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Photo on file.

Title: Review of Lessons from Lockdown: The Educational Legacy of COVID-19 by Tony Breslin. ISBN-13: 978-0367639297

Pull-out Quote: Citizenship education has always been at the heart of the community, what this book highlights is how it is more important than ever

Article Begins

In the summer of 2020 in the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic Dr. Tony Breslin wrote Lessons from Lockdown. Using 100+ participants through focus groups and with help from a researcher who will now go into teaching. The book asked pupils, teachers and educators in all phases and sectors of teaching i.e., Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, Primary, Secondary, Further Education and Initial Teacher Education about their experiences. On hearing about this book, I could not wait to get a copy. How Tony Breslin and Ryan McMahon (the researcher) managed to compile and analyse so much valuable qualitative data on the experiences of so many in such a short time is beyond me. However, thank goodness they did as the book speaks volumes about what we need to learn and takeaway from the experience of education during an unprecedented event in history.

The research output of this easy-to-read book was instantaneously developed while the event was happening, which makes the experiences and contributions from the participants so ever more real and helpful, voices of solidarity while we all are experiencing it. The way the book compiles these voices around very pertinent themes was my favourite part of the book. It considers the multiple purposes of schools and schooling and what schools need to do in the future, moving on from where we were and are now. How schools and governmental education departments need to drive innovation and practice while looking after teacher retention and recruitment and exploring how we are to determine the role of the teacher in the community and schools as places of social activity, and socio-economic progress.

The book considers the challenges that the pandemic has highlighted that existed before it in terms of socio-economic disadvantage, the digital divide, the participation gap, the wealth gap and as these will probably increase what we should do to catch-up through strategies used in trauma-based recovery. I particular like that the recommendations are gathered at the end of the book and improving citizenship education is one of them. It is my contention that citizenship education has always been at the heart of the community, what this book highlights is how it is more important than ever, and what I believe should be used to enable children and young people to catch up on what Tony describes as 'the water-cooler moments of childhood' to build up well-being and dialogue as well as knowledge, how students develop their interaction with society.

The book thinks about all the opportunities we can learn about from the lockdown that will help us meet the skills and needs of the next generation; new types of pedagogy and andragogy, online, non-group work in social complex spaces i.e., from home, autonomous learning, inter-age learning between groups, new approaches to assessment i.e. no national exams, providing extra support and the new role of SEND pedagogy, empathy and kindness and the intimacy of home based learning for students and teachers.

Credit is given to the huge volume of work that was done (is being done at the time of writing) by students, teachers and educators in the lockdown – not just in the headlines and the book helps us

to think about loss, bereavement and the struggles we have all had during lockdown while considering the elements of success that many have had, including increased time to learn from each other and re-connect, giving us pause to think about how to balance these perspectives.

The participants of future collective traumas and disasters in communities far and wide now and in the future would do well to read and learn from this book, a significant collection of research compiled early in the COVID-19 pandemic and as such one that I am sure will be cited frequently in the future.

Tony is currently undertaking research for the sequel to Lessons from Lockdown, entitled Bubble Schools: the long road from lockdown and set to be published at the turn of the calendar year. It picks up where Lessons from Lockdown concludes, and tracks the story of the pandemic from September 2020 through to the close of the current academic year. Tony is keen for ACT members to participate in the research; if you would like to join one of the focus groups, send Tony a direct message on twitter @UKPolicywatch or drop him an email tony.breslin@breslinpublicpolicy.com