

Centring Humanity in Legal Education: a classroom experience

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Overview

Aims and Purpose

- Reflect and take stock
- Interrogate your own practice as a legal educator

Content

- The stages of legal qualification
- Recent trends in UK higher education
- Classroom experiences and pedagogy
- Theories of teaching
- The legal context
- Why does it matter?

The stages of legal qualification in the UK

- Academic stage
 - 3 to 4 years, traditional requirement of a “qualifying law degree” (QLD)
- Professional qualification stage
 - Recent changes: SQE and BTC
- Vocational training stage
 - Work-based training

Focusing on the academic stage

Foundations of Legal Knowledge:

- Criminal Law
- Equity and Trusts
- Law of the European Union
- Obligations 1 (Contract)
- Obligations 2 (Tort)
- Property/Land Law
- Public Law (Constitutional Law, Administrative Law and Human Rights Law)

Recent trends in UK higher education

- **Decolonising the curriculum**

- Definition by Katy P. Sian (2019), p.98:

“Calls to decolonize the curriculum seek to introduce different histories, alternative philosophies, and broader concepts, which combine to displace, or rather, decentre, Eurocentric thought and practice within the academy.”

- Suhraiya Jivraj (2020)

- Foluke Adebisi (2020)

- **Compassion-based approaches**

- Theo Gilbert (2017)

Pedagogy: going further

- Self-identify and self-locate
- Meet on an equal basis
- Extend invitations for connection
- Allow oneself to be seen
- Set the standard

Education as the Practice of Freedom

The work of bell hooks and Paulo Freire

- The need to enter into dialogue
- The role of love
- Instructors need to be willing to be vulnerable in the class-room to be fully present
- Connection between university knowledge and life practices
- Classroom dynamics are a collective responsibility

Law and Love

- The enemy of reason?
- Law, justice and love as correlative and complementary: “the imperative of a sentimental education” (Julia Shaw, 2020)

The background features several large, light-orange, curved segments arranged in a circular pattern, resembling a stylized 'S' or a series of connected arcs. These segments are positioned around the central text.

Why does it matter?

Investigation launched after black barrister mistaken for defendant three times in a day

England and Wales courts head apologises after Alexandra Wilson describes having to 'constantly justify existence'



📷 Alexandra Wilson said she was 'absolutely exhausted' after what had happened. Photograph: MMLA

The head of the courts service in England and Wales has apologised to a black barrister after she was stopped and mistaken for a defendant three

<https://www.theguardian.com/law/2020/sep/24/investigation-launched-after-black-barrister-mistaken-for-defendant-three-times-in-a-day>



<https://www.coventry.ac.uk/globalassets/media/global/08-new-research-section/cawr/cawr-policy-briefs/pregnant-women-in-prison-report-final.pdf>

Girl tried to kill herself after strip-search by Met officers, mother says

Mother says she believes 'racial stereotyping' was a factor in her mixed-race daughter's case



📷 The Met said an investigation was under way to 'determine the appropriateness of the search and the way that it was conducted'. Photograph: Kirsty O'Connor/PA

A 15-year-old girl of mixed white and black ethnicity was so traumatised after being strip-searched by **Metropolitan police** officers that she tried to kill herself, her mother has said.

Olivia, not her real name, was menstruating when she was handcuffed and

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/may/24/girl-tried-to-kill-herself-after-strip-search-by-met-officers-mother-says>

Where do we go from here?

“What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive, and that love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love. And this is what we must see as we move on.”

- Dr Martin Luther King, Jr., 1967

<https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/where-do-we-go-here>

Thank you.

References

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