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## Policy Eye

Highlights of week ending Friday 20 September 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.

Education spending in England, Universities, the Lib-Dems and global learners top the education headlines this week; a pretty eclectic spread. Some details to follow.

Education spending in England first where this week the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IfS) published its latest report. As IfS director Paul Johnson observed in launching the report, they'd had to dig quite deep to get the full picture and even then a lot of questions, notably on the future of HE funding, remain. The full 100+ page [report](#) is available on their website but headlines include the fact that the latest spending round increase for schools, if delivered, would reverse the 8% cut but still leave schools in 2022/23 where they were ten years ago. Second, fully reversing college cuts would require the government to stump up a further £1.1bn over and above existing plans. In addition, spending on apprenticeships has significantly increased over the last decade but the 3m target is unlikely to be hit while for HE funding, huge questions remain about Augar adoption, Opposition policies and more.

Next Universities where it's been a busy week strategically as institutions prepare for the start of a new year. The week began with the latest Education Secretary issuing an updated [remit letter](#), the third so far this year with the Teaching Excellence Framework, admissions review, student contracts and flexible provision all featuring prominently. And it progressed with a flurry of reports. Unite Students' [study](#) of next generation students as 'New Realists,' prioritizing financial security over wealth is an interesting read as is, if we may say, Pearson's [analysis](#) of HE system change in the future. Three future principles emerged here: continuous learning, skills-based learning, and balanced investment.

Third, the Lib-Dems who have just rounded off their latest Annual Conference and where despite their stance on Brexit hogging most of the headlines, there were a number of events and motions on various aspects of education. It only featured briefly in the Leader's speech but key takeaways as their [education policies](#) take shape appear to include: replacing SATs and league tables; developing a new school inspectorate; removing the EBacc for a slimmer curriculum entitlement; a possible graduate tax for HE; and supporting lifelong learning through a system of Personal Education and Skills Accounts.

Fourth and finally, on home turf, Pearson's inaugural [Global Learner Survey](#), a comprehensive exercise that captures the views of learners across 19 countries. A fascinating picture emerges here at a pretty critical juncture in learning provision with new technologies and new approaches dominating and eight trends standing out including notably a 'do it yourself' approach to creating leaning options. A lot to digest.



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## Top headlines this week

- ‘Education Secretary backs review of university admissions.’ ([Monday](#))
- ‘Harrow schools sets up online sixth form for global students.’ ([Tuesday](#))
- ‘Teachers have worked long hours for many years.’ ([Wednesday](#))
- ‘Revealed the £2.3bn bill for Augar review’s FE demands.’ ([Thursday](#))
- ‘Rise in 18 year olds without basic qualifications.’ ([Friday](#))

## People/organisations in the news this week

### General Policy

- **Education spending.** The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IfS) launched its second annual report on education spending in England, sponsored by the Nuffield Foundation and showing latest trends and developments across each stage of learning
- **Global Learner Survey.** Pearson published the results of its major new survey of learners from across 19 countries highlighting eight key trends that emerged including a strong interest in a ‘do it yourself’ approach to education, the increasing role of technology, and a drive for continuous upskilling
- **Automation and the future of work.** The House of Commons Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee published the results of its inquiry into automation and the future of work, criticizing the government for failing to take a lead and calling on it to come up with a ‘UK Robot and AI Strategy’ by the end of next year and to ensure that the school curriculum develops the subjects needed for this
- **English language tests for overseas students.** The Commons Public accounts Committee published its report into failings in the English language testing system exposed by Panorama five years ago as well as how the Home Office had subsequently dealt with the aftermath, calling on it to remedy injustices to individuals and ensure that abuse couldn’t happen again
- **Education is for Everyone.** The Lib-Dems threw their weight behind 16-19 and adult learning as they passed a motion at their Annual Conference supporting a Young People’s Premium and adult Personal Education and Skills Accounts (PESAs) along with additional funds for FE
- **Brexit Business Readiness Events.** The government launched its nationwide campaign of Brexit Readiness events where representatives from different government depts, including Business and Industrial Strategy, are on hand to answer questions and help businesses get ready for Brexit
- **Labour market violations.** The Resolution Foundation launched its three-year long investigation into labour market enforcement by highlighting the extent of some current abuses where for example one in ten workers, often the most vulnerable, don’t receive a payslip
- **Centre for Education and Youth.** The think and action tank formerly known as LKMCo re-launched after 10 years with a new title, the publication of a collection of essays and some drinks

