

A viable alternative to England's secondary school testing : A position

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Abstract

Recently the British government has once again embarked upon a wave of what it calls educational 'reforms' and it is inspired by this potential pedagogical ground-shift and the renewed climate for change, that the author's wish to bring to the arena of reform a proposal to eradicate all formal testing in England's secondary schooling including the abolishment of both GCSEs and A levels, 'paper' tests, usually conducted at sixteen and eighteen years of age, respectively. In place of these aging constructs the argument will be presented for a 'graduation passport' an authentic document which will give a more accurate record and evaluation of the educand; a document which will have genuine social currency both in academe and the workplace.

Keywords

Secondary school testing, English secondary education, anti-testing

Introduction

Attempting to debate the relative merits and demerits of testing within academe is a highly contentious issue, not least because of the semantic, cultural, political, and social difficulties in reaching a consensus as to the meaning of testing irrespective of whether it is of the formative or summative variety. Perhaps more troublesome, however, is how this essentially contested concept (Gallie 1956) is framed and thus how it is ultimately perceived by the two opposing camps; its social, cultural, epistemological, ethical, moral, not to mention its pedagogical definition and function. On the one hand there exists the pro-testing camp which is arguing from an ideologically conservative, controlling, extrinsic locus, what Lakoff (2006) might call a 'strict-father-mentality' - those on that side of the divide essentially believe they know what is best for others and ultimately for society too. And on the other side of the divide is the anti-testing camp who have framed this issue seen through the lens of enlightenment, democracy, personal freedom, progression and an intrinsic perspective, what Lakoff would call 'nurturing parent.' It is because these two camps share neither a common worldview nor a common lexicon that discourse - true discourse is nigh impossible. Given these very different worldviews the focus of this paper is not to present the pros and cons of the issue, it seems to us that à la modus tollens, it is our responsibility on the anti-testing side, to discredit the dominant paradigm by presenting an argument of opposing views. This position paper will therefore simply present our viewpoints of how secondary school testing (perhaps all testing) should be framed and then offer a viable alternative to the current practice du jour in the UK.

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A brief overview of the English educational provision

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland stands collective on many issues and disparate on others. On the subject of education it is best to consider the Union as largely dissolved, for the four countries have quite distinct schooling systems. With that in mind the purpose of this essay is to focus solely on the English education system, hence all examples and arguments presented herein will pertain specifically and only to England.

There are three key points to understanding the English education system, these are: structure, outcomes, and funding. Firstly, England's education system can be divided into the standard three phases with four key elements; **primary** (5 - 11 yrs), **secondary** (11- 16), VI Form (16 - 18 yrs) and **tertiary** (colleges of higher education can be entered at 16, whilst universities generally accept students from 18 after the completion of a two year preparatory period at VI Form or equivalent)¹. In terms of outcomes, students do not 'graduate' primary or secondary school, they (for the most part) sit paper examinations at the end of high school, aged 16, the result of which has little or no impact on anything, save, they wish to enter further study² or employment which often stipulates a certain required level of attainment (often only in mathematics and English). Examinations primarily consist of paper tests which are taken in the final year of study (aged 16), or occasionally continual assessment throughout the four years of secondary school (11 - 16yrs). The net result of all study is a certificate. Whilst previously separated into Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) [1965 - 1987] and General Certificate of Education 'Ordinary' level (GCE or 'O' Level) [1951 - 1987], they are now amalgamated into a single General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) [1988 - present]. If the student continues on into VI Form they will sit General Certificate of Education 'Advanced' level ('A' Levels) which are a prerequisite for most universities. Finally, funding; how is all this paid for? Perhaps due to the socialist/social welfare nature of the country, most primary and secondary education provision (some 93%) is governmental (Besa.org, 2019) along with nearly all tertiary (university) level; there are only two private universities from a total of 106 in England. Compulsory education is generally paid for by revenue generated through relatively high levels of taxation (Income Tax and National Insurance). Despite this tax, all universities in England charge fees. To summate, all primary and secondary education in England, irrespective of geographical location or funding is focused on students leaving school at 16 with around 9 paper certificates obtained from tests sat in both their compulsory and optional classes taken as part of the national curriculum. Compulsory classes include; English language and literature, mathematics, and science, whilst optional subjects can be elected from amongst the following; history, geography, foreign languages, design and technology, and art and design (depending upon provision within a given school) (gov.uk, 2019).

