



FEdS Consultancy Limited
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FEdS BUSINESS FORUM on LIFELONG LEARNING BRIEFING FOR OCTOBER 2009

FEdS' aim is to promote well-informed debate that will help to improve the provision of education and skills in the UK.

It provides a neutral space where senior, experienced people from business, education and government can think creatively and work collaboratively.

Members of the FEdS Business Forum also benefit from tailored policy briefings and discussion seminars with key personnel in government and its agencies.

FEdS is not just about thinking and talking, important as those are. As a result of its work, FEdS has instigated a number of programmes that have filled recognised gaps in the education and skills system.

Since its establishment in July 1996, FEdS Consultancy has created a niche position that is not replicated in any other organisation.

These Business Forum Briefings are prepared at the beginning of each month for the Business Forum members. They seek to keep member companies well informed on the two areas of interest to them – the world of education with which they engage and the development of learning practices within companies.

They are sent both electronically and in paper format. Member organisations may disseminate Briefings as they wish within their organisations. The Briefings reach some 5,000 people every month.

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For the Business Forum

ECONOMY, EMPLOYMENT & POPULATION

Despite expectations that the UK economy would pull out of recession in the third quarter of 2009, a preliminary estimate of economic output from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) showed a 0.4% contraction. First estimates tend to be revised, as they are based on only 40% of the final data.

- The figures imply that the UK economy won't return to growth until the final quarter of 2009. Unemployment is likely to continue rising into 2012 and businesses will continue to fail. There is also plenty of evidence to show that economies tend to suffer sluggish growth following a financial crisis.

Latest UK employment figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS):

- The unemployment rate was 7.9% for the 3 months to August 2009. The number of unemployed people rose to 2.47 million, up 677,000 over the year.
- The claimant count reached 1.63m, an increase of 20,800 over the previous month. The number of claimants of up to 6 months duration fell by 2,500.¹
- The employment rate was 72.6%. 29.95 million people were in employment, down 467,000 over the year.
- 233,000 people became redundant during the period, down 68,000 over the quarter but up over the year. There were 434,000 unfilled job vacancies in the three months to September 2009.

Joblessness is at a post-second world war high of 8.5% of the workforce in the 30 high-income OECD countries, and is likely to rise for several months.

- Ireland, Japan, Spain and the US may already have seen most of their job losses; in France, Germany and Italy the largest part may be yet to come.
- In the UK, joblessness is forecast to rise to about 3m, or nearly 10%, but the overall fall in employment has only been about a third as large as the percentage contraction in the economy. Reduced hours and pay cuts have restricted job losses – but this may slow down a market recovery as hours increase before staff are hired.

A new survey has found that companies in India expect to see economic recovery in March - six months before their counterparts in the UK.

- The retail, healthcare, telecoms and IT sectors are most optimistic about the future, with manufacturing, finance, media and services most pessimistic.

Latest figures from the Office for National Statistics project that the UK population will increase by 4.3 million by 2018, to over 65m.

- If past trends continue, the population will reach 71.6 million by 2033, due to more births than deaths and an assumed net inward flow of migrants.
- Projections are for an increase by 2018 of 7% in England and Northern Ireland, 5% in Wales and 4% in Scotland.

¹ The claimant count is the number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance whereas 'unemployment' measures people who meet internationally agreed definitions. The claimant count is more up to date and the estimates are monthly; unemployment estimates are averages over three-month time periods.

- The proportion of people in the UK aged 65+ is projected to increase from 16% in 2008 to 23% by 2033. In 2008, there were 3.2 people of working age for every person of state pensionable age. This ratio is projected to fall to 2.8 by 2033, taking into account the future changes to state pension age.

APPRENTICESHIPS

Provisional data show a record 234,000 people starting and 126,900 completing apprenticeships in the 2008/09 academic year.

12 organisations - including colleges in Gateshead, West Nottinghamshire, Hull and Lewisham - have won a share of £7m of Government funding to set up new Apprenticeship Training Associations (ATAs) and Group Training Associations (GTAs).

- Apprenticeship Training Associations (ATAs) are based on an Australian model, and work like recruitment agencies, placing apprentices with “host” employers, and reassigning them if necessary.
- Group Training Associations (GTAs) have existed since the 1960s. They bring small businesses together to develop their own dedicated training.
- The aim is to offer over 14,000 apprenticeship places over the next three years, focusing on industries vital for the country’s economic growth.
- The National Apprenticeship Service is also working with Rathbone and other stakeholders to develop GTA-type support for third sector Apprenticeships.

The National Skills Academy for Creative & Cultural Skills will be given the funding to create 250 new apprenticeships in 2010, a further 400 in 2010 to 2011, and thereafter to enrol 450 apprentices annually.

Over 300 people have already registered for a new level 4 Higher Apprenticeship in Accountancy, launched this month in England and Wales.

The Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) is considering whether to introduce a cross-sector apprenticeship for the children and young people's workforce.

The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) has launched a partnership with horsesmouth.co.uk to provide an online mentoring service for both existing apprentices and those interested in the scheme.

- Current and former apprentices will provide informal support, particularly for those who lack role models or mentors. 35 mentors have signed up to date.
- Horsesmouth is a free social networking site for informal mentoring, open to anyone over 16 seeking support and guidance on a wide range of issues.

National Apprenticeship Week will take place from 1 to 5 February 2010. For more information go to: www.apprenticeships.org.uk.

SKILLS

The UK Commission for Employment & Skills (UKCES) has published its advice to the four nations on how to put the UK on track to become a world leader in employment, skills and productivity².

² <http://www.ukces.org.uk/server.php?show=conFileDoc.167>

- It proposes a simplified and more responsive system, better aligned to labour market needs, focused on supporting better-informed individuals and more ambitious employers.
- Its aim is to have more high-value businesses offering more high-skilled jobs to more people with high-level skills.
- It also proposes cutting up to 30 of the quangos engaged in employment and skills work, and reviewing the rest – including itself – against the criteria of value added and impact.

For more information, see FEdS recent briefing paper “Skills, Jobs, Growth”.

LSN – the network that supports the learning and skills sector - has launched a new think tank, the Centre for Innovation in Learning. Its recent report on skills policy for the upturn suggests that:

- The young people affected by the recession do not form an homogenous group. The two largest cohorts of young unemployed 20-24 year-olds are:
 - Those with below Level 2 qualifications, who will increasingly encounter barriers to employment;
 - Those at Level 4, who are better able to re-engage with the market, leading to a ‘churn factor’ of highly-qualified individuals.
- Full fee remission for adults who are below Level 2 is limited in its ability to prepare people for the upturn. Funding needs to support individual employment and mobility rather than specific levels of qualification.
- There is little connectivity between government departments responsible for employment and skills policies or between current programmes.
- There is no magic bullet that will solve the problem of unemployment. However, flexibility in provision and progression through established training routes do appear to be elements of more successful programmes.
- Train to Gain does not offer business support effectively and is poor value for money. By making business increasingly reliant on government to meet its training needs, it may also stifle the development of an innovative and genuinely robust response to market difficulties.

We wait with baited breath for the new skills strategy, due for publication on Monday 9 November. FEdS members will receive the usual briefing note.

