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Policy Eye

Highlights of week ending Friday 24 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

“If you can see the future and say how things will turn out, tell me.”

Banquo’s request of Macbeth seems pretty apt this morning as the aftershocks of the referendum start to register.

The world of education, like many, is gradually contemplating what it means. There had been considerable support in the education sector for a Remain vote. Universities campaigned for it, teachers in Scotland voted in a poll for it and Ministers from both sides even stopped tussling over the apprenticeship levy to argue for it. Now that the result is out, the immediate reaction is to call for a period of calm. The Association of Colleges and Universities UK are among a number of education organisations who have put out steadying notices while a contributor on the Wonkhe website has even suggested ‘it (probably) won’t be that bad,’ though perhaps the brackets are telling.

More immediately for education what happens to the government’s current reform programme for which it secured a mandate just over a year ago? The government had gone to the country in 2015 with over 30 education manifesto pledges, some of which like reforms to the schools and higher education systems, have since been activated while others like the school funding reforms and a new skills action plan were being lined up for once the referendum was over. So what now?

It’s difficult to be certain but Parliament re-assembles on Monday and in terms of scheduling sits until 21 July when the extended summer recess begins, taking it up to 5 September and the start of the conference season. David Cameron has said he will continue to ‘steer the ship’ until a new leader is elected by the conference season, equally that he will continue with the same group of Ministers.

So formally at least, parliamentary business will continue as best it can over the next few months.

During that time, it’s likely that Ministers will take stock and consider what can/should be carried forward in the short-term and what should be left to the new leadership coming in in October. There are at least five important Education Bills on the table with a national funding formula for schools, academisation criteria, baseline assessment, FE maintenance loans, a review of technical education for young people, a skills action plan, apprenticeship levy machinery and a whole host of higher education reforms all at various stages of consultation and/or development. They, like perhaps many of us, now await the future with varying degrees of enthusiasm or anxiety as to what will happen.



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Top headlines this week

- 'It's time to create national digital skills colleges, MPs say.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Teacher or not: Ofsted's new chief passes the test.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Why the iPad generation still needs to learn to write.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'Wilshaw: Don't bleat about the tyranny of testing.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'We should remind students that while we may not be in Europe, Europe is certainly in us and our schools.'" ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [Counting the cost](#). The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) offered a fairly sober reflection of public sector finances following the release of the latest Treasury pre-Referendum figures earlier this week
- [Maths for all](#). The OECD published a report as part of its PISA series of briefings, on 'Making Mathematics Accessible to All' arguing that disadvantaged students were getting a raw deal as they tended to be taught simple facts and figures while more advantaged students were often taught more exciting and deeper maths skills

HE

- [One step forwards, one step?](#) The Centre for the Study of Market Reform of Education (CMRE) published a collection of essays by leading commentators looking at how far the government's HE reforms amounted to a step forwards or backwards, broadly concluding that a big step is still needed
- [Open market](#). The FT took an in-depth look at the changing higher ed market in England suggesting that in some ways universities were having to behave more like premier league football clubs in the pursuit of league points and global riches
- [Alternative Perceptions](#). Gordon Sweeney, Head of Education at Point Blank Music School, responded to what he saw as some misconceptions about alternative providers in the recent Alternative HE White Paper
- [TEF Tables](#). The Times Higher offered an early run at what impact the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) might have on university rankings using some initial metrics and came up with some surprising results with many traditional research institutions ending up lower down the listing
- [Digging deep](#). The Student Room, the online community for students, called in the experts from Wonkhe to explain to prospective students about the future costs of going to uni which are likely to rise with inflation costs and TEF incentives



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FE/Skills

- [Digital apprenticeships](#). A number of employer groups announced they'd come together to help develop and promote digital/tech apprenticeships through a Digital Apprenticeship Standards Steering Group
- [Filling the careers gap](#). The Skills Funding Agency invited bids to help schools meet their statutory duty of providing independent careers advice by including information about apprenticeships and traineeships in future

