

Comprehensive State-Wide Senior Exams

Part 5: What is "The Blob"?

In ***Prisoners of the Blob: Why most education experts are wrong about nearly everything***¹ Toby Young FRSA, describes *The Blob* (paraphrased below):

The term ***The Blob***, referring to an amoeba-like monster in a 1950's sci-fi movie, re-appears in the UK and the US referring to the 'thought-world' of educational bureaucracies (from leaders of teaching unions, local authority officials to academics in university education departments).

"They all believe that skills like 'problem-solving' and 'critical thinking' are more important than subject knowledge; that education should be 'child-centred' rather than 'didactic' or 'teacher-led'; that 'group work' and 'independent learning' are superior to 'direct instruction'; that the way to interest children in a subject is to make it 'relevant'; that 'rote-learning' and 'regurgitating facts' is bad, along with discipline, hierarchy, routine and anything else that involves treating the teacher as an authority figure." (p 2)

"Their adherence to this ideology is so fanatical that they ignore the huge body of empirical evidence that shows progressive teaching methods don't work, as well as the findings of cognitive scientists. ... For the most part, [members of *The Blob*] are well-intentioned, well-meaning people who share the same goals we do ... it's just that they are misguided – imprisoned by a 200-year-old belief system..." (p 2-4)

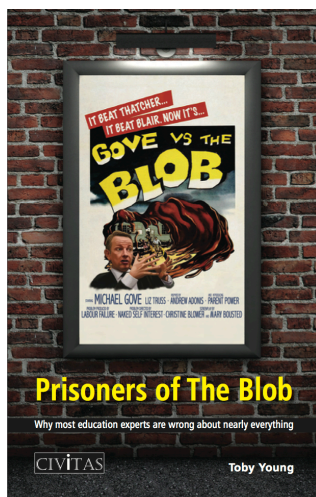


Figure 1. *Prisoners of The Blob* by Toby Young.

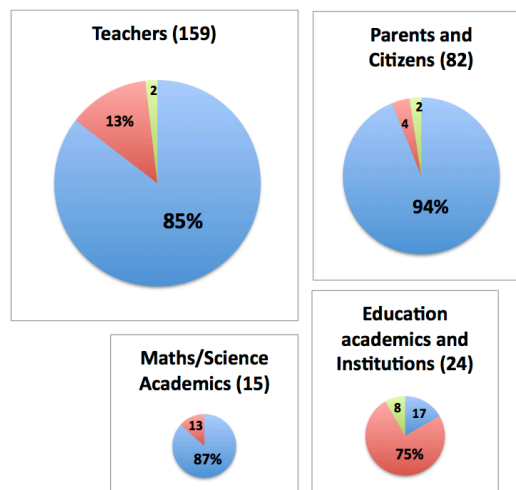


Figure 2. Classification of Queensland submissions to The Parliamentary Inquiry into Senior Mathematics and Sciences Assessment based on stated profession. Blue: support change to use of marks and **state-wide exams**, Red: prefer social moderation, criteria marking and long written assignments. Green are undecided.

"In light of all the evidence about how ineffective progressive teaching methods are, you'd think they'd have been abandoned by now. But no. Every time a progressive theory is discredited, it resurfaces under a new name and masquerades as an 'innovation'... One of the most striking characteristics of *The Blob* – both in the sci-fi film and in the educational sense – is its ability to regenerate. For every educationalist that sees the light and recognises the importance of knowledge, another springs up in his place, spouting the same old jargon or 'eduspeak' ..." (p 11)

Why Education Experts Resist Effective Practices, And What It Would Take to Make Education More Like Medicine² by Prof. Douglas Carnine of University of Oregon, describes education as an immature profession:

"In education, the judgments of 'experts' frequently appear to be unconstrained and sometimes altogether unaffected by objective research. Many of these experts are so captivated by romantic ideas about learning or so blinded by ideology that they have closed their minds to the results of rigorous experiments.

Until education becomes the kind of profession that reveres evidence, we should not be surprised to find its experts dispensing unproven methods, endlessly flitting from one fad to another. The greatest victims of these fads are the very students who are most at risk." (p 1)

¹ [file://localhost/available free at http://www.civitas.org.uk/pdf/PrisonersofTheBlob.pdf](http://localhost/available free at http://www.civitas.org.uk/pdf/PrisonersofTheBlob.pdf)

² <http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/teach.profession.carnine.pdf>