education sciences

Educating Informal Educators

Edited by
Pam Alldred and Frances Howard

Printed Edition of the Special Issue Published in *Education Sciences*

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This is a reprint of articles from the Special Issue published online in the open access journal *Education Sciences* (ISSN 2227-7102) (available at: https://www.mdpi.com/journal/education/special_issues/Educating_Informal_Educators).

For citation purposes, cite each article independently as indicated on the article page online and as indicated below:

LastName, A.A.; LastName, B.B.; LastName, C.C. Article Title. *Journal Name* **Year**, *Volume Number*, Page Range.

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About the Editors

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Editorial
Educating Informal Educators

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As Youth and Community Work courses in Higher Education dwindle across the UK, following years of austerity and cuts to Youth Services, the diverse pedagogies of informal education are more needed than ever. Any society that values learning and recognises learners' diversity needs these approaches. This Special Issue focuses on how informal education pedagogies, practices, and principles are engaged with, modelled, taught, or shared in Higher Education. 'Educating Informal Educators' draws on the range of expertise in Higher Education courses across the UK and seeks to emphasise the value of informal education, its values, and practices not only for students of education or informal education, but for society as a whole. This Special Issue seeks to capture the particular pedagogies of youth and community work courses that sustain distinctive informal education practice.

This series of 13 articles celebrate the distinctive contribution of youth and community work pedagogues to the development of informal education pedagogies, covering themes of collaboration, creativity, student–lecturer dialogue, anti-oppressive practice, pedagogy of discomfort, critical and social pedagogy, and critical race theory as theoretical perspectives.

The authors in this Special Issue responded to an invitation to reflect on their practice as educators (usually university lecturers) of Informal Education. While reflection would be familiar to informal educators, although not always comfortable, we asked them to do so in an academic journal—*Education Science*—that expects an objectivist epistemology and empirical article structure. Reviewers were, therefore, sometimes disappointed with reflective meanderings through concepts from 'old' literature, and authors were dismayed at critical feedback that was about their structure, rather than their reflection or insights. We think we found a middle ground in the end. For a Science journal, this collection will be more philosophical, more political, and sometimes more personal than usual.

In a two-part contribution, Batsleer, Bowler, Green, Smith, and Woolley explore anti-oppressive practice. The first article, Batsleer [1] traces the genealogy of anti-oppressive practice as an approach in the UK to youth and community work, examining six fields of practice, from Paolo Freire and Critical Praxis to New Managerialism. The second element of this contribution from Bowler, Green, Smith, and Woolley [2] draws on research undertaken as part of a Collective Biography project generated by a group of activists and lecturers teaching and researching in youth and community work. Exploring the current context and contemporary challenges for teaching anti-oppressive practice in UK-based universities, the article investigates the role of these concepts for teaching and learning. The article concludes by starting to scope out possibilities for a grassroots strategy for learning about anti-oppressive practice alongside young people and communities.

Howell's article [3] presents an autoethnographic case study on Interprofessional Education and the pedagogical practice youth workers bring to Higher Education. He explores the challenges and opportunities of genuine collaboration based on youth work principles of group work, relationships with shrinking professional distance, critical pedagogy, genuine agency, and an emotional connection made between the professionals and service users. Howell brings our attention to the ways in which youth workers bring their pedagogical practice to a broader range of spaces within and beyond Higher Education

(HE). Another student–lecturer collaboration comes from Sheridan and Mungai [4], through an autoethnographic and reflective piece that takes the form of conversation between a lecturer and a graduate. Together, they emphasise a value-driven approach in enabling informal educators to celebrate cultural diversity. Acknowledging that we are always 'becoming', Sheridan and Mungai explore critical consciousness through praxis as educator and informal educator.

Whilst Youth and Community Work education works to prepare practitioners for demanding and responsive work in an ever-changing society, alternative pedagogic modes need to be introduced. In their article, Cullen & Whelan [5], reflect on difficult and challenging moments of learning, exploring the emotions, ethics, and challenges of facilitating training for youth practitioners to tackle gender-related violence. They draw upon Boler's work on pedagogy of discomfort in order to think productively about designing and delivering training for informal educators on sensitive issues with ethical integrity. Achilleos, Douglas, and Washbrook's article [6] presents approaches to raising issues of race and inequality for informal educators. Drawing on the Youth and Community Work programme at Wrexham Glyndŵr University, they argue for the value of Critical Race Theory for deconstructing learning and assessment, student voice, and support, in order to explore critical consciousness, challenge, and change.

As well as capturing experiences and insights from Youth and Community work lecturers and academics, the Special Issue presents research undertaken with students on these courses. Gormally, Coburn, and Beggan's article [7] draws on perspectives from current and former students in the UK, in order to find out if teaching, learning, and assessment practices in professionally approved programmes adopt the principles they espouse. Their findings indicate that despite a strong and coherent understanding of core theories that supported students in articulating emancipatory practice, teaching and learning was more aligned with traditional and formal methods than alternative or informal methods. A way forward through this issue, they suggest, is the provision of more flexible and creative assessments over the persistent use of standardised assessment methods within HE. A further step towards applying our preferred theory in informal education comes from a contribution from Spanish colleagues. All our authors might share a consensus regarding the value of learning through experience and from personal experience, but this paper illustrates the value of a highly intentional form of this in historical re-enactment that seems highly successful in learning about history. Historical re-enactment societies are booming in Spain, and Español-Solana and Franco-Calvo [8] present findings from over a hundred participants of its success in promoting learning about history and culture, military, and Medieval history in this case.

The critical stance regarding educational practice in universities is taken further in the contribution by Jeffs and Smith on the Education of Informal Educators [9]. They argue that youth and community work courses are stuck in silos, and lacking an educational imagination, and with little grounding in social sciences and moral philosophy. The full implications of this, Jeffs and Smith suggest, is that students are being sold short in terms of their ability to be teachers and pedagogues, and have also lost the chance to develop their subject knowledge. However, this perspective is counter-balanced by the wide range of alternative pedagogical practices demonstrated through the articles in this Special Issue. For example, Howard [10] reflects on creative pedagogies within youth work education, sharing examples of music, filmmaking, and board games with feedback gleaned from students. Highlighting the symbiosis of creative pedagogies with relational and experiential learning as key tenets of youth work practice, she argues that there is much to learn from youth work courses within HE, not only in terms of engaging and encouraging students through creativity.

Smith and Seal [11] explore the contested terrain of Critical Pedagogy within Higher Education. Focusing on practical examples of enabling Critical Pedagogy in the teaching of informal education, they argue that it is crucial for the teaching of informal educators, enabling lecturers and practitioners to interrupt the hegemony of neo-liberal and

neo-managerial thinking in their practice, re-orientate themselves, and examine their positionality within their institutions. Jones and Brady [12] develop this strand by exploring Social Pedagogy and its synergies with informal education. They present social pedagogical concepts whereby informal educators can 'practice the practice' through a transcendence of pedagogy. Their article signposts the value of these pedagogies within the post-COVID environment. This future-facing theme is also taken up by Curran, Gormally, and Smith [13] in their article on re-imagining approaches to learning and teaching post COVID-19. Drawing on their experience as members of a Community of Practice—the Professional Association for Lecturers in Youth & Community Work (PALYCW)—their article argues that these programmes should be preparing students for navigating practice in the society where new formations of social injustice are unfolding post COVID-19. Together, they argue that working collaboratively deepens democracy as the basis for taking action in communities with conscious intent.

Informal Education, as a sub-discipline, may be understood as on the cusp of Education, perhaps overlapping or formed by elements of Community Work, Youth Work, Social Pedagogy, and Social Work; certainly that is how it lies in the UK context, which is what this Issue reflects. We therefore invite articles to either respond to this Special Issue or to extend the discussion more widely by sharing their perspectives on informal education. This Special Issue explores how informal education (or these contributory elements) are brought into play in our practice as educators in Higher Education. Some of us were lucky enough to present the Issue and to discuss with some of the contributors at annual conferences of some of the professional associations that bring lecturers together. The 'BERA' (British Educational Research Association) and the Professional Association of Lecturers in Youth and Community Work annual conference sessions on these themes highlighted to us the value of working collectively in dialogue with colleague-teachers and learners and our shared values. We hope you enjoy it and that it prompts innovative teaching towards socially just ends.

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Essay

Re-Assembling Anti-Oppressive Practice (1): The Personal, the Political, the Professional

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Abstract: This essay offers a broken narrative concerning the early history of anti-oppressive practice as an approach in the U.K. to youth and community work and the struggles over this in the context of UK higher education between the 1960's and the early 2000's. Educating informal educators as youth and community workers in the UK has been a site of contestation. Aspects of a genealogy of that struggle are presented in ways which link publicly available histories with personal memories and narratives, through the use of a personal archive developed through collective memory work. These are chosen to illuminate the links between theory and practice: on the one hand, the conceptual field which has framed the education of youth and community workers, whose sources lie in the academic disciplines of education and sociology, and, on the other hand, the social movements which have formed the practice of informal educators. Six have been chosen: (1) The long 1968: challenging approaches to authority; (2) the group as a source of learning; (3) The personal and political: experiential learning from discontent; (4) Paolo Freire and Critical Praxis; (5) A critical break in social education and the reality of youth work spaces as defensive spaces; (6) New managerialism: ethics vs. paper trails. The approach taken, of linking memory work with present struggles, is argued to be a generative form for current critical and enlivening practice.

Keywords: anti-oppressive practice; social movements; critical praxis; youth and community work; critical pedagogy

1. Introduction

This article forms a very partial account of the experience of offering professional formation in 'anti-oppressive practice' in youth and community work in the period from the mid-1980's to around the turn of the twenty-first century. The term 'anti-oppressive practice' distinguished from the more liberal term 'anti-discriminatory practice' emerged in the 1980's as a challenge, in the fields of social work, youth work and community development, to forms of practice which ignored power relations, especially the impact of the class system and of patterns of racism and sexism. In what follows, the emergence of the term in the field of education of youth and community workers in higher education in the UK is traced in a very partial history. The term arose and became a focus of practice in the 1980's, which has been called the period of 'the politicised years' [1]. It was later codified in particular in social work text books, especially in the popular 'Anti-Discriminatory Practice' [2], which offered an analysis of power and oppression through personal, cultural and structural lenses. It was during this same period that the term 'Informal Education' became well established as a generic term for youth work in the UK, replacing to some extent the earlier terminology of social education, largely thanks to the work of Mark Smith and Tony Jeffs [3].

I first attended a youth club and a youth arts project in the early 1970's; I became a part-time worker on Adventure Playgrounds, and then a full-time youth and community worker. In 1986 I started working at Manchester Polytechnic as a lecturer in youth and community work. I continued in that work until retiring from Manchester Metropolitan

University in 2020, having been part of the UK Youth Work world and educated informal educators throughout that long period. However, I believe this holds much more than merely personal interest, as the trajectory of our work was shaped first by the sense of the 'long 1968' and its influence [4], and then by the post-1989 period of 'capitalist realism' [5], with the hegemonic conviction that 'there is no alternative' to neoliberal economics and forms of education which credentialise and turn students into consumers, only to hold them entirely responsible, in a sickening manner, for their own failures within the education system. This post-1989 turn became linked to an audit culture from which we still need to devise ever more creative methods of escape. The ethical and political imperatives associated with 'anti-oppressive practice' remain in contradiction with the imperatives of 'capitalist realism' in both universities and many contemporary forms of youth work practice. The aspects of educating informal educators presented here follow an arc leading from optimism to a deadening kind of inertia: but they also provoke an awareness of the possibility of a different kind of praxis.

My certainly unreliable memories of the earliest years of my work as a youth and community Work educator at Manchester Polytechnic/Manchester Metropolitan University were re-awakened by the participation in a collective biography project entitled 'Re-assembling Anti-Oppressive Practice' [6]. I have worked over many years with ideas from Frigga Haug's [7] 'memory work' method, which, alongside other 'consciousness raising' methods in both research and movement spaces, was important in the 1980's and continues to influence contemporary work on collective biography [8]. The process we undertook, like Haug's, prompted writing out of everyday memories and experiences of oppression which were then discussed in a group setting. This is the source of the writing presented here. We aimed to explore the theoretical significance of apparently mundane and everyday moments in the marginal and conflicted space of educating youth and community workers in UK higher education. In what follows I have chosen to offer accounts of particular concepts and practices in order to show a set of entanglements between the field of youth and community work, significant social movements of the second half of the twentieth century, and both State or market forms. I am drawing on lived experience and personal archives as well as on courses I have taught throughout the period from the 1970's to the early 2000's. Working with 'the archive' has become a significant method for enquiry into feminist education practices [9]. The idea of 'the archive' is that it does not provide neutral data, but forms part of a genealogy which can be generative of feminist practice in the here and now. It is for this reason that I draw on both established texts and personal memory in what follows, seeking to validate forms of knowing usually excluded from the written and academic record. This builds on work undertaken as part of the Feminist Webs archive collective [10]. In such an approach both marginality and marginalia become the strong thread of a continuously emergent practice.

There has long been a sense that youth and community work courses have offered a 'radical' space at the margins both of higher education and of the field of youth and community work, itself a practice marginal to the mainstream institutions of education and social care. This has been expressed both in terms of the courses being in tension with the requirements of higher education (for example through emphasising experience as much as academic qualifications in recruitment processes) and being criticised for remoteness from the field of practice as a result of an emphasis on the importance of a critical engagement with current policy directives, whatever their origin. At the heart of our discussions in the 'Re-assembling Anti-Oppressive Practice' collective has been the question of the extent to which this field of practice has been and may yet again become permeable to wider radical and democratic social movements and the pedagogies associated with them.

In this genealogy of 'anti-oppressive practice' (a term which emerged at a certain point and then almost disappeared, being replaced by terms such as 'inclusion' and 'equality and diversity') I have chosen to highlight both concepts and practices which show youth and community work in the UK to be a powerfully contested terrain. The term 'anti-oppressive practice' became a phrase which gathered those who experienced youth and

community work as a site of struggle, especially for the rights of young people in relation to the oppressive forces of, for example, policing or schooling, and against practices of youth and community work which were primarily concerned with the social control of young people. As chair of the UK QAA Subject Benchmark process which established the framework for the recognition of undergraduate courses in this field, such contestation seemed to me to be of the utmost significance, even to the extent of defining the field [11]. The turn from the engagement with social movements to the development of bureaucratic forms of accountability in which 'anti-oppressive practice' became nothing more than a 'tick box' exercise is part of the sorry tale here, but it is the earlier lively struggles to which this essay draws attention. In the end, in the Benchmark process, the conflict took the form of an argument surrounding naming: whether the word 'community' belonged in the naming of this Benchmark at all. The term 'youth and community work' marked a pragmatic compromise, and so this genealogy, which begins with the term 'community' is not innocent. The word 'community', with its dangerous echoes of 'communism', could at times become a code for commitment to a grassroots practice with an ethic which promoted equality and social justice.

This genealogical approach is intended to suggest ways in which emerging conceptualisations, the spaces afforded by higher education, and a specific field of practice have overlapped with one another. It also offers a glimpse of how, in a very small field of practice, relations between individuals and patterns of influence emerge which are as significant as bodies of theory, and are intertwined with them. In particular, the role of individuals in the Training Agencies Group (TAG), the Trade Union (CYWU) and the Youth Work Unit at the National Youth Bureau (NYB/subsequently National Youth Agency/NYA) are the focus of attention. These have been important UK national reference points for the practice of youth and community work. In terms of Educating Informal Educators, the work of TAG, now the Professional Association of Lecturers in Youth and Community Work (PALYCW) is central to the story told here.

The sources and the methods here therefore intertwine the personal, the public and the political. The writing of the six aspects which follow engages with each of these sources. Where possible I have referenced both published texts and personal blogs and other communications. The rest relies on my own memories of the times.

