

Writing

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I promised myself a week to write. Yesterday, I did just that.

The plan for the new book is now with three publishers and an agent. I heard what people said here.

The first chapter is in draft, but needs editing, and a bit of work has been done on the second.

It is amazing how much time is available in a day when I do not work on videos. I was, however, well short of my highest-ever word count, which I think was produced when drafting the final chapter of *The Joy of Tax*. There were 9,400 words in that chapter, and they were written in a day.

That is why I found yesterday's PISA educational attainment data from the OECD disappointing. I should say that the style of mechanical replication ability these tests measure is not what I think is most important in education or in determining life outcomes. The OECD awards no marks for the most important characteristic that any education system should encourage, which is curiosity, but it is troubling nonetheless that reading ability is moving backwards, and quickly.

As the [Guardian notes](#) the OECD saying:

The long-term declines in performance suggest deeper structural issues within education systems, with challenges at the school and system level. These include changing attitudes towards reading, the impact of digital distractions on students and rising levels of absenteeism.

Reading ability is slipping, markedly, and COVID is no longer the determining factor. It seems that tech and alienation from an education system and society that no longer provides answers to questions that young people feel are relevant to them is the real issue.

I know so many young people who almost proudly say they never read a book, and

have not written a word beyond the length of a text message since leaving school. As someone who finds the idea of life without the written word almost incomprehensible, I confess to being more than a little saddened by that.