*TASK: It is often suggested that exams are too easy and don’t challenge students enough. You have been invited to share your views on a national radio show.*

Have you any idea how insulting and demoralising it is to work yourself nearly to death revising, and then be told that exams aren’t hard enough? Anyone who supports this ridiculous claim cannot possibly have even the miniscule understanding of what modern exams entail.

As a head teacher, I’m on the front line of the struggle our valiant young people. I cannot express my admiration and pride as I walk down the corridors after school, watching students hurrying to yet another revision session, their bags crammed with notes, revision guides and flashcards.

How can any student possibly work harder?

Nevertheless, there always some poor, misguided people, stuck in the past and convinced that everything was so much better in their day. Experts have compared essays from a recent GCSE history exam with those from five, ten and even fifteen years ago. The surprising result? What received a top grade in 2005 would receive a mere 75% now. If anything, exams are getting harder!

It’s time that decisions about education stopped being made by a few opinionated OAPs; we need a reality check before we end up making yet another pointless change to the exam system.

Let’s talk about what exams are really like. Eleven to thirteen subjects. Two to four papers per subject. Two to four hours per paper. It doesn’t take a genius to realise that students are working at full capacity. For over a month, students are subjected to multiple exams every day, with just a short window to demonstrate all they’ve learnt since they were four years ago. Can you imagine the stress our young people are under?

Furthermore, consider the facts. Year 11 students are 67% more likely to suffer from mental health problems that people in their twenties. Self-harm, addiction and even suicide are the lamentable result of a system where more and more and more is expected of our young people. However valiant and resilient a child is, suffering is inevitable.

There’s no way we can allow people with no experience of this terrible turmoil to dictate to those who are experts in their field. Only a person without an ounce of compassion would wish to cause these courageous young people any further misery.

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Don’t we all want what’s best for our young people?

Some bleeding hearts will tell you that exams are too hard. That students are stretched to breaking point and will be crushed under their workload. Well, let me tell you something. I have fourteen grandchildren, all of which have slouched and ambled through their exams over the last three years. Were they diligently spending every moment revising? Did they attend countless revision classes, beg their teachers for extra papers and stay up late preparing?

I’m sorry to tell you that this was far from the case. Although clever, precocious and certainly capable, none of them were ever pushed. In fact, typically they would arrive home from school at three o’clock sharp, eat a gigantic meal, and return to their rooms to sleep, watch TV, or play computer games until it was time to get up again. Yet all of them managed to secure As and A\*s. Does that sound like an exam system which challenges our best and brightest? Our schools are simply resting on their laurels, doing more of the same every year, and seldom bothering to question whether students are intellectually stimulated.

In Singapore, students study as many as twenty subjects. If they fail a test, they’re given a harder one. It is common for most teenagers to be fluent in several languages. Consequently, this country boasts the most capable and sought-after employees in the world. Similarly, in Japan, a system of rigorous testing ensures students have to compete to do better than each previous year groups. As a result, standards constantly rise rather than fall.

Contrastingly, in Britain, we see more and more youngsters without jobs loitering a bus stops and on street corners. The reason? Exams systems which have failed to push them, schools which have failed to challenged them, and teachers who have failed expect enough of them. Year by year, Britain slips lower in the international rankings of literacy and numeracy. And we have only ourselves to blame.

So, let’s raise the bar. Let’s challenge the young and refuse to accept anything less than the highest standard of work and the most demanding challenges. If our exams were the hardest in the world, it stands to reason our young people would be the smartest in the world.