

You asked me to write some words on education from a personal standpoint. I'll start off by explaining why I have been a keen member of the Workers Education Association for some time, and now a committee member.

There are many, many people in the land similar to my husband and me, both of us had the ability (I hope!) to have gone on to further education and a satisfying career, but both families insisted on us leaving school and going out to work to earn some money. We learnt our 'reading, writing and arithmetic' well, but there were so many facets of education we so sadly lacked, and evening classes have opened up a whole new world for us. In fact my husband got so hooked on them that he has taken a diploma in nature studies and a 'higher tech' in electronics. Hard work, but oh, how he enjoyed himself!

Take a look any autumn at the list of evening classes available, some through the Local Education Authority, some in private institutions such as the Swarthmore, some with the W.E.A. You can take 'O' levels, 'A' levels, you can go to classes where you can just sit back and listen to the lecturer, or go to classes where you can actively participate. For many years my friend and I went to Psychology classes at the W.E.A. We joined in all the discussions and took part in many experiments, and got to know the other students very well. And I think getting to know the other students very well is another great benefit of going to evening classes. If anyone is new to the city, or bereaved, or just find it difficult to make friends, then going to an evening class and actively joining in surely would make quite a difference to your life. Lack of money should not be a bar to joining evening class. The cost per evening is not really very high, and special arrangements are made for those 'unwaged'. Going to evening classes could be the beginning of a new career, channelling your life to something you hadn't dreamed of!

I started going to evening classes many years ago, and am very grateful to the organisers. I have found them much more interesting than sitting home watching T.V. and hopefully have made me a better person to talk to my family.

I would like to finish this piece of writing with something I feel very strongly about: the importance of parents' support when a child is at school. These days a child needs all the education possible to help make a success of life later. If he or she really wants to go into further education, and the school feels they are capable of it, then parents must do all they can to encourage them to go further. Parents have an enormous responsibility once they have produced a child, and ensuring they reach their full potential. Otherwise they can become very bitter and frustrated adults. This is all part of being a parent: it means sacrifice, sometimes of time, sometimes of money. But my husband and I hope that our children have benefited from what happened to us: we encouraged our boys as much as we could. We would never want to push them into trying to achieve something they were not capable of, but we want them to have a more satisfying life than we had. I do not want to sound smug, but it made it all worthwhile when our elder son turned to us just before he went up to Oxford and said, "Thank you for all the encouragement you both gave me."

Mind you, I still get all the dirty washing brought home!