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Decolonising Relationships and Partnerships for Social Justice

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7

Decolonizing Relationships and Partnerships for Social Justice

Introduction

Education is often posited as a route to social justice and equality. However, as history shows, educational institutions are far from inclusive (Abegglen & Bustillos, 2021) and education, rather than facilitating equity, serves to reproduce society as it is with all its injustices (Althusser, 2012). Since the late 1990s in the UK, HE was supposed to operate a conscious anti-racist widening participation agenda, actively reaching out to, and recruiting those traditionally excluded from or unwelcome within traditional university spaces. Critical commentators have noted that rather than develop a more inclusive HE with a wider vocabulary and more creative practices, what has emerged is a more exclusive HE (Molinari, 2022) with some universities, courses and students more highly valued than others:

> The point is that by celebrating your 'otherness' without addressing the historical circumstances that created that 'other' as an inferior in the wider public arena, you run the risk of becoming embroiled in a fruitless tautological endeavour, such as debating whether 'all lives matter'.
>
> (Henry, 2021, 32)

Critics such as Noble (2003) argue that hand in hand with the promoted 'opening up' of HE has been the increasing commodification, bureaucratization and micromanaging of its processes and practices, with course development and pedagogic decision-making the first casualties. For the lecturer in this climate, teaching becomes the management-directed assemblance of the course into packages of decontextualized 'things': learning outcomes, syllabi, lessons and exams. The outcome is offered for sale in the marketplace if sufficient numbers of students are willing to subscribe, and if their future salaries are predicted to meet government-defined acceptable levels (Office for Students, 2022). Thus, teachers become producers, students become consumers and their relationship takes on not 'education, but a shadow of education, an assemblance of pieces without a whole' (Noble, 2003, 4).

More recently, academia has been shaken by the reverberations of Indigenous activism and the Black Lives Matter movement, leading to renewed calls for anti-racist

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practice and to 'decolonize the curriculum' for equity, and to acknowledge diversity in all its facets and forms. This has seeded opportunities for reflection, introspection and action. Whilst diversity and inclusion will differ according to geographic contexts, and 'decolonizing' has multiple meanings (from challenging the normalcy of empire, to enabling all students to see themselves within the curriculum, to creating active pedagogy that ensures all students are framed as actors and agents within their own learning process), universities as a whole and academics individually and collectively have been spurred to reimagine curriculum, pedagogy and practice in response to these additional and very urgent provocations.

In this section we include chapters that explore and discuss the various ways in which the practitioners have attempted to address historical and more recently created injustices within HE and thus to 'decolonize' relationships as they collaborate for action for social justice.

The Case Study Chapters

In *Coming in Together*, Ryan Arthur and Nahid Huda discuss their 'decolonizing' induction process designed to disrupt negative assumptions made about students. Their collaborative approach reveals the power of authentic dialogic activities that acknowledge students' socio-cultural histories. They argue that these cooperative learning activities need to be continued in and through the curriculum if, rather than passive enculturation, we are to facilitate openness to and engagement in 'emergent' academic processes.

With *Unite and Unrule!* Cybele Atme, Pauline Bon, Mila de Graaf, Daniel Haudenschild, Mieke Lopes Cardozo, Melina Merdanovic and Eleonore Nouel discuss their self-organized Masters course: Critical Development and Diversity Explorations that sits within International Development Studies. Seeded by an occupation in 2015 that called for a radical reimagining of the university itself, they moved on as a collective to experiment with co-creation as means to develop a more creative, innovative and collaborative space to enact (in)direct transformations in the larger HE system. Inspired by insights from critical, contemplative, social justice and relational pedagogy, they highlight two interrelated features of their co-creation approach to developing transgressive learning spaces: relational learning beyond individualism, and reflective and self-directed learning beyond competition – with an informative example of their practice that is adaptable for many HE contexts.

In *Honest Conversations about 'Race' and Racisim* Anthony Kalume and Jess Moriarty raise the issue of institutionlized racism in HE and explain how their anti-racist cultural project was designed to create the space, place, networks and research necessary to design an innovative, community-based module to challenge and change negative experiences and dominant discourses around Black and Minority Ethnic (staff and) students in HE. In the process of their collaboration, Anthony and Jess created a cultural project in which it was possible to have open and honest conversations about 'race' and racism, and the practices (and allyship) crucial to dismantling institutionalized racism in HE.

In *Love, Respect, Esteem*, Vikki Hill and Louise Taylor offer two examples of student partnership projects that address educational inequalities in relation to

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transition, attainment and belonging. The projects, that focused on challenging and changing racial inequity of outcome and treatment in HE, were designed iteratively with students over time, a collaborative approach that challenged power hierarchies and built relationships for change. They applied Honneth's Theory of Recognition as a framework to explain and argue for the relational complexities of the approach taken in their projects – both with respect to project design and to implementation as well as the outcomes achieved. Love, respect and esteem appear essential to develop equal and successful partnerships.

With *Inclusive Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*, Uzma A. Siddiqui reveals how collaboration between teachers and students can enhance engagement and participation amongst a socially and culturally diverse cohort of Health and Social Care students, thereby promoting social justice through co-creation. Seeking to address a lack of student participation and engagement with course content, a pilot session was redesigned with students, adopting a collaborative approach where students led the session and teachers acted as co-learners/facilitators. Evaluation indicated increased teacher-student communication, higher level of engagement with the subject material and inclusive student-student interaction through improved participation amongst a diverse student cohort. Student-teacher collaboration as curriculum partners is strongly recommended as a way of realizing students' added value in designing their own learning and increasing all students' engagement.

Tess Czerski, Jana Finke, Cybele Atme and Mieke Lopes Cardozo give us a practical example of *Teaching for Equality and the Politics of Feminist and Decolonial Education*. The course was created through the collaboration of junior and senior colleagues to contest normalized and normative notions of education and de-centre dominant teaching practices and curriculum. The pedagogic space was designed to move all participants from polarized debate to collaboration for change – via the collective lenses of the student 'education change' interventions. The authors acknowledge that transgressive practices can create discomfort for all concerned and emphasize the need to revert to practices of care and responsibility within the whole classroom, by both students and teachers/facilitators.

Coming in Together: Staff-student Collaboration in a 'Decolonizing' Induction Process

Ryan Arthur and Nahid Huda

- Current induction programmes and processes are rooted in assumptions made about students as 'lacking' and needing guidance. Arguably, this can lead to remedial or monologic approaches when planning induction sessions.
- Our collaborative approach reveals the power of authentic dialogic induction activities that invite students to immerse themselves in the learning process.

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- The significance of students' socio-cultural histories is important in establishing a welcoming and inclusive learning environment that is relevant to all participants.
- Inviting students to collaborate and co-construct knowledge via dialogic learning activities facilitates openness to and engagement in 'emergent' academic processes – rather than passive enculturation.

Introduction

Every year, universities welcome a new cohort of students. The first stop on their 'voyage of University discovery' is usually a 'welcome day', which is part of the wider 'orientation process' or 'induction process' (Cock et al., 2008). The induction process is a 'ubiquitous intervention' by universities designed to help new students adjust to their degree programme (Cock et al., 2008, 37; Richardson & Tate, 2013). They are widely recognized as being a 'valuable instrument in the integration process' (Cock et al., 2008, 37; Richardson & Tate, 2013). However, this 'integration' is a one-way street. Welcome events often epitomize 'banking', that is, those who deliver these events 'issue communiqués and make deposits which the students patiently receive' (Freire, 1996, 53). This was the case in the post-1992 university where the authors delivered their collaborative induction session. The observations of the authors were confirmed by Curran (2016) who evaluated the induction process in the same university. He found a similar scenario in which students felt that the university said to them: 'This is us – get used to it!'

To 'de-colonize' our pedagogy and practice, such a scenario needed to be 'disrupted' and redesigned to accommodate our predominantly non-traditional students. If WP is to fulfil its promises, rather than changing the student, we must change. We must start by creating a sense of belonging from the moment students first enter the university (Cook & Leckey, 1999; Cock et al., 2008; Curran, 2016; Read et al., 2003). This chapter outlines the power of a different, dialogic induction where the various processes are welcoming and collaborative.

