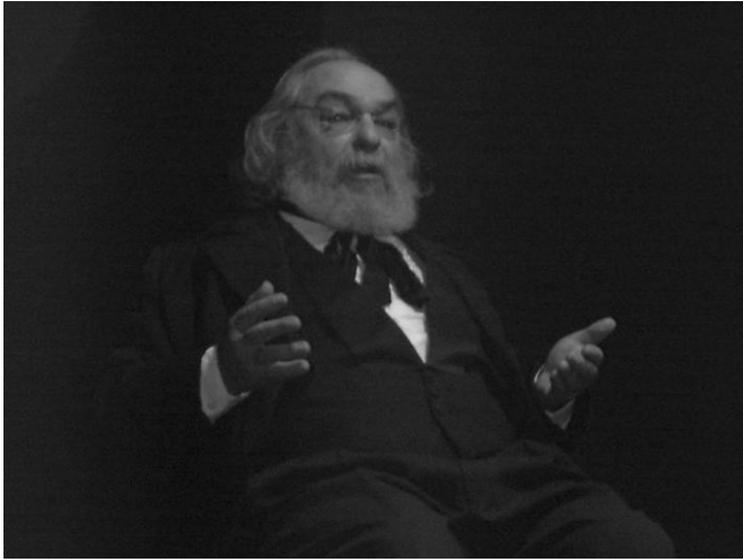




Just Books re-opens!



Jerry Levy as Karl Marx at the Conway Mill performance of Marx in Soho. This play, by the late Howard Zinn, was put on by the Just Books Collective in the Conway Mill, Belfast and the Void, Derry over the 5 - 8th of January 2006. It was a very successful event, a great performance by Jerry who helped raise funds for the Just Books project. The event also helped raise money for the International Brigades Commemoration Committee.

The Just Books Collective are really very chuffed to announce the re-opening of Just Books from the 1st April.

The Leveller wish the Just Books Collective well for their opening event which includes the launch of *Ghost Dancers* the new book on the Great Miner's Strike of 83-85 and the last generation of miners by strike participant, former NUM member and anarchist Dave Douglass.

The collective been working for some time to open up as a bookshop and labour resource centre and now, thanks to working in conjunction with the Warzone Collective, we have moved into new premises in Clarence Street in Belfast city centre. We aim to be open Monday to Saturday from 12.00pm to 5.30pm.

For those who don't know very much about Just Books it was originally opened by the Belfast Anarchist Collective in June 1978. It was much more than a bookshop however, the premises included a cafe and print workshop and provided a focal point for the collectives many activities until it closed shop sixteen years later in June 1994.

Set up without any form of state subsidy or grant, money was raised through running benefits and from interest free loans and donations from supporters. The bookshop, which became a feminist collective from the mid-eighties until it became a mixed gender collective again in the early nineties, was always run on a self managed basis with collective decision making at its core. Located in Winetavern Street in the Smithfield area:

*"The location of the bookshop in the old Smithfield Market area of Belfast, at the bottom of the Shankill Road and the Falls Road, was important to the anarchists who set up Just Books in that they wished the building to be accessible to people from all communities"*¹.

Just Books at various stages of its development included a library, the Print Workshop, a meeting and exhibition space, the Hideout Café, Belfast Independent Video, Belfast Unemployed Group and Women's News office.

A victim of the general decline of the Smithfield area following the 1986 development of Castlecourt, a more general squeeze on radical and independent booksellers brought about by recession, increased book prices and growing competition from bigger outlets Just Books closed its doors in June 1994 proclaiming that *"16 years of providing an invaluable service to the community and being a focus for social change and revolutionary ideas is something to celebrate."*²

The Just Books collective disappeared for a while after that but we hadn't really gone away you know. In recent years we have provided bookstalls at the Belfast May Day celebrations at St. George's Market, at numerous Grassroots Gatherings, and at various bookfairs in Ireland and England.

For a time we were based in an office in Lombard Street we have expanded our range of titles and currently carry stock dealing with Irish history, labour history, sex and sexuality, global development and exploitation, progressive politics, current affairs and environmental issues. We have also built up a small multi-lingual library designed to be of use to labour and community activists that includes a broad selection of historical, progressive political, feminist and environmental publications.

We are asking people who can to support Just Books by setting up a regular £10 a month standing order that will be used to cover running costs (pesky things like rent, bills, kitting the space out etc). If you wish to support Just Books please set up a monthly standing order payable to:

Account name: Just Books Collective
Ulster Bank University Road Branch
Sort Code: 98-01-55
Account number: 24049070

Let us know when you have set the SO up and whether you would like to be added to the Just Books mailing list.

Once on the list we will send you information about events and anything else that is going on in the space.

There are other ways to help out, we are also building up a multi-lingual library - contact:

justbooks@rocketmail.com

if you have any books you think we may be interested in adding to the library.

Or simply call by, browse and maybe pick up an interesting book, pamphlet, t-shirt, or grab a coffee. Who knows, this could be start of another revolutionary 16 (plus) years for us all...

