

## WHERE HAVE THE 'INDIVIDUAL' STUDENT(S) GONE?

With the continual demands for standardised testing, marking and the constant tick-box exercises; the question that I want to explore, where has the individual student gone? and, what has caused this disconnection between the individual and the student?

There can be an argument to say that the education system across all education doesn't advocate creative, free-thinking individuals. As Twain puts it "I never let school get in the way of my education" (Acarglu,2018) and there is some truth there. With the obsession of success and the constant push for excellence within all education sectors, it has had a backward effect, which has often resulted in creating an underwhelming environment, for both teachers and students as for both parties, there is frustration with its unclear agenda with pushing for academic success and excellence in this way. Reflecting on both my teacher and student perspectives this is alarmingly true. With the constant battle to fit in and be accepted academically, often feeling not valued because of the way I am and the way I think. As a teacher, now seeing the concerns in a different way; from a place of responsibility rather than from a place being a victim to its consequences. Instead of seeing its effect on me personally, I am now faced with two questions; As a teacher, what is my role in creating this environment for the students? and, how has it come to be that global education systems have become structured to enforce conformity and reductive thinking? (Acarglu,2018) (PS02,09,10).

In context to exploring the first question, there are some external factors that need to be discussed in connection with this too. Firstly, as teachers there is a constant discrepancy between what we (teachers) feel is going well and isn't and what the government and governing bodies that run these institutions feel (PS10). This causes an unclear and confusing plan moving forward as teachers, like students are experiencing these specific issues and concerns subjectively, whereas the government and governing bodies are seeing it objectively. With this discrepancy and disconnection occurring it causes further implications and consequences, with things like timing, cost, administration concerns and students attainment and performance often being at the forefront of rather than what we are teaching our students. As Robinson advocates, "We have sold ourselves into a fast-food model of education, and it's impoverishing our spirit and our energies as much as fast food is depleting our physical bodies" (Acarglu,2018). Further to this, as a consequence of the current educational attitudes towards success and excellence. "If schools were designed to nurture the potential and possibility of the maturing human brain, then the neurological and bio-physical reality of knowledge acquisition would be designed to maximize the experiential aspects of learning, as well as foster an ability for young people to build confidence, creative independence, and diversified thinking for active application in the world" (Acarglu,2018).

As teachers we must urgently find the balance between what we are teaching (defined by governing bodies) and why we are teaching our students. With discussing these issues with other members of the Art faculty, it's clear that it's a collective concern. The issue is now how do teachers move away from the forced structures and find autonomy again? How can teachers stand out against the norm and create content that benefits both parties? At the end of the day, as teachers we have to honestly ask ourselves, why did we become a teacher? To inspire, motivate and nurture the next generation of creators, thinkers and makers (PS10,12).

It's my belief that the individual hasn't disappeared from the student, but it has been suppressed by educational pressures to succeed, as a student and as a teacher I do feel this external

pressure to succeed for the institution; for something outside of myself which consequently, produces students of the product of excellence, rather than the process of nurturing individuals. It's often that students don't feel their worth and value and this mindset comes from their education. As identified by Robinson, it's often that "many highly talented, brilliant, creative people think they aren't because the thing they were good at wasn't valued, was actually stigmatized" (Acarglu,2018). Maybe it isn't valued because quite often those things cannot be measured or scored, as Allen further advocates here, "quantities only and never of qualities, so that in education, if it cannot be given numerical scores, then it cannot be assessed and cannot be taught" (Allen,2015:30) because a subject like Art cannot be measured in the same way as STEM subjects or ways of thinking cannot be measured, it's quite often discouraged, misused and undervalued.

The individual and the student should be one of the same, but it isn't. Above, I have explored different aspects of this paradigm. It's my understanding that from this the shorter answer is the roles of the government and educational governing bodies demand for academic success and excellence. To them it's just another number or another statistic.

Though from further investigation, it has become clearer that this disconnection is multi-layered and complex. As Wigley (2019) identifies, education is "fundamentally about emergence" (Wigley, 2019: 1) a pursuit for certainty and efficiency (Biesta,2015) and is unattainable and undesirable if taken too far. Wigley further advocates that as a consequence of this, "education turns into its opposite, a machine for the transmission of official dogma, received opinion and hegemonic beliefs" (Wigley,2019:1). The very structure of where education stands, isn't clear in its own identification from constant re-evaluations of what education is, and consequently, what policies have to be taken out, reintroduced and or completely scrapped. This means that there is a disconnection from the whole education system, to the government and governing bodies, teachers and finally the students.

Until that is properly addressed, education as a whole will continue to be reductive and confusing often without a clear message that is properly identified and understood by all involved. Until then, education will continue to be "a machine for the transmission of official dogma, received opinion and hegemonic beliefs" (Wigley,2019:1) consequently, the students will just be "another brick in the wall" (pink-floyd-lyrics.com,n.d).

Therefore, I believe that we are still fighting against the same issues that Dewey and Vygotsky had in their time; 'reductionism' and furthermore, 'behaviourism' as a consequence of reductionism (Wigley,2019). For the student to fully reclaim their individuality and for individuality to be used and considered properly as an integral part of the teaching and learning pedagogies and philosophies we must learn how to properly move away from this (PS10,20).

## REFERENCES

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