Section One, Testing: Framing the Issue

What exactly is testing?

The problem with paper certificates, if, of course, not the actual artefacts themselves, rather, it is the process through which they are obtained, thus, what they represent when viewed in their

1 Education is compulsory until 16 in England

2 Further study often means 'O' levels will students access to VI Form, where they can sit 'A' levels

wider context. Thus, part of this revisiting or reexamination requires that we ascertain what exactly testing is. Whilst testing comes in a variety of forms such as; multiple choice, short written response, cloze and occasionally an oral test, the vast majority of English secondary school testing is recollection of 'small' facts, multiple choice, and short written responses. Put simply, however, regardless of method used, testing is merely a form of measurement, it is a measure of the correlation between input and output, that is, how much information (input) has been retained by the student learner on a given topic, subject, or theme over a given period of time (output). For the most part, nearly all paper tests are concerned with merely checking whether the learner has stored previously taught/digested information into their short-term memory (STM) or long-term memory (LTM) from which it can be retrieved during a specific or given period of time (the duration of a test). Occasionally the test-taker may be asked to rationalise a response or precis a wider body of information, but the task remains the same, cognitively at least; to link a question with an 'appropriate' answer derived from a store of deposits which occurred via state actors (teachers) 'teaching' children according to a national curriculum delivered via standardised materials to meet standardised tests. Results of a standard test therefore, simply indicate the extend to which a) the student was taught that which appeared in the test, and b) how well they memorised any information. In this regard, testing should not be romanticised, and those who excel at such forms of linear testing should not be mistaken for possessing either higher-order skills such as criticality, analysis, discourse, evaluation, or synthesis or wisdom; retention of facts has nothing to do with intelligence other than being perhaps an indicator of its lack, thereof. Meaning that if one unquestionably digest 'facts' and is able to regurgitate them at will without questioning, challenging, or validating them, then this points not towards any form of genuine intelligence, rather, towards, complicitness and passivity, neither of which has anything to do with intelligence.

It should be noted at this juncture, that the above model and parameters are essentially the same regardless of level (secondary or tertiary) the only difference being the complexity of the required response. Having worked in global tertiary education for a combined period of over forty years, the authors concur that the situation is not much different in the upper strata. As an aside, it should be noted that whilst not specifically within the scope of this research we should introduce our only caveat to the dominant model of testing outlined above, and that is with regard to the realm of certain disciplines within tertiary education, for example, within the 'hard sciences,' law, engineering, architecture, and medicine, where an ability to recall facts and set-procedures at will is a useful skill and historically a prerequisite for employment in those disciplines. That acknowledged, however, given the advances in technology and wireless connectivity and the litigious nature of contemporary society, in most of the above fields, with perhaps the exception of law, it has become standard practice to refer to (on-line) data bases for corroboration and confirmation.

Having outlined what testing is, we now wish to present by association, a list of six core constructs which for us, define testing. Following this, we also present another four assumptions that are not unreasonable to draw, given what we know about the pro-testing position.

Testing assumes:

