

My time at Melbourne Rudolf Steiner Teacher Training

A journey into the realms of childhood, imagination, and wholeness

By Alexander Paz

I was in my final year of my Arts Degree at Monash studying social sciences (Sociology and Anthropology) when the idea of becoming a teacher first began to form in my mind as a possible career trajectory. My university course was chosen out of a desire to further my education and to find a vocation that I truly love. But my problem was that I didn't have a clue what I wanted to do with my life! I had been a high achiever through school, receiving DUX of my school in year 12. My experience of life as a young adult felt discordant to the success that my high grades had supposedly implied. Like many people I knew who had succeeded in high grades through school, I felt a disconnect between my school foundations, and the kind of skills and understandings that would enable me to thrive in life outside of the school system. I felt like a "big head" walking around in the world, disconnected from my deeper self, disconnected from tradition, nature, history, and culture. My education had excelled at teaching me to deconstruct the world, to analyse and dissect ideas, and to see things from multiple points of view. Where it left me hanging by late university, was in my real sense of feeling lost.

This existential dilemma of feeling displaced from myself, from nature, and from a cohesive ideal to orient my life by, made me question the education I had received through the Victorian State System. I questioned the purpose of education and felt that the role of school was to prepare children for life beyond school, not just to teach them to be good at school. At this time of exploring the possibility of becoming a teacher, I came across the teacher training at Melbourne Rudolf Steiner Seminar. I was exploring alternative models of teaching; seeking to find more holistic practices, and a model that catered to the whole human being growing up integrated, connected, and in a state of flow with the world.

From the outset, the Seminar located at the Michael Centre appeared different to anything I'd previously seen in education. The teacher training was emersed in bushland; the sound of birds whistled through the winds, I could smell cherry blossom and eucalyptus in the air, and the buildings and student work on display conveyed the message of beauty, reverence, and a sense of deep connection with life. I thought: "this place is an education for *being* – not just a place for earning another certificate!".

The following year I began my training to become a Steiner Teacher. We sang at the beginning of every day, learning to sing in harmonies and rounds. Each day included being immersed in the arts: music, dance, storytelling, recorder playing, painting, sculpture, knitting and more. The way these artistic pursuits were taught at the Seminar gave me the experience that artistic work can facilitate healing and wholeness. Whilst painting, sculpting, weaving, knitting, I was also processing feelings, and discovering deeper levels of connection with myself and the world.

The teacher training took me on a journey into my own childhood and across my biography – helping me to discover common themes, deep inner strivings, challenges, and an emergent sense of my self-defined purpose in life, both personally and professionally. As we explored Anthroposophy in great depth, I came to appreciate a broader vision of humanity than I had previously known about. I discovered an upwelling of reverence and wonder towards my own Western culture, where previously my education had only left an impression of the corruption of the West and its imposition on other cultures. At the Michael Centre I found a balance to that shadow side: a sense of deep spirituality and directionality in the Western program towards freedom, individuality, and higher expressions of love.

The Melbourne Rudolf Steiner Seminar gave me the understanding that children are not just little adults. During my two-year Advanced Diploma of Rudolf Steiner Education, I developed a deeply nuanced appreciation for the realms of childhood and the many ways that children evolve through stages of consciousness and priorities of learning in terms of their balanced integration and wholeness. This developmental understanding informs everything that I do as a teacher – helping me to make school into a place that my students are excited to attend each day.

I have been a Steiner teacher for three years now. I work in a Steiner-stream school in Melbourne where this year I have been teaching Class 2. I absolutely LOVE my job! I have students regularly tell me on a Friday how they wish they didn't have to wait two more days to come back to school again! My Anthroposophical education has enabled me to enter the wonder and imagination of childhood, and from this place of inspiration, to engage my students in their intrinsic motivation to learn and apply themselves with focus. I have come to believe that our natural state is to love learning and to be deeply curious and engaged with the world. I see my job as facilitating my students to unfold so that they can fulfil their highest intentions for being here.

I can't imagine a more meaningful career than the opportunity to facilitate children in finding their balance, their connection with the world, and the joy of their unique expression, so that they can live each moment with increasing reverence, wonder and awe. I believe these children have gifts to bring to the world, and it is my role as their teacher to help them discover their gifts and to facilitate them to blossom into their fullness.

If you are looking for something more out of life, if you're seeking something different than what you've done before, something deeper, something that can make a difference for you and all those who you engage with: then the Advanced Diploma at Melbourne Rudolf Steiner Seminar is worth seriously considering. I cannot recommend this course enough to prospective teachers, parents, and seekers of meaning and wholeness. This course offers not only a doorway into a fantastic vocation. It also offers the kind of education that many of us missed out on in our own schooling; the kind of education that facilitates us as adults to feel an inner connection with life, with our deepest self, and with a sense of self-defined purpose and meaning. That kind of education is truly priceless.