



The Centre for the use of Research and Evidence in Education

# E-NEWS

CUREE E-NEWSLETTER: Christmas 2016 Edition

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## The Yule Log Book



Hang on, I hear you say, haven't I just had an e-news from you? Yes you have, we have sheepishly to reply. But that was the regular end of term communiqué full of serious and useful info. This, on the other hand, is the Xmas edition, light hearted and full of cheer! And I am going to try really hard to put an optimistic spin on escaping from the dark and turbulent 2016 into the sunny uplands of 2017. Let me know how I make out.

Well, as we sweep away the detritus of the last nativity/Christingle/Strictly Come Xmas/Stars in their Eyes performance of the season, how is the world shaping up for those of us who like to take their education with a light sprinkling of evidence? You could be forgiven for reaching for your anaesthetic of choice at the end of a year which saw the OED celebrate the

adjective 'post-truth' as it's word of the year - defined as "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief". Many commentators attribute this phenomenon to the echo chamber of social media in which people narrow down their frames of reference to encompass just those others who agree with them, and then turn the outrage dial up to 11 against any contrary view (just scroll down to the comments section on any Brexit-related article for examples). This of course plays straight into the hands of teachers keen to ban smart phones and their like from schools and is deeply upsetting to others who see in social media ways of making learning both more accessible and more relevant to young people's lives. And for all the potential ills in the virtual world, such as cyber-bullying, sexting and plain old ignoring-the-teacher, Snapchat, Facebook, WhatsApp and their kin may well be reducing the hazards IRL (in real life) through a steep decline in teenage pregnancy,

drug abuse and violent crime. So, a score draw then.

The larger political world seems to be dominated by what I call 'sod-you' votes (at least in the USA and UK) in which a sufficient proportion of the electorate appear to choose the fantasy promises of post-truth candidates providing they can stick one on the establishment candidate at the same time. By contrast, in England we have the establishment apparently determined to foist a grammar school solution onto an unwilling public and profession – in the face of the overwhelming evidence that this is A BAD THING. More promisingly and by contrast – and beyond the baleful reach of No 10 – we seem to be witnessing a growth in evidence-informed practice from the ground up (on which more below) Also coming alive this year has been the research school concept – given capital letters by the **Education Endowment Foundation** but given birth by visionary school leaders and teachers who recognise that great schools offer the staff great professional learning opportunities and that finding out something you don't know already is a stretching performance management target.

I for one, take cheer from this and from the experience of working with these schools, with 3rd sector organisations picking up the baton of evidence-based practice and with the newly emerging champions of independent professionalism such as the College of Teaching.

So, have a relaxing holiday; if you expect to eat and drink too much, reassure yourself with **this article in the Sun** about why fat is good for you, and don't forget to see your friends and get some fresh air – preferably all at the same time.

**Merry Christmas**

**Y Log**

## **The Ig Noble Awards**

CUREE colleagues know only too well how dry and serious the process of research can be – just ask anyone who has had to calculate 'p' values for a series of variables if they can see the funny side. So it gives us great pleasure when an opportunity to have a bit of a laugh about research. Therefore, as has become tradition, we are happy to offer congratulations to all of this year's Ig Nobel Prize Award winners for their sterling work. We offer hearty thanks to the following individuals, teams, and organizations in particular:

- Volkswagen (Chemistry Prize), for solving the problem of excessive automobile pollution emissions by automatically, electromechanically producing fewer emissions whenever the cars are being tested.

- Debey et al (Psychology Prize), for asking a thousand liars how often they lie, and for deciding whether to believe those answer.

- Charles Foster and Thomas Thwaites (Biology Prize), for, respectively, living in the wild as, at different times, a badger, an otter, a deer, a fox, and a bird, and; for creating prosthetic extensions of his limbs that allowed him to move in the manner of, and spend time roaming hills in the company of, goats (no mention is made of whether Mr Foster also made use of prosthesis, but if not our hats go off to him).

