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ABSTRACT

“Tall, Dark, Handsome and No.1”: education and change through the creative use of ‘self-as-instrument’ By Nick Mayhew

This ‘paper’ – part performance, part reflection – will invoke and review a mixed-media learning intervention, which has evolved via business school, organisational development intervention and secondary school settings to stimulate potent forms of triple-loop inquiry into issues of sustainable development, corporate/personal responsibility and change-agent capacity-building over the last 16 years.

Starting with the call for educators to engage students as potential ‘change agents’ - *participating* in ‘the challenge of sustainable development’, rather than merely consuming objective knowledge about it from a distance (Reason 2002) - this contribution will model a performative mode of knowing and teaching, using ‘self-as-instrument’ (Cheung-Judge 2001). There is a move towards a more participative form of engagement with, and transmission of, the ecology of nature and ‘mind’ (Bateson 1972), as well as modelling a unique form of pedagogy-as-change-agency *and* change agent capacity-building .

Behind this work are questions of identity, power and ‘soul’ - and the role of the academy in conveying ‘participative’ forms of ‘truth’, articulated in ways that are both liberating, yet conducive to growing transformed forms of relational responsibility (Gergen et al 1999).

The presentation negotiates a route through a post-modern, autobiographical territory of confused identity, relative truths and playful creativity (Hebdige 1987) towards more demanding, systemic understandings derived from the profound system healing work of Hellinger (1999) It also models how Scharmer’s ‘U process’ can compliment such a performative mode – enabling learners to enter into a ‘liminal’, not-knowing phase, before then accessing a more true and creative relationship with their sense of ‘how things could be’ and their potential role within that (2005).

The ‘paper’ concludes by posing the key question for ongoing research: ‘what options are there for gauging and conceptualising the potency of this educational approach, and how might it be reproduced to grow change-agency for sustainable development at scale?’.

Nick Mayhew graduated in Social Anthropology from Cambridge University, before working as a research fellow at the Jerome Levy Economics Institute in New York. He currently works as a change consultant and is seeking a Visiting Research Fellowship to support this work.