

I have this year completed my 'O' levels at a small private school for girls, and have recently begun my 'A' level studies at a slightly larger private school for boys, both in Plymouth. I have had, so far, few reservations about my own private education and could have hoped for no better.

One of my few reservations about the English education system is the much debated subject of the private and comprehensive educational systems. I think all people should have the same opportunities in education, whether rich or poor. Why should it be only the rich few, who can afford expensive school fees, who are able to have a choice of schooling for their children?

I personally believe private schools give a better education than many comprehensives, as seen by exam results, and whatever people may say, good 'A' level results bring better opportunities for finding the few jobs available to school leavers, nowadays. I shall therefore want to send my children to be privately educated, as my parents did, while the choice exists. But I believe this choice should not exist, and therefore, ideally, I would like to see private education phased out and the government putting more money towards the education of its young which, after all, are the basis of any country's economy - no brains, no future.

More state schools should be built, instead of closing down the 'unfilled' schools which the present government seems to want to do, so making the schools smaller. This is because I believe the main problem of state education is that pupils are taught in larger numbers. All people are different, and these differences should be catered for, especially during their childhood, when at their most vulnerable and impressionable stage. This is not possible if classes/schools are too large and the children attending them are in danger of becoming just another statistical figure passing through the education system. The smaller the class/school, the more time teachers are able to spend on the individual needs of each pupil.

I also think better streaming systems should be introduced, i.e. having separate classes according to the speed at which pupils can work, so preventing the less intelligent being left behind, and the brighter ones getting bored. This would give more pupils a chance to understand the work being set.

Perhaps, when the state education has been reformed, and private education phased out, people may be able to have a fairer and better education, also helping prevent class distinctions in our society.

The other main reservation I have concerning British education, is the way in which schools and teachers treat dyslexia. I myself have been found to suffer from this common, but much scorned, 'disease'. My first primary school refused to believe such a thing existed. I and other people in the same situation were considered 'lazy' or 'careless', but never dyslexic. Throughout my school life the spelling list at the end of an essay would be nearly as long as the essay itself! I consequently got very teased, not only by my fellow pupils, but by the teachers too, some of whom made fun of my spelling list and made the class laugh at me. They all continually got at me about my spelling and carelessness.

It was not until the year before my 'O' levels that my biology teacher decided I should be assessed for dyslexia, as she realised that unless something was done, I would fail my biology and other exams due to bad spelling, when in fact I was capable of relatively good exam results.

Thanks to her, I was later assessed for dyslexia and found to suffer from it. Although it is not severe, it was bad enough to need help when it came to the exams, so the examining boards were informed, and my bad spellings and general 'carelessness' were taken into account for the final grade. I was therefore lucky, and I was able to obtain good grades, unlike many other dyslexic sufferers who went unnoticed. The worst of these people were probably cast aside as stupid, never given a chance to prove themselves - it has been proven that dyslexic people generally have high IQs. People who do suffer from dyslexia should be given the same opportunities as others, but due to the ignorance of some teachers, have been prevented from doing so. This must change, and teachers and schools should be made aware of dyslexia, and taught how to cope with sufferers.

Perhaps out of all my reservations on schooling, the one that worries me most, other than the revolting school dinners which I eat anyway because I eat anything placed in front of me, is the early mornings, made extra early by travel time. Now I have to go to school on Saturday mornings, the only decent lie-in I get is Sundays, the rest of the week I get two or three hours cut from my sleep. I am sure with these couple of hours given back to me I could enjoy my schooling to a better extent, not being bleary-eyed for most of the morning! Perhaps I would not dread the beginning of each term so much if I knew I would not have to get up early, but still, life and schooling must go on, and I suspect the early mornings will, too!