

OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS

Website Review [libed.org.uk](http://www.libed.org.uk) and davidgribble.co.uk

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During my PhD research I used the *Libertarian Education* website (www.libed.org.uk) occasionally to gain other insights and background information on different approaches. It was only when asked to write this review that I came across David Gribble's new website (davidgribble.co.uk).

The *Libertarian Education* website (www.libed.org.uk), with its subheading "For the liberation of learning" is a central hub for the Lib Ed magazine (which has had many different formats and is currently online). What I found to be particularly helpful was the historic explanation of the development of the term "Libertarian Education," particularly as the term had not been on my search list when researching different types of "alternative education."

The website introduction page explains that libertarian education can be defined as "responsibility, freedom and equality, development of solidarity and community." It also explains that the role of a Lib Educator is to foster and develop freedom rather than licence. However, it also makes sure that the reader understands that libertarian education is different to mainstream "authoritarian" education as it is about self-discipline, no hierarchy, but not chaos as Lib Ed wants to

create social responsibility. It is made clear that this social responsibility includes respecting others' differing ways of life and being inclusive of all. The website gives a clear example that this includes sexuality. The final point stresses that education is decided by those involved so that all involved should have equal rights in decision making.

From this broad manifesto there are no direct links to examples of schools which the website thinks cover these ideals, except it could be inferred that the six images and international locations that rotate on the header of the site are seen to be examples of Lib Ed in action. If you click on "Links" three different "democratic" schools' websites are on offer, however I think this is possibly a narrower focus than the above definition of libertarian education and the examples from the "Videos" page is broader than just self-labeled democratic schools. For example, the "Videos" page has embedded videos on democratic and Sudbury schools but also on unschooling, Sugata Mitra's School in the Cloud, play and also what could be understood as a strong anti-government sentiment with a film on "Academies and Lies." For someone interested in "educating differently" to the

authoritarian mainstream, this would be a great starting point.

The other links take you to books, a large number of which have been written by David Gribble. Many of these books could be purchased from this site but it was not made obvious on the home page nor did it seem to be of great importance. I found it fascinating to compare this to the American website, *Education Revolution*, (www.educationrevolution.org), ran by the Alternative Education Resource Organisation (AERO) which is heavily focused on marketing and selling books or courses on setting up your own alternative school. However, I think part of this difference, as well as maybe being cultural, is that AERO is updated weekly and the helpful and interesting blogposts on Lib Ed have only been updated 16 times this year. However, the Lib Ed blogposts I think were particularly interesting as they gave another facet of what is possible in terms of education and many of the examples in the blog posts were of change that is happening within mainstream, state-funded schools as well as from independent democratic schools.

The main link on the home-page is to another website called *Authoritarian Schooling* which was set up by David Gribble with the aim to create a collage of articles and book references to show a “catalogue of damage.” This website (www.authoritarianschooling.co.uk) is intriguing and had me clicking immediately on titles such as “Uniform,” “Lord of the Flies,” “Rules,” “Lack of Trust” and “Fear.” However, I was slightly let down by the lack of depth of the entries and wondered if it could be developed further with more people adding stories and possibly academic research to back up

what I think is the beginning of a very helpful resource for parents, teachers and children interested in educating differently to the current mainstream.

The other *David Gribble* website, (davidgribble.co.uk), also links to the *Authoritarian Schooling* website and it is clearly visible the role that David Gribble has in *Libertarian Education*. It left me wondering if a new title for *Libertarian Education* was needed for the site so that more people would find it, or if its history laid way for a new website to be developed for networking educating differently in the UK and I thought about the *Freedom to Learn Project* (www.freedomtolearnproject.com) site as possibly taking this a step further.

In comparison David Gribble’s website seems new, much more user friendly and professional than the *Libertarian Education* site. It includes lots of photos, with short and snappy titles and then buttons to click to move onto another page to read that specific article. On my laptop this was a great site to explore, however it was trickier on hand-held devices as you have to keep opening new pages, but the photos open quickly. This website is a celebration of both David Gribble’s career in progressive and then democratic education and his role as an ambassador for change through his extensive publications and talks. My own PhD thesis was inspired by one of David’s books, *Real Education* (1998), where he visited 18 schools that “nurture children’s curiosity” and “help children loose their coggishness” around the world.

The website uses different types of media from videos of David Gribble talking, to links to his articles and books. I was interested to read that his books are

available in English, German and Polish. It is not possible to buy the books on his website but there is a link to the Lib Ed site where you can buy them. The real strength of this site is to gain an insight into David Gribble's life (including his love for music and crosswords!) and see how many ways he has had an impact of educational change. On his "About" page he positions why his books are worth reading: "I have seen wiser ways of educating, and I write about their success...I write about real children in real schools, often quoting their own words." I think what this website brings is hope. In David Gribble's life story, in the stories he shares of other schools around the world, he brings hope to someone searching for change to the current system.

Both *Libertarian Education* and David Gribble's website are useful tools for anybody searching for more

information on educating differently to the traditional mainstream and offer extensive resources to learn more about examples of education around the world, as well as giving hope for change in some mainstream environments.

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