i)	That a 'correct' answer actually exists, that objectivity (at least for the purpose of testing) invariably surmounts subjectivity, furthermore that apparent objectivity is more highly valued as a source of knowledge and wisdom than philosophical hypotheses and conjecture,
ii)	That the multi-faceted and relativist plethora of truthS (be they 'hard' truthS or 'soft' truthS) which are abundant and indeed dominant in life and society are irrelevant and will be trumped by quantifiable data (despite the fact that this too is often in a state of flux, and thus is not as concrete as the layman might be led to believe i.e. even 'scientific' or 'hard' truths can and are superseded by new paradigms (see Kuhn, 1962,
iii)	That such an answer is extracted from monolithic Truths (note the capital T) which are metanarrative [5] in nature,
iv)	That in all likelihood any notion of Truth is constructed from a white, Judaeo-Christian weltanschauung, a lens which is inherently Euro-centric in nature,
v)	That the locus of knowledge lies outside of the educand, that they have no voice or agency in the dialogue or the construction of the narrative - an extrinsic discourse which they must engage and participate in nevertheless, as though it were of their own intrinsic choice,
vi)	That the very nature of testing (the effect) will and can only be the result (the cause) of a system which actively designates and defines a metanarrative and then works to propagate and reinforce such an idea through the confines of a standardised test or system of conformity and adherence.

Fig. 1: The six core tenets of testing

i)	That testing is an archaic and unnecessary faux rite-of-passage handed down without questioning from past generations to the present without questioning its validity or appropriation à la 'Well, I had to endure it, so should you,'
ii)	That testing is inherently and inextricably linked to corporal punishment, that it is by proxy the very same thing. The stress, the pressure, the taking away of free-time to cram or revise (which really amounts to no more than a form of social-control/curfew through what is ostensibly a several month-long detention) are all passive-aggressive modes of indirect punishment that are ethically abhorrent,
iii)	That the very existence of an end-point (an end destination) not only encourages 'teaching-to-the-test' but more worryingly, stunts intellectual growth, usurps real academic enquiry, dissuades dissension from the established metanarratives and induces a general sense of adherence and compliance into future citizens and voters, all of which are qualities not to be encouraged or fostered in any society that aspires to be both free and democratic,
iv)	That in this post-postmodern epoch, testing is essentially the least imaginative, the least creative, the least appropriate and the least beneficial (for all concerned) of all the possible solutions to the evaluation quandary.

Fig. 2: Five associated assumptions

Section Two: Testing: Five Key Problems

From the above we have taken five core constructs which, to us, accurately frame and elucidate the problems with secondary school testing, these are; testing framed as child abuse, testing as part of the commodification of education, the damage of short-termism, teaching to the test, and the limits of the tools available. Each argument will be presented in turn, following this, Section Three will begin the process of presenting our alternative to testing, a graduation 'passport' or document.

Testing as a form of child abuse

Thankfully we no longer use corporal punishment, we no longer make children who forget their gym kit, do it in their underwear, we no longer throw buckets of water over children who are afraid of swimming, we no longer pull the hair of students so violently that it falls out in large clumps, we no longer throw books or chalk at students, we no longer bang arguing students' heads together, and thankfully we no longer allow teachers to physically assault or bully students - all of which the author's have witnessed during their primary and secondary schooling in England and the United States, in the '70s and '80s. And yet despite the significant progress in these areas, we still subject 16-year olds to abuse from high-stakes testing. In 'preparation' for these tests we still take away children's free time so they can 'cram,' we stultify their natural propensities for self-discovery and enquiry, replacing the joy of knowledge for knowledge's sake with what might come up on a test. We force upon them the unnecessary stress of having to remember specific information which might (or might not) come up in a test, and ignore that which may not. We cause children to suffer stress, anxiety, depression and occasionally suicide in order that they forgo their natural inquisitiveness and their natural thirst for knowledge, in whichever form and discipline they are drawn too. Not only do we maintain the inhuman punishment which is the practice of testing but we actively sanction it and laud it in public as comedic currency - just as society once did to drink-driving, racism and domestic violence, all of which were given the green-light for far too long, as practices validated by society and popular culture. In popular discourse testing has not been correctly framed as a form of child abuse, but this is how it should be framed.