2. 'The Long 1968 . . . ' and Changing Approaches to Authority

The Milson–Fairbairn report, commissioned in 1969 [12] by a Labour government to explore links between youth work, schools and Further Education, on the one hand, and adult community groups, on the other, is much less discussed than the Albemarle Report (1960) [13], which is usually treated as the origin document for the formation of Youth Leadership as a profession. Yet this was the report that opened up a difficult, fruitful conversation between 'community development' (rooted in Christian traditions of 'overseas mission') and 'Youth Leadership' (also with strong roots in Christian philanthropy and yet based 'at home' and newly professionalised in the formation of the National College). It also opened the conversation between youth leadership (now termed youth and community work) and the development of democratic forums in formal education such as student unions. In 1969, in line with a salary scale which had long been applicable to 'Youth Leaders and Community Centre Wardens', community development joined counselling and group work as key elements in the curriculum for the training and development of such staff.

The term 'I968' has come to represent a moment which in fact occurred both before and after 1968 and into the early 1970's, when many traditional hierarchies were being brought into question, not least in education and in the field of charitable endeavours. Paternalistic and patronising forms of practice were becoming increasingly difficult to sustain. Inherited patterns of authority were put strongly into question. 'The Laughter of Stafford Girls High' (as Carol Ann Duffy describes it in the wonderful poem of that name [14]) had been let loose in the world, and the 'youthquake' of that time was moving

faster than any of the newly established youth and community work training courses could hope to capture.

Student movements were central to 'les évènements' of 1968, and movements to reform school education formed an inevitable counterpart to the attempt to reform universities. The student protests centred on the opposition to war, to militarism and to bureaucratic power, but also on the universities themselves, including the ways in which university authorities had repressed civil rights protests and disciplined those involved. In relation to schools, the example of the Little Red School Book [15] (1969, 2014), which presented an open educational approach for young people towards drugs (including tobacco and alcohol) and towards sex (including the discussion of female masturbation), became a cause célèbre for the Christian establishment across Europe to rally against. Opening up such liberalising conversations in Youth Work remained controversial well into the 1970's, so youth work was positioned as behind the curve and as an 'agent of social control' in a moment of youthful rupture against 'establishments' internationally. But courses in higher education settings did begin to open up the possibility of an engagement between youth and community work and the counterculture.

The non-judgmental ethos of the counterculture was present in the emphasis on the 'social' that had developed in both the training of youth leaders and the formation of community development workers. 'Social education' (as it was termed) might turn out to be more than an education in moral development, civilising behaviour and minding your 'p's and q's.' Ideas about 'group work', especially non-directive group work, and peer-led learning came to the fore. Ideas about community development as a form of activism allied to civil rights brought a sense of the politics of the time into recently established courses, which were still forging a sense of 'professionalism' in order to distinguish this practice from 'old style' philanthropy. However, this professionalism was, in its turn, problematic in its assumptions concerning a neutral 'expertise.'

As Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson [16] made clear in their groundbreaking study 'Resistance through Rituals', the power of youth counterculture was only part of the story. Youth 'sub-cultures'—which were the focus of so much public anxiety and policy attention —were as divided by social class as the rest of UK society. Hall and Jefferson's work enabled a clear grasp of the ways in which cultural expressions mediated class divisions, and had their own power. 'Tuning in and turning on' to such expressions could be seen as an essential means of connection between the youth leader and groups of young people. For many years, courses drew not only on studies of group dynamics but also on cultural studies and radical deviancy studies as essential elements of the curriculum. In subsequent work, Hall (et al.) [17] were to identify the contradictions of this moment as a 'crisis of hegemony' as it developed through the prism of 'race'. 'The appearance of a renewed panic about race in the very moment of this intense polarisation of the political scene and just when the shift from a managed to a more coercive variant of consensus is occurring, cannot be wholly fortuitous.' [17]. The forces which supported a shift towards authoritarian populism, against which the new social movements were pitched, were already present in the late 1960's, and already strongly focused around issues of race, nation and sexuality.

3. The Group . . . . . .

Some of the powerful struggles in practice as they were lived are present in the biography of Susan Atkins, one of only 17 women out of 145 students enrolled on the emergency programme for the training of youth leaders which ran at the National College in Leicester from 1961–1970. Susan, who went on to play a significant role as national chair in the development of the Community and Youth Workers Union (CYWU) and was instrumental in the establishment of the Women's Caucus of that union, gives an account of the influence of Peter Duke. Duke became the principal of the first National College for the Training of Youth Leaders, in 1964. With Peter, then the Warden of Oxford House, in Bethnal Green (whose nineteenth century origins lie with High Anglicanism and the Oxford Movement), Susan, as a young woman, was involved in theatricals, including

the production of scenes from Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. Susan's account [18] of those years captures the continuity of the struggle in youth work education and training traditions between 'experience' and 'theory': Susan describes first 'learning on the job' as a young woman leading theatricals, then struggling to retain her place on the massively male-dominated emergency programme: a struggle in which, thankfully, she was successful. It was such struggles 'without a name' which prefigured the emergence of the Women's Liberation Movement. One expression of that movement was the formation of the Women's Caucus in the trade union.

With the emergence of professional education and training came the further development of theory to inform practice, and the term 'social education' became central to this. Initially the focus was on association and the dynamics of association: Bernard Davies, in his pamphlet 'From Social Education to Social and Life Skills Training' cites the following set of questions (drawn up for the Derbyshire Youth Service in 1963) as typical of the professional orientation to social education:

Is association in my club . . . . harmless . . . . . . ?

Does association in my club introduce young people to new interests . . . .. to responsibility?

Have any members shown increasing acceptance of themselves . . . .?

Are there members who have shown increasing acceptance of others . . . . . . ?

Are there any who show increasing readiness to consort with members of the opposite sex in a relationship other than one of the forms of courtship? Do some members show increased ability to listen with attention to unfamiliar or accepted ideas . . . . . . ? [19]

There is a resonance here with earlier definitions of 'social education' within youth work promoting the ability 'to entertain oneself; entertain a stranger; and entertain a new idea' [20]. Acceptance and non-judgementalism set the tone.

Group development was also seen as a fundamental element of community development:

The process of community development (or creation) is envisaged in two stages: the first, development within the groups themselves as the members become more knowledgeable people, more friendly and co-operative among themselves, and more able to conduct their business without outside help and guidance; and the second, development in the community at large as the characteristics developed within the groups influence the conduct of the members in their homes and in their neighbourhood. Thus, through the groups they sponsor the agencies aim to produced socialized and community-minded people, as well as knowledgeable people. They hope that leaders developed in their groups will later become leaders in community affairs [21].

Reg and Madge Batten (based at the Institute of Education, in London, after 'fieldwork' experience in Africa) influenced the curriculum of courses through their advocacy of a combination of directive and non-directive approaches. The non-directive approach can be understood as a move away from the moral certainties and colonial mastery inherent in earlier approaches, although the traces of colonial power remain in the assumption that 'socialised and community-minded people' need to be 'developed' rather than encountered, supported and resourced. 'The learning group' also became central to emerging approaches to adult education in the UK, as University Extra Mural Departments moved away from lecture courses towards an emphasis on recognising the experience of adults as a foundation for learning. This learning group became a central feature of courses both for part-time youth workers (the 'Bessey courses') [22] and for the original courses for full-time staff to achieve professional qualification. Often combined with a shift from 'lecturing' to 'group facilitation', the covert power of the tutor in the 'tutor group' on such courses became the focus for feminist and anti-racist critique in the 1980's. The scope (both for influence and for exploitation) afforded to the 'tutor as guru' in such apparently 'non-directive' groups became the material for much reflective critique from the 1980's onwards, including in the informal circulation among women of accounts of what was then newly termed 'sexual harassment.'

The field of youth and community work became—in its own understanding—a space for group work and peer learning—and this was associated with self-development and autonomy for young people, in well-boundaried spaces, and with democratic rather than inherited forms of authority. The small group was a space for development and for the integration of learning. However, inherited patterns of authority had far from disappeared, and the disappointment and sometimes furious discontent caused by the ability of such apparently alternative spaces to remain deeply conventional in terms of power dynamics was persistently and acutely felt.

4. The Personal Is Political: Experiential Learning That Starts from Discontent

By the mid 1970's there was a significant flow (always at the margins) between the spaces being created in the new social movements—especially between student activists and the Women's Liberation Movement and Black Youth activism—and the pre-existing spaces of youth and community work. This was partly because these were spaces in which support for those living in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods could be developed without recourse either to legal powers such as those possessed by social workers or the accompanying pathologising case work approaches and without involvement from the police. It was also because the social movements saw a significant politics in the social in the same moment (but often not in the same way) as youth work theorists saw a democratic educative potential in the same civil society spaces.

The significant new emphases emerging from the social movements was on the experience of power *within* the social and on the role of the small group in investigating and challenging hegemonic power in everyday life, whilst building the collective agentic power of participants. In the Women's Liberation Movement, the role of small groups was now seen as vital and as the central organising tool of the movement [23]. Practices of 'speaking bitterness' and of naming personal troubles as shared and potentially political issues were widely practised both formally, in consciousness-raising groups, and informally, in the many reading groups and campaigning groups which flourished, linked by magazines such as *Spare Rib* or *Red Rag* and by the publishing of pamphlets about emerging practices, theories and issues. All this was supported through newsletters and radical bookshops. These often-provided meeting spaces, alongside the meeting spaces emerging in women's centres and gay centres. One such newsletter was the '*Working with Girls Newsletter*' [24]. The male dominance of the youth work sector was widely noted and discussed: this applied to the courses which trained youth workers. From the mid 1970's to the mid-1980's the organising by feminists within youth work led to the formation, discussed earlier, of a women's caucus within the trade union, to regular conferences for women associated with the *Working with Girls* newsletter, and to the brief existence of the National Organisation for Work with Girls and Women, which argued for the development of a national training college specifically for women youth workers [25]. These networks developed organising strategies which disrupted any easy sense of the 'social' as a gender-neutral space. Feminist women appointed to posts in training agencies (the precursors of today's degree programmes) began to attend the Training Agencies Group (TAG) and to raise issues of gender justice in that organisation, in ways which challenged the sense of an 'old boys club' in which the 'secretariat' (made up of the leaders of the small number of existing courses) shaped agendas and ran the show, even when the meetings happened in the ubiquitous 'democratic circle' of youth work training courses of that era.

The insistence on opportunities for women to meet autonomously within TAG meetings was an early example of a 'disruptive moment'; this was disruptive even though the regular annual conference was held on the weekend of the FA Cup Final and had always included a session dedicated to the watching of the match. In much the same way as newly established, feminist-inspired Girls Nights were often offered on Wednesday evenings, as Wednesdays were a 'football night', the possibility of women meeting at TAG during the match was offered, thus requiring some women to choose between their love of football and their politics. Such 'disruptive moments' are a hallmark of practice developed by

social movements and interventions like these, drawn from the practice of the Women's Liberation Movement, and began to be theorised in ways which potentially transformed the meaning associated with 'experiential learning'.

One's social experience, and active enquiry into experience by experimenting with new patterns became the material for the exploration of social relations of oppression and subordination. Experiences in small groups could give glimpses of the potential for different ways of being in the world, become sources of solidarity and possible liberation, as well as offer discomforting insights into unnoticed and unthinking privilege. As Black Studies emerged alongside Women's Studies to challenge the curriculum and focus of training courses in youth and community work, the exploration and theorisation of imposed silences and subjugated knowledges made 'non-directive group work' deeply controversial in its power to non-directively sustain hegemonic power relationships. Instead, group work and experiential learning became the grounds for enquiry and for opening up the possibilities of change.

5. Paulo Freire at West Hill College: An Emphasis on Critical Praxis as the Source of Transformation

At first, there was considerable resistance in TAG to the inclusion of community work alongside youth work in courses. Subsequently, there was resistance to the inclusion of part-time and work-based courses alongside those historically based in colleges, polytechnics and universities. As the wave of new courses which emerged from the late 1980's onwards was for the most part dedicated to the recruitment of black workers, this suggested an exclusionary attitude towards those 'taking the experience route', which reinforced existing white hierarchies in relation to 'professional qualification.'

Important to all the social movements as they travelled in the spaces of community development, adult education and eventually youth work was the critical approach to education in the work of Paulo Freire [26]. His discussion of 'praxis' became central to understandings of the kind of practices we were engaged in.

*'To speak a true word is to transform the world . . . when a word is deprived of its dimension of action reflection automatically suffers as well and the word is changed into idle chatter . . . into an alienated and alienating **blah** . . . . there is no transformation without action.*

On the other hand, if action is emphasized exclusively to the detriment of reflection . . . action for action's sake . . . negates true praxis and makes dialogue impossible.' [26]

It is somewhat amazingly the case that Freire was part of a Conference on Community Development at West Hill College, Birmingham, in 1970. The influence of his work, and that of his critic and powerful advocate bell hooks, has been profound especially in those courses which associate themselves closely with community development. Critical pedagogy and engaged pedagogy offered the theoretical framework for practice.

Freirean approaches were by no means universally welcomed. In particular Freire's emphasis on the directive rather than the non-directive role of the educator was a source of much criticism, as was his revolutionary commitment to the transformation of social relations of oppression, which he termed 'liberation', 'transformation' and 'conversion.' Despite the fact that Freire argued that the educator needed to be directive of the process, not of the student, the sense was that the dialogue proposed by Freire could easily become mimicked as one led by Socrates in which 'yes Socrates/yes Paulo' was the only possible answer permitted to the learner. So, Freirean pedagogy—or 'critical pedagogy', as it came to be known—despite its commitment to dialogic relationships between partners in learning, was too often expressed and even experienced as an alternative form of mastery [27,28]. There was, too, a consistent fear within the world of youth work training and education, of too much emphasis on 'pedagogy' (and therefore education), with the consequent neglect of practices of association, collaboration and community-building, based on enthusiasm and enjoyment as much as on learning [29]. 'If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution.'

The problem of too much emphasis on 'pedagogy' also related to the issues identified in 1980 by the authors of the London-Edinburgh Weekend Return Group's pamphlet '*In and Against the State.*' 'Your resources we need. Your relations we don't.' [30]. There were significant unmet basic needs among both the young people and the older generations with whom youth and community workers engaged. At the same time, receiving resources from the State involved them in patterns of relationship they had rejected: pathologising communities; assessing individuals and families in terms of educational and parenting skills deficits; administering border controls on the access to opportunities.

Youth workers and other community educators too easily became 'street level bureaucrats' [31] even whilst also carrying traces (within the State) of the social struggles of the past. In a similar way, lecturers on courses also too easily became assessment bureaucrats, whilst carrying the same traces of social struggles in universities. Praxis and the critical linking of reflection and action was the only way to mitigate this in-built tendency. Praxis might mean drawing on university resources to support unfunded women's groups beyond the university; enabling students to undertake placements in newly emerging and not yet professionalised settings such as voluntary sector-based Black Youth Centres; supporting young people 'coming out' as gay in school contexts, and reflecting together across difference on the power of such actions. New thinking on 'diffractive practice' is strong in its critique of the way 'reflective journals' have become routinised and scripted as performances of the self. Reflective conversations in the context of new social movements, which emphasised the importance of conversations and coalitions across difference, and so were committed to the production of new praxis away from racism and sexism, may have been diffractive without knowing it.

6. A Significant Text and a More Significant Practice: Defensive Spaces

Between 1980 and 1982, the Youth Work Unit at the National Youth Bureau, led by Mary Marken, developed The Enfranchisement Development Project 'to consider the needs and therefore the position of young people in relation to organized society.' It drew heavily on work undertaken in a similar period by Steve Butters and Susan Newell [32], 'Realities of Training', in which Butters delineated what he termed 'the social education repertoire' (cultural adjustment, community development and institutional reform) and also posed the possibility of a critical break with social education towards a 'radical paradigm' (self-emancipation) in which workers aligned themselves with the youth against parental controls and fought the system, recognising that this would involve them in conflict, not consensus. The results of this project were published as '*Interpretation and Change: The Emerging Crisis of Purpose in Social Education*', by Marion Leigh and Andy Smart.

