



Thank you for the cartoon to Polly Donnison

Ofsted

The pandemic has shown schools that there is life without OFSTED. Many in education do not believe that it is fit for purpose and have been campaigning for years for its abolition. Whilst ultimately school leaders choose what they do in schools OFSTED has become the enforcer of government rhetoric. From triple marking to three-part lessons to the constant monitoring and scrutiny workload has soared and many believe that this is linked to the oppressive OFSTED regime. The next few articles discuss the impact of OFSTED and consider what is needed. At a time when OFSTED is returning to our schools now is the time to really consider if it is time for a campaign for its abolition and a replacement with a focus on support and development rather than punitive naming and shaming.

‘Knowing More and Remembering More’: The New Reductionist View of Educational Progress being forced on schools by OFSTED.

The aphorism ‘Knowing More and Remembering More’ (occasionally ‘doing more’ is added as a sop to the skills lobby) behind the latest OFSTED framework and arguably driving the whole ‘knowledge rich’ project the Tories are pushing, was revealed first at OFSTED training events in the lead up to the launch of the new framework. Reactions from school-based inspectors ranged from bemusement to surprise and shock. In previous frameworks, OFSTED had used phrases such as ‘progress from starting points’ as measured by national assessments. More sophisticated notions of educational progress involving personal development, creative prowess, the growth of collaborative skills, critical thinking to name a few were never part of the picture but this definition of pupil progress even by OFSTED’s standards is starkly minimalist. This is deliberate because it reduces education to committing identified knowledge to a pupil’s long-term memory (without this happening it is stated by OFSTED no learning takes place) and in the process removes the learning process, at least as far as teachers and schools are concerned, from sociological, political, economic and cultural contexts.

I have had the dubious privilege of teaching some A level psychology because I once took a unit in it as part of a degree course. Experimental psychology focuses on the individual and has little to say about social context. It is for this reason OFSTED appears to be holding it up as ‘latest research’ and at the same time dismissing other pedagogical drivers as ‘discredited’.

Suddenly the language of experimental psychology,

particularly around memory, appeared from nowhere into the new Inspection Framework and the Early Career Framework. Apparently, this psychology research into memory is ground breaking and a game changer, though a closer look at the research OFSTED is quoting is hardly new. The working memory model which is now referenced in the Early Career Framework and referenced in ‘research’ used by OFSTED to back up its new framework was devised by Baddley and Hitch in 1974 and the associated ‘cognitive overload theory’ was put forward by Sweller and others in the 1990s. Whilst the working memory model may well be the most successful to date at explaining memory processes, it is a model and like all psychology models is not set in stone. OFSTED treats it as though it were scientific fact similar to the workings of the digestive system.

There are major problems with reducing the process of teaching and learning to an elaborate memory exercise. First the psychology used by OFSTED is selective and second the focus on the psychology of memory to the exclusion of other pedagogical approaches neatly avoids questions around the receivers of the knowledge: the children. The assumption is that apart from those with SEND for whom teaching must be adapted, the child’s class, ethnicity or cultural background should be disregarded as an irrelevance.

I wrote previously in *Reimagining Education: Curriculum and Assessment* about how the relationship between emotions and transfer into long term memory has been omitted from OFSTED thinking. Such research could underpin teaching approaches based in the arts, particularly drama, where knowledge can gain significance by being part of an imagined event or story. Not only that the ‘Mantle of the Expert’ a ‘context for active learning’ developed by Dorothy Heathcote, Drama in Education lecturer, makes pupils ‘knowledge seekers and knowledge producers’ (Buley 2018) ‘Through drama, students become a part of the learning process rather than mere observers or inactive receptacles of the rich experience of learning; in this way, their learning was deeper, more sustained, and infinitely more complex’

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(Wilhelm 1998). In the latest OFSTED inspection handbook, the claim is made that transfer of knowledge to long term memory is rooted in 'key elements of effective teaching' including 'Feedback, retrieval practice and assessment' which should be prioritised. After this section comes a warning: - 'Pupils also need to develop fluency and unconsciously apply their knowledge as skills. This must not be reduced to, or confused with, simply memorising facts. Inspectors will be alert to unnecessary or excessive attempts to simply prompt pupils to learn glossaries or long lists of disconnected facts.' OFSTED cannot have it both ways. 'Retrieval practice' and in this context assessment both translate as regular tests and quizzes. Their 'Overview of Research' document ignores anything relating to affective aspects of education and is a recipe for the promotion of exposition, modelling, and then the regurgitation of knowledge by pupils with little regard for deep learning.

Whole areas of pedagogy are ignored or minimally referenced by OFSTED. Dialogic teaching developed by Robin Alexander puts talk at the centre of learning and aims to empower students 'for lifelong learning and democratic engagement'. The EEF started to research the approach and trials show positive results. The research 'found consistent, positive effects in English, science and maths for all children in Year 5, equivalent to about 2 months additional progress. The result was similar when looking only at children eligible for free school meals. This is consistent with other EEF trials focusing on cognitively challenging talk, such as Philosophy for Children, and Thinking, Doing, Talking Science. The consistent results across subjects and the lack of any subject specific content in the training suggest that the approach may improve children's overall thinking and learning skills rather than their knowledge in a given topic.' (EEF). OFSTED ignores this.

I do not have the time to discuss constructivist methods in detail here. Constructivism's adherents would claim brain research to back up their methods too. It requires students to 'construct' their own meaning or interpretation of the material being studied. OFSTED quote in their research document a vain attempt to discredit the approach by Kirschner et al (2006) who start by agreeing that knowledge is 'constructed' rather than just remembered. They criticise inadequate instruction from teachers using the approach rather than the approach itself. Again, OFSTED barely references, and only in critical terms, a huge area of pedagogical development taking place internationally.

Constructivism, dialogic teaching, and the mantle of the expert all have one common attribute. Education is not done to pupils. Instead, education is a partnership between learners and teachers where learners are empowered to interpret knowledge and construct their own meanings. Teaching the history of slavery for example requires considerable sensitivity and skill. How black and white pupils interpret the knowledge they gain about it will be different and this should not be seen as a problem. Unlike any previous framework OFSTED have used, the latest EIF with its emphasis on 'knowing more and remembering more' effectively rules out alternative perspectives on the role of education in society and the status of learners within it. OFSTED pretends it's recent discovery of the psychology of memory will give the effectiveness of teaching a boost and that other methodology has been 'discredited'. It treats its ideas, despite it holding very different ones until very recently, as incontestable fact, whereas in reality they are pushing one side of an ideological debate where the teacher holds a superior position of expert and moral authority over children. Education though is a vastly complex social activity. To describe it and to hypothesise about it we need to draw on philosophy, politics, and sociology as well as psychology. Ideas about education cannot be set in stone. There will always be conflicts about them. OFSTED as a 'driver of improvement' should welcome debate and discussion, not act as the enforcer of a narrow conservative view of what constitutes quality education.

