

Thinking **ACTIVISM** FAILURE *Aspiration* Language **INCLUSION** Empathy
OPPORTUNITY Music **SAFETY** environment ANGER Pedagogy Hope
Damage *Entitlement* MOBILITY Barriers Pride Class INEQUALITY Family
Community Identity TEACHERS Belonging Pleasure Race Respect Guilt
POWER SOLIDARITY Needs SHAME Acceptance DIET Happiness Destiny
Agency Dreams Dropout Authenticity Loneliness Research Gifts System

THE WORKING CLASS

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IAN GILBERT

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CLASS**

POVERTY, EDUCATION AND ALTERNATIVE VOICES

IAN GILBERT

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Foreword

ON WHY I AM NOT CONTRIBUTING TO THIS BOOK

Let's get some things straight:

1. I was the first child in my working class family to go to university.
2. I have worked in schools serving areas of high deprivation for over thirty years.
3. I fundamentally believe that the education system is unfair, dysfunctional and penalises the 'have nots'.
4. I refuse to contribute to this book, even though it is one of the most important publications that we at Independent Thinking have been involved in.

So, let me explain.

It is not what the book is about that I take offence at, far from it. Nor is it that I don't want to be associated with what is a very impressive and wide-ranging list of contributors covering so many important aspects of what we can all do to help young people from our poorer socio-economic backgrounds. The more we open up the debate and offer alternative perspectives and narratives, the better. No, what I take umbrage at is the title. Quite simply, by referring to the issues covered in this book as being linked to 'class', working or otherwise, I feel we are moving backwards, not forwards; looking at labels, not truths, closing the debate down and not opening it up in the way it so desperately needs.

I, like so many of the contributors in this book, am fiercely proud of my working class roots. In my father's youth, the term was a rallying cry for those facing disadvantage and prejudice. Communities used their working class identity to galvanise political and social change, and some of society's greatest developments owe their existence to this movement – individuals united by the trials and tribulations of their shared circumstances and doubly united by that label.

But *now* is not *then*.

It was not just the news footage that was black and white during the emergence of some of this country's most progressive social movements. Things were simpler back then, but we are no longer in a world of such clarity. Now the identity of an individual is much more diverse, grey and subjective than ever before. People identify themselves by religion, ethnicity, sexuality, shopping (the new 'opium of the people'), pastimes, clothing, TV programmes (another 'opium'), which football team they support or *Big Brother*

contestant they don't. We are no longer in a world where people in poverty live side by side with others who identify themselves in the same group as their neighbour. We live in a world where difference has become the focus and homogeneity the apparent goal of our education system.

Most young people I meet in the course of my work have no concept of the term 'working class', no ownership of it, no understanding of it and certainly no pride in it. Too many look to their 'gang' (often identified by a postcode area – check out the inner-city graffiti) for support, brotherhood/sisterhood and guidance. Many see the world divided in two – 'in the gang' and 'not in the gang'. The concept of traditions based on generational wisdom is meaningless, and many of these young people will tell you that no one understands the demands of modern Britain – the demands *they* are making – regardless of their political persuasion or class.

Rather than trying to rally opinion around an outdated term, I feel the issue is much more straightforward. It is about disadvantage, pure and simple: economic disadvantage, social disadvantage, emotional disadvantage, aspirational disadvantage.

These disadvantages are not located in one group of people, in one street, in one area or even in one type of community. They are in all areas of our country and of every country.

Rather than losing sight of the real issues, hidden behind the nuances of language and labels, we need to be better at holding our politicians and educational leaders to account, and not simply for failing the working class – but for failing so many children.

I am not contributing to a book called *The Working Class*. This is not because I think it is unimportant, but because I believe it is *too* important. My experience in schools across the UK and further afield proves to me that our education system is broken. Labels from the past run the risk of obscuring what needs to be done to put things right today, to create a system much better suited to the challenging world ahead, an education system that is genuinely world class.

Read the book and see what you think.

Dave Harris, Nottinghamshire

Preface

This book was written to offer an alternative perspective on three worrying ‘truths’ that have been peddled regarding school and the education of young people from challenging backgrounds:

1. If an individual from a disadvantaged background does not do well at school then this is a result of the child not trying hard enough. He or she deserves all they get.
2. If a group of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds do not do well at school then this is a result of the school not trying hard enough. The school deserves to be punished.
3. If an individual from a disadvantaged background does do well at school, we know this is the case because they will have become like us. Let’s call this the ‘middle classification’ of the working classes.

Through its many voices and perspectives, this book is designed to challenge these dangerous and damaging narratives and transform the way we work with *all* young people in order to help make our schools more diverse, inclusive and egalitarian communities where everyone has something of merit to bring and of value to take away.

It is not a book of answers. We are not telling you how to run your school, your classroom or your relationships. The field is too massive, too complex, too open to debate and to discussion to propose ‘off-the-shelf’ solutions. In fact, when anyone talks to you about ‘what works’ in education, what they are really referring to is ‘what worked’. Complexity lies at the heart of education and there are too many variables to be able to dictate your future from someone else’s past. Your classroom is what is called a ‘complex adaptive system’ where everything changes everything else, constantly. And a school is a complex web of complex webs. The research we refer to in this book is not presented in order to tell you what to think but to inform your own thinking, to help readjust your ‘mental model’ with regard to the three ‘truths’ above and, in this way, to challenge some of the dominant narratives about educating the ‘feckless poor’.

Besides, the way we tend to work at Independent Thinking is to do what our name suggests – to encourage, stimulate and provoke you to think for yourself, to draw your own conclusions, to come up with your own answers. This book is not about giving you all the answers – or indeed any. It is about helping you to ask the right questions. And the starting question for this book is quite simple: how can we approach

‘Mental models are personal, internal representations of external reality that people use to interact with the world around them. They are constructed by individuals based on their unique life experiences, perceptions, and understandings of the world. Mental models are used to reason and make decisions and can be the basis of individual behaviors ... People’s ability to represent the world accurately, however, is always limited and unique to each individual. Mental models are therefore characterized as incomplete representations of reality.’

Natalie Jones, Helen Ross, Timothy Lynam, Pascal Perez and Anne Leitch, *Mental models: an interdisciplinary synthesis of theory and methods*¹

‘The fact some give food to food banks, merely enables people who can’t budget ... or don’t want to, to have more money to spend on alcohol, cigarettes etc.’

York councillor
Chris Steward²

Feckless – feckless
(adj.) 1590s, from feck,
'effect, value, vigor'
(late 15c.), Scottish
shortened form
of effect (n.), + -less.³

'... a feckless arrogant
conceit of their great-
ness and power.'

