

School Memory Work

a space and experimental tool to explore imaginings of education futures together with children and young people.

Background

Education is a political project and so is its futures. But education futures cannot be constrained merely in rational thinking, for futures are also “shot through with affect and emotion” (Sobe, 2019). Affective appeals interwoven with different genres for living shape collective feelings toward teachers and students (see Dernikos et al., 2020), and education more broadly.

School memory work draws inspiration from uses of memory as a methodological tool to conduct research in the social sciences (see Keightly, 2010) and is suggested here as an affective methodology (see Knudsen and Stage, 2015). This means, a methodology that aims at eliciting and capturing affective themes and processes, emotions, and bodily senses, and foregrounding those to create otherwise education imaginaries.

It has first been conceived and designed together with a group of young people, students in a secondary democratic school at Southwest England, their teacher, and an alumni student, in 2019. It has been further developed during the first two years of COVID-19 pandemic through multiple conversations with students and teachers across the UK about how education can be imagined otherwise. Taking children and young people’s school memories that matter to them as a starting point, the method aims at facilitating an intergenerational dialog about education futures through affect.

The school memory work cards were developed by POEM fellow Elina Moraitopoulou and have been adapted from the work of Mitchell, Claudia, and Sandra Weber. *Reinventing Ourselves as Teachers*. Routledge, 2003.

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