

Editorial: The Academic Study of Educational Alternatives

Helen E. Lees¹ and Gert Biesta²
University of Stirling¹ and University of Luxembourg²

Having just read some reflections on the first issue of *Other Education* (<http://www.libed.org.uk/jan13/other-education.html>), we consider it is a fitting place to springboard into this editorial.

The review, speaking from a place of practical educational matters, voices concerns about the philosophical nature of some of the contributions in the inaugural issue of *Other Education*. As readers of this journal will see from the articles in this issue—our first to include peer reviewed submissions—*Other Education* is extremely concerned with practical educational matters. As stated and shown, with regard to the inaugural issue of invited position papers from the OE editorial board, our remit is broad. What we have done so far is to highlight perhaps that educational alternatives are a wide territory, *requiring* a theoretical basis and philosophical and theoretical debates, positions and challenges *included* in its conversations, in order to flourish. The mostly academic based editorial board that we work with are always theoreticians, even if not explicitly so, because academic work without some kind or some content of theory is missing a vital component of its presentation. As the stated aim of *Other Education* is "to promote and represent the academic study of educational alternatives" rather than to represent those practices and processes themselves (see <http://www.othereducation.stir.ac.uk/index.php/OE/about/editorialPolicies#focusAndScope>) our first priority is towards the publication of academic work. Such work inevitably needs to include a theoretical dimension—albeit that this does not necessarily mean that such a dimension has to be philosophical.

We are extremely pleased with the various feedback *Other Education* has so far received from a number of comments from colleagues around the world. We do not, naturally, stop there. As editors of this journal it is very important to us that the theoretical basis of educational alternatives is enriched and stimulated because it is so necessary and influential that this would occur. But we also understand that knowing, discussing and highlighting what happens on the ground is the key. This

Helen E. Lees: h.e.lees@stir.ac.uk
Gert Biesta: gert.biesta@uni.lu
editors@othereducation.org

is why we value our connections to people who work in a wide range of settings, also outside of academia, and invite everyone involved in educational alternatives to submit work for consideration in our new section of OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS. We do not require academic training and academically styled articles, but look for contributions that can enrich the discussion about educational alternatives in line with the mission statement of the journal—this can include up to date opinions, news, perspectives, reports, interviews, reflections and so on. The section is not peer reviewed (subject to the opinions of knowledgeable experts about the content and nature of an article). A decision to include a piece in this section is at the discretion of the editors. As with any work published in *Other Education*, all opinions and perspectives are those of the authors alone.

In this issue we have a bumper crop of what we consider, as editors, to be important work on home education. In the peer reviewed articles section Kunzman and Gaither present a significant overview of home education scholarship around the world—and in particular with reference to North American work—and make sense of a vast and sometimes unwieldy landscape. In OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS various pieces connected to home education concerns enhance the nature of this issue as a contribution to the knowledge, understanding and appreciation of home education. We also present in OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS some work on various topics. Looking at the variety gives an understanding to OE readers of the breadth of our interests and also, the extent to which we wish to support, promote and stimulate other ways of doing educational research, scholarship and writing—including the artistic and visual. We hope to exemplify our openness to being different through this section and the publications in the journal more generally.

Issues to come will have more peer reviewed articles—a number are currently in the system and coming through the peer review process. Whilst being fundamentally open in our attitude, we are being demanding with our authors that their work—often presented with elements of difference which are welcomed, interesting and powerful—is also sufficiently robust to withstand encounter with a wider field of scholarship where very different views about what counts as good research and good practice circulate. We do believe that shifting the goalposts is an important part of all academic work, and we care about arguing through difference with a strong hand for the sake of our authors and the vital conversations that the work our authors are offering us can develop and promote.

We are building our book reviews section and this will appear for the first time in the following issue. If you have an OE relevant book you would like to review or would like to get a book in exchange for a review, please get in touch with our book reviews editor.

An attitude of rigour on our part as editors (and for this we rely heavily on all the reviewers who offer their energy, time and expertise to provide us with informed opinions) requires *a process* for work to come to fruition and we are right

at the start of this. We would urge submitting authors with full papers for peer review to not be afraid to be different. OE reviewers are open to this. But OE reviewers also ask searching questions and point to possibilities where arguments can be improved and strengthened. We work, through the peer review system, to ensure that the work we publish is as strong as it can be. This is not always a *necessarily* long process of course but it is in place in a supportive and constructive way and we try to ensure timely turnarounds.

We would like to thank those who have spoken up and told us that what OE is doing and trying to do is exciting and worthwhile. Something is happening. Over to you.

© Copyright 2013. The authors, Helen Lees and Gert Biesta, assign to Other Education: The Journal of Educational Alternatives, and to educational and non-profit institutions a non-exclusive license to use this document for personal use and in courses of instruction, provided that the article is used in full and this copyright statement is reproduced. The authors also grant a non-exclusive right to Other Education: The Journal of Educational Alternatives to publish this document in full on the World Wide Web. Any other usage is prohibited without the express permission of the author.