FEdS is also running a Strategy Forum on post-recession skills, bringing together senior people from the four UK nations. The event will be held in London on 12/13 November – please contact the FEdS office for more information: feds@feds.co.uk.

Skills Minister Kevin Brennan and Care Services Minister (and former Skills Minister) Phil Hope have launched a National Skills Academy (NSA) for Social Care.

- The NSA will be the thirteenth skills academy, and the first in the public sector.
- The Skills Academy is already piloting a National Management Trainee Scheme to attract executives of the future into the adult social care workforce. The one-year course is hosted by 20 employers across England and is designed for current graduates from a range of disciplines.

Four more sector skills councils (SSCs) have been relicensed by the UKCES.

- They are: Skills for Health, Skills Active (leisure industry), Improve (food and drink manufacturing) and Skills for Justice (policing and the judicial system).
- A decision on Skills for Care and Development, which covers social care and those working with children, has been delayed because the SSC's broad remit means that the panel needs to gather more evidence.
- Eight of the UK's 25 SSCs have already been relicensed. Assessment of the remaining SSCs is due to be completed by the end of the year.

The Institute for Turnaround [yes – really!] is developing a qualification and accreditation scheme to raise the skills of professionals appointed to save struggling companies.

A report from the University & College Union (UCU)³ reveals wide gaps in educational achievement levels depending on where people live.

- The report analyses educational achievement by parliamentary constituency in England, Scotland and Wales and ranks each according to the percentage of people with at least some qualifications and the percentage of people with a degree or above. It also analyses 21 of Britain's biggest cities.
- The national average percentage of people of working age with no qualifications in a constituency is 12.4%. The equivalent percentage of people who have at least a degree-level qualification is 29%.
- Of the 20 constituencies with the highest percentage of people with no qualifications, the West Midlands accounts for eight of them and occupies the four bottom spots.
- London attracts the highest number of graduates, with 17 of the 25 constituencies that boast the most graduates. However London also has many areas where a substantial percentage of the working age population have no qualifications at all.
- Constituencies with traditionally high academic achievement have pulled further away from those at the other end of the scale.

The report claims that its analysis reveals the postcode lottery operating in access to education. While this is undoubtedly proven to some degree, surely the statistics in this report are also down to where well-qualified people can find jobs and/or choose to live – itself an interesting story!

TECHNOLOGY

A report from Youthnet finds that young people are living 'hybrid lives', communicating and networking in a more advanced way than their parents, and with 'highly developed visual-spatial skills'.

- 75% of those surveyed said they couldn't live without the internet; 45% said that they felt happiest when online; and 32% felt that there was no need to speak to a real person about their problems.
- 82% said they had used the internet to look for advice and information for themselves and 60% had for other people.
- Anonymity was the single most important reason for 62% of young people seeking advice online rather than from other sources; while ease and speed of access to information were also cited by over half of respondents.

³ www.ucu.org.uk/locationlocationlocation

Researchers at Iowa State University have found that action video game players who play around 40 hours a week have more difficulty keeping focused on tasks that need longer, more proactive attention than those who play video games less than a couple of hours a week.

- The study found that reactive attention control - described as happening “just in time” - was similar in the two groups of gamers. But brain wave and behavioral measures of proactive attention were significantly diminished in the frequent video game players.
- Researchers don't yet know whether the effect is graded – ie 10 hours a week is OK, but 20 isn't.
- The results contrast with research that has found beneficial effects of action video game play on some aspect of visual processing.

A decision by a Sheffield school to use pupils' mobile phones to support their learning has given rise to the inevitable debate.

- On the one side, there are those who welcome the opportunity to harness young people's enthusiasm and technological know-how. The phones can be used for collaboration, internet research, downloading homework and general study support. There are many case studies of innovative teaching that has really engaged the pupils.
- On the other side are those that point out the potential for abuse (inappropriate photos, cyber-bullying, etc), extra responsibilities for the teachers – including concerns about theft - and the problem for those on low incomes who don't have phones with all the bells and whistles.

Perhaps allowing young people to use them legitimately and responsibly will help to change anti-social behaviour.

Almost two-thirds of the global population - 4.1bn people – have mobile phones, and new ways are being developed to harness the potential of digital communication to transport goods and services quickly, cheaply and with less environmental impact.

- The model is the MP3 player, which has transformed the music industry from one based on physical products – records and CDs – to a “virtual” one.
- By using smart-metering and automation technologies, the world could save 15% of CO2 emissions.

The head of Samsung's Mobile Communications division predicts that personal computers, monitors, mobile phones and televisions will increasingly converge to change the way we use IT.

- Faster mobile broadband is on the way because consumers want the same internet services when they are out and about as they have at home.
- User-friendly smartphones will let people pay council tax or book doctors' appointments more easily.
- We will all be connected 24 hours a day, seven days a week to our friends, family and homes. Information on status, location and even mindset will be synchronised. We are all going to be a lot more discoverable and accessible.
- Having better office features on our mobiles and better internet access will give more flexibility and an improved balance between work and social life.

Surely that will only happen if people learn to manage the continuous flow of information and emails.

A survey of 1,460 workers suggests that 57% of office staff spend 40 minutes a week using social networks for personal use while at work, costing businesses an estimated £1.4bn a year in lost productivity.

- Portsmouth council recently banned Facebook access for all employees.
- Of those surveyed, more than three-quarters said their employer had not issued guidelines on using Twitter.

GOVERNMENT ISSUES

More than 300 elected 12-18 year-olds made history when the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) held a debate in the House of Commons Chamber.

- No one is allowed to sit on the benches in the chamber apart from elected members of Parliament. But an overwhelming majority of MPs voted in support of the unprecedented move.
- The UKYP debated topics including youth crime, employment and the economy, and university fees.

The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children & Learning Bill has attracted flak from the House of Lords.

- Already irritated by the late decision to give regional development agencies (RDAs) responsibility for determining skills strategies, peers raised doubts about the wisdom of giving local authorities a veto over skills strategies.
- Lord de Mauley, the Conservative whip with responsibility for skills, said the Tories would give responsibility for skills planning to Sector Skills Councils.
- The ASCL Bill is coming under scrutiny ahead of its third reading in the Lords on 10 November. From there, it will go to 'Ping Pong' [*the official term!*] where it passes back and forth between the two Houses.
- Lawyers for the Conservatives are already working on an alternative proposal, which is expected to repeal the "overwhelming majority" of the bill.

The apparent enmity between the Select Committee for Children, Schools & Families and the current DCSF Secretary of State took a rather strange turn when Committee chair Barry Sheerman described Ed Balls on national radio as "a bit of a bully".

- Ed Balls had brushed aside the Committee's opinion that Maggie Atkinson was unsuitable for the post of Children's Commissioner [*see p7*] because she was not independent enough to stand up to the Secretary of State.
- The committee can make recommendations but not veto appointments. However Gordon Brown has been a strong advocate of MPs increasing their scrutiny of public appointments.

Shadow Cabinet Office minister Francis Maude is apparently drawing up plans that would allow ministers to dismiss the Permanent Secretaries who head up government Departments.

- They would be moved to fixed-term contracts, and their performance would be reviewed by ministers working with new "non executive directors" brought into Whitehall from the private sector.
- Traditionally, under-performing 'perm secs' are moved or retire early.