The Dialogic Welcome Day

The Welcome Day was a four-hour single event partitioned into three distinct sessions: identity, motivation and unveiling. This event was an expression of 'dialogic learning', where insight and understandings emerge through the process of dialogue in a learning environment (Mezirow, 1985; Savin-Baden, 2007), where staff work with students to draw upon their lived experiences to make concepts and ideas accessible, and where the students 'then use that experience to make sense for themselves and to explore further issues' (Savin-Baden, 2008, 54).

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To create a dialogic environment, there are no specific 'how to steps' because creating dialogue is not a 'mere technique … This would make dialogue a technique for manipulation rather than illumination' (Freire & Shor, 1987, 13). Instead, dialogic environments are created by putting the object to be known 'on the table between the two subjects of knowing. They meet around it and through it for mutual inquiry' (Freire & Shor, 1987, 14). This means, we, as the instructors, took part in the tasks with as much enthusiasm as the students in order to 'relearn the objects through studying them with the students' (Freire & Shor, 1987, 14).

Regulations around the Covid-19 pandemic required us to deliver the Welcome Day online. Though delivering this event face-to-face is the ideal scenario for dialogic engagement, the online space can be equally powerful. However, it is not without its difficulties; student engagement can be determined by the challenge of the 'digital divide' (Boyd, 2016; ONS, 2019), in our case, much time was spent introducing students to Blackboard Collaborate platform and resolving any technical issues that the students encountered. Yet, our alternative induction session proved to be empowering and illuminating.

In the following we outline the three Welcome Day sessions delivered and discuss the impact they had.

Identity

'Identity Texts' (Cummins & Early, 2011) are creative expressions that showcase the influence of cultural background on the individual in a new social setting,

> Identity Texts challenge hegemonic societal trends by bringing learners' cultural backgrounds to the foreground, and drawing attention to the multiple facets of life experiences which shape interactions in learning environments.
>
> (Cummins, 2009; Cummins & Early, 2011; Zaidi et al., 2016, 2)

This first session offered a creative exercise where students and instructors relayed 'their stories'. Aware that students were not familiar with the notion of Identity Texts, a brief explanation was given, supported with additional resources in the form of exemplars and suggestions presented in an e-handbook. The students were given time to create their pieces and upload them on Padlet – a digital sharing platform. Students elaborated on their Identity Texts in energetic group discussion. Initial caution in discussing their writing dissipated as we encouraged students with conversational prompts, facilitated by our reading the pieces as they were posted. This allowed for a specificity when addressing questions to students, which, in turn, affirmed the value of each contribution. There followed a rich retelling of personal histories, addressing themes such as 'What represents me?' 'How does my history shape me?' 'What defines me?' As students became comfortable with the idea of holding a dialogic space, further themes emerged centred on shared qualities, such as compassion, empathy, care and working with others. Thus, a 'grounding' of students' experiences had been established, preparing all participants to explore their motivations to learn.

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Motivation

Motivation should not be regarded as a one-dimensional construct; instead, motivation is complex, multi-dimensional and transient (Kember et al., 2008; Nowell, 2017). It is viewed as a significant factor in the transition into university. In particular, the first six months of the first year is seen as the period to embed interventions that 'monitor' and 'enhance' motivations to learn (Edgar et al., 2019). It seemed appropriate to devise an exercise that introduced students to the concept of motivation and facilitate an exploration into their own motivations to learn. Thus we created an affirmative model of motivation, rather than further reinforcing a predominantly deficit model.

In our session, students were given time to consider what their key motivations were, initiated by a personal, internal dialogue. Students were encouraged to set the parameters for this exercise, acknowledging themselves as actors invested in the activity. The quality of responses from students evidenced a reflective stance, critically aware of how different motivators resonated with their identities and personal contexts, and how these could be located within wider, public spheres. These contributions showed a cognisance amongst all participants of the different positions and voices that can exist in one space, thus priming students for an exploration into the final session 'unveiling' the hidden curriculum.

Unveiling

Besides talking about course and study programmes in the induction, it is crucial to reveal and name the hidden curriculum. As Neve and Collett (2018, 2) state, 'the hidden curriculum may also be a useful tool for triggering debate about issues such as power, patient centredness, personal resilience and career stereotypes in medicine'. This not only creates awareness amongst the student body about its existence, it also allows staff to develop an understanding of its potential impact. To this point, Freire notes that the educator remakes their 'cognoscibility' through the 'cognoscibility' of the students. 'That is the ability of the educator to know the object is remade every time through the students' own ability for knowing, for developing critical comprehension in themselves' (Freire & Shor, 1987, 14).

Engagement with this topic was structured through interactive approaches where the starting point was, again, students' experiences. With respect to teaching and learning, a series of questions and quizzes were used to scaffold the discussion. Students' responses were mediated via chat streams and unmuting their mikes. This provided a 'sand pit' for students to explore ambiguities, weigh up assumptions and voice opinions, thereby developing an understanding of the hidden curriculum through co-construction. As facilitators, we were keen not to diminish any of the voices present and actively engaged with all the contributions made. A key outcome of this open, free-flowing discussion was the abandonment of the fear of getting it wrong and an acceptance of emergence. Students became confident enough to put forward their ideas knowing that they may be contested, something we hope they can utilize throughout their study.

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Evaluation

Feedback was taken directly after the induction sessions with confidence emerging as a central theme. For students, confidence was expressed in terms of recognizing that their perspectives have a place in any discourse and the possibility that these might be open to challenge should not dissuade them from contributing to discussions. One student observed:

> It's easy to get very shy about what you're gonna say or what you're thinking, whether it's right or wrong. Just have confidence in what you want to say.

Confidence was also expressed in how students might engage in learning. At the beginning of the sessions, students were tentative. However, there was a noticeable change throughout the day as the combination of scaffolded tasks, preparation time given and a dialogic space to share contributions permitted students to actively collaborate in the co-construction of knowledge. Arguably, the sessions facilitated a learning process removed from traditionally passive approaches (Angelo, 1993) and students acknowledged this:

> I think the overall session was a complete icebreaker, introducing us to different ways of doing things and that we have the support when we are not sure and that's really important.

The capacity for self-reflection was also evident. Students felt they had been given the space to explore aspects of their lives and articulate how their socio-cultural backgrounds might shape their futures (Gutierrez, 2018):

> I feel more confident about my motivations and values … I wasn't sure what drives me – what my characteristics, values and motivations were, but this whole exercise has helped me to understand myself better.

Overall, the students were able to use the induction to synthesize their experiences and prepare a grounded understanding of themselves as learners embarking upon the next phase of their learning.

Limitations

Despite the overwhelming positive feedback by students, two key limitations were identified. First, student participation was determined by the challenge of the 'digital divide'. No matter how well-designed the Welcome Day was, the lack of technology and internet access and the missing digital expertise frustrated its aim for some.

Secondly, our induction was a 'one off'. Students were afforded the opportunity to engage in a dialogic discourse; yet, how much of this will be replicated in other learning spaces they encounter is questionable. If students are left to acculturate to traditional

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transmissive forms of learning and teaching which take little account of their socio-cultural backgrounds (Lea & Street, 1998), then an isolated academic epiphany will not change the elitist and exclusionary status quo.

These limitations can only be tackled with a root and branch transformation of pedagogy and practice that extends beyond the induction of students. Arguably a way forward is a commitment to education for social justice curricula and practices that sustain the dialogic teaching and learning process into, through and across the curriculum. We argue for a collaborative approach where learning, and staff development practitioners work alongside discipline academics to reimagine their practices. Discipline staff need to be given time, space and support to devise strategies and activities suited to their contexts and to integrate into the curriculum space. Students require time to experiment, practise and tweak their ideas. This would demonstrate a commitment by institutions to integrate dialogic, collaborative pedagogical practice within learning environments.

Conclusion

Delivering induction sessions differently has demonstrated that opportunities for students to engage must be crafted in ways that allow them to do so. This 'invitation' must be supported with scaffolds that ensure all students can participate and actively immerse themselves into the learning process. Collaboration offers a vehicle for this to happen and, if mediated through dialogic spaces, ensures that students and staff can carve out a positive learning experience together.