### HE

- **New instructions.** The new Education Secretary issued the Office for Students with an updated list of strategic priorities for the next few months, focusing among other things on value for money, admissions systems, the TEF, flexible learning and student consumer rights



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- **Uni entry.** UCAS published the latest set of figures on university admissions for 2019 showing an increase in the number of young people accepted from disadvantaged backgrounds and a new record for UK 18 yr olds generally
- **Mental health support.** Ex-health Minister Sir Norman Lamb called for a formal duty of care to be established for universities following the collection of evidence showing that in some cases students had to wait up to 12 weeks for mental health care
- **A new era for HE.** Pearson reported on the picture of higher education coming out of its Global Learner Survey where three 'learner-centric' principles including lifelong learning, distributed investment and future skills, emerged as likely future determinants
- **Brexit ready.** Universities UK reported on its survey among UK universities about how prepared they were for a no-deal with all respondents saying they'd taken steps of some sort but were still concerned about the potential impact on recruitment, funding and research
- **The New Realists.** Unite Students, working with YouthSight and the HE Policy Institute (HEPI) published the results of its survey into how young people view university, their hopes, fears, experiences and transition, finding a group of 'realists,' more diverse than previously and seeing uni as bridge to a stable and secure future
- **The white elephant in the room.** The HE Policy Institute (HEPI) published a collection of essays from leading figures on how to reduce racial inequality in higher ed with the need for champions, ground rules and participation in the Race equality Charter all among the recommendations
- **Avoid the phishing net.** The Student Loans Company issued a warning to students especially Freshers to be on their guard against scams and fraud at the start of a new term when a lot of data is often transferred and financial transactions are at their highest

## FE/Skills

- **4 steps to improving the apprenticeships system.** The CBI published a new report on the apprenticeship system, outlining a number of familiar issues and listing four recommendations including an annual £100m top-up from government, greater transparency on how the money is being spent, a more user friendly system, and consultation on a wider skills levy
- **More on apprenticeships.** The skills provider QA.com reported on the social mobility aspects of apprenticeships calling for a number of changes including better collection of data, stronger careers guidance and an increased minimum wage to help boost social mobility in the apprenticeship system
- **Centre assessment.** Ofqual reported on its earlier consultation on regulations for centre assessment where it intends to make a number of changes including the introduction by Awarding Organisations in 2021 of a Standards Scrutiny process
- **Skills devolution.** The Mayor of London called on the government to devolve more powers and funding for skills and employment as he announced additional funding for both his Construction Academy and Small Projects Fund along with the creation of a new Skills for Londoners Innovation Fund
- **College of the Future.** Sir Ian Diamond, Chair of the Independent Commission on the College of the Future heralded a further stage in the Commission's work in FE News, as it hosted experts from Europe offering their thoughts about the role of colleges in the future



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## Schools

- **Working all hours.** UCL published extensive new research, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, on working hours for teachers in England showing that although these hadn't increased in recent years, they remained high in comparison with other countries with government workload initiatives having little effect
- **Teachers' Pay.** The Education Secretary set out his thoughts on teachers' pay for 2020/21 to the Pay Review Body proposing among other things 'a significant uplift in the starting salary of classroom teachers' in light of the recent spending round announcement
- **Understanding school revenue expenditure.** The Education Policy Institute published the first in a series of intended briefings on school income and expenditure showing how priorities were changing and how much variability there was in the system between schools
- **Leaving school with nothing.** The Children's Commissioner for England reported that increasing numbers of children, especially in disadvantaged areas were leaving school without substantive qualifications pointing to attainment gaps of over 20% in different parts of the country
- **Reform options for Britain's private schools.** The newly formed Private School Policy Reform organization launched a document looking at potential options for reforming the country's private school system, suggesting six options in all, five imposed such as removing charitable status and nationalization, and one suggesting reform from within
- **You need a policy for that.** The DfE published the list of statutory policies ranging from admissions to school exclusions and more that schools and academy trusts are expected to have in place
- **Online sixth form.** The BBC reported on the creation of a new online sixth form being developed by Harrow School and Pearson which will be available from September 2020 and will offer online A level provision, initially in science and maths for students in other countries
- **SEND analysis.** The Education Policy Institute examined many of the issues around the provision of special educational needs and alternative provision in light of another review announced recently by government, listing rising demand, lack of funding and inconsistency of provision as three sources of concern
- **Top 100 tips.** The OECD marked the 100<sup>th</sup> edition of its PISA in Focus series by listing 100 things that have been learnt from PISA over the years, from what makes for high-performing education systems to what students know and can do