James Whiting, SEA Secretary

Time for some proper PSHE: OFSTED reviews and the bigger picture

The OFSTED Curriculum Research

The OFSTED Curriculum Research Reviews have missed a trick in its narrow focus. It is one thing to commission something called the Science Curriculum Research Review, but to fail to take on board core curriculum concerns and connectivity across the curriculum, especially at a time when the pandemic has kicked learning in the teeth and learners in the stomach. A broader and more meaningful curriculum, important at any time, is crucial now. Whether it is history, geography, languages, maths, or music there are certain fundamental concerns and issues that are central to the post-Covid world and that need to be talked about. Failure to seize the moment and address not only core learning skills and much needed enrichment let alone tackle the burning issues of the day: climate change, decolonisation and social and economic justice is inhumane, unforgivable, and criminal in its negligence. Now, more than ever, we need active citizens to solve real-life and real-world problems - and what better way of fostering this could there be than active citizenship forming a core part of the curriculum.

The bigger picture

As ever, what is not reviewed says as much about OFSTED as what is reviewed. No English review. Why? Because Gove and his foot soldiers have already crawled all over it and sucked out its progressive lifeblood. Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education? Re-branded in 2019, but somewhere the potential for an emergency and building back better curriculum could really have made an impact. Re-visioning and re-writing of curricula at this time could, especially with a new paradigm in PSHE, have been genuinely transformational. Instead, the OFSTED Review represents the latest in a long line of missed opportunities to address the lack of breadth and its woeful irrelevance to young people in modern society. The lack of planning for a genuine entitlement curriculum with space for the development of transferable and 'soft' skills, like action planning, problem-solving, team-work, communication and generic learning skills alongside building resilience and enrichment activities. These all represent massive holes in the curriculum. Key - as ever - is engagement and the removal of barriers to learning.

Barriers to learning and engagement

Barriers to learning might include environmental factors such as poverty or hunger, mental or physical health; they could equally be emotional ones stemming from poor prior learning experience, peer pressure, fear of failure or low self-esteem. Again, they might be motivational, arising from lack of goals or low expectations. Engagement or re-engagement is a pre-requisite for overcoming the barriers of social disadvantage, deprivation, or disaffection. Engaging learners might best be fostered through the development of new skills, participation in any activity, knowledge and general education and enrichment, fortified by entitlement as its strong backbone. A customised, learner-centred model that is genuinely personalised and should be at the heart of the learning.

Principles

As it happens the SEA has recently conducted its own curriculum review. In that review clear principles were set out, something notably absent from the OFSED reviews. SEA wants to see young adults who have the skills, knowledge, and personal qualities to:

- Ensure personal wellbeing - this would include physical and mental health, social and emotional well-being including friendships and relationships, personal autonomy, and creativity and the practical aspects of life including managing money, entering employment, and living independently.
- Make a positive contribution to society - this would include contributing to their roles as a citizen and a member of civic society and through a contribution to the economic well-being of the country.
- Appreciate and respect the contributions of a range of cultures to human experience, understand the perspective of those who have experienced oppression and colonisation and know that the knowledge and cultural experiences they bring to education will be respected.
- Are willing to contribute to solutions to global problems such as tackling racism and decolonisation, climate change and poverty.
- Are aware that the economy and society are open to change and that there are alternative ways of organising them.
- Are able to choose areas of study to focus on in more depth depending on their interests in the upper secondary phase.
- Achieve their full potential in both their personal life and in their contribution to society.

The ever-narrowing curriculum

In an ever-narrowing curriculum, spearheaded limply by the flimsy flagship T-levels, served up as vocational education where is space for enrichment? How can we make the room to develop the much-needed soft skills? Where do we nurture engagement? How do we start to remove the barriers to learning? Post-Covid, we need a new, bigger, broader, braver and more meaningful curriculum that embraces the things that matter like social and economic justice, decolonisation and climate change with an injection of the skills for learning to glue it all together for life and work. We are though, less than ever, likely to get this with the thinnest of gruel on offer from the Tories or even from a new, new Labour government of the potentially distant future.

Ian Duckett
SEA NEC

SEA Curriculum Statement

As socialists we acknowledge that the current English curriculum as laid down in National curriculum documentation is designed to reinforce existing power structures in society and at the same time equip learners for their future economic role within it.

The English National Curriculum is unusual in that its aims are not seen in terms of the attributes a learner will develop as a result of experiencing it. Indeed, it's doubtful whether it even prepares the majority of pupils for their role in the economy. Instead, it catalogues the knowledge pupils must learn i.e. what, in the view of its designers, is the 'best that has been thought and said'.

Most other jurisdictions, including the other three in the UK, see curriculum aims in terms of the qualities, knowledge and skills learners will acquire to operate effectively as citizens and gain worthwhile employment. These aspects usually include soft skills such as creativity and problem solving as well as awareness of rights and responsibilities, and respect for individual differences. This approach is better and has widespread support including from employers and the centre right.

To support these curriculum aims, we need a meaningful assessment for learning. A form of assessment that supports learning is the key to building a new curriculum that serves our young people. We want a model of assessment that serves the whole curriculum and is no longer separated from the learning process.

We would want to go further. Our aims for the curriculum are:-

We want to see young adults who have the skills, knowledge and personal qualities to:

- Ensure their personal wellbeing – this would include physical and mental health, social and emotional well-being including friendships and relationships, personal autonomy and creativity and the practical aspects of life including managing money, entering employment and living independently.
- Make a positive contribution to society – this would include contributing in their roles as a citizen and a member of civic society and through a contribution to the economic well-being of the country.
- Appreciate and respect the contributions of a range of cultures to human experience, understand the perspective of those who have experienced oppression and colonisation and know that the particular knowledge and cultural experiences they bring to education will be respected.
- Are willing to contribute to solutions to global problems such as climate change and poverty
- Are aware that the economy and society are open to change and that there are alternative ways of organising them
- Are able to choose areas of study to focus on in more depth depending on their interests in the upper secondary phase
- Achieve their full potential in both their personal life and in their contribution to society.

