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Policy Eye

Highlights of week ending Friday 17 June 2016



(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

It can be hard to find the right words when events such those of the last 24 hours have happened but education offers a beacon of hope for many and this latest weekly summary therefore reports in that spirit, where four main issues have captured the education headlines over the last seven days.

First digitalization, the subject of a second major speech in a couple of weeks by the Cabinet Office Minister Matthew Hancock and of another one of those 'crisis' reports by a Parliamentary Select Committee. The speech first, where the Minister continued to present digitization as a disruptive force, albeit positively. Its relationship with education remains uncertain as a comment piece in the TES this week indicated, but the Minister remained bullish generally offering three transformational principles. Less bullish was the Science and Tech Committee which published a report at the start of the week claiming that the UK was facing both a digital divide and a digital skills crisis. The report contains some alarming figures on training needs, recruitment and lost revenue and offers a useful summary of the state of play in schools, colleges and HE but the key message was addressed to government: namely get on with it and publish the long-awaited Digital Strategy.

Second, there aren't many weeks when apprenticeships don't get a mention and this week is no exception. The levy continues to trouble employers in varying degrees and this week a major survey of employer attitudes was published by the CIPD. It pretty much reinforced current perceptions that larger employers will, if not embrace, at least work with the levy but smaller ones are unlikely to, that concerns about the impact on quality remain widespread and that the levy is unlikely to bring about any great sea change in employer attitudes to skills investment. The Minister will no doubt address some of these concerns when he speaks at the training providers' annual conference the week after next.

Third, and another topic that's never far away, multi-academy trusts (MATs,) where two of the leading antagonists came if not face to face at least shoulder to shoulder at the Education Committee this week. The Committee is currently leading an inquiry into these trusts and it called on Sir David Carter and Sir Michael Wilshaw to offer their thoughts in this latest session. Sir Michael remains concerned about the ability of many MATs to take such a leading role and it remains an issue that the new Chief Inspector will need to address.

Finally, and arguably a fitting finale in this week of all weeks, the chief executive of the Girls Day School Trust issued a powerful rallying cry to young women everywhere in a valedictory speech to the Trust's annual conference in this week. Be confident in your abilities was the message; the speech is [here](#).



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Top headlines this week

- 'Maths Associations urge Nicky Morgan to think again over Yr 7 resit tests.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Government presses on with all plan for all - Academy England.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Oxford students complain about excessive and uneven workloads.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'Sponsors lose control of 119 Academies.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Ofsted judging schools negatively for teacher shortages.' ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [Not enough digital natives](#). The House of Commons Science and Technology Committee raises concerns about the scale of the digital skills gap in the UK in its latest report and urges the government to get stuck in and publish its long-awaited Digital Strategy
- [The Great Overtake](#). The Centre for Policy Studies think tank offers an interesting analysis of future prospects for the UK economy and society even claiming the exact moment when the size of the UK economy will overtake that of Germany (28 August 2032 at 18.27 hrs apparently)
- [Initial Teacher Training](#). The National College for Teaching and Learning (NCTL) issues a call for those providers hoping to offer training places in 2017/18 to register their intent in a return to a more structured system of allocations
- [Early Years concerns](#). The Public Accounts Committee raises concerns about how far government, local authorities and providers will be ready to pilot the new childcare entitlement from this Sept
- [More Education Institutions](#). The Centre Forum think tank renames itself the Education Policy Institute as it decides to major on English education while Sheffield Hallam University launches its own [Institute of Policy Studies](#) focusing on social, welfare and education policy and research

HE

- [There is An Alternative](#). The Convention for Higher Education raises concerns about academic freedom and the dangers of going down the US HE route as it calls for a publicly funded and publicly provided HE system in its 'Alternative HE White Paper'
- [Five key lessons](#). David Morris, Deputy Editor of wonkhe, offers a helpful summary of five key points that emerge from last week's widely publicized annual HEPI-HEA Student Academic Experience Survey
- [AP data](#). The HE Statistics Agency (HESA) offers a first stab at data on student enrolments and qualifications achieved at Alternative Providers (AP) in England for 2014/15 showing that most (75% and 84% respectively) were EU and non-EU domiciled students on first degree courses with HND/HNC Business courses the most popular



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FE/Skills

- **More levy issues.** The CIPD reports on its survey of employer attitudes to the apprenticeship levy and finds some support for increasing apprenticeship volumes but concerns about the impact on quality and little evidence that it will help drive employer investment in training generally
- **Charity begins at home.** The FT reports on further concerns about the apprenticeship levy, this time from the charity sector where over 1,000 charitable organisations fear they will struggle to pay costs
- **Setting the scene.** One week away from his organisation's Annual National Conference, the Chief Exec of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) Mark Dawe, helps set the scene with a blog calling for help for SMEs and more young people to take the higher apprenticeship route
- **Apprenticeship value.** The Social Market Foundation offers the latest briefing to emerge from its wider project looking at apprenticeships, wages and productivity, suggesting that employer investment in training generally and apprenticeships in particular can reap productivity benefits
- **Apprenticeship awareness.** The services and construction support company Interserve publishes its latest snapshot on apprenticeships highlighting an alarming lack of understanding and awareness of the apprenticeship route among many young people, parents and employers
- **Academy conversions.** Sixth Form Colleges, in annual conference this week, appear to be lining up academy status in numbers with Hampshire and Pontefract leading the chase and up to 60 more likely to follow
- **Window on the workforce.** The Education and Training Foundation publishes the latest annual data on the FE sector workforce showing high levels of part-time staff, median pay in colleges at least of just over £26,000 and a continuing decline in FE staff numbers

