

what educators can do

what people want, commitments they seek, outcomes they pursue, why they can't agree - and what are those 'noises-off'?

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9 October 2013

I'd rather leave the job I love than teach the government's propaganda

[the secret teacher](#)

The secret teacher speaks for himself; we don't know how many other teachers and lecturers would endorse this condemnation of curriculum abuse. But he may well get a cheer from educators who would not call themselves 'teachers' or 'lecturers'. Education has agencies other than schools-and-colleges. Every locality has some such free-standing voluntary agency or social enterprise. organising help in what is called 'civil society'.

My shot at explaining all this is set out in an earlier [account of education and policy \[BL39\]](#). I examined influences on education, the beliefs they call upon, and the risks they pose. Here I ask how education can respond to those pressures, by forming and activating stakeholder groups as part of civil society. Civil society, by definition, acts independently of commercial and political pressures. And stakeholder groups give voice to that independence. This blog asks what kind of conversations about education that independence sets up. It means probing what different groups want from curriculum, what commitments they each seek, and what varied outcomes they try to realise.

The possibilities are far-reaching, especially when education for selection is set alongside education for well being. I look for what gets argued when education for competitiveness is set alongside education for fulfilment. The term 'learning-for-living' crops up.

Curriculum development needs all the independent support it can find in schools and colleges. But an independent education may need civil society more than is yet obvious, even to the secret teacher and his allies. This blog faces the probability that education will be privatised; government is in no position to resist the leverage of commercial interests looking for new markets. Thinking about the future of education needs, then, to grapple with all the possibilities - if not in the public service then in civil society.

It's a long-term project - bigger than a parliament. But Labour is calling for local communities, in partnership with businesses, to be free of arbitrary demands for unsustainable growth, and working for locally-valued outcomes. Those calls resonate with the forward-looking possibilities signposted here.

on priorities

Most people can answer to their own satisfaction the question 'what's education for?'. Everybody has some experience to go on. But agreement in a group is less likely - people have different experiences. Some claims are at such levels of word-playing malleability to be useless: talk of 'inspiration', 'confidence', 'empowerment' and 'creativity' can obscure more than it illuminates. It's not easy for stakeholders to get enough detail on the action that such claims call for. They need to get to grips with how far such underlying priorities can stretch...

- 1. **between brand and actual**

[‘And the brand played on’](#) - professional journal article recording acknowledgement of the inevitability of branding in higher-education, even by its opponents

branding raises questions for educator’s and their stakeholders, concerning how useful to anybody ‘looking-good’ brands can be

[‘...branding corrupts knowledge...’](#) - professorial polemic documenting in detail the loss of contact with the fundamental justification of learning

raises questions for education’s stakeholders on whether learning is to recruit customers or citizens, or to enlarge humanity

[Everything is for Sale](#) - professional journal review of a thorough enquiry into policy driven marketisation of higher education - tracking the transition from a shared public service to a purchasable private good

students can usefully expend some energy on wondering whose interests their qualification serves, and how it should therefore be paid for

- **2. between competitiveness and well-being**

[‘...families to boost ambition...’](#) - journalistic report on government ideas for parents to help their daughters become more ambitious

raising stakeholder questions about whether aspiration for competitive success is now to be socially expected from everybody

[‘...competition is not raising standards...’](#) - professional journal report on research which shows that the overt imposition of competitiveness is both ineffective and damaging

stakeholders are engaged in a conversation about learning as economically instrumental and for human fulfilment

[‘...time to change the questions we’re asking...’](#) - documented think-tank analysis of the evidence on how entry into community and work-life is as much a social a commercial matter

stakeholders engaged in a conversation about learning as an individual and social experience which both connects and separates people

[‘parliament maintains all-party group on Sure-start...’](#) - government source on how formerly successful policies for Sure-start and ‘Every Child Matters’, developed for young peoples’ well-being, are now fairing

stakeholders need their own response to the loss of such programmes, as they are displaced by priorities for competitive employability

