

## Education: background briefing

Briefing from the **UK Women's Budget Group**

### Key points

- Between 2010-11 and 2015-16 **public spending on education fell by 14% in real terms**
- Spending per pupil in state schools is likely to fall by 6.5% in real terms between 2016 and 2020. Meanwhile, additional **money allocated to free schools**, many of which are faith schools, may **negatively impact on the future of female pupils** and increase faith-based inequalities.
- Cuts to schools' budgets means teachers' salaries are likely to be squeezed. With women composing the majority of teachers (85% in primary school level and 63% of secondary level) **classroom teaching is becoming a low-paid area of female employment**.
- **Further education** is the poorest area of educational spending (10% less per pupil than in schools) and it will see a **12% cut in real terms** between 2010-11 and 2019-20.
- **Funding for apprenticeships will double** from 2015-16 to 2019-20. However apprenticeships remain highly gender segregated with women comprising the vast majority of students in apprenticeships for low-paid professions.
- The shift in HE funding to student tuition fees and, consequently, to student loans, is currently under review. Under the current system women pay a significantly larger proportion of their income back in loan repayments than men because of the gender pay gap in graduate occupations.
- Sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools is highly gendered, with the majority of victims girls and the majority of perpetrators boys. WBG supports the recommendations of the Women and Equalities Committee that Sex and Relationship Education be made compulsory in schools and for improved training and funding for external agencies to work with schools.

### Introduction

Public spending on education in the UK reached a peak of 5.79% of GDP in 2010 before declining significantly to 4.5% of GDP in 2016. It is budgeted to further fall as a percentage of GDP in coming years, to 4% of GDP by 2020.<sup>1</sup> There is a predicted spend of £86 billion for 2018.<sup>2</sup>

This decrease in public spending in education is starker when the calculation is adjusted to inflation. The Institute of Fiscal Studies have reported that between 2010-11 and 2015-16 education spending

'has fallen by about 14% in real terms, taking it back to the same level it was in 2005-06 and a similar share of national income to that last seen through most of the 1990s.'<sup>3</sup> This percentage is below the EU28 average, which was 4.9% in 2015.<sup>4</sup>

### Schools

The Institute of Fiscal Studies predicts that between 2016 and 2020 real spending per pupil in UK schools is likely to fall by 6.5% in real terms. This would be 'the biggest real-terms fall in school spending per pupil for at least the last 30 years'. This has produced cuts to

<sup>1</sup> HM Treasury (2017) *Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses 2017* (<http://bit.ly/2v00wWl>)

<sup>2</sup> UK public spending figures (2017) (<http://bit.ly/2mlGNxd>)

<sup>3</sup> Institute for Fiscal Studies (2017) *Long-run comparisons of spending per pupil across different stages of education* (p. 9) (<http://bit.ly/2zF4pA1>)

<sup>4</sup> Eurostat (2017) *Government expenditure on education* (<http://bit.ly/2ibL4yB>)

special needs support in schools and after-school clubs which have impacted on mothers in particular who have to adjust their working hours to take on additional childcare.

While cuts to the state system of schooling continues, the Conservative Government has targeted additional money to schools outside the state system. In the 2017 Spring Budget, the Chancellor announced an additional £320 million for 30 free schools. Free schools can be selective and they include 'faith schools'. Selective schools, whilst benefiting the educational attainment of those selected, tend to under-represent low-income families in their pupils, and have a negative impact on students not selected.<sup>5</sup>

In April 2017, 12 of the 111 free schools approved that month were 'faith schools'.<sup>6</sup> These schools have a negative impact on religious and social class integration and on gender equality. The recent case of the al-Hijrah school in Birmingham shows that Ofsted had previously been obliged to accept gender segregation in faith schools that was later deemed unlawful by the High Court in October 2017. Ofsted are now looking into 25 mixed-sex schools that operate gender segregation to see if they too are unlawful.<sup>7</sup> However, it would not be unlawful for a faith school to be single sex. The increase in state funding to this sector of the school system risks a negative impact on the future prospects of female pupils and an increase in faith-based gender inequalities.

### Teachers' pay

Teachers' salaries come out of the budget for schools. When that budget is squeezed, like all employers, the government and individual schools have looked for ways to reduce their spending on teachers' salaries. NASUWT, the teachers' union, reported that in 2015 the salaries of comparable professions were 20.2% above those of secondary school teachers, and 32.4%

ahead of average earnings for primary school teachers. NASUWT also reported that 'the average starting salary for comparable graduate professions is at least 15% higher than the national M1 starting point for a qualified teacher.'<sup>8</sup> This is contributing to a crisis in recruitment which risks damaging the learning environment in schools. In 2015, 85% of teachers in UK primary level classrooms were women and 63% of those in secondary level.<sup>9</sup> Classroom teaching is becoming a low-paid area of female employment.

