

# Axe archaic exams at once!

DAWN\*

Scrap exams for teacher assessments!

## I. BORN RICH: SCORE HIGHER

Examinations are woven into the fabric of mainstream education, they have served as the traditional method in which educational institutions assess students on their performance over the entirety of their academic year; they serve to give students a ticket into the adult world. Whether they perform well or poorly dictates the opportunities that lay ahead of them. However, in a time of uncertainty, when not even our government officials can give a straightforward answer to whether “exams will be going ahead or not”, should we reconsider the reliability of formal assessments and whether or not they have a place in British society and education? It is an undeniable fact that this pandemic has left the families of our nation’s children, grief-stricken as they have lost their loved ones, yet also, economically impoverished as many parents jobs have been made redundant. A significant ramification of this has been how shall the grades that are required for students to progress to “sixth-forms and universities” be awarded fairly. This important question has left millions of students in a state of panic as their future is in jeopardy, ambiguity and speculation.

## II. BORN POOR, TOUGH LUCK

At the moment, there are numerous propositions to abolish exams, they are categorised as discriminatory and favour a society with a rigid academic hierarchy, our nation’s disadvantaged children sit at the bottom of the pecking order, unable to progress up as their families experience financial hardships. You would think a government so worldly-wise

would have realised the irony of the situation by now? But, no. They continue to feed fat lies into the mouth’s of our students. The notion that exams have been the time-old constant and therefore must be used is ludicrous! We are currently living in a period of uncertainty, where our own government cannot give us a straightforward answer to whether or not exams will be taking place. Many students are unfairly advantaged in terms of overall exam preparation. Students from wealthier backgrounds are able to undergo private education in the form of extra-tuition and that many of the nation’s poorer students see remote-learning as the only hope of catching up lost school time. Is this fair to you? Do, you honestly think that an exam makes any sense at this point, if the poor cannot even get access to teachers? This creates an unjust divide between Britain’s different socio-economic classes, as those from more privileged families can enjoy an array of learning resources which counteract the consequences of months of missed school time. Whereas in the meantime, children from poorer backgrounds are disadvantaged as many families cannot afford the equipment or WiFi infrastructure that is needed for their children to participate in online-learning, which leaves gaps in their knowledge as many courses are difficult to understand without the guidance of a teacher. Is this just? Why should someone be able to buy their position in the ranking (for exam scores) based on their parents wealth? Education officials argue, less advantaged students have lost between 8 months to a year. They also argue that data from current trends suggest the nation is lapsing backwards in time to a period where education was highly dependent on household income. How can an exam possibly be suited to students from both rich

and poor backgrounds, without inadvertently favouring the rich? Anybody, who wishes to see the truth behind the matter should ask the million's of disadvantaged and distressed students how difficult it is to participate in on-line learning; then imagine themselves in the same position. It is an undeniable fact, that the students from more affluent family's are: privileged, fortunate and well-prepared. In stark contrast, children from less wealthy families are: disadvantaged, in a period of uncertainty and unequipped with the skills necessary to tackle exams.

### III. SHORT ON TIME

On the other hand, the UK's lead educational adviser "John Smith" dismisses claims that exams are discriminatory, instead he views these notions as "preposterous" and a way for disgruntled students to get out of sitting compulsory exams. He adamantly argues, that the UK's lead exam boards have took into consideration the undeniable fact that many children across the UK are disadvantaged. He says, "it is up to the responsibility of students to study their specification whether it be through online resources or physical textbooks, all students should be aware of what their specifications require and exams must go underway". Moreover, he makes note that top *exam boards* such as "AQA" and "Edexcel" commission teachers with years of experience under their belt to create the exam papers, this ensures that all exams take into consideration a student's expectations to perform and are balanced for students of different levels. He further argues, that the process it takes for an exam paper to be made requires many months of questions being scrutinized and peer reviewed. In addition to this, AQA commented on the matter stating, "measures have been put into place to ensure all exams are fair and cater to the needs of students". It is up to speculation as to what they mean by this... Nevertheless, they continue by stating, "students who miss out on large periods of learning, will be offered the opportunity to take texts in the exam hall

with them". It can be questioned, whether or not they intend to leave us in the dark with the constant ambiguity... They further state that, "students who perform poorly may have the option to resit the exam at a later date if they choose to do so".