Testing as commodification

In its purest form, education has no 'market' value, as the pursuit of knowledge and discovery it is valueless. Value, however, is attached to the things education brings - things such as knowledge, information, inventions, patents, and prestige &c. As scholars such as Willmott (1995), Scherrer (2005), Karpov (2013), and Giroux (2014), et al have pointed out, since the late '60s there has been a commodification of education and teaching with the resulting paper tests being equivalent to money insofar as they help an individual effectively 'buy' one's way into higher education. Beyond this analogy Silbough (2011) is one of the few to suggest that this commodification in education is expanding and that testing has become the central locus. That with the advent of global rankings, education (like stocks and shares) has become something to be

inflated, deflated, bought, sold, and traded. For once a 'market value' is universally attributed to something (regardless of the actual cost or value), then there is a potential for barter, exchange or swapping. Once market value can be attached to such things as increased earning potential as a result of education, or on one educational establishment being somehow 'better' than another (i.e. they score higher on standardised metrics and testing, not on the actual genuine quality of their educational provision), then they become ranked and filed as we see now with both global tertiary education and domestically through league tables. At the secondary level, this can mean parents moving to areas where their children will be in the catchment area for so-called 'desirable' schools. In genuine capitalist terms this can mean house prices become inflated in such areas meaning those with the least wealth are potentially excluded. The authors argue that to align education itself with the capitalist market economy, with supply and demand and 'value' is inherently wrong; it is an inappropriate metric. Certainly, since the advent of league tables or any kind of ranking, either for schools, educational districts, or students, education has been commodified in the truest sense of the word. It has become something to be bought, sold, and traded as per any other commodity. As schools or universities attain higher scores (or perceptions thereof) places for those schools inflate and in the same way stock might rise for a public limited company (PLC) to reflect profitability, so the 'value' and 'status' of an institution will rise too along with its prestige.

Short-termism

Any tertiary educator who asks their first year students about the content of their previous study will likely elicit a vague response at best. Clearly the vast majority of students (including the authors too) are unable to remember much of substance from their secondary schooling. Given that this occurs at a relatively pivotal point in one's life, at the apex of the raising of one's consciousness, and the burgeoning of one's transition into adulthood, this seems both somewhat odd, and furthermore, somewhat sad. As Atkinson and Sciffrin's Modal Model of memory (1968) demonstrates information first enters the sensory register after which it transfers to the short-term memory (STM). If it is to be retained and made more stable, then a further transfer needs to occur between STM and long-term memory (LTM) which, as the name suggests is the real locus of any sustained or prolonged memory. If, however, one 'chunks' information in any given subject and if one decontextualises it then there is a real danger the student learner will not retain the information for any length of period. Noting the aforementioned abuse, it seems extremely unfair to rob students of valuable social time and discovery in favour of short-term goals which ultimately will not be remembered. It is rather like having a lavish birthday for a child's first birthday - something they will not remember.

Perverting the pursuit of knowledge: Teaching the test

In all cultures where there is standardised testing, there has to be standardised teaching which runs on the rails of standardised curricula. Any time anything is standardised it is invariably edited and shaped to fit desired parameters. In doing so, it is important to recognise that it will be changed,

that it will invariably have to loose parts which cannot be embraced by the pre-established metrics of the given standardisation. Any form of 'standard' education (action) carries an equal reaction which means that there is more on the cutting room floor of history than possible to be included in a given test or a given duration within given parameters (multiple choice, cloze, &c.). If the school wishes the student to perform well in the prescribed test, then teaching to the test, or more accurately teaching the test is a must. The questions we need to ask here are, 'What does this mean in real terms?' and 'What does this mean for real students?' We might also ask if this practice is putting our students on the wrong path if they continue into higher education, that is, they may become accustomed to not fully understand the purpose of learning.