It is already the case that female teachers earn less than their male counterparts. NASUWT found that the average pay for all male teachers in 2014 was £39,600 compared to £36,700 for women.<sup>10</sup> Men were also more likely than women to have senior roles as headteachers or deputy headteachers: in 2012, 17% of men were employed as headteachers or deputy headteachers compared to 11.5% of women. Data published by the NUT suggests a wider gender pay and promotion gap.<sup>11</sup> Women classroom teachers earn £800 a year less than men, and this gap rises to an average of £8,300 for headteachers. It is also age-related, with female headteachers aged under 40 earning £4,500 less than their male counterparts, those in their 40s earning £7,900 less, those in their 50s earning £11,400 less, and those aged 60 or over earning £13,700 less.

Academy and Trust schools were not required to publish their gender pay statistics before legislation was introduced in March 2017. They will publish their first data in April 2018, although only schools with over 250 employees are required to do so.

### Further education

Further education (FE) remains the poorest area of educational spend and has suffered most from public spending cuts to education. The Institute of Fiscal Studies predicts that in the ten years between

<sup>5</sup> Institute for Fiscal Studies (2016) *Can grammar schools improve social mobility?* (<http://bit.ly/2cj89e4>)

<sup>6</sup> Humanists UK (2017) *Government approves yet more religious free schools* (<http://bit.ly/2jShzJ>)

<sup>7</sup> The Guardian (2017) *Islamic school's gender segregation is unlawful, court of appeal rules* (<http://bit.ly/2z5fdFO>)  
<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/oct/13/islamic-school-gender-segregation-unlawful-court-of-appeal>

<sup>8</sup> NASUWT (2017) *Pay gap between teaching and other professions harming education* (<http://bit.ly/2lp58O>)

<sup>9</sup> OECD figures, 2015 (<http://bit.ly/2yxO3rg>)

<sup>10</sup> NASUWT (2016) *Teachers' Pay and Equality: Baseline Research* (<http://bit.ly/2zZuXF0>)

<sup>11</sup> National Education Union (2017) *The Gender Pay Gap* (<http://bit.ly/2zFqBK3>)

2010/11 and 2019/20 there will be a 12% cut to the FE budget in real terms.<sup>12</sup> Spending per pupil in FE is 10% less than spending per pupil in schools. Funding for adult education (post-16) has been frozen since 2015, after significant reductions had already taken place between 2010-2015, apart from apprenticeships where funding will double between 2015/16 and 2019/20.<sup>13</sup> It is intended that much of this additional funding will be provided from the apprenticeship levy on business, rather than by government directly. It remains to be seen whether this levy system can produce the required level of funding to carry forward the plans to expand apprenticeships.

In 2016/17 women were 47.5% of all students on apprenticeships. However most women are on apprenticeships leading to low-paid occupations. For example, 71,570 are on health and social care apprenticeships in 2016/7 compared with 13,780 men. 20,140 women are on childcare apprenticeship programmes compared with 1,470 men. 5,700 women are on learning and teaching support apprenticeships compared with 930 men. In comparison, there are 16,920 men on engineering construction programmes and another 17,640 on construction skills programmes compared with 600 and 370 women respectively.<sup>14</sup> Anyone interested in the roots of much of the gendering of the workforce has only to look at the UK's expanding apprenticeship system.

In the Spring Budget 2017 the Chancellor announced a new set of technical qualifications called T-Levels. The first plans for these were published in October 2017.<sup>15</sup> These qualifications will provide an alternative to A-level route into skilled employment for certain industry sectors. This new initiative has a long lead time and the first programmes will not start taking students until 2020. The planned study routes as published in the action plan do nothing to challenge the gendering of the traditional subject/employment areas that exist in apprenticeships. The action plan

takes the form of a consultation document but does not list gender inequality as an issue for consultation. The implementation of T-levels could increase gender divisions in skills and employment.

### *Higher Education*

The Institute of Fiscal Studies notes the difficulty of measuring changes over time to the funding of higher education because of the different ways in which this funding is provided.<sup>16</sup> Since the change to funding HE teaching through student tuition fees and consequently loans, most concern has been on the impact on students and graduates of servicing these loans, as well as the debt incurred to the government by unpaid loans.