- **3. between shareholder and stakeholder**

[‘...competing priorities need to be democratically examined...’](#) - refereed-journal articles on the inevitability of conflicting concerns for ‘a good life’ - philosophically considers human nature, justice, equality, what is worth learning, and why

a manifesto for a wider stakeholder interest in education, rather than a narrower shareholder interest

[‘...informing stakeholder attitudes to open sharing...’](#) - project spec to support shared services - organised to give technical and administrative guidance to organisations embarking upon shared services

a challenge to stakeholders is dealing with the bureaucracy that inevitably envelops education establishments

- **4. between structures and dynamics**

[‘...tackling the needs of diverse groups...’](#) - project spec for cooperation between partners, while staying independent of institutional capture - tailored to the needs of local groups especially those working with special educational needs

stakeholder-led local action on education is not exclusively located in schools and colleges

[‘Supporting your local school’](#) - pressure-group piece reframing the education debate by listening to stakeholders, resisting centralisation, valuing both competitive and cooperative success, and recreating a public service

but there is an issue for whether stakeholders can locally canvas in terms which can win wide-enough electoral success

[‘...the making of an ideology of curriculum...’](#) - a refereed journal article seeking an ideology of curriculum in the various philosophies, politics, vocabularies and stages of development in curriculum

raises issues for whether such leading-edge thinking can expect stakeholder agreement with a unified ideology

[‘How can social entrepreneurs tackle local problems?’](#) - think-tank probing partnerships between local development and enterprise - lateral thinking on civil society

education stakeholders need to find ways of bringing genuine creativity into useful contact with inevitable bureaucracy

[Educating Lambeth with Parents in Charge](#) - journalist’s account of how educators, using voluntary-controlled status, act in partnership with local authorities - giving voice and influence to family and community interests

education stakeholders whose voice is disregarded by policy can organise for resisting and reversing unwanted influence

on culture

All education is socially situated - where it happens influences how it happens. That location can be thought of as an institution, a neighbourhood, a locality, a region or a nation. In whatever combination, a sense of belonging-to-a-place calls up shared beliefs about how things are, shared values about what is worth doing, and shared expectations about what is possible. Whether street-level or cosmopolitan, each culture formulates its own stake in education. So when students and their families approach an educator they do not come with just a post-coded address, they carry cultural baggage. Any ensuing conversation needs to understand what they believe to be the truth, what they take to be worthwhile, and what they therefore think education is for...

- **5. for the arts**

[‘Traditional values’](#) - professorial polemic on how UK education is losing its hold on how the arts represent the common good and a shared wealth

talk of the arts raises issues for students concerning what values their own cultures protect - and why

[‘...in short Britain is fucked...’](#) - journalistic account of an architect’s claim that Germany is successful because it respects the arts - the UK pushes the arts into a corner - a brit student can get a buzz from a car, an outfit, a song, a house - and by knowing how much it costs, what status it has and whether it’s fashionable - but a German student knows this is not all there is - or so it’s claimed

the arts as more than marketable preferences poses issues that educators and their stakeholders cannot evade

- **6. for commerce**

[Ways into Work](#) - training provider’s assembly of the views of young people on the importance to education of links with employers - students are found to value such links - the account is not clear about the different learning that comes from links with managers and recruiters, rather than with working people

students with educators can usefully consider why different people in a firm say different things about what it’s like, and why

[Business and Schools](#) - government-funded agency for promoting employment and skills, surveying how business influences the design and delivery of education

stakeholders and educators can probe these claims for both good and bad employer practice, and for where it is unfair and exploitive

[‘The globalisation of education policy...’](#) - education professional journal report on the range of claims and opinions concerning the shaping of education by global commerce - but the claim ‘we know what to do’ can mean ‘we know what to do in our interests’

few are better placed than independent stakeholders to probe in whose interests the claims on curriculum represent

- **7. for citizenship**

[‘...towards justice, inclusion and hope...’](#) - refereed-journal survey, arguing for education to rise above being more than a functionally and socially reproductive activity - arguing for education for active citizenship

students with educators can probe where in the media, on-line and locally, people can engage with how their lives are governed