Unite and Unrule! Reflections of a Co-created Pedagogy for Transformation

Cybele Atme, Pauline Bon, Mila de Graaf, Daniel Haudenschild, Mieke Lopes Cardozo, Melina Merdanovic and Eleonore Nouel

- As a collective, we experimented with co-creation as means to develop a more creative, innovative and collaborative space in order to inspire (in)direct transformations in the larger HE system we study and work in.
- Our approach to co-creation, as a specific form of collaboration, is inspired by insights from critical, contemplative, social justice and relational pedagogy based on design principles derived from regenerative development.
- In this case study, we highlight two interrelated features of our co-creation approach to developing transgressive learning spaces: (1) relational learning beyond individualism and (2) from competition towards reflective and self-directed learning.

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Introduction: Planting the Seeds of Collective Self-organizing

The occupation of the University of Amsterdam's (UvA) main administrative building, Maagdenhuis, and the banner reading 'No Democratisation without Decolonisation' in spring 2015 signalled two key demands of the protesting students and staff. They demanded equal access, democratic participation and more transparency from the university management, while a second demand was aimed at decolonizing knowledge (The University of Colour, 2018). The movement mandated the new Diversity Commission chaired by Prof. Dr. Gloria Wekker to investigate the state of the University, which resulted in the publication of concrete recommendations for democratic and decolonial practices (Wekker et al., 2016).

Inspired by this spirit, a handful of Master students and a lecturer at the UvA's International Development Studies (IDS) programme started self-organizing the Critical Development and Diversity Explorations (CDDE) initiative to collaboratively explore alternative pedagogies for social justice-inspired and transgressive learning. The CDDE initiative was initiated in 2017 as an attempt to 'unrule' student-teacher asymmetries, address epistemological hierarchies and overcome institutional barriers to develop a more collaborative and holistic learning space. We are a growing collective which started with ten and has grown into a group of thirty-two (former) Master students and an initiator and lecturer(s) who are organizing the seminar-style CDDE 'course', which is open to Master students in the IDS programme. CDDE student members are recognized for their CDDE membership and can include a number of study credits within their Portfolio, a 'free' space within the IDS curriculum. The initiator and lecturer was awarded a teaching innovation grant which freed up time to develop this initiative during the initial three years. Over the past five years of the CDDE journey, we experienced and un-learned together, while also influencing tangible changes in teaching and learning practices within the IDS teaching programme, and increasingly in other academic and professional contexts where CDDE alumni continue to design CDDE-inspired work.

Our broader objective is to contribute towards imagining and enacting a transgressive (hooks, 1994; Wals, 2015) and collaborative alternative to the neoliberal HE model. On the one hand, we seek as a collective to counter a managerialist, competitive, market-oriented and Westernized HE culture (Springer, 2016). On the other hand, through CDDE we aim to co-create a creative, revitalizing and critical space to cultivate a pluriversality of knowledges along with a cross-hierarchical learning community based on an ethics of care (Mountz et al., 2015) and slow scholarship (Berg & Seeber, 2013). Inspired by Regenerative Development and Design (Mang & Haggard, 2016), and infused with contemplative pedagogies and practices (Berila, 2016), CDDE co-creates an innovative space to develop personal self-reflection and development as individual and collective 'change agents', in order to inspire (in)direct transformations in the larger HE system we study and work in. Extending the notion of relational pedagogy into community building has its foundations in the work of Nell Noddings (Bingham & Sidorkin, 2004; Biesta et al., 2004), Humberto Maturana and Paulo Freire (Souza et al., 2019). In this chapter, we reflect on our collaborative and co-creative practices and experiences of the CDDE initiative to create a transgressive and more inclusive learning space within the university.

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Enacting Transgressive Education through Co-creation

We translated our aim into practice through our agency-oriented, cross-hierarchical and co-created 'course' design. Co-creation, as a specific form of collaboration, is considered a key approach to relational pedagogy (Bovill, 2020; Souza et al., 2019) and serves as a way to integrate (individual and collective) contemplative practices into collective spaces of anti-oppressive learning (Berila, 2016). We highlight two interrelated features of our co-creation approach to developing transgressive learning spaces: (1) relational learning beyond individualism and (2) from competition towards reflective and self-directed learning.

Relational Learning beyond Individualism

Through co-creation, community building and engagement with an ethics of care, we learned how to think of education as a collective, relational process (Bingham & Sidorkin, 2004; Mountz et al., 2015), rather than a pre-fixed route to a predefined destination. With teams of students and the lecturer, we collaboratively co-create each of our bi-weekly sessions. The themes for each session are brainstormed together at the beginning of the semester. Then, small teams prepare the content and activities for a particular session, which are further refined and co-facilitated. We found that the key in the co-creation processes is taking time to collectively and inclusively make decisions: a '[d]ecision-making process is a consensus-based dialogue, rather than democratic voting. The extra effort this takes is worth it in terms of making people feel included'. As expressed by one CDDE member:

> I learned how challenging it is to take everyone's opinion/wishes into planning while also being pragmatic of possibilities and time constraints. I do believe we managed that well and that everyone's preferences were included.

In this learning community, we hold each other and ourselves accountable and have a sense of responsibility towards each other. As a lecturer, this process creates a very different dynamic:

> I prepare for and leave these sessions with students more energised and enriched with resources and insights I would not have experienced in more traditionally organised classes, and I too benefit from the sense of community which is established, there is a shared sense of care which is not always present in academia.

From Competition to Inclusive and Self-directed Learning

Co-created sessions often include contemplative practices in combination with social justice pedagogies, which enables a reflection on our education process. Through self-directed learning and both introspective and collaborative reflection exercises, we aim to enhance our agency with regard to our individual learning trajectories, as well as a

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shared purpose for the CDDE community to support broader systemic transformation within and possibly beyond the department. Through meditation, journaling and sharing our experiences, we learnt to channel empathy towards each other but also towards ourselves. Instead of focusing on competition in our HE space (Naidoo, 2018; 2016), we have been motivated by our sense of community. Inspired by the integration of regenerative design and living systems thinking frameworks (Mang & Haggard, 2016), our reflective frameworks focused on enhancing 'internal locus of control' and 'external consideration' as practices of introspective personal development. This dimension was addressed by a CDDE member:

> For me, CDDE is a way to connect the academic to the personal. It is a space where I am learning to enjoy education again. I have always been very passionate about education, but I often experience stress and anxiety. Our focus on contemplation, embodiment, and sharing spaces have helped me to reconnect to my surroundings and be more present and mindful.

Through practices of embodied knowledge, we focus on 'walking the talk' of what a feminist decolonizing learning process might look like, by recognizing and employing a pluriverse of knowledges in and beyond the classroom (Kothari, 2006; Kothari et al., 2019; Sultana, 2019). One of our sessions in 2019 was themed on storytelling as a form of knowledge. During this session, each of us shared an experience of marginalization at university (that they experienced or heard). At the end of the exercise, we reflected together on the common elements in the stories and the axis of oppression. By exploring the politics of ontology and epistemology, we identified how power operates at the university and specifically in a complex and interdisciplinary field like IDS (Harcourt, 2017). For us, the alternative practices of (forum) theatre, music, poetry, yoga, storytelling and so forth are a way to engage with the pluriverse of knowledges. These contemplative and creative methods have enriched a sense of inclusivity in the way we co-create our learning journey. For instance, by consciously designing the atmosphere for collaborative and empathetic work in CDDE sessions, co-creation teams would often include a piece of poetry, a song or visual art in the opening part of the session for the members to wake up to a more creative, mindful interaction and reflection.

