

Self & SOCIETY

Editorial



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It is a pleasure to be co-editing this edition of *Self and Society*. Our intention has been to represent and celebrate the depth and breadth of humanistic psychology practice within education. Because the traditional territory of humanistic psychology is in areas of mental health, clinical practice and the broad range of therapeutic interventions working to heal distress, and to restore and revive our holistic selves, education has therefore perhaps taken a bit of a back seat. There are reasons for this. The regulatory framework of UKCP accreditation which provides a professional framework and recognition for therapists and practitioners has led to much more visibility and income potential for therapeutic work than any other.

There is much less recognition of the benefit of using humanistic and person centred education practices and interventions to inspire and encourage learning. In fact it is a very hard road to follow. The context and policy frameworks for UK state education continue to be confined and repressed by traditional quantitative and regulated approaches; holistic student centred approaches are squeezed out in the pursuit of cognitive evaluative practice and research. Both of us have experienced the stress and depression that results from working in highly toxic education environments which have only valued our brains, neglecting and disregarding our spirits, emotions, bodies and souls. It is therefore with joy and delight that we have brought together these examples of work in the field of education.

We have chosen to invite colleagues at the early stages of their careers to share their writing; and how fresh and insightful they are, reminding us anew of core skills of listening, staying quiet and the importance of reflection and supervision. How wonderful it is to hear that snow prompted spontaneity for Elliot and led to an impromptu rap session which then developed into quite inspired teaching of vocal creativity and confidence through performance. Mel's action research project, identifying the value of the affective elements in work based learning and their recognised importance in employment, provides hope into the future too. The challenges faced, met and learned from in Kristian's songwriting workshops in prison illustrate hope, and remind us how important it surely is to provide a glimmer of person centred education amid the tedium of spending 23 hours a day locked up in a cell.

We also both offer our own very personal reflections on our work as educators and educational developers in an effort to explore how humanistic psychology affects and informs our practice.

Our thanks to all the regular contributors and to David for letting us loose with this edition. We look forward to receiving your feedback.

Sue Orton & Neill Thew

Sue and Neill are both based near Brighton. They work - together and separately - in person centred education development and training - including teacher training, facilitation skills, course design and evaluation, workshop facilitation and mentoring.

You can find more on Sue's work - Comfortable Shoes: Learning in Action - at www.comfortableshoes.ltd.uk



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Awakening

Life sits in our hands,
an object we have forgotten the use of -
a quill pen, a nutmeg grater -
or a toy played with once,

a wooden fire-engine
whose people, coloured differently,
all with the same face,
fit peg-like in their round slots.

What did I see in that? we ask,
what is it for? turning it over,
wishing we could ignore
the feel of its reality,

could remember why ink
or nutmeg or the wooden people
should matter to us so much.
Then we give up

and for an instant fall back
into the space we always knew
and always forget we know.

Elaine Taylor