James VI on the Scottish
nobility, *Basilikon Doron*⁴

the education of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in a way that actually makes a difference for all concerned?

NOTES

1. N. Jones, H. Ross, T. Lynam, P. Perez and A. Leitch, Mental models: an interdisciplinary synthesis of theory and methods, *Ecology and Society*, 16(1) (2011): 46. Available at: <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol16/iss1/art46/>.
2. Quoted in G. Aitchinson, Councillor in attack on food bank, *The Press* (3 January 2013). Available at: http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/10138097.Councillor_in_attack_on_food_bank/.
3. See http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=feckless&allowed_in_frame=0.
4. James I, *Basilikon Doron or His Majesties Instructions to His Dearest Sonne, Henry the Prince* (Edinburgh, 1599).

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Chapter 22

Family

As described so clearly by Jonathan Lear in the previous chapter, it is vital that you display the levels of bravery and professionalism needed to stop doing what clearly isn't working for the children in front of you, to step back and reflect on the point and purpose of education for those children, to throw out what is simply getting in the way of achieving that purpose, and then have the creativity to adapt and apply, and then keep on adapting and applying, whatever is necessary.

By giving children from disadvantaged backgrounds the opportunity to *be* a writer or an artist or a scientist or whatever their current professional and vocational passion might be, especially at such a young age, you are breaking down the barriers alluded to by Sir Al Aynsley-Green (Chapter 18) when he described how young people from poorer socio-economic backgrounds are held back in their applications to study medicine because they haven't had the relevant work experience. We have a world where, increasingly, the unpaid internship is the norm, regardless of the dubious legal connotations around it, and spending time working for nothing – when you and your family so desperately need you to be working for something – is creating a two-tier careers system which is in danger of unbalancing even further so many of the professions and most sought-after jobs.

Speaking to a mother recently, she described the extent of unpaid work her trainee vet daughter had to undertake, not only throughout her five years at London's prestigious Royal Veterinary College but also before she even started her studies there. As we saw in Shona Crichton's contribution and elsewhere, the pressure to contribute to the family coffers is a major factor in young people dropping out of education, and the increasing expectation that young people will have undertaken some form of unpaid internship means the likelihood (based on a quick search on the job website www.indeed.co.uk) of becoming working class vets, doctors, TV producers, accountants, marketing executives, fashionistas, advertising creatives, estate agents and so on is slim.

'In southern European countries, the United Kingdom and Finland, having a father with tertiary education raises a son's wages by at least 20% or more, compared with a son whose father had upper secondary education. At the same time, individuals whose fathers had achieved below upper secondary education tend to earn considerably less than those whose fathers had achieved upper secondary education.'

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Economic Policy Reforms: Going for Growth 2010*¹

'Countries that spend more on education also have higher absolute social mobility (reducing the extent to which children's outcomes are determined by their parents' backgrounds).'

Declan Gaffney and Ben Baumberg, *Dismantling the Barriers to Social Mobility*²

'Relative income mobility in the UK has become worse in recent decades, with individuals' adult incomes increasingly likely to be related to those of their parents.'

Declan Gaffney and Ben Baumberg, *Dismantling the Barriers to Social Mobility*

The unpaid internship issue was to be addressed by then Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg but it was blocked by then Prime Minister David Cameron. It is currently under review again so do watch this space. In the meantime, what are you doing at your school to keep career options open for *all* young people, and how can you specifically help the children from poorer backgrounds have at least an initial taste of the 'best' jobs and the chance to apply for them based on merit, not on how wealthy their parents are?

The link between parents' and children's career outcomes is another aspect of the social mobility debate that the Oxford University sociologist John H. Goldthorpe, whom we met in the previous chapter, calls out for what it is. Working on the premise that we all want what is best for our children, we will all use what is at our disposal to ensure our children can 'rise to the top'. It's just that, in the case of better-off parents, they have more at their disposal and use it for what is known as 'defensive expenditure':

“ ... those who suppose it possible to modify the class mobility regime directly through educational policy overlook the regime's important self-maintaining properties: i.e. properties that stem from the capacity of families with greater resources to use these resources specifically in reaction to situations in which some threat to their positions might arise.³ ”

These resources, which Goldthorpe points out might involve grandparental contributions too, are deployed in any number of competitive edge-building activities including:

“ ... to buy houses in areas served by high-performing state schools, to pay for individual tutoring, to help manage student debt, to support entry into postgraduate courses for which no loans are available, or, in the case of educational failure, to fund 'second chances'.⁴ ”

What's more, in the same way that I don't need to be faster than a bear, just faster than you, parents don't need their offspring to be better qualified per se. They need them to be better qualified than the competition. And the greater the competitive scenario they find themselves in (selective grammar schools, school selection by more subtle means, internships, graduate jobs, etc.), the greater the expenditure on the defence of their offspring's prospects.

Regardless all of this research, let us not forget the resilience and fortitude of working class parents who, irrespective of the lack of

resources, still help to make life better for their children despite, not as a result of, current policies and educational practices. Many of the more personal stories in this book reflect such families and none more so than the following contribution from Dr Debra Kidd.

What Debra does so well is to highlight the fact that in the same way that poverty is multifaceted, so too are the people living in poverty and their responses to it. So, therefore, must be our responses to it. The ‘working class’ may arguably exist as a social grouping, but it is a class made up of real people and everyone’s story is different. All those working with young people from such backgrounds – and devising policies on their behalf – need to be mindful of this fact.

‘... making the most of their talent and securing their family’s future takes that much more skill, will power, and commitment for the poor.’

Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty*⁵

Lifting Heads, Not Ripping Up Roots

DR DEBRA KIDD

My four grandparents lived in social housing and my parents were raised in that environment. But there are more differences between their stories than similarities, and we would do well to remember that when we talk about ‘the working class’.

On my mother’s side, my grandmother worked as a cleaner. She was a single mother with two small sons who had lost her husband at Dunkirk. My grandfather was older, a veteran of the First World War who had lost both his wife and his son in the Second, and who was forever damaged. He was working in a paint factory when he met my grandmother and neither of them ever pretended that their marriage was anything other than a matter of mutual convenience.

Their home became filled with more children – two more boys and my mother. They had one light bulb that they moved from room to room. Toilet paper was cut out from pieces of out-of-date newspaper that my grandmother cleared out of the waiting room of the doctor’s surgery where she worked. When a neighbour gave the family a piano it was quickly chopped up for firewood. My mum doesn’t remember there being books in the house – if there had been, she concludes, they would have been on the fire.

The local Catholic primary school that she attended had no aspirations for its children, just draconian discipline. She once asked a teacher why the word ‘sugar’, written on the board, didn’t have an ‘h’ in it. After the beating that ensued she decided not to speak in school again. She left at fourteen and went to work in the local mill. Their family had known nothing but poverty since the potato famine in Ireland, a poverty passed from generation to generation.

