Policy Eye

Highlights of week ending Friday 29 March 2019

(Welcome to Policy Eye, a weekly service from Policy Watch offering a regular round up of UK education headlines and stories from over the previous 7 days.)

The week summed up.

The evenings are getting lighter, not sure about the political mood yet.

For education it's been a week of reports, Parliamentary Committee hearings, high profile events and some leading speeches and developments. A bit of everything in fact.

The reports include a new review of apprenticeships, this time from the Social Market Foundation raising concerns about the quality and nature of some provision and in particular the different wage returns evident at some levels. Among its solutions, the proposal to re-title apprenticeships as master crafts men and women attracted some media attention. Earlier in the week, Wonkhe published the results of its commissioned survey into campus life. It's a disquieting read: many students are lonely and don't have friends they can call on. There's a clear link here to student wellbeing and mental health.

Elsewhere, and it wouldn't be a week without something on future work, automation and artificial intelligence, we've had two reports. One, a fascinating report which actually came out at the end of last week from the RSA on the future of work, outlining four possible scenarios by 2035, ranging from a fairly frenetic Big Tech economy to a more soothing empathy economy. And the other, a report from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on the potential effects of automation on future occupations. A lot depends on your age and where you live but education professionals emerge here as essential roles.

On to Parliamentary Committee hearings where the Public Accounts Committee hosted a witness session on apprenticeships in England with concerns raised about future investment, programme diversity and quality provision. And, the Education Committee looked into knife crime with a range of reps including the police. Partnership working, stop and search, and school security were among the topics raised here.

It's also been a busy week of events and conferences. At the start of the week, Wonkhe held its symposium on student life where the Minister outlined his model of STEP support (student transition, experience and progression.) An excellent summary of the event is here. There've been other important events. The Education Policy Institute held a session on EdTech, the FE sector held its annual big Apprenticeships Conference, the British Chambers of Commerce held their Annual Conference and we're finishing the week with the Headteachers' Roundtable Group in session as they host their 2019 Summit.

Finally those speeches and other developments. Plenty stand out but it's worth noting in particular the Chief Inspector's speech to the Apprenticeship Conference, the launch of the Independent Commission on Colleges of the future and Headteachers' Roundtable response to the Ofsted consultation.

Pearson

Top headlines this week

- 'One in six students say they have no 'true friends' at university, according to study.' (Monday)
- 'Ofsted rows back on judging schools' EBacc progress.' (Tuesday)
- 'Scrapping BTECs 'reckless and rash' warns ASCL.' (Wednesday)
- 'Government bankruptcy expert wanted as universities rack up debts.' (Thursday)
- 'Older teachers bullied out of schools.' (Friday)

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- **Occupations at risk.** The Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported on which jobs, regions and age-groups are likely to be most at risk from future automation, suggesting that low-skilled routine jobs, often undertaken by young people and women are most at risk while high-skilled jobs like medicine and education professionals are least at risk

- **Parliamentary Group on AI.** Nesta blogged about the recent All Party Parliamentary Group session on artificial intelligence highlighting its recent landmark report with recommendations for funding to help schools develop the most promising AI tools, for the creation of an EdTech testbed, and for a challenge prize to help develop the use of AI in assessment

- **Digital copyright directive.** The European Parliament passed a new copyright directive which member states have yet to formally endorse but which makes large online platforms responsible for copyright permission and the remuneration of material used, apart from short extracts and material such as memes

- **No deal data transfer.** The DfE issued guidance in the event of a no deal covering the transfer of data within the EU which could include matters such as school trip details or exam results and which may need to follow General Data Protection Regulation

HE

- **2nd intervention.** The Education Secretary launched the second of his anticipated interventions into higher education, calling on this occasion for stronger measures to tackle perceived grade inflation

- **STEP change.** The Universities Minister outlined his concept of STEP (student transition, experience and progression) support for students at different stages of their life through higher education in an address to Wonkhe's 'Secret Life of Students' event

