

Editorial: From Whence do we Speak?

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The special issue in this issue of *Other Education* is about acknowledging education differently, through the eyes of the literary humanities. Through other eyes (see Andreotti & Souza, 2008) than the quantitative, scientific, worldly, secular, too often neoliberal and white, western eyes of the social sciences, where education resides as research discipline. This is what *Other Education* stands for. This is what matters to this journal and its contributors and readers: seeing humanely. This special issue, brought together by Catherine Samiei, of York St John University, UK, is doing something I have always wished education had much, much more of: the incorporation and working with of the literary, artistic humanities.

To speak from that position is to strengthen the sense we have in education that other perspectives are both possible and needful. It is to open up education and become, refreshingly, more *interdisciplinary*. Education was or is always multidisciplinary as an academic whole yet was and remains, in practice and principle, significantly made of disciplinary research siloes or sliced up to make that whole (Lawn & Furlong, 2011). It is mostly only inherently holistic and open to different disciplinary influences *together and intertwined*, when alternatively practiced. Daft bananas.

Furthermore seeing through the eyes of educational studies and BERA or AERA or EERA or WERA eyes is not enough. Education as institutionally and socially organised is really boringly complacent and complicit in so many harms when it is part of a cult or club that internally agrees. It perpetuates the exercise of racism, sexism, homophobia, scientism. Furthermore it does nothing when it sees unfairness and injustice just so long as its own camp is protected and safe. In other words it has not got the guts to speak up for what is right. It seems only to speak up—that implies action outside the box—when this serves its boxed interests. This causes problems because then education is rendered political rather than pedagogical. In my view educationists should do everything they can to stand up for pedagogy first, at all costs. All kinds of pedagogy and all kinds of approaches to it, through theory and practice, from and by whoever is serious about caring. This is what forms and moulds the experience of practice, even if it starts with theory: protecting pedagogy not politics. It is practice of education—not its politics—which changes lives for the better.

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So we need other eyes and other languages with which to talk about education. The question is not so much how do we study education from within academia—servant of neoliberal capitalist demands as it is—but how do we exit? What happens when we do? Anything new or better or just nothing at all?

Disciplinary perspectives and our political position therein is thus one area in which we can self-identify as the place *from which* we speak about education. There is another sense in which we can talk together of position and perspective. From whence—in work or learning space, geography and location—do we speak when we speak of alternative education? Are we in a university post? In a school? From an English speaking country, a European (non UK) country, a third world country, the Antipodes, South America, Scandinavia, Alaska, elsewhere? Then, connected to this what national language or culturally formed educational vocabulary do we use? These have effects.

Possibly more importantly, from which mental state or heart-state do we speak? Do we speak from the heart of fear of failure? Do we speak with a salary in mind and maintenance of status? From a sense of freedom and voice? Do we speak with love for others or personal gain in mind?

My own opinion now is that being outside of for-profit institutions is increasingly helpful to speak freely, truly and well of education. This is especially so in regard of alternative education. The white, heteronormative “mainstream” is not conducive to freedom. It does not understand difference. It abhors difference, in fact. It cannot assimilate it, or cope with it as we see, again and again, from research pointing at racisms, sexism and homophobias or other forms of prejudice. Universities are astonishingly particularly guilty of normalisations to align themselves with the market rather than with cutting edge knowledge (Morrish & Sauntson, 2019: <https://academicirregularities.wordpress.com/2018/10/06/a-short-commercial-break/>). That is not to say that those in universities cannot do freedom. They definitely do, but these “types” are the ones to whom we increasingly turn for conversations about the outside of academia.

To express oneself honestly and well, have good conversations about alternative education and to be other than a stifled and suffocating mainstream follower-of-nothing-important, do we need to leave, stay away, struggle, protest, stop perpetuating? We must breathe fresh air; speak from a good place.

References

- Andreotti, V., & Souza, L. M. T. M. d. (2008). Translating theory into practice and walking minefields: lessons from the project ‘Through Other Eyes’. *International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning* 1(1), 23-36.
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