suggest back-office savings may not generate the volume of savings anticipated
- ['System Error.'](#) The Institute for Government come up with a new twin track approach to that Achilles Heel of Government: big IT Projects
- ['The Wolf Review of Vocational education.'](#) Detailed analysis and 27 recommendations to help set our vocational system for young people in order
- ['Regulating financial sustainability in HE.'](#) The National Audit Office give HEFCE the thumbs-up for its management of the HE sector but worry about risk in the future
- ['How to produce an access agreement 2012-2013.'](#) The Office for Fair Access sets out its guidance for universities intending to charge over £6,000
- ['Support and Aspiration.'](#) The DfE launches its long-awaited SEN Green Paper incorporating a new single assessment process and a managing-outwards of services
- ['Independent Public Service Pensions Commission: Final Report.'](#) Lord Hutton concludes by recommending a career average rather than final salary scheme plus higher pensionable age
- ['History for All.'](#) Ofsted find History still a popular subject despite pressure on the timetable though raise concerns about how well pupils understand chronology generally
- ['Fair Pay.'](#) Will Hutton completes his Report on fair pay in the public sector calling for it to be performance-related but not capped as originally thought
- ['The Forgotten Half.'](#) The think-tank Demos identify the 5 'proven market premiums' young people need to get a job and get on
- ['Academic rigour and social mobility.'](#) The Centre Forum think-tank suggest an A-Bacc of A level subjects as a way of helping young people progress
- ['Solutions for Business.'](#) The Government launches a new portfolio of 13 products designed to help businesses and support growth

- [‘OECD Economic Survey of the UK.’](#) OECD support much of the current policy direction on economic recovery but call for further and deeper reform to improve chances in education
- [‘Inspection 2012.’](#) Ofsted launch a consultation on its new focused model of inspection to be tested in 2011 and potentially introduced from January 2012
- [‘Getting value for money from the education of 16-18 year olds.’](#) The National Audit Office look across the board at 16-18 provision and suggest value for money could be improved
- [‘Meeting technological challenges.’](#) Ofsted report on the D and T curriculum in schools and worry about how schools and teachers are supported to keep up with the pace of change
- [‘Budget 2011.’](#) The Chancellor sets out a few immediate measures but more longer-term ambitions to help the country move from recovery to reform
- [‘The Growth Plan.’](#) The long-awaited strategy built around 4 ‘overarching ambitions’ is published as the engine of change alongside the Budget
- [‘Economic and fiscal outlook.’](#) The Office for Budget Responsibility publish their analysis of the state of public finances and revise some of their forecasts for the future
- [Early Years Review.](#) Dame Clare Tickell’s Review comes up with 40 recommendations but a simpler framework around 3 areas: comms/language; physical dev; social/emotional dev

Speeches of the month

- *David Willetts’ 1 March British Academy speech* presents the case for supporting arts subjects under the new fee structure
- *Vince Cable’s 4 March Mansion House speech* identifies skills and innovation, greater de-regulation and stronger trade and industry as instruments of growth
- *David Cameron’s 6 March Spring Conference speech* promises to ‘tear down’ the barriers to growth and enterprise
- *Andy Burnham’s 11 March ASCL speech* formally launches the Opposition’s policy review of schools around a new comprehensive ideal
- *David Willetts’ 16 March Guardian HE Summit speech* makes an impassioned defence of the value of a university degree
- *Geoff Russell’s 24 March LSIS Annual Conference speech* spells out FE’s direction of travel
- *David Willetts’ 31 March AoC HE in FE speech* announces a major review of HE opportunities in FE

Quotes of the month

- *“Britain has a plan and we’re sticking to it.”* The Chancellor refuses to defer to siren voices in his latest Budget
- *“When the man from Whitehall is telling Mr Whippy how to sing, something has surely gone wrong.”* The Business Minister considers how best to free up business from red tape
- *“It’s a good idea to decide how many people are coming to a dinner party before you do the shopping.”* Oxbridge academics argue that in setting a new fee system for HE, the Government has failed to set the table correctly
- *“An analysis of those in their 20s and early 30s in employment over the last decade showed on average they changed jobs 3.5 times, changed occupations 2.5 times and changed sectors 1.8 times.”* Just one of the key sets of stats in the Wolf Report
- *“Our scheme will help ensure that the costs of travel, food and equipment for poorer students are properly met so no-one is prevented from participating though poverty.”* The Education Secretary spells out some details on the new, post-EMA, bursary scheme for 16-19 year olds

Word or phrase of the month

- *“The Goldilocks option.”* The Wolf Report ascribes to the Goldilocks options in determining whether we have the right diet for 14-16 year olds, neither too hard nor too soft

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Policy Tracker on what happened in March 2011

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