In a moment of insight never far from the realities of practice, Leigh and Smart wrote: 'A number of workers would argue (on the basis of bitter experience of having apparently middle of the road non-controversial programmes of sex education and civics style political education subjected to intense political scrutiny) that the real critical break in practice can be found running through all the components of the Social Education Repertoire . . . ' [33]. Perhaps the same critical break ran through the courses in universities. The challenges of the late 1970's and early 1980's, which were faced first on the streets, erupted in the form of a recognition of racism and exclusionary practice, subsequently enabling the development of Black Access courses as part of the struggle to establish a black presence and black perspectives within UK higher education. This struggle was felt in the Manchester course, for example, from the mid 1980's onwards, when student complaints about racism and the absence of black lecturers led to an HMI inspection which brought the course to the attention of the university authorities, who threatened the course with closure.

Leigh and Smart [33] end with a reflection on the future of concepts of professionalism in youth work. They sensed that the social democratic model associated with 'the social education repertoire' was under pressure, but found little support among practitioners for other, more radical and critical approaches to youth work, which seemed 'unprofessional.' This was especially the case for the 'oppositional approach', as it involved 'taking sides.'

Yet throughout the book there is the insistent trace of the events that took place on British streets in 1981, after the long period of pressure on young black people, and young men especially, in the form of the 'sus' laws. In what came to be termed uprisings, young men (and some women) started to take their freedom into their own hands. Irvine Williams, from Moss Side Manchester (now youth work manager at the Hideaway a Moss Side Youth Centre), has spoken in a recent podcast of his experience as a young man [34]. He had been a member of Hideaway from age 14, in attendance at a centre in which there were many fights around the sound systems, boiling over among the youth as a result of the pressure from the hostile environment they were growing up in. In July 1981, discontents about unemployment and police brutality following Special Patrol Group's use of the 'sus law' erupted on the streets. At the age of 16, Irvine was picked up during the riots, arrested and taken to the Platt Fields police station in Manchester, just on the edge of the district. At this time, the youth workers all attended the police station to support the young people and were part of the crowd who came to the police station to free them. As a result of the support he received from youth workers in this way, at the age of 18, Irvine became a volunteer at the youth club, and began to associate with other black people running youth clubs in different parts of the country. He remembers powerfully his experience of support and guidance at that time from local youth workers, including Ann Rose, who became his tutor on the Youth and Community Work course at Manchester Polytechnic. This has informed his practice as a youth worker ever since. In this context, the paradigm which Leigh and Smart [32] describe as the 'oppositional paradigm' was far from unthinkable: it formed a basic practice of self-defence and mutual aid among young people who were especially vulnerable to what Leigh and Smart termed 'the encroaching non-welfare state.' Forty years before the coining of the phrase 'school to prison pipeline', youth workers and young people in Black communities such as Moss Side were already forging sustainable practices with which those offering professional formation to youth work professionals would struggle to engage. These were not State-led practices, they were not colonial practices and neither were they neutral, as those between young people and the authorities.

It was out of, and in response to, such experiences that the term 'Anti-Oppressive Practice' came to be coined. 'Race' as a prism through which to understand both the nature of the crisis in hegemony and the resolution of that crisis in new forms of authoritarian populism and in patterns of bureaucratisation and control continues to haunt the education of informal educators. Oppression, under its many names, has often seemed to be focussed in policing and the criminalisation of urban communities. The resistance and mutual aid practices of those communities remain a vital source for understanding what it might mean to be 'anti-oppressive', both including and beyond the experience of racism, as well as continuing to create often fragile civil society spaces which provide a defence for those young people consistently under attack from authoritarian populist responses to the continual crisis which occurs through the prism of 'race' in UK culture.

7. New Managerialism and the National Occupational Standards: Paper Trails vs. Ethics

According to Jean Spence [24], it was already the case in the late 1980's that the struggles of radical practitioners came to be re-interpreted by a managerial ethos in youth services which made commitments to anti-sexist and anti-racist work a managerial edict rather than a primary response to the needs and discontents of young people.

A good deal of energy went into institutional struggles to create a Statement of Purpose of a core curriculum for youth work in 1990, at the Second Ministerial Conference convened by the DES [35], which identified the task of the service as 'seeking to redress all forms of inequality and to ensure equality of opportunity for all young people'. It saw youth work as needing to operate 'through the challenging of oppressions such as racism and sexism and all those which spring from differences of culture race language sexual identity gender disability age religion and class'; And 'through the celebration of the diversity and strengths which arise from such differences.'

Thus, the social struggles of the past left a trace within the documents of the State, or at least in documents aligned to the State. These documents were then to form the basis of 'National Occupational Standards' (NOS) [36] developed for youth work and the pre-degree level during the New Labour period and first published in 2002.

Between 1997 and 2010 the work of the Education and Training Standards Committee of the National Youth Agency and, by association, the work of TAG, became deeply embroiled with the necessity of creating national frameworks within which the work of youth workers, alongside that of other community educators, could be supported. Just as this applied to the education and training offered to voluntary and part-time youth and community workers at a pre-degree level, it also applied to degree programmes in universities. However, the professional field was largely concerned with specifying the skills and competences required of part-time youth workers, whilst the universities remained concerned with the requirement for all professional qualifications to be at the degree level by 2010 (and therefore in line with those awarded to social workers and teachers). It was as if every element of what had previously been a marginal but valued practice was now subject to minute assessment and the requirement of paper trails accrediting skills and competencies, which, like certificates and graduation ceremonies, became more elaborate in inverse proportion to their market or social value.

By 1999, the first Mapping of National Occupational Standards for Youth Work was completed. This period also saw the emergence of PAULO (named after Paulo Freire) as a National Training Organisation for Youth Work, Community Work and Adult Education [37]. PAULO was soon overtaken by a rationalisation process, and youth work' workforce development found itself positioned between Lifelong Learning UK (which it joined in 2005) and the powerful presence of the Children's Workforce Development Council. Just as the youth work workforce was now being 'integrated' into wider partnerships to pursue the 2003 Every Child Matters programme (2003) [38], so the skills and competencies required of Children's Workforce professionals became ever more generic and welfare/safeguarding-based.

It was during this period that I heard a committee report on the development of the National Occupational Standards [37]. When asked what had become of the commitment to anti-oppressive practice, the outsourced company responsible for the design of standards at that stage had taken the term to be a reference to good practice in the restraint of young people in residential settings.

Meanwhile, traces of earlier social movements were to be found in the higher education bureaucracy of the development of Subject Benchmarks. The development of the Subject Benchmark for Youth and Community Work began in 2006 [11]. Perhaps because of the distance from the re-organisation of the workforce, it was possible to retain for a while a sense of the presence of some distinctive commitments to enquiry, association and ethics in this statement. Professor Sara Banks of Durham University had worked with the National Youth Agency in 2000 to produce the Ethical Conduct in Youth Work: A Statement of Values and Principles [38], and it was now here that the strongest statements of values with significance for practice which challenges oppression were to be found.

It might seem that the claims of the social movements on the civil society space of youth work had been reduced to a subsection of a subsection in the National Occupational Standards: *'providing equality of opportunity [39]'*.

8. Without Conclusions

A second article in this Special Issue [6] engages with the question of how these memories and archive might be living in the present moment, and what new forms of theorising and acting are being offered to youth work committed to understanding and unsettling oppression.

There is a good deal of work on the 'archive' currently, as an aspect of critical humanities. The writing of both these articles can be understood as framed by such an exploration. Karen Barad's [40] thinking on time/space entanglements is very significant for many writ-

ers in this field. In this her work connects to that of earlier Marxist visionary thinkers—one of whom, Walter Benjamin, wrote vividly about the artist Paul Klee's 'Angel of History':

> *This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceived a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. The storm is what we call progress [41].* (Benjamin, 1940; 1959)

Such thinking suggests that time is not best understood as linear or progressive. The wreckage of oppression which continues to be piled up in what we can understand as 'one single catastrophe' faced by peoples across many generations. So, the catastrophes of police violence; or exclusion and violence based on gender and sexuality; or of segregated provision for disabled young people; or of poverty: these were not addressed 'once and for all' between 1970 and 1990, so that progress could be made. Rather, the storm continues to blow us back to the future, and the debris of earlier actions might become driftwood to hold on to as new actions to sustain life are taken. So 'memory work' is a method not primarily designed to provoke nostalgia or melancholy but to spur such new actions and a new praxis.

One way in which the new movements of the 21st century are being characterised is their focus on life and breathing as much as on voice and rights. A critical question that was present in the earlier movements mentioned here and which remains a necessary question is that of the relation between theory and experience, between ways of knowing and ways of being. 'Praxis' has been one term for this, a sense of the unity of action and thinking, as discussed in the work of Paulo Freire [26]. A further question, often provoked by feminist work on 'situated knowing', has been to consider how to avoid those forms of knowing and being that relegate other forms of knowing and being to redundancy and non-existence. In this essay I have sought to emphasise the contribution of unpublished practitioners who do not define themselves as scholars to the development of understandings of anti-oppressive practice in youth work. Therefore, the work with 'the archive' presented here is in itself an attempt to re-ignite those connections between different forms of knowing about informal education, as the new social movements of the current times alert us to the challenges of the current times.

Another current framing of this relation might be to emphasise what happens beneath language and concepts, what enables them, what sustains them. More and more we find ourselves drawn towards practices of care and salvage from the wreckage as the only practices strong enough to counter disaster capitalism and all its oppressive force. It is here, in these practices—in the resulting small-scale activity—that new ways of being—not of self-reflection or self-care, but of being in the world in difference, being in the world as relationality from the very start—can and do emerge, are already emerging. Youth work in community spaces is small enough and marginal enough to be part of that.

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Article

(Re)Assembling Anti-Oppressive Practice Teachings in Youth and Community Work through Collective Biography (2)

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Abstract: This article draws on research undertaken as part of a Collective Biography project generated by a group of activists and lecturers teaching and researching in youth and community work (YCW). Collective Biography (CB) is an approach to research in which participants work productively with memory and writing to generate collective action orientated analysis. The emphasis on collectivized approaches to CB work acts as a potential strategy to disrupt and resist the reproduction of power in academic knowledge-making practices and the impact of powerful policy discourses in practice. The article explores the current context and contemporary challenges for teaching anti-oppressive practice in UK based universities before briefly scoping out the methodology of CB. Extracts from a memory story are used as an example of the process of collective analysis generated through the process of CB in relation to racism, the role of anti-oppressive practice, and as the basis for YCW educators to think collectively about implications for teaching going forward. The article goes on to explore the role of concepts that were worked with as part of the CB process and considers the potential significance for teaching anti-oppressive practice in YCW. The article concludes by starting to scope out key considerations relating to the potential role of CB as a grass roots strategy to open spaces of possibility alongside young people and communities in reassembling the teaching of anti-oppressive practice in YCW.

Keywords: youth and community work; social justice; anti-oppressive practice; collective biography; agential cuts; memory; diffraction

1. Introduction

Teaching anti-oppressive practice in Youth and Community Work (YCW) in Higher Education (HE) is a messy business. The article starts in the middle of a theoretical and practice terrain that is fraught with contestation and is as complex as it is dynamic. YCW educators and students located in UK based HE institutions are routinely immersed within narratives of individualization and responsibilization [1]. These narratives are deeply embedded and internalized within the practices of the neo liberal university which at the same time are intersecting with new formations of social inequalities and oppression re-carved along old fault lines of social division [2]. Increasingly, YCW educators and their methods and methodologies, shaped by Freire's [3] notion of critical pedagogy, are precariously positioned in the neo liberal university with frequent reminders of the potential of being both 'replaceable and renewable' [4] (p. 909). These contexts run counter to HE as emancipatory and transformational [3]. This holds intended and unintended consequences for approaches to teaching anti-oppressive practice orientated to social justice as part of critical pedagogy in YCW. Instead, it is creating conditions in which educators are vulnerable to 'colonise their own practices while being anxious about the implications of doing otherwise' [4] (p. 909).

The article is based on the premise that there is a political and ethical imperative for youth and community educators to develop teaching strategies to 'do otherwise' [4] (p. 909) as a push back to increasingly overly colonized performative teaching spaces in HE [1]. This requires a commitment to be proactive in developing collective ways of working as a community of practice and to work creatively with concepts in ways that disrupt the reproduction of academic knowledge-making practices and deficit-based policy discourses [5]. It is within these contexts that the article draws on a process of CB [6] incorporating memory work, writing, and analysis generated by a group of activists and lecturers teaching and researching in YCW across universities in the UK (United Kingdom). The process of CB was an endeavor to lean into the current challenges and tensions encountered within teaching practices and opening space to explore possibilities.

2. Background Context and Literature

Since YCW became a degree profession in 2008, anti-oppressive practice continues to be both in the middle and increasingly on the margins of ethical and political struggles about how and to what extent teaching and practice should engage with broader societal concerns relating to social justice [7]. What constitutes professionally qualifying YCW education cannot be understood as if it is a fixed object conceived in an ahistorical, apolitical vacuum, disconnected and decontextualized from the realities of young people's lived experiences.

There are a multiplicity of stakeholders invested in constructing, validating, maintaining, and regulating professionally qualifying YCW education and in shaping spaces for learning. Youth and community programs located in universities are inevitably subject to multi-directional and competing pressures to engage with the profession and its diverse youth and community practices in the context of changing social, economic, and political landscapes [8]. Students often want to know what they 'need to learn' to successfully complete their qualifying degree program and get a job aligned to government policy and employer's expectations. There is an uneasy alliance between this and the call, integral to critical pedagogy, that underpins youth and community programs, to challenge oppressive systems and structures and to devise anti-oppressive ways of working that are transformative and oriented to social justice [3].

In the Middle and on the Margins

Powerful policy discourses and associated performativities in practice have cast anti-oppressive practices, and the conceptual framing of them, to the margins at a time when new formations of oppression and injustice are emergent [2]. The shift from social democracy to neoliberalism has facilitated the breakdown of traditional forms of collective organizing and a general erosion of investment in youth and community services. This has given rise to new narratives, underpinned by powerful moral deficit discourses, with both continuities and breaks from the past [9]. In the 21st century new challenges associated with a post-industrial society include but are not limited to globalized changes to work, mass migration, demographic changes, epidemics, rising concerns about security, escalating inequality, and oppression [9]. Youth loneliness, mental health, and violence are magnified as symbolic of a broken society and the advance of technology increases the scope for surveillance and management of 'disordered' individuals [10].

The scale of inequalities, abuses, and injustices experienced by young people in contemporary times makes for compelling evidence that there is an ongoing need for anti-oppressive practice as a way of 'doing' YCW [2]. The profound changes that are taking place within a globalized, advanced capitalist society [2] require critical analysis of the ways in which anti-oppressive approaches to youth and community practices are being theorized and put to work.

A preliminary review of literature as part of CB work over the last decade revealed an eclectic, rich, and diverse field of writing woven through books, journal articles, and reports referring to anti-oppressive practice in YCW from different angles and from across

disciplines drawing on critical race theory, feminism, queer studies, critical disability studies, and post-colonial theories [11]. These areas of critical study all arose from the margins of academic discourse as positions from which to critique oppressive practices in dominator systems [11]. As in the academy, the dominator discourse about young people's concerns is primarily driven by government policy and an economic imperative. Under these neoliberal domains, the challenging of oppression thus becomes adrift from systemic and structural forces into a problem of competing individualized personal choices.

Despite significant movements in recent decades to push anti-oppressive practice into the middle of a way of 'doing youth and community work', it remains both in and out of focus. Seal [12] (p. 263) notes for example that 'in the light of late modern, postmodern and post-critical debates there has been a difficulty in establishing a coherent theoretical framework for both critical pedagogy and YCW.' This article extends that reflection to incorporate a consideration of similar challenges in theory building for anti-oppressive practice. Williams, at a critical social policy conference, provided useful analytical points to orientate the contemporary and necessary theoretical work required to address the difficulties outlined by Seal [12]. She calls for an approach that 'recognises diversities in patterns of power but one which does not fall into the trap of establishing a hierarchy of oppressions' [13] (p. 16). The task she affirmed is to relate the diversity and differences between forms of oppression on the one hand to a need for an anti-oppression alliance on the other [13] (p. 16). The intersectional thinking that came from the collective conversations by the authors in this article endorse that position.