- **A vision for global higher education.** The Universities Minister set out his vision for global higher education in a speech to the International HE Forum in which building on the recent International Strategy, he outlined four principles around promoting the brand, the product and the offer and providing greater support to international students

- **Financial adviser needed.** The Times Higher reported that the DfE was recruiting an expert to advise on financial problems and future financial sustainability for higher education, as concerns continue about the extent of funding pressures facing some institutions

- The AI Challenge. The Times Higher reported on its survey with Microsoft on how universities are meeting the challenge of artificial intelligence (AI) finding many aware but few with a dedicated budget or strategy but a general sense that opportunities will prove positive

- Only the lonely. Wonkhe published the results of its commissioned survey into student loneliness and its effect on student wellbeing as part of its major event looking into the life of students, reporting that many young people find the transition to uni life and work quite difficult, and suggesting a number of ways to help ameliorate this

FE/Skills

- Remit for the IfATE. The government set out what it wanted the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) to be doing around apprenticeships and T levels over the coming financial year with a hefty Annex devoted to T level activity

- SAP grant. The government confirmed the funding available for Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs) intended to help them develop local skill supply analysis and needs in line with the DfE's proposed toolkit

- AEB grant letters. The government issued adult education budget (AEB) grant letters to the six devolved Authorities plus the Greater London Authority spelling out the funding available for devolved education and training functions for the period 1 August 2019 – 31 July 2020

- College of the Future. The UK Association of Colleges (AoC) and partner organisations announced the formal launch of the Independent Commission that over the coming year will examine in detail what the college of the future might look like and what might be needed from it

- Industry placements. The DfE issued some brief guidance for employers about what's involved in T level industry placements and how they are intended to operate

- Apprenticeship progress. The House of Commons Public Accounts Committee held two witness sessions to consider the latest developments in the apprenticeship programme in England noting from providers, concerns about funding and flexibility, and from government officials, issues about numbers, the target, assessment and future investment

- Ofsted on apprenticeship quality. Amanda Spielman, Ofsted Chief Inspector addressed the Annual Apprenticeships Conference where she reflected on the changes in provision and what Ofsted was doing to assure quality provision from new monitoring visits to the new framework

- Making apprenticeships work. The Social Market Foundation published a new report on apprenticeships pointing to concerns about differential wage returns and quality on some programmes and calling for the creation of value premiums, quality excellence ratings and a new titling system

- Subcontracted delivery. The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) reported on apprenticeship delivery figures by provider type in the year after the levy was introduced pointing to a notable fall in the amount of subcontracted provision with management fees still under debate

- Evolution or revolution? The Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) outlined a number of scenarios for change and in particular for reaping the benefits of digital and technological change, as it prepared to launch in the coming weeks a new Future Skills Strategy

- Centres for Excellence in Maths. The Education and Training Foundation which is managing the Centres for Excellence in Maths Programme announced the names of the 'expert' partner organisations that will work with it to help Centres deliver the programme

Schools

- It's time to tell Ofsted what you think. The Headteachers' Roundtable and WorthLess?(Funding) Campaign group joined forces to issue a series of points that those responding to the Ofsted new framework consultation which closes next week, might want to consider
- School places. The DfE reported that it had created over 900,000 new school places since 2010 as it published the latest figures on school capacity, showing that the rate of increase in primary drops from 2021 leading to a commensurate increase in secondary places from the same jumcture
- Selective Comprehensives. The Sutton Trust built on its earlier report on the lack of social representation in some comprehensive schools in England by publishing a new report in this case looking at Scotland and Wales, using further research from the NFER to highlight issues, calling among other things for a ballot system to make admissions fairer