And

- Atsuki Higashiyama and Kohei Adachi (Perception Prize), for investigating whether things look different when you bend over and view them between your legs.

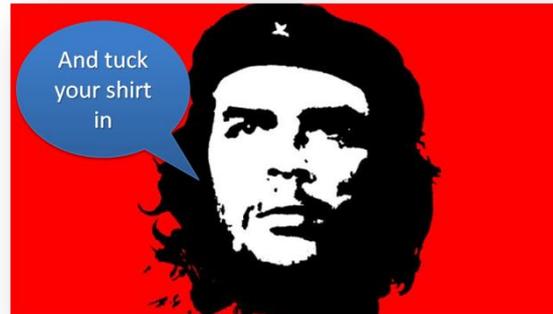


Superb efforts in the field of esoteric research all.

Bart Crisp

## Research Informed Teaching - The Guerrilla Movement

At a time when the **UK press routinely beats up the education system** for not being a monocultural city state in the Far East, it's nice to be able to reflect on something we do which stands head and shoulders above other systems. I refer to the willingness of classroom teachers and school leaders to engage with and learn from research. I've attended two international conferences this year in The Hague and Copenhagen where members of the **EIPPIEE Network** met to explore the impact of research on education



policy and practice. After a while, those of us from England had to bite our thumbs to keep quiet lest we sounded arrogant by offering yet another example of how this or that evidence informed initiative was being implemented here. Even in those bits of Europe we think of as being quite like us (e.g. the Nordic lot I **wrote about last Xmas**) don't feel they can get their teachers to think about the evidence much and only if it's built firmly into the working day.

And the stand out feature in our system is the guerrilla movement of teachers committing evenings and weekends to learn from research and from each other. Bubbling along in modest ways for years, the movement really took off around three years ago when Tom Bennett and Helene Galdin-O'shea were egged on by Sam Freedman to convene what turned into the first **ResearchED** event. This was followed by some regional events, then some build around specific topics (e.g. literacy) or particular roles (research leads), and more recently similar events in New York, Sydney and Stockholm. The ResearchED approach has been adopted by **#LearningFirst** which also began as a Tweeted idea by **Alison Peacock**. Both share a genesis in a notion being floated in social media (both Twitter as it happens) and it's probably true that this 'flash mob' (or, for the more mature, "let's put the show on right here!") responsiveness would not have been possible before social media became a mass phenomenon - ironic really given the widespread dislike by teachers of social media in the classroom!

A second key characteristic has been the communal nature of the enterprise. Both organisers and contributors work pro bono, the participants are generally attending in their free time and the venues are mostly free too (with charges generally paying for direct costs like catering and hired equipment). This is probably not viable over the longer term if the model gets embedded and a sustainable infrastructure is needed. But, for the time being, some of these costs are being covered by sponsorship.



Not surprisingly given our **mission**, CUREE has been an enthusiastic supporter of this guerrilla movement since it began. We have participated in all the national ResearchED conferences and many regional ones. We have provided sponsorship and

helped local organisers put events together. You can find some of the resources we've contributed on the ResearchED website (e.g. search for 'cordingley' [here](#)) and on our own site [here](#) (search for 'Researched'). Now we are contributing in a similar way to the LearningFirst movement. This has proved, to our delight, to be more than a passing fad and we look forward to an even more bumper year in 2017 and beyond.

**Paul Crisp**

## Real Sauce for a Real Goose

Readers familiar with CUREE's little foibles will know that we are a tiny bit over the top on goose analogies. We like the way they collaborate with each other to share the burden of leadership when flying and we like the name of the shape they make when doing it (skein). The "what's 'sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander" is an expression we use a lot and we've used it as a publication title