## Tweet(s) of the week.

- "The UK Home Office has confirmed that post-study work visas will be available for students 'graduating in the summer of 2020/21 and after' following criticism of the government's initial announcement for causing 'confusion'" - [@timeshighered](#)
- "Almost 7 in 10 students go to uni 'as the only way to make sure I get the life I want, @Unite\_Student'" - [@jim\\_dickinson](#)
- "@ED Dorrell: 'By 2022 we will have had a whole cohort of students who have experienced 12 years of education funding pressures'" - [@EduPolicyInst](#)
- "Girls at school should be taught how to ask for a pay rise, says female CEO." - [@guardianworld](#)
- "Pro tip: always eat breakfast before going to a breakfast meeting" - [@RichardA](#)



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- “A recent study showed that teenagers with very late or no set bedtime are 24% more likely to suffer from depression” - [@Telegraph](#)

## Other stories of the week

- The College Admissions scandal. The Washington Post carried an interesting piece this week on the issues around college admissions in America. The story has been running for some time and has seen charges of access and elitism being levelled and questions raised about admissions tests and the impact on young people. Last week actress Felicity Huffman was sentenced for paying for her child to get higher results in the admission test. The title of the article: ‘Even if you could give your kid everything, should you?’ seems to have captured the debate for many and can be found [here](#)
- Empty nesting. It’s the time of year when car boots are loaded up and offspring dropped off at university leaving parents at home facing what’s known as the empty nest syndrome. For some parents it’s a relief to have the house back, others find it more difficult. The Times this week turned to a therapist to guide parents on how to survive and thrive. A link to the article can be found [here](#).

## Quote(s) of the week

- “My written evidence will present – based on the latest evidence and data - a strong case for schools to move towards a relatively flatter pay progression structure than is currently typical, alongside significantly higher starting and early career salaries” – the Education Secretary sets out his thoughts on teachers’ pay to the Teachers’ Pay Review Board
- “You have my full backing to continue to exercise your powers boldly to ensure that you are an effective regulator” – the (new) Education Secretary adds his backing to the Office for Students
- “Today’s students are not in the main going to university because they want to be rich; they are going because they want to absorb the lifelong transferable benefits that degrees continue to confer” – HEPI director Nick Hillman comments on the Unite Students’ report into how the latest generation views the uni experience
- “Education is an area full of prognostications about the future – many of them empty and hollow” – Tim Oates reflects on the future of education in the Centre for Education and Youth’s new collection of essays
- “There is no such thing as a quiet term” – one of the conclusions from the latest research into teachers’ working hours in England

## Number(s) of the week

- £2.3bn. How much would be needed to meet the Augar recommendations for re-balancing FE funding, according to the latest report from the Institute for Fiscal Studies
- 495,620. How many students have a confirmed place on a full-time undergrad course this year, slightly up on last year according to the latest figures from UCAS
- 62%. How many prospective university students want a job they are passionate about, much more than those who just want to be wealthy, according to the latest research from Unite Students



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- 1 in 20. How many workers in the UK don't receive their paid holiday entitlement, according to research from the Resolution Foundation
- 354. How many apprentices the DfE has taken on since April 2017 making it one of the top apprentice employers across government, according to new official figures
- £100m. How much the CBI is calling for by way of an annual government top-up to the apprenticeship levy fund, according to a new report
- 47. How many hours on average a teacher in England works in term time, rising to 50 during the summer term, according to new research from UCL

## **What to look out for next week**

- Labour Party Conference (this Saturday – Wednesday)
- Conservative Party Conference (next Saturday – Wednesday)