Schools

- [Conversion costs](#). The Education Committee published a letter from the Secretary of State spelling out how much money the government was setting aside for its academy programme
- [Low fives](#). In a powerful speech to the Festival of Education, Sir Michael Wilshaw pointed the finger at five 'culprits' deemed responsible for letting down more disadvantaged young people
- [High fives](#). Patrick Hayes, Director at the British Educational Suppliers Association (BESA) listed five reasons why he thought the rise of multi-academy trusts should be carefully monitored
- [How did yours do?](#) Some primary school teachers have started to compare how their pupils have done in this year's more demanding KS1 tests, with mixed results according to the TES
- [Careers in context](#). The Institute for Employment Studies (IES) added its voice to concerns about careers guidance by showing how a scheme like that of STEM Ambassadors and STEM Club use mentoring and work experience to enthuse young people considering careers in these areas
- [Two become one](#). Teaching Leaders and the Future Leaders Trust, two separate charities who have been running development programmes for school leaders for much of the last decade, announced they were joining forces
- [Schools budgeting for beginners](#). The Guardian offered a five-step guide, with hardly a spreadsheet in sight, to anyone who might just have been given responsibility for managing a school budget

Tweet(s) of the week

- "If I have caused offence I apologize. Sir Michael Wilshaw six months away from being a national treasure?!" - [@miss_mcinerney](#)
- "We've tinkered with education for too long. What we need now is to start again from scratch" - [@tele_education](#)
- "You can tell a lot about a teacher from the way they arrange their classroom" - [@teshelen](#)

Word or phrase(s) of the week

- 'Friskolar.' Not a good week for Sweden: out of the Euros and their controversial Free School or Friskolar system the subject of a further critique in this case in the New Statesman



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Quote(s) of the week

- “The Northern Powerhouse isn’t just being built with warm words” – Business Secretary Sajid Javid explains the importance of the government’s northern investment in a speech to this week’s International Festival of Business
- “It’s a personal view that we are not as interesting to government as the new breeds in the education farmyard” – New College Pontefract Principal Pauline Hagan tells the TES why she’s keen for her sixth-form college to gain academy status
- “If I have stirred up emotions from time to time and caused offence by speaking bluntly, then I apologise” – Sir Michael Wilshaw’s ‘apologia pro vita sua’ moment
- “He was both a traditionalist and a maverick” – BBC education correspondent Sean Coughlan offers an assessment of Sir Michael Wilshaw
- “In a year of mistakes and confusion on assessment, this one takes the biscuit” – Gen Secretary of the NAHT Russell Hobby takes a nibble at Year 7 resits
- ““We need to make private education so attractive that people are falling over themselves to come to these schools as opposed to taking a holiday, having a car or second home and other things that middle classes are doing” – a private school headmistress challenges some middle class priorities
- “My concern is the way that contemporary child-rearing and educational trends are creating overprotected, cotton-wool kids, pre-loaded with adults’ safeguarding anxieties by the time they leave school” – TES columnist and director of the Institute of Ideas Claire Fox defends her stance on children’s mental health

Number(s) of the week

- 65.1M. The size of the UK population last year, up half a million over the year according to the latest data from Office for National Statistics (ONS)
- £1.3bn. The increase in central government spending over the last year according to the latest figures
- £600m. How much the government is setting aside under the current Parliament for its academy programme with half going on supporting academy conversions and half on supporting the development of MATs (multi-academy trusts)
- £9557. What current GCSE students might have to pay in annual uni fees by 2018 according to Wonkhe, pending inflation increases and teaching excellence incentives
- 50%. How many disadvantaged students believe they’re poor at maths compared to 33% of advantaged students
- 5. How many children a day were referred for de-radicalization programmes over the last year according to figures released by the National Police Chiefs Council

What to look out for next week

- Association of Employment and Learning Providers National Conference (Monday, Tuesday)
- Latest briefing from the OECD’s adult skill survey (Tuesday)
- SMF Seminar on the consequences of high-stakes exams (Wednesday)

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- OECD and partner countries' Skills Summit (Wed, Thursday)
- MEI Maths Conference (Thursday – Saturday)
- Headteachers' Roundtable Alternative White Paper event (Friday)