There was never any mention of education, aspiration or hope: just the need to get out to work and contribute a wage to the family.

On my father’s side, my grandmother was a secretary and my grandfather, having served in the navy during the war, continued naval service until he had to leave. He had problems with alcohol and the family fell on hard times, moving into social housing. My dad remembers cowering in the dark behind the sofa with his mother, hiding from the rent collector. Their poverty was not generational, but situational. Heavy drinking, perhaps in part triggered by the war, brought the family low, but education was always valued. All of the children in my father’s primary school were encouraged to take the 11-plus and many went on to the grammar school. He was one of them.

He was lucky, brought up to believe that education mattered in a house where books were to be read and not burned. He left school with A levels and prospects.

Now, this is not a tale of how grammar schools saved my father. The same system that gave him a leg up kept a firm restraining hand on the head of my mum. But it shows us that then, as now, we cannot group working class, or whatever other label we wish to give them, children as one homogenous lump. There are working class children whose parents have aspirations for them and there are working class children whose parents are not even aware of what possibilities exist, and if they are, have no idea how to help their child to achieve them. The differences between situational poverty, where you've experienced something better and aim to get back there, and generational poverty, where there has been nothing but poverty, create very different mind-sets and circumstances.

This is why we must view any data that assigns children into income groups with some suspicion. For example, the recent research which suggests that white children are not doing as well as children from ethnic minorities deserves greater scrutiny.⁶ Behind every white working class child and every child from an ethnic minority is a unique set of circumstances. While it seems to be true that it is white working class boys who are not doing so well in school, Roma and Traveller children fare worse.⁷ And although white working class boys achieve lower grades, they tend, nevertheless, to end up in better paid work than white working class girls. Black boys may be out-performing white working class boys in school, but they are still more likely to end up imprisoned. The picture is complex and the solutions cannot be reduced to single silver bullets.

What we do know is that growing up in poverty is a stressful experience for children. When I recount my parents' and grandparents' experiences, the circumstances seem extreme, but there are families living in such circumstances today and a record 67% of them are in work.⁸ A lack of social housing means that many of them are living in overcrowded, temporary accommodation with no prospect of a permanent home. The impact of this on children is great.

To suggest that the 'answer' to the issue of underachievement in working class children is an *academic* education is laughably simplistic. Yet when this is pointed out it is met with an accusatory cry of 'low expectations', usually from those who have had no direct experience of poverty. Such an answer ignores hunger. It ignores gnawing, relentless worry, sleeplessness and the lack of a warm, safe environment in which to learn or to read. It ignores the fear that many working class children have of debt – because they have seen first-hand what it does to cripple their family. To speak of student debt as if it were a mere trifle shows a breathtaking lack of understanding of how debt impacts physically and psychologically on low income families and how they come to fear it.

The fact remains that without parental support and understanding, it's a huge uphill struggle to get any child to understand how education might lead them towards a better future. To want a better future you have to be able to conceptualise what it might be like and, crucially, be able to see yourself in it.

It is, therefore, meaningless to group free school meals (FSM) children into one category, especially when certain schools are wising up to this and using it as a means of selection. If they can ensure that their FSM children come from supportive families – ideally those in situational poverty, such as immigrants – they can effectively select the 'poor' students most likely to succeed. Study after study tells us that parenting makes the difference. For example, a ground-breaking longitudinal study, the Effective Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Education (EPPSE) research project, is clear: when it comes to parenting, it's not what you earn, it's what you do that matters.⁹ If your school can ensure that it will get full parental support, if it can recruit from the aspirational poor, then it can make its data look amazing.

This is not success – it's selection. We need to dig deeper than an FSM label and so, to help us in this, let's go back to my parents.

They had three children. All went to university. I was born in a terraced house with an outside toilet. Eight years later, my brother was born into a house with two bathrooms and a bidet. That's social mobility. But what made the difference to us was not my dad's income but the value they placed on our education. When I became a mother, I watched my mum with my kids. She would take them round the supermarket and name everything. At the park, every tree, bird, animal was named and described. She talked to them as I know she must have talked to me. A constant stream of language. And my dad, even when we had no money, would bring books home from charity shops. Had we stayed poor, we would still have had the chance to succeed because they did the right things.

Of my uncles and aunts, those who stayed on council estates (some of whom were conned into buying their house in a neighbourhood that went down the toilet) had children who are still on council estates. Or who are dead. You are more likely to die young if you are poor. Of my uncle's four children, two are dead and one is sectioned for mental health problems. The loss of his job, being trapped in his home, losing both sons, worry for his mentally ill daughter and the breakdown of his marriage led my kind and gentle uncle to despair. He committed suicide. The fourth child still lives on an estate, dependent on benefits, and has seven children. There are many who would judge her, but being a mother gave her a sense of value. She had lost everything; having children around her made her feel like her life had meaning and stability. And there are stories such as these all over the country. Tragedy is common where children have no safe place to play, are living in homes with black mould and damp, where boredom and hopelessness prevail.

It's understandable that some of us think that the answer is to get them out of there. But we cannot underestimate the pull of belonging and of

community. Many people don't want to get *out* of their community. They want improvements *to* the community. And education will not appeal if it is seen to take them away. We need to consider how we make education meaningful for those who want to remain in their communities, warts and all. And to do that we need to consider what opportunities for work there are or could be in that local area. If we start from a point of improving what we have, we can find hope.

So back to brass tacks. What can be done to build stronger communities and bring hope to people who have known little? If the answer lies in work and in having a sense of purpose, we need to ask what kind of education creates the kinds of jobs that will build stronger communities. Some children – from all classes – would benefit from vocational and practical education. The belief that academic education is for the middle classes and vocational education and apprenticeships for the poor is being turned on its head as middle class students, clued up on the advantages of Higher Level Apprenticeships, are beating a path to their door, while poorer students, pushed towards universities, are leaving saddled with debt. We need better vocational opportunities for all.

We also need to understand – and then act on – how poverty impacts on well-being, memory and achievement at a biological level and how this affects a child's life chances.

Another story – modern day. A primary school near a gas works. There is an emergency procedure for when a leak is suspected, and on this day the procedure kicks in. The children are moved a safe distance away and all the parents are called. The vast majority come and collect their children within an hour. Others call to say they're on their way or that they've arranged for a family member to collect them. But a small number of children are left. The head instructs the staff to walk them home.