At the time of writing this across different contexts and in response to different contemporary social movements such as Black Lives Matter and calls to decolonize the curriculum, there is evidence that the YCW sector has entered a moment of critical reflection about the need to reimagine both the possibilities of teaching [8] and future directions as a professional practice. In May 2021, for example, the Institute for Youth Work facilitated a student led conference. Participants explored the extent to which the hierarchies within the sector, youth and community workers, and those teaching and training in YCW were representative of the communities of young people that they serve. Issues were also raised about whether the National Occupational Standards [14] were equipping students to be effective in practice and whether they need updating, especially given their failure to explicitly articulate anti-oppressive practice. A representative of the National Youth Agency in response to concerns raised about the lack of focus upon power, privilege, and access to opportunity within the sector, stated that 'we are not very good at anti-oppressive practice' with a call to work collaboratively to be proactive in redressing this. This accords with Banks's [15] writing in an editorial piece in 2008, in which she raised questions about the theory and practice of ethics which are central to anti-oppressive practice. As relevant in 2021 as in 2008, she asks whether 'education and training programmes, textbooks and research findings provide students with effective tools that they can actually use to guide and resolve them in practice' [15] (p. 54). This can potentially provide an impetus and call for those researching, writing, teaching, and practicing in YCW to work collaboratively to open space to take stock and make connections of where we want to get to in terms of our teaching anti-oppressive practice, what it is designed to do, and what possibilities are opened in working creatively with concepts [6]. At a time when oppression, discrimination, and intolerance of difference is on the rise both in the UK and globally [16] there is a danger that the forging of deep divisions between theory and practice gives way to anti-intellectual times whilst waving the banner of social justice [17]. What constitutes anti-oppressive practice as a way of doing youth and community work is a deeply political matter. Seal [18] calls for the creation of 'Alliances for creating new knowledge'. Working collaboratively in alliance holds the potential to enable collective sense making of the serious challenges that lie ahead. This is especially important given the precarious nature of youth and community education within the neoliberal university and the scale of oppressions experienced disproportionately by young people. The CB work is one approach to working across boundaries to address the limitations of theories and concepts in relation to 21st century challenges, the

impact on young people and communities, and to reassembling anti-oppressive practices as part of this.

3. Methodology and Methods

The CB project was undertaken as part of one of the participant's doctoral research during a global pandemic and two UK wide lockdowns in the period June 2020–May 2021. The University of Plymouth Education Research Ethics Sub-Committee granted ethical approval for the project in May 2020. In total, nine participants from across seven universities were recruited via an initial email request to participate, followed by a more detailed information sheet and briefing session which also provided details of the right to withdraw and anonymity. Participants were all members of the UK based Professional Association of Lecturers in Youth and Community Work (PALYCW) and had experience in researching and/or teaching anti-oppressive practice on professionally qualifying undergraduate degree programs in YCW.

The CB process followed a 'describable pattern, revisable in practice' [6] (p. 8) and due to the pandemic was developed online via Microsoft Teams rather than face to face. The pattern included 'researching and constructing memory questions,' 'structuring workshops,' 'memory telling,' 'memory writing,' and 'reading memory stories. This describable pattern acted as loose organizing principles that informed the research [6]. In practice this translated into two cycles of CB where participants negotiated and agreed on the focus for memory work, a further dialogical session exploring the role of theory and concepts in opening possibilities for teaching anti-oppressive practice and a smaller group who engaged in a process of extended dialogue and writing of which this article is one of the outcomes.

In the first cycle of CB, participants worked with their own memories of discrimination and oppression, in the second, they explored how academics are situated in the neo liberal university and experiences of teaching anti-oppressive practice in that context. The third session worked with memory stories that had been generated in the first two cycles of CB and worked with them in relation to agential realism and the allied theoretical concepts of memory and diffraction, considering their relevance to teaching anti-oppressive practice in YCW. The approach to CB was a development on from the earlier collective memory work led by Haug [19] in the 1980s. For Davies and Gannon [6], individual stories take on a significance in the production of knowledge about how individuals are made social or how we are made (post) human [20]. Through a process of CB, participants worked productively with memory making, dialogical, and writing activities to explore the relations of power, politics, identity, and recognition. The activities were developed collectively and collaboratively to find ways to move beyond the humanistic boundaries of selfhood and Cartesian nature/culture dualisms [11]. The approach taken to CB work prioritized the process of relationship building and collaboration as crucial elements in creating conditions of trust that facilitated community solidarity and participation. The memory work developed from within lived experiences considering implications for theory as practice. This approach offered a way of engaging with theory that was not abstracted from lived experience but flexible, revisable, workable, and orientated to action. The aim was to locate new openings and possibilities for thinking about teaching practices in relation to anti-oppressive practice. The methodology aligns well with the principles of YCW with its emphasis on the processual and relational nature of approach and the possibilities this opens for new insights and theorizations.

3.1. Challenges and Limitations in Practice

There are several challenges and ethical considerations associated with the development of CB work that require both commitment and active engagement from participants in working them through as part of the process. It is beyond the scope of this article to engage in an in-depth discussion about some of the challenges and limitations encountered through the process of CB work as this is still subject to further exploration and analysis.

There are some initial reflections including that the CB approach is time and resource intensive which is often limited for those teaching and researching in HE. Due to the pandemic, the CB process was developed through a series of online interactions rather than face to face and carried out over a longer period rather than intensively face to face through a writing retreat [6]. The move to an online approach to CB work did make the process more accessible as participants were not restricted geographically. The process was however no less demanding of time, resources, and a high level of emotional engagement in collectively sharing and working with memories. The process required a significant level of trust, intimacy, and a willingness to be vulnerable which was made more challenging in an online environment. The silences and discomfort in the online virtual space were, for example, more intensified than in physical spaces. Differences between participants, conflict, and disagreement were more easily glossed over in online CB work when further time and space was required to explore those differences in greater depth. Within any CB process including this one there will be power differentials as participants will come into the space with a multiplicity of experiences, differing levels of time, seniority, shared histories, and working relationships which can influence and shape how participants feel able to engage with the process [6]. Ethics in this research was understood as a negotiated relational process between participants and throughout the process. Time and space were built into agreed intentionality within sessions and there was a commitment to navigate differences carefully, with respect, recognition, and with the option to call time at any point [6].

3.2. The Process of CB, Findings, and Discussion

The process of CB generated memory stories, extended collective writing, and analysis developed from within participants' experiences of teaching anti-oppressive practice as part of professionally qualifying youth and community education programs. The memory work for the purposes of this article and the theoretical work and analysis emerging through the process is constituted as both data and findings. The CB work is at an early stage of development. Multiple lines of inquiry were worked with in depth generating rich materials. This section of the article offers an initial partial unfolding of memory, writing, and analysis as 'data and findings' in relation to that work and is organised into two parts. The first part provides an example of memory work, writing and analysis in relation to racism, anti-racism, and the teaching of anti-oppressive practice. The second part explores key concepts that were worked with through the process of CB, exploring the potential to extend analysis and open possibilities for teaching anti-oppressive practice. Participants negotiated the focus for memory work. The first cycle focused on experiences of oppression informed by an agreed brief:

> *Individual memory stories can include for example smells, sounds, touch, taste and focus on body parts, clothing, technology, music. Once you have decided on a memory try to capture this in as much detail as possible including the context of when, where were you, sensations, feelings etc. There is no right or wrong in the writing of an individual memory story.*

Participants spent time generating their own individual memory story:

> *The place of my birth was Newcastle upon Tyne in 1956. The same year the White Defence League formed when it broke away from the League of Empire Loyalists. I hope they felt my birth. I most certainly came to feel their violent ideological hatred. I have lived with their logics in action for the whole of my life. We were born in the same nation, in the same timeframe. Thus, began my journey with the imposition and weight of systematised oppressions and the inner desire to be anti-oppressive and develop opposition and resistance to all forms of unjust authority.*

Working in small groups individual memory stories were explored through dialogue again in relation to an agreed brief:

It will be important once you have written the memory story that you arrange to share with your group so that the process of rewriting into the third person can be begin by asking questions/seeking clarifications.

Following this individual memory, stories were exchanged so that each person was responsible for rewriting a memory story into the third person.

The lessons learnt about the British state and the state of Britain in relation to its violent eugenicist histories to sterilise and cleanse . . . . keep clean, do not mix, work but always be marked and defined as subhuman. The desire is to whitewash the planet, impose supremacist and purist ideations . . . . these discursive practices are given scientific justifications within the academy.

The process of rewriting individual memory stories into the third person was designed to engage in a process of putting the individual subject under erasure, to expose relations of power, politics, identity, and recognition [6]. Through a process of writing memory stories were developed into extended analysis. The writing process was punctuated by further moments of dialogue and reflection between participants through emails, via telephone, and in virtual sessions in small and large groups. What follows is an extract of an extended analysis developed through the process.

4. Writing into the Process

The importance of YCW more accurately remembering the connectivity of the historical to contemporary sites for struggle against racism's reality is produced here. In this his/her/our story, the importance of the Black and South Asian Youth Movements and their resistance against British white supremacist racism makes visible how YCW struggled to learn from young people [21–25]. The memory story is brought into relationship with social movements of resistance to racism and all intersecting systematic forces of privilege which brought young people's material and concrete experiences to bear on the YCW profession to develop a statement of purpose. The pivotal moment chosen as a point of departure from our current state of near silence in the shrouding of the purpose and value of anti-oppressive praxis, is the 1991 definition of youth work cited in Davies [26] and the periods before and after its promise. The statement of purpose tells us that youth work should redress all forms of inequality and ensure equality of opportunity through the challenging of oppressions such as racism and sexism and all those which spring from difference of culture, race, language, sexual identity, gender, disability, age, religion, and class.

At this time anti-oppressive practice as a conceptual tool was in the ascendancy, boosted by the political support from progressive social movements and the rise of municipal anti-racism within local government structures. This definition was ambitious for youth services to achieve alone but was borne out of the wider struggles for justice and 'more traditional forms of resistance' to discrimination [26]. In challenging oppressive forces such as racism, three important studies into the needs of young Black people [27–29] identified a major challenge for youth services because the youth service was white, male, and mono-cultural. These moments of intersecting consciousness and the politics of empowerment [30] need remembering in the depoliticized and decontextualized politics of the current moment.

Under the jurisdiction of racist education, it remains imperative that questions are asked about what truth claims and social reality are being created. It is this analysis where the 'illusions of choice' [27] (p. 141) need to be exposed if racism is to be located and known. Under a system described by bell hooks [31] (p. 4) as 'imperialist, white supremacist capitalist patriarchy', how YCW understands anti-oppressive practice requires recognition of the intersecting dominating cultures in which difference can easily become discursively produced as hateful extremism [32]. Working with memory stories reflected in the extracts italicized above enabled different phenomena to be brought into relationship including history, 'race,' racisms, geographical location, policies, and norms. The processes made

visible that whilst oppressive practices such as hateful extremism impact on the individual, the system of oppression simultaneously targets collectives. This cognizance of oppression as collective and systemic places a responsibility onto the YCW field to theorize practice in ways that give recognition that young people are never outside of the situated, contextual, communal, and societal realities where meanings are made.

Everyday racisms are the frame for enabling the ongoing acts of racist violence and therefore YCW praxis must be cognizant of the historicity of the problem at the heart of our concern. It is important that we 're/member that targeted and individualized violence is always given cover by the commonplace exclusionary structural and cultural practices where 'micro-aggression' becomes an everyday experience' [33]. The logics of 'race' posited as natural with essential characteristics, forged in and out of the 19th century period of racial science, was built upon ideas and categorizations of what it meant to be, and therefore who could be, human [11]. This was wrought in the elite Eurocentric white and male Enlightenment period [34]. These pasts reverberate into the present and whitewashing the walls to clean them from memory does not challenge the privileges arising from them. Rutherford [35] (p. 186) sums up the complexity when he identifies that 'Race is real because we perceive it. Racism is real because we enact it. Neither race nor racism has foundations in science.' This leaves us all to know that 'racism is a set of social relationships' [34] (p. 14) where the logics of white supremacy, produced through relations of power, were used to justify the transatlantic slave trade, the imperialist expansion of European territories and the brutality of colonial rule. These persist today to deny the full reality of British history and its relationship with racist ideologies and practices that funded its wealth. How the fictions of 'race,' the perpetuation of everyday enactments of racism, and the defense of racist cultures persist, are central questions for YCW professionals to engage with.

One of the practical difficulties for YCW education and training is the absence in most formal educational curricula of explorations of Britain's relationship with racism [36,37]. These absences, which create ignorance and division, are illuminated by a British government pandering to racisms and creating policies that specifically encourage a hostile environment articulated through the lens of nationhood and belonging [38]. Practitioners in developing anti-oppressive praxis for YCW must always be cognizant of the systems of power that organize culture and order conduct in the everyday lives of youth workers, young people, and the encounters they have in the communities where they work, live, and play. How the vertical lines of authority occupy the spaces where young people and youth workers encounter difference is of absolute importance to our pedagogical practice.

Anti-oppressive practice must therefore also turn its concern to the intersectional as well as the simultaneous individualizing, communal impact that is a central connection for YCW practitioners. As Sinclair [39] (p. 22), identified, 'Life experiences [. . .] form the foundation for each person to build an analytic framework to view, understand, analyse and take action in the real world'. Anti-oppressive practice is thus about developing an analytic frame that can make sense of experience and engage in actions that both dream of and seek to make the world a better place. In relation to anti-racism YCW must critically engage in a discussion about historical/systemic practices such as whiteness, focused on how this system orders the lives of young people in contemporary British society [40].

What happens if we analyze whiteness diffractively? Here, we need to become cognizant of the activity and outcomes of whiteness as a source of systemic privileging power that colonizes our daily encounters with each other. Moments from the past and memories of those moments become purposeful devices to explore ways to develop diffractive practices to escape from the confines of individual immobilization. This can potentially happen when we use the anchors of our past to create a different lens from which to enliven and reconnect us to the central purposes of our ethical work alongside young people. How whiteness is unpicked in relation to anti-oppressive practice illustrates one aspect of the difficult terrain YCWs need to tread when engaging young people in challenging white logic. How Black and other global majority youth workers and their white peers come to

know race, speak race, and understand race across the different geographies in Britain, is central to our concern.

If race is not openly discussed by white people and white people believe racism is outdated or only concerns black and other global majority people whilst racist cultures and practices persist into the present, then a contradiction arises in the profession's responsibility to ensure all its workforce are racially literate. Whiteness as an ideology and system of privileging endows white people with investments they accrue whether they want them or not. Anti-oppressive practice must work to dismantle the system that bolsters the colonizing ideas and processes woven into the imperialist white supremacist, patriarchal, capitalist system. How we frame anti-oppressive practice is important to where we take it as a cornerstone of YCW praxis in order to (re)assemble anti-oppressive praxis. This notes that oppression requires a collapsing of the binary between theory and practice necessitating ongoing inquiry and theorization in practice.

The extended writing on racism and whiteness emerged from the memory work through the CB process enabling participants to find ways to begin to work towards unsettling and decolonizing taken for granted thinking and practices. The focus of the collective biography work was 'towards what things do, rather than 'what they are;' towards processes and flows rather than structures and stable forms; to matters of power and resistance; and to interactions that draw small and large relations into assemblage' [41] (p. 407). The process of collective biography provided an orientation and a strategy for navigating complexity in relation to anti-oppressive practice. The process of inquiry enabled recognition of a range of forces at play simultaneously and spanning different temporal and spatial dimensions to produce analysis in action [41].

