

Reform, revolution and the RevEDlution

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How education has changed in the last year! With the advent of COVID 19 the education world was, and in most cases still is, in chaos. All of the known models were thrown out and education had to reinvent the wheel, to change the delivery paradigm. This meant relearning for some, an epiphany for others and hallelujahs all round for the early adopters of digital ed-tech.

Whilst the educational world struggled to adopt this new paradigm, it became apparent that there was more to it than just a mere digital shift. There were other questions to be asked and other issues that this new world of digital brought to the forefront of experience.

The digital divide was illuminated in the stark light of day:

- Digital poverty - hardware and software, skill sets and access to internet
- Infrastructure -Do we have truly digital campuses?

The new digital vocabulary was about bandwidth, access and pedagogy.

But to list just digital issues we are missing the enormous opportunity to reset the education system as a whole entity. Originally education was 'done to' the poor, now the wealthy of society command Education as privilege. This can still be seen in last year's algorithm failure, the movement of wealthy households to be closer to the 'best' schools' catchment areas and the private school built government. But it shouldn't have to be this way, now or in the future.

And so, revEDlution began. As a conversation, for both of us. After spending the past year in and out of lockdowns, work closures and working through screens. Could we really just walk back into our classrooms and not say a word, realising the need and opportunity for change? Could we really slump back into our old ways with no consideration for what is going on?

Professionally, there is an identification of the issues, but is anything really being done? We have had reforms, and the dreaded Gove word embedded into the system for the foreseeable. This is where our main goal comes into play:

Reform or Revolution?

Reform is where we make change, to improve a system already in place. Revolution provides us with

the ability to throw out the current system and revolutionise it with something completely new. The goal is for the latter to come into play. It's proven that reforms don't work.

For example, the English Baccalaureate is a new government initiative in which they aim to have 90 per cent of 14-16 year olds taking part in by 2025 (gov.UK, 2019). The EBACC essentially takes away any freedom a student had in selecting their GCSEs. Within this, you are forced to take a set of subjects: English Literature & Language, Mathematics, The Sciences, Geography or History, and one Language. These are essentially now the 'core' subjects students must take forward (Gov.UK, 2019), and they will only be able select an additional one or two subjects from a huge range.

'The government's English Baccalaureate is stifling pupils by forcing them to take subjects they do not enjoy, in some cases creating problems for motivation and behaviour'. This also extends influence into schools offering fewer creative subjects such as music, drama or design, and ultimately giving students less options. (The Guardian, 2016) There is even a belief that the English Baccalaureate is becoming a new Philistinism, explored by Jeff Adams: 'The English government's astonishing and depressing omission of arts education from the core subjects of its proposed new secondary school examination, to replace the GCSE, is probably the clearest indicator yet of the new philistinism that has overtaken the English education system'. (2013) This reform alone is limiting our younger generations, and this is just the beginning, which is why we are fighting for revolution. Not evolution, not reform. Revolution. From the bottom up.

Education is about the survival of our humanity and the human race, Mandela's famous quote, 'Education is the most powerful weapon to change the world'. Let's make this manifest. If humanity does not survive this descent into a dystopian future, it will be this generation's fault for not taking the greatest opportunity for more than a century to change the system, not just for us now but for the children, and their children, ad infinitum.

Now is the time to strike whilst the iron is hot, now is the time for governments to listen, now is the time for change. Change society for the better now so that our progeny doesn't pay for our ignorance and ineptitude in the future.