Reading List: 5 must-read books on the future of education and schools
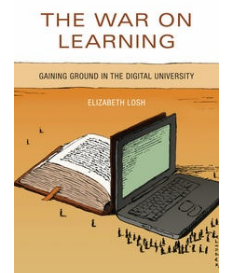
2014-9-1

As children return to school this week and university staff prepare for the new wave of students to appear over the next month, we bring together a selection of must-read books on the future of education and schools.

Interested in education and technology?

The War on Learning: Gaining Ground in the Digital University by Elizabeth Losh

In The War on Learning, Elizabeth Losh analyses recent trends in post-secondary education and the rhetoric around them. In an effort to identify educational technologies that might actually work, she looks at strategies including MOOCs, the gamification of subject matter, remix pedagogy, video lectures, and educational virtual worlds. Losh's work is valuable reading for students and parents trying to make sense of when current technologies provide venues for meaningful assignments and assessments, rather than serving as 'add ons' to conventional education that leave everyone feeling cheated, writes Susan Marie Martin. Read the full review.

Find this book: amazon

Interested in social background and educational achievement?

Education, Social Background and Cognitive Ability: The Decline of the Social by Gary N. Marks

In this book, Gary N. Marks argues that the influence of socioeconomic background for education is moderate and most often declining, and that it has only very weak impacts on adults' occupation and earnings after taking into account education and cognitive ability. This book affords an alternative and at times quite radical opinion to the seemingly endless debate of how to raise educational attainment and enhance wider life chances, writes Claire Forbes. Read the full review.

Find this book: amazon

Interested in how schools should be going digital?

Education and Social Justice in a Digital Age by Rosamund Sutherland

In many countries the school curriculum oscillates between focusing on traditional subjects and focusing on skills that are linked to the needs of the 21st-century digital age. In this book Rosamund Sutherland argues against such a skills-based curriculum, maintaining that, from a social justice perspective, the priority of schools should be to give young people access to the knowledge that they are not likely to learn outside school. Claire Forbes finds Education and Social Justice in a Digital Age to be a refreshing and thought-provoking contribution to current debates. Read the full review.

Find this book: amazon

Interested in the strengths and weaknesses of the current UK system?

Education Under Siege: Why There is a Better Alternative by Peter Mortimore
How do we improve England's school system? Every Education Secretary has their own ideas and subsequent U-turns, but in this book Peter Mortimore aims to identify the current system's strengths and weaknesses, and asks readers who share his concerns to demand that politicians alter course. Cole Armstrong talks readers through the highs and lows that Mortimore identifies, and finds that some aspects of the author's vision for a new education system are questionable in terms of practicality. Read the full review.

Find this book: amazon

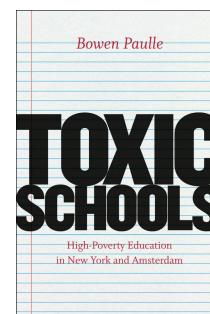
Interested in school-based ethnographies?

Toxic Schools: High-Poverty Education in New York and Amsterdam by Bowen Paulle
Violent urban schools loom large in our culture: for decades they have served as the centerpieces of political campaigns and as window dressing for brutal television shows and movies. Based on six years of teaching and research in the Bronx and Amsterdam, Toxic Schools is a fully participatory ethnographic study and aspires to be a searing examination of daily life in two radically different settings. Brendan Bartram finds many strengths. Read the full review.

Find this book: amazon