For example, in a session we co-created between a group of the student members and the lecturer on intersectional feminism and climate justice, when the group entered the room we had a painting by Bolivian artist Mamani Mamani on the screen called 'La Pacha Mama' (Mother Earth), and played some Andean music as we all settled in. We then started seated in a circle with a grounding and visualization exercise, using breath techniques and visualizing what 'mother earth' means for us, followed by some structured journal writing on the theme of the session. After this wake-up, we had a conversation about intersectionality as represented in feminist literature, after which we listened collectively to a historically recorded speech by the American nineteenth-century women's rights activist Sojourner Truth and watched a short video by Kimberley Crenshaw on intersectionality. We then connected these feminist

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reflections to the theme of climate justice and present-day debates. We went outside for a walk around the university campus in small groups to work on a 'counter-mapping' exercise, which allowed groups to reflect on and draw out a counter-hegemonic picture of real-life examples in the way the university environment (mis)represents issues of intersectional and climate justice (including the build environment, food offerings and more discursive expressions such as posters or observed interactions). We then closed the session by engaging with each other's counter-maps, and ended with a brief guided breathing exercise and journaling moment. Post-session, we captured notes of what we worked on, and asked all participants to reflect briefly in an online post-session survey to capture key insights, to inform our continued work and analysis, resulting in ongoing projects such as this one.

Drawing Some Conclusions: To Unite and Unrule?

After five years of collaboratively organizing the CDDE space in various forms, we carefully navigated between personal autonomy, the neoliberal academy and our project goals, as well as shifting constellations in our collective – not least shifting from in-person to online engagements due to the Covid-19 pandemic. One of our key motivations lies in our shared desire to create a sense of community, ownership and transformative space, while this brings up the challenge of becoming integrated into the mainstream institutional university culture in less-valued ways or being showcased as another 'diversity' success (Ahmed, 2012). Nevertheless, we inspired tangible changes in the IDS programmes at the UvA, including integrating aspects of the co-creation pedagogical approaches into several Bachelor and Master courses, and more attention paid to research ethics, reflectiveness on positionality and the importance of (introspective) reflection and inquiry to develop students' capability to (re)connect to their unique learning trajectory and purpose.

Another tension we successfully navigated concerned the sustaining of the community space over multiple years and generations of students. Each year, CDDE has reinvented itself based on that year's unique make-up of members while building on experiences and insights gained from the past. Together, we are committed to disseminating insights and approaches we gained. This means uniting energies as students and lecturers alike to co-create inclusive, transformative and transgressive learning spaces in HE, to individually and collectively un-rule existing education structures and connected patterns of thinking, being and acting from competition to collaboration.

CDDE has inspired us to explore the re-appropriation of the classroom space as one of movement and connection, rather than fixed 'banking education' (Giroux, 2010). By (re)claiming space and challenging hierarchies in the classroom, we explore what it means to transgress traditional institutional boundaries. In CDDE, we co-created the content and pedagogical design of the sessions, shared food and built friendships beyond the classroom.

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the people who were involved in the CDDE initiative over the years to build a community of care for transformative, social justice inspired learning, as without them this work would not have been possible. We are thankful for the financial support by a Comenius grant (grant number 405.17865.009) for innovative teaching practices that Mieke Lopes Cardozo received, and institutional encouragement of supportive colleagues in IDS. In addition to the respective authors' input, we wish to thank Annet Kragt (also CDDE member) for her editorial support.

Honest Conversations about 'Race' and Racism: Innovative Decolonizing Practice

Anthony Kalume and Jess Moriarty

- Creating a culture in which it is possible to have open and honest conversations about race and racism is understood as crucial to dismantling institutionalized racism in HE.
- This anti-racist project was a cultural collaboration between HE and community partners where the goal was to develop a new anti-racist module. All parties were equally valued in the process and via the co-authored research outputs.
- The collaborative project aimed to challenge and change negative experiences and dominant discourses around BAME (staff and) students in HE.

Please note that this chapter uses Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) as this is the term used in much education research on this topic, but we respect that it is not a term that many people would use to describe themselves and apologize that we are unable to be more specific in terms of 'race' and ethnicity within this piece.

Introduction – The Clothes on Our Backs

The 'Clothes on Our Backs' was a collaborative project between Diversity Lewes (DL, 2015), a charity set up to challenge racism in the South East of the UK. DL, the University of Brighton (UoB) and Brighton Museum aimed to respond to findings from a National Union of Students' (NUS) report that identified continuing, unresolved issues around Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) student participation within HE. Forty-two per cent of BAME students who took the survey stated that they did not believe their curriculum reflected issues of diversity, equality and discrimination, and a third (34 per cent) stated that institutions often 'did not take into account diverse backgrounds and views' (NUS and Universities UK Report, 2020, 4).

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In the UK, universities are deeply gendered and racialized (Emejulu, 2017), and a later report from the NUS (NUS, 2019) identified four key areas for HE to urgently address:

1. a need for strong BAME leadership;
2. creating a culture in which it is possible to have open and honest conversations about race and racism;
3. developing racially diverse and inclusive environments and communities; and
4. getting the evidence and understanding what it means and understanding what works.

Further highlighted were problems regarding the number of modules being devised by white tutors for BAME students who already doubted institutional commitment to diversity and inclusion (NUS, 2019).

Our cross-racial collaboration aimed to offer a method of co-creation that acknowledges, and also seeks to resist and change, dominant inequalities that exist in HE (Bell & Phall, 2018; Facer & Enright, 2016). We hope that the insights into our experiences will provide thought and inspiration for other colleagues working on pedagogy that aspires to:

- challenge and change negative experiences and dominant discourses in HE;
- value community partners as equal in the process;
- explore methodologies that permit personal and evocative storytelling in academic work in multi-disciplinary initiatives; and
- are sustainable once the project (and or funding) ends.

Method

In the following, we outline Anthony's story, Director of DL, to provide insight into the collaborative workings of our project as an autoethnographic approach. We move on to tell the story of Anthony and Jess' collaboration, a collaborative autoethnography (CAE).

We adopted an autoethnographic approach as it is personal and connected to the social group under study (Moriarty, 2019) and our project of democratizing academic discourse to make it more inclusive (Canagarajah, 2002). People are often drawn to autoethnography because it enables 'a better conversation in the face of all the barriers and boundaries' (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, 748).

CAE has implications for issues of power and control within the field of academic research (Bell & Phall, 2017; Chang et al., 2016). Our approach advocates a way of conducting and disseminating research that we have developed and written together. This way of working allowed for our collective exploration of our subjectivity and facilitated power-sharing between us as co-researchers and co-authors.

As co-authors we argue that this approach has deepened our collaboration, enabling us to have discussions around institutionalized racism and personal storytelling that have informed dissemination about this project at conferences and via co-authored texts (Kalume & Moriarty, 2022, forthcoming).

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Anthony Kalume: My Story

Anthony is not only the Chair of DL but also a Visiting Lecturer at the UoB. In this double role, and with his familiarity of Black students' 'struggles' in HE, he came together with Jess Moriarty to form a collaborative between LD, Brighton University and Museum. The aim was to harness their resources to raise awareness of racism by hosting community events in neutral spaces.

One of the activities revolved around Khangas (see Figure 7.1), as Anthony explains: As part of my work with DL, I was invited by The Royal Pavilion Trust (RPT) Museum to share my knowledge and expertise on Khangas, polka-dotted handkerchiefs (Lêsos) supplied by the Portuguese merchants who came to Africa in search of slaves and trade (Rawley & Behrendt, 2005). The Gardens and Galleries of Brighton Museums had within their collection a variety of Khangas which came to my attention when officiating during the Fashion Cities Africa (The Royal Pavilion, 2016). The project looked at four cities on the African continent Lagos, Nairobi, Casablanca and Johannesburg, where local contemporary designers were commissioned to deliver fashion items that would respond to trends amongst African people and the diaspora (Pool, 2016). The Brighton Museum asked DL to join the collecting panel who designed, collated and delivered the exhibition (Kalume, 2019a) and this meant that a working relationship of mutual trust and respect had already been established when the collaboration for the 'Clothes on our Backs' began.

By the beginning of January 2019, I had carried out some initial research in Kenya on the various aspects of using the Khanga (Hanby, 1984). At this point, I approached my friend and colleague Ednah Chepkirui from the American University Kenya, and

Figure 7.1 Khanga. Anthony Kalume shares the history of the Khanga at Brighton Museum (image credits: Willie Robb).

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Figure 7.2 Khanga exhibit. Anthony Kalume giving a talk on the Khanga exhibit at Brighton Museum (image credits: Willie Robb).

Dr Jess Moriarty from the UoB on the feasibility of developing a project exploring identity through my own research on Khangas. DL had worked together with Jess on a Creative Writing module and also completed a Heritage Lottery Funded project called *Celebrating African Caribbean's in Sussex Past and Present* in 2015 (Kalume, 2019b) developing mutual trust that has enabled us to work together as equal partners.