Limits and scope of testing as an holistic tool

Scholars Felder and Silverman (1998) have demonstrated the existence of eight basic modalities or learner types (Sensing or intuitive, visual or verbal, active or reflective, and sequential or global learners). Likewise, Gardner has spent his entire academic career exploring the idea of multiple intelligence. Indeed, academia is abundant with research and scholarship which states the obvious, that people are different, that they receive, process and use information in different ways; anyone who has ever taken a 'Mysers-Briggs' test in a group environment will attest to that fact. Given the indisputable evidence which demonstrates that we are not all equal, and not all the same, how can a single test then be equally applicable to all types of learners? It simply cannot. As per the stripping down of the concept of testing which was conducted above it seems appropriate here to introduce some rationale from the hard sciences, a fact which seems to be constantly overlooked. That is, if you want to measure something, for example, the density of gas or the effect of a particular treatment on cancer cells, they you design a model, a machine, and a test, configured around an appropriate source code or algorithm which is specifically designed to observe, record, and monitor the data/results being sought; this is a very obvious point. One wouldn't use a machine designed to weigh sub-atomic particles in order to record the frequency of light; again a moot point. With that acknowledged, the equally obvious question needs then to be asked as to why a single test on a single and limited tranche of information seems appropriate for measuring the 'intelligence' of a range of males and females, from a diverse array of cultural, social, and economic backgrounds? Given the plethora of learners, learners types, propensities, proclivities, dispositions and characteristics, it seems utterly incredulous to evaluate all students on the same test. As the famous illustration below demonstrates.

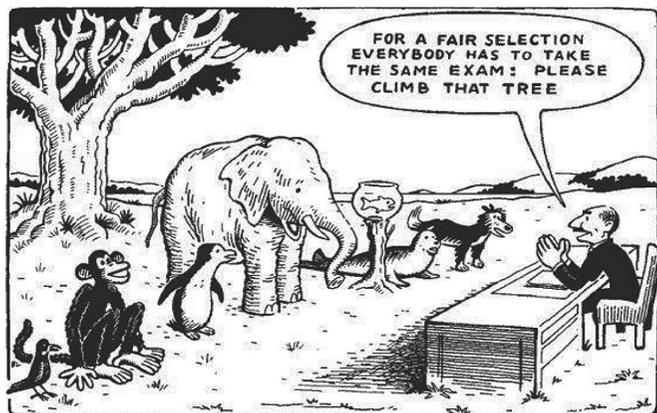


Fig. 3: "Our education system" (source unknown)

Section Three, The Document

A Brief Outline

The legitimate concerns that are levied against the anti-testing camp often focus on the fact that when the educand graduates from their secondary (or even higher) academic institution they need some thing, some 'proof,' some documentation which is deemed to carry metaphorical currency into the outside world where it can then be exchanged or bartered for an 'other' - employment, further study &c. The author believes, however, that the doctrine which undergirds this thing is, however, an essentially flawed notion, as it is both fictitious i.e., it assumes the document in question - (those certificates produced by the current system) are what they purport to be, and that they are also in fact bona fide artefacts which are certified and authorised to demonstrate a genuine degree of competence in a given discipline or area. Whilst the authors recognises the legitimacy of such a concern about 'proof' in general principle, in reality there are certain inherent flaws in the arguments that are invariably trotted-out without due consideration or qualification which render those reproaches vacuous. Some of those flaws are listed below.

i	Can an examination taken at sixteen or eighteen, (an O/A level or a GSCE, for example) really be said to demonstrate any particular skill that is both transferable into another arena outside formalised schooling? - or for that matter, inside academe too?
ii	Can an 'academic' examination taken at sixteen or eighteen - an examination which is largely based upon the tenets of memory and compliance (compliance to the authorised version of doctrine, history etc.) really offer the potential employer a genuine insight into the employee, other than to confirm their level of compliance and their lack of criticality and creativity together with their inability to question dominant structures?
iii	Is it not just the case that any 'attainment' in examinations are merely manifestations of what The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), or any governing entity has arbitrarily deemed to be an appropriate sum of knowledge that a given citizen should possess at a given point in time?
iv	Is it really considered the case by employers that paper qualifications actually favourably influence an employees employability on the ground, especially for entry-level positions?
v	Are adherence, compliance and a lack of criticality and dissension the most appropriate vehicles, and the best pedagogical tools we should be employing in a democracy? Furthermore are these the skills we should be vesting upon young minds in preparation for higher and further-education?