- The Tories also want a "senior non executive director" for the whole civil service who would advise the prime minister on the running of the entire Government machine, wielding significant power over Whitehall.
- One Whitehall historian has pointed out that removing a perm sec on grounds of performance could look like covert politicisation of the civil service.
- The party is currently in the process of holding authorised private talks with senior officials about how Conservative policies would be implemented if they won the next general election.

A Whitehall in Industry Group (WIG) review of communication between business and government concludes that things have improved but could be even better.

- WIG provides exchanges and secondments between the two sectors; workshops and briefings; and a "safe space" where the two sides can talk under Chatham House rules.
- In 1984, when WIG was formed, Whitehall was running a clutch of nationalised industries, but had "minimal interest or expertise" in successful private companies. There was little outsourcing of public services. Policy was made behind closed doors and set in stone before it became public.
- Today, a wide range of public services has been outsourced. The divisions between government and business have also narrowed as the former has become more of a commissioner and regulator. Senior civil servants are more accessible, both sides are better informed and there is "more trust".
- However, a lack of technical knowledge in government can make dialogue on key issues difficult. Business needs to engage and be engaged earlier to help influence global policy. And neither side fully understands the constraints on the other in implementing ideas and policies.

PEOPLE

Just as we go to press, Universities Secretary Lord Mandelson has announced that **former BP Chief Executive John Browne** (now Lord Browne of Madingley) will chair the Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance.

Welsh First Minister and Labour leader Rhodri Morgan is to stand down at the end of the year, in line with his intention to make way around the time of his 70th birthday. He lists his proudest achievement as reforming primary school education.

Former president of the Association of Directors of Children's Services Maggie Atkinson has been appointed the new Children's Commissioner for England. She will leave her position as director of children's services for Gateshead at the end of January to replace Sir Al Aynsley Green who has held the post since its inception in 2005. The Commissioner's role is to ensure that children's views, interests and concerns are taken seriously in government.

David Cragg, a Director at the Learning & Skills Council, has been appointed as interim Chief Executive of the new Skills Funding Agency. He was formerly LSC Regional Director for the West Midlands. He will establish the adult skills agency in advance of its formal creation on 1 April 2010, subject to legislation.

Nick Linford, previously Director of Planning and Performance for Lewisham College, has become Edexcel's Special Adviser on Funding and Performance. Nick is the author of *The hands-on guide to post-16 funding*, a new edition of which has just been published.

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

The 5th Women's Forum for the Economy & Society brought together 1,000 activists, business leaders and politicians from across the world to debate the financial crisis. The gathering received little media coverage.

- Its theme was the critical one of how to rebuild the financial system to meet the needs of poor women in Africa as well as rich men on Wall Street.
- For poor women in particular, the current crisis is a matter of life and death. Girls are the first to be pulled out of school to help with the family income, but the last to get food when supplies are short.
- Giving young women the same access as men to land, fertiliser, credit and agricultural training can increase yields of some crops by 22%, according to the International Food Policy Research Institute.
- Studies by Goldman Sachs have shown that women are more likely to plough their earnings back into the family, bringing benefits to society as a whole.
- At the moment, for every dollar of development aid, women and girls can receive as little as half a cent.

Twenty Jordanian female entrepreneurs and businesswomen have taken a two-week programme at Thunderbird business school in Arizona.

- The Supporting Entrepreneurs and Enterprise Development Seminar (SEEDS) has been designed to give women intensive teaching, mentoring and access to resources to enable them to start a business back home.
- The women work in industries as diverse as handicrafts, publishing, consulting, construction, security systems and consumer products.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Employment and Learning Minister Sir Reg Empey has announced funding for 1,000 jobs within the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland.

- 'Step Ahead' is aimed at people receiving benefits who have been out of work for 30 months or more. The jobs will last for six months and could benefit up to 4,000 long-term unemployed over two years.

SCOTLAND

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning Fiona Hyslop has announced that every pupil in Scotland is to be taught personal finance skills.

- Research by the Scottish Government into the range and effectiveness of financial education found that provision is 'variable'.
- Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) has been asked to produce a delivery plan to ensure good quality financial education is delivered to every pupil in every school in Scotland.

Minister for Schools and Skills Keith Brown has launched a new online resource to support education business partnerships.

- Partnership with Employers showcases best practice from around the country and includes interactive training modules for teachers.
- The resource was developed by Determined to Succeed, which is the Scottish Government's strategy for enterprise in education.

- Meanwhile *Skills for Learning, Life and Work* has been published, one of a series of documents supporting curriculum planning in schools and colleges.

Fiona Hyslop has announced a £2,000 financial incentive scheme to encourage apprenticeships in small and medium size businesses in the manufacturing, textiles, food and drink and energy sectors. The scheme is part of the Scottish Government's updated Economic Recovery Plan, published during October.

The Scottish Government will finance an estimated 10% increase in the number of students entering higher education to respond to rising applications during the downturn. £8.6 million will be made available to meet the student support and tuition fee costs of around 3000 extra students this year.

A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) and its Scottish equivalent, Universities Scotland, to promote cooperation between Indian and Scottish universities.

- Under the agreement, Universities Scotland and the AIU will facilitate knowledge exchange and sharing of best practice, promote student and faculty exchanges, and drive collaboration in research and development.

WALES

Education Minister Jane Hutt has outlined her spending priorities for the draft Children, Education, Lifelong Learning & Skills budget, which stands at over £2billion in 2010/11.

- Funding includes £13 million to extend the Skillbuild programme and the Pathways to Apprenticeships scheme. There is also £6.7million available for the Young Person's Guarantee, which includes the Future Jobs Fund.

Deputy Minister for Skills John Griffiths has announced a £14 million scheme aimed at improving the career opportunities of 22,000 young people and preventing them from becoming economically inactive.

- The three-year Building the Future Together scheme will target 11-19 year olds offering intensive one to one support for those falling behind in maths and literacy as well as vocational training options.
- It will also provide a range of innovative activities such as motivational and emotional intelligence support to boost their confidence in learning.

Jane Hutt has announced a £34 million investment in a work-based learning programme to help almost 8,000 people improve their skills on the job.

- The programme will offer employees flexible, bite-size learning opportunities at NVQ Level 4 and above, with modular credits that can be counted towards other higher level qualifications.
- Led by University of Glamorgan, on behalf of the Welsh Higher Education sector, the scheme will see institutions across the region collaborating with almost 1,000 employers to deliver learning in the workplace.

A new 'virtual skills centre' has been launched by Aberystwyth and Bangor Universities. The Aber-Bangor Skills Centre aims to address the higher-level skills gap in Wales and strengthen links between the two universities, business communities in Mid and North Wales, and the Sector Skills Councils.

Business/Education Issues

BUSINESS & EDUCATION

Much publicity was afforded to Tesco chief executive Sir Terry Leahy's attack on the "woefully low" standards in Britain's education system, and his complaint that employers are often left to "pick up the pieces".

- He blamed a surplus of quangos and too much centralised control, and compared the system to Tesco's, where they: "...keep paperwork to a minimum, instructions simple, structures flat, and...trust the people on the ground."
- His comments were echoed by the CBI, which said that they were putting effort into business education partnerships in order to tackle the challenge.
- Sir Terry is a member of the National Council for Educational Excellence, which has been advising government on how to improve the relationship between education and business.

