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30 Jan 2014

Policy Tracker - Keeping track of what happened in the world of education in January 2014

Main talking points

The appearance of both Government and Opposition Ministers armed with lists of announcements at the North of England and BETT Conferences, the traditional starting points of another education year, suggests that 2014 is already off to a busy start. Topics getting the treatment so far include school performance, teachers, elite colleges, learning technology and HE.

Key headlines from the month

- Free Schools. 10 more announced along with 6 new UTCs and 5 new Studio Schools
- SEN. DfE to fund 1800+ champions to help implement new arrangements
- GCSE. Ofqual confirm PE and Drama 'safe' as new consultations awaited
- A' levels. Consultation closes with concerns about de-coupled AS and science practicals
- School league tables. Number of underperforming state schools drops to 154
- Learning Technology. New strategic Group announced
- Progress 8. DfE publish an Update in advance of next month's report on methodology
- White working class kids. Ed Committee Inquiry under way
- School Governors. DfE consult on more professional model
- Talented Leaders Programme. Government confirm a spring launch
- 16-18 funding. FE facing average 3.0% hit
- Traineeships. AELP to run Traineeship Staff Support Programme
- FE. Government announce new elite college brand
- Basic Skills. Labour to introduce Basic Skills Tests alongside welfare reforms
- Adult Literacy. BIS Committee announce new Inquiry
- Student Loan Book. BIS Committee question some of the figures
- HE. HEFCE issues a response to OFT Inquiry
- University rooms. Average room now costs £3,301, up 11% over 3 yrs

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

- **Youth Index 2014.** The Prince's Trust undertakes its annual check on the pulse of young people and finds many, especially those unemployed, feeling they have little to live for
- **Reversing the widget effect.** The thinktank Policy Exchange argues that 'effective' performance-related pay can help teachers feel more valued and less like widgets in a system
- **Introduction of 16-18 core maths qualifications.** The DfE hopes this qualification will encourage the 40% of 16 yr olds with a GCSE grade C or above to carry on studying maths
- **Make NEETs history in 2014.** The venture organisation Impetus-PEF calls for better school-work transition as it highlights the potential problems of being NEET
- **Update on progress 8.** The DfE amends the position on Eng Lit as one of three changes listed in this latest Update on accountability arrangements for secondary schools
- **The Graduate Market in 2014.** Latest figures from High Fliers Research suggests graduate opportunities in top companies for 2014 are likely to increase by 8.7%
- **The School Governance Regulations.** The DfE identifies three core roles for school governors as it seeks to encourage a more business-like approach
- **Funding reduction for full-time 18 year olds.** The DfE eventually publish the impact assessment which leaves colleges liable to take a notable hit
- **Education to Employment.** McKinsey examines the issue of youth employment across Europe and points to the dangers of parallel universes between employers and young people
- **Growth Dashboard.** The government publishes its latest smorgasbord of data on UK growth and industrial policy
- **School Partnerships and Cooperation.** The government dismisses calls for Ofsted inspections of academy chains as it responds to the Education Committee's recent Inquiry
- **Schools United.** Anthony Seldon calls for further cross-fertilisation between the state and independent sector as part of his latest published work on school reform

- **A passion for learning.** The Russell Group explains what makes their experience so unique
- **Performance Tables 2013.** The DfE publishes the latest set of school league tables showing more taking EBaccs and a fall in the number of under-performing schools
- **A Rich Seam: How New Pedagogies Can Find Deep Learning.** Pearson launches a series of commissioned global think pieces on the changing face of classroom learning
- **Making Education Work.** An independent group of outside experts gathered by Pearson recommend significant changes to the design and development of the qualification system
- **Performance and Capability of the Education Funding Agency.** The National Audit Office runs the rule over the EFA and worries about growing demands
- **UKCES Skills Survey.** The UK Skills Commission publishes its latest employer skills survey which suggests recovery may be hampered by a lack of skilled workers in key industries

Speeches of the month

- Elizabeth Truss's 3 January Oxford Conference speech outlines how lessons from abroad are shaping the government's current education reforms
- The Chancellor's 6 January 'Let's finish the job' speech warns against any complacency and instead labels 2014 'the year of hard truths' with further cuts to prove it
- Tristram Hunt's 15 January North of England Conference speech spells out the Party's vision of a fully qualified and registered profession
- David Laws's 16 January North of England Conference speech sets out more details on how the government's Talented Leaders programme will help under-performing schools
- John Denham's 16 January RSA speech offers an interesting analysis of UKHE funding and identifies four possible ways forward in an attempt to shape the university fees debate
- Rachel Reeves's 20 January IPPR speech calls for a compulsory jobs guarantee and basic skills tests as part of Labour proposals for reforming welfare to work
- Michael Gove's 22 January BETT speech reflects on some of the changes happening in technology and explains how the government is changing the curriculum to respond to them
- Matthew Hancock's 24 January BETT speech announces the creation of a new Education Technology Group designed to lead future strategy
- Matthew Hancock's 28 January Skills Summit speech outlines government activity around vocational and announces a new generation of elite college institutions

Quotes of the month

- *"One of the most depressing discoveries of 2013 was that over the last decade Britain's education fell even further behind other countries in the world."* The Chancellor laments the state of English education in his New Year speech
- *"This is quite a serious black hole. How are you going to address it?"* The BIS Committee puts the HE Minister on the spot about how to fund an increase in student numbers
- *"I have had many opportunities to observe that very intelligent people leave their brains behind when it comes to technology. The MOOC phenomenon is just further confirmation of that simple truth."* The IoE's Professor of learning with digital technologies clarifies her thoughts on MOOCs
- *"I remain of the view that the quality of careers guidance in schools is improving."* The Education Secretary sticks to his guns on careers education
- *"If you're not a motivated teacher, passionate about your subject, passionate about being in the classroom, then you shouldn't really be in this profession."* The Shadow Education Minister gets passionate about his proposed validation scheme for teachers

Word or phrase of the month

- 'Year of hard truths.' The Chancellor's prognosis for 2014

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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 January 2014

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