Schools

- **MAT Inquiry.** The two 'Sirs,' Wilshaw and Carter give evidence, often from different perspectives, as the Education Committee hosts its latest witness session into multi-academy trusts
- **School places.** The DfE publishes stats on the allocation of school places this year showing that while most parents got their first choice school place (84.1% at secondary and 88.4% at primary) in some parts of the country, choice was more limited
- **Amanda's in-tray.** The TES highlights five files that should be on the top of the incoming Chief Inspector's in-tray (establish credibility with the profession; reduce the inspection burden; improve consistency of judgements; focus on its core role; create good working relationships with the Regional Commissioners)
- **No resits here.** Six leading maths associations write to the Secretary of State calling on her to abandon plans to introduce KS2 resits in Year 7 on the basis that they'll distort the maths experience of young learners at a crucial stage in their learning
- **GCSE grades.** Ofqual's consultation on proposed changes to the awarding of grades 8 and 9 for English Lang, Lit and maths and arrangements for grading other GCSE subjects draws to a close today
- **Maintaining the premium.** The Sutton Trust reports on research conducted by the NFER suggesting that a small number of schools were using pupil premium money to stem cuts elsewhere in school budgets



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- [An Inspector blogs](#). In Ofsted's latest blog, Sean Harford talks about assessment without levels emphasising the point that any system developed should be for the benefit of pupils rather than inspectors
- [School improvement](#). ASCL and CUREE join forces to launch a new partnership for school improvement

Tweet(s) of the week

- "Academics ability to never be in their office is a constant source of amazement to me" - [@IanDunt](#)
- "I have a lot to do between now and December and will carry on as I have over the last 4 ½ years says Wilshaw" - [@tes](#)
- "Managers do things right...Leaders do the right thing" – [The LiveGroup](#)

Word or phrase(s) of the week

- 'Magna Charta Universitatum.' A document, from nearly 30 years ago, setting out academic freedom and institutional autonomy as the twin principles for universities of the future, signed up to by over 300 European university leaders and referenced as the basis of proposals by those issuing an alternative HE White Paper in England this week

Quote(s) of the week

- "It's easier to write new software than to rewrite an organizational culture" – Cabinet Office Minister Matt Hancock outlines some of the challenges involved in digital transformation as he addresses the opening of the latest National Digital Conference
- "A really good idea that is being poorly executed" – Labour MP and BIS Committee member Peter Kyle argues that the apprenticeship levy is suffering from a rushed introduction
- "In a nutshell, he's found a way of working with the grain" – reactions come in as Sir David Collins, the FE Commissioner, announces he'll stand down in November
- "You'll take office at a time when the school system is, to use the language of inspection, good with outstanding features and a government dept that if you were given the power to inspect, you'd probably put in special measures" – education commentator John Dunford offers some thoughts to the new Chief Inspector
- "Too many women are in thrall to their inner critic"- the Chief Exec of the Girls Day School Trust uses her valedictory speech to highlight some of the challenges faced by young women today
- "Exams were terrifying"- Princess Beatrice shares the pain with young people in Newham
- "I would say that the primary assessment system is the carbuncle on the boil that is the primary curriculum" – the ATL general secretary issues a rather painful diagnosis of primary assessment

Number(s) of the week

- 621,000. The unemployment figure for young people over the last quarter (Feb – April 2016,) down 11,000, in the latest figures published this week



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- 5.8m. The number of people who've never used the internet according to a new report by the Science and Technology Committee
- 45,000. The number of listed UK management consultants according to the latest annual report by the Association with digital consultancy plus private health and life science consultancies, the greatest growth areas
- 60%. The number of staff working part-time in general FE colleges according to latest staff survey published by the Education and Training Foundation
- 66. The number of UK state school students who, following participation in the latest Sutton Trust US Programme, have gained places at renowned US universities this autumn, the highest number so far,
- 7%. The number of young people surveyed by Interserve who said they were considering undertaking an apprenticeship
- 548,006. The number of applications for a secondary school place in England this autumn, according to DfE stats, up 2.8% on last year as the 'birth rate bulge' continues to hit secondary education
- 31%. The number of children in the recent British Nutrition Foundation survey who said they regularly eat their evening meal in front of a screen, TV or laptop

What to look out for next week

- National school sport week. (All Week)
- Whole Education Summer Conference (Wednesday)
- Telegraph Festival of Education at Wellington College (Thursday, Friday)
- (EU Referendum vote day. Thursday)