

AUTOMATON STUDIES

Amanda Spielman, the boss of Ofsted, former boss of Ofqual, whose experience of schools is vastly different from that of most young people and teachers, is disturbed that a degree of 'militant activism' can be seen in schools.

I very much doubt that she has the faintest idea that in the days before Thatcher Government and Politics was a very popular subject studied by 14-16 year olds. The conferences and events of the Politics Association were very well attended by schoolteachers. Stradling and Noctor surveyed young people in schools and Bob Stradling in particular produced a very accessible book on the teaching of controversial issues.

And, as I say so often, in 1978 came the Report of the Working Party on Political Literacy. Things were happening. In 1979 we got Thatcher. Today we have as Secretary of State for Education someone who appears to be incapable of carrying out any research on the meaning, for example, of the word Semitic. His Schools Minister (algorithm man) constantly pushes an 'official line' on what should be taught, how it should be taught, what should be assessed and how it should be assessed.

If you expel the study of government and politics and if, at the same time, you demote art, music and languages, you vastly reduce the possibility that young people can discuss and argue from different perspectives. You de-legitimise discussion and argument. Young people become fodder to be measured.

The 'militant activism' of which Spielman complains relates to outlawing discussion, argument and creativity. My study of history at school was very much enhanced because I was also studying the development of painting in 19th. century France. More perspective. And are teenagers not allowed to be angry about injustice? Educare and Educere are the key Latin words that give us Education. They do not give us the word Instruction.

Cliff Jones 25th. June 2021

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