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Policy Eye



Highlights of week ending Friday 14 July 2017

(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

A week defined by some significant numbers. Details and links below but these are the headline ones: 1, 4, 29, 61, 33 and 19.

1, or rather 1%, refers to the pay recommendation this week from the Pay Body for teachers. A few at the top and tail end of the main pay scale will qualify for 2% but the continuation of the 1% pay cap has not only dismayed teachers but threatens to leave much of the education system facing huge pressures on recruitment, resources, future provision and so on. Schools Week has a good summary of the issues [here](#).

4, refers to the percentage drop in UK applicants for uni this year, reported by UCAS in its latest (end of June) data this week. On the plus side, they're up slightly for 18 yr olds from England and non-EU overseas students but there are some troubling trends in here. A [tweet](#) from the BBC's Sean Coughlan sums it up well: 'UCAS dip from nursing, EU/Brexit, fees, women in 20's, black students, W. Midlands and N.W, low tariff unis.' As has been noted, that pretty much covers all the social mobility targets.

29% refers to the apparent dwindling numbers of young people expecting a better quality of life than their parents, a number that's dropped in recent years as the costs of housing, tuition fees and so on have taken their toll. The figure emerges in one of three reports launched by the Sutton Trust at a [Summit](#) this week to mark the 20th anniversary of their work in helping improve social mobility through wider educational opportunity. The Education Secretary attended and stressed her support with [a series of initiatives](#).

61% is one of the headline figures from the latest [CBI/Pearson survey of employer views on education and skills](#). Other headline figures in the report cover apprenticeship use, school links and careers guidance, the numbers who understand the new GCSE grading scale and levels of satisfaction with basic skills but this figure of 61% stands out because as the CBI noted, it shows how many firms are worried about a lack of high-skilled recruits in the future.

The figure 7 is the resounding message from another major report this week, namely the [Taylor review of modern working practices](#), commissioned by the PM to look at how work was changing for many and what was needed to sustain it. The core recommendation is 'seven steps towards fair and decent work' including a focus on 'good work,' two-way flexibility, clearer rights, training and workplace health.

Finally, 33 and 19. 33, or to be more precise £33bn a year, is what the Institute for Fiscal Studies suggests is needed to bring about an end to austerity; their briefing paper [here](#) presents options for achieving this. While 19 is the number of clauses in the Repeal Bill, published this week and designed to repeal EU law and put in place UK law ready for Brexit in March 2019. The numbers, it seems, are stacking up.



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Top headlines this week

- 'Student loans not as bad as Wonga, insist Ministers.' ([Monday](#), paywall)
- 'Teachers raise concerns over SATs marking.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Growing uncertainty over prospects for young people.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'UK University applications fall by 4%, UCAS figures show.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Crippling GCSE English and maths resits set to rise again.' ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [Let's work together](#). The Prime Minister called on other parties to help her deliver the vision of the fairer society she had identified when becoming PM a year ago, in a speech at the launch of the Taylor review
- [Good Work](#). Matthew Taylor, Chair of the group that over the last year has been looking into modern working practices, launched the final report from the group, calling for a new social contract based on 'good' or 'fair and decent work' and listing seven steps needed to achieving this
- [Deep dive](#). The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) published a hefty 300+ page analysis of current fiscal risks, such as the costs of social care which need to be considered at the same time as negotiating Brexit and dealing with austerity fatigue, suggesting a tight fiscal environment remains
- [Social Mobility Summit](#). The Sutton Trust reported that concerns about social mobility were higher than ever, particularly among the young as it released a series of reports and recommendations including a greater focus on early learning, soft skills and technical learning to commemorate the 20th anniversary of its work in this area
- [The Social Mobility Challenge](#). The Education Secretary addressed the Sutton Trust Summit on Social Mobility where she highlighted some of the steps her Dept was taking, such as the development of Opportunity Areas, to help address the problem
- [Education inequality](#). The Commission on Inequality in Education completed its final report following 18 months of research and as with the Sutton Trust found attainment gaps between the richest and poorest failing to improve, concluding that a lot more needs to be done to attract the highest quality teachers into some of the poorest areas if things were to improve
- [Education and Skills Picture 2017](#). The CBI and Pearson published their latest annual survey of employer views on education and skills, with concerns about the future recruitment of high-skilled staff, the impact of the apprenticeship levy and worries about careers guidance all high up there
- [Russian Roulette](#). The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IfS) and Institute for Government (IfG) considered the options on tax and spend facing the government in a joint seminar, suggesting that 'an end to austerity' was possible but that it all depended on the choices the Chancellor was prepared to make
- [Making the numbers count](#). The charity National Numeracy with support from KPMG, published its latest report into the state of numeracy in the country indicating that many adults still struggle with numbers, often at personal cost, but that help is at hand in the form of the online, cost effective National Numeracy Challenge