My friend takes a small group of children. All the parents are at home but most are not happy to see their children there so early. Two children are left. One arrives at his house. The doors are boarded up. He tells the teacher that this is because the police kicked them in. There is a ladder leading to a first floor window. Quick as a flash he climbs up it and through the window. This is how he gets in and out of his house. The final child doesn't want to go home. He drags his heels. When they get there, the door is open and loud noise from the TV is booming out into the street. The teacher puts her head around the door and calls out. No answer. She ventures in. There is no furniture in the room, except for a chair and a television. There is no carpet. There are beer cans all over the floor. In the chair a man is asleep. And in a cardboard box, on the floor next to him, a baby in a stinking, sodden nappy is crying. She understands why this child finds it hard to concentrate in school.

Her school has an unusually high number of FSM children, and the fact is that the majority of them are cared for, collected from school each day and safe. But for those climbing through windows or growing up with nappy rash

in a cardboard box, an academic education is not going to be enough. These are the children that some schools avoid. These are the children most likely to fail, the ones for whom even getting to the school gate is a feat of resilience. These are the ‘hard to reach’.

We know from many studies that children living in poverty tend to underperform in comparison to their more affluent peers. They are sorted in terms of gender. They are sorted in terms of race. Yet they are never sorted in terms of circumstance, never in terms of quality of care. These are the nuances that matter. It has been tempting for politicians to assume that the reason for this ‘underachievement’ lies with low expectations from teachers. Yet this ignores the very important part that other factors – hormones, for example – play in learning and the impact that stress can have on those hormones.¹⁰

Cortisol is known as the ‘stress’ hormone and in short, sharp bursts it can focus concentration. Over time, however, children living under constant stress are significantly impacted. Cortisol affects the immune system, meaning that children living in stressful environments are more likely to suffer illness and miss school. It also affects memory, making learning so much harder.¹¹ And in boys who don’t have oxytocin to offset the effects of cortisol on emotions it makes for lower levels of empathy and increased social withdrawal.¹² This, in combination with the presence of testosterone, makes it more likely that boys under stress will react with aggression and show less empathy towards those they disagree with. A recipe for school punishments and exclusions. Indeed, if we look at the figures, boys are far more likely than girls to be excluded.¹³

Whatever answers are found, they need to be multifaceted. We need to find ways of lifting children’s heads so they can see beyond the here and now, but do so without ripping them up by their roots. We need services that marry education with improving mental health, physical health and social care. We need a housing policy that seeks to ensure that all children grow up in a safe, warm space with room outside to play. We need to build, not destroy, communities, to restore pride, to give hope. Anything else is an abdication of responsibility and all our efforts mere sticking plasters.

There is a moment in the Paddy Considine film *Tyrannosaur* – which paints a grim yet realistic picture of life on an estate – where the community comes together at a funeral.¹⁴ There is care and support, understanding and belonging. This is what we need to tap into. This is what children need to find. We can create communities in our schools – it is the foundation stone that schools should seek to build first. The rest can follow. But the rest needs to consist of more than yet another tweaking of the curriculum.

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Chapter 29

Respect

When the wider world is alien, when it is full of – and run by – people not like you and yours, doing things that could just as well be magic, then it can often feel safer to stay put, to hunker down, to stick to what you know. This, in many ways, is the antithesis of education, but it is the situation in which many young people from working class backgrounds find themselves.

When seen through the lens of symbolic violence, it is entirely understandable, although not desirable, for some children to prefer not to come to school but to remain at home or in the streets around their home. But, as researchers from Belfast University found, sticking to your own surroundings creates yet another vicious circle, where the inability to leave is compounded by not securing the educational or social capital that would allow you to leave. What's more, they found this to be an exclusively working class phenomenon. The middle class children in their research did not experience such 'violence' or unconscious restraints and restrictions as they moved across the city to attend grammar school or across borders to attend the 'right' universities. For the working class boys in the research whose 'objective structures' were ones of 'disadvantage and exclusion': 'Their habitus is, thus, all too often dominated by a strong sense of locality and a sense that there is very little for them beyond that. Education has little meaning and school is reduced to a ritual of attendance.'¹ What the children aspire to is therefore 'restricted to what they know', and the circle is complete.

The term 'habitus' in the above quotation is drawn from the work of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu who has written extensively on issues to do with identity, class and society and who we met in Chapter 4. For Bourdieu, habitus relates to the dispositions that a person from a particular group exhibits, including features such as accent, dress and even comportment, as well as shared beliefs, appreciations and actions.

So, what's to be done to ensure that all children and young people, regardless of ethnicity or gender or social class or any other sense of

'[Habitus is] society
written into the body,
into the biological
individual.'

Bourdieu,
*In Other Words*²

being a minority, feel that they have a place in a school, in a classroom, in your life and that they have as much of a chance of succeeding as everyone else?

For one thing, what is remarkable is the immediate and long lasting effects of relatively simple ‘social belonging’ interventions. For example, one approach saw the gap between the academic achievement of African-American and white students reduced by 52% following a single hour-long intervention,³ and women whose stereotypical views about female performance in maths were challenged improved their tests scores by 33%.⁴ The interventions may take the form of messages, videos or talks from others belonging to the same minority group about how they too struggled but still succeeded; they might be spending fifteen minutes reflecting on the core values you and your group value; they might be being introduced to growth, not fixed, mindsets and an understanding that mastery, not results, is what matters; even being asked to identify your favourite food serves to move the focus away from the stereotype and on to the individual, with beneficial effects.

While the factors at play here are subtle, the overall message coming through with regard to these interventions contains a three-fold approach:

1. We value and respect the ways in which the group to which you belong are different.
2. You are an individual.
3. Nothing is fixed.

Take, for example, the research we have visited on several occasions from the Netherlands on what is referred to as ‘social identity threat’ and its consequent ‘protection’.⁵ Various studies have shown how the perception of being under attack – symbolic violence – can have deleterious consequences not only on achievement and performance but also on health and well-being, with inhibiting responses such as increased cortisol levels and raised blood pressure coming into play. Being in a situation where a ‘high status’ group is expected to do well further threatens the ‘lower status’ group’s self-perceived value and, as we often see, this creates a vicious cycle where the members identify even more strongly with their group, and thus focus less on their potential as an individual in their own right, further compounding poor performance in the particular situation.

The interplay between groups and the social and academic setting they find themselves in (Bourdieu’s ‘fields’) has a profound effect too. The US researchers looking at stereotype threat and the maths performance of women found that females performed worse the higher the number of males there were in the exam hall, but it doesn’t have to

‘Every People has its own culture, and no people has less than the others. Our culture is a gift that we bring to you. A vital breath of air to relieve the dryness of your books written by men who have done nothing but read books.’