There is something essentially collaborative and cooperative about the Khanga: the way that the Khanga is used as a means of communicating a personal story and connecting people together speaks to Jess' work on autoethnography and a focus on storytelling as a way of connecting people that is also an emphasis in my own practice of collaborating on transdisciplinary projects to raise understanding and awareness around Black people in Sussex. I have known Jess for many years and appreciate her ability to give feedback, her humour and her commitment to diversity and social justice, which is perhaps why we work so well together and value each other as friends. The project's intention meant that a workshop based around the Khanga seemed an ideal way of developing connections and telling and sharing stories that could help us develop pedagogy.

Anthony Kalume and Jess Moriarty: Our Story

Our collaborative partnership: CUPP issued a call for projects that developed research and knowledge exchange between the university and community partner(s). The Ignite funding scheme kindly accepted our proposal that aimed to:

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- establish a collaboration between DL, the UoB and Brighton Museum that is built on mutual respect and trust;
- engage members of the BAME community in Sussex and students and staff at the university to work on archival material housed at Brighton Museum;
- devise a series of creative workshops that used the Khanga as a source of inspiration for poems, textiles and prose;
- collect feedback from workshop participants to inform the development of a new module in the School of Humanities and Social Science at the UoB that looks at archival material and creative practice and draws on the expertise of BAME artists and tutors; and
- disseminate findings via workshops and co-authored texts that value each partner as equal.

The workshops would focus on identity and clothing, in particular how the Khangas contain symbols and messages that relate to autobiographical experiences including empowering sayings and statements. The workshops were to help participants devise texts about their identity that they could then inscribe (using textiles and print) into garments that had significant meaning to them. The outputs generated (see Figure 7.2) by the workshops would then be used in an exhibition in Black History Month at the Brighton Dome and at the UoB that would seek to engage more people from inside and outside the university with the project.

We agreed to use the workshops to identify staff, students and community partners who would collaborate on devising a new module, focused on creative practice and archives, that built on concepts of diversity and inclusion. The module would develop teaching and learning that might inspire existing students and also engage members of the wider BAME community with the University.

Outcomes and Issues

Brighton Museum was incredibly supportive, allowing us to expand our collaboration with external stakeholders, beyond the university and DL members. We were allowed unique access to their Khanga archive (see Figure 7.3) which provided a real focal point for the workshops we ran and engaged the wider Sussex community with the exhibit. As a result of the events, we were able to build an extensive mailing list and host several networking events at the university where BAME scholars discussed decolonizing and developing the curriculum.

We wanted to develop a collaboration that would facilitate better conversations around diversity in HE and use the Khangas at Brighton Museum to connect Black people with the UoB – as students and members of staff. The project also explored how conversation and storytelling can produce liberatory research for cultural and social change. Our research and the workshops indicated that a module housed at Brighton Museum and run by local BAME experts was feasible and desirable but recruiting experts needs resourcing and sustainable support from the institution.

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The main challenge facing the project was that we were only funded to run the initial workshops, and without additional funding to pay people for their time and travel, we were unable to set an agenda to take forward the module development.

Arguably a further challenge was that without this resourcing, the idea of Jess (who is white) writing a module for a BAME tutor to teach would go against our research and our beliefs. Part of the Race Equality Charter insists that BAME tutors lead such teaching. We had no desire to perpetuate the racism evident in HE and undermine the BAME expertise we had engaged with the project.

Conclusion

Our research identified racism as an institutionalized issue within HE that needs challenging and resisting. The initial motivations for the project were to collaborate within and outwith the University to take forward an anti-racist cultural project that would transform into an innovative anti-racist module to be delivered in the Brighton Museum.

The DL 'Clothes on our Backs' project was the seedbed of research for that potential module and harnessed the talents of a multi-disciplinary BAME network of scholars from Law, Educations, Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities. This collaboration did create anti-racist opportunities to develop new modules, new research, and a new and evolving community of BAME academics and scholars.

However, a key issue with this project was sustainability, and once the project ended, there was no scaffold in place to develop a new module led by Black experts. Jess, a

Figure 7.3 Khanga workshop. Workshop at Brighton Museum using the Khanga exhibit as a source of inspiration for creative work (image credits: Willie Robb).

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white academic, was embarrassed at the thought of continuing as solitary project lead. The collaboration meant that we were able to talk about and problematize this issue but we did not and could not resolve it. Essentially, we need more Black leaders in HE to do this work so that people like Jess can continue to be an ally but not a leader on a project challenging racism in HE. Our fear is that until change is supported, racism and white privilege will continue to limit and reduce HE, undermining not just our education system but also our humanity.

Acknowledgements

With thanks to the Ignite Fund at the UoB for funding this project and to staff at Brighton Museum for taking part in the collaboration and supporting this work so generously. With further thanks to Willie Robb for allowing us to use his images of the project for which he received consent from all those photographed.

Love, Respect, Esteem: Collaborative Student Partnerships for Social Justice

Vikki Hill and Louise Taylor

- We present two collaborative student partnership projects that address educational inequalities in relation to transition, attainment and belonging.
- Honneth's Theory of Recognition is applied as a framework to examine the relational complexities in our partnership projects.
- Socially just partnerships can be designed to recognize love, respect and esteem.
- We propose collaborative approaches that challenge power hierarchies and build relationships for change.

Introduction

In our chapter, we present two collaborative student partnership projects that aim to address educational inequalities in relation to transition, attainment and belonging at London College of Communication (LCC), University of the Arts London (UAL). As authors of the paper and project leads, we recognize the activism of colleagues across the institution in shaping the development of anti-racist and socially just pedagogies and partnerships. We present *Peer Mentoring* and *Creative Mindsets* (UAL, 2021a) as two collaborative case studies that are closely aligned in practice and ambition to foster a sense of belonging in first-year students as they transition to university. We then conceptualize our understanding of student partnership and draw upon Honneth's

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Theory of Recognition to consider love, respect and esteem as a social justice framework to reconcile the complexities within our context (Power, 2011). Finally, we offer reflections as implications for future development of both Peer Mentoring and Creative Mindsets and for partnership work in the HE sector.

The Context

Based in South London, LCC is one of six colleges that make up UAL. It is renowned for creative communication education and industry-focused courses in Design, Media and Screen. Student partnerships are embedded as key approaches to teaching and learning across the college, and the university's Anti-racism action plan (UAL, 2021b) has strengthened this position. It states that UAL will develop partnerships with students and the Student Union (Arts SU) to address ethnicity awarding differentials that exist and persist across the HE sector, between home white students and home students of colour. The plan pledges significant change to systems, processes and culture and a commitment to dismantle systemic racism across all levels of the institution.

The Projects

Peer Mentoring was established in 2014 to support students as they 'settle in' to university life and encourages the exchange of knowledge and experiences between students at different levels. It adopts a model where mentees in year-one are matched with mentors in the second or final year of their course. The project is informed by developmental approaches to mentoring that emphasize the mutuality of learning and the personal and professional development of both parties (Clutterbuck, 2008). The aim is to develop a sense of community where mentors and mentees benefit from making connections with a wider support network across different levels of study. Mentors receive payment for their work and are employed through the university's creative recruitment agency. Training focuses on defining the mentor/mentee relationship and the development of communication skills. Unlike traditional mentoring in which mentees are positioned as 'novice' (Colley, 2001), developmental mentoring encourages students to engage in an ongoing partnership in which both parties benefit. This form of collaboration challenges unequal power relations by flattening hierarchies between participants.

Creative Mindsets was developed in 2017 as part of the Office for Students, 'Addressing Barriers to Student Success Programme' *Changing Mindsets*, that was designed to eliminate persistent and disproportional inequalities experienced by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students in HE (Mahmud & Gagnon, 2020; Singh, 2009). *Creative Mindsets* combines social and psychological approaches to develop growth mindsets (Dweck, 2006) in students and staff to reduce racial bias (Devine, 2012; Good et al., 2008) through a programme of co-facilitated workshops led by a team of students, alumni and the project lead (Hill & Simpson, 2020). The workshops are dialogic and offer space for staff and students to consider unexamined biases and devise strategies to change practices and behaviours. The student team were appointed on hourly paid contracts and attended workshops on mindset theory, anti-racism,

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intercultural communication and teaching in arts HE to build trust and to collectively devise approaches to deliver forty-five workshops to 2,400 students. In 2020, the project moved to an asynchronous delivery hosted on the UAL Academic Support Online platform with scheduled synchronous sessions co-facilitated by students and staff.

