From Exam Factories to Communities of Discovery

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THE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

1. **Macro level:** Counter productive government policy
   National testing and assessment

2. **Meso level:** Testing in Schools and Colleges

3. **Micro level:** Individual responses to Testing
“... Teaching to the test .... is widespread” (p.49).

A level Ss “tend not to take a critical stand [nor] responsibility for their own learning”

Vocational Ss “arrive at university having learned techniques and how to apply them by rote”
TESTING IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

1. “We are an exam factory. I’ve no issue with that.” Comprehensive head, 2009

2. Do all Ss at 16 or 18
   a. view themselves as able to learn successfully?
   b. understand learning and themselves as learners?
   c. leave with positive attitude to continued learning? (Hargreaves, 2004)
   d. do they possess critical intelligence? (Coffield, 2002)
INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES

How did you do so well, Ruth?

‘Learning the formula for each exam and practising it endlessly. I got an A1 in English ‘cos I knew exactly what’s required in each question. I learned off the sample answers provided by the examiners and I knew how much info was required and in what format in every section of the paper. That’s how you do well in these exams.... There’s no point in knowing about stuff that’s not going to come up in the exams. I was always frustrated by teachers who’d say “You don’t need to know this for the exams but I’ll tell you anyway.” I wanted my A1 – what’s the point of learning material that won’t come up in the exams?’

Stobart (2008)
WHERE ARE WEヘADED?

What will schools/colleges look like in 10 years time?

• exam factories?

• high performance learning organisations?
  o where staff are valued for their impact on ‘bottom line’, profits or test scores

• communities of discovery?
What’s a COMMUNITY of DISCOVERY? (1)

1. Learning is the central organising principle.
2. Shared values among Ts and Ss who treat each other as people and not as inputs/outputs.
3. Telling truth to power. Principled dissent is not only tolerated, it’s encouraged.
4. SMT treat staff in the same way staff are supposed to treat Ss (And govt treats SMTs..)
What’s a COMMUNITY of DISCOVERY? (2)

5. T & L improved by research, reflective practice and joint practice development
6. Academics in charge not Finance Dept, Ofsted, govt
7. Centres of Further Education, not Centres of Further Examinations

Is this what it’s like where you work?

REFERENCES

Coffield, F (2010). *Yes, but what’s Semmelweis got to do with my professional development as a teacher?*, London: LSN


