

## **Editorial: Diamond scholarship in and for alternative education**

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There is much work to do in and for alternative education. The main reason, I believe, is the *value* of alternative education knowledge for education where-so-ever it happens. This value is currently coupled with a lack of interest in the “mainstream” in knowing about other ways. More reason to work. How-so-ever. Children’s lives are at stake.

The mainstream doesn’t want to know much. It is conservative: what behaves differently automatically seems wrong and worthy of rejection (Gasparatou, 2009). But despite conservatism, the mainstream doesn’t know its own mind because what might be meant by “mainstream” is teachers in schools who behave a certain way which is no longer manner or method by choice: they are being controlled and forced; their minds entirely disregarded. One example is the newly imposed 2015 English “rule” that whilst reception (age 4-5) baseline assessments (data gathering directly from these children about their abilities) are not compulsory, if a school does not do them they see their 65% inspectorate floor target in reading, writing and mathematics in year six rise to 85%. Blackmail with four year olds on the block? Wow—we knew things were getting to a low ebb. Teachers don’t want these tests but do them anyway by dint of fear and coercive pressures (<http://tinyurl.com/j5c5zfb> and <http://tinyurl.com/hazgmw2>). The penalty for not meeting one’s target is to be deemed a failing school. The majority of English primary schools then *test* children who are still learning to do up their shoelaces. So much for choosing one’s relations, pedagogy or atmosphere... Given alternative education would in no uncertain terms tell such policies and policy wonks to stick themselves where the sun don’t shine because they have an alternative vision to work with, I’d say the mainstream has something to learn from the “other” side even if it’s just how to swear to authority in different colours. I mean. Fkin’ hell—don’t you think testing a child age four does anything to the child? You get your data but what? I’m exorcising about this one...

The tragedy of course is thick in that even now our most important examples of alternative pedagogy and philosophy are being sucked into the vortex of inspection, assessment, norming, measuring and shaming that drive and drive to an early grave the mainstream sector (see: <http://tinyurl.com/z7romd6>). Is it any wonder mainstream education (in England) struggles to retain and gain teachers?

(see <http://tinyurl.com/z6hsho7> and <http://tinyurl.com/jmdd7jo>). I know England is not the only place on the planet where the crisis and anomalies of the mainstream sector cause issues rather than offer solutions (e.g., (Harber, in press, May 2016; Srivastava, 2013). It's not just that education is inherently complicated and riven by partisan pedagogical beliefs. It's now that data business is the primary "educator" and informant for what goes on.

So, we need to know more about alternatives to this. Yet, to say there is global ignorance about alternative education at the moment—with all its democratic, autonomous intent—is an understatement. The reasons lie with the hegemony of an idea of education as schooling (authoritarianly informed and practiced schooling) dominating expectations of self, being and becoming (Flint & Peim, 2012) as well as a lack of social imagination for the very existence of other pathways to even exist, let alone be viable (Lees, 2014). But it's increasingly more again: not knowing about alternative pedagogy is perhaps a pernicious but naive ignorance. These days it's more a case of not knowing about how our teachers are renting their school premises from a corporation and how the reading scheme the children follow is dictated to the teachers by the owner of the building. These are our children...

To change a *non-response* to business and to difference and to ignorance is important. This importance is in the rise of governmental forms of "datafication." As mentioned above, even the youngest of our children are targeted from before they can count past 20 as "products" of the social: to assess, manage and progress independent of care for the personal or the child's experience of being erroneously "known" by data through testing as something they are not and cannot possibly be (Roberts-Holmes & Bradbury, 2016). This problem of the depersonalisation of the child through manipulation of data appearing as more important than people requires an interdisciplinarity response from alternative spaces. Thus, the workload towards change is heavy. It is not part of a light, leave-it-if-you-like "dilemma." Instead there is an urgent and pressing need for community response. Short term *laissez faire* now will allow this rise of a belief in data to tell us what matters educationally. A snowballing of assumption that it is normal or ok as a paradigm of adjudicating educational decisions will develop into a world of education we cannot recognise and which frankly will churn our stomachs. It will affect alternatives also, through law. I thought in alternative education we could kinda take it easy whilst studiously bringing to bear on the mainstream our value—you know, just chat about it. Nope. This is a war.

The point is we will not be able to turn the ship around if we leave the educational data gathering to mature. Allowing it to mature means we will have to deal with what it does rather than resist. Voices are needed now to speak up: that speak up for all kinds of otherness that confound and confuse scientism, that disregard data and have other compelling answers given and involving an entirely other way of seeing things. Let's blast them with *our own kind of science* in ways

that pull in power, using multiple resources of scholarship: all the educational disciplinary fields/domains/arenas/ plus more.

Given the power plays of authority that pervade our world where the voice of Dr This or That matters more or is trusted more than the voice of mum or dad on education: Academics! Get on with making your entire academic career function to counteract, change, inform and influence education towards the more democratic and personally empowered; the local; the small; the relational. These things are the future for a human kind which seeks peace, which feels love, which knows the other and respects the other through its educational journey. The child who age four was tested within six weeks of arriving at school (see <http://www.betterwithoutbaseline.org.uk/> or <http://tinyurl.com/hc62h3s> ) will learn other things—things we know already lead to bad outcomes: if you are told (or pick up by osmosis) you belong to a certain category (Aryan?) you categorise those not in your category as something else (burnable?). If you are asked to prove yourself before you know yourself, what will you prove? More lies, falsehoods and deceptions, circulating ever deeper and taking our children with them, as they grow, disappearing into the named, numbered, monitored self.

What happens in one country with global educational influence (such as the US or the UK) can soon be coming your way if you currently live in a less data driven country. Be afraid and get on with developing ways to counteract this crap now. Get a PhD in bullshit detection. Start publishing work in places where people can read it easily. If you don't have a PhD, start a campaign, educate, involve people as some incredible work has already done (see e.g., [www.educationrevolution.org](http://www.educationrevolution.org), <http://radicaleducationforum.tumblr.com/>, <http://www.infed.org/>, <http://www.eudec.org/index.html>, <http://www.libed.org.uk/>, Just don't stay silent. Be hard, be brilliant, shine and be difficult to not notice.

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