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- **Uni applications.** UCAS published its latest set of data from this year's applications based on the 30 June deadline and showing a drop (5%) in EU applicants with a more severe drop in mature applicants and those for nursing (19%) but an increase (0.7%) in the numbers of 18 yr olds in England applying and in applicants (2%) from other non – EU overseas countries
- **Why student finance is such an explosive issue.** Sheffield Hallam VC Chris Husbands highlighted four issues, including the rising interest rate and shrinking recruitment market, in a blog responding to the current fees debate
- **The Boles view.** Former Skills Minister Nick Boles offered his thoughts on the tuition fee issue suggesting the system could be fixed on the basis of two premises: conducting a comparability study of a global study of tuition hours and costs in other countries and re-considering the latest interest rate increase
- **Adonis Mark 1.** Nick Hillman, Director of the HE Policy Institute (HEPI) blogged about the rather strident entrance of Lord Adonis into the tuition fees debate, questioning his recent volte-face
- **Gen Z.** Lancaster Uni wrote a comment piece in The Guardian about the impact of the more tech savvy Generation Z (those born after 1995) on higher education and how universities need to work with them

FE/Skills

- **Training Boards.** The government confirmed its continuing support for the Construction and Engineering Industry Training Boards on the basis of further reforms and announced it would publish the results of its review into them in the autumn
- **MPs on Apprenticeships.** The MPs' cross – Party Group on Apprenticeships published a report on its work so far this year covering in particular funding and careers advice and making a strong plea for young people to be given more careers advice on apprenticeships in schools
- **Laying the foundations.** The Industrial Strategy Commission, a new group set up by the Sheffield Research Institute and Manchester Uni earlier this year, published its first major report on industrial strategy identifying seven foundation stones including a focus on skills, place, investment and institutional framework
- **Learner Satisfaction.** The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) published the results of the latest FE Choices Learner Satisfaction Survey showing most learners (76%) happy with the quality of teaching received and 78% with the support received, but some concerns generally about a lack of progression advice

Schools

- **Paid to explain.** The Teachers' Pay Board recommended sticking with the 1% pay cap for 2017/18 apart from for those at the top and bottom of the main scale although it did recognize a build-up of pressures around recruitment, comparability with other professions and future pay levels
- **What do you think of it so far?** The DfE reported on its latest Omnibus survey of parents and carers finding that most (77%) had heard about the GCSE reforms but only 29% were aware of the EBacc and only 19% had heard of Progress 8



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- **Teacher R and R.** The Education Policy Institute (EPI) published a briefing paper on teacher recruitment and retention particularly in the light of recent developments on numbers and pay, concluding that recruitment challenges remain high particularly in some EBacc subject areas
- **Measuring the quality of governance.** The DfE reported on its work into measuring the quality of school governance concluding that while at least nine of the ten metrics proposed could work, a bit more work was needed on defining cohesion as a measure
- **Headteacher Boards.** The National Schools Commissioner encouraged eligible applicants to apply as the next round of elections opened, with the receipt for e-nominations due next Friday July 21

