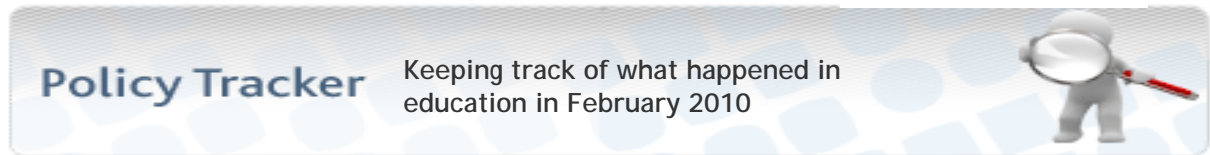


POLICY TRACKER

2010/02

26 February 2010



Main Talking Points

There have been four main talking points this month. First, higher education where proposed cuts leave this sector as the one in which debate about the impact of funding is currently being played out. Second, schools where the government has launched an alternative to the Conservative 'free' school model in the form of accredited chains of schools. Third, the economy where against a backcloth of government having to borrow more money, economists appear split over when cuts should happen. Fourth, politics where talk of a hung parliament has hardened.

Key headlines from the last month

- [Schools Bill](#). Reaches its Report Stage with fierce debate on sex education
- [Special Needs](#). Government plan to implement the [Lamb](#) recommendations
- [A*](#). Ofqual explain in an [open letter](#) how this new grade will be awarded
- [FE](#). AoC [survey](#) reveals average cuts of 16% in adult learning budgets
- [HE](#). The £7,5356 funding grant for universities for 2010/11 includes a 1.6% reduction in the teaching budget and 14.9% cut for capital funding
- [UCAS](#). Latest [application figures](#) for 2010 entry up 23% on last year
- [Jobs](#). PWC find more p/t working and 28% of bosses planning redundancies
- [Economy](#). NIESR claim the economy will grow by 1.1% and 2.0% over 2 years
- [Employment and Skills](#). The UK Commission begin a formal review of progress in integrating UK employment and skills systems; concludes 2011
- [Visas](#). Tougher requirements introduced for foreign students from March

Reports of the month

- *'Making it count: how universities are using income from variable fees.'* A [UUK Report](#) reveals that of the £1.3bn fee income generated so far, 25% has gone on bursaries, 17% on staff: student ratios, 57% on buildings
- *'Preparing colleges for the future.'* A blue sky [Paper](#) commissioned for the 157 group considers new forms of structure, governance and funding for FE
- *DCSF Select Committee [Report](#) on 'Training for Teachers.'* This year long inquiry includes amongst its 40+ recommendations a higher entry bar and better CPD but recognises the need to give teachers space to innovate
- *'Science and maths secondary education for the 21stc.'* The Expert Group come up with 21 recommendations to strengthen standards
- *'[More fees please?](#)'* The think tank Policy Exchange argue that poorer students should be better protected, better-off students should use a private loan scheme and proposes 3 'tests' to be used in any fee rise
- *'[Low income and early cognitive development.](#)'* A [Report](#) commissioned by the Sutton Trust finds that children from the poorest backgrounds can end up a year behind their better off peers by the time they start school

- *'Power to public sector workers.'* A potentially surprising [Paper](#) revealing Conservative enthusiasm for co-operative models of public service delivery
- *'Engaging older learners.'* A UUK [Report](#) that recognises the importance of the 'grey' market to HE and suggesting 4 possible types of programme that might meet their needs
- *'Cost of raising children.'* Apparently the average cost, at least up to age 21, has risen to above £200,000 for the first time. The most expensive years are the first year @ £9,152 and the 3 university years @ £13,677 a year

Speeches of the month

- *Nick Clegg's 1 Feb [speech](#) to Barnardo's* argues for a £2.5bn pupil premium to help schools better support disadvantaged children
- *George Osborne's 2 Feb [speech](#)* sets out 'A New Economic Model' for Britain built around 8 benchmarks. Nos 2, 3, 4, 6 involve education and skills
- *David Cameron's 8 Feb [speech](#) on 'Rebuilding trust in politics'* promises to cut the number of MPs by 10%, introduce a new Public Reading Stage for Bills, limit the number of special advisers and introduce a new Bill of Rights
- *Lord Mandelson's 11 Feb [Dearing speech](#)* defends the government's record on HE funding, commits to "sustainable expansion" and urges HE to source other forms of income and consider alternative modes of provision
- *Gordon Brown's 19 Feb [Policy Network speech](#)* sets out the government's case for not making cuts too early
- *Gordon Brown's 20 Feb [speech](#) at the Party's Spring Event* lays out Labour's 5 'Future Fair for all' pledges likely to feature in the Party's manifesto
- *Gordon Brown's [Woodberry Down speech](#) on 23 Feb* offers an alternative 'stakeholder' school system to the Tory Swedish one by creating accredited chains of school able to respond to parent wishes or authority concerns
- *George Osborne's 'Mais' [speech](#) on 24 Feb* holds the Tory line on cuts sooner than later and promises 3 things: an immediate post-election emergency budget, an autumn spending review, an office of budget responsibility

Quotes of the month

- *"Our bottom line is we will protect the front line."* Gordon Brown draws up the lines at his Party's Spring Event
- *"You will not see endless relaunches, initiatives, summits or politics and government as some demented branch of the entertainment industry."* David Cameron promises a new, less showy form of government
- *"The lesson is that it's not easy to find a way to continue school improvement."* The head of the Swedish National Agency for Education confirms that even the Swedish model will only go so far
- *"The government has made it clear to me that it's essential that we look in detail at how we increase fee collection."* Chris Banks spells out his remit for the FE fees review

Word or Phrase of the month

- *Nursery Neets.* The think tank Demos find disengagement happening young

Edexcel Policy Trackers are intended to help colleagues keep up to date with national developments. Information is correct at the time of writing and is offered in good faith. No liability is accepted for decisions made on the basis of information given.