

Education

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Everybody needs some kind of organised educational system to learn to a sufficient depth about things that happen in everyday life; and so that we can hopefully earn enough money to support ourselves, and be happy without having to live off the state. But at the moment the education industry is a way in which some people are able to make lots of money out of innocent children without really caring what happens.

Teachers are human beings, the same as everybody else. The main problem is that they've got an unpopular job. However, most of the hostility created towards some teachers is because they make out that they should be worshipped like some kind of God - maybe because they are afraid of something.

This leads to the question "Should teachers' psychological fantasies affect our education?" For example, I was talking to a biology teacher about sexuality, and he was saying that when giving sex education he would like to say that, contrary to victorian ideas, masturbation is a good thing, but he is afraid that the parents may get irate about him "perverting their little Johnny!" So he is more concerned about what parents believe than the fact that kids could grow up with warped ideas about sexual behaviour.

Maybe if some teachers were more informal and friendly without losing control of a class, it would result in a better teacher-pupil relationship, and we would have a better understanding of the subjects. In my experience the most popular and 'best' teachers are the ones who it is easy to talk to, and do not take the slightest excuse to start an argument.

At the moment D.H.S. has about 600 boys. Because of this relatively small number a very good "atmosphere" could be created if some of the stiffer teachers would accept a bit of give and take, but after the other schools in Plymouth close and our numbers double, it will be more like a factory production line producing 'O' and 'A' levels as the finished product, ready for the employers' market. A larger school may result in alienation of teachers, and the education won't be as good. When this amalgamation takes place, Devonport High School may not be as HIGH as its name suggests.

But the name of a school really isn't important. Surely somebody with 5 A-grade 'O' levels from one school is as good as somebody with the same grades from another school. After all at the end of the day that's what employers and the rat-race are looking for.

The idea of taking these exams at the end of 5 years' intensive secondary education is O.K., I suppose, but the thought that the rest of your life depends on that one day, when you have to regurgitate as much information as possible is slightly frightening and off-putting. But what repulses me is the way that in school this competitiveness is encouraged to a ruthless extreme, making some people feel inferior due to the false labelling of superiority given to others, which only serves to discourage the less able ones.

I think that the grammar education tries hard to take away any individuality and creativity, practical subjects are disfavoured, and there is an opinion that everybody should think that engineering and banking are the best things since sliced bread. To take an extreme point of view they are turning out lots of butt-fucking zombies.

If there is to be education, everybody should be given a balanced view of everything and then allowed to decide for themselves. Teachers are always trying to entice us into banking, with amazing thoughts of cheap mortgages, etc. but there is never a mention of graphic design or television work. The ultimate choice is to be happy and interested in a job, not how much money it pays. Very few people would say that drilling the holes in toothbrushes all day, or counting out one pound notes is their idea of an interesting job.

I get the impression that many of the teachers in my school are afraid to believe that art is in fact more demanding than, say, physics, because you have to think for yourself, you can't just rely on learning a formula and stuffing a few numbers into it to get an answer.

There is no reason why you shouldn't be proud of your school no matter whether it's grammar or comprehensive but why go to the extreme of boasting about it, and disguising its downcomings - after all, it's only reality. For example, why create a false impression of a school by printing big glossy photographs of nicely painted rooms with expensive equipment like computers in them when 80% of the school is dark, cold (the heating is knackered) and paint is peeling off the wall because more money is spent on sport than renovating very old buildings. It only creates a false impression to prospective parents. Surely the truth is better; the ultimate reality!

Education is good, but it should not be disguised like it is at the moment. This may be why some people are afraid of it.

At last there is a faint glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel. Not only was I nearing the end of 'O' levels, but as the summer term drew to a close there were signs of human life around the school buildings. An army of builders (or should I call them Architectural Engineers!) had been brought in to modernise many of the old classrooms and laboratories.

As the other Grammar Schools in Plymouth are closing, preparation was being made to accommodate their pupils at Devonport. I am sure that in the future the sciences will benefit from their new, high-tech facilities, but there is a darker side to this reorganisation.

Two small Port-a-cabins have been built, each housing 3 classrooms. The rooms are hardly big enough for 5 people, let alone a whole class. They are built right next to a low fence and are constructed from a material that resembles cardboard. It doesn't need to be said that these rabbit hutches are hardly vandalproof!

As for the teachers? Well, there are going to be new members of staff to handle the larger number of children and a few new subjects, but it appears that the Government's money will not run to giving the existing ones a deserved pay-rise or even an oil change and dust off!

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"Thoughts whilst doing a mock 'O' level"

I have got the impression that once I have taken these 'O' levels in June, I will not have to spend as much time with education, both at school and with homework, but instead I will be able to use a lot more time to work on MY ideas with photography and video.

I was sat in the hall in January trying to do a mock English Literature exam, which I ended up writing a load of bullshit for the answers, and I started thinking that in June, the last 5 years of my life will have been spent on these exams. I was frightened when I thought that my mind could have been "moulded" so much that I would end up "stuck in a rut" that I was unable to walk out of!