Tweets(s) of the week

- “You don’t need a double first to see university funding is in chaos” - [@GdnHigherEd](#)
- “Pessimism about the future quality of education is the highest we have recorded” - [@benatipsosmori](#)
- “Greening becomes the third minister in two years to claim a careers strategy is about to be launched” - [@SchoolsWeek](#)
- “My Dad on the difference between compound sentence and cat. One has pauses at the end of clauses, other clawses at the end of pawses” - [@literaryconnect](#)

Other stories of the week

- Henry V111 powers. He may not be the best role model for the modern age with six wives and extravagant behaviour but we’ll be hearing a lot more about Henry V111 and his powers in the coming weeks. That’s because in reclaiming powers from the EU as part of Brexit, the government will be faced with a huge number of laws, rules and regulations, potentially over 12,000 in all, that will need repealing or amending. Given it’ll be hard pushed to get everything done by the Brexit date of March 2019, the government is likely to have to resort to pushing some things through via secondary legislation or amendments with little discussion or scrutiny. In an effort to avoid Parliamentary scrutiny in his day, Henry V111 forced through the 1539 Statute of Proclamations which allowed him to legislate by proclamation. It’s a form of behaviour, critics will be on guard against over Brexit.

Quote(s) of the week

- “When I commissioned this report I led a majority government in the House of Commons. The reality I now face as prime Minister is rather different” – the PM reflects on how things have changed as she helps launch the Taylor report
- “No establishment man” – Rob Halfon, the new Chair of the Education Committee makes his pitch
- “Fees have become so politically diseased they should be abolished entirely” – Andrew Adonis believes the current tuition fee structure is beyond cure
- “For not much more than half the cost of abolishing tuition fees, we could make a gift of £10,000 to each and every young person when they reach their 21st birthday. That would help all young people , not just graduates” – the Institute for Fiscal Studies’ Paul Johnson with his solution to the tuition fees issue
- “Not good news” – the Chief Exec of the MillionPlus group of universities reacts to the latest news on university applications through UCAS



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- “The current situation is unsustainable and the government is playing fast and loose with children’s education” – the General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders makes feelings clear following the latest pay announcement
- “Difficult choices may be inescapable” – the Teachers Pay Board points to a difficult future for school finances and teachers’ pay
- “This autumn I am launching a Careers Strategy which will have a clear focus on driving social mobility” – the Education Secretary becomes the latest Minister to announce a Careers Strategy
- “Just do it” – the National Numeracy charity encourages individuals to check out the Numeracy Challenge to help improve their levels of numeracy
- “We are banning Fitbits and smartwatches” – one school takes drastic action to shield pupils from becoming obsessed with body image

Number(s) of the week

- 0.7%. The fall in real average weekly earnings up to the end of May compared with a year earlier, according to the latest official stats
- 17m. How many adults have numeracy levels at roughly the same level as primary school children according to research quoted by the National Numeracy charity
- 14%. The drop in the number of young people over the last 15 years who think their quality of life will be better than that of their parents (from 43% in 2003 to 29% now) according to a survey by the Sutton Trust
- 1%. Or 2% for those at the top and bottom of the main scale. The recommended pay rise for teachers for 2017/18
- 47%. How many schools have yet to implement recommendations from the Workplace Challenge about cutting back on unnecessary tasks, according to a survey by the DfE
- 3.33m. What the size of the secondary school population is likely to be by 2025 according to projections from the DfE (it’s currently at 2.80m)
- 16.0. What the pupil teacher ratio in secondary is expected to rise to (from 14.5) over the next decade according to a briefing paper from the Education Policy Institute
- 77%. How many parents/carers had heard about the GCSE grading changes according to the DfE’s latest Omnibus survey
- 9. How many minutes a day could be added to your life by drinking a cup of coffee according to a study published in the Annals of Internal Medicine (spoiler alert: other scientists think it could be down to the lifestyle of coffee drinkers rather than the drink itself)

What to look out for next week

- School Funding Rally in Whitehall (Sunday)
- FE Trust for Leadership Summer Symposium (Monday)