

## **Editorial: Never the Twain?**

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All my conscious life I have been aware of the split that seems to reside between diametrically opposed approaches; that there is something fundamental to our being which makes us inhabit a certain point of view and which then affects the way we understand the point of view of others.

This background has shaped my thinking about education. I understand why people might want to see otherwise and why those who are in power might not “get” this other view. But I also know (and have practice) of sticking to my views as an alternative educationist and whilst those with whom I converse cannot see what I am saying has validity, I know that actually it has meaning; just not for them.

Over time I have learnt to stand on the bridge of incommensurability between differently structured and indeed paradigmatically different understandings of education. Or, at least, I try this delicate feat of daring. It has taken time to value what is now, to me, the *other* of the mainstream approach. I don’t value it more than democratic and autonomous values in education, but I see there is value in the ideas of the mainstream; aspects of interest for proper education and I’m not afraid to sift through the attendant rubbish either to get the gold of many people’s opinions and practices. I have become an ecumenical educationist and intend to stay that way. However, what matters to me is the voice of my own educational community and I speak for them.

Working with alternative education is for all practitioners in this field a feat of daring. They must stand their ground; not alienate their colleagues working in and with what might be easily called “mainstream education” and yet continue with their vision of the other way they value, whilst offering at least to see the other’s (dominant) viewpoint in as positive a light as can be mustered. Holding true to alternative education is a skill. It also comes at a price because resources for the field are—how shall we say—emergent.

It feels like a lot is happening in the alternative education scene at the moment. PhDs in alternative education are being passed (Congratulations Harriet Pattison, Editor of our nascent book reviews section) and are being offered for study with studentships attached for new, emergent scholars of alternatives (best wishes to the

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person awarded the University of Hull “Freedom to Learn” studentship); seminar series, research interest groups, projects, book contracts, book publications, specialised international mailing lists and research groups are being formed and developed; funding is being offered for various potentially highly “educationally alternative” research bids. The democratic, autonomy, partnership, creative innovation, curiosity, listening, connecting, etcetera, are all in fashion. They are beginning to make serious sense to people with power. About time. These things, and more, start to be seen as economically viable; to have market sense.

But if only there was more investment in a bank of understanding about how alternative education itself functions! If only those with the power to act on the activity and investment in attempts to get such research off the ground would *vote for* alternatives wherever they are ideologically located; on whatever side or part of that bridge between educational camps and belief systems about educational validity they stand. We need those who may not have yet the concepts of educational alternatives to vote for the idea of growth in new concepts: ones we are developing in *Other Education* for instance and within all those initiated, attempted or ongoing activities of various international colleagues alluded to above. We need friends with power to decide to not rely on their own views necessarily about what counts educationally but instead apply “educational love.” To risk because the risk is worthwhile. To allow all members of the educational family to flourish and feel valued and worthy. To make sure that research about *all kinds* of education grows.

Educational alternatives knowledge is currently a poorly funded domain with a lot to offer and much need for support. The time is now to invest because there is so much we intuitively know about what works in alternatives and what isn’t working in schooling that we need to bring forward with rigorous, robust studies. These are able to be written in ways which can and do bridge the incommensurability divide between the new, unknown and struggling language of and for alternatives (in the face of the sedimented and standardising vocabulary of the mainstream’s dominance) and the scientific demands of the modern era if it is to believe also in the *other*. If there is to be equality and some justice around diversity of educational modalities in the educational arena learning “new languages” is a priority for educational studies.

Although there is much happening to support alternatives it is not yet nearly enough. It’s as though someone has seen the gold sticking out of the mountain and merely points to it and says “Wow! Look at that gold!” and then walks by.

Yet in an age of technological advances that free up old ideas of education and in an increasingly democratised social “network” (due to social media) which challenges old ideas of the teacher and student dynamic, picks and shovels ought to be in hand. There is gold in those alternative mountains. If education cares about children and other students who study and learn now—in whatever way—for the future, it will listen to the sound of another voice speaking. Not the usual accent,

nor the usual content, but as I heard a playwright say recently, something new will be there; something gripping and attention grabbing and strange. Compelling because it tells a new story about education.

Educationally it seems to me that finding a bridge between incommensurability between educational approaches—with the mainstream in its groove and alternatives their own (why not?)—will enable education to be correct: not marginal and extreme in otherness or strictly fashioned by hegemonic tradition for a well worn (deadening?) cliché of desks and chalk and talk. Open.

Indeed, is not education bigger than individual personality traits? Do we not need to understand education as being beyond and above the limitations that our own predilections for thinking style or philosophies and politics of living will afford? We need to get over *ourselves* so that children (and adults) can choose. Let's start educationally with the idea that whoever or whatever we undeniably are *by nature*, we can and will get on together and make a social bond. Through love. So educationally what is most important is that we learn to love one another. That's an educational paradigm for all of us to share and a research funding dynamic from which all of us can benefit? It's an *ethical* situation; a situationist ethic. An embracing ethos.

This issue we say goodbye to Emily St Denny who did a fantastic job as editorial assistant with *Other Education* for the first three issues and has now received the studentship she so thoroughly deserves at a new university, so she can do that chilled out reading thing the fully funded student enjoys. Thanks Emily and good luck with everything. Her place is now taken by a new editorial assistant in the form of Robert Hamm, resident in Ireland, who has completed a PhD on ritual in schooling.

Sincere thanks for a just a little while longer to Stirling University for hosting the journal on its server and Michael Bekaert, its guardian there and our technical manager. Thanks also to Philip Ward in the IT department. We are aiming to move server in 2014.

Last words are in remembrance of Roland Meighan (1937-2014), who has inspired so many of us to believe that there is another educational way forward and that we're not alone in seeking it and wanting it.

