

A) According to the journalist, why are private universities booming in Europe? Answer the question in your own words (80 words +/- 10%)

In Europe, private universities are booming. One reason is students' readiness to pay top dollar for alternative modes of education. This demand is met by private schools, notably thanks to company-sponsored dual-training programmes. Hence, they attract less academically-oriented students who would otherwise have joined the labour market. Now, these students can contemplate ambitious careers. Lastly: Foreign players are encouraged to invest in private education by cash-strapped European governments. Indeed, whereas they used to finance free education, governments are now tempted to transfer the cost from state to student.

88 words

A Students more open to new modes of education/(more job-oriented à la rigueur)

B They are ready to pay

C Private universities provide alternative ways of teaching (or subjects?)

D dual-training programmes sponsored by companies

E for less academic students

F who wouldn't have gone to university otherwise

G so, they can be ambitious now

H cash-strapped countries encourage private players

I they traditionally supply free education

J So they can transfer the cost of education to students

B) "Students can benefit from being treated as consumers." Do you agree with this statement? Answer the question personally (180-200 words )

Worldwide, fear is growing of our market economy morphing into a "market society". Education is a case in point: the law of supply and demand is denting the undivided power of the State. Picking and choosing freely are tempting for students/consumers, but it raises many questions.

More educational offers would definitely attract more students. Fee-paying vocational schools are more adapted to the fast-changing labour market. But private schools also know the tricks of high-street marketing. Students, lured by glossy pamphlets, may end up with worthless diplomas when schools don't deliver on their lofty promises.

There are more ethical issues. Should private schools keep developing, governments may be tempted to pull out from public education. Then, education would be part and parcel of a market economy in which the best-heeled alone can afford the best schools. In France, where many prestigious schools are cheap, this would be at odds with our *élitisme républicain*, which values the brain above the bank account. Meritocracy may not guarantee social mobility, but it states that we set great store by education.

Students shouldn't be regarded as mere consumers. They do need more say in their studies but education mustn't be 'up for grabs'. 198 words