Surprising, then, that there was almost no publicity for the launch of the Education & Employers Task Force only two days later.

Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Schools, and Peter Mandelson, Business Secretary, have officially launched the Education and Employers Taskforce⁴ first announced in December 2008.

- Established as an independent charity, the taskforce is chaired by Bob Wigley, Chairman of Yell Group, and Anthony Salz, Executive Vice Chairman at NM Rothschild. Its Director is Nick Chambers, formerly of BITC.
- It will receive £1.5m of Government funding over three years.
- It will implement the recommendations of the National Council for Educational Excellence regarding business and education, including that every school and college should have an effective link with a local business.

Ed Balls has also announced a new group of Diploma Employer Champions, who will work with the Taskforce to generate work placement opportunities for Diploma learners and promote understanding of the qualification among businesses.

- They include: Brendon Riley, Chief Executive, IBM UK; Chris Mayer, Chief Executive, Her Majesty's Court Service; James Wates, Wates Construction; and Will Butler Adams, Managing Director of Brompton Bicycles, an SME.

CURRICULUM & QUALIFICATIONS

Following its first year of operation, data on the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) shows that 23,000 more children are reaching a good level of development than prior to its introduction.

- The achievement of the most deprived five year olds has also improved, and the gap between the lowest achievers and their peers has narrowed from 38% in 2006 to 34% in 2009.

⁴ <http://www.educationandemployers.org>

In an article in the Times Education Supplement (TES), Gordon Brown has defended SATs tests and says they are as important as GCSEs or A-levels in ensuring schools are held to account.

- His comments come as the NUT and NAHT teaching unions are calling for next year's tests to be boycotted unless the Government replaces the tests with teacher assessment.

Provisional 2008/09 GCSE figures published by the DCSF show that 50.4% of pupils in the maintained sector achieved five or more GCSEs at grade A*-C, including English and maths.

- This is an increase of 2.1 percentage points from last year, and above trajectory to meet the Government's target of 53% of maintained school pupils reaching the benchmark by 2011.
- 69.7% of pupils overall achieved five GCSEs at grade A*-C, up 4.4 ppt.
- 53.7% of pupils achieved two or more A*-C grades in science subjects.

DIPLOMAS

A survey of 133 colleges by the Association of Colleges (AoC) has shown continuing support for the Diploma qualification, while highlighting some concerns during the first year of delivery. Over 95% of general further education colleges teach Diplomas.

- 83% of staff teaching Diplomas are positive about them and say their students find the courses enjoyable. Respondents plan to double their Diploma student numbers between 2009 and 2010.
- Concerns include:
 - The complexities of delivery arrangements, particularly for colleges that recruit from different areas.
 - Teaching the Diploma in one year as a catch-up programme for students with disappointing GCSE results is proving too challenging for many students.
 - The recent decision to remove functional skills from GCSEs (but not from Diplomas) means that there is inequity between qualifications.

The UK's advertising watchdog has banned the DCSF radio campaign for Diplomas for stating that the qualification is accepted by all universities.

- Cambridge University currently only accepts the diploma in engineering.
- A DCSF spokeswoman said they had worked closely with the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) to ensure the accuracy of the advertising messages.

It's a subtle point. Not every A level is accepted by every university for admission to every degree course, but nobody would disagree with the statement that A levels are accepted by all universities.

The 2013 entitlement for all 14-19 year-olds to do any one of the Diplomas may disappear under a Conservative government.

- The Conservatives have stated that they would drop the entitlement clause in the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

- The obligation to offer every Diploma at three levels to all students - in effect 51 new qualifications - is seen by some as a major stumbling block in ensuring innovation in the qualification.

INFORMATION, ADVICE & GUIDANCE (IAG)

The head of the government's Youth Taskforce, Anne Weinstock, has accused former Cabinet minister Alan Milburn of "a complete lack of understanding" in his criticisms of Connexions.

- His independent report on social mobility - *Unleashing Aspiration* - stated: "We have barely heard a good word about the careers work of the Connexions service", and proposed that it should be dismantled.
- Ofsted recently inspected IAG in 16 areas, finding 14 satisfactory or better.

In his new strategy for IAG⁵, Education Secretary Ed Balls has offered Connexions a reprieve, saying that he will review the service in 2011, once local authority arrangements have had time to bed in.

- The strategy puts schools and colleges at the heart of IAG, through the medium of personal tutors, subject specialists and better trained and qualified careers professionals.
- It will also ensure that parents have the information they need to help their children make decisions about learning and careers, since they are more likely to be consulted than official advisers.
- On-line access will be strengthened with an emphasis on mentoring and labour market information; work experience will be improved; and more employers will be encouraged to get involved in supporting IAG.

For more detail, see the recent FEdS briefing paper: "A Strategy for IAG?"

Education Minister Iain Wright has launched three types of trial in 11 areas to pave the way for the raising of the participation age (RPA) across England in 2015.

- Derby, Lambeth and Staffordshire will focus on how local authorities can best provide the right careers advice to young people.
- Barnsley, Swindon and Wandsworth will look at how LAs can best get 16 and 17-year olds who have dropped out of learning back into education or training.
- Cumbria, East Sussex, Hertfordshire, Newcastle and Greater Manchester will develop area-wide strategies to enable full participation of all young people in education or training.

WIDER LEARNING & EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

Tim Dracup, head of gifted and talented policy at the DCSF, wants more primary schools to recognise and support their gifted and talented (G&T) pupils, especially those who are underperforming and/or in care.

- One in five primary schools claims it has no G&T pupils, but the term refers to the top 5-10% of *any* school. Teachers are acting illegally if they do not identify children who excel academically, in sports or the arts.

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<http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00977-2009&>

London Gifted and Talented – a scheme to tackle social disadvantage through offering “aspirational” lessons – has been encouraging independent school teachers to learn from innovative state school approaches.

- As well as improving exam results, the project aims to get more pupils to study declining subjects at A-level and degree level. The schools run activities together in modern foreign languages, science and maths.

A DCSF-funded pilot project that gives the poorest pupils in 23 schools extra money and attention to raise performance and aspirations is being rolled out to 100 more primary and secondary schools.

- The Extra Mile project has given schools in deprived areas £10,000 so that teachers have the time and money to try out their own ideas.
- Extra Mile activities are designed to encourage a culture of respect, broaden children's social and language skills, and promote good behaviour.
- Heads say the scheme has had a dramatic effect on their performance in lessons, with healthy SATs results among those chosen to take part.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING & MATHS (STEM)

Low-achieving 6-7 year-olds participating in ‘Every Child Counts’ pilots have made four times the normal rate of progress, after just 20 hours tuition.

- None of the children in the pilot was predicted to reach expected levels for maths when they started the lessons, but nearly three-quarters were up to speed by the time they were seven.
- The scheme is now expanding to 12,000 Year 2 pupils, and will go nationwide in September 2010.

Stockley Academy in Middlesex, which has a specialism in science and technology, is the first school in the UK to have a Lego Education Centre (LEC), designed to develop essential STEM skills.

- Since 2003, more than 140 LECs have been established across Scandinavia.
- The academy has generated much local interest and primary schools are now considering working with Lego.

