

## Whole Person Learning

### The Evolution of Whole Person Learning

The human potential movement and humanistic psychology provides the basis for an experiential approach to learning that puts participants and their own process central to the learning they achieve. It seeks ways to enable them to learn how to 'use' themselves', (the 'self' that is theirs, that is), in their various roles and relations. It is a whole-person approach, which sees the mind/body split as largely artificial and which is interested in enhancing the individual's ability to take increasing personal responsibility for his or her own well-being. Core to this approach is the ability of the person to know themselves and to learn how to know themselves.

### The Purpose of Education

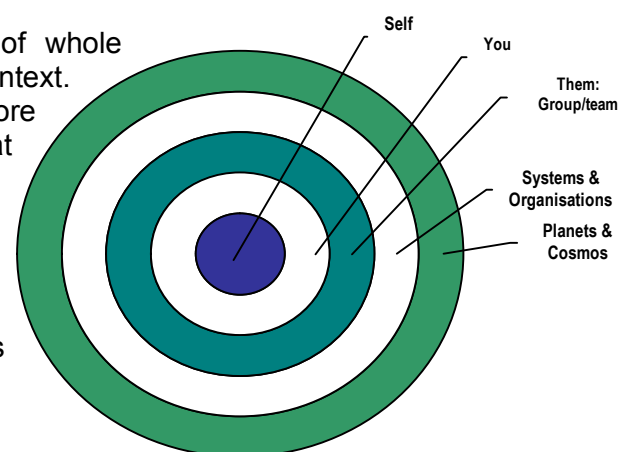
Traditionally, education is a means of preparing citizens to take up a responsible role in their society. Qualifications are the general measure and intellectual grasp the demonstrated means to progress. To become a person in such a world is to learn the rules and 'fit in'.

Increasingly, in a global context where there are no rules or where systems and ways of operating are in question, individuals need to develop higher levels of autonomy. They need a stronger sense of self whilst being able to shape the future collaboratively in a way that honours and respects the others involved.

### The Inter-dependence of Persons

The human being exists in a network of relationships, interconnecting arrangements and interdependent systems. We are born incomplete and unfinished. The human individual is unique and unrepeatable. I need you to become you in order for me to also become me. We need each other to become more than we currently are. Persons are persons only in so far as they are persons in relationship.

*Relationship* is at the heart of the enterprise of whole person learning. There is always me, you and a context. Which one of us can know which is the more important and influential upon our endeavours at any given moment? Often it is what we do not yet know that is influencing what is happening. The *peer principle* is the foundation of all authentic and genuine human meeting. There are at least five major areas of influence to which the person relates: Self, You, Them: Group/Team, Systems and Organisation, Planet and Cosmos.



## Working with the Whole Person

This is an approach that seeks to bring together:

1. The background of context together with an understanding of the nature of personhood.
2. Creating suitable learning tasks that are selected and chosen in collaboration with the learner to enhance their functioning toward the goal of a more complete personhood.
3. Fostering and living out in practice a more responsible engagement with the nature of effective participation in the human order and the planetary sphere.

Individuals (when viewed as persons) have a right to play a part in those decisions which affect them. The aspiration of an educator to promote personhood immediately transforms the nature of the relationship between the educator and those taking part in the learning. They stand together as joint creators of the educational enterprise – each with different contributions but with contributions of *equal worth*. The educational endeavour then is not so much about participation as *collaboration* and the *process* of the learning becomes every bit as much a source of learning as the content.

## Facilitating Whole Person Learning

One of the great dilemmas of a more whole person learning approach is that when it works it is clear that there is little for the facilitator to do - it can appear all too easy. Only when the work breaks down, the individual and group get caught up in some procedural wrangle, some interpersonal conflict or is unable to manage someone's distress-distorted activity does the facilitator appear to be needed. At such a time the facilitator has to find responses that are not anxiety-laden or distress-determined in themselves, and that help indicate just how much personal self-awareness is required to hold a challenge or meet a manipulative demand.

It is not an approach that has years of history such as teaching or committee management, yet there are centres of practice that mirror whole person learning. It calls for new skills and openness to developing new ways of working, reflecting the same challenges we are asking others to face and engage with in the wider world.

**This paper is a summary of a radical education approach that is explored more fully in a publication, [Whole Person Learning](#), by Bryce Taylor, available from Oasis Press ([yvonne@oasishumanrelations.org.uk](mailto:yvonne@oasishumanrelations.org.uk)), and facilitated through Oasis development processes.**

**The Oasis School offer an international programme in relation to [Whole Person Learning Facilitation and Practice](#).**

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