School of Barbiana,
Letter to a Teacher

be this way. The Dutch research found that members of ‘stigmatised groups’ (the women and ethnic minorities in their studies) performed better, regardless of the make-up of the wider group, when their differences were acknowledged by the majority or dominant group and this group was able to ‘communicate respect and value for these social identities’.⁶

Furthermore, highlighting difference – *and then respecting and valuing it* – has been shown to be more effective than simply pretending it doesn’t exist. Research has shown that organisations which promote what is called a ‘colour-blind’ approach and show no evidence of diversity are the ones that ethnic minority groups trust least.⁷

What, then, do the staff photos on your school walls, on your website and in your prospectus tell potential students and their parents about your school? Remember, cultural violence is as subtle as it is pernicious. What about the messages you give all students about the importance of academic achievement? Are they hitting home with exactly the opposite effect you want them to have? The more you remind young people of the importance of academic studies and the more certain students see themselves as incapable of academic success, the more you are inadvertently reducing their motivation and the chances of them ultimately succeeding. The answer, though, is not to stop highlighting the importance of academic success – and falling foul of Gove’s ‘soft bigotry of low expectations’ – but *also* to focus on their strengths as you do so. As Derks et al. discovered, by stressing the importance of the task in hand but *also* focusing on the strengths of a particular group (for working class students it may be, for example, sense of family, work ethic, sense of heritage, national pride or the ability to overcome the odds), the ‘threats to social identity were reduced’. In the words of the researchers:

“ ... women and ethnic minorities are most likely to retain their motivation and achieve high performance in work and educational environments when others in these settings acknowledge rather than deny the existence of gender and ethnic identities and communicate respect and value for these social identities.”⁹

When it comes to identifying the aspects of working class habitus that can be valued and respected, some teachers may argue that, at times, they are not overtly apparent, at least at a surface level (although the same could be said of bankers and telephone cold-callers). Yet, look again at Jaz’s story (Chapter 26) and identify the sheer strength of character and creativity with which she undertook her school life. Or, take a look at our next contribution from educator Julia Hancock. With

‘... have we created a truly colour-blind society in which every single child in this country, no matter what their background, no matter what their ethnicity, is given an equal opportunity to succeed?’

Michael Gove⁸

honesty and the clarity that hindsight can afford, she has enumerated the many benefits she derived, as a child, from a friendless working class boy called Dean.

Ten Things I Learned from Dean

JULIA HANCOCK

It all starts with a boy called Dean. Or maybe it doesn't. I thought it did but, as I sit here wondering where my inner drive to make sure every child, irrespective of background, gets a chance to thrive and enjoy learning and that the adults who work with them are inspired to show them a world of possibilities, I am starting to think that it probably started way before Dean. Maybe it started in my own family's working class roots and their desire to survive, to give themselves the best possible chance to succeed. Maybe.

We moved house when I was four, much to my disgust. I threatened to stay and packed some essentials so that when the family moved I could survive there without them. It was only when I realised that another family would end up moving in with me that I weighed up the options and decided to head south with my parents and brother. This move brought a new school, the chance to make new friends and, of course, new experiences.

The school I found myself in was a small church school, with a clear social divide. The catchment comprised a council estate on one side, with some of the 'roughest' families in town, and on the other, an array of nice rural 'town dwellings'. This was where we now lived, with the largest garden I had ever seen.

It was here that I got my first taste of social inequality and prejudice.

I wasn't too keen on people not playing with each other because of where they lived, so I not only made friends within our immediate neighbourhood but, one fabulous day, and as my mum has recounted many times, I came skipping out of school holding Dean's hand. Dean lived in a council house, had a permanently shaved head on account of the nits, and regularly spat and hit people. But he liked me and I truly wanted to help him. I couldn't bear the fact he was ostracised because he didn't have the same clothes or the latest possessions. Some said I could 'tame' him. Some said I was just bossy. It didn't really matter. Then, as now, I had a fascination for what makes people tick, particularly the most challenged and vulnerable, and I wanted to help and empower them to succeed. Certainly Dean changed. Someone believed in him. He didn't spit as often. He learned to read. He began to smile. Did he change me? I believe he did, and irrevocably, in the short time I knew him.

But what did I learn from my friendship with Dean that has impacted on my professional life as an educator?

1. We are all the same in terms of how we feel. I learned this first hand. What we feel and how we respond may be because of our experiences, external influences or factors really outside of our control. We are acting how we do for a reason that is linked to those emotions. As educators it is important to take time to consider this before we judge or act.
2. We all have the potential to change, if only there is enough of a sense of belief – belief in ourselves, belief in others – and if someone creates the conditions for that change. Just as I gave Dean the chance to see what life could be like when someone believed in him, what can we do to ensure we inspire these feelings in our children and their families?
3. The value of not making assumptions based on appearance. Getting to know a child and their context is important before we can address their needs, and we should be looking at this from their perspective, not using our own cultural assumptions. Also, we need to be aware of how even our language and dress sense may affect their relationships with us. For example, can all our families comprehend the language used in school letters and newsletters? How do we know? Is meeting the head teacher in a suit in an office a comfortable experience for all parents? What can we do to affect and sustain positive relationships?
4. The constant consideration of how others can help to create the possibility of change, nurture aspirations when a child may be faced with very challenging circumstances or live in a family that has lost hope against a backdrop of poverty or violence. Does a child have any idea what they could aspire to, or is their idea of a ‘successful’ career simply linked to media coverage of fame, for example? What does our curriculum, the enrichment around it and the school culture, offer to widen this perspective? Dean only knew the work his family did. Our friendship offered him a chance to see the alternatives.
5. Nurturing and creating positive emotions in a child must not be sacrificed for academic objectives as this will not support any long-term gains. It’s about being brave enough to recognise the importance of making sure a child knows someone believes in their abilities, is secure in themselves and equipped for life. That the adults around them have a dogged persistence to support their very next steps in the classroom rather than simply a test to teach to. And that those adults share a belief that the child can and will succeed, even if it’s not at the pace some external agents may require. Dean struggled with decoding, but when I read him stories he loved the rich language and the sound of words, and we made up our own stories. His comprehension and engagement with composition was highly sophisticated, and he loved to dream about magical worlds.