My 9 year-old Lego-addicted nephew will be delighted!

Thames Water is to support 10 budding engineers a year for 5 years in the London Borough of Newham, by paying for their degrees and providing summer work and mentoring.

FUNDING

The LSN’s Centre for Innovation in Learning [see p3] is organising a series of free, regional, early evening debates to discuss the 16-19 funding transfer changes. More details at: <http://lsnlearning.org.uk/news/article-33361.aspx>

The Employer Reference Group for the Skills Funding Agency met for the second time this month. The Group meets every two months, and comprises employers and their representative groups. For further information, go to: http://www.dius.gov.uk/further_education/fe_reform/skills-funding-agency-transition/information-for-employers

UNIVERSITIES

Oxford University has fallen from 4th to joint 5th place with Imperial College London in the QS/Times Higher Education rankings. University College London (UCL) has risen from 7th to 4th place after Yale, Cambridge and Harvard.

- Overall the UK is second only to the US, with four out of the top 10 slots and 18 in the top 100.
- There has been a fall in the number of US universities in the top 100, from 42 in 2008 to 36 in 2009. The number of Asian universities in the top 100 increased from 14 to 16.

The University of Sunderland has launched a lifelong-learning scheme that follows the model of gym membership.

- Under the scheme, members pay a monthly fee that allows them to attend as many lectures, seminars, day schools and discussion groups as they want, whenever they want, rather than paying to join one single course. A year's subscription costs around £250.

Six areas have been successful in their bid to the government's University Challenge scheme, which aims to create university towns in parts of the country where provision is lacking. They are: Somerset, Crawley, Milton Keynes, Swindon, Thurrock and the Wirral.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has published the report of its sub-committee set up to investigate concerns about standards raised last year.

- The report proposes that external examiners should be interviewed by inspection teams; the Quality Assurance Agency should have a new "public-facing" role; and external examiners should have an independent channel to report concerns.
- The report admits that staff-student contact hours in the UK are shorter than they are elsewhere, but says it does not follow that standards are lower. It argues that universities should publish information on the nature and amount of staff contact that students can expect, the learning effort expected, the time this will take, and the academic support likely to be available.

STUDENT NUMBERS

New data from the university applications service UCAS show that the number of new students has risen 5.6%. 477,277 students took up a place at university this autumn - 25,406 more than last year.

- 47,188 students successfully used the Clearing system, compared to 43,145 last year.
- 139,520 students did not get places compared to 114,009 last year. However, it is not clear how many of those had the necessary grades.
- Universities accepted 10.1% – 54,470 – more students aged 25+ this year compared to last year, and 10.6% more students from the EU.
- The number of students accepted on to chemistry and mechanical engineering degrees rose by 3% and 11.9% respectively.
- Vice-chancellors face being fined for every student admitted over the official limit. The government had ordered that only 13,000 more students were allowed this year compared to last.

Universities are warning of a funding crisis due to delays in processing visa applications by foreign students. In Pakistan alone there is a backlog of 14,000 applications.

- Some universities have started filming lectures so students unable to get into the UK can catch up by watching them online. Others have suggested providing reading materials so they can start at home. But it is thought that many will close their doors to delayed entrants around the start of November.
- Overseas students contribute £4bn a year in fees. The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) says more than 8% of the total income of UK universities comes from international students' fees.

HIGHER & FURTHER EDUCATION

A report from the pressure group Scientists for Global Responsibility suggests that the rise in industrial funding of university science is compromising its quality as well as inhibiting research for the wider public good.

- Based on an analysis of the pharmaceutical, tobacco, military, oil and gas and biotechnology industries the report found bias in commercially-funded studies; an increase in the use of commercial confidentiality agreements that impede the free flow of data; and poor policing of conflicts of interest.

As part of its review of postgraduate study, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) is calling for evidence from all those with an interest in the topic.

- The review will consider the benefits of postgraduate study to the economy and the UK as a whole, as well as other wide-ranging issues including research competitiveness and the UK's international position. To submit evidence, go to: www.bis.gov.uk/pgreview

Speaking at the CBI's Higher Education Summit, Lord Mandelson – Secretary of State for Business, Innovation & Skills – set out his strategic ambitions for HE and FE policy over the next decade.

- HE and FE are two systems, joined by one goal. They do not do the same job, teach at the same level or specialise in the same ways. But they have the same essential role which is building human capacity and higher skills.
- Universities are academic and cultural institutions as much as engines of the economy. But to maintain support for public investment in that role, they must demonstrate their relevance to economic life.
- He gave notice that both the HE Framework [*published 3 November*] and the Skills Strategy [*to be published 9 November*] would address employers' concerns about generic employability skills. They would also emphasise the strategic skills that the British economy will need in the future.
- Both HE and FE also have a critical role to play in increasing social mobility in Britain, which means keeping up the pressure to widen access to HE – both with respect to when you can access HE, and with respect to social background.
- Both HE and FE will be subject to increasingly tight fiscal constraint for the foreseeable future, but this must not impact on quality.
- Business is a key client of the higher skills system, and must get better at expressing its needs clearly, coherently and quickly. Business must also contribute more financially for a system that will be more vocational and more targeted on generating economic impact than ever before.

China has ousted the UK from second place after the US in the ranking of nations by their research output.

- The UK published 91,273 papers in 2008 – 2.3 per researcher - up more than 11,000 on 2007. It was responsible for 7.9% of the world's research papers in 2008, down from an average of 8.5% over the past 5 years.
- China produced more than 110,000 papers in 2008 – an increase of about 30,000 on the 2007 figure. China has increased its output four-fold over the past decade.
- The US world share has also dropped, from 34% to 29.5% over the period.
- The report notes an “exceptional” global increase in the number of papers published this year, driven largely by China, Brazil, India and Iran.

Kevin Brennan, the further education minister, has said that the forthcoming skills strategy will provide incentives for FE courses in subjects where economic demand is strong.

- He made the comment in response to a BBC report that fewer than 9% of college-leavers found work. However, the report was later found to be based on out-of-date pilot statistics, drawn from a very limited sample.
- In fact, about 40% of college students are in work after completing their course. In total, 84% either find a job or progress on to another course, while the equivalent figure for those completing their first degree is 85%.
- 39% of the entrants to higher education are from FE colleges.

FEEdS members will receive a briefing note on both the HE Framework and the Skills Strategy.

SCHOOLS

There was wide – and, of course, inaccurate - coverage of the Cambridge Primary Review's final report, “*Children, their World, their Education*”⁶, covering three years of investigation into primary education in England.

- The review finds that primaries are generally doing a good job, helped by dramatically increased investment and policies that have had a positive impact. They are not in “danger of subversion by 1970s ideologues” and don't neglect the 3Rs.
- Children are generally not in crisis – they were the Review's most upbeat witnesses – unless their lives are blighted by disadvantage.
- The apparatus of targets, testing and tables is perceived to do damage for questionable returns. The definition of ‘standards’ is too narrow. Different approaches to assessment and inspection are needed.
- Among the 75 recommendations contained in the 608 pages:
 - Extend the early years foundation stage (EYFS) – a structured approach to learning through play - to age 6 and examine the feasibility of raising the school starting age. *Considering the success attributed to the EYFS [see p10], this does not seem an outrageous idea. Jim Rose proposed an ‘Early Phase’ building on EYFS.*
 - Redefine standards to include all aspects of the curriculum. Retain end of primary assessment, but stop the SATs; separate assessment for

⁶ <http://www.primaryreview.org.uk/>

learning from assessment for accountability; and improve the scope and methodology of both.

