

CRITIQUING MY CURRICULUM VITAE

STAGE ONE

There has been some interest in the writing of negative or anti CVs. For me this would mean raising all the awkward questions that I would ask if I were interviewing myself. They would include:

“So why did that initiative end so early? It seemed to have the potential to be developed further.”

and

“You do not appear to have published very often in conventional academic journals. Why is that?”

or

“There is a lot in your CV. What themes connect all these items?”

Years ago I learned to make much use of the word ‘include’ or ‘includes’. A very clever word because it suggests to the reader that if required you could produce much more. A clever word but it carries the risk that you may be asked to provide those further examples. From experience I believe that no interviewer wishes to hear more than three examples. At interview I would offer three examples, then pause to ask if that answered the question or would they like more? Always the answer was that they did not need to hear more. It is, therefore, a risk worth taking.

I don’t think what I am about to write will be negative or anti. I shall cling to the word ‘critical’ in the best sense.

Here is the first section of my CV.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Cliff Jones

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Education, training and qualifications include:

- B.A. Political Theory and Institutions;
- PGCE;
- MEd; and
- Internal Auditor, Quality Assurance, British Standards Institute.

COMMENT

My first degree was what was known as a 'good honours degree', a two-two. The starting salary for a schoolteacher was about £650. Because in those days my degree was classed as good it meant an extra £220 on my salary. Perhaps I can mention that Liverpool University was notoriously stingy with its degrees. Firsts were like hen's teeth. And a two-two meant you had never missed a party. I seldom did.

PGCE stands for Post Graduate Certificate in Education. We called it a Cert Ed. In those days it was not necessary to have that award in order to teach. I did it because I was engaged to be married and my fiancé had one more year before graduating and it meant I could be near her.

In the previous vacation I earned a lot of money (with overtime £28 per week) cleaning inside the pipes and the boilers of a power station. It was extremely unhealthy and I missed a lot of the course with very bad breathing difficulties. One assignment was to have been a long essay. The idea was that at the start of the year you submitted a title and if approved the department would structure your teaching practice so that you could carry out relevant research. My chosen title was The Teaching of Government and Politics as a Non-Examined Subject. It was accepted but in every school placement I was required to teach history. At the end of the year I asked the head of department what I should do since I had been given no chance to do the research. He said, "Oh just get something down on paper." So I did and he failed it, without any feedback at all.

I had to repeat it a year later before getting my PGCE and an extra £50 a year on my salary. I did, however, get my revenge on that head of department. Many years later I saw him at a talk he was giving holding up for approval something I had written and when he retired I hired him for some work.

My Masters in Education I loved. The tutors were great and the course was very well constructed. By then I had been closely involved in the political education movement for some time so that was a theme of my dissertation. The external examiner was Lawrence Stenhouse who asked a gathering of the students why we were not doing more empirical research. I thought I was but did not argue.

A failing of the Education Department was that in terms of providing written feedback and feedforward it was well behind what I was used to. They simply pronounced on you. My supervisor told me that my dissertation had been singled out for publication (why it was not published is another story). We waited until the secretary guarding the filing cabinet holding the reports on students was out, got into her office, borrowed her key, found the report on me (the size of a post card) and there were the words 'recommended for publication'.

As for QA, at times I have attempted to capture a concept for the profession before government turned it into a stick with which to beat us. Quality Assurance in Education was one of those concepts that, having a background

in government and politics, I felt ought to be humanised. To find out how the British Standards Institute trained people to operate its standards I enrolled on their course and obtained a qualification. I put it in my CV with the thought that it might impress but actually most of the course concentrated on being able to demonstrate to an inspector that you were doing what your mission statement said you were doing. No one questioned the wisdom of that mission statement. Documentation was the most important evidence that you could present. Today I wonder if all of Tony Blair's New Labour apparatchiks had been on that course.

A feature of the course was that when it came to the use of personal pronouns they were all masculine. I don't think anyone else noticed. There were two women in attendance. They were the silent secretaries.

You may have noticed that there is no PhD. More on why later.

Cliff Jones 6th. July 2018