4.1. New Materialism, Agential Realism, Intra-Action, and Diffraction

The second part of the findings section draws on new materialism and explores key concepts that were worked with giving initial consideration as to why these were significant in the process of CB work. The CB work was intimately connected to participants teaching practices, informed by critical pedagogy, the concept of praxis [3], and their own contexts within HE institutions in terms of how they were ethically and politically situated within material environments. This was considered by participants to be centrally important to the commitment to disrupt taken for granted ways of working practices vulnerable to a creep towards technical rational approaches to teaching.

Participants considered the role of concepts in enlarging spaces of possibility in analysis and in practice [6]. New materialism and post-humanism draw on a constellation of concepts and theories which have shifted focus to social production [41] and which signal an ontological turn to the material and concrete impact of oppression reflected in the memory writing about racism. This enabled participants to turn attention to what oppression is doing, how it is interfering, disrupting, and shaping lived experiences. In the extract of extended writing, it was the material and concrete impacts of accounts of racism in the writing and analysis that had productive possibilities, enabling potential in the theorization of anti-oppressive practices in action. Barads [42] work on agential realism is significant in working with this potential as it demonstrates the interconnectedness and continual interplay between knowledge-making practices, epistemology, ontology, ethics, and material impacts. This holds implications for how ethics can be understood and enacted through a research process. Barad [42] (p. 90) describes this as a performative and relational 'ethico-onto-episteme-ology'; in other words, 'we cannot think epistemology and ontology separately', they are intimately connected and always emergent in 'intra-action.'

The memory writing developed into extended analysis in the previous section is a demonstration of a means of developing action in ways that enable 'collective knowing and doing' [42] (p. 66) to make a difference. Agential realism unsettles the idea that there is a subject/object relationship between researcher and researched. This conceptualization enabled participants to begin to find alternative ways of thinking about the relationship

between the approach that they took to CB work and writing and how this connected to their everyday teaching practices. This contrasts with the usual 'interaction' which assumes that there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction. The notion of intra-action recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but emerge through, their intra-actions. It is important to note that the 'distinct' agencies are only distinct in a relational, not an absolute, sense as agencies are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they do not exist as individual elements [42] (p. 33). Throughout the writing process participants used Barad's [42] notion of agential cuts to make ethical decisions about their knowledge-making practices and the difference that they felt this was making in their practices. Agential cuts can be described as 'knowledge-making practices.' 'Cutting' in involves the active construction of boundaries within any given research process and making decisions about what is brought into relationship [41,42]. Agential cuts are inherently exclusionary and require an ongoing commitment to tuning into ethical considerations including those of unintended consequences. This article can be read, for example, as a series of agential cuts that are intended as non-hierarchical and subject to ongoing negotiations in dialogues across space and time [41–43]. The cuts made into the memory work on racism are not intended as a linear fixed presentation of 'the truth' or 'facts'. Rather, they are a careful ethical unfolding of meaning-making about matters that impinge on the teaching of anti-oppressive practice in the neoliberal university: what it does and what it can potentially do.

4.2. Memory

According to Huyssen [44] (p. 2) memory is 'one of those elusive topics we all think we have a handle on but as soon as we try to define it, it starts slipping and sliding, eluding attempts to grasp it either culturally, sociologically, or scientifically'. Braidotti [11] asserts that without 'a freeing from humanist frameworks' memory is rendered inadequate in being able to realize its radical and political potential to productively engage with a number of contemporary issues. Those contemporary issues are interconnected with 21st challenges, including, for example, the recent global pandemic, ecological challenges, poverty and hunger, the nation state, the changing nature of technology, and the productive role of memory in the process of resistance for justice, equality, representation, and recognition [11]. Drawing on Braidotti's [11] analysis of memory, what can be remembered, what is recollected, and forgotten cannot be understood merely as a process unfolding from within an individual physical body. Memory is not bound by physical bodies: it is relational, processual, nonlinear, and multi directional, with affective capacity across space and time [11]. This makes it possible to move between and beyond the Cartesian separation of mind and body as memory is understood as always existing in the present to orientate actions in the future. As such, there is a constant interplay between past, present, and future across space and time as reflected in the memory writing presented in the previous section.

Memory practices generated from the grass roots expose the power at play when memory is presented as fixed. Memory has a social and collective dimension that is integral to the making and remaking of ideas in intra-action [42]. It engages all the senses, smell, touch, sight, hearing, and taste, and in this framing has radical and political potential for action [11]. The ethical dimension of memory is intimately connected with 'our collective voices' in relation to what and how we are enabled to remember. Recent debates about decolonization serve as a powerful reminder of the role of official memory in manufacturing subjectivities, in shaping the political landscape as well as social relationships, social bonds, and obligations one to another. Collective memories about that which has gone before are continually being reworked in the present with a view to the future. Memory plays a role in the knowledge-making process and is developed intra-actively across space and time. St Pierre describes these kind of ethics as 'invented within each relation as researcher and respondent negotiate sense-making' [45] (p. 186).

4.3. Diffraction

Integral to the approach of CB was a focus on the discursive ways through which lived experiences became embodied and remembered with intentionality. This was not about presenting what could be remembered or (re)formed as a 'reliable truth' but gave recognition to a shared sense of how individual experiences are constituted in relation to a range of human and non-human matters. The memory work was approached through stories of lived experiences which were written individually, then re-membered, and written about by others in the group. Memory was a diffractive tool [42] interpreted through each person's current contexts and understandings and was a starting point from which to develop a collective fiction, based in remembered 'facts'. This created a dynamic collection of meanings and understandings of oppression and anti-oppressive practices which enabled collective and divergent meanings of events to emerge. The collective 'grid' through which accounts of experiences travelled, bent them to expose the effects of differences at play simultaneously across different and temporal dimensions [41,46]. Through the process of writing participants were able to produce analysis in action rooted in their own practices. Participants were mindful of why some differences are made to matter more than others as the basis for action and 'as an act of courage not to follow the lines laid down by neo liberalism but to sink into the act of writing and to allow the body to take you to think the as yet unthought' [47] (p. 93).

The theory base of YCW (amongst other professions) uses the concepts of reflection and reflexivity [3] and this constitutes a significant strand of teaching in professionally qualifying YCW programs. 'Seeing' ourselves clearly and being conscious of how we are in relation to others is important in practice, but there is more to do before this process can create an anti-oppressive practice. Adding to the metaphor of reflection, the concept of diffraction is a useful tool. Diffraction shows up the effect of differences in what otherwise appears as a homogeneous body. It creates rainbows rather than fractures or hierarchies. It is a valuable analytical tool in a critical, collective, intersectional, anti-oppressive practice. Haraway states "A diffraction pattern does not map where differences appear, but rather maps where the *effects* of difference appear" [42] (p. 72).

Social change is constant, yet oppression has resilient patterns. The relations of power and control over human and non-human actors of our planet (e.g., land, water, air, living creatures, and all other matter) are devastating the planet and oppressing the majority of people [11]. As explored in the memory writing in the previous section, patriarchy, imperialism, and capitalism have persisted over centuries, yet are subject to change; constantly face challenges; and are not inevitable, eternal, or natural. Anti-oppressive practice is often couched in terms of individual axes of oppression including class, race, gender, sexuality, disability, and age. The identity politics that come with this has always been self-limiting as the intersectional [30] entanglements get knotted when any movement gains momentum. Everyone has a class, race, gender, disability, age, and sexuality and patterns of oppression diffract through the effects of all these differences. These knots of entanglement get collective movements for change stuck, but if taken account of fully, these entanglements can create knots that bind to give strength and structure to movements—however transitorily.

5. Conclusions

The levels of disadvantage and oppression experienced by young people and communities, exacerbated by COVID-19, across social divisions makes for compelling evidence of why ethical, values driven, critically reflective, and anti-oppressive practice continues to occupy an important space within the lexicon of YCW. The anti in anti-oppressive practice implies a proactive position is taken up by YCWs that is explicitly opposed to oppression in all its various guises and that this is reflected in the discursive ways in which teaching practices are shaped and created as the basis for action. Anti implies a call to activism, a commitment to be proactive in creating alliances and working collaboratively across networks and alongside young people and communities to develop practitioner strategies

that give recognition to lived experiences and unsettle taken for granted assumptions about ways of doing YCW. Teaching YCW must be understood as emerging from within the context of relationships informed by values and ethics that underpin the profession. Those practices, whilst developing from within and emerging out of analysis of structural inequalities, are also at the same time operating in intra-action [42] and are always situated, contextual, relational, and processual [6] (p. 26). Working with concepts to develop analysis of how power operates to inform strategies for practice is central to anti-oppressive practice and the operationalization of a YCW's commitment to social justice [48] (p. 51). Working creatively with concepts as part of a process of CB offers the potential to develop, tune into, and enact political alliances from the grass roots in dynamic and creative ways so that anti oppressive practices 'Contribute to the transformation of conditions which make injustice possible' [49] (p. 53).

The commitment to work collectively to explore anti-oppressive teaching practices was a commitment to engage in a process of 'doing otherwise' described earlier in the article. The process of collective biography opened a space to explore the complex context in which teaching anti-oppressive practice takes place and how YCW educators are positioned within the neo liberal university. YCW educators are not immune to forces of discrimination and oppression and the internalization of narratives of individualization and responsibilization embedded in the practices of the neo liberal university. CB is an approach to research that is orientated to disrupt those narratives and taken for granted ways of teaching in HE. The approach is challenging, requires commitment, and is resource and time intensive. CB does, however, offer a strategy to develop knowledge-making practices that are generated from grass roots practices starting where people are at. As Davies et al. [47] (p. 100) states, 'the only place we can speak from is where we are grounded . . . . our feet on the ground, breathing the air around us, walking through and in our local places . . . . In starting from where I am I write from my everyday world to connect with yours as the basis for action.'

The CB work is in its initial stages of development. There is recognition that there is further theory building work to do going forward. The exploration of the process of working with memory, the role of dialogue, and writing as a method of inquiry offer the potential to sharpen a focus on collective knowledge-making practices and possibilities in teaching anti-oppressive practices orientated towards the hope that 'Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.' Arundhati Roy [50] (p. 11).

Author Contributions: All authors contribute same to this paper. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Article

Student Collaboration in Action: A Case Study Exploring the Role of Youth Work Pedagogy Transforming Interprofessional Education in Higher Education

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Abstract: The College of Health, Psychology, and Social Care at the University of Derby has transformed its Interprofessional Education (IPE) offer from a top-down standalone event into a five-year strategy designed and delivered in genuine collaboration with students. Across the higher education sector, IPE has been a struggle, tokenistic at best, with limited buy-in from students. When academic-led it prevents deep learning; however, by utilising an informal education approach students bring their life, programme, and practice learning together to genuinely break down barriers between professional disciplines. This paper will use an autoethnographic case study to explore the challenges and opportunities of genuine collaboration based on youth work principles in the creation of a 'value-added curriculum', not aligned to modules or assessments. It found that buy-in from academics and students comes when students are empowered to take the lead. This is based on youth work pedagogical principles of group work, relationships with shrinking professional distance, critical pedagogy, genuine agency, and an emotional connection made between the professionals and service users. It suggests the potential is considerable as youth workers bring their pedagogical practice to a broader range of spaces within and beyond higher education.

Keywords: interprofessional education; youth work; collaboration; empowerment; relationships; professional distance; critical pedagogy; agency

1. Introduction

Tragically, when authorities conduct serious case reviews to examine what happened when children or vulnerable adults have died or experienced serious harm, time after time reviews demand improvements in interprofessional collaboration [1–3]. The university environment provides the ideal opportunity to develop these collaborative skills to improve outcomes for patients, service users, and project beneficiaries. This is described as Interprofessional Education (IPE) [4].

Interprofessional education is a vital component of good quality health and social care [5,6]. It is important in preparing a 'collaboration ready' professional [7]. IPE is defined as "when two or more professions learn about, from and with each other to enable effective collaboration and quality of care" [8]. Across the higher education sector, IPE has been a struggle and not easily taught [9]. It is tokenistic at best with limited buy-in from students. Student are often grouped together without pedagogical thought, reinforcing separation and difference [10], despite IPE being increasingly identified as essential work-ready skills for professional practice [7]. It is described as a collaborative movement [11] and requires the ability to discern between common competencies, complementary competencies, and collaborative competencies [12]. This requires relationship and dialogue rather than observation.

When academic-led it often becomes either an observation, where students attend an event, planned and facilitated by academics, or an awkward discomfort, where students are put together in a room [13], taught common learning that is relevant to them all [14],

and academics leave confused as to why there was no relationship or collaboration with no sense of long-term impact where small group teaching is essential [14].

This paper will examine through autoethnography, using a case study of the College and Health, Psychology, and Social Care at University of Derby, the author's reflections on adopting a youth work pedagogy for interprofessional education. The research question to be examined is 'how would youth work pedagogy support the delivery of interprofessional education in health and social care disciplines at the University of Derby?' In other words, what would happen if interprofessional education at the University of Derby was 'youthworked'? This starting point could initiate a broader discussion of the potential of youth work pedagogy in a broader range of spaces both within and beyond higher education.

Youth work is a distinct pedagogical practice, a process of informal education located in supported relationships, with the facilitation of participation and social justice at its heart [15]. Inherent in this practice is the tension of 'youthworking' a context; creating democratic relationship-driven processes in a market-orientated context [16], such as higher education.

2. University of Derby Context

2.1. Before the Youth Work Approach

At the University of Derby, there were pockets of programme-level good practice in IPE. However, the college-wide IPE portfolio was high on aspiration and perspiration but a frustration for those involved in it. There was a strategy in place, but it was a roadmap to embedding evidence-based IPE and sought senior leadership support to embed across programmes with an IPE steering group. This led directly to an 'IPE forum' being made up of department heads and discipline leads, a top-down approach disconnected from both the academics with most contact with students, and the students themselves. This made deep learning and meaningful experiential learning [17] unlikely and problematic.

Essentially, this college-wide IPE offer was a value-added curriculum, with tension between wanting mandatory engagement but with no way to enforce that as a non-credit bearing learning programme. Complexity was added based on the structures of different programmes with some students full-time on campus and others on campus for day release and having literally no room in their timetables for additional opportunities, a common issue in IPE [18]. The more professional groups involved, the harder this becomes [14]. At the University of Derby, there were almost fifty distinct programmes and almost 7000 students in the college IPE offer. There had to be another way.

Individual programmes collaborated, and although these were popular initiatives, they stood alone, and their reach was limited. For example, social work and mental health nursing students participated in a very engaging simulation where they had to assess a range of service user actors and examine their mental capacity. Adult nursing and radiography students collaborated similarly in acute care simulations. Less successful were attempts for postgraduate students to learn topics together from study skills to careers advice, where some programmes (particularly from non-health backgrounds) did not engage at all.

The only genuine cross-college IPE event was the flagship IP Conference for 400 new students. At the conference, there were high profile speakers such as celebrity social worker, Sharon Shoesmith; and experts by experience, talking through case studies or practice. Students listened and talked to their neighbour when requested. The conference happened two months after students started, and for many students they had limited understanding of their own professional identity and were ill-prepared to articulate that, let alone synergise other disciplines into deeper learning around improving outcomes. The timing of IPE is highly contested [19]. The layout of the room was theatre style, so discussion was limited to those sitting around you, which were chiefly peers from their own programme, which did not lend itself to deeper learning [20]. The critical point that inspired me to volunteer to fill the IPE lead vacancy was a well-meaning attempt to

introduce the programmes of the college where academics introduced their programmes from the stage. As the more dynamic academics received a more enthusiastic response from students, it became clear to me that engagement on this scale needed to be student-led, and an edutainment approach [21] could transform the potential of this event.

