

The first of my many reasons for despising Michael Gove.

Blair had a habit of firing multiple, often contradictory, initiatives at educators, but one brilliant one lasted for ten years until it was destroyed by Gove.

It was called Postgraduate Professional Development, PPD. Under the scheme schoolteachers in England were allowed to register for masters and doctorate degrees. It was funded by universities transferring money that had already been allocated to them. And it emerged after a two year long inspection of university postgraduate provision carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors, HMI. Unlike Ofsted these were serious inspectors who were very challenging.

My boss was very happy with my own design of a PhD project but asked me to stop it because I had to manage the inspection and he said that if we fail we shall all lose our jobs!

Not only did we not fail but all the universities involved did so well that the national report on our work read like a love letter. PPD was the consequence.

Representing the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers, UCET, I was involved with the designing of PPD. And when it came to discussing how it was to be inspected the decision was taken to base the proforma on a paper I had written on the evaluation of the impact of professional learning, what in those days we called Continuing Professional Development, CPD.

Every year universities were required to submit their self-evaluations of the impact of their work. In fact, this would have been my PhD but on a much larger scale. I have a lot of those reports and have donated copies to the International Professional Development Agency, IPDA.

Each year for ten years a minimum of twenty five thousand and a maximum of thirty five thousand teachers registered for those degrees. Yes, people dropped out, but you can guess that many millions of words were written in the form of essays, dissertations and theses.

They were writing about their interests, concerns, anxieties and responses to government educational policies, of which there were a lot.

Who read what they wrote?

The people who, to use an old fashioned word, marked them and the writers of the annual impact evaluation reports.

I am sure that not one of those words was read by any policy-maker. Neither, I am sure, did they read the annual impact evaluations.

A huge professional treasure trove was lying there untapped by politicians who always believed that they knew better.

Among the first actions of Gove when in 2010 he became Secretary of State for Education was not only to abolish the entire scheme but to keep the money that had funded it.

In his book Cameron refers to Gove as an intellectual.

That would not be my word.

Cliff Jones, 16th. March 2024

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