[‘Classroom deliberation and political polarisation...’](#) - refereed-journal report of observation of how error, superstition and prejudice invade and distort political conversation

students with educators can usefully examine politicians’ pronouncements, and consider whether and how people are misled

[‘Teaching to and through cultural diversity...’](#) - refereed-journal opinion-piece on culturally responsive teaching - calling for a restructuring of teacher attitudes-and-beliefs - and links to all parts of the curriculum - it draws on the diverse voices waiting to be heard in every learning setting

students with educators can survey how cultural diversity figures in what people do about work-life and life as a citizen

[From Exam Factories to Communities of Discovery](#) - review of a professorial polemic calling for a radical reform of education - it rejects the arbitrariness of assessment-driven learning and argues for a democratic realisation of creativity

educators and their stakeholders need to work on how learning-for-testing can also be learning-for-living

on institutions

Where the conversations are local, ideas for education can relatively easily be compared, scrutinised and made the basis for action - asking 'why would we want to do this?'. But much of the influence on education comes from higher-up and farther-away - provoking 'why would they want us to do that?'. And, while local stakeholder conversations are culturally rooted, shareholder interests are rooted in institutions. The latter reflect commercial interests and the politics they can successfully lobby. And they can pull levers and push buttons way beyond the reach of local stakeholders. Institutional interests get things the way they want them in systemic rather than conversational ways...

- **8. for privatisation**

['A capitalist command economy'](#) - illustrated journalistic polemic on how education is manoeuvred, against local wishes, into acceptance of a status where commercial interests are both dominant and classified as 'private sector'

stakeholding means a strong and locally-rooted civil-society which can independently disentangle itself from imposed systems

['The academies illusion'](#) - independent and voluntary statistician's analysis showing that claims for what political institutions impose are false

stakeholders may find it impossible to negotiate with systemic change where there is no shared acknowledgement of reality

- **9. for assessment**

['...remaking the grades'](#) - education journalist's review of the politically-proposed future of 18+ qualifications - showing how education leaders find them unworkable

education stakeholders must be among the voices speaking truth to power, in the interests of students' well-being and fulfilment

[Towards a proper English baccalaureate](#) - headteacher's detailed run-down on what a genuine baccalaureate is - showing the English proposals not to be sufficiently inclusive, comprehensive or integrated

stakeholders must deal with how constructive language is commandeered to implement destructive intentions

['Tomlinson - a bridge too far...'](#) [BL08] - account of a failed attempt to introduce a genuine baccalaureate - showing how it is linked to student well-being anchored in Sure-start and informed by 'Every Child Matters'

stakeholders must deal with a neo-lib system shaped to commercial drivers and pursuing competitive ends

- **10. for localities**

[Redesigning Education](#) - self-styled expert group claiming to rescue education from global change - the remedy is a systemic application of marketable provision and strong leadership - there is little reference to local factors, educationists' ideas or a need for consultation

stakeholders can resist policy-driven requirements that supplant local and professional understanding

[‘...ten out of ten...’](#) - self-report by local authority on achieving ready-made intentions - all ten intentions reflect terms proposed by government - there is little reference to the hopes and fears of local people

stakeholders must probe why proposals for the systemic reform of education draw so little on what educators know

[‘Local government - new era of co-operation’](#) - journalistic review of evidence on local authorities reorganising in response to loss of government funding - describes councils moving from commissioning to cooperating - and acting on such matters as credit unions and fair trade - although without, yet, much mention of education

stakeholders are part of a civil-society trend that resists central control and defends education for fulfilment

[‘...redefining local-authority professionalism...’](#) - refereed-journal account of how helping professionals are reorganising locally - the trends raise issues for role-definition, quality of personal contact, nature of caring, and the independence of helping professionalism

stakeholders can be part of the realisation of a bigger optimism than neo-lib policy and its lobbyists can grasp