6. Education is about celebrating every success, no matter how small, as well as creating safe boundaries with high expectations. It's about being fair and consistent in our use of any sanctions that may be needed. Dean eventually learned to read because he and I recognised his achievements along the way, not by being punished or shamed into it.
7. This education business is bigger than results on a page. It's about not sacrificing a child's well-being for the data or the school league table, but truly nurturing it, empowering independence and really understanding their context to determine the best way forward. Dean was disaffected with learning but this changed when people started to take an interest in his well-being.
8. As a school leader, it's about understanding the specific context of my own community and planning accordingly to support the creation of a culture that inspires. We hold tight to traditions that may offer security, but we change and adapt to suit an ever-changing world.
9. We need to be able to hold steadfastly to our vision even when things get tough or turbulent, offering opportunities for even our most vulnerable families to look with fresh eyes at the world through rich cultural experiences. Indeed, it is these families who need these opportunities the most, particularly if they are preoccupied with the challenges of survival or swimming madly to keep afloat in the midst of chaotic or, for some, violent lives.
10. For many, school is the safe haven where there are reliable constants and trusted frameworks. Nurturing relationships and offering reassurance, particularly when things change or when times are difficult, is paramount. We are the role models and lifelines that can make even the smallest difference and we can let children and their families believe there are people in the world who they can trust and who believe in them – just as I offered the hand of friendship to Dean. We have the capacity to change lives in the small courses we chart every day.

These are the big lessons. They are not the policies and processes we receive updates about on an almost daily basis or a tick-list of what to prepare for our next inspection. They are lessons about the bigger picture of who we are and what we want to be, what we want our schools to be and what we want for all the people in those schools.

My friendship with Dean was a brief period in both of our lives as we eventually moved on to different junior schools, but I know we changed each other. He found a love of stories and made more friends, learning the value of letting people see his vulnerable and happy sides and the infectious giggle that I hope served him well into adulthood. And I know the lessons I learned from Dean that inform my life even now.

What about you? Do you consider the small moments and actions that changed your own life, that informed and affected your own assumptions and perspectives? How are you finding out what your children's real perspectives are? Or are you making assumptions? How are you giving everyone a fair chance? Do your children know you believe in their ability to succeed? Do *all* of them know? Do your Deans know they are valued and that you believe in them?

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NEVER MIND THE INSPECTORS

Here's punk learning

Tait Coles

ISBN: 978-178135112-3

So what is punk learning?

It's a philosophy that recognises the importance of students having complete control of their learning.

In *Never Mind the Inspectors* Tait Coles justifies the need for punk learning. His manifesto challenges the orthodoxy and complacency of teaching and allows students to be central to a critical educational culture in which they learn how to become individuals and social agents rather than merely disengaged spectators who have their 'part to play' in the neoliberal ideology of modern schooling.

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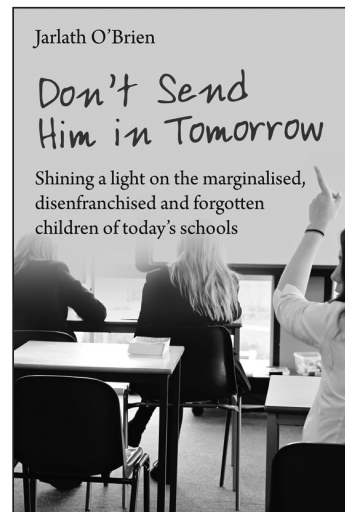
DON'T SEND HIM IN TOMORROW

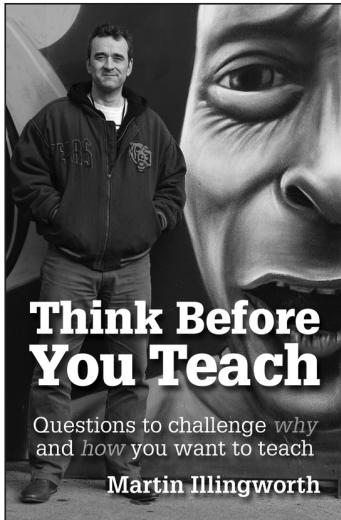
Shining a light on the marginalised, disenfranchised and forgotten children of today's schools

Jarlath O'Brien

ISBN: 978-178135253-3

Jarlath O'Brien has been a teacher for fifteen years and has spent ten of those years working in special schools. He has become increasingly frustrated at the lack of interest in this sector and the varying quality of provision for children with learning difficulties and SEN in mainstream schools. This book describes how the system and this provision can be improved if and when these marginalised children are given higher priority by the powers that be.





THINK BEFORE YOU TEACH

Questions to challenge why and how you want to teach

Martin Illingworth

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By raising questions about pedagogy, good practice, values and responsibilities – to name but a few – Martin encourages all teachers to become reflective practitioners and rediscover their passion.

THINKING ALLOWED

On schooling

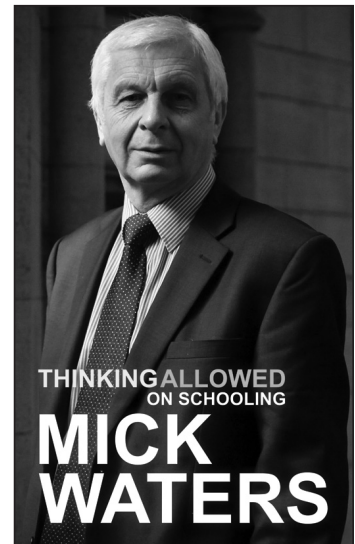
Mick Waters

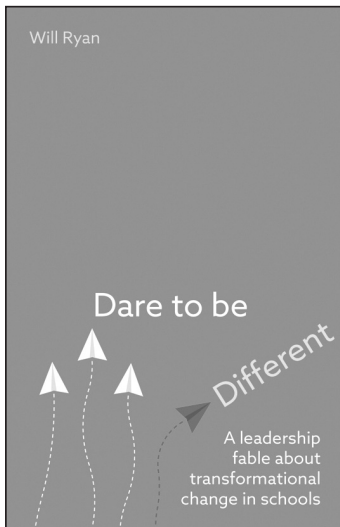
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One of the UK's most influential education figures poses some of the most important questions of our time:

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DARE TO BE DIFFERENT

A leadership fable about transformational change in schools

Will Ryan

ISBN: 978-178583276-5

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RULES FOR MAVERICKS

A manifesto for dissident creatives

Phil Beadle

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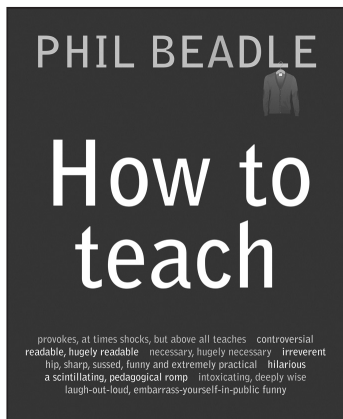
'If you make any stand against power, then power will stand against and on you. And it will do so with centuries of experience and techniques in how to do so effectively: you will be painted as barbaric, dismissed as stupid and insane, be told to know your place. Most of all, you will be termed maverick.'

Rules for Mavericks is a guidebook to leading a creative life, to being a renaissance dilettante, to infesting your art form with other art forms, to taking a stand against mediocrity, to rejecting bloodless orthodoxies, to embracing your own pretension and, most of all, to dealing with your failure(s).

