

The great game of life is not about winning

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The Guardian's [reporting this morning](#) that "education secretary Michael Gove has asked the top universities to set A-level exams, amid fears that tens of thousands of teenagers are woefully under-prepared when they start their degrees".

So universities freed from public control and increasingly influenced by the private sector and its demands get to set the education agenda for schools that become increasingly under their control as a result and consequently that of the private sector. This is privatisation by the back door.

And what will be the consequence? Three things. First there will be a loss of educational choice: cash value will determine what is taught. Second, there will be increasing division in society as access is determined by ability to pay. Third, there will be a loss in well-being, [as explained by Ha-Joon Chang yesterday](#).

This move is about 'the great game of life' - based on the assumption implicit in all private school advertising that a parent's duty is to make sure their child is thrusting ahead of the pack to beat down all competition. Except it isn't. Life's not like that. Indeed work's not like that. The vast majority of jobs require 'team players' i.e. people who have the ability to cooperate with and not beat their fellow employees. Indeed, even business works 97% on co-operation between customer and supplier to achieve mutual goals and little on the basis of competition. But people like Gove want something very different.

The question then is not whether students are ready for university but whether Gove's view of what education and university is about are right. Given how poor the private sector model of education is at preparing people for the reality of the workplace I very much doubt it.