- **11. for employers**

[The Industrial Training Act - Failed Revolution](#) - economist’s detailed and fully-referenced account of a shared training system, now largely abandoned, which guarded against self-interested employers off-loading training costs onto competitors and education - the loss of the scheme directs pressure for vocational training at schools

educators see training as a commercial responsibility, and education best engaged in a deeper and more extensive underlying enablement

[...Review of Apprenticeships](#) - summary of independent research, pointing to the need for significant improvement in provision - to be designed by commerce, supported by government and paid for by employers - and relying on education only for underlying background learning - but not mentioning the scope of what that learning now needs to be

the role of education stakeholders in monitoring the local outworking of this three-way cooperation would be critical

[‘...everybody should learn how to program a computer...’](#) - education journalist’s report of policy-supported producer demand - ignoring expert advice that programming is unlikely to be embraced widely by students, and is best outsourced

educators attend to user rather than producer needs, by enabling critical thinking in dealing with on-line enticement

[The Mismanagement of Talent](#) - fully-referenced professorial account of crude recruitment-and-selection procedures, and counter-productive management techniques - damaging some students’ life chances

stakeholders can shift the monitoring and accountability of employer foibles from distant to local scrutiny

[‘...why employers do not serve employees...’](#) - prominent business leader’s account of why business management stands aloof from worker experience - the alternative, ‘servant-leadership’, seems weaker but is more effective and better respected

stakeholders find a less macho imagery for education leadership and a less bossy concept of student-educator conversations

[Work After Globalisation - Building Occupational Citizenship](#)¹ - education professional's review of a trade-union account of working life - people are increasingly at the precarious and arbitrary beck-and-call of employers - commercial interests do not always accord with worker interests

stakeholders and educationists share with trades unions concerns for well-being and fulfilment, and trades unions are part of civil society

- **12. for the well-positioned**

[Relocating Careers Work in Curriculum](#) [BL21] - account of how careers education has been overtaken by change - and how a low-growth and damaged economy reduces social mobility - because advancement becomes zero-sum, where one person's gain means another's loss

educationist, seeing curriculum as a means of fairly enabling life chances, will call for sustained learning in a reformed curriculum

[‘State-funded school are socially exclusive...’](#) - journalistic review of evidence showing school admission arrangements favouring well-placed family manoeuvring for its own children's advancement

stakeholders can only resolve such conflicts from outside any politics which allows abuse by its own constituencies

[‘Rise of the super-family’](#) - professorial account of how well-positioned families maximise their life chances, to the point where there is no more room for others

stakeholders need to gain support for a shared interest in the well-being of other people's children

- **13. for family-educator partnerships**

[‘Our school's ain't broke’](#) - report of an attitude survey showing that, though families are happy with political priorities for education, they want educators to be in charge of education - it would be a strange concept of civil society that did not listen to what educators have to say about education

stakeholding understands that education is community property and no single interest group can be allowed to take control

[‘...targets risk pupil well-being...’](#) - journalist's report of a head-teacher group set up to resist control by measurement - the group claims that the politics has devastating results, and urges colleagues to abandon the national curriculum

stakeholders, representing civil society, are establishing alternative leadership for the institutional improvement of education

[‘Headteachers to reform education’](#) - education journalist's report of educators organising for non-government ways of establishing local partnerships for curriculum and assessment - such stakeholder action systemically replaces central-government control of education

stakeholders must resolve locally-identified conflicts of interests, and for that educator-voice is irreplaceable

¹ Linked to a review by Peter Hall-Jones of Guy Standing's book *Work After Globalisation: Building Occupational Citizenship*.

on design

Whatever balance is struck between content and process, educators need to design a scheme-of-work. Before they join their students in a group, they need to think about what students are ready to learn, why it is important, what will attract their interest, what to bring them as resources, how to engage with them in working with those resources, and what indications of learning to look for. There is a conversation about enablement to be had on all this, and stakeholder priorities will figure. There are questions, for example, about how ideas like 'inspiration', 'confidence', 'empowerment' and 'creativity' can feature - and whether they are to feature at all. What comes of that conversation is a scheme design - and there is a range of design features to call on...

