

International Practice Development Journal

Online Journal of FoNS in association with the IPDC (ISSN 2046-9292)



COMMENTARY

Human flourishing through body, creative imagination and reflection

Paul McIntosh

Before I get into the body of this commentary I firstly need to declare something of a bias. The content and writing genre of this article are an area where in recent years the majority of my own scholarly work and research has focused, so firstly it is heartening to receive such an article to commentate on.

What this paper does is to push the envelope about the ways in which professional development can be conceptualised as a form of scholarly endeavour and applied to research or 'real-life' practice. As a piece of literature, it is of a different and important quality to the standard forms of scientific or technical rational forms of writing that predominate – themselves a result of an obsession with particular types of 'evidence'. What I mean by this is that it has an intellectual quality to it that is often lacking in those purporting to be conducted through 'gold standard' research such as RCTs etc.

However, because of this it also presents a number of problems. Firstly because it is very 'left field' it may not make sense to those new to the concepts or who are unfamiliar with the language and terms used. Secondly the transference of the concepts into real practice may appear to be too great a challenge for those with less years of scholarly immersion and expertise into this area of inquiry and development. What I also struggled with at times was the clear focus of this piece as the methodology described at times appears interchangeable between social research, critical creativity and professional development. Perhaps it is, but this needs to be applied discreetly I imagine in practical useage. What would be a disappointment would be if this work and its ideas were to be lost because of misconceptions of its value and the perceived difficulties of implementation.

Some points that stand out as areas for some development for me include better connections between the discussion on page 4 around human flourishing not being part of contemporary discourse and the summary around how the methods can be used in practical terms. There are no real practical examples given of how such methods can be used in ways which are quick and effective whilst operating in busy environments. Perhaps some relating to De Bono's 'creative pauses' might be useful here. Sadly, for a significant number of clinicians I think this paper may be viewed as introspective and overly indulgent if there are no real practical ways in which they can engage in the ideas discussed.

I also wonder about some of the terms used that the audience may not be familiar with, such as mandalas and their archetypal form. These may need to be explained more as I imagine that a reasonable proportion of the readership will not be familiar with the Jungian or archetypal psychology which underpins this.

As a piece of literature and as a set of personal stories of transformation I really enjoyed reading this paper. I think it would benefit from some further working up of the principles in practical ways for

busy practitioners. As with much theory development, the expectation that practitioners can make quite a substantial leap from the abstraction of theory to applying it in context , for example on a busy medical ward is probably unreasonable.

My recommendation is to accept this theoretical advancement but with some conditions; that it is developed to be more accessible to an audience less familiar with critical scholarship and more grounded in practical application; work which the authors are probably planning to attend to.

Paul McIntosh (PhD, PGCE, MSc, BSc Hons, RNMH), Research Fellow, Queen Mary University of London, UK.