### IV. A STORY OF STUDENT SUICIDE

At some point or the other, we've all been faced with the pressure exams have put on us. Face it we've all been at the brink of hair-tearing, after late hours at the library cramming for the final test. Haven't we all? If someone were to put forward the question whether or not I thought students should sit exams after hearing all the rebuttals, *my answer, unequivocally, would be "no"*. It always will be. Recent mental health studies have woefully revealed, as the exam season approaches there is a direct correlation between teenage suicide rates and exam dates. How would you feel if you came to realisation (god-forbid) your child had suicidal thoughts about exams? How would it make you feel knowing so many deaths could have been avoided, by scrapping an a4 document? As I write this, I believe there will be thousands of readers, reading this article with a look of shock and disbelief. Disdainfully, crying "But exams teach children how to cope with stress, they are a necessary challenge". To that I simply say, tell that to our nation's most vulnerable family whose future relies on whether or not a child scores enough marks on a piece of paper... Take for instance, *the classroom*. Everyday, millions of pupils communicate and collaborate with others, brainstorming ideas. Whereas, in exams students are thrown into the deep end and are left to fend for themselves. All alone. To those critics, I say this: exams do nothing to capture the teamwork and hard-work students exhibit during classroom time yet instead attempt to capture many years work of learning in one or two papers. Does, this sound reasonable to you?

## V. INTERNATIONAL INSPIRATION?

However, many career advisers have stated that the current *GCSE'S and A-Level* exams (that are awarded based on exams) are very valuable and respectable on the international stage; they set students up to study abroad, as many foreign countries recognize and increases their prospects. They argue, how can we foresee that where the abolishing of exams will take us? Will, those students who wish to study abroad, have to sit further exams (in the country they wish to study in). Furthermore, lead education ministers have stated, "by abolishing exams you are taking away the rights of children that wish to test their academic abilities by sitting an exam. They argue, "How would it feel for something you have worked so hard towards, be taken away from you at such short notice?". They further explore their argument by stating, "this leaves students frustrated". Student's who previously scored poorly in mock exams, feel as if their right to prove themselves is being stripped. This may certainly be true and can also be the only hope some students have towards achieving their dream qualifications. Yet, it can also be argued that if a child is performed poorly in the mocks, would they be certain they would improve drastically in the short period between the mocks and actual exams? Moreover, would the teacher not have a better judgement of a student's ability to perform in exams than the examiner themselves?

## VI. WHAT'S THE FUSS ABOUT TEACHER ASSESSED GRADES

To conclude, as seen from the data and figures exams contribute significantly in widening the gap between our nation's different socio-economic classes and have a direct correlation, unfortunately, with student suicide. Yet, you ask what can be done? Well, there are a multitude of proven methods to capture a student's academic achievements that does not result into herding students, into an exam hall as if they were sheep. I and many others, propose, that all exams should be abol-

ished in favour of; teacher-assessed grades. I believe that the judgement of a teacher, is reputable, whereas an examiner is merely an observer, with his eyes only on the student's exam paper. Whereas, a teacher will be able to award fair grades based on a child's: behaviour, homework and punctuality. Statistics, show that teacher-assessed grades accurately represent the differences in students, highlighting their academic achievements and disprove the notion that exams capture this better. A teacher from "St John Smith School" commented saying, "It is ludicrous to suggest that a student's 4-6 year stay at a school can be represented by anyone other than a teacher". So, ladies and gentlemen. Would you rather place your child's future/our nation's students future in the hands of trustworthy teachers or an examiner?