Recognizing Partnerships

In the process of reflecting on our student partnership projects we interrogate inherent tensions and complexities in reimagining our collaborative and relational practices. Bovill (2013) states that the key condition for partnerships is that, along with choice and meaningful learning, the 'student-tutor relationship is facilitatory, collaborative and based on dialogue; and that the learner is viewed as a knowledgeable and critical partner in learning' (p. 99). Relational student-staff identities are constructed when values of mutual respect, reciprocity and shared responsibility are centred (Cook-Sather et al., 2014). A focus on the relational can be transgressive as it challenges normative market-driven approaches that characterize the field of HE as 'impersonal', individualistic and 'objective'. Our partnership projects tried to expand traditional pedagogical approaches, as students engage from positions of power, resistance and agency (Dei, 2016) to co-produce knowledge (Freire, 1970).

Of particular importance to our work is the goal of social justice – a contested and complex term which resists a single definition (Fraser & Honneth, 2003). As Fraser (cited in Lovell, 2007) points out, disputes about justice frequently extend beyond traditional framing, leaving not only the substance of justice in dispute, but also the frame itself. In our reflection we draw upon Honneth's relational, interdisciplinary approach to critical theory to locate recognition as fundamental to social justice. Honneth (2014) argues that justice is a form of mutuality embodied in both the interactions and identity formation of both self and others. McArthur (2018) states that 'mutual recognition is always about both self-realisation and social inclusion' (p. 55) and these intersubjective practices are of particular importance within student-staff and student-to-student partnerships.

Below we consider Honneth's (2014) three aspects of recognition – love, respect and esteem – that combine to form his notion of social justice and use this as a framework in which to examine some of the complexities in our partnership projects.

Love

Honneth (1997) conceptualizes love recognition as unconditional concern where an individual's needs and desires are of value to another. Drawing upon the tradition of moral philosophy, love recognition is about care of the other. In *Peer Mentoring*, this is expressed through building effective communication and cooperation in the relationship between mentor and mentee – the ability to recognize divergent experiences and identify with each other through curiosity and dialogue (Sennett, 2012). Mentees have highlighted a high level of support available from mentors who they describe as 'a much-needed support system' and 'very kind and reassuring', as well as an increased confidence (Taylor, 2021): 'It has helped me communicate better with

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people I don't know.' In our podcast on *Creative Mindsets*, that captured student voices and experiences, students spoke of how their self-confidence grew when they learnt about the commonality of their experiences (Simpson et al., 2020) in the workshops they were trained to facilitate: 'realising this [racial bias] is a thing that other people go through and I finally know how to word it'. Each of these projects demonstrates the transformative potential of working collaboratively for both the individual and the wider learning community, where difference and mutuality are recognized and valued.

Respect

For Honneth (1997), respect recognition is about legal rights as moral accountability. The importance of understanding the law and affording others the same rights is the essence of Honneth's approach to universal equality and social justice. In the facilitator training for *Creative Mindsets*, we frame discussions around the Equality Act 2010 (an Act of Parliament of the UK with the primary purpose of consolidating, updating and supplementing the numerous prior Acts and Regulations) to further understand intersectionality of protected characteristics, to develop racial literacy and to identify systemic barriers within HE. The students we engage as partners in both our projects are employed and paid through UAL Arts Temps that aims to be a social enterprise recruitment agency built upon ethical and inclusive practices. Although Colley (2002) warns of the capitalist exchange-value of human relationships, the recognition of the role provided by the formal processes of employment and training, and the guarantee of a real living wage, is key to successful collaboration in these projects. These formal processes contribute towards a 'respect for autonomy (that) also includes rights that make possible the exercise of autonomy' (van Leeuwen, 2007, 183).

Esteem

Honneth proposes esteem as 'heavily dependent on collectively shared values and goals' (van Leeuwen, 2007, 183). This form of recognition has a duality in that it refers to both the social and individual and grows from what Honneth (1996) also defines as 'solidarity' with others. McArthur (2018) writes, 'Self-esteem is fostered when our abilities and actions are regarded as socially useful and are recognized as such' (p. 57). The developmental approach to peer mentoring emphasizes the relational experience as social good and traditional power relations (in which the mentor is positioned as expert) are challenged. In the *Creative Mindsets* project, students and alumni spoke of how they learnt from each other when co-facilitating both student and staff-facing workshops on bias. One student partner commented:

> I was aware of observing teaching methods, knowing they would develop my own pedagogical practices for future projects. The workshops encouraged active learning as a facilitator.
>
> (Team Member in Hill et al., forthcoming, 2022)

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This relational, problem-posing pedagogy positions the construction of knowledge through 'invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other' (Freire, 1970, 45).

Implications for Practice

In our case studies we have drawn upon Honneth's Theory of Recognition to consider how the relational practices of love, respect and esteem can offer tools to analyse and reflect upon partnership projects designed to achieve social justice aims. Honneth (2014) reminds us that social structures are required to achieve recognition between individuals, and that we must examine existing conditions that obstruct and can instead provoke misrecognition, particularly within competitive and individualistic cultures of HE. For both *Peer Mentoring* and *Creative Mindset*s, we have identified recommendations to contest existing norms and assumptions about partnership projects (Healy et al., 2014; Mercer-Mapstone, 2018) and to foster social justice across the curriculum. The first is to acknowledge the emotional labour associated with creating relational practices that are premised by love and care, and to design institutional policies and practice to support this. The second is to ensure formal employment processes sustain and nourish respect and that precarious working conditions for student and staff partners are addressed. Finally, institutions should construct equitable teaching and learning environments so that non-hierarchical collaborative partnership projects are embedded into the core curriculum delivery. As project leads, we consider in what ways collaborative partnership projects can challenge patterns of misrecognition and support strategic social justice aims as we continue to question – who is valued within our institutions as worthy of love, respect and esteem?

Inclusive Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Students as Co-creators in Course Re-design

Uzma A. Siddiqui

- This case study provides a real-world example of how collaboration between teachers and students can enhance inclusivity and involvement amongst a diverse cohort of learners, thereby promoting social justice through education.
- Seeking to address the lack of student participation and engagement with course content, a pilot session within a Health and Social Care course was redesigned adopting a collaborative approach where students led the session and teachers acted as co-learners/facilitators.
- Students were engaged with the deep transformative process of reflection, critical thinking and problem-solving, thus creating conditions for dialogue

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amongst students that would encourage their epistemological curiosity and promote free and critical learning.
- The pilot session was evaluated using observations and feedback questionnaires from students and teachers. The evaluation indicated increased teacher-student communication, higher level of engagement with the subject material and inclusive student-student interaction through improved participation amongst a diverse student cohort.
- Student-teacher collaboration as curriculum partners is strongly recommended as a way of realizing students' added value in designing their own learning and increasing student engagement.

Introduction

Collaboration has a key place in the Health and Social Care provision in HE. While Kuh (2005) suggests what students learn at university matters more to their success and development than where they study, shaping future practice in the social professions through partnership is core. Diverse social care graduates bring valuable cultural wealth to the health care of a diverse population (The Office for National Statistics, 2017). To promote this, universities can offer programmes that do not just develop subject knowledge, but that tend to the holistic development of their students. Particularly, encouraging students in collaborative practice as part of increasing cultural awareness and acceptance is key. Such collaborative practice can extend to the student networks that will sustain students postgraduation and into which widening participation students are not automatically plugged. Keeping partnership for social justice in mind, this case study explores the co-creation of a pilot session, to inform future curriculum re-design, with students at a post-92 inner-city university in the UK.