Fig. 4: Flaws in the current system

Specifics

As stated prior, in order to remedy the current situation it seems an obvious step to introduce some entity whose function will not only replace the current outdated system of testing and certificates, but position the whole idea of 'evaluation' in a more cohesive and appropriate domain so that it can serve society until it is too is superseded. Any alternative should offer a trouble-free solution which can easily be transitioned towards and one which redefines the

parameters not merely reappropriates them. Furthermore, a resolution which will not overburden the teaching and administration staff yet something which, in return will carry genuine social currency is of course desirous.

To meet these demands, it is the authors' intention to propose the introduce of what we shall call a 'graduation passport,' a nationwide document which will truly act as a vehicle by which students can (like a real passport) use it to secure access to the areas of society which they wish to gain entry to upon finishing secondary school; be that academe or the employment market. Listed below is a preliminary suggestion of eleven items which such a document would include these are:

i	A personal profile, including (like a regular passport) a photograph, date-of-birth, &c
ii	A personal statement, a short essay or statement that draws together information different areas of the educand's life and experience
iii	Reference to and reflection upon certain definable characteristics which have a degree of currency in both academe and the workplace, for example: Conduct, Attendance, Leadership, Studentship, Learning attitude Self-governance and autonomy Creativity and personal enquiry Research and academic enquiry
iv	A list of awards, prizes and achievements both academic and non-academic,
v	A list of classes, workshops, seminars, lectures, talks, and tutorials that students have attended or undertaken,
vi	Hobbies, interests, pastimes, membership of clubs, societies etc.,
vii	Field-trips, travel undertaken as either part of the curriculum or otherwise,
viii	Volunteer work, internships or community service,
ix	Future aspirations, goals and hopes, with specific plans for achieving these where appropriate,
xi	Disciplinary issues such as violence, truancy, illegal or anti-social behaviour, with input from both the teacher and student,
xi	Specific personal reference(s) from tutor(s).

Fig. 5: Suggestions for what the document would include

This system could also be extended with documents being issued by all accredited institutions where, until now, learning has taken place, for example life-long learning institutions, adult-education centres and such. Basically any institution which is accredited to offer a 'recognised' certificate of learning should also arguably be sanctioned to issue learning 'passports' either in

their entirety (an educand would end up with one per institution) or adding pages to a single document (an educand would, like a real passport, only possess one).

The nearest thing that is currently offered is an intermediate 'report-card' - the likes of which the second author was given at elementary school when, one presumes, educands are considered by the State to be too young for testing - although that of course might be set to change (Guardian, 2013). As a reference point - as a document with many are familiar, it is worth taking a moment to examine the two main differences between this document and a traditional report card, which are; Its intended function, and the fact that this is a negotiated document which is certified and signed-of by both the student themselves, their immediate supervisor/tutor/home-room teacher, and the school principle. Let us examine those points in-turn.

Firstly, the fact that this passport contains information that could be presented in hardback book form means that upon graduation when the student receives their passport it becomes a defining document which they can use for both employment and for gaining access to further and higher education in their home country or abroad. The information could either be presented as a regular book or as a smaller passport sized document that had the information encoded in QR Codes (or similar) which would then allow the information to be retrieved from an external website. It is conceivable that in the initial instance of an application or tentative enquiry for a place in Higher-Education or entry to the workplace etc., that the individual's QR Code/barcode from their 'educational passport' could be printed on application materials thereby allowing accurate candidate information to be accessed. Depending upon the Data Protection Act and other governing ethics, this information could be accessible to relative degrees of depth with or without the need for a password, that is a key/password could, rather like a PIN be used to temporarily unlock data on a tablet so that the employer could view it in the educand's presence. And although the information is personal it is not envisaged as being particularly 'useful' to others because it would simply be a negotiated record of an educand's personal journey. The only exception here would be information pertaining to part x - 'Disciplinary issues such as violence, truancy, illegal or anti-social behaviour.'

