

Fear and alienation in teaching – the response of the ‘principled pragmatist’

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The current recruitment and retention crisis clearly shows how hard it is to survive as a teacher in the mainstream education system. The ‘terrors of performativity’ (Ball, 2003) and the constraint, control and surveillance of the ‘New Managerialism’ (Rikowski, 2006) lead to alienation manifesting as powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and estrangement (Seeman, 1959). The psychological and emotional pain and fear that this alienation causes often lead to breakdown and drop-out or resignation and adaptation. In spite of this, however, there are individuals who seem to manage to navigate the system, staying true to their personal and social politics and their related sense of self- without sacrificing their ideals. But who are these people; how many of them are there? What are their habits, attitudes, strategies and tactics? What can be learnt from them, and what can they learn from each other? In this workshop we will draw upon Eschle and Maiguiashca’s (2010) idea of ‘principled pragmatism’ - as a new way of ‘doing politics’ constructed from their analysis of feminist anti-globalisation activism - and discuss how this might offer a new way to explore how radical educators can survive and thrive in education.

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