Context

Our university is committed to inclusive education and fair outcomes for all students (see Education for Social Justice Framework, ESJF, 2021) as juxtaposed with the traditionally competitive approach in HE. Hockings et al. (2010, 1) provides a core definition of inclusive curriculum:

> Inclusive learning and teaching [L&T] in HE refers to the ways in which pedagogy, curricula and assessment are designed and delivered to engage students in learning that is meaningful, relevant, and accessible to all. It embraces a view of the individual and individual difference as the source of diversity that can enrich the lives and learning of others.

This was acknowledged when developing a pilot session for a student cohort composed of highly diverse, mature students largely from lower socio-economic

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backgrounds and ethnic minorities, and some with certain disabilities. A session for the Urban Health module from final year Health and Social Care (H&SC) course was redesigned using a dialogic and collaborative L&T approach rather than didactic techniques, creating conditions for dialogue amongst students encouraging their epistemological curiosity and promoting free and critical learning, as suggested by Freire (1970). This approach involved students leading the session and teachers acting as co-learners. The pilot session was evaluated through observations and feedback questionnaires from students and teachers.

Collaboration for Inclusive Curriculum and Pedagogy

It is essential to restlessly reinvent both HE and the 'skills' necessary to succeed in HE in these super-complex times. An example would be how all participants – tutors and students – successfully participated in online L&T amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. By creatively utilizing technology (digital skills), emotional intelligence, resilience and adaptability (life-skills), it was possible to fight against all the odds and persevere (Luthera & Mackenzie, 2021).

This reinvention required addressing the needs of the marginalized and excluded. Marginalization and exclusion from traditional HE cultures, curricula and communities lead to underachievement (Ainscow, 1999). Hockings (2010) emphasizes that HE learning environments should change, i.e. by taking account of and appreciating students' differing attributes, developing all students within mainstream curriculum, pedagogy and assessment – promoting inter-dependent learning and development rather than sending students off to be 'fixed' or to additional support services. Moreover, as Abegglen, Burns and Sinfield (2016) recommend a collaborative approach to pedagogy and practice helps students take control of their learning, through being involved in dialogic group discussions, followed by reflection and de-briefing. Thus, a collaborative approach is required where learning occurs through co-construction/co-creation of knowledge (Trowler, 2010) – even online, in times of crisis.

The Pilot Project

The pilot session for the Urban Health module was collaboratively redesigned, involving students as co-creators, adopting more innovative and creative methods (McIntosh & Warren, 2013) which would not only inspire student learning but would also challenge, stimulate and excite enough to improve overall student engagement.

Students split into self-selected groups of five, devising together the 'pilot session' with mutual consensus. A three-hour whole-class session was developed – with ice breaker and in workshop format. Its aim was to build confidence and trust amongst students as they were transitioning from monologic teaching to student-led learning. This required participation from everyone.

Each part of the workshop was led by a different group. There was a student-led (Group 1) subject-specific discussion on personal/work-related scenarios, with

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reflection time and a break. In the second part of the session an article recommended as per module handbook was selected (by Group 2), discussed and analysed using a creative activity called 'Text Mapping' (Abegglen et al., 2019). In the last part of the session, Group 3 opted to show a short video relevant to the session topic and then conducted a discussion, followed by a recap of the session by the teacher and time for students to debrief within their groups to reflect on their learning and future improvements. All group activities were delivered to the whole class where the teacher's role was to advise/guide, scaffold and facilitate.

Throughout this three-hour workshop session, the student-led approach focused on creative strategies designed to better prepare students for their complex/specialized roles after graduating. Students were engaged with the deep transformative process of reflection, critical thinking and problem-solving, as suggested by Hockings (2010). Following an experiential/learner-centred approach, the teacher's role was identified as one of a co-learner and a facilitator, where knowledge emerged as being interpersonal derived from interaction among students, the (selected) text and teacher. To facilitate student learning and fostering deeper rather than surface approaches, it was deemed necessary that knowledge was culturally, socially and politically conditioned where the students were supported to make the learning their own (Toohey, 1999).

Evaluation

The session was evaluated based on Kirkpatrick's (1994) model. A qualitative approach was followed for collating information in the form of both informal and formal appraisal.

Student Observations/Reactions

Prior to the pilot session, student attendance had declined. Approximately 20 per cent of students would arrive late/leave early. Together with an increase in the use of mobile phones, this led to unfruitful sessions indicating a lack of interest and declining student engagement. After implementation of the student-led pilot, student feedback indicated not only a difference in attitudes but also broader learning gain:

- Seventy-six per cent of attendees noted the quality of the teaching session was enhanced and, where previously no-one had the courage to engage in academic dialogue, let alone openly with the tutor, 84 per cent indicated their teacher-student communication was enhanced, thus indicating that collaboration amongst diverse cohorts improves engagement per se.
- Eighty-eight per cent felt scope of creative engagement was enhanced because of collaborating within a diverse cohort.
- Everyone indicated a higher level of engagement with the subject material; they were more attentive and gave satisfactory feedback.
- Sixteen per cent noted their initial apprehension with moving from a teacher-centred approach to student-centred one – with mandatory participation; however, icebreakers helped them ease into the new session format.

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Tutors' Responses

Teachers involved in the delivery of the module were also invited to provide feedback on the pilot session to support the collaborative approach to curriculum redevelopment. Their comments highlighted that

> the effectiveness of working closely and in collaboration with students to raise perception of a better service will help improve the University's National Student Survey score.
>
> It's always beneficial to rethink and evaluate one's own teaching and learning approach to develop inclusive teaching practices.

The findings above were further interrogated through a short questionnaire, utilizing a 'Stop, Start, Continue' framework adopted from Hoon et al. (2015). Teachers' reflections on specific practices included:

- Making the pre-session reading mandatory for all attendees (*Continue*).
- To promote inclusivity and encourage shy students, icebreakers should be employed (*Start*).
- Students felt that it was better when the lecturer did not prompt individuals to participate (*Stop*) but rather opened the discussion to the whole room or groups promoting collaboration (*Continue*).
- Future sessions would be recorded and made available to students via VLE (*Start*) for better service and post-session support.

Recommendations and Implications

Collaborative teaching creates conditions for dialogue amongst students and encourages their epistemological curiosity, while promoting free and critical learning (Freire, 1970). Going forward more teachers should act as facilitators/co-learners realizing that students' cultural wealth brings added value and participation to the classroom. Thus, they must ensure that the diversity of students is taken into consideration. Instead of tutor-led monologues, the sessions should be 'interactive workshops' focusing on dialogic discussions around 'evidence' and knowledge-claims. Collaboration can be enhanced through authentic group work in bespoke sessions that are student-led. To prepare the education systems and institutions for the future, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2018) has suggested that empowering individuals to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and values today will help them to contribute to an inclusive and sustainable future. This is particularly important for those in Health and Social Care who are responsible for the well-being of others. For this, a more integrated and interconnected pedagogic approach is required to empower students to participate, understand the needs and desires of others, and to problem-solve and share ideas which will help reduce the awarding gap. This recommendation is pivotal to empowering teachers to co-facilitate with students creating inclusive L&T practices that encourage effective collaboration amongst a wider learning community.

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Teaching for Equality and the Politics of Feminist and Decolonial Education: From Polarized Debate to Collaborations for Change

Tess Czerski, Jana Finke, Cybele Atme and Mieke Lopes Cardozo

- The course *Teaching for Equality?: The Politics of Feminist and Decolonial Education* was created through the collaboration of junior and senior colleagues of our faculty at the University of Amsterdam to move from polarized debate to collaboration for change.
- In collaborative courses we can de-centre dominant teaching practices and the curriculum. This creates space for turning critical theory, in this case decolonial and feminist pedagogy, into practice.
- Co-creation and collaboration can lead to discomfort, which requires always reverting to practices of care and responsibility within the whole classroom, by both students and teachers/facilitators.