- Strengthen community engagement through clustering, federation, all-through schools and the exchange of expertise.
- Put the implementation of Jim Rose's review on hold while their own "more comprehensive" curriculum proposals are considered.

It is impossible that anybody could have read the entire report before a statement was made, but it would have been more impressive if Schools Minister Vernon Coaker had acknowledged the importance of such a major study and promised to give it consideration, rather than dismissing it out of hand.

Ofsted has drawn up a list of 20 English primary schools that have received the top "outstanding" rating at least twice, despite operating in areas of high social deprivation.

- Common themes included children being involved in decisions affecting their education; effective leadership; and a strong focus on staff training.

A further 114 schools have been given the green light to work towards acquiring Trust status. 240 trust schools already work with over 400 organisations to focus on raising standards.

- Trust schools are local authority maintained schools (primary, secondary and special) that are supported by a charitable foundation (known as a Trust), which appoints some of the Governing Body.
- They operate within the same framework as other maintained schools but employ their own staff, set their own admission arrangements and manage their own land and buildings.
- The Trust is composed of one or more external organisations (eg businesses, colleges, universities) and draws on their expertise and energy as a means to raise standards.
- The schools include 25 which will be following the Co-operative model, which gives communities direct power over the running of the schools. The government hopes to have at least 200 co-operative trust schools up and running or in the pipeline in the next year.

Education Secretary Ed Balls has launched a consultation process on a new accreditation process that will be used to select partners and sponsors for trust schools, federations and Academies.

- Accredited School Providers (ASP) will take over up to two underperforming schools in need of rapid, sustainable school improvement.
- Those providers with the best track records will be able to become an Accredited Schools Group (ASG) and run more than 3 schools or academies.
- Potential providers will include successful schools, colleges, universities and other organisations like business, charity, faith and parents groups.
- Individuals, charities or businesses that don't have first-hand educational experience will no longer be allowed to be sole sponsors of an academy. As part of the accreditation scheme, they will have to have a co-sponsor or partner that can demonstrate a track record of improving schools.
- The approach has gained widespread support, including from the Association of School and College Leaders, the National College (formerly NCSL) and the Association of Colleges.

The Conservatives have pledged that any school will be able to become an academy. Those with an “outstanding” rating will be automatically approved.

- Academies are semi-independent, state-funded schools, launched under Tony Blair to raise standards in deprived areas by bringing in third-party sponsors, such as charities or businesses.
- Within 100 days of winning an election, a Conservative government would close down any school that has been in ‘special measures’ for more than a year and reopen it as an academy.

The DCSF is already struggling to oversee the growing number of Academies, and is giving the new Young People’s Learning Agency an administrative role. The YPLA is already on the Conservatives hit list. This move would put an ever-increasing number of schools out of Local Authority control. Whatever ones views on the merits of such a policy, it is unclear who would pick up the pieces if and when something goes wrong.

A study commissioned by the National College (formerly the NCSL) suggests that federating schools can have a "positive impact" on children's attainment, but only when the aim is to raise standards by linking higher- and lower-performing schools.

- The report says that the approach has little impact on performance if it is done only to save money; and the education system is not ready for more federations due to barriers such as achieving collaboration between "challenging" schools.

The Charity Commission has promised to give private schools up to five years to reorganise their finances and fundraising if they fail to meet the new legal requirement around ‘public benefit’.

- Under the 2006 Charities Act, all organisations wishing to be recognised as charities must demonstrate explicitly that their aims are for public benefit. Previously, the law presumed this to be the case for any organisation advancing education.

WORKFORCE

Exeter and East China Normal universities have twinned their teacher training departments so that future school staff gain a more international outlook.

- Britain is still considered one of the leading nations in the world by Chinese educationists, who are particularly interested in the play-based curriculum and SEN provision.
- British trainers plan to draw on Chinese expertise in maths and science teaching, the growth in technical education and a curriculum focused on science, technology, languages and traditional arts.

A report from the Training and Development Agency (TDA) suggests that banking, management, architecture and legal professionals are looking to teaching to offer them a more rewarding job.

- There has been a 50% increase in enquiries about teaching training over the past year, and people increasingly want a career in which they inspire others and "make a difference".
- People are less interested in factors such as "making people envious of me" and "having ‘manager’ in my title".

Corporate Learning

BUSINESS SCHOOLS

The recession could result in a massive shake-up of UK business schools both in terms of the content of their programmes and the number and structure of the institutions.

- Critics have accused business schools of fostering risk-taking and greedy attitudes through MBA programmes based on traditional economic theory.
- Harvard Business School professor Rakesh Khurana has long argued that, by abandoning their original goal of producing a professional cadre of managers, business schools have created a moral vacuum at the heart of management education.
- However, the Association of MBAs (AMBA) has found that 59% of 99 business schools surveyed cover ethics to a large or very large extent. This is in sharp contrast to the late 1980s and 1990s, when many of today's corporate leaders were studying for their MBAs, and ethics and sustainability played little part in the curriculum.
- 52% of the 535 MBA graduates responding to a parallel survey described ethics as an integral part of the syllabus they had followed. 59% agreed that the MBA should adopt a stakeholder rather than shareholders focus. 54% thought that corporate social responsibility should underpin the actions of organisations.
- The research will inform both the development of the MBA and AMBA's forthcoming review of its criteria for accrediting the qualification.
- Institutions that receive no public funding are tightening their belts in anticipation of tough times ahead. At £45,000 for a 2-year MBA, students expect high returns on their investment, and may doubt that high-paying jobs will be available.
- But university-based business schools could also suffer, due to the efficiency savings the government has asked the Higher Education Funding Council for England to make. Universities bracing themselves for deep funding cuts are unlikely to subsidise loss-making business schools.
- Any increase in tuition fees could make it harder for weaker institutions to attract students and survive, and between 10 and 25% of the UK's business schools could disappear over the next five years.
- Some believe that's a good thing, arguing that the 130 UK business schools is perhaps 100 too many.

An article in the FT comments that relying on MBA-qualified managers to the detriment of other management approaches could be dangerous for organisations.

- Quality training, with its focus on risk assessment, rigorous evaluation and continuous improvement, has been seen as promoting a too-cautious approach in the past. However, its inherent resilience is increasingly valued in current conditions, where the overall health of the organisation becomes so critical.
- Quality professionals are trained to encourage the participation of every employee, creating a dynamic and flexible culture that is used to change.

A merger between the Melbourne Business School and the University of Melbourne's faculty of economics and commerce has been called off because nine corporate shareholders said the merger would damage the school's international standing.

- Discussions had been underway for almost four years, with a view to create a top-ranking business "powerhouse".
- The MBS board had under-estimated the deep commitment to an independent business school retained by stakeholders such as John Gough, a former chairman of ANZ bank, and John Dahlsen, an ex-chair of retailer Woolworths, who helped to establish MBS and, between them, led the board for 16 years.
- Unlike other Australian business schools that are owned by their universities, the University of Melbourne holds a minority 45% stake in MBS. If the merger had proceeded, the university's stake would have risen to 70%.