The author is an experienced teacher, lecturer, and youth worker. I often find myself with adults and students where I 'youth worked' the room using informal approaches, relationship and agency-driven. I taught across several programmes in social and community studies, primarily located in the youth work team. Youth work students are notoriously insecure around other professionals who they feel do not value their contribution, in particular social workers. This is not new and was identified in the Albemarle report of 1960, where youth workers felt neglected and held in low regard [22]. Cooper [15], argues this is not surprising considering the interprofessional and diverse contexts and practice, myriad of funding pathways, and the fact it is practiced from anyone from untrained volunteers to postgraduate professionals. Jeffs [23] argues this is compounded by the range of other professionals appropriating youth work pedagogy, while De St Croix [16] argues many human services face pressure to move from person-centred practice to market-orientated targeted work and see their professional status and values threatened. However, teaching social workers, I was surprised that they felt similar powerlessness when comparing themselves to other professionals, most notably doctors. There was clearly an angle to pursue examining professional assumptions and prejudices. I decided to 'youthwork' IPE and seek to transform the IPE offer into a programme genuinely student-led from top to bottom but with a critical pedagogy approach to tackling the big issues head on and foster an emotional connection to their disciplines and 'making a difference'. I wanted to apply my background in large-scale faith-based youth events, where dynamic facilitation enabled transformative learning into the large-scale IPE conference, and expand it to a second event.

2.2. After the Youth Work Approach

In 2018, the IPE steering group led by managers, evolved into the IPE forum, a collaboration made up chiefly of new academics and students. They designed and delivered a new college-wide IPE offer developed across the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in the college as follows:

- 'Induction to IPE' (online for undergraduate, on campus for postgraduate).
- 'Cake and Debate' discussion-based workshops looking at the issues of the day for all students.
- 'Case Study Case Conference' assessing the needs of a complex family for second year undergraduate students.
- 'Experts by Experience World Café' exploring service-user experiences for all postgraduate students.
- 'Collaborative Leadership Workshops' for all final year students (commissioned and externally facilitated).

Over the next three years the IPE offer became characterized as a student-led collaboration and informal education pedagogy with equality and deeper relationships at its heart. There was an overt focus on examining the prejudices between professional disciplines. This paper reviews that evolution and focusses on three aspects: the changing IPE forum, the large case study case conference, and two online events, the current practice debates, 'cake and debate' and 'experts by experience world cafe' exploring the testimonies of service-users.

3. Materials and Methods

This paper adopts an autoethnographic methodology. This is where the writer develops a research question regarding a specific experience and then describes and analyses his/her own behaviour and experience. The purpose is to develop an objective understanding of the behaviour and experience by positioning the writer as the insider describing

what happened and the outsider analyst [24]. The writing style is often personal, emotional and more artistic than the traditional journal article. It can enable the inclusion of highly nuanced meanings, depth, and knowledge about the lived experience often unavailable to 'outsider' researchers [24].

This qualitative approach is not without its critics, and often challenged for generating more of an autobiography than rigorous scientific research [25]. However, it offers an innovative way to examine the lived experience. It is highly appropriate when examining the social interactions from a pedagogical approach to holistically explore the self (the author), the sociocultural group (experiencing IPE at University of Derby), and the writing style. This is especially pertinent when the author wishes to engage and resonate with the reader's own experiences [25]. This resonance is described by Dadds [26] as 'empathetic validity'. In this context, such empathetic validity is sought in terms of the potential for youth work pedagogical approaches in higher education and to engage with the highly emotional nature of the curriculum described below.

To answer the research question, a qualitative case study examines one individual case in a context [27] to enable understanding of the social reality to explore how the author made sense of his world [28]. Qualitative research leads to an interpretive paradigm with thick rich descriptions of the researcher as the biographer, interpreter, and evaluator [29].

The ethical issues with this method are most likely in terms of the vulnerability of the writer especially when faced with the academic demands for positivist validity, reliability, and generalizable research findings. Furthermore, autoethnographers by their nature will include other social actors whose anonymity may be challenging to protect [24]. Whilst advised that no formal ethical approval was necessary, long conversations were held between the author and his manager and the special issue editors to ensure the journey does not appear to criticise or damage the reputation of the university identified in the case study. It does refer to anonymous voluntary student evaluations from participants, which included standardised consent to their use in published research papers. These support the reflections of the writer.

4. Discussion—The Journey in IPE

4.1. Shifting the Power—The IPE Forum

After selling the idea to the Head of School and Dean, the first IPE Forum meeting had standing room only. After pitching a proposal to managers, they stepped aside. This had to be a bottom-up approach based on relationships with students and frontline academics. The first student representatives had just been to the IPE conference and had no problem giving their feedback. It was interesting that they were exclusively mature students, new to higher education but experienced practitioners which made them ideal candidates to drive forward a new strategy. It was no accident that the first representative was from the youth work programme, and she could see clearly how a different pedagogical approach was needed. She thought the conference needed to be focused on group work principles; using one case study to explore the different disciplines in the college took hold. This has continued to this day.

As a youth worker, I have a long-standing commitment to cooperative learning through group work as a successful teaching and learning method [30]. Effective group work is a proven tool to enable learning in the classroom. There are many benefits to group work including involving learners actively and facilitating the value and exchange of ideas and opinions. There is much value from students receiving peer recognition when they agree with another's viewpoint. Group work is effective in developing communication, leadership, and teamwork skills. It also helps to manage more extreme or radical opinions through the negotiation of consensus opinion. It enables learners to discuss topic content in specialised language and encourages shy participants who would not present their ideas in large groups. Group work allows learners of mixed abilities to work side-by-side and draw on individual strengths to complete tasks [31].

By recruiting new academics to the IPE forum, this provided them with a great opportunity to induct themselves into their new college as well as communicate with their own teams. Splitting the IPE leadership across different schools in the college helped share the relationship-building remit and is a model that has continued since. The relationship business was crucial to achieve buy in from busy academics who, like students, were focused on the core business of teaching, learning, and assessment of mandatory modules. By literally walking around the college offices talking to colleagues, learning names and faces, real momentum grew. Enthusiasm for learning and working together was shared. This took time. Relationships take time to develop and contribute to learning [32,33]. Universities are full of committees and groups, but students are rarely actively involved and chiefly have to fit in to university designed processes. This flipped approach [34] was deliberate and contributed to both the strong relationships with academics and greater responsibility taken by students, such as facilitation roles in the programme.

The need to achieve buy in from academics and students led to an emerging informal approach and transparent information sharing where professional distance was intentionally shrunk. After several experiments, a college area on the virtual learning environment (VLE) was created, which all students were enrolled in, enabling the location of all materials and resources and emailing directly the 6700 students. Drawing on youth work practice where engagement required support, the IPE lead made himself available to students. Rather than signpost to a document and enforce sanitised distant professional relationships, direct communication was invested in with intention, as a specific pedagogical approach. An interest in students, their programmes, practice experience, and aspirations were demonstrated. More authentic interactions in education require staff and students to get to know each other on a personal level [35]. The IPE lead and students had email exchanges and became excited about the programmes they were on, their journeys towards university, and built enthusiasm for the opportunities on offer. Students on the IPE forum were treated like equals; academic representatives were interested in their lives, partners, and families, empathetic to workload struggles, and gave them as much responsibility as they could handle, as genuine co-creators [36]. Shrinking professional distance is not without its problems [37] and needs genuine reflective practice to minimize vulnerability to prevent intentional informal professional relationships crossing boundaries into peers or more intimate relationships. However, in higher education, there is significant crossover where many academics are still in practice and may encounter students in practice settings as peers. One of the largest challenges of this approach was workload. It took significant time to sustain relationships with multiple students, in particular, when authentically responding to emails using an informal education approach. Rather than just answering the question, I expressed interest in their experiences and journey, which promoted engagement but took significant time.

The commitment to collaboration embodied a critical pedagogy, a complete contrast to the student as customer in the marketized higher education sector in England [38]. Critical pedagogy refers to an intentional approach to develop awareness of power dynamics and injustice enabling problem solving and collective action [39]. This commitment to praxis [40] encouraged students to be fully informed of the problems and issues, structurally and institutionally, to enable them to work as genuine partners to problem solve. This is argued to be the corner stone of the new pedagogical approaches in higher education which enable deeper learning [17]. It certainly formed the basis of the IPE forum meetings looking at student-led ideas to encourage engagement recognising how students were engaging with their studies more generally as consumers. This was in direct contrast to their other experiences of collaboration with academics and university processes. This authentic engagement is a crucial component of critical pedagogy [41].

It was reaping rewards and was reflected in a similar informal approach to the pedagogy.

4.2. Students as Partners

Collaboration with students adopted an 'asset-based' approach, identifying and responding to opportunities and strengths, building on their agency to take control and develop their potential [42]. Their skills and competencies were built on and empowered. Mutual accountability, high expectations, and responsibilities were communicated with space for reflection and challenge [43]. It was based on genuine respect and treating students as equal adults, respecting their autonomy and agency [44]. In youth work terms, agency is about starting where the young person is, where the voice of the young person is central to the process of the work [16]. In IPE, this translates to the student professional identity. At its heart was a need for students to have a solid professional identity [45].

Practitioners need to invest in relationships, build on strengths, and find common spaces and build accountability [43]. This requires, trust, care, safety, and reciprocal exchanges for effective relationships. It requires effective trusting relationships [46], where students are pushed to the edge of their comfort zones [47]. The IPE offer was developed around student voice and learning needs informed by conversations and relationships, with their voice integral rather than what professionals perceived they needed [48]. They demonstrated and advocated co-participation in learning rather than being kept at arm's length [49] and the right balance of being challenged and supported [50]. This led to students taking on significant roles and responsibilities as discussed below.

4.3. Shrinking Professional Distance

Relational sharing is a cornerstone of social pedagogy, an approach to relationship development with hard to engage young people [51]. Being genuine and authentic, to build trust and demonstrate your humanity is a key component of relationship building [52]. While professional boundaries have existed in health since the Hippocratic oath from Socrates in the 5th century BC [50], these boundaries are rarely challenged and emerged from professional ethics and regulations [53]. They are aligned to the medical model where the professional is the expert rather than co-participating in learning [49]. Professionals are neutral and anonymous [54]. The danger zone is any kind of contact, physical, emotional, or spiritual [55]. However, such simplistic assessment hugely underestimates the role of subjectivity and unconscious dynamics in all relationships [56].

The alternative is a relational approach, offering relationships "characterised by mutuality and safe connection rather than . . . boundaries and distance" [53] (p. 21). Going that extra mile has huge potential and is significantly under-researched. It encourages educators to question 'taken for granted' views and assumptions [49].

4.4. The IPE Strategy

Reflecting the student voice, the new IPE strategy responded to students' lived experience of joined up working. While communication and trust are important [57], what rarely is examined is the need for a solid professional identity [45] and the professional stereotyping and prejudices among different disciplines [58]. Only by making the hidden transparent can authentic interprofessional relationships develop. This really struck a chord with me. Authentic discussion of professional stereotypes and prejudice can have a transformational impact on interprofessional learning.

The strategy was built on the three core values of solid professional identities, creating communities of practice, and a co-created pedagogy. In practice, this led to many changes. The conference became built around a case study, student-led, and moved to the second year where professional identities are more secure. Seating plans ensured as much as possible students would engage with peers on other programmes and students would facilitate multi-professional groups.

The new aims in the strategy were to:

1.   Demonstrate an enhanced understanding of the roles and responsibilities of their own and other health and social care professionals through respecting, understanding,

and supporting the roles of other professionals and the changing nature of health and social care roles and boundaries;

2. Discuss stereotyping and professional prejudices and the impact of these and other barriers on interprofessional working;
3. Demonstrate a set of knowledge, skills, competencies, and attitudes that are common to all Health and Social Care professions and that underpin the delivery of patient/client focused services;
4. Develop teamwork skills and improved knowledge of the nature of multidisciplinary teamwork and subsequently make an effective contribution as an equal member of an inter professional team;
5. Apply learning from others in interprofessional teams in a variety of contexts through collaboration with other professionals in practice, online, in programme teams, and on college wide initiatives and projects.

This strategy appeared to have significant overlap to the four cornerstones of youth work [59] with a focus on equality (specifically discipline-level prejudice), learning, and empowerment both in terms of student contribution to interprofessional teams and crucially in the design and delivery of the offer.

Next, this paper will examine how youth work pedagogy presented itself in this interprofessional education programme of events. The new academics and students co-created the programme based on the principles of genuine agency, shrunk professional distance, and strong relationships, with opportunities for developmental group work at the heart. Starting from the professional identities of student, their voice and experience was to be central in both the design and delivery of IPE opportunities. The collaboration with academics saw them repositioned as colleagues and partners with strong relationships, where all opportunities were designed around creating the opportunities to meet with students on other programmes in small groups to share perspectives and learn with and through one another [8]. This is where the paper now turns, looking at the case study conference, and then adapting this pedagogical approach to digital activities during the COVID pandemic and remote teaching.

5. Informalising the Pedagogy

5.1. The Conference—Interprofessional Needs-Analysis of a Complex Family Case Study

Firstly, the conference was moved to year two, to directly address the first strategic aim and give them more time to understand, own, and be able to communicate their diverse professional identities. Next, the IPE forum sought to give a platform for students to talk about their programmes. It also needed a focus to enable students to share deeply about how different professional groups need to work together to meet the needs of patients, service users, and project beneficiaries. The case study became the focus. Interprofessional student groups were seated wedding table style, multi-professional by design, and facilitated by trained practitioners, students, and academics to encourage genuine debate around professional stereotyping and other barriers to effective collaboration to address the needs of the given case study. The original case study was a video written, performed, and filmed by academics and students.

Introducing programmes was delivered in chat-show format, with microphones and leather sofas. It was like Graham Norton meets Ted Exchange. Finding a student from each programme who could talk on microphone in front of 500 people was difficult, but the result was spellbinding. Students from all walks of life spoke with passion and dynamism, sharing their journey to higher education, and passion for making a difference in their chosen fields. Whilst the audience remained spectators, the speakers were motivational and inspiring and enabled students to have a similar dialogue with their neighbours. By the second conference, the chat show role was being shared with a student from the IPE forum asking the questions. Students must understand the roles and responsibilities of other disciplines to promote effect collaboration [60]. More than that, this fostered professional empathy, so crucial for overcoming misunderstandings and miscommunication [9].

The classic youth work icebreaker of bingo explored the experience in the room. This is where students identified peers with common experiences despite differences in their professional identities by talking to one another and annotating the bingo sheet of the names of student colleagues who had, for example 'worked in a prison', 'worked in a hospital' or 'used outdoor environments in their practice'. The youth work students facilitated this with support. The academic spent her time preregistration building relationships and asking for donations from student delegates to the prize, with prizes ranging from biscuits and lottery tickets to lanyards. It was fun and funny and set the scene for creating a safe place to play and explore. This deliberate approach helps foster professional adulthood, the ability to give up professional territory to work across boundaries [61]. Completely organically, students were realising that they were building relationships in a way that was not happening on campus. Their academics were having fun with them. Suddenly, students wanted their photo with their lecturers, grabbed the microphones at lunch, and whole discipline cohorts of 20–100 in size took group photos from the stage. Barriers were breaking down between students and between students and staff [62].

The conference was built around a case study, with an original drama (used from 2018–2020) performed by staff and students, recorded, and played at the conference to identify the presenting needs and multi-professional response, debated on the day in multidisciplinary groups. It concluded with a case conference simulation and keynote speaker on one of the emerging themes. However, the direction the discussion evolved was directly driven by students and their contributions. Case study approaches in IPE are proven to promote collaboration in decision making and familiarity with different disciplines [60]. Dispelling the myths of disciplines has become a major theme in the IPE offer, and this started with a session facilitated by dramatherapy students, to explore the feelings of the practitioners involved in the case study. Whilst there is a long-established recognition that successful teams need trust [62], the underlying cause of mistrust is a perception about different roles in the sector [58], and this powerful dramaturgy approach [63] made the unseen, seen which was shocking to both those within and beyond the specific disciplines. Here in this space, every single discipline began to see they speak interprofessionally into a space where perceptions, stereotypes, and prejudices were creating genuine barriers to collaboration, way beyond 'lack of trust' [62].