In order to do these things, young adults need:

- A high level of key skills including literacy, numeracy and the ability to engage with the digital world, they understand, the intention behind and veracity of, information posted on line
- Important areas of knowledge – including a grounding in science and scientific method, an understanding of how human society is organised, has evolved and interacts with the physical environment and the creative and artistic achievements of people now and in the past; When they learn in subjects they acquire skills as well as knowledge e.g. they learn to act as historians as well as learn history or they express themselves as artists as well as learning about art.
- Critical thinking skills and competence to communicate and express their ideas effectively through a variety of media
- An understanding of the key characteristics of British and global society including the values of democracy and social justice, respecting diversity, the world of work and the challenges of sustainability;
- Practical and technical capability in a wide range of contexts and the opportunity to develop their own creativity;
- The ability to analyse and solve problems, to empathise with and work collaboratively with others and to understand and meet appropriate expectations;
- To know about the opportunities, open to them both in education and employment and to understand how they can access them;
- The motivation and ability to go on learning throughout life and to meet the challenges posed by an age of rapid change and longer life expectancy.

Ofsted maths review 'ignores swathes of evidence and could lead to poor practice'

Say eminent mathematics educators

Professor Anne Watson, Emeritus, University of Oxford and Dr Jenni Back are two of the most highly regarded mathematics educators in the UK. Anne has published very widely in mathematics education research including two syntheses of research about how children learn mathematics for the Nuffield Foundation. She was a member of the expert drafting panel for the primary and secondary mathematics National Curriculum for the Department for Education and has advised on the curriculum for the Welsh Assembly. Jenni has held academic posts in a number of universities, has also published widely, was the primary mathematics co-ordinator for NRICH (specialists in rich mathematics for children of all attainments) and an associate director at the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics. So, their opinion is not to be lightly disregarded.

In a recent article in Schools Week (Ofsted's maths research review could lead to poorer teaching (schoolsweek.co.uk)), they say that Ofsted's maths review could lead to poorer teaching:

The impression given in the review is that memorising facts and procedures, followed by application exercises, is the watchdog's evidence-based preferred way of teaching. But that is what mathematics teaching has been like in most parts of the world for decades – and it does not work.

The review frames mathematical learning as expressible through completing three sentence stems: "I know that...", "I know how..." and "I know when..." but never "I know why..." or, even, "Perhaps...". Mathematical concepts are not static, 'but restructured and reconnected many times on the learning journey' and develop through (multi-sensory) exploration: it's this that leads to meaning making. Memorising facts and procedures before attempting any richer mathematical engagement, is known to be an ineffective approach to learning the subject:

The "example, exercise, practice, revise" model is tried and tested, and the fact is that wherever and whenever it has been tried and tested, it has failed to generate strong mathematical capability for all.

It is an approach that disempowers learners and robs the subject of both its challenge and its joy.

In their concerns, Anne and Jenni are not alone. The Association of Mathematics Education Tutors (AMET) has sent in a formal complaint asking that the review be withdrawn. AMET's members had noticed some places where the references cited did not support the statements in the review to which they were attached so the Association undertook a detailed scrutiny of the 307 references, reading the original source and, where possible, also contacting the authors. Less than half the references fully supported the point being made and 28% did not support the relevant statement at all.

For me, there are other fundamental things wrong with the review: I do not share the philosophy, values or purposes that underpin the government's approach to education. But, even setting that aside, it is obvious that the last thing teachers and children need is the non-research-based promotion of an approach to mathematics teaching that is known, internationally, to fail.

*Professor Anne Watson, Emeritus, University of Oxford
and Dr Jenni Back are two of the most highly regarded
mathematics educators in the UK*

Ofsted History Review

In July Ofsted published its conclusions on what it feels makes effective history teaching in England as part of its “research and review series” of forays into classrooms. The TES headline its coverage of the report: “avoid out of date history teaching warns Ofsted”. Somewhat catching the mood of the report as yet another dictate from a body lacking all credibility to weigh into debates on pedagogy due to its detachment from the everyday reality of classroom practise. However, on closer inspection of the reports “findings” I would suggest a more apt appraisal to be “Ofsted instructs history teachers to take coal to Newcastle”.

Ofsted’s main findings of how history is to be taught effectively in England, helpfully summarised by the TES in the most useful feature of their brief review were:

- 1. Freedom in curriculum design**
- 2. Curriculum decisions occur at different levels**
- 3. Pupils need to develop ‘substantive’ and ‘disciplinary’ knowledge**
- 4. Teaching should cover ‘core’ knowledge and ‘fingertip’ knowledge**
- 5. Pupils need to be secure in particular concepts.**
- 6. Pupils need secure chronology**
- 7. Pupils’ prior knowledge helps them learn new material more easily**
- 8. Pupils need to be secure in their disciplinary knowledge**
- 9. Pupils should develop their historical thinking through disciplinary concepts**
- 10. Teaching should include breadth and diversity**

Free from the accompanying Ofsted double speak that serves to justify its own existence rather than help actual teachers advance their practise this list seems unobjectionable. Indeed, it is even to a former history teacher, or in that matter any teacher of any degree of competence as points 3 – 10 are pretty basic statements of how any learning can effectively happen. It should also be taken as a small mercy that the inspectorate has produced such a bland report. It could have followed its traditional interpretation of its role being enforcing the will of the current politicians occupying the department for education. Which given the current governments delight in pursuing culture wars and in attempting the undermine the credibility of any individual or organisation to oppose their “values” it is a surprise an Ofsted review into history teaching hasn’t mentioned “woke wars” “cancel culture” or falling statues”. The government seems to have stayed focussed on academic historians and their works in this front, in itself indicative of the amount of attention it has paid to mainstream compulsory education over the last two years. Zero.

Back to the report and what of points one and two? They are the most significant not because Ofsted has included them but because of, as is often the case with institutions that function by dictate, what they haven’t said about them. All teachers would agree that they want freedom in designing what they teach in order to make it appropriate to their students and would also accept that certain decisions by necessity are made at different levels. Ofsted resorts to its traditional form by only investigating these points to the extent that class room teachers fail to utilise the “considerable” freedom they have to determine what history they teach and concludes that “bad” history teaching is often the faults of teachers not using this freedom to design appropriate lessons.

Dubious conclusions given the “freedom” that Ofsted seems to think class room teachers enjoy is never really investigated as if it were any observer would find a far more complicated picture that Ofsted has. They would also find as usual the inspectorate is one of the biggest restrictions on the freedoms of teachers to teach what they would like. Throughout the report unusually for something

coming from Ofsted, exams boards and examinations are not mentioned once. Curious given how much Ofsted and the entire English education system rests upon exam results to make any meaning of what goes on in the classroom on a daily basis. The practical upshot for this report is this; exams dictate hugely what history gets taught in schools, especially high schools and not to mention those that have taken the ghastly decision to reduce KS3 to two years to enable a three-year GCSE teaching period in the hunt for better exam results. I admit to focussing on secondary schools here rather than primaries as I was a secondary school history teacher but as also this report is clearly by implication focussing on the teaching of history in secondary schools as that is where subject specialisms are most often focussed on. Although another failing of the report is it doesn’t set out explicitly what phase it is talking about. So not meeting its own list of points about core knowledge and chronology if we want to nit pick.