Secondly, and most importantly, as this is a negotiated document which is written by both the educand themselves and their senior tutor/homeroom-teacher, it means that the document not only introduces and reinforces the construct of democracy but in offering the educand a voice in the debate, by authenticating the document through genuine dialogue, it is rendered much less extrinsic and (it is hoped) that when the educand is empowered in such a way and they know the document (good or bad) will be considered a genuine reference-point for society's appraisal of the individual at a later point, that intrinsic motivation will kick-in and they will embrace the democratic opportunity afforded them through the building of this document. A document which has both real credibility and real value because it represents not an arbitrary and irrelevant certificate which records how good (or bad) their memory was on a given day(s), or how good (or bad) they are at recalling specific monolithic facts under pressure etc., rather, an authentic holistic record of the educand - a document which they not only have a stake in, but which they agree as being authentic and accurate about numerous aspects of their being not simply their

powers of memory, or lack thereof.

As the individual ultimately responsible for all educands in their care, the head-teacher would also be required to sign off on and validate this document in a final 'exit-interview.' This means that in order to complete such a task they should follow the lead of other areas of personnel management and become intrinsically motivated to know each and every student in their care. Furthermore, this act of getting to know students, which is sadly so lacking in the upper echelons of much of education, should ensure that students do not just pass through the system as was the case when the second author attended secondary-school in England. Instead, not only can the head-teacher validate the authenticity of a graduation passport which bears the name of the educational institution of which they are the head, but they can also use that valuable opportunity to record the viewpoints of graduates with a view to continually striving to improve the structure and delivery of education and thereby render the notion of genuine academic democracy and pedagogical advancement much more legitimate constructs.

Conclusion

The position that secondary school testing is untenable in the current post-postmodern epoch has been clearly demonstrated in the preceding sections. Likewise the realities and mechanics of the system have been stripped and laid bare so that there can be no mystique, no romance, and no doubt as to what testing actually is and what function it serves to perform in its current form du jour. Put simply, the system we currently have, State-sanctioned testing, teaching the test, and the issuing of certificates does not work and probably has never worked as a viable pedagogical tool. Whilst it was undoubtedly pilfered from the seventeenth or eighteenth century trade/apprenticeship system - which probably did work. A system which was constructed around the practice of learning a craft and being able to call someone a master crafts(wo)man; someone who by very definition could build a masterpiece to demonstrate certain set techniques and skills which were demonstrative of mastery recognised by a guild of crafts(wo)men. As the reader will no doubt recognise, not only is that not the arena in which we dwell as educators, but even if it were, the skill-sets in question have nothing in common in terms of what they actually are, their ultimate function and how we might go about checking their validity - and indeed why we might go about checking their validity and adherence to a pro forma.

So if the current out-dated system doesn't work, if each year educands are leaving State-education (both secondary and higher) and taking their place to become part of the collective sum of society, and society isn't functioning as we hoped it would. If the complex challenges of global warming, population decrease, dwindling resources and migration are not being met, then we need to question why those leaving sanctioned education are not capable of meeting those challenges. Furthermore if the English economy, despite all of its early advances and privilege of Empire, is consistently under-performing (as it is), if our firms and companies are not meeting the challenges of the age. If they are not world leaders, trend-setters and future-shapers, and once again, their employees are the fruits of our State-sanctioned education then we need to realise that the core cause (State-education based on standardised metrics such as curricula and testing),

is totally inadequate in equipping and shaping young minds to be the critical, forward-thinking individuals who can drive society forward and build the future.

It is worth remembering that education is not an afterthought - something to be tacked-on to society. It is the point of inception, the single most important thing in society, for it represents the starting point from which everything else emanates; poverty, crime, conflict, unrest, progress, success, failure, compassion, love, empathy, ethics, morality and more. And until government and policy-makers realise that we will never shift the paradigm and move society (and the world) forward, because we will always be spending our time and resources fixing the social and political ills which result in society as a result of our woefully inadequate education and the nonsense system of State-sanctioned and State-propagated paperwork. These out-dated artefacts which allude to a faux sense of accomplishment, but are really no more than bits of paper that confirm an individual's level of compliance and memory, they are simulacral facsimiles of achievement and nothing more.

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