After three years, the case study was renewed. In 2020 a local production company was commissioned to support writing a new case study. The IPE forum pitched ideas, then a plot was storyboarded, and four scenes created. Two students and two staff wrote one scene each, which was then reviewed by the production company and the script evolved with feedback from disciplines and the two student writers, before the whole script was critically evaluated by a student sub-group. 'Somebody isn't listening' is a short film about family breakdown with a grandad with dementia, an overwhelmed mum, a dad on gardening leave, a daughter hiding a secret, and a teenage young carer risking his college course trying to be everything to everyone until he breaks. Students and their networks recorded the voices, modelled for the photos, and even offered their homes up as venues. This online conference with the new case study will be rolled out next year.

5.2. IPE under COVID—Participatory 'Cake and Debate'—Debating Current Practice Issues

The move towards online learning under a global pandemic, created significant opportunities. Firstly, it removed the pressures in timetabling and finding large rooms for large events. Students clearly valued talking together about current practice issues. Real-world learning with students accelerated into placement to support the National Health Service response [64], meant there were multiple topics students wanted to discuss. Whilst research into online learning is emerging, one of the early outcomes was how it changed discussions. The anonymity of being online and on your own, led to many students participating differently and often engaging online especially using chat functions in ways that would not have happened face-to-face [65].

The IPE forum was driven to provide a group work discussion opportunity for current practice issues, but needed to consider how this could avoid a top-down process where academics chose the topic and drove the discussion. Under COVID a new informal discussion event emerged, 'cake and debate', mirroring a youth work activity from Greenbelt Festival [66]. The online live discussion began where staff and students left a five-minute video to stimulate dialogue on a given topic, and students then shared and debated their experiences using a Padlet discussion board in advance. Topics and points obtained votes (through likes) and comments. The most popular were then explored during the live one-hour debates on Microsoft Teams. The facilitation style built on the edutainment philosophy [21], creating a dynamic and engaging discussion. Rather than facilitating as a value-free neutral, anecdotes were shared, passion and enthusiasm was communicated with conviction for the social justice value-base of multiple disciplines, and how the emancipatory approach had relevance, was appropriate and desirable across the health, psychology, and social care sectors.

It evolved over the academic year, where academics created the original opinion piece and facilitated the debate. However, by the end of the year the 'opinion pieces' were coming from students, and an IPE forum student facilitated the live discussion. Over 150 students from across all three schools and all disciplines in the college debated COVID and mental health. Other topics included poverty and racism and were decided by the students through college-wide polls.

As the event norms evolved, students soon developed the habit in the preparation activity and live event to start every contribution with 'speaking as a [e.g.,] adult nurse . . . ' which enabled all the strategic aims to be met, with student insights on the experiences and values of the different disciplines. The learning was significant, as students had insight into the specific discipline-level nuances and challenges and how these related to multi-professional teams with feedback such as the participants below:

"Hearing perspectives and priorities from other disciplines helped me to understand the differentiation between the different professions and how they can all work together in a multi-disciplinary setting."

"This has been a fantastic opportunity to hear and understand how working as a team will achieve better outcomes and remembering to put and keep that person right in the centre as ultimately the goal is a satisfactory outcome for them."

Clearly, enabling students to apply their own experiences to real world problems was fast-tracking their own insights and deeper learning [20]. These student reflections affirmed my belief of the power of informal learning and relational based programmes, where sharing their experiences with one another, whether a student or a service-user, was a powerful learning approach.

5.3. IPE under COVID—Group Work Edutainment 'Experts by Experience World Café'-Workshops Exploring the Testimonies of Service Users

The Experts by Experience World Café postgraduate day evolved from a face-to-face event with 60 students and four service users (referred to as Experts by Experience), into an online event where over 500 students authentically listened to the stories of seven service users. They enquired into their experience to demonstrate the importance of the person-centred caring attributes of care, compassion, dignity, honesty, and empathy. The service-users shared the highs and lows of their experiences in health, social care, and the community. In preparation for the event, each service user or carer shared their experience on a pre-recorded video testimony of 20 minutes. Their testimonies included stories of misdiagnosis, medical negligence, mental health and eating disorders, being a looked after child, hearing impairments, sensory processing disorders, and brain injury. On the day, students joined facilitated breakout rooms to meet with and talk deeply with three of the service users. This event has been running nine years, but in response to student opinion, it has diversified and now includes a young person and a service user with a learning disability.

It was a huge logistical challenge to maintain youth work principles of agency and choice, registering five hundred students into their preferred three breakout rooms from the seven on offer. Quite deliberately facilitators were chosen from a youth work background or similar with facilitators exclusively from programmes who taught group work, namely youth work, social work, children's nursing, and mental health nursing. As such the excellent facilitation and use of Socratic questioning [67] enabled deep learning examining the issues from multiple professional disciplines lenses [68] while considering how the wider sector can improve in the future. This directly addressed the skills required for multi-professional teams in strategic aims three to five.

Again, the facilitation of the event utilised deliberate edutainment [21] with an attempt to engage the students on an emotional level and foster authentic empathy. This was a hugely powerful event with exceptionally strong feedback from participants as captured by the participants below:

"An extremely powerful day. To be immersed in that way and to that extent in a patient's world is never not going to be thought provoking. In stage 1 of my nursing journey, I believe it is something that will stay with me, and not just in my working life. I don't think I am over stating it when I say it was almost a life changing event."

"The ExE event gave me an intimate insight into the human experience of complex health and care situations across a variety of practice settings. I really liked that there was thought and respect throughout the program design, from the interviews for background/history to the selection of individual health stories that you felt more connected to. I was amazed at how open the ExE were to the whole process and their generosity in sharing such personal and tough situations was remarkable."

"It was really amazing that all three ExE's I listened to, were using their lived experience positively and they reflected on both their own responsibility and the need for professionals to address inequalities to bring about good change."

This event embodied the cultural shift in IPE at the University. There was a powerful shift from discussing joined-up working and the traditional themes of communication, trust, and information sharing [56], towards creating an emotional experience connecting practitioners across health, psychology, and social care and with the social justice of service users.

6. Conclusions

This study should be seen as an example for broadening the use of genuine student collaboration. A more holistic innovative programme built on the interests and aspirations of students is crucial to effective IPE [69], complementing their core programmes of study [70]. However, the benefits are reliant upon high quality programme design and practice [71]. Relationships between staff and between staff and students are crucial to achieve buy in and engagement to any value-added learning opportunities. However, when these relationships recognise and value the student contributions and practice experiences, they significantly enhance both the quality of the programmes and the engagement of students. When there is genuine collaboration with students as co-creating partners, this speaks powerfully into the values of the broader health and social care sector about valuing people and promoting voice, empowerment and agency or patient-centred care. Student-led collaboration is essential for deep learning and value-added curriculum [20,30] and crucially for strengthening their own secure professional identity [72]. Delivering large learning opportunities at scale, requires a different approach both in terms of the pedagogy and the engagement. This is amplified further when these opportunities are delivered online. An edutainment approach [21] built on the participatory youth work principles [59] enable large group learning where educators are much more the meddler in the middle then the sage on the stage [73].

After a decade of austerity and significant cuts to services, youth workers are finding themselves in an exceptionally broad range of multi-professional spaces [74], where youth work pedagogical approaches are making a significant impact on the lives of young people,

far beyond the traditional open access youth club. However, this paper has explored what happens when youth work pedagogy is utilised in higher education. Youth workers in higher education, especially those not teaching on youth work programmes, are making a significant impact across different disciplines. At University of Derby, the IPE offer is planned and delivered in genuine collaboration with students. Strong relationships and shrinking professional boundaries have a made a significant impact on the quality and quantity of the offer, and crucially the level of engagement from both academic colleagues and students themselves. This provides useful insight into the value of informalising the relationships with students, especially in a post-COVID world of online learning. However, it invites a broader enquiry. It begs the question, what would a university look like, pedagogically, philosophically, and in terms of student experience and engagement, not to mention transforming campuses to arenas of social justice, should youth work academics take up positions on the executive or senior leadership team? It would be interesting to undertake further research into the impact of informal educators in senior positions of responsibility within leadership, management, local authorities, politics and of course, higher education.

Reflecting on my own journey in IPE, it does exemplify one of the largest challenges in informal education; relationships take time to build, develop and sustain [32,33]. There is a resource implication for embedding informal education pedagogies in higher education. The time for relationships, genuine participatory practices, and collaboration needs resourcing. For higher education to reap the rewards of youth work teams' influence across institutions there does need to be a recognition of the value of stronger relationships and the time commitment needed to build and sustain them. This is crucial as higher education transitions into a post-COVID world, where the impact of relationships and critical pedagogy on the student experience, especially online can have a significant impact on key student metrics such as the National Student Survey [75]. A conscious commitment to the more informal approach to relationship building in education is not only appropriate, it is professional and needs to become a conscious tool for liberation [76].

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Viewpoint

Teacher-Student Reflections: A Critical Conversation about Values and Cultural Awareness in Community Development Work, and Implications for Teaching and Practice

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Abstract: This reflective, autoethnographic piece provides some insights into our involvement with a program that promotes a value-driven approach to community development work. As a 'conversation' between a lecturer and a graduate, or Educator of Informal Educators and Informal Educator, we discuss the process of teaching and learning about values within day-to-day community development practice. We emphasise that a value-driven approach enables informal educators to celebrate cultural diversity, which can be complex in community settings. As the educator of informal educators (Louise), I reflect on the need to explore and demonstrate what value-driven practice looks like in day-to-day practice within community work and not simply state that values are important. This was prompted by self-reflection and the realisation that my teaching failed to illuminate how to bring values to life in all aspects of community work to achieve anti-discriminatory, inclusive and empowering practice. As an informal educator (Matthew), I consider how community development theories and values translate into meaningful practice that celebrates cultural diversity. Reflections are influenced by theories from Paulo Freire, with a focus on his notion that 'educators should respect the autonomy of the students and respect cultural identities'. An example of Freirean dialogue, the article discusses our critical consciousness through praxis as educator and informal educator. Acknowledging that we are never fully complete—we are always 'becoming'—we hope the article will be of interest to both Educators of Informal Educators and Informal Educators alike.

Keywords: community development; values; social justice; cultural diversity; informal educators

1. Introduction

As a 'conversation' between lecturer and graduate, this piece presents autoethnographic narratives on our involvement with an undergraduate program that promotes a value-driven approach to community development practice. The article captures our reflections as an Educator of Informal Educators and an Informal Educator. We emphasise that a value-driven approach enables informal educators to celebrate cultural diversity, influenced by Freire's principle that educators should respect people's autonomy and cultural experiences [1]. As the educator of informal educators (Louise), I reflect on the need to explore and demonstrate what value-driven practice [2] looks like in day-to-day practice within community work and not simply state that values are important. This was prompted by self-reflection and the realisation that my teaching failed to illuminate how to bring values to life in all aspects of community work. As an informal educator (Matthew), I consider how community development theories and values translate into meaningful practice that celebrates cultural diversity. For clarity, the terms informal educator, community worker and community development practitioner are used interchangeably. For this article, these terms refer to people who work, paid or unpaid, in diverse community contexts to support communities that strive for justice and equality. We hope to provide you, the reader, with some insights on how Paulo Freire's theories [3] are helpful in shaping positive educational experiences in both higher education settings and informal community settings.

2. A Statement of the Problem

As a lecturer marking student assignments, it became apparent that many students were not able to fully articulate and demonstrate what value-driven community development practice involves on a day-to-day basis on placement. This prompted some reflection, followed by the realisation that the intricacies of bringing values to life had not been fully elaborated. Without a deeper understanding, informal educators could fail to apply values in a meaningful way. This has the potential to be disempowering, albeit unintentionally.

3. The Context

The Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Community Development (BACD) is part of the University of Glasgow, which is in Scotland—part of the United Kingdom (UK). The program is professionally endorsed by the Community Learning and Development Standards Council for Scotland and, as such, is an example of formal education that is certificated. It equips graduates to work as informal educators in the broad field of community work. The work they do can be associated with informal and non-formal learning. An example of informal learning might involve community members gaining knowledge by attending a community event. Non-formal education might involve a group learning more about a topic connected to a project in which they are involved, such as learning about housing rights. Through formal education, the BACD enables informal educators to gain skills, knowledge, and experience to work with communities and promotes learning as a lifelong activity [2]—a key value for community practitioners when working alongside communities. Informal and non-formal education is the bedrock of community development. The program promotes transformational learning [3] through community development methods and approaches to increase social, cultural, and political awareness and is underpinned by community development values. Table 1 presents a typology of values relating to community development practice, including values from The National Occupational Standards for Community Development [4] and the Community Learning and Development Standards Council for Scotland [2]. The typology combines two sets of values that form a thread throughout the curriculum of courses on the BACD program.

Influenced by values [2] and critical pedagogy [3], the role of the community worker is to support communities in their efforts to influence positive social change, examining structures, processes, and policies that are unfair. The process begins with the community worker actively listening to communities, hearing their stories, and co-creating a program of activities that culminate in collective action. In this process, community workers are informal educators, enabling creative and participatory learning experiences, as opposed to depositing knowledge to community members. Community workers are based in some of the most vulnerable communities within society; therefore, it is important that they are equipped with the knowledge and skills to ensure best practices.

The article is framed by a set of questions that we each answer: how we define community development; why values are so important in practice; how values enable culturally sensitive practice and promote anti-discrimination and inclusion; and finally, are Paulo Freire's theories still relevant to contemporary practice. We begin with a discussion about our interpretation of community development and the various approaches that are useful in enabling communities to work together for positive change. The article includes some honest reflections on my teaching practice as a lecturer, being mindful of the responsibility associated with educating informal educators who will work with vulnerable communities. It also considers how value-driven community development can celebrate cultural diversity and promote inclusive, anti-discriminatory practice [2]. Mindful that Paulo Freire's ideas feature throughout the program, the article questions if his ideas are still relevant in contemporary practice. An example of Freirean dialogue [3], the article reflects our critical consciousness as educator and informal educator, calling us to deeply reflect on our practice and make necessary changes in the name of social justice.

Table 1. Typology of Community Development Values.

Typology of Community Development Values				
Autonomy	**Equality and Justice**	**Action for Change**	**Collective Working**	**Learning through Life**
The Community Learning and Development Standards Council for Scotland Values				
Self-Determination	**Inclusion**	**Empowerment**	**Working Collaboratively**	**Promotion of Learning as a Lifelong Activity**
Respecting the individual and valuing the right of people to make their own choices	Valuing equality of both opportunity and outcome, and challenging discriminatory practice	Increasing the ability of individuals and groups to influence issues that affect them and their communities through individual and/or collective action	Maximising collaborative working relationships in partnerships between the many agencies which contribute to CLD, including collaborative work with participants, learners, and communities	Ensuring that individuals are aware of a range of learning opportunities and can access relevant options at any stage of their life
The National Occupational Standards for Community Development Values				
Equality and Anti-Discrimination	**Community Empowerment**	**Working and Learning Together**		
Community development practitioners will work with communities and organisations to challenge the oppression and exclusion of individuals and groups	Community development practitioners will work with communities and organisations to work together	Community development practitioners will support individuals and communities working and learning together		
Social Justice	**Collective Action**			
Community development practitioners will work with communities and organisations to achieve change and the long-term goal of a more equal, non-sectarian society	Community development practitioners will work with communities to organise, influence and take action			

4. Community Development–A Student and a Teacher's View

There Are Many Interpretations of Community Development, How Would You Define It?