Back to the substantive issue of the lack of acknowledgement of the dominance of exams and their specifications. In designing key stage 3 history most history teachers will consider the following:

- Their own knowledge / specialism and interests (what they know that can teach well)
 - Their local area. Including the community heritage, cultural, racial make up and events of local historical significance (what connects to the kids we teach)
 - What their school management want them to do
 - What kids need to know to do well in exams.
- What can we teach them in KS3 that will allow them to access the GSCE, so often teaching stuff from GSCE exam syllabuses before the GSCE starts. This is often the same as the point above about what management want.

In my time in the class room points three and four of my list consistently superseded points one and two with lessons based on local history that year upon year of students enjoyed learning about and that I felt pride in having created and delivered well were removed to make space for “core knowledge

lessons” on concepts that the kids would see again two or three years later in GCSE. Ofsted does mention briefly that in some schools the quality of history teaching suffers due to managers enforcing too rigid a whole school framework to teaching and learning, and lacking the specialist knowledge to manage different curriculum areas of its own. But it falls short of investigating this as the serious profession wide issue which it is. It does not ask why the pay progression of teachers stops at an arbitrary stage and then offer no reward for those who want to do the actual business of teaching. Dedicating their working lives to getting really good at teaching their subject rather than leaving the class room to then tell others how to do it (invariably very badly). Taking this issue of centralised control and standardisation even further it does nothing to look at the academisation of schools into MATs where the curriculum is set from the centre and must be taught identically across schools, taking all control from teachers in the design of their curriculum. Ironically with this being pursued by managers in the name of doing what Ofsted wants, which in a way they are as they are performing Ofsted’s trick of working simply to justify their own existence rather advance anything resembling quality education. With that in mind we should have known this report had scant historical merit to it as it nowhere covered how history repeats itself first as tragedy then as farce. Like English Education policy.

Chris Smith
Assistant Secretary SEA
East of England Branch
NEU Eastern Region

SEA Contribution to Academies Debate At Labour Conference Noted by Schools Week.

Kate Green Open to Academies returning to Local Authorities

The principal education news journal Schools Week recognised that the debate over academies in the Labour Party is still raging and that it is the SEA which has been driving opposition to academisation.

With the headline ‘A view from conference: academisation battles rage on’, the article references the SEA fringe meeting where Kate Green, Shadow Secretary of State, acknowledged there were downsides to the current fragmented system. She also criticised the “frankly unacceptable sky-high pay of some of the chief executives of some of the academy trusts. “I really hope that in terms of the problems that you’ve rightly identified from the fragmentation and marketisation and competition that’s in the system, that we can make haste on some of those, even without necessarily being able to do all of the deconstructing and restructuring that, I think right now as we’re coming out of a pandemic, would not be parents’ priority.”

Other speakers at the meeting did not agree. The article notes that John McDonnell MP called for academies to be scrapped. Julia Voce from Moulscumb primary school in Brighton, explained to the meeting how it felt to be academised against the will of parents and staff. James Whiting (General Secretary SEA) and Kim Johnson MP also called for a return to local democratic control whilst Professor Diane Reay’s excoriating attack on the failing education system called for schools to be run by local democratic collectives.

The article went on to describe another fringe meeting, attended by SEA members, run by the Education Policy Institute and ASCL about collaboration in a partly academized system. Two members of the front bench team Tulip Siddiq MP and Peter Kyle MP were on the panel. Tulip Siddiq repeatedly declared that, in her opinion, tackling structures now was a waste of time and energy. She felt it would disrupt the education of pupils including her daughter. She did not explain that she lived in a local authority, Camden, which had not lost any of its excellent schools to academisation.

Peter Kyle also denied that replacing academies was important and said he was “focused with a blank sheet of paper about what it’s going to take to get schools to improve so that no student is left behind. I want to look absolutely afresh at the landscape as we find it today. I want to see where excellence is, where the improvement is, and then put forward to the membership a set of policies that can learn from the best that’s out there. But it will be grounded in the reality of the system today.”

He was challenged by SEA members who accused him of reinventing Labour policy without consultation. A delegate from Greenwich described how the academies programme had damaged education in the borough leaving two ‘orphan’ academies without sponsors. They cannot re-join the local authority as this is now illegal.

Kate Green told Schools Week later that it was ‘well worth thinking about’ the idea of allowing academies to leave trusts and re-join local authorities. This idea was first mooted in an SEA paper ‘Restoring Democratic Accountability to the Schools System’ referred to in 2019 conference policy.

The SEA ‘Give Us Back Our Schools Campaign’ is having an impact and is certainly causing differences of emphasis in Labour’s front bench education team.

The full article, written by Fred Whittaker is available in the Schools Week issue published on Friday October 1st.



The Tory government is trying to make all schools join Multi-Academy Trusts. (MATs). On joining a MAT a school loses its autonomy and its links with the local community. It's no longer a separate school but becomes a branch of the MAT; just like a local branch of Tesco is not an independent shop. Elected governors representing parents and staff are stood down, and replaced with handpicked advisory boards or not replaced at all. Locally elected councillors have no say in how MATs work in their area.

MATs and the academisation programme are essential to the delivery of the Tories' education project. They are accountable to no-one. Chief Executive officers of MATs, earning up to £450,000 a year, have been drafted in by the DfE to advise on the curriculum, assessment, catch up programmes, initial teacher training and to help OFSTED. Instead of universities, MATs are about to take over the running of teacher training which will cover little more than behaviour management and knowledge delivery. New teachers will not consider the development of the child or what kind of education learners should receive.

The Give Us Back Our Schools Campaign run by the Socialist Educational Association (SEA), believes that bringing all publicly funded educational services back under democratic oversight is key to making education work for everyone. We can't shape the curriculum or the testing regime properly; we can't guarantee every child is taught by a qualified teacher; we can't ensure the needs of SEND pupils are suitably met; we can't even guarantee every child has a place at good local school until we bring schools back into a transparent system of local democratic control. We want to replace the current competition for pupils and funding and ensure all pupils across a community have a stimulating educational experience which recognises the achievements of all and prepares learners for life in the modern world. All schools and colleges should be accountable to the communities they serve. Parents, staff and students, with local councils should have a say in how they're run. Join us if you agree with our aims and persuade your union branch, parents' group or local Labour Party to adopt our aims too.

Why We Need to Be Talking About Political Education in Schools

Most members of the Labour movement would probably agree that to be successful and remain relevant we need to recruit far higher numbers of younger members. Most socialists, let alone socialist educators, would probably recognise that

Give Us Back Our Schools Campaign

schools – the places in which young people spend most of their waking hours between the ages of five and eighteen – have an important part to play in cultivating young people's democratic political instincts and capabilities. And yet the provision, or absence, of political education in schools, even after the political tumult of the past few years and recent upsurges in young people's political participation in movements such as Black Lives Matter and Extinction Rebellion, as well as what Sloam and Henn call the 'youthquake' of the 2017 General Election, hardly seems to warrant a footnote of recognition within Labour education policy debates.

The case for rich, comprehensive, and properly funded political education in schools should be at the forefront of Labour plans for educational reform once a Labour Government is returned to power. And in the absence of a Labour Government, which may be far away, should be something for which socialist educators actively campaign within their local authorities, governing bodies, and – for serving teachers and educators – within their own schools.

This is not a particularly radical or new proposal. The last Labour Government promoted citizenship education, invested in the training of citizenship teaching, and made it a part of the National Curriculum. Whatever the failings of citizenship education (and there were many), there was a clear recognition, elaborated in the Crick Report (1998), that a political education, along with literacy, numeracy, the sciences, arts and languages, should be a core part of every child's schooling. Citizenship education was removed from the National Curriculum by Michael Gove and the status of political education in schools has been in decline ever since.

For the past three years I have been researching the political life-stories, ideas and experiences of young politically engaged Muslims on the Left in London – that is, young people who actually have an interest and, in many cases, an active involvement in politics. Most were part of the post-2015 wave of support for the Labour Party

following the election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader. Most who joined the Labour Party during that period have left since December 2019 or become relatively inactive, although a few remain deeply engaged in local and grassroots politics. I am interested in where the motivations and ability of these young people to engage in politics came from and the factors which have facilitated or restricted their interests and engagement. Although my research is not primarily focused on school and political education, all my participants have talked in detail about their experiences in school and have much to say about what motivated and inspired them. I suspect that their experiences differ to those of many young people – there are aspects of the political engagement or non-engagement of young Muslims which are not relevant to non-Muslims – but much of what they discussed with me would be recognised by many school leavers over the past few years, as well as their teachers.

For most of my research participants, citizenship – or any kind of formal political education – was either non-existent or, where it was provided, had made a negligible impact. For many participants, Citizenship as a formal, timetabled subject was replaced during their secondary education by Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) delivered by a non-specialist in form time. Not a single participant in my research sample of 32 young people talked positively about either Citizenship or PSHE. A few recalled extra-curricular visits from outside organisations – in particular, the educational outreach work of Amnesty International – that had made an impact, but most could not remember attending anything similar. Those who elected to take A Level Government and Politics generally found it dull and uninspiring, especially the first year which entailed the study of British Government institutions and political parties. Disappointingly, participants found that they were not given the opportunity to learn about and debate the social and political issues that interested them and which they had expected would be part of the study of politics. Some who did not take A level Politics felt excluded from political discussions due to their lack of knowledge of the 'appropriate' language of politics.

For some participants, however, school did make a significant impact on their political development, but typically because of the agency of a particular teacher. Many told me about inspiring teachers of History or English Literature or Sociology or Drama, and particular lessons or moments in school where they began to think differently about the world and their place within it. For one, it was a Drama teacher who chose to study Billy

Elliott and facilitated discussions about the Miners' Strike; another told me about her English teacher and reading Dario Fo's 'An Accidental Death of An Anarchist' and Orwell's '1984'. Others had teachers who bent the KS3 syllabus to give more time to black civil rights in the USA and Malcolm X. I was told that these teachers really knew how to stimulate students' imaginations, were both political and extremely passionate and knowledgeable about their subjects, and perhaps equally importantly, had a close knowledge and understanding of the cultures and histories of the communities their students came from.

These positive experiences are a tribute to those teachers who took it upon themselves to create a space for political learning, and had the skills and opportunity to do so, but they also emphasise how chancy outcomes can be. For every student who has managed to 'find their way', helped by a teacher who went beyond the call of duty (which now carries a much higher risk of being accused of bias and indoctrination), there are others who passed through school without any such luck.

Undoubtedly, most of the participants in my research first developed their political sensibilities within families that talked about politics at the dinner table, discussed the news, and encouraged them to think; some learnt about social injustice through the things they observed within their families and especially the experiences of their parents. But a political consciousness and knowledge is a necessity in a democratic society and should not depend on being lucky enough to grow up in a political home or have a teacher who takes it upon themselves to try to bring a political worldview into their students' lives.

If, as research suggests, children begin to develop a political consciousness during their early years, this is something that should be systematically cultivated and developed during their primary education and continue throughout their secondary education and beyond. To achieve that outcome, we need political education to be planned and implemented throughout the education sector, including academies and private schools as well as maintained schools; we need formal time to be set aside in the curriculum for political education; we need to train teachers to teach politics; and we need research and evaluation into what works in terms of political learning. Citizenship education as it stands is badly in need of reform. But for all this, we need the active involvement of teachers, students, and parents. None of this will happen without prior debate and the generation of planning proposals within the Labour movement and amongst socialist educators and policy campaigners. Those debates – and the prioritisation of those debates – need to start now.

Peter Burgess is the Secretary of West London SEA, a former teacher of Politics, History and Sociology, and is currently completing a PhD in Sociology.

James Chuter Ede

The name of James Chuter Ede is often forgotten in the annals of British educational history. Yet he was an educationalist and politician who, as a junior minister of education in the wartime national government, played a pivotal role in framing the 1944 Education Act. It was legislation that established a national education framework for the next quarter of the century.

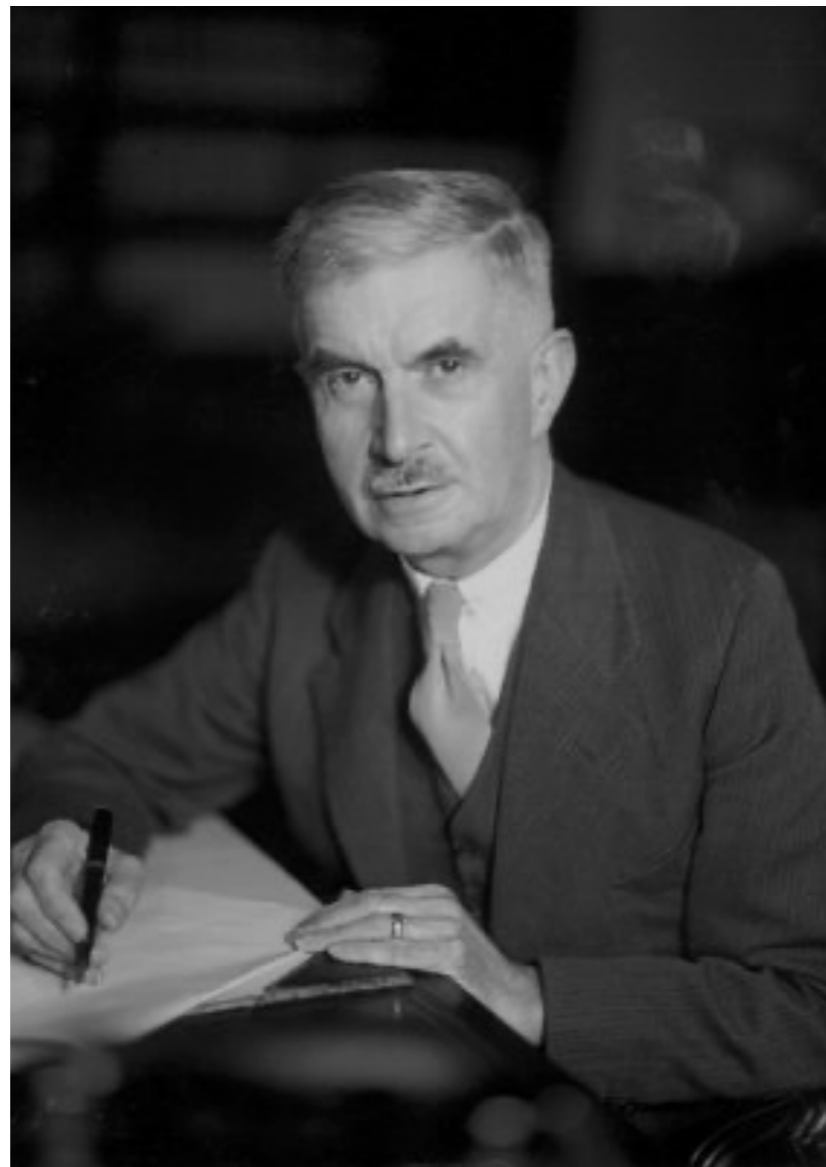
Chuter Ede was born in 1882 to a nonconformist family in Epsom; becoming a lifelong Unitarian. His lifetime involvement in education began when he trained as a teacher at Battersea Pupil Teachers' Centre. The same year as he qualified, he was accepted by Christ's College, Cambridge University to read natural sciences but had to leave before he graduated due to lack of funds. He then returned to his original intention of teaching in what were then elementary schools for working class children (up to the age of thirteen).

Like many nonconformists at the turn of the nineteenth century, Ede was a Liberal and, as such, was elected to the Epsom Urban District Council and then Surrey County Council when he had to resign his teaching post. Although his teaching career was cut short, his experience on the county council's education committee, on which he served for 35 years, proved invaluable in his future role at the Board of Education. Furthermore, his experience of travelling the county by bike as Assistant Secretary to the Surrey County Teachers Association gave him a unique insight into the views of teachers.

After military service in the First World War, he changed his party allegiance and was elected as Labour MP for neighbouring Mitcham in a 1923 byelection, only to lose it the following general election. The southerner was then parachuted into the safe seat of South Shields. Although he lost it in the national government landslide in 1931, he regained it four years later and held it for thirty years, sponsored by the National Union of Teachers, until his retirement.

At the age of 58, Ede joined the national wartime government as Parliamentary Secretary at the Board of Education. He was to serve under its President, R A Butler, a Tory public school-educated grandee whose background was colonial affairs, not education. On appointment, he even had to ask what an elementary school was. The zeitgeist was "secondary education for all" at a time when eight in ten children left elementary school at fourteen. It demanded considerable political heft from both the High Anglican and the leading nonconformist. Butler had the political skills whilst Ede had an in-depth understanding of the school system and local education authorities.

A thorny issue was the reform of the Dual System



whereby Catholic and Anglican Churches and the State were separate providers of schooling. Ede was the key minister in drawing up the White Memorandum which set out the options for reform. The nonconformists wanted the end of "Rome on the rates": state funding should be conditional on state control. But Churchill told Butler that he wanted "no religious or political trouble" during the war. The difficult negotiation was with the powerful vested interest of the Anglican and Catholic Churches. The liberally-minded Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, was much more conciliatory than the Roman Catholic, Cardinal Hinsley, who was diametrically opposed to any change of status of Catholic schools. The "settlement" was painstakingly achieved. It gave local education authorities more control over denominational voluntary schools but much more investment in their buildings, and the replacement all-age elementary schools with primary and secondary schools. Denominational schools were to continue daily acts of worship and with their own religious instruction syllabus. It must have been an uncomfortable compromise for Ede since the Unitarian General Assembly's position as set out in a 1929 resolution affirmed "the value of education taking place in a multi-faith and non-sectarian environment". It strenuously opposed any sectarian right of entry or the giving of building grants to denominational schools.

Another policy issue close to Ede's thinking and that of his party was the introduction of comprehensive schools, then termed "multilateral schools" although his union, the NUT, did not support them at that time. His party also wanted the public schools brought into the new system. He must have been uneasy with the emergence of a tripartite system of grammar, secondary and technical schools, with entry based on academic selection, and with the

unaccountable fee-charging public schools remaining untouched.

Nevertheless, given that Labour was the minority party in the wartime coalition, Ede felt that the Education Act had translated many of the party's demands. These included secondary education for all, the raising of the school age to fifteen, free school meals and milk, nursery education and the ending of fee-paying in local authority schools. It is however known as "the Butler Act" which underplays Ede's meticulous and diligent contribution to the drafting of the Bill. Ever self-effacing and pragmatic, he realised that "if it was suggested that it was to any large degree my scheme it would be killed" by the Tory backwoodsmen. He "only wanted the scheme to succeed".

The Labour landslide election in 1945 propelled Ede into the senior post of Home Secretary. He used his experience in local government to set out the right level of local authority control for the police, fire and civil defence services, all of which he reconstituted through legislation. He also introduced reforms to make the justice system more humane. But his greatest, yet unsung, contribution was acting as midwife to the birth of the 1944 Education Act.

Ede died in 1965, the same year that he had been elevated to the House of Lords. His Times obituary stated that he brought to Parliament 'the finest qualities of the best type of schoolmaster – patience, good humour, tolerance, and an acute instinct for detecting humbug and woolly-mindedness.'

The Author

Bert Clough has worked for both the Labour party and the TUC as a policy researcher in education, training, and lifelong learning. On retirement, he was appointed Visiting Professor of Vocational Education and Training at Leeds University. He is a member of Oxfordshire SEA.

Unlock our climate teaching ideas from our schools

For local online Climate Teaching and Learning workshops, set up by NEU Branches, organised and run by members, meeting informally and regularly to share their ideas and experiences of teaching and learning about climate issues.

"Britain's children are being failed by schools when it comes to learning about the climate crisis, with the subject often wholly missing from the curriculum, sidelined, or mistaught, students and education experts have said."

"A private member's bill that would require basic knowledge of climate issues to be taught in the national curriculum receives its second reading in parliament on Friday with cross-party support. But it is unlikely to make it to the statute books." (The Guardian, 28 January 2022.)

Of course, climate issues should be part of the national curriculum for all children and young people. Many teachers are already including them in their teaching. But it is very worrying that, according to the Guardian, "A survey of 4,680 teachers in England found that two-thirds of secondary school teachers felt climate change was not taught in a meaningful way within their subject, even though nine out of 10 said the climate was relevant to their subject area."

The survey didn't cover primary or special school teachers but climate issues should be part of the curriculum for all children and young people, appropriate to their age. What can be done now to encourage and support all teachers to teach inspiring lessons about the climate crisis and how to respond to it?

There are of course lots of teaching materials and ideas available, including from the NEU itself. But we can do much more. In each local area – each borough, each town, each city, each county – there must be hundreds, maybe thousands, of teachers doing good things about climate change in their classrooms. But nobody in other local schools knows about what teachers are doing because it's all locked inside each school.

Yet there is a solution – and the opportunity has been opened up by the widespread use of online meetings as a result of Covid. Each local branch of the NEU could set up a local regular online Climate Teaching workshop. It would be self-organised and managed, run by teachers themselves meeting

informally and regularly to share their ideas and experiences of teaching and learning about climate issues. It would require no additional commitment of time or responsibility by Branch officers once it had been launched.

It only needs a handful of teachers to begin. There could be separate primary and secondary meetings if participants prefer, or perhaps later when numbers grow.

We know that teachers are under enormous pressure because of Covid. But as the epidemic eases teachers will be looking for new ideas, and coming together online with other local teachers to share and develop their teaching about climate change could provide inspiring support that they'd welcome.

If you are interested in developing this please contact Richard Hatcher at Richard.Hatcher@bcu.ac.uk

Richard Hatcher

Climate Change and the Education Unions

The education unions wrote to the Secretary of State for Education raising the need for the curriculum to contain sustainability and climate change at its heart. The letter is below.

NEU teaching resources on climate change can be found here:

<https://nationaleducationunion.foleon.com/neu-remote-learning-portal/rehub-practice-members/practice-members/>

If you want to join the NEU Climate Change Network email:

neuclimatechangenetwork@gmail.com



The Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

24 January 2022

Dear Mr Zahawi

Sustainability and Climate Change: A draft strategy for the education and children's services systems

As organisations who engage directly with children and young people, or whose members are tasked with helping to prepare those young people for the challenges they face in moving towards a more sustainable future, we welcome the opportunity to play our part in shaping the final DfE Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy. Each of our organisations is submitting individual feedback but there are certain core principles which we all share and which we believe are so fundamental to the success of the strategy, that we are putting forward a collective position.

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to engage with staff from the recently established DfE Sustainability Unit - and appreciate their knowledge and dedication - and will continue to contribute positively to meetings and prepare written feedback. However, given the

importance of this engagement, and to demonstrate that the Government will listen and act, we would, in addition to these engagement opportunities, urge you to establish a formal consultation process compliant with the HM Government's Code of Practice on Consultation. At COP 26 you gave a clear commitment to worker consultation. We would, therefore, urge you to make good on this undertaking. It is not too late to establish a formal consultation process with a deadline for responses in April 2022.

We all agree that there are positives within the strategy to build upon – the Climate Leaders Award and National Nature Park are positive initiatives as is sustainability training for early careers teachers.

Areas where we feel there needs to be much greater ambition are as follows:

Embedding sustainability and environmental education throughout the whole curriculum

The commitment to sustainability and the net zero transition requires deep change in every aspect of our lives, and world-leading education for sustainable livelihoods requires curriculum and pedagogical reform towards this end. To achieve “excellence”, it is not enough to “increase, support, training and resources for teachers” within the confines of “science, geography and citizenship subjects”. Children and young people need to be able to make meaningful connections between all the disciplines and then to apply them in context in order to solve sustainability problems. They need to be able to develop their leadership, collaboration and creativity skills in the process.

Sustainability and environmental education must be embedded through the entire curriculum so that it is preparing and mobilising our society for a sustainable future. As a step on the road to this transformation we would urge that the Government supports Jim Knight's private members' Bill to make provision in the national curriculum for sustainable citizenship and protection of the environment.

In addition, we feel it is essential that the strategy focuses on more than simply transferring knowledge. Whilst the content of the curriculum is important, the purpose of climate education must be to bring about change in our world and our behaviour. Young people should be empowered to act on what they learn. The curriculum must enable this, and recognise the capacity of young people to act, innovate, and bring about change.

We welcome the fact that teachers will not be expected to present climate change denial as a valid viewpoint but have concerns that if the current emphasis in the draft strategy is maintained, staff will feel constrained in engaging with pupils about values and attitudes out of fear of being deemed to be 'partisan'. We must rely on the professionalism of our teaching force

and not allow them to become fearful about encouraging the widest and most transparent discussion.

Green skills

The sectors identified as 'green' lack imagination - the care sector and public sector are green sectors, in being carbon-neutral. If these are not recognised as such, it could have negative implications for incentivising young people to enter these sectors (leading to a capacity crisis) as well as minimising leverage to improve pay and conditions in these sectors as they continue to be undervalued. What's more, all jobs must be sustainable - the narrow identification of green jobs does not acknowledge this. The focus on STEM should be balanced by recognising the equally valuable contribution made by the humanities, literacy and the arts, in order to lead, communicate and inspire others to action.

It is concerning that the delivery group in this area does not include unions. It is vital the 'essential' green sectors of the future have good working conditions to ensure retention of the workforce. Unions are core to just transition.

