

2015/26

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Pocket Watch – Two important Bills

Introduction

This week the Education and Adoption Bill completed its passage through the House of Commons and headed off to finish its business in the Lords. At the same time, two further Bills that had been listed in the Queen's Speech in May and which are of particular interest to the world of education made their grand entrance. One was the **Enterprise Bill**, a Bill that sets out to support small business and enterprise but with a section on apprenticeships. It'll start in the Lords first where it is due a 2nd Reading on 12 October. The other is the **Immigration Bill** which has a number of wide ranging proposals including a couple of particular interest to the world of education. It's starting off in the Commons and has its 2nd Reading on 13 October. 2nd Readings are used to debate general principles behind the proposed legislation and in the case of the Enterprise Bill where there's already been consultation on apprenticeships may not be too controversial. The Immigration Bill may prove a different kettle of fish given the extent of the proposals outlined. This is how the education bits appear in each Bill.

The Enterprise Bill

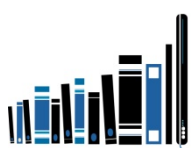
As indicated a lot of this Bill is taken up with simplifying and supporting small businesses, for example there's provision for a Small Business Commissioner to fight for SMEs but Part 4 of the Bill deals with two apprenticeship matters. Clause 18 is aimed at the 3m target and grants the Secretary of State (SoS) powers to set apprenticeship targets for public bodies including incidentally government depts and other non-dept public bodies. How the targets are set, whether they're to apply to single or groups of bodies and the prescribed timescale will be up to the SoS. There'll be a duty on such bodies to provide progress reports to the SoS who will also be able to access information about the nature of a particular body's workforce if required

Clause 19 picks up on the consultation earlier this summer on the formal status of an apprenticeship by making it an offence *"for a person to provide or offer a course or training as an apprenticeship in England if it is not a statutory apprenticeship."* The offence can be committed by a body corporate or a representative of the body, will be enforced by local Weights and Measures Authorities and could result in action in a magistrate's court and a fine. The aim is to protect the brand and prevent misuse

The Immigration Bill

This too has a couple of sections that are of particular interest to the world of education, both of which have been signalled previously. The first deals with English language requirements where as set out under Clauses 38-45, public sector workers will be required to speak *"fluent English."* Public sector workers are defined as those that are public facing such as the police and NHS although relevant Ministers will be able to extend the requirement to different categories of workers and fluent English is defined as *'a command of spoken English that enable workers to perform their role effectively.'*

Clause 46 meanwhile introduces an immigration skills charge which would see a levy imposed on certain groups of employers for each skilled worker they sponsor from outside the European Economic Area. Any money raised is intended to pay for the increase in apprenticeship numbers



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