- **14. enabling practical ability**

['Education for work...'](#) - refereed-journal article setting out theoretical claims that education is preparation for work - it argues for a shift of professional focus in that direction - the aim is the acquisition of unproblematic skills for action, rather than the problematic questioning of underlying influence - it is, in that sense, about training rather than education

education stakeholders need to consider what understanding of partnership between training and education can be agreed

['Why we should all be hands-on'](#) - illustrated professorial analysis of the difference between practical and academic learning - arguing that 'practical' means more than 'vocational', and is not less intellectually rigorous than 'academic' - argues for a broader underlying concept of usefulness, which might be called 'learning-for-living'

students with educators can work on how practical abilities are used for both good and ill, and need to be received in that questioning way

- **15. enabling remembering and thinking**

['...how to make appropriate inferences in a body of knowledge...'](#) - refereed-journal account, with examples, of how academic content needs to be processed into knowledge that can be meaningfully used into life - the same need applies to practical know-how - the recognition is called 'knowledge by acquaintance'

students and their educators can use such thinking to grasp the range of what education is capable of bringing into their lives

['...a devastating critique of curriculum reforms...'](#) - journalist's review of a leading educationist's critique of government proposals for subject-based and content-driven curriculum - such a limited curriculum asks only for students to remember and reproduce, rather than to consider and make links - these policy proposals are argued to be ill-informed, with little relevance today's young learners' needs to find and experience for themselves - such critiques are largely disregarded by policy

stakeholders are among the few forums where such issues are examined and resolved, if necessary independently of policy

['...the reinvention of education for critical thinking...'](#) - professional journal article describing a 'thinking' programme - students research the content of learning for themselves - and specialised tutors enable them in the processing of what they find

these are educator-student partnerships, where both share in finding curriculum content and scrutinising it for meaning

- **16. enabling buoyancy**

[Self-esteem, Confidence and Adult Learning](#) - think-tank rundown on the interacting feelings of self-esteem and confidence - both correlate with performance - but which is cause and which effect is an open question - a lack of confidence is commonly argued to cause lack of ambition - but the lack can be an effect as well as a cause, and a person can be confident in some situations but not in others

students can usefully invest energy in comparing how in experience self-esteem and confidence are caused, and what effects they have

[Self-concept and Self-esteem](#) - university-based study of self-image and self-esteem argues the processes to be rooted in a wider social setting - it shows how linking teachers with families to work together enhances student self-concept and improves performance

educators and their stakeholders need to understand how learned buoyancy is experienced and how it shapes what people do

[From helplessness to hope](#) - paper collating original enquiries into self-confidence and self-control - drawing on psychology, it suggests that both are learned from experience - and each can both improve and damage prospects

educators and their stakeholders can help repair psychological damage - but also reform any social and local puncturing of buoyancy

[Building Character](#) - think-tank-based examination of mindfulness - which includes completing tasks, controlling impulses and relating to others - it is argued to be the product of upbringing - and is increasingly sought-after in selection procedures

stakeholders can discuss with recruiters how a search for 'mindfulness' can favour cosmetic niceness, but lose energetic robustness

['...what is resilience?...'](#) - refereed-journal review of models for educational achievement - especially related to reactions to stress - it argues that resilience, and the well-being it affords, are rooted in socially-situated 'ecologies'

students with educators, perhaps drawing on neurology, can seek examples of thinking which works better when disturbed than when comforted

[Sustaining and Disruptive Innovation](#) - thorough attempt to define innovation - speaks of it as two-fold - one improving existing products, the other developing new products - although framed in marketing terms it can be applied more flexibly - usefully calls on both on-line and off-line learning to make an unusual distinction, which rejects the frequent confusion of 'innovation' and 'creativity'

such thinking is useful to education for the way it suggests the importance of well-defined, rather than sloppily-confused, ideas