Introduction

The course *Teaching for Equality?: The Politics of Feminist and Decolonial Education* was created through the collaboration of junior and senior colleagues of our faculty at the University of Amsterdam. The course encourages a collective effort for analysis and imagination on how to foster education equality in our university, and in society. It emerged from discussions among students and teachers about tensions between our educational practice, the feminist and decolonial theories of our courses, and the politico-institutional realities of the (neoliberal) university (Diversity Commission UvA, 2016; Icaza & de Jong, 2018; Rizvi, 2017). The course responds to experiences with educational inequalities by centring the following question: to what extent and how can students and teachers collaborate towards (educational) equality (for conceptualizations, see Lynch & Baker, 2005; hooks, 1994)? We strive to answer this by putting feminist and decolonial theories into practice, regarding the context described above. In this chapter we reflect on our collaborative effort to teach and learn from and with students, teachers and activists, focusing on the core assignment: the education intervention. In the conclusion, we reflect on the wider applicability of such an intervention exercise in the university classroom.

Educational Intervention

The elective course is part of the social science *Gender & Sexuality Studies* minor and is open to Bachelor students of all disciplines. It consists of eleven two-hour interactive seminars across two months, facilitated by a teacher and guest lecturers. At the heart

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of the course is the notion that mitigating inequality in education is a collaborative effort. To put that into practice this course is co-created with students in a way that destabilizes the norm of prescriptive teaching. Each session introduces a new theme, e.g. feminist and decolonial pedagogies and student activism (Freire, 1968; hooks, 1994, 2003; Merry, 2020; The University of Colour, 2019). The teacher-facilitators decide on the themes and literature in the course, but actively encourage students to provide input on the course content through class conversations and assignments. To cater to diverse learning strategies, students have the option to engage with academic and non-academic written, oral and visual material. Next to a reflection assignment, where students critically reflect on their own and a peer's experience with education inequality, collaboration centres around the course's core assignment: the 'education intervention'. Following Giroux (2003) and Freire (1968), this course sought to move away from the hierarchical relationship between teacher and students so that both become participants in the classroom.

The 'education intervention' encourages students to take the lead in their educational process by envisioning, together with other classroom participants, how to foster equality in or through education. They are challenged to engage with the feminist and decolonial (ideal) perspectives in the course material, to co-create their own format for a class session, and then to deliver it. The intervention consists of three parts, which allow students to step-by-step build up their collaborative potential through group work and peer feedback:

1. *Student Discussion Leaders*: Three discussion leaders per session co-create a classroom exercise of about thirty minutes relating to the session's theme, putting together creative ideas for course material and possible guest speakers. Participants and the teacher would often discuss their ideas for the session beforehand in a meeting and over email to create a coherent session.
2. *Education Intervention Presentation*: In the final three sessions of the course, groups of two to three students prepare an education intervention tackling (education) inequality to implement in the classroom. Students share preparation materials with the class (e.g. academic articles, podcasts, exercises). After that, the class gives dialogic feedback in the light of the theory and the practical and institutional limitations.
3. *Intervention Reflection Essay*: Emerging from the class discussion and feedback, students individually write a 1,500-word paper where they contextualize, reflect on and redevelop their intervention addressing its limitations while taking the theory and the politico-institutional context into account.

Reflections on and for Educational Praxis

Transgressing Institutional Realities

'Teaching for Equality's' collaborative step-by-step set-up transgresses (hooks, 1994) the classical 'banking model of education' (Freire, 1968) dominant in educational institutions. The course was seeded by junior staff; some just transitioned from student to teacher, and co-created with senior colleagues, activists and educators

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who co-facilitate it with the students and their 'education interventions'. Through this collaborative process, the role of the teacher shifted from 'teacher as information sharer' to 'teacher as intellectual' (Giroux, 2003), who engaged with and learned from the students' reflections and interventions.

Transgression may be experienced as disturbing by teachers and students (hooks, 1994; see also hooks, 2003; Freire, 1968) and whilst some students relished the room for creativity, something they are often not offered in other courses, others found it stressful and intimidating. Straying from traditional 'academic' norms and forms can make 'success' uncertain. For example, the student with dyslexia who argued for the inclusion of non-written materials in courses to facilitate the learning experience of students with dyslexia went on to present their assignment in the more traditional academic, written format, despite encouragement by the teacher to present their ideas in an alternative format.

The course itself, while enriching and exciting, was challenging in diverse ways for teachers. In our case, it required additional care and engagement outside class hours, adding to emotional labour and work pressure. Further, grading students' work felt increasingly contradictory to the course's aim. Yet, the course provided room to turn the challenges into new possibilities. One group of students, critiquing the hierarchical student-teacher relationship in grading, presented a peer-to-peer grading form focusing on progress and process that they tested with the class. The exercise led to a thoughtful discussion about grading. Although the class agreed that grades lead to stress and inequality in the classroom (many shared personal experiences around this issue), some wondered how peer-to-peer grading, or no grading, would affect participation and motivation. For some, it felt freeing, but others did not feel as incentivived to participate without the extrinsic motivation of receiving grades. This intervention group subsequently integrated the class's feedback on the complexity of assessment via a podcast (Mala Iyer) and a magazine spread (Quinty Hopman).

In the end, the class discussion led them to propose letting students themselves decide on how and whether to be graded on assignments. Even though it was not possible to change the actual way in which students were graded in the course, this collaborative intervention created a safe and open space wherein both students and teachers were able to dialogue about possible alternatives. In the process, teachers became more aware of diverse drivers of motivation and participation. Teachers were also able to express their frustrations towards the institutional limitations, which also made students more mindful of the teacher's agency.

Political Tensions and Care

The course has revealed political tensions that we encounter in and around university. Working through these tensions requires collaborative care work, which should be not only the responsibility of the teacher but shared by all participants (Berila, 2016; hooks, 1994; Mehta, 2019). In our course we sought to create a space for collective engagement with inherently political critical theories of decolonial and feminist pedagogy – valuing personal experience as knowledge (hooks, 1994). At the same time, we consciously chose to discuss politico-institutional realities and (un)conscious

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biases which might interfere with the ideals of the abovementioned theories, thereby purposefully disturbing the notion of the classroom as a 'safe space' (Ludlow, 2004).

The contrast between the possibilities within our classroom and the hierarchical structures 'outside', in the institution, could be disheartening to students. However, by envisioning collaborative interventions, we can meet those challenges with excitement, hope and care for each other (hooks, 2003, referring to Freire). During the discussion of an education intervention by students Lynne Kavishe, Rozan Snoek and colleague, the classroom carefully and collaboratively formulated ways to include both discomfort and excitement in addressing political tensions. These students conducted an exercise, wherein artworks served as the starting point to discuss emotions around racism and mental health in response to 'colourblind' approaches in the Dutch education system (Herve, 2018; Sijpenhof, 2020). Afterward, the class offered sensitive feedback for the intervention's further development. They pointed to the risk of white students participating in the exercise consuming the traumas of students of marginalized positionalities (Mehta, 2019). They suggested including artworks expressing joy to do full justice to lived experiences. In their reflection essays, the creators took this feedback into account and suggested the inclusion of new images for the intervention, but also reflected on the possibility of explicitly discussing the consumption of trauma in their intervention. The whole class collaborated to centre experience knowledge and emotions, thereby creating a 'contested space' (Ludlow, 2004) in which tensions can be met with care.

Conclusion

To what extent and how then can students and teachers collaborate towards (educational) equality in a course like the one we introduced in this chapter? The education intervention described in the three steps above offers students and teachers a sense of agency and shared responsibility – for action (Freire, 1968). The format encourages collaborative self-reflection, social scientific analysis of complex inequalities and imagination inspired by critical theory to conceive creative interventions to tackle them. Most students actively tried to consider the real politico-institutional settings in which their intervention would take place and its accompanying limits. One could take the interventions one step further by asking students to try them outside the 'bubble' of the classroom. This may further support participants to implement their idea(l)s in their future (educational) careers, putting visions into practice.

We created the course to critically analyse how our education is embedded in (discourses of) inequalities, but also to collaborate as teachers and students and imagine how to work towards equality to bring about real educational change. We believe that similar educational inequalities are faced in many institutions across the world and that this format can be useful in many different educational contexts. One can also decouple the format from the topic of education and use it to bring critical theory into practice in other social science courses. Instead of an 'educational intervention' students could come up with an NGO or governmental intervention, being asked to take theoretical principles and common ideal(s) (such as equality) into account.

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Through critical peer and self-reflection, we learn that such interventions are always 'work in progress', requiring resources of time, energy and care, but when students and teachers collaborate, they generate excitement.

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