

2012/10

30 October 2012

## Policy Tracker - Keeping track of what happened in the world of education in October 2012

### Main talking points

October is traditionally a heavy month for policy announcements and Oct 2012 has been no different with some significant Conference speeches and some hefty Reports. Three Reports, all listed here, perhaps best capture where interest is at its sharpest. For schools, the Education Committee Report confirms the changes to GCSE, A level and the exam system; for FE the Lingfield Report provides an interesting overview of sector professional development while for HE, HEPI's Paper on the financing of tuition fees raises important questions

### Key headlines from the month

- Key Stage 4 results. Provisional figures point to slight drop in A\*- C performance
- ABacc. Stories grow that Government is edging towards an IB type A level model
- Northern Ireland. Launches own review of GCSE and A levels
- Teachers. Stiffer entry tests announced for 2013
- Apprenticeships. Higher apprenticeships up but under 19s down in latest stats
- 24+ loans. Further round of factsheets released
- Commission on adult voc teaching and learning. Closing date reached for evidence
- University students. Survey suggests many spend the first term's loan in first month
- UCAS. Early figures for 2013 university suggest entry up 2% on previous year
- Numeracy. Details of new National Challenge announced, launch next spring
- National Minimum Wage. Edges up to £6.19 an hour for adults, £3.68 for 16/17 yr olds
- Unemployment. Down to 2.53m in latest stats, down to 957,000 for 16-24 yr olds
- Growth. Increased by 1% over the summer according to latest figures
- Transparency. Review of public sector data launched

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

- [Baseline designs for Schools](#). The Dept issues new building blueprints for austere times, multi functional but no follies
- [Introducing the HEAR](#). The Steering Group recommend universities develop Achievement Records (HEAR) for graduates
- [Young participation rates in HE](#). The latest update points to considerable variation in rates around the country with the N.E suffering most
- [How to develop, strengthen, improve and increase the number of apprenticeships](#). AELP update their policy paper on apprenticeships and call for a more ambitious approach
- [The effects of the English Bacc](#). DfE commissioned research suggests most schools now adopting EBacc subjects but concerns remain about the impact on different types of schools
- [World Economic Outlook: Coping with High Debt and Sluggish Growth](#). Not much more to add to the title of the IMF's latest quarterly Report which downgrades growth forecasts again
- [What do Graduates do?](#) Apparently many, 62% find jobs within six months of graduating but not all of them in traditional graduate employment areas according to the latest stats
- [Competition meets Collaboration](#). The think tank PolicyExchange propose a 3 strike process for school improvement: Ofsted inspection; Academy chain; private sector involvement
- [Going for Gold](#). Team Boris draw up a blueprint for London schools with a Gold Club of top schools, a £20m Excellence Fund and an 'inspiring' new curriculum
- [How HE Can Advance Social Mobility](#). Alan Milburn's latest social mobility report suggests diverting bursary funds to schools and lowering some offers to boost participation
- [New Qualifications for Teachers and Trainers in FE](#). LSIS consult on a 'simpler' system of prof quals, 4 levels of generic quals, 3 specialist, implementation from Sept 2013
- [Postgraduate education](#). The HE Commission argue that it's time to bring post grad education in from the cold and fund it properly through a loan scheme

- [Professionalism in FE](#). The Final Report from the independent Inquiry sets out a new professional structure for FE around a Guild, a Covenant and chartered institutes
- [Ensuring quality in apprenticeships](#). Ofsted report on sub contracting in the apprenticeship system and call for closer monitoring and better value for money
- [The cost of the Government's reforms of the financing of HE](#). HEPI do the maths and question some of the assumptions made about fee levels and debt repayment
- [Jewels in the Crown](#). The Russell Group of universities claim the title and call for greater investment if such 'jewels' are to withstand global competition
- [A risk-based approach to quality assurance](#). HEFCE feeds back on the recent consultation on QA in the new HE system and outline a new QAA based review cycle
- [Response to the Education Committee Report on the Exam System for 15-19 yr olds](#). The Government confirms its reforms to EBCs, A levels and the operation of the exam system
- [No stone unturned](#). Michael Heseltine's comprehensive economic plan argues that the skills system isn't working and calls for better alignment with local needs

### Speeches of the month

- Ed Balls's 1 October Conference speech sticks with his 5-point growth strategy but acknowledges that Labour would have to conduct a tough Spending Review
- Chuka Ummanna's 1 October Conference speech announces that Lord Adonis will lead a business team to help develop a stronger enterprise capacity for BIS
- Ed Milliband's 2 October Conference speech identifies changes to apprenticeships and voc provision as part of a plan to raise skill levels in the new 'One Nation' Britain
- Stephen Twigg's 4 October Conference speech announces that Chris Husbands will lead a review of 14-19 qualifications
- David Cameron's 10 October Conference speech highlights growth, welfare reform and education performance as key ingredients of a new aspiration nation
- Glenys Stacey's 10 October Cambridge Assessment Conference speech highlights some of the major risks involved in qualification design and reform
- Stephen Twigg's 22 October National Numeracy Challenge speech identifies three specific challenges: no can do attitudes; early intervention; adult engagement
- Michael Gove's 23 October Politeia speech seizes the mantle of Blairism to propel reforms of the education system and portray critics as reactionaries

### Quotes of the month

- *"Those school reforms are the single most important long-term economic investment we can make."* The Chancellor singles out the education reforms in his Conference speech
- *"We cannot succeed if we have an education system that only works for half the country."* Ed Milliband calls for an education system for the whole nation in his Conference speech
- *"There's nothing fluffy about transparency."* The Cabinet Office Minister calls for increased data and transparency to help stiffen the backbone of reform
- *"A levels will not be replaced under any circumstances."* The DfE clarifies the position as ABacc rumours increase
- *"We work in an area that is high volume, complex, high stakes and where media interest is high risk and risk tolerance low."* The Chief Executive of Ofqual on life in a pressure cooker
- *"We were a cocksure crew of precociously assertive boys."* Michael Gove apologises for his behaviour at school

### Word or phrase of the month

- *'Jinxed Generation.'* 20 yr olds who now face being worse off than their parents
- *"I can do maths."* The National Numeracy Group want us to keep saying it

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It is also possible to follow some of the team with [Steve Besley](#) and [Louis Coiffait](#) on Twitter, and to subscribe to our [YouTube](#) and [Vimeo](#) channels.

Policy Tracker on what happened in Oct 2012

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