[The Inter-generational Transmission of Educational Success](#) - university-based multi-disciplinary research into the personal and social outcomes of life-long learning - examines correlations between learning and health, crime, parenting, citizenship and social cohesion - takes a special interest in what is not work-related, and in what seeks other-than-competitive outcomes - it is for well being, and is claimed through resilience, perseverance and self-control

stakeholders are uniquely placed to work with families and communities on local inter-generational influences

['...think differently, creatively and learning from mistakes...'](#) - university-based comparison of how assessment generates stress and loss of confidence - argues for independent educators, working in neighbourhood comprehensives, and rooted in community - these are well-placed to nurture well-being and the realisation of

potential - they work well because 'local' means nearby-and-familiar - so it affords safety which can allow for difference, support creativity and nurture fearlessness of making mistakes

it is not bad news for students to feel scared, confused and to know that they don't know, short-term troublesome has long-term potential

- **17. enabling thinking**

['...how resilience transforms development...'](#) - peer-reviewed article examining the experience of adversity as a pathway to adaptability - students may see a problem as an opportunity, but that does not dispose of the problem - resilience pushes open the door to action - but that's all that such stickability does

students working with educators on nurturing nothing but stickability can stick unthinking people into yet deeper shit

['Education for intellectual virtues...'](#) - peer-reviewed argument for the importance of learning to develop 'curiosity', 'open-mindedness', 'courage' and 'honesty'

students with educators might invest energy in figuring how to realise who, conversely, are 'dependent', 'closed-minded', 'timid' and 'deceitful'

['...we need some straight-forward term such as "good learning"'](#) - peer-reviewed article rejecting romanticised claims for 'transformative' learning - and arguing for nine 'solid' aspects to good learning - 'instrumental', 'communicative', 'affective', 'interpretive', 'essential', 'critical', 'political', 'passionate' and 'moral'

this is a stakeholder learning agenda, for opening students to their best possible selves, in their best possible futures

- **18. enabling meta-learning**

['...we must rethink our approach to education'](#) - report of an experiment to engage village students in learning-to-learn, by setting up free-to-access on-line devices - it sets up a process of 'self-organising learning', calling on teachers only when necessary

students may well be able to help their teachers make better use of on-line devices

[Singapore heads in a bold new direction](#) - education journalist's report of formerly content-driven academic system, now moving towards a brit-developed holistic approach to learning - argued to be in the interest of a fairer and more equal society

could this mean that educationist voices will be heeded, as the reality of a changing world reaches open-minded policy makers?

['Reframing information literacy...'](#) - on-line discussion of the importance of 'meta-literacy' - the ability, particularly important on-line, to learn how to learn and re-learn for a changing world - this account draws all forms of literacy into an underlying ability for critical thinking - argued to be essential for reliable cooperation and sharing knowledge

students working with educators in a conversation about how you know you need to find out more, before you carry out anything

['Learning as transformation...'](#) - website collating research-and-development on an inter-disciplinary method for making meaning through 'deep learning' - it involves questioning, seeking alternative sources of information and evaluating - and, where necessary, it leads to reframing a world-view

this is not following other people's 'inspiration', but students themselves investing in learning which puts themselves in charge

- **19. enabling learning-for-living**

['...research as a conversation analyst...'](#) - podcast on research into how people draw on direct-and-personal experience for learning - a conversation-analysis technique draws on what people say in conversation with each other, rather than what they report to researchers - it argues that conventional psychology's checklists, interview schedules and role-plays miss too much

few are in a more trusted position to call on direct-and-personal experience than open stakeholders and conversational educators

['...how mindset affects learning...'](#) - research-based academic review of the different ways that intelligence is engaged - it can work with fixed concepts which come from measurement or what other people agree - but it can also seek out new possibilities, looking for growth and expansion - the research shows that fixity holds students back, but enabling seeking means escape from containment

educators must not teach as though they are defending the way things are, but to enable recognition of what can be changed, and should be

[Believing Bullshit](#) - professorial analysis of the ways people can be deceived into accepting the indefensible - with an illustrated account of the usefulness of enabling students in the philosophy of probing - students can learn to recognise such ploys as 'mystification', 'easy answers', 'extremism', 'inconsistency', 'intuition', 'posturing', 'anecdote' and 'manipulation' - that learning enables them to see through mere posturing, whether in the headlines or in on-line posts

educators can recognise this learning-for-living as belonging to disciplines which will not squeeze into edge-of-timetable slots

[Career-learning Thinking for Contemporary Life...](#) [BL28] - illustrated review of meta-learning showing how meaning is socially constructed - engages students in explaining the past and anticipating the future - designed to deal with complexity in experience, whether personal, situated or on-line - a stage-by-stage process works through 'finding out', 'sorting out', 'checking out' and 'figuring out' - to navigate changing, confusing and stressful transitions - learning in the programme transfers into life

students need learning which reminds them of their lives, so that their lives remind them of their learning

[Three-scene Storyboarding - Learning for Living](#) [BL35] - inter-disciplinary analysis of how finding meaning and committing to purpose is most naturally processed in narrative form - stories speak of the complexity, confusion and apparent chaos of events - but it does so in humanly-comprehensible forms - a programme shows how events are assigned meaning, and meaning is made the basis for action - this is a sense-making process where critical-thinking interrogates the anecdote

all students, working with all educators, have stories which they can probe for the sense that enables them to take reliable control of their own stories

education, interests and 'noises-off'

[Gary Thomas](#) has distilled curriculum thinking into an hour-or-so of reading. He maps a six-thousand-year history of education. I find his account riveting - it's of a struggle. In the blue corner, an insistence on the need for formal and reliable facts. In the red, trust in the case for an open and progressive process.

But, before the bruising starts, it's a pointless match - have you ever come across an unprocessed fact? or a fact-free process? So we should be able to find a consensus. But it's hard to find. Educators and their stakeholders need to understand why.

The author helps by taking a close look at pragmatics, constructivism and marketisation. I've tried here to take account of all that. But I can't help noticing that the author leaves out pretty-well all of what neurology, the social sciences and cultural theory bring to an understanding of curriculum. So where are the clues to understanding? Are they in what we can see included? or in what we can't see because something's left out? We'd have to ask who ignores what? And why would they do that?

From what I've managed to set out here, I find it hard to lose the suspicion that this is not really a debate about ideas, it's about whose interests are being served. A content-driven factual understanding of how things are suits some, and they are glad to see it included. A process-driven curriculum addressed to critically scrutinising how things got this way will upset some apple-carts

Assembling this account of what educators can do has repeatedly come across those conflicting interests. Any claim made, or research reported, or policy announced stands in a framework of one set of interests or another...

neo-lib < > shareholder < > cosmopolitan < > street-level < > civil society < > stakeholder

It also finds the interests managed in a range of settings...

systemic < > institutional < > local < > conversational

Some of this is 'noises-off' - hard-to-decipher murmurs of what is somewhere being canvassed, or the wangling of manoeuvres, or - eventually - what turns out to have been downright misleading. I've found some of what is signposted here in the news, but the news can also be a daily parade of immediate events, short-term consequences and facile solutions. There's too little time, space or attention-span to pose uncomfortable questions - just enough for evasive answers. Claims to transparency are so narrowly framed as to be laughable. Education needs larger frameworks, demanding disclosing answers. Am I paranoid to sense that there's some probing to do here?

And probing done before any compromises are made. A resolution can only be negotiated from what is put on the table. There's no compromise with absolute beliefs. And compromise with partial disclosure is a commitment to little that's worth having. Garry Thomas's story is in part an account of what kind of limp resolutions are left dangling.

Educators are not responsible for any of this, but neither can they afford to ignore it. This account of what they can do is widely-enough framed to take account of the gamut of interests and the reach of exchanges. So there's a lot here. But the more educators take into consideration, the more bases for action they can search. And this blog has argued that the action can include root-and-branch curriculum reform - with or without the support of the 'noises off'.

this work is in four parts...

1. [issues \[BL38\]](#)
2. [change \[BL39\]](#)
3. [education \[BL40 – this one\]](#)
4. [policy \[BL42\]](#)