Applications to US Executive MBA programmes - MBAs for working managers - have increased in the past year in spite of the recession.

- Although full-time MBAs are traditionally seen as anti-cyclical, EMBA applications tend to decrease when money is tight, as they rely more on corporate sponsorship.
- The increase in applications suggests that more managers are sponsoring themselves and that they view the degree as an investment in their future career.

On-line retailer Amazon is providing several hundred discounted Kindle DX readers to US colleges and business schools, which are in turn making them available to students free of charge.

- The colleges are interested in whether the process of education will change as a result of the new technology; whether the devices will enable faculty to deliver information in new ways; and whether students will approach their readings and assignments differently.
- Kindle ebooks generally sell at 50% discount to traditional printed copies, and with many printed textbooks costing \$100 or more, the savings to students could be substantial.
- Business education experts argue that devices like the Kindle, smartphones and lecture room polling devices provide ways to involve and interact with students.
- The incoming cohort of MBA students is showing the attributes of the multimedia generation. They like structured problems; they don't care for ambiguity; they are more consensual, more trusting of organisations and of businesses. They search for clarity about how to get ahead.

LEADERSHIP

We have entered the Digital Age, but most of those in control in business, and indeed politics, are not digital natives.

- By the time they get to be the definitive boss, leaders are generally in their 50s. At that point in their life, they are unlikely to be ready to reinvent what they and their company do.

- Psychologically, we are congenitally opposed to tearing down what we have helped create in order to build anew, so efforts are applied to preservation because no one is forcing the company in a new direction.
- But lamenting change is like regretting the weather – futile and destructive. The only answer is to hire as many bright young things as you can afford and hope their dynamism will counteract the inevitable conservatism of an existing institution.
- Perhaps the way ahead is to adopt Samsung’s mantra of “perpetual crisis”. That way, no one can afford to get complacent and think they can ignore the competition and dictate to customers.
- Charles Darwin understood: it is not the strongest that survive – but those most responsive to change

Post recession, investors will seek different data and treat traditional data differently in order to make better decisions, giving innovative companies new strategic opportunities.

- They will look for more and better information about human and intellectual capital - such as employee training, turnover and patents - about risk management; and about carbon footprints and other environmental impacts.
- Investors will look for companies with board members who have real expertise and, among other things, ensure pay is tied to performance and chief executive succession planning is handled effectively.
- They will see pay practices as a key indicator of risk, and will look at executive pay in terms of return on investment.

Giving evidence to a Commons Treasury Committee inquiry into sexism in the City, Harriet Harman pledged to end male-only City boards; to force employers to undertake gender pay audits; and to use the award of government contracts as a lever to tackle sex discrimination in the Square Mile.

- She also hoped Sir David Walker’s review of corporate governance, due next month, would help to promote equality for women in the boardroom.
- The Conservatives intend to require companies to conduct audits only if they have lost an equal pay discrimination case.

The computer company Dell is to roll out a mentoring programme in which male senior executives are mentored by female middle managers.

- The programme aims to give male bosses an insight into the challenges women face in the workplace, helping more women into senior roles. The mentoring scheme is one of a number of initiatives introduced by Dell to address the sexes imbalance.

RECRUITMENT & TALENT MANAGEMENT

As companies tentatively put their heads above the parapet and consider a post-recession world, there is a risk that some of them will lose some of their best senior staff, due to pent-up demand for new opportunities and advancement among high-potential leaders.

- Just 10% of high-potential leaders lost their jobs during the recession, with many quickly securing new opportunities. But fewer than usual received promotions or moved to new companies.

- Companies that did a clumsy job of cost-cutting and restructuring are particularly at risk of losing their best talent as conditions improve. The survivors will feel no loyalty to their current employers and will jump ship the instant they feel it's safe to do so.
- Companies that handled the downturn well are not safe – they will be attractive recruiting grounds for firms that didn't do such a good job and will be looking to recruit new leaders.
- Companies should be focusing on how to retain their best talent in the next couple of years. This may mean immediate efforts to rebuild the culture and restore trust. It may require new top leadership untainted by the organisation's survival techniques.
- Above all, they need a clear view about who their top talent is, and to be communicating actively with them about their potential.

It may be fashionable, convenient and amusing to think of staff and customers as being 'baby boomers' or members of 'generation X' or 'generation Y', but such classifications are too superficial to be of real value.

- In fact, people's views are likely to be affected more by stage of life and personal circumstances than they are by their age group. Parents of teenagers face similar challenges, whether they are in their 30s, 40s or 60s.
- Managers need to dig deeper. Beneath the surface of the supposedly homogenous Gen Y grouping of 15-28 year-olds, there are at least four separate types of person: students, young singles, young couples and young couples with children. Each sub-set has different priorities. They may not have all that much in common.
- The implications for managers is that, as they seek "more from less" and put employees under greater pressure, they need to understand what stage of life individual employees have reached. What are the pressures at home? What are their commitments? How flexible can they be? How ambitious are they?

A US executive coach is working with financial traders to help them exploit – rather than ignore – their emotions as they deal with the pressures of the trading floor.

- As an ex-trader herself, as well as a qualified neuroscientist, she has considerable credibility with her clients.
- Feeling and emotion are a critical part of analysis and decision-making. Becoming conscious of emotions can make people aware of their biases, improving the data on which they base their decisions.
- Feelings and actions are separate things. People are taught to control their feelings, when what they need to do is understand their feelings and control their actions.
- Through emotions, the brain can communicate patterns we're not conscious of, resulting in a better understanding of risk and faster development of ideas.

Jaguar Land Rover has improved manufacturing efficiency at its Halewood plant with a pilot training programme that concentrated on basic skills and problem solving.

- The course was developed to tackle production inefficiencies caused by a lack of basic numeracy and literacy.

- The programme was developed in partnership with the National Skills Academy for Manufacturing and a private training provider BUCAM to combine traditional problem-solving with basic skills. This combination has helped remove the stigma that can attach to attending a basic skills course.
- The education and training manager does not echo Terry Leahy's remarks about the current education system - most of those requiring the programme were older workers recruited for semi-skilled jobs in the 70s and 80s.

Tesco is to invest £3 million in its leadership academy to support its global expansion. The funding will be used to plug a gap in developing senior staff due to the focus of the past 2-3 years being at the lower levels of training.

- The company has developed a new Advanced Leadership Programme to prepare individuals for director roles. It offers exposure to the board in the form of sponsorship and mentoring, international sessions in Asia and Europe and global networking.
- The programme also targets people with the potential to be future chief executives through the senior executive syllabus, an 18-month programme.
- The academy's programmes were designed with business schools such as Ashridge and Insead.

HR Magazine asked the Human Resource Directors of some of the UK's largest organisations about their approach to talent management in the current climate.

