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**January 2021**

## Bev's Findings - Continued

### Summary

COVID-19 has moved us into the next normal and accelerated the emphasis on digital and critical literacies. These trends for new skills and competencies emerging in a digitized, automated, linked and diverse workplace continue to influence education and learning. Tomorrow's workers will likely face temporary, project-based activities with less security and more collaboration and interaction albeit remotely via the cloud (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2015)[1]. We need to embed global competencies in the formal and informal curriculum and re-think and refine collaboration between system/school leaders, teachers, students and parents and their communities. Educators can be agents of change. This requires commitment and involvement from all stakeholders (Fullan & Gallagher, 2020).

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[1] More given the realities of COVID-19

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This is a continuation of the Readathon reviews linked to a theme on the nature of reality and truth in a complex world.

**Belief**
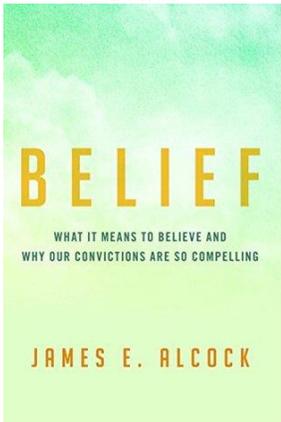
York University's James Alcock has put decades of study into his 1918 Prometheus Books publication *Belief: What It Means To Believe and Why Our Convictions Are So Compelling.* He offers confirming takes on many of the issues raised in the earlier books reviewed in the previous Newsletter.

Reality is complicated and at best we understand only parts of it. Our interpretations and actions may be based on these "realities" or may be unintentional or deliberate distortions. Due to our large, complex brains, and our use of language, we developed a level of consciousness thousands of years ago that came to dwarf that of other animals. We have created entire systems of abstraction or imagined realities- religions and faith traditions, cultures, nation states, economics and money, culture and our notions (c.f., Gardner) of truth, beauty, and goodness. So we come to BELIEVE and such beliefs inspire us to action or non-action. His book begins by looking at those who die for their beliefs, answering Hamlet's question "To be or not to be". Factors may be personal or societal, for health or ideology, or religion, or...?

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Belief comes from many sources, none of which is perfect. Is seeing really believing or can we be fooled; c.f., WYSIATI? Our memories are also far from complete or even accurate on occasion. Think of histories as sets of collective or personal memoirs (not memories) triggered by documents and photographs. Remember the WYSIATI fallacy applied to written documents, even though writing things down helps us to accurately reconstruct memories we choose to select and thus believe. What is the effect of learning new things or reviewing previous learning due to our beliefs? How do emotional experiences affect our beliefs? What role does "trust" play in shaping, keeping, or revising our beliefs ("fake" news)?

Sections in this work examine the complexities among beliefs, truths, and other aspects of how we act when it comes to rumours, community stories, health, and medicine. There is also a chapter on beliefs many of us find strange such as UFOs and aliens, ghosts and haunting, energy fields, fire walking, and the Bermuda Triangle. Some wonderful quotes cause you to think about thinking: What is it? How does it really work? What or who shapes it? If the belief is not based on truth, a complex thing as we have noted, or if acting on the belief causes harm, how can it be changed?

We believe in all sorts of things and may, if we are not careful, confuse imagination (which has often resulted in great achievements e.g., flying) and reality. Remember that modern scientific thinking has only been around a few centuries and there are still large numbers of people who do not accept scientific beliefs. *Belief* concludes with 8 tips to "build a firewall against folly". In addition to ideas cited in other works in this review he notes how in Scottish jurisprudence there is, in addition to the "guilty" or "not guilty" verdict, Scottish juries that can declare a verdict of "not proven".

When you put the ideas of all of the Readathon books together, what are the implications for classroom teaching and learning?

John Myers