

Associate

TAIT COLES

*“If nothing gets challenged,
nothing gets changed so be
realistic and always demand the
impossible”*

Tait is a challenge.

An experienced and effective teacher, as well as SLT member, working in an ethnically diverse inner-city secondary school in Bradford, he has to jump through all the hoops that any practising teacher and school leader has to. They are many and narrow and becoming more abundant and narrower all the time. But in an era when the curriculum is being commoditised and shot through with a certain ‘White and Western’ view of the world and when children are being expected to sit down, sit still and think what they’re told, Tait has other views.

And the challenge is, he does something about it.

Never Mind the Inspectors, Here’s Punk Learning was Tait’s first book for the Independent Thinking Press, a call to arms for teachers everywhere to rip up the ‘Ofsted expects...’ narrative along with the textbooks – literally – and plan professional lessons full of spontaneity, authentic learning and certain sort of ‘in your face’ energy. Which is what you’d expect from someone who quotes John Lydon and Joe Strummer as much as he cites educational thinkers such as Paulo Freire and Henry Giroux

‘Punk Learning’, based on Tait’s highly popular blog, is full of practical ideas

about teaching, learning, lesson planning, thinking skills, teacher expectations, assessment and student engagement of the highest order. Yet it was just a first shot across the bows. His thinking is becoming increasingly insightful and wider ranging as he gives a professional voice to the unspoken yet critical questions young people are asking:

- Why is your knowledge more important than my knowledge?
- Why is your culture more important than my culture?
- Why is your wish for me to be silent more important than my need to speak out?
- Why is your wish for control more important than my right to freedom?

Working in a multiracial urban school (his students are predominantly Pakistani working class Muslims), Tait is witness to the way children can be marginalised and disadvantaged by the very system that is supposed to be there to support them. And this makes him angry. And this makes him speak out. He is currently working on a new book on Islamophobia in schools for the Independent Thinking Press and recently co-wrote a paper with Dr Nasima Hassan looking at Islam, identity, British values and Muslim pupils in British schools. And this makes him a challenge.



“Let’s inspire our learners through chaos to become anarchically self-regulating”
Never Mind the Inspectors, Here’s Punk Learning

And that’s why he’s such an important Associate at Independent Thinking.

Feedback from recent events include:

“Gave a new, alternative and different perspective - provided food for thought and was challenging in a positive way”

“Really thought-provoking – posed interesting questions about the purpose of teaching”

“Has given me the confidence to think differently”

“Engaging delivery – his passion and philosophy really came across”

Books written by Tait Coles:

- *Never Mind The Inspectors*
- *There Is Another Way* (contributor)
- *The Working Class* (contributor)

Tait has been with Independent Thinking since April 2013.

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www.independentthinking.co.uk
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