

Education adviser attacks UK schools

15th October, 2013



A top adviser to the British government has attacked the quality of British schools and teachers. The adviser, Dominic Cummings, has worked closely with

the UK Education Secretary Michael Gove for many years. Mr Gove has followed many of his adviser's ideas and has become very unpopular with British teachers. Cummings has made teachers very angry about a new report he made on education in Britain. He said education in Britain is "between awful and mediocre". He said most teachers do not do a good job in the classroom and that "real talent is rare". He wrote: "In England, few teachers are well trained in the basics of extended writing or mathematical and scientific modelling and problem-solving."

Mr Cummings also attacked other areas of Britain's schools. He said billions of dollars are "wasted" on projects to help poorer students and on "pointless" university courses. He argues that many university courses in England teach students little and do not help them get a job. He said university students needed to work much harder. Cummings also angered teachers by saying 70 per cent of a child's ability in the classroom is because of his or her genes, and not because of teachers. Senior officials at the Department for Education have said Mr Cummings should be fired. One said he is the reason for a lot of the Education Secretary's "madder ideas". Many teachers also want Michael Gove to be fired.

Sources: *Daily Mirror* / *The Guardian*

Writing

It isn't easy being a teacher but it's a great job.
Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

adviser / quality / ideas / unpopular / teachers / classroom / basics / problem-solving /wasted / pointless / university courses / ability / genes / be fired / madder ideas

True / False

- A British government worker damaged some schools in England. T / F
- The name of the adviser's boss is Michael Gove. T / F
- Britain's Education Secretary is very popular with British teachers. T / F
- The adviser said few teachers know how to teach extended writing. T / F
- The adviser wants the government to use money more carefully. T / F
- The adviser suggested a lot of university courses are a waste of time. T / F
- Teachers are angry because of their students' genes. T / F
- No one wants the adviser or his boss to lose their job. T / F

Synonym Match

- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| 1. adviser | a. useless |
| 2. quality | b. average |
| 3. unpopular | c. cause |
| 4. mediocre | d. consultant |
| 5. rare | e. misspent |
| 6. attacked | f. disliked |
| 7. wasted | g. criticised |
| 8. pointless | h. standard |
| 9. reason | i. dismissed |
| 10. fired | j. unusual |

Discussion – Student A

- How will teaching change in the future?
- Does having a university degree help you get a job?
- Is a child's ability from genes or from teachers?
- What would you do to make schools better?
- How are computers and iPads, etc. changing the way you learn?
- What would you teach if you became a teacher?
- What kind of teacher do you think you would be?
- What questions would you like to ask Mr Cummings?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. A top adviser to | a. is rare |
| 2. made teachers | b. to work much harder |
| 3. real talent | c. solving |
| 4. few teachers are | d. very angry |
| 5. problem- | e. them get a job |
| 6. He said billions of dollars | f. the British government |
| 7. do not help | g. ideas |
| 8. university students needed | h. genes |
| 9. because of his or her | i. well trained |
| 10. madder | j. are "wasted" |

Discussion – Student B

- What is the quality of schools like in your country?
- Are you surprised a government advisor is attacking British schools?
- What is your image of schools in Britain?
- What do you think of the job of a teacher?
- Who was the best teacher you ever had (and why)?
- What do you think of your English teacher?
- What can teachers do to be better teachers?
- Do you agree that "real talent is rare" for teachers?

Spelling

- the iuylqat of British schools
- worked ceollsy with the UK Education Secretary
- become very rlppouaun with British teachers
- between luwfa and mediocre
- well trained in the sscbai
- problem-ilsgovn
- iosbliin of dollars
- "pointless" university suesrco
- Cummings also adgrnee teachers
- because of his or her eseng
- soafcflii at the Department for Education
- teachers also want Michael Gove to be eirdf

Answers – Synonym Match

1. d	2. h	3. f	4. b	5. j
6. g	7. e	8. a	9. c	10. i

Role Play

Role A – A sense of humour

You think a sense of humour is the most important thing for an English teacher. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): a lot of energy, giving feedback or being cute.

Role B – A lot of energy

You think a lot of energy is the most important thing for an English teacher. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): a sense of humour, giving feedback or being cute.

Role C – Gives feedback

You think giving feedback is the most important thing for an English teacher. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): a lot of energy, a sense of humour or being cute.

Role D – Cute

You think being cute is the most important thing for an English teacher. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): a lot of energy, giving feedback or a sense of humour.

Speaking -

Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the most important things about a teacher at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- sense of humour
- strict
- plays games
- full of energy
- gives lots of feedback
- answers questions well
- knows his / her subject
- cute

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	F	d	T	e	T	f	T	g	F	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.