

Dorling, D. (2010) The Browne review moves us further away from a system in which the majority can get the benefits of higher education, *Adults Learning*, November Issue, 22, 3, p.25

The Browne review moves us further away from a system in which the majority can get the benefits of higher education

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We have a strange higher education system. In more rich countries in the world it is normal even for many of the most affluent students to attend a local university. The Browne Reviews recommendations will move us away from that.

There will be a lot of disappointed mums in tears to come. Women who have gone to university themselves will expect their children to go. But Browne moves us away from the trend in the rest of the research world in which a large majority go to university. His policy has, at its heart, having no more students than we have at the moment – probably, slightly less. The chancellor announced an extra 75,000 apprentices on October 20th. I think these are seen as more ‘fitting’ for the young people the Brown review will exclude from university. Akin to when technical schools were introduced between secondary moderns and grammars.

It is toward the US model we are moving and in the United States there are huge inequalities on campus. Some students are hardly sleeping at all because they have to both work and study for long hours. Under such a system, students whose parents are rich have an incredibly nice time, and they find it easier to do well as they are not exhausted. That’s the best model of what’s likely to happen here. The more students pay the higher marks they will expect, but we have reserved most of the 80 to 99 range of marking for this trend.

What I would really like to see – and it would be clever of the Lib Dems to call for this – would be to cap fees at around £3,000 for local students (those growing up within the same county for the largest proportion of their childhood as the university they apply to sits in). It means people can still go to university, it's very green, you don't have student ghettos, and people going to university get to know a bit about their neighbourhood. People don't need to go away from home to learn life skills. Human beings have learned to cook for themselves for millions of years.

I wonder, though, at what point parents will start teaching their children French so they can go and really experience something away from home – and pay less. The Browne review is banking on the fact that we can't speak anything but English.

The other thing to look at is which universities will close. The ones that close will be ones where a vast proportion of their students aren't white and are the first generation of their family to go to university, and the ones least likely to close will be the ones with students that are most likely to be the 30th generation in their family to go to university.

When you are going down a particular route it is also worth asking where next. After a marketised university system the next step is different kinds of sixth forms. I asked a group of students what they thought of fees at sixth form and they didn't bolt. They have been brought up with this kind of thinking.