The government has been selling off its portfolio of student loans to private companies at a discounted price for some years, because the expectation is that many students will not be able to pay off the debt under the conditions under which they took it out. This has demonstrated that the loans system for tuition fees has produced both debt for individual students and overall government debt, which seems to be an unproductive way for government to invest in human capital.

After the Spring Budget 2017 student loans became a political issue during the May general election campaign when the Labour Party said it would abolish student loans if the party took over government. Following the election, the Prime Minister announced a review of student university fees and loans, a freeze on the fees cap at £9,250, and an increase in the threshold for loan repayments to an income of £25,000 per annum (from £21,000). It has also been widely reported that Phillip Hammond is considering capping tuition fees at a lower figure of £7,500.<sup>17</sup> However, if reports are correct, the gap in income this creates for universities will not be filled through an increased flow of money from central government to

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<sup>12</sup> Institute for Fiscal Studies (2017) *Long-run comparisons of spending per pupil across different stages of education* (<http://bit.ly/2mIVjFc>)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> All figures taken from Skills Funding Agency (2017) *FE data library: apprenticeships* (<http://bit.ly/2hnLIZ5>)

<sup>15</sup> Department for Education (2017) *Post-16 technical education reforms* (<http://bit.ly/2gkqyOI>)

<sup>16</sup> Institute for Fiscal Studies (2017) *Long-run comparisons of spending per pupil across different stages of education* (<http://bit.ly/2mIVjFc>)

<sup>17</sup> See, for instance, The Independent (2017) *Tuition fees could be 'slashed to £7,500' a year under government plans, report says* (<https://ind.pn/2f7GfV3>)

universities; it will be expected that universities absorb the difference from their surpluses and possibly by reducing the salaries of senior staff.

### Gender impact

A reduction in tuition fees would be especially welcome for women. Recent research by the University and College Union demonstrates that, because of the gender pay-gap in graduate occupations, women pay a significantly larger proportion of their income back in loan repayments than men, and over a longer period of time.<sup>18</sup> However, the Institute of Fiscal Studies has argued that low-earning graduates, of which women comprise a majority, benefit from the present system by paying back very little of their original loan.<sup>19</sup>

Despite the government making loans available to part-time students from 2012, part-time student numbers have continued to fall. By 2015/16 part-time undergraduate student numbers had fallen by 60% since 2008 compared with a 3% increase in full-time students.<sup>20</sup> Part-time study had always attracted large numbers of mature entrants, and those with caring responsibilities, the majority of whom were women.

As noted in its response to the Spring Budget, WBG recommends reducing the amount of time over which graduates pay back loans, as well as reducing the fees that students need to take a loan to cover.<sup>21</sup>

### University salaries

University salaries have recently come under criticism from government, in particular those of senior staff. This is a way of implying that universities are not short of money, they are simply choosing to spend it irresponsibly. University salaries are in other ways inequitable. Universities follow the pattern of all sectors of education in paying women staff less than men, on average, and in the same grades, as well as having fewer women at senior level.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> London Economics (2017) *The impact of student loan repayments on graduate taxes* (<http://bit.ly/2yVTpRz>)

<sup>19</sup> Institute for Fiscal Studies (2017) *How much would it really cost to write off students debt?* (<http://bit.ly/2x6Ei54>)

<sup>20</sup> House of Commons Library (2017) *Higher education student numbers* (<http://bit.ly/2j4G5NW>)

<sup>21</sup> Women's Budget Group (2017) *Gender impact assessment of the Spring Budget 2017* (<http://bit.ly/2ABZzTj>)

### Sexual harassment in schools

In September 2017 the Women and Equalities Committee of the House of Commons published a report on sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools.<sup>23</sup> The overall conclusion was that the majority of perpetrators were boys and the majority of victims were girls. The extensive recommendations in the report include improving training in sex and relationship education (SRE) for staff and pupils, better learning resources for pupils, that SRE and PSHE<sup>24</sup> are made statutory subjects, and that external agencies are funded to work with schools to support their activities in this area. It is hard to see how this can be achieved in a context in which school budgets overall are being cut. For these recommendations to be carried out schools would need new ring-fenced money.

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### UK Women's Budget Group, November 2017.

WBG is an independent, voluntary organisation made up of individuals from Academia, NGOs and trade unions. See [www.wbg.org.uk](http://www.wbg.org.uk)

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<sup>22</sup> University and College Union (2017) *UCU names and shames colleges and universities that hold down women's pay* (<http://bit.ly/2iR5ZXo>)

<sup>23</sup> Women and Equalities Select Committee (September 2016) *Sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools report* (<http://bit.ly/2yEuLnQ>)

<sup>24</sup> Personal, Social and Health Education