Tweets(s) of the week

- "All I remember about college is that everyone was saying the word dichotomy. The teachers, the students. I heard a janitor say it once"- @Palumbros
- "Gen Z are more mild than wild.... less drink, less drugs and less crime! They are also much more inclusive #SecretLife @Wonkhe @IpsosMORI" - @MikeGradconsult
- "At too many conferences I've noticed universities are incapable of talking about themselves without saying they're 'world beating' 'cutting edge' 'award winning' 'wealth creating' 'mobility enhancing'..With so many magical institutions it's hard to know why the UK is such a mess" - @RSAMatthew
- "Eileen Milner says she is 'absolutely confident' 3 million apprenticeship target will be achieved - but quality will be prioritised over quantity" - @tesfenews
- "Lots of talk about BTECs in the news from commentators making it clear they've never been anywhere near one" - @tstarkey1212
- "Ha! Love this - baffled parents paying for their own tutors so they can understand their children's homework... #helicopterparenting Story @nicolawoolcock @thetimes" - @SianGriffiths6

Other stories of the week

- Taking the class register. It may not be through class registers of course anymore but there are some interesting names for teachers to grapple with in future years given the latest list of most popular girls' and boys' names reported in the media this week. The list, on the dedicated site Nameberry, contains the usual mix of the traditional, the classical and the eclectic. Posie, Isla, and Olivia are the top three girl's names while Milo, Jasper and Atticus are the top three boys names, based on responses over the last couple of months. A link to the full list of most popular names on the site can be found here

Quote(s) of the week

- "Since becoming Universities Minister almost four months ago, I have made it a personal mission of mine to go out and see for myself what providers are doing to meet the needs of different types of students at every stage in their student journey" – the Universities Minister explains how he's been spending his induction

- "Like much of the rest of what used to be called the public sector, universities have been reduced to being supplicants for the crumbs that fall from government's table" – Professor Roger Brown reflects on Sir Anthony's Seldon's recent call for reform to sector leadership

- "Holders of the most prestigious apprenticeships might be addressed as 'master craftsman' or 'master craftswoman' in the same way that people who complete a PhD are entitled to be called 'doctor'" – the Social Market Foundation suggests a new titling system to address the issue of apprenticeship status

- "They've got the money now, we haven't, and we should be jolly pleased that they regard English schools as something they wish to invest in" – the chair of the Independent Schools Council considers reality as the Chinese move into the UK private school sector

- "The Department will confirm further details on the membership and timescales in due course" – the DfE answer questions in Parliament on the new Advisory Group on Teacher Wellbeing

- "The trouble is we're too squeamish about whether we can or can't use it, and it creates all kinds of issues" – Geoff Barton offers a perspective on the use of mobile phones in the classroom at the Education Policy Institute EdTech event

Number(s) of the week

- 15.8%. How many university students reported feeling lonely on a daily basis, according to a survey commissioned by Wonkhe

- 225,800. The number of reported apprenticeship starts between August 2018 and January 2019, up on 2017/18 figures but down on 2016/17 figures, according to the latest official stats

- 60%. How much apprenticeship provision inspected last year was judged good or better, according to a speech by the Chief inspector

- 11%. How many new apprenticeships relied on subcontractors in 2017/18 compared to 26% the year before, according to figures reported by the AELP

- £5.4bn. The true cost of the shortfall in schools funding according to latest figures from the School Cuts campaign

- 119,000. The projected increase in secondary school students by 2020, according to the latest forecast from the DfE

- 600. How many police officers the London Met is looking to have working in schools in the coming months, according to a response from the Assistant Commissioner at an Education Committee hearing

- 2%. How many pupils in England cycle to school, according to an article in The Conversation

- 3.7m. How many children are living in absolute poverty, according to the latest government statistics

What to look out for next week

- Westminster Hall debate on FE funding (Tuesday)

- Education Committee witness session with Ministers on school and college funding (Wednesday)

- Understanding School performance, leadership and resourcing event at the IoE (Thursday)

- Closing date for consultation on Ofsted's new inspection framework (Friday)