- PwC intends to recruit 1,000 UK graduates this year. They know their training supplies not just their own needs but the wider industry's. Their emerging leader programme fast-tracks talented staff through a CPD partnership with London Business School. They have moved away from a talent culture which divided potential partners from the rest.
- At Lovells solicitors, the talent management process adopts a merit-based approach that benchmarks performance, creating a pathway to partnership. It is an important move away from promotion based on years of seniority.
- Lloyds Banking Group is positioning itself as the place for talent to come and work. All graduate trainees from across the organisation are invited to a conference later in the year to brainstorm the future of banking. Risk management specialists are the hottest property in town.
- At Marriott Hotels, they believe talent management says something about the organisation. The hotel chain invests a significant amount of its talent management budget in its corporate intranet, which keeps staff up to date on all aspects of the company performance, policies and opportunities as well as a recruitment website with internal and external vacancies. It has frozen recruitment and is putting the emphasis on retention.

RECRUITMENT & INTERNSHIPS

IT security company Symantec has announced its first graduate recruitment and internship programme in Europe. It hopes to hire more than 350 people, including 25 graduates and 13 interns in the UK, using Facebook as one of its key recruitment tools.

- What makes this story particularly intriguing is that the same company recently warned against putting personal details on social networking sites, including incriminating photos that might affect future employment chances.

Only 20% of HR managers are using the free advertising and recruitment services offered by Jobcentre Plus, although 51% of businesses surveyed were currently hiring.

- Employers who take on those who have been out of work for six months or more through the service are eligible for a £1,000 recruitment subsidy, and can also access up to £1,500 worth of funding for in-house training.
- It costs, on average, £6,125 to recruit a new member of staff.
- A firm that recently used Jobcentre Plus to hire 45 new staff estimates that it saved £90,000 in recruitment fees, and received £18,000 under the recruitment subsidy scheme.

A report from Centre for Cities – a non-partisan research group - warns that graduate unemployment will continue to rise because of fewer opportunities in the public sector.

- Researchers found that up to 290,000 graduate jobs could be lost in the public sector by 2014 because of the squeeze on government spending.
- 52% of UK graduates currently move into public sector roles within six months of completing their studies.
- Unemployment among university leavers currently stands at 7.9%, but public sector graduate recruitment has remained relatively buoyant until now.
- One in four workers are employed by the public sector across UK cities, and 69% of the 1.2 million jobs added to city economies between 1998 and 2007 were public sector positions.

The Government has joined forces with the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) to offer up to 10,000 graduates internships in small and micro businesses.

- The FSB, which represents 215,000 small businesses across the UK, has been calling for the Government to recognise the importance of small businesses in creating jobs for skilled young people graduating from college and university. More than half of small firms have said they would employ more staff if they were given the right support.
- The FSB will encourage its members to offer these internships in addition to places already on offer under existing schemes. The extra places will be funded through a £100 per week grant towards wage costs, administered through Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and universities. University Careers services will help match graduates to the opportunities available.

Speaking at the Universities UK conference in September, Higher Education Minister David Lammy announced a new placement scheme that will offer graduates opportunities in the low carbon vehicle and marine energy industries.

- The Low Carbon Future Leaders placement scheme is part of the Backing Young Britain campaign, which is providing funding of £40m for new internships and work placements for graduates and 10,000 places for non-graduates.
- Initial placements will be in marine energy in the South West and low carbon vehicles in the North East.

WORKING CONDITIONS

The Chartered Institute for Personnel & Development's most recent quarterly UK Employee Outlook survey has found a drop in job satisfaction scores.

- 42% of the 2,000 staff surveyed reported excessive pressures at work, compared to 38% six months ago; and employees were more likely to report increases in stress and conflict at work.
- There was a slight reduction in the number of people who thought they would lose their jobs, but a slight increase in people who feared it would be more difficult to get a new job after redundancy.
- The percentage of staff that would like to change jobs had risen from 34% to 40% since April.

A survey by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has found that 45% of men do not take their two weeks' paternity leave, with the most common reason cited being that they couldn't afford it.

- Only 30% of fathers who have flexible working options actually take them, with the effect on the individual's career the main concern.
- Two in five would like more flexible hours but are afraid to ask for them.
- The commission is calling for four months of "parental leave", eight weeks of which would be paid at 90%.

Ministers across government are considering whether the recession, which prompted many firms to put staff on four-day weeks or offer sabbaticals to avoid redundancies, could alter traditional working patterns.

- Plans are being drawn up for a white paper on work to be published alongside the pre-budget report.
- Yvette Cooper, the work and pensions secretary, wants firms that advertise full-time posts in jobcentres to consider opening them up to job sharers or part-time workers. There will also be a new database of part-time jobs.
- Senior ministers are also considering proposals to extend to future employers flexible working laws that allow parents to ask their current boss if they can reduce their hours. Employers can refuse flexible working requests but must provide a rational business case for doing so.
- Emma Stewart of Women Like Us, an organisation which matches women wanting reduced hours with suitable employers, will chair a taskforce considering ways of boosting part-time jobs.

IBM has significantly increased home working, part-time working, job-sharing, and compressed weeks in order to support its globalised business.

- 70% of the firm's employees now work from home at some point in their working week, while 75% of managers have some remote staff.
- Investment in managers' training has been tripled in the past year "in acknowledgement of the complexities of managing a remote workforce effectively".

A survey of over 100 businesses with between 250 and 10,000 employees has found that actively promoting good work-life balance results in 20% higher earnings per year from each employee.

- The greater productivity arises from reduced absenteeism and improved wellbeing. However, almost half of the businesses questioned have seen their headcount drop over the last 12 months, leaving remaining staff to pick up the additional workload.

SMEs can apply for between £1,000 and £50,000 a year for innovative projects to improve the health and welfare of their workers as part of the Department for Work & Pension's (DWP) new Health, Work and Well-being Challenge Fund.

- The total pot is worth £4 million and is open to bids until March 2011. Feasible projects include: improving mental health and reducing stress; providing healthy activities; ensuring work-life balance, and supportive management.

A report from the Institute of Directors proposes that the state pension age should rise to 70 "as soon as reasonably practical".

- The IoD report reflects the views of Lord Turner, chairman of the former Pensions Commission, who wishes that that body had been more radical. The Government has adopted the commission's recommendation of a steady increase to age 68 by 2046.
- Average life expectancy after the age of 65 has risen from 12 years in 1950 to 19 years today and is projected to go on increasing.
- 1.3m people aged 65 are already continuing to work full or part-time. 78% of IoD members say they expect to continue working beyond 65.
- The report acknowledges that such a change would require "a significant culture change", with more training for older workers and phased retirement.
- The TUC has pointed out that many employers want to retain the right to retire workers at 65, and is worried that many older people would end up in a limbo where they are too old to work and too young for a state pension.

The Civil Service is to end forced retirement for staff, allowing employees to carry on working for as long as they like.

- Last year a pledge was made that there would be no forced retirement for any civil service staff below senior management level. Cabinet secretary Sir Gus O'Donnell has now promised that this will be applied to senior civil servants too from April 2010, making the service "retirement free".
- The government is widely expected to legislate to scrap the Default Retirement Age (DRA) as part of its review of the issue, which has been brought forward from 2011.

The DWP is calling for employers to submit evidence on the default retirement age ahead of its official review next year.

- Businesses are being asked how raising or removing the default retirement age, which allows employers to force staff to retire at 65, would impact on them. The government also wants evidence on how the current regulations work in practice.
- Employers must submit their evidence by 1 February.