References

1) Elaine, Just Books 10th Birthday. Women's News, 1988.

2) Just Books Spokesperson, Market to close if shoppers don't return. Bookshop goes under as Smithfield crisis deepens. *Anderstonstown News*, 04/06/94.

Assessment as control: a teacher's experience of the pecking order in schools

Assessment is a normal and sometimes valuable part of education. There's nothing wrong with checking whether some sort of training or education has achieved its goal of helping someone learn new knowledge or a skill. This is a necessary and vital part of many aspects of education. This article however, centres on the reactionary uses of assessment in schools. It effectively has a dual-purpose - a) establish a pecking order from the early years onwards, and for pupils to 'know their place' throughout their educational life, and b) to monitor worker performance. The examples refer specifically to experiences in England are of relevance to education workers elsewhere.

Monitoring students

The language is encouraging; 'getting the most out of our learners', 'levels in the air' and 'adding value'. The rhetoric within many schools now is that in order to achieve such goals, we need to be quantifying the learning every step of the way, checking that those incremental gains in 'knowledge' are being maintained. In effect what this means is pupils, learners, students, whatever term is in-vogue now, being overtly conscious of their place in the school pecking order at all times. Not only being aware of their own place, but that of every other pupil they share a class with, and the pecking order of each class.

Labelling pupils from the earliest years of school is now common practice. By the end of primary school, pupils are expected to have a firm grasp of what 'level' they are in core subjects (maths, science, English), and those levels are increasingly used to 'stream' or, as has been common practice in core subjects for a long time, at least 'set' pupils depending on ability. Streaming is a more divisive version of setting where pupils are not just set within an individual subject, but effectively separated for the whole of the school lesson time into different ability classes. This effectively creates schools within schools, enabling the establishment of hierarchies within supposedly comprehensive schools.

What does 'levelling' mean? In England, the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA), sets out the levels within subjects, from level 1-8 in most subjects. These levels map onto what's known as Bloom's Taxonomy - a classification of learning objectives, which is supposed to progress through basic skills and sounds a bit like this - recall, describe, explain, analyse, evaluate, synthesise. They roughly translate to levels 3-8 of the QCDA's descriptors.

If this all sounds boring, it's because it is. It relates little to the content of the subjects kids are learning, and is more a process of quantification that suits micromanagers who want to easily monitor performance of staff and students. The effect on pupils in the classroom is tangible. In the days when tests were measured in As, Bs, Cs etc in early secondary education, pupils of course had awareness of who was a the 'smart kid' and who wasn't. But they didn't wear that label for every minute of every lesson, of every day of every term. The hierarchy is a constant, throughout all lessons.

Depressingly this is internalised by many students, who will refer to themselves and their own abilities negatively. Many un-

derestimate the degree to which pupils internalise the labels we assign them, and unfortunately some don't care, because they're genuinely only interested in generating graphs to show their departments are 'performing'.

The impact on students is very real, and should be of deep concern to anyone genuinely interested in education.

Monitoring staff monitoring students.

Beyond labelling individual students, the assessment that now exist in most schools are used directly, and openly, to monitor staff performance. Most schools have a computerised record system that monitors everything from attendance, to test scores, to behaviour management. But the scope of these systems, and the uses to which they are put, may vary from school to school.

In its most pervasive guise, these systems are a tightly quantified form of pupil and staff monitoring. The data from these systems can be used explicitly in 'performance management'. Performance management amounts to bosses monitoring staff to check they are doing the job. In some instances, provided your line manager isn't a jobs-worth and simply is in their position for a bit of extra money, it can be supportive - it can identify areas for improvement, and suggest ways to move forward and make teaching and learning better.

However, increasingly, the data is used to identify 'under-performing' staff. Performance management does not apply to trainee teachers or NQTs (Newly Qualified Teachers i.e. those in their probation period) - it applies only to teachers in their second year in the profession and onwards. I have seen instances where data from pupil monitoring has been used to build cases against so-called under-performing staff. In those that I have witnessed, it has been where a line-manager is an 'aspiring leader' - someone who wants to get out of the classroom and into school management. They will use the data to openly criticise colleagues and show quantitatively how they 'aren't doing their jobs well'.

Quantifying performance

What does this data involve? Ok, say you give a class an assessment. You mark it, record you marks, and enter it into the computer system. So far, it's no more than a glorified version of the old fashioned mark-book, those folders you see teachers carrying around (most still carry the old ones too, so effectively work is duplicated, but most of us like to have a paper copy of marks).

But further to that, the mark is then mapped against a pre-determined 'target' for each pupil. At key stage 3 (11-14yrs) this target is usually based on the scores they come from primary school with, and mapped across the three years of the curriculum. These projections are often wrong - perhaps the pupil has a 'good day' on the assessment day, perhaps they had a 'bad one', but for the next three years, every test they take will be matched against that yardstick, and both the pupils performance, and their teachers' will be judged in that light.

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