Finally, it is essential that gender and ethnic disparities are consciously addressed in recruitment and not left to inertia (which will lead to existing patterns replicating themselves). 97% of construction workers are men at the moment. There is no need for that to be the case for workers doing retrofitting, for example. There is no acknowledgement of the gender disparity in STEM subjects or how this might be addressed – the vague reference to *'anyone, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to pursue a rewarding career in a STEM occupation'* does not indicate how this might be achieved.

The need for a comprehensive plan to decarbonise the entire school estate by 2030, as part of an overdue refurbishment and repair programme

The retrofitting of the existing education estate is a crucial element of the draft strategy. We need a target date for this to be completed and an investment commitment to make sure that it can happen. It is essential that the government commits to proper resourcing, including sufficient funding, for education providers to achieve this. We believe that the target date for achieving this should be fixed as 2030.

Development of a detailed policy on green travel for students, staff, and parents

There is only one mention in the draft strategy of delivering initiatives to increase active and safe travel to school such as Bikeability, Walk to School Outreach and School Streets, to improve wellbeing, reduce carbon emissions from the school commute and improve air quality.

Yours sincerely

Mary Boustead
Joint NEU General Secretary

Kevin Courtney
Joint NEU General Secretary

Dr Jo Grady
UCU General Secretary

Paul Whiteman
NAHT General Secretary

Patrick Roach
NASUWT General Secretary

Jon Richards
UNISON Assistant General Secretary

Avril Chambers
GMB National Officer

Larissa Kennedy
NUS National President

Jamie Agombar
SOS-UK Executive Director

Robin Nicholson
Convenor of The Edge

Tim Ibell FREng
Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and Design,
University of Bath

Rachel Musson
Director of Education,
Thoughtbox

Sarajane Aris “Mental Health, Spirituality and Wellbeing” - A Response

When Sarajane Aris wrote, suggesting her new book might be of value to Further Education professionals and inviting me to share it with colleagues, I had no thought of picking up a pen. The reaction I had took me by surprise; a frustrated anger or angered frustration.

The book itself I like very much and have bought it in gift for friends. I love the format and the layout - I'm fussy and won't read fonts and layouts that don't agree (which is why I only ever read Guardian articles online and never, ever in print).

Each chapter is written by a different expert contributor and their warmth, humanity and care for their professional field, is soaked into their pages.

I disagree with the Foreword, that this is a book to “dip into” and not read in order. Books carry an energy and this book has a very deliberate flow. Hold onto and revisit this book definitely, but go with its flow, learn where its energy takes you.

My frustration lies not with what is written, but what is unwritten, omitted, excluded, forgotten; the missing chapters. The section on life stages jumps from school years to retirement and death.

Our lives are stories, living narratives with beginnings and endings - and middles too.

I remember clearly, age three, in my grandparents' garden, wallowing to the waist in my own mud bath, joyous, filthy and at one with the wet earth. I remember the cherry blossoming of my neighbours' tree each spring, a connection to the world of my sister who never lived. I remember knowing without words.

Is it only with education and cognisance and age that we can be spiritual? As adults it is so easy for us to define the infant world and experience without just letting them be.

Yesterday a student brought her essay on child development to our session. After an impassioned and considered rant on period poverty and its impact on learning and on confidence, which she had unwittingly but brilliantly linked to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs she added in all seriousness, “we get to menopause and that's it, life over, and we wait for retirement... and spend twenty years waiting to die”. I shifted the conversation to Piaget, hoping we could think this through...

What are we teaching our young people and what are we not teaching them?

Death by menopause. I bleed therefore I am.

Is there anything more grounding and connecting than birthing; seeing in the bearing of the next generation, the ancestral line to a past beyond knowing and ahead to time long after we have gone.

Where are the women? Where are our lives? We are spiritual beings, we are material beings - and somehow absent.

And where are our young people? This is where the rest of my frustration lies - in the absence of teenagers and young adults who have been borne to a world of cuts, hunger, diminished narratives, waiting lists and limitation. Forgotten. Left behind.

Living lives in the perpetual spotlight of social media, every event a drama, young people have every experience seen and are yet unseen. They are not seen for who they are, what they could do or who they could truly be.

Expectations are that young people stay in education until eighteen then progress to apprenticeships or higher education. A generation caught in sixth forms and colleges. The work of the Children's Plan 2013 promoted directing funding for mental health, wellbeing, extracurricular activities to schools.

Youth, community, therapeutic services closed and then school funding was cut. Young people trapped.

College is a time of new beginnings and transition, of learning and growing, of sex and sexuality, of gender and identity, of pushing boundaries and testing limits, of finding place and asking “why not?”

For many now, further education has become a time of referrals and diagnoses to bring deferral, delay, end points and reasons “why not”.

Pathologising needs and categorising our students by study support, special needs, wellbeing and other divisors may be causing more harm than good.

Sarajane's book has really made me think about how we support our young people through their educational experience; what support is and how we deliver it.

We need to reframe.

Our starting point needs to be the whole person, the whole student. And our colleagues need meaningful professional development delivered through a new paradigm.

Grounding and connection and a still centre creates wholeness, wellness and is the starting point we need for academic success, social belonging and feeling better.

Whether we work in education, health or care, no matter how person-centred we claim or try to be, the reality is the system itself is an auditing machine that doesn't allow us to fully be.

Buy the book. Read the book. Keep the book. Go with the flow. Where does it take you?

Reimagining Education - Curriculum and Assessment

'This is the second in our series of books 'Reimagining Education'. In this second book we are focusing on the curriculum and assessment. The first in our series looked at what we would want to see in an education system post pandemic. This book focuses more sharply not only on the content of the curriculum but also how we would envisage an assessment system that is appropriate and relevant for children and young people going forward. We currently have a top down education system, dictated by government with a narrow and heavily test based curriculum. Children are tested as soon as they enter the system and this testing continues throughout their primary schooling. These tests are narrow and show not what children know but rather test a narrow skills range often labelling children as 'failures' from a young age. They are based on the view that there is only one way to learn or to show your knowledge and skills. This test-based philosophy follows young people through to their secondary education where a narrow knowledge-based curriculum stops children from showing their true potential. If the pandemic has taught us anything it should be that a different world is possible. Our children and young people deserve a curriculum and an assessment system that not only reflects the modern world but also allows them to show their true potential. Our job as educators is to reclaim education for ourselves but more importantly for those that we educate.'

'We have nothing to lose but our chains.'
Louise Regan and Ian Duckett

*If you would like a copy
email louise.regan@ntlworld.com*



Reimagining Education Curriculum and Assessment

edited by Louise Regan and Ian Duckett



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