**RULES FOR
MAVERICKS**

**A MANIFESTO
FOR DISSIDENT
CREATIVES**

PHIL BEADLE



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Phil Beadle

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How to Teach covers everything you need to know in order to be the best teacher you can possibly be.

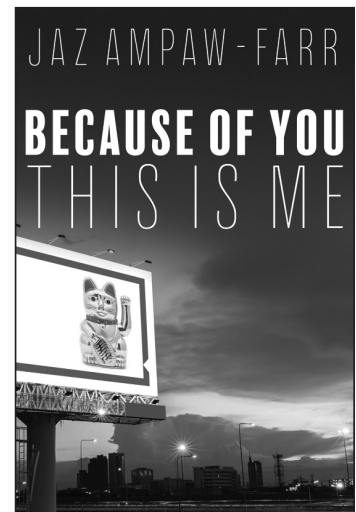
BECAUSE OF YOU, THIS IS ME

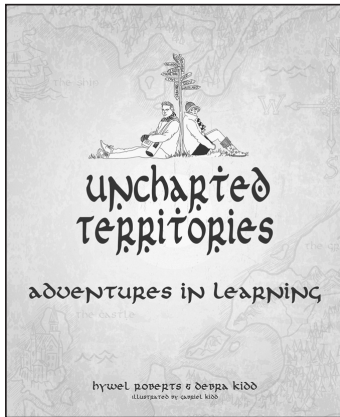
Jaz Ampaw-Farr

ISBN: 978-178135298-4

Growing up in poverty, and neglected and abused by her own parents, Jaz Ampaw-Farr was destined to become a statistic. Her story was changed, however, by a handful of teachers who made the point of putting human connection first – despite the challenges of the education system.

Because of these people, Jaz went on to become a teacher, writer and international speaker who, through celebration and provocation, engages and galvanises educators into embracing the difference that they can make when they too put being a human first. In *Because Of You, This is Me*, Jaz shares her story – often harrowing but always uplifting – to show the ways in which the everyday heroes in our schools can empower those children who need their help the most.





UNCHARTED TERRITORIES

Adventures in learning

Hywel Roberts and Debra Kidd

ISBN: 978-178135295-3

Rooted in practice and grounded in research, *Uncharted Territories* invites a reassessment of what curriculum coverage can look like and provides an abundance of hooks into exploratory learning that place learners – of whatever age – knee-deep in *dilemma*, so that they are thinking deeply, analytically and imaginatively.

These are not knowledge organisers or schemes of work; rather they are inspirational forays into imagined contexts for learning which, as fantastical as they may appear, always have the real world as their destination. With their story starters and inductive questions, not to mention the illustrations which are sure to fire children's imaginations, Hywel and Debra's innovative routes to learning will help you stray from the beaten track of the curriculum and instil in learners a sense of purpose as they discover, manipulate and apply knowledge and skills across a range of collaborative, cross-curricular problem-solving contexts.

GUERRILLA TEACHING

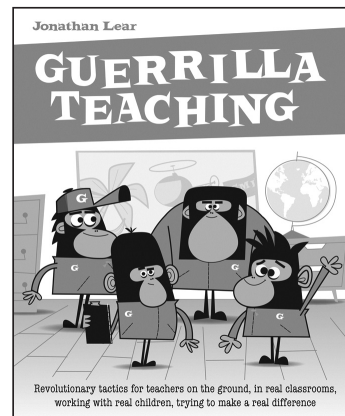
Revolutionary tactics for teachers on the ground, in real classrooms, working with real children, trying to make a real difference

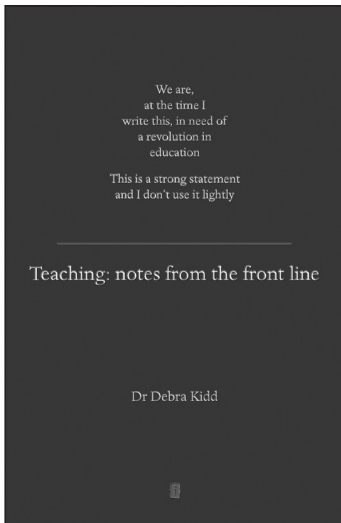
Jonathan Lear

ISBN: 978-178135232-8

Guerrilla teaching:

- To put children, and their learning, at the heart of lessons
- To embrace problem-solving and risk-taking in the classroom
- To be adaptable and creative
- To think about the skills and knowledge children will need in the future
- To stand up and make sure children get the education they deserve (even if it means subverting the system!)





TEACHING: NOTES FROM THE FRONT LINE

We are, at the time I write this, in need of a revolution in education. This is a strong statement and I don't use it lightly

Dr Debra Kidd

ISBN: 978-178135131-4

This is a book about redirecting, rechannelling and reaffirming; about taking positive action.

It challenges the overpowering but deadening desire for certainty that has formed the illusion that data is truth.

And because this book is about being a teacher and taking control, it is about activism both in and out of the classroom.

It is activism informed by knowledge and practice, fuelled by

networking, reading and collaborating. It is the activism of experience gained inside the classroom in the day-to-day interactions with children.

It is pedagogical activism.

LEADERSHIP WITH A MORAL PURPOSE

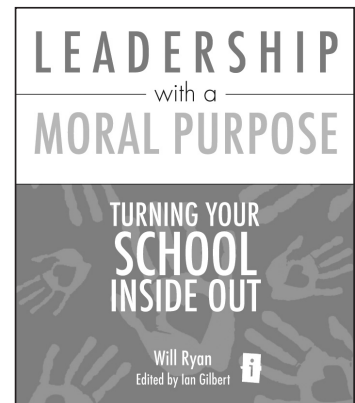
Turning your school inside out

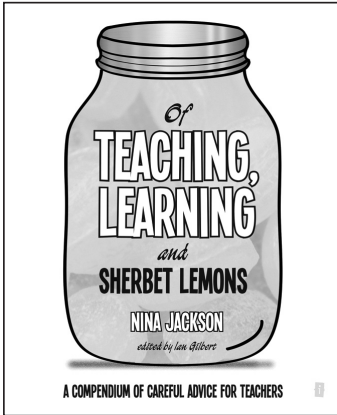
Will Ryan

ISBN: 978-184590084-7

Leadership With a Moral Purpose gives all primary heads – aspiring, newly appointed or those who think ‘There must be something more than this!’ – the ideas, techniques, tools and direction to turn their schools inside out and inspire them to lead with the heart and with the soul.

Too many schools these days are ‘outside in’ schools, running to keep up with someone else’s agenda or priorities. In this timely book, Will Ryan gives heads the confidence to do those things they know are right because they are right for the children, right for the staff and right for the community.