Matthew: As a student in the University of Glasgow's BACD program, I came across various definitions and approaches of community development. For example, Kretzmann and McKnight's [5] Asset Based Community Development focuses on utilising the resources and assets of a community to formulate strategies for addressing social challenges. This approach, as I came to learn, draws insights from Cooperrider et al.'s [6] Appreciative Inquiry (AI) business model, which entails collective inquiry to highlight the strengths of an organisation, followed by the cohesive design of the desired outcome. This leads to collective action for the realisation of that outcome through which the strengths of the organisation are accentuated. Other approaches are more radical, such as Alinsky's [7] community organising, which involves working with communities to help them strategically apply pressure to decision-makers, including politicians, business owners, and

property owners, to bring about change. This method is applied by community activists all over the world and has been used by human rights activists, including Obama, during his tenure as a community organiser [8]. Commonalities between the different approaches to Community Development became apparent to me, which enabled me to develop my own understanding. It is important to note that my perspectives are influenced by my lived experiences as someone who faced social injustices due to my background as a black African man in Glasgow. Therefore, the narrative I give in this conversation with you, Louise, is unique to myself and cannot be used as a basis to generalise experiences in the entire BACD programme because experiences may vary from person to person.

I came to understand that values, such as participation and anti-discrimination, are the common thread that underpin the different approaches. Community Development is a process that brings about positive social change, through which people increase their critical consciousness [3]. The Community Development Jigsaw (Figure 1) [9] was the framework for students' practice, which helped to guide the work that I did within communities.
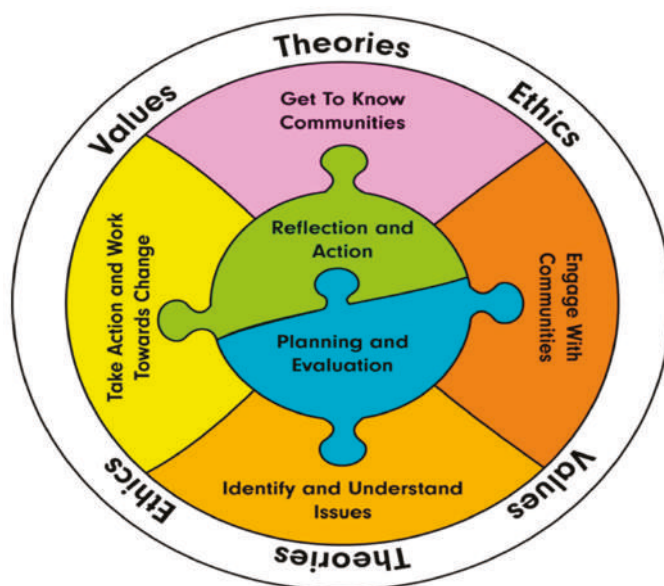
Figure 1. The Community Development Jigsaw.

My first-year placement was at an Integration Network, where I worked with Ethnic Minority community groups to coordinate activities that would facilitate integration within their local communities. We adopted a community-centred approach to integration, which entailed both host and new community members coming together to create spaces in which both groups could thrive. For this to work, both host and new community members must compromise on certain aspects of their cultures and values to enable integration. This placement resonated with me due to my background as an immigrant. Many participants who attended the activities I facilitated were asylum seekers and refugees. I empathised with them, having been through a racist and discriminatory immigration system myself. I shared my experiences of integrating in the UK with participants in the men's group through activities including focus group discussions and informal one-to-one exchanges. As the informal educator, I had to create a safe space where the participants felt that they could share their experiences without being judged and discriminated against. Firstly, I gave a brief but honest account of the challenges that I faced through my life and how I dealt with these situations. Sharing my experiences as a young boy in school was informative to parents with children attending school in the UK. For instance, they were not aware of

the social pressures that their children may encounter in education as they had no prior experience of the UK educational system. Sharing the challenges I faced as an adult was particularly useful for those who had recently arrived in the UK and had not established strong networks. I found this would often prompt discussions on the different challenges we faced as migrants, regardless of our status in the UK. What stood out to me was that migrant groups faced different challenges on integration depending on their ethnicity or religious/cultural background. This is corroborated in research, as literature highlights that, indeed, a migrant's faith, racial ethnicity and nationality play a significant role in their integration experience in the UK. This is particularly evident in the media, where different migrant groups are either misrepresented and/or underrepresented, which adds to negative experiences of discrimination amongst migrant communities [10].

Initially, this experience was daunting to me. The participants in the focus group discussions were asylum seekers and refugees, and I was not. Therefore our interaction with the UK immigration system was different, and, as a result of this, so too was our experience integrating in the UK. Through working in Integration Networks, I learned that asylum seekers often face a strenuous ordeal, with the most vulnerable migrants facing dire circumstances such as destitution and the inability to work. These experiences are perpetuated by an inherently discriminatory system. I was able to apply the theory I learned as a student to my practice, ensuring that I brought values to life in my day-to-day work. It was experiences such as these that helped to deepen my understanding of community development. Through exchanging knowledge gained through lived experiences with other immigrants, we were able to create a network that provided a range of support, information, and advice. This included legal advice pertaining to immigration, as well as more informal information such as employment opportunities that had an empowering effect on new community members. Through collective action, a value and key element of community development [2], we came together to prohibit home office efforts in detaining vulnerable asylum seekers, including families at the immigration removal centre in Scotland. Witnessing and being part of events such as these confirmed the transformation that is possible through community development.

Louise: Through collective action, the Integration Network influenced a form of social change by preventing the detainment of vulnerable asylum seekers. At times, students doubt that theory translates into practice, but your experience demonstrates that change is possible through a thoughtful approach to community development. For me, supporting communities to bring about positive change is at the heart of community development, regardless of the method being used. As you note, the program teaches multiple approaches to community development, but you recognise that values are a core element. You mentioned the exchange of knowledge between community members and with you as an informal educator. This connects with another core element of community development—that communities must be at the heart of the process and should drive the agenda. Your efforts to enable people to share their experiences and cultures connect to Freire's [1] principle that **e**ducators should understand and value cultural diversity, as well as recognise people's ability as agents of change. It is important to recognise that community development is interpreted and applied in diverse ways and that ideology shapes the way that community development is constructed. Historically, community development was identified as a process that involved whole communities in ensuring economic and social progress. Implicit, though, is the belief that communities identified for such projects lack the ability to bring about positive change without help from external agents [8]. It is impossible to deny that many communities in Scotland and across the globe have been affected by multiple factors that have left them struggling in day-to-day existence. There is no question that communities affected by multiple levels of deprivation benefit from support. However, rather than advocating an approach to community development that does work to communities or does work for communities, the BACD emphasises the importance of working with communities. You exemplify this Matthew, by discussing the collective action you undertook with asylum seekers to prevent the detention of vulnerable

asylum seekers. Success is further enabled by building and maintaining networks, which is what Gilchrist describes as a well-connected community [11].

The need to challenge injustice and inequality is a vital aspect of any conception of critical theory. However, focusing only on the problems within a community may have more of a debilitating effect. A deficit approach to working with communities involves only asking questions such as 'what would you change about your community?' or 'what are the problems in your community?', whereas an asset-based approach begins by asking 'what makes you proud about your community?'. Therefore, a balanced approach is necessary, combining elements from Freire's problem-posing approach in which generative themes reflect difficult lived realities, with aspects from appreciative inquiry that envisages a better future [1]. Regardless of the method of engagement, it is vital for practitioners to convey that they believe communities have power and the ability to act with others to effect positive change. On reflection, this was something I took for granted, that students would inherently know they should embody this positive belief in their day-to-day actions. Through my doctoral study, I came to realise that, as teachers, we should not assume that students instinctively know how to be when they apply these methods and approaches. This led me to develop the concept of 'alfirmo' [12], which means conveying the belief in people's ability to achieve positive change, demonstrating care and compassion for people, and providing the necessary support when needed to help them achieve their goals. To return to the question about the definition of community development, it is a way of being with communities that embodies optimism, encourages solidarity and passion for social change. It is a lengthy process that combines the joys and challenges of working with groups of people and will be more meaningful and authentic when guided by ethics and values.

5. Community Values and Day-to-Day Practice

Why Is It So Important to Take a Value-Driven Approach to Community Development?

Louise: As discussed, there are multiple theories, approaches, and methods under the banner of community development. However, working 'with' communities is at the core [13]. Whatever the approach, whether it is community organising [7], appreciative inquiry [6], or any other, bringing values to life is imperative [14]. I have always been fully committed to teaching students about values, listing them with ease. Table 1 presents a typology that combines values from the National Occupational Standards for Community Development [4] and the Community Learning and Development Standards Council for Scotland [3]. Students were asked to write about how they brought these values to life in their practice. They were in no doubt that values were important in their work with communities; this message was explicit in my teaching. When some students reproduced these lists in essays, without fully exploring what value-driven practice looks like on a day-to-day basis, I began to question if I had been doing the right thing.

You refer to the Community Development Jigsaw [9] as a framework for students' practice, Matthew. Colleagues and I developed this (Figure 1) as a guide to the essential elements involved in working with communities. Each part of the jigsaw contributes to an overall approach to working with communities to achieve their goals and effect positive change. Again, students were in no doubt about the importance of values, underpinning all aspects of work, along with ethics and relevant theories. However, it is one thing to tell students, 'You must apply community development values in practice', and an altogether different thing to teach them 'how' to take a value-driven approach. I realised a deeper exploration of what value-driven practice involves was missing. I assumed that people would instinctively know that actions, decisions, and language used within the context of working with communities should be guided by values. One should never make assumptions, especially as a lecturer. I began to change my teaching practice.

I began to explore how to bring values to life in day-to-day practice. For example, for the value of inclusion [2], I encouraged the development of a group agreement. Many youth workers know that setting ground rules when working with groups of young people

is an important part of the process. It is less common to do this when working with groups of adults. My recent experience of chairing meetings with representatives from multiple community groups, sometimes fraught with tensions, reinforced that a form of agreement is important in any context. It may feel obvious for some, but I realised the importance of exploring this in detail, teaching students that setting an agreement forms part of the process of creating a safe and inclusive space. This connects to Freire's principle for transformational practice that emphasises care and attention to create a conducive space for learning [1]. Discussions with students about them actively enforcing the agreement demonstrate how to bring the value to life. In setting the agreement, I encourage students to be honest with group members, explaining that they will intervene if someone is excluded from the conversation, albeit unintentionally. Simple actions, such as creating a safe atmosphere that enables people to build good relationships and to work together, is a way of ensuring a positive space that promotes trust and solidarity [12]. I am passionate about ensuring that students not only understand the importance of value-driven practice, which is an ethical imperative within community development, but also that they know how to ensure their practice is shaped by values. That is my hope, but I am not sure this was always the case. What was your experience of learning about values as a student?

Matthew: My experience was significantly influenced by my upbringing in a religious home. Integrity, which is defined here as adherence to strong moral principles and values both in private and public settings, was a trait consistently taught to me at home. When I joined the BACD program, I was taught to embody community development values—not just in my practice but also in my day-to-day life. This was a particularly challenging process for me because it clashed with my family's values. I began critiquing some of the beliefs with which I was brought up. I had to challenge traditional religious beliefs that were outdated or tailored to accommodate the hegemon. Often, this entailed debates with my parents and siblings on issues that contradicted the religious beliefs that we were accustomed to. However, as I believed in what they stood for, upholding them was necessary to become a successful community development practitioner.

To be effective in my practice, I had to adopt a critical perspective and demand more from myself. It is important for me to embody community development values in all aspects of my life. In my current role as a researcher, I am guided by the value of working and learning together, for example [2]. When monitoring and evaluating development interventions that have been conducted within communities, I ensure that I adopt a participatory approach. This entails working closely with communities who are the recipients of the interventions to gain insight into their lived experiences. The findings comprise communities' perspectives and feature in the final research reports. This practice challenges conventional methods of monitoring, evaluating, and implementing development projects, as it makes the community the primary stakeholder as opposed to the donors. Although funding is crucial for implementing projects, we must challenge top-down approaches to community development as they do little in addressing community issues [13]. As you previously mentioned, as community development practitioners, we cannot assume we know what ought to be done in communities. A key message I learned through the BACD program is that practitioners should support and enable communities to set the agenda and identify projects that will serve their needs.

I moved back to Kenya in 2019 after working with communities in Scotland for five years. I had to adapt my approach to community development, whilst still maintaining the values, to successfully work with communities in this context. This was a challenging process because not all communities align with Community Development values outlined by professional bodies in the United Kingdom [2]. This is partly due to cultural and religious beliefs that shape some community development interventions in Kenya. Understanding the differences has shaped my experience as a community development practitioner. I have found that standing firm in my values, particularly when they are challenged, gives me the opportunity to delve deeper into the concept of community development. The BACD program allowed me to do this with its unique structure, where 60% of the program is theory

and 40% of the program involved the opportunity to go into communities and put theory to practice. This significantly enhanced my understanding of Community Development values, and indeed, reaffirmed their importance in Community Development practice.

6. Cultural Diversity and Community Development

We Live in a Culturally Diverse World, What Helps Community Development Workers to Celebrate This?

Matthew: Applying the Community Development values helps community development workers celebrate culture and diversity in the world. This is because the values encourage equal participation in communities, which harnesses perspectives and ideas gained through diverse cultural experiences. This is the essence of community development, as it encourages more dynamic communities in which everyone can contribute to shaping places that accommodate all cultures. Furthermore, community participation gives a sense of community ownership, which enhances sustainability. As community development workers and informal educators, it is our goal to become redundant in these communities as we facilitate the empowerment of the communities and eventually hand over the reins where the community can become self-sustaining. I learned that it is important for community development workers to apply the value of anti-discrimination to allow for the full participation of communities. Discriminating against groups prohibits equal participation, which results in a community where the needs of specific groups are neglected. Discrimination can be manifested in various forms, including direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, and intersectional discrimination [15]. Learning about the various forms is invaluable for any practitioner or informal educator.

Direct discrimination is defined as the unfair treatment of a group or individual because of a protected characteristic such as sex or race [15]. An example would include people from specific nationalities being prohibited from seeking asylum, applying for leave to remain, or accessing humanitarian aid to deter these specific nationalities from seeking asylum. During my work as a researcher, I witnessed people from red-listed countries in a state of limbo, where they cannot go back to their country of origin, as they are fleeing from both man-made and natural disasters. Indirect discrimination occurs when a law, practice, or policy is represented in a way where there are no defined distinctions made. It is presented neutrally, but it disproportionally disadvantages specific groups [16]. For example, the United Kingdom's asylum law states that to vote, one must produce a legal identification document. This includes a passport or driving license, which is only granted to those with legal status in the United Kingdom. This disregards groups, such as refugees, who reside and participate within communities. For some, the asylum process can take up to 15 years or more, which is a long time to be denied the right to participate in a crucial decision-making process that affects them directly. Intersectional discrimination occurs when multiple forms of discrimination occur at once, which leaves some groups even more disadvantaged. For example, discrimination against people with disabilities often means that they do not have the same opportunities as others, including employment and education. When people from a minority group also have a disability, there is a chance they will face greater barriers and exclusion, which is intersectional discrimination based on their ethnicity and disability [17].

To celebrate culture and diversity, it is imperative that discrimination is challenged in practice. For this to happen, we as community development workers and informal educators must first begin identifying privileges afforded to us and how they influence our interactions in the world. For example, as an able-bodied, heterosexual, educated black man, it became apparent to me, through my practice, how communities would react to me as I had certain privileges afforded to me by my education, gender, sexuality, and lack of disability. At the same time, I also became aware of certain negative stereotypes attached to my ethnicity. We live in an inherently biased world, where the narrative is shaped by a select few and by challenging that narrative, we can truly celebrate each other's differences and appreciate contributions from diverse cultures. That, for me, constitutes value-driven practice.

Louise: As you note, change is only possible by challenging narratives that privilege some over others. Community development workers, youth workers, and informal educators can play a vital role, but the strength lies with people in communities. Two pieces of the community development jigsaw [9] are relevant here. A significant part of any community worker's job must be spent getting to know and engaging with the community. This must go beyond simply mapping the organisations, services, and resources that can be found within a community; this must involve building meaningful relationships with community members. Only then will community workers have a sense of the cultural diversity that exists within communities. Students on the BACD undertake forms of community mapