

Children are not “guinea pigs” to be experimented on

In the Guardian on Saturday 20th February 2021 there was a very good piece by Donna Ferguson entitled “Home Schooling....I am a maths lecturer and I had to get my children to teach me”, there is also, in the same article, a piece on “English Teaching” by Erin Kelly a successful novelist and a piece on “Science Teaching” by an environmentalist. Sadly the piece on “ Science Teaching “ is the only positive one!!

For many years I have questioned the teaching of Maths and English in our primary schools. With successive governments we have had numerous curriculum changes which have had a detrimental effect on children’s learning. Children are not “guinea pigs” to be experimented on....they are our future and deserve the best!! Children need to leave primary school with a good sound knowledge of Reading, literacy and maths which are the foundations necessary for a secondary school education to be successful. Too many children have not achieved these standards due to the curriculum set down by the government. Too much bureaucracy and too little time for good interactive teaching. .Also, as the maths lecturer points out ,too many mathematical methods introduced too quickly which he says leads to confusion....and I certainly have experienced that in my many years on “ The Chalk Face” As have many other teachers I know. We need to make these people in government listen to those of us delivering the lessons....it’s all too easy to dream up “Utopia” sitting at a desk or round a conference table in Whitehall !! I have lobbied my MP for years about educational problems. We all have a responsibility to make them listen to our views on what is best for the children we are teaching.....it is not a “ one size fits all “ situation. I taught for 10 years in a school where 93% of the children were second language English.....many of them were let down by our system as there was very little money for “Language Support Groups” to enhance their acquisition of English. Then into that mix they introduced “ French”..... Welcome to chaos !!!!

Likewise with the teaching of English....we are, as Erin Kelly points out, stifling creativity by insisting children must include so many grammatical criteria in their story writing. Lots of children go into a trance when they hear those dreaded words “ Creative Writing”for lots of boys it’s like a death knell!! You cannot be creative to a a formula!!! It defeats the purpose. The people who dream these ideas up are not in the classroom regularly enough. All too often children are not given enough assistance and advice when choosing a book to read. Primary School children cannot be left to choose books without assistance and advice. In the private sector children are given a book list with age appropriate books on it....a practice I used when teaching. Children, left to their own devices, will either be too ambitious or not ambitious enough when choosing a book. Yet in many schools this is actually what is happening. If they leave Primary School with a low reading ability they will fail in Secondary School as there is not the time or money to help them.

So let’s all be proactive in making our voices and opinions heard by those who need to hear it!

SM

Reference

Home schooling: ‘I’m a maths lecturer – and I had to get my children to teach me’

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/feb/20/im-a-maths-lecturer-and-i-had-to-get-my-children-to-teach-me>