OF TEACHING, LEARNING AND SHERBET LEMONS

A compendium of careful advice for teachers

Nina Jackson

ISBN: 978-178135134-5

Education is like a sherbet lemon: we need the structures and systems – the hard exterior – but we can easily lose sight of the magic that is at the heart of this; the teaching and learning – the fizz in the centre.

Nina Jackson's mission in *Of Teaching, Learning and Sherbet Lemons* is to put the fizz back into classrooms by solving some of the toughest dilemmas facing teachers.

Nina doesn't have a magic wand but what she does have is years of experience, honesty and a commitment to help everyone be the best they can be. After all, second best just won't do!

WHEN THE ADULTS CHANGE, EVERYTHING CHANGES

Seismic shifts in school behaviour

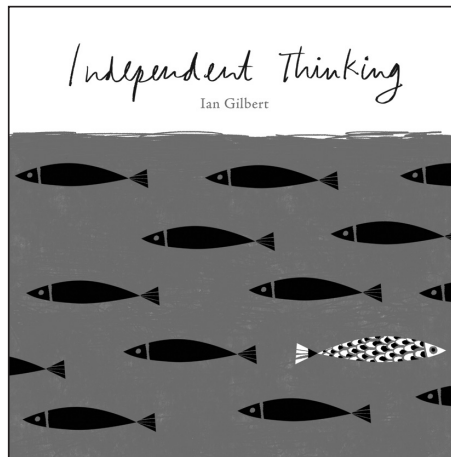
Paul Dix

ISBN: 978-178135273-1

In *When the Adults Change, Everything Changes*, Paul Dix upends the debate on behaviour management in schools and offers effective strategies that serve to end the search for change in children and turn the focus back on the adults.

Packed with anecdotal case studies, scripted interventions and tried-and-tested approaches, this book is suitable for teachers and school leaders – in any setting – who are looking to upgrade their classroom or school behaviour plan.





INDEPENDENT THINKING

Ian Gilbert

ISBN: 978-178135055-3

Do things no one does or do things everyone does in a way no one does.

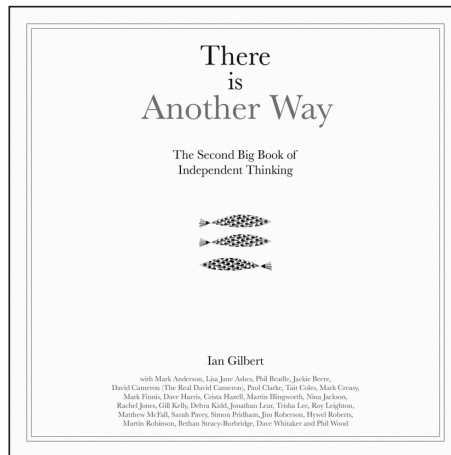
See the same world you've always seen and that everyone else sees, but think new thoughts.

Get children to think in order to make the world better further down the line.

Fight back.

Think for yourself, before it's too late and before someone else does it for you.

Written by Independent Thinking founder and award-winning author Ian Gilbert, this book is an invaluable collection of reflections, ideas and insights on the nature of learning, thinking, creativity and, drawing on Ian's experience across three continents, the role education has in changing not only people's lives but also entire societies. Controversial, humorous and challenging, this book is both moving and personal yet carries an important global call to action from a man with a distinctive voice and a unique perspective who has earned the right to speak his mind.



THERE IS ANOTHER WAY

The second big book of independent thinking

Ian Gilbert

ISBN: 978-178135309-7

We are living at a time when loud voices from inside and outside the profession are telling teachers and school leaders 'this' is the way education should be done. This is how you should lead a school. This is how you should manage a class. This is how children should learn. This is what you should do to make children behave. These messages are given as if there is only one way to achieve these things – their way.

However, with decades of experience working in all types of school around the globe, the many Associates of Independent Thinking know there is always another way.

This book is for educators everywhere who are hearing these loud voices yet who know that children deserve something better. Full of inspiration and ideas for how to achieve just that, *There is Another Way* is a call to action to swim against the tide and reclaim the heart of education.

A terrific and feisty read, an indispensable inoculation against the educational gloom that can too easily infect us.

**Geoff Barton, General Secretary,
UK Association of School and College Leaders**

A joy to read, a real treasure trove of thinking and practice; there is a jewel for everyone.

Mick Waters, Professor of Education, Wolverhampton University

TIM TAYLOR DR STEVEN WATSON RHYTHMICAL MIKE *Dr Ceri Brown*
 Dr Brian Male Julia Hancock PAUL DIX Chris Kilkenny NINA JACKSON
 Paul Bateson SARAH PAVEY Dr Matthew McFall JAMIE THRASIVOULOU
 Hywel Roberts Dr Kevin Ming Will Ryan Leah Stewart (REAL) DAVID CAMERON
 Sir Al Aynsley-Green Shona Crichton Floyd Woodrow Dr Debra Kidd
 JONATHAN LEAR *Daryn Egan-Simon*

“ *The Working Class* is essential reading for all those concerned with inequalities in education.

Diane Reay, Visiting Professor, the London School of Economics and Political Science

This brimming, unfettered multiplicity of forms is an antidote to the bleak, sterile, smooth diktats of neoliberal rhetoric.

Gabrielle Ivinson, Professor of Education and Community, Education and Social Research Institute, Manchester Metropolitan University

The Working Class will enable readers to begin to understand why change is needed.

Professor Sonia Blandford, founder and CEO, Achievement for All and author of *Born to Fail? A Working Class View*

I find myself energised, inspired and fired up reading this book. It challenges the political narrative of the ‘undeserving poor’ and acts as a call to action for educators everywhere.

Sue Cowley, teacher, presenter and author of *The Artful Educator*

Love them or hate them, Michael Gove’s so-called ‘enemies of promise’ are fighting back – and they’re angry.

Loic Menzies, Director, LKMco CIC

Many of these writers are fighting from the front line, and they are fighting with a mighty heart. Because that’s what this battle needs.

Ben Walden, Founding Director, Contender Charlie ”

Andrew Morrish Sameena Choudry *Phil Beadle*
professor terry wingley JAZ AMPAW-FARR Darren Chetty
 Tait Coles BRIAN WALTON DAVE WHITAKER Gill Kelly Roy Leighton
 Jane Hewitt Jarlath O’Brien Crista Hazell Louise Riley Mark Creasy Ian Loynd
Martin Illingworth David Rogers PROFESSOR MICK WATERS
 Professor Paul Clarke

All royalties from this book will be used to support the education of children living in poverty in the UK.

 www.independentthinkingpress.com

ISBN 978-178135278-6



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Education Teaching skills