**And - we have an actual sauce for goose (chicken, nut roast etc) which we really like and can heartily recommend**

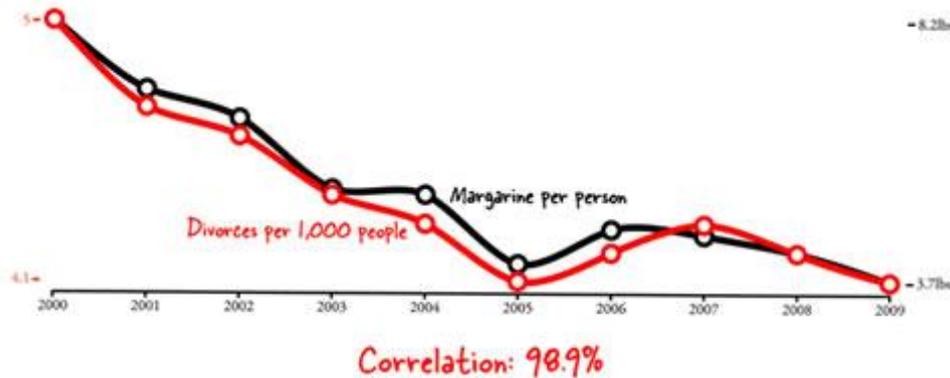
### ***Apple, Ginger and Green Chilli Sauce***

- 4 large cloves of garlic, peeled
- 1-2 inch (2.5-5 cm) piece of fresh ginger, peeled 2 fresh green chillies, seeds removed 1.5lb (675g) cooking apples (usually Bramley) juice of 1 lemon 6 tablespoons (6 x 15 ml spoon) natural yoghurt 2 tablespoons (2 x 15 ml spoon) caster sugar 2 tablespoons (2 x 15 ml spoon) soy sauce a handful of chopped fresh coriander (mint or parsley can be used instead)
- 60-75 ml goose or duck fat (or any vegetable oil) Chop the peeled garlic, fresh ginger and chillies together finely.
- Peel, core and slice the apples.
- Take 4-5 tablespoons (4-5 x 15ml spoon) goose (or duck) fat (or vegetable oil) and heat this to medium heat in a flameproof casserole dish or heavy saucepan.
- Add the chopped garlic, fresh ginger and chillies and stir for 30 seconds.
- Add the sliced apples, stir and then cover the dish.
- Add the lemon juice, and season with salt.
- Cover the pan again and cook over a low heat for 20-25 minutes, until the apples are fairly mushy.
- Stir in the yogurt and remove from the heat until ready to eat.
- When ready to serve reheat the apple mixture gently and stir in the chopped coriander, mint or parsley leaves. If eating this with a roast, pour off any more fat from the pan juices; then season them to taste and use as gravy.
- The apple mixture should be spooned on top of the carved goose (or duck or chestnuts!) on your plate.



**Paul Crisp**

## Careful what you put on your bread! Margarine caused divorce



As this graph clearly shows, use of margarine leads to divorce but happily both have been in decline (in the USA at least) for the last decade.

NB – Statistics 101: correlation is not causation

## The 2016 Christmas Quiz!

Answers on a postcard time - it's the CUREE Christmas Quiz!

1. According to an old wives' tale, bread baked on which day will never go mouldy?
2. Which beloved, quiet little man passed away on Christmas Day 1977?
3. In which European country does a kindly witch named La Befana deliver childrens' Christmas presents?
4. What is the first line (or 2 lines) to the Christmas song 'Let It Snow, Let It Snow, Let It Snow'?
5. In an old nursery rhyme, who "sat in the corner eating his Christmas pie"?
6. Which former Hollywood child star and US ambassador once said "I stopped believing in Santa Claus when I was six. Mother took me to see him in a department store and he asked me for my autograph."
7. What kind of 'bread' is traditional at German Christmas markets?
8. Which chart topping Christmas song from Bony M was originally recorded by Harry Belafonte in 1956?
9. The communist dictatorship of which European country came to a bloody end on Christmas Day 1989?
10. Which critically acclaimed film about King Henry II takes place over the Christmas holidays in the year 1183?

[Check your answers here](#)

Maggie Stafford

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