

# To progress we need a revolution. MMT will be at its co...

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I have kept thinking that there must be something profound to say about the whole A level debacle. And yet, at least initially, in a great many ways there is not. What we have seen is straightforward incompetence.

It can, of course, be argued that because the devolved governments all followed London's lead on seeking to establish an algorithm to replace exams - and each in turn also followed Ofqual's design principles - that the mistakes are not peculiar to the Tory government at Westminster. But I am not completely convinced. Ofqual's approach was bound to dominate when there were common university entrance systems, as there are. In that case the blame for this does fall fairly on Johnson and his, already proven to be incompetent, education secretary Gavin Williamson.

Let's dismiss Williamson's role though. I think it safe to say he will soon be a forever-to-be-forgotten former minister. And rightly so. But Johnson will still be there. In that case the blame for what has happened can only lie with him.

We have a prime minister who ruthlessly culled his party of talent to make sure he looked competent. He chose his ministers from amongst those who were willing to support a very obviously incompetent project that is bound to end in abject failure and misery, which is a kind description of Brexit. And he refuses to consider detail, thinking that is for others to deal with. The result is a government of incompetent dogmatists. Not an exception can be spotted (it's just taking a little time for Sunak's inability to be come apparent, as it will).

What we now know is that this level of incompetence comes at an enormous cost. I think of the young man I know who did not get his forecast grades that his parents (in his case) had invested so much in and was rejected by his first choice university, to then accept a place at a second (albeit good) university with a heavy heart, but who now finds that this was exactly the wrong thing to have done as if he had not taken that second option so quickly he might be at his first choice after all. I am quite sure that this is a Tory family to its core, that's now being stressed beyond to levels it could not have imagined by a situation of this government's creation. The story will be

commonplace. It is thought that there may be 55,000 already in this situation.

This is gross injustice. And the government had warning that it would happen. They saw what happened in Scotland and refused to take note. That refusal - reiterated on Saturday - is almost as bad as the original inability to ask appropriate questions of the Ofqual system and to anticipate the reaction that arose when I can promise that, as a parent, the stress about the issues this proposed system might give rise to was a real, lived, experience.

It's easy to say as a result - as another person told me last night - that they will never, ever vote Tory again after this (and in their case I am well aware that they have) but the question remains, who will they vote for in that case?

Of course Keir Starmer appears competent in this scenario, playing the role of the sober and dependable lawyer that he is. But did he propose an alternative before this fiasco developed? The simple answer is no, and it cannot be said that Labour did not have to face the issue, because it did in Wales. And it's pointless for the left to say that Corbyn would have done better, because there is not a shred of evidence that he would have done. His shadow education secretary is now deputy leader, and has not delivered.

The LibDems are beyond hope now, I think. After all, they failed on education a decade ago and people have long memories on such issues, of which the Tories should take note.

The Greens have a mountain to climb.

And the far right is now so deeply embedded in the Tories (as evidenced by the ghastly videos coming out of Dover) that there is no room for another party there, thankfully.

The evidence is that the failure being seen is not, in that case, particular. And it's not even just widespread, although the number of U turns that this government has had to deliver suggests that it is that. Rather, it's systemic. And again, it's not just systemic to the Tories but pretty much across the entire political system. Even the SNP, which some south of the border seem to think a model for all that works, is riven by infighting as a result of central control by a very small elite that refuses to listen to its membership and their opinions, in the process evidencing many of the failings of all the other large parties.

Young people, whatever their aspirations, and those who work in universities, businesses and other institutions who need to rely on exam grades to help them achieve their ambitions have all been failed by a body politic that has shown insufficient ability to rise to the challenge that coronavirus has created.

They failed to understand the scale of the issue that they were facing.

They failed to act quickly.

They failed to appreciate that the old normal was history.

They failed by thinking that the right thing to do was to stick to old routines - like announcing student grades late in the day as if exams had been taken, when they had not been.

And they failed to foresee consequences - and so imposed caps on student numbers at the very time when becoming a student might be the best option available for many more young people.

It's easy to predict the failures to come as well.

The end of furlough will be a disaster.

Rising unemployment will seem to catch governments by surprise.

Business failures will do so, likewise.

Brexit gridlock will be a 'price worth paying', just as excess deaths were.

Track and trace will fail again.

And the government will attempt to balance its books by imposing cuts in the middle of all this.

Most worryingly though, in the midst of all this the opposition parties - whether Labour or SNP - will have no alternatives of substance to offer because the leadership of both are (as, for the record, John McDonnell was) dedicated to the neoliberal model of balanced government budgets that denies them the chance to think of a different goal for government.

And that's why we have a crisis. Government has been neutered by an idea that always had the objective of neutering government so that a few might get very rich indeed in the resulting chaos.

Unless we reject that idea of neoliberal government we have no hope of getting out of this mess.

And yes, the alternative is MMT, because it says government is not limited by finance as all neoliberal schools of thought - including neo-Keynesianism - say it is. Right now it's the only basis for a democratic alternative to this complete shambles that we have got.

That does not say MMT is a panacea.

Nor does it say things can't go wrong when using MMT logic.

But look at where we are. MMT offers an alternative that is better, by far, than anything we have got, and can only improve.

To progress we need a revolution. MMT will be at its core because it, alone, is saying another form of democratic politics is possible right now.