

Editorial: Universities

Helen E. Lees
Newman University, UK

It strikes me that universities are very interesting places. If one enters into the heart, mind and spirit of a university it is possible to see so much about how knowledge interacts with people; how it makes societies what they are. Universities have huge responsibility and are special creatures.

I like universities which are honest. I also like education which is honest. I like knowledge which comes of a project—be it a university project or an online journal project or the project that a conversation or a glance across a room might be—made in community where everyone is respectful, forgiving, understanding, thoughtful, open, transparent, brave, kind, curious. Good qualities in people in projects make for good knowledge. Luckily *Other Education* is a good project and in and with it come good people who have those qualities of self just mentioned. We are lucky with our community of alternative educationists. They are good people. This bodes well for the outputs we seek of good knowledge. The heart, mind and spirit of our endeavour here, outside of university spaces, is clean.

With honesty comes the fallibility and frailty of our human life. Alas it is possible that universities are more fallible and frail than they are human when it comes to honesty. Without honesty a university is just a business and increasingly it strikes me that education that is led by the concerns of business is a disgusting business of the perpetuation of evil rather than the doing of good. Reputation, reputation, reputation. And the lost, drowning souls of true educationists as they swim to shore—in a storm—from the shipwreck that is the university project as a vehicle for social justice, can be seen gasping for breath. But at least they can reach land, for they are strong enough and wise enough to want to live instead of die.

A fixation of any business on its reputation is the death knell to diversity, resilience with risk and open innovation. Universities these days increasingly focus on reputation and forget—or don't know—that what they lose with a reputation agenda is the heart, mind and spirit of a university. So, in this sense, a lot of universities are not universities.

This is why I like immensely that *Other Education* is online, open access and privately owned by the company Other Business Limited, which, so far at least, makes no money. I like it because it can behave like a proper university. Ok, so an online journal is not a university in the sense of having a campus or a budget or

students. But we have a research agenda and we develop research and researchers. We may not teach directly but our domain doesn't teach directly anyway- that would be rude. So we infiltrate. We are. We converse.

Although *Other Education* and a university are in every way practical opposites they share the rhetoric of a common good to do with new knowledge. Whilst *Other Education* continues to be true to itself and to its authors and readers universities are losing their purpose. A little online journal which is honest can seek new knowledge about alternative education and it can *do no harm*; indeed on account of its truth-telling and fearless speech it can hope to do good. A special, specialist, tiny university for a few? Free to join... Universities as we know them with their exclusionary fees, the games they play, the pretence, the ego, the positioning, the spending, the marketing—do harm. The good they do is also up for debate these days.

Going back to the point above about how universities make societies. Well, *Other Education* stands to make societies in ways which are pure. We need readers and of course we need people whose work in the field and written work speaks of this other way to make societies. Whilst small and nascent, the field of educational alternatives is very powerful in its role in the making of societies of people who do not jockey for position, who do not lie with every breath, who do not need to be top dog. Our people seem to feel somehow secure in themselves. Our knowledge is good enough—on so many counts and none of them involve a marketing team or a brochure—to be university standard. I'm not so sure that universities can say that they punch above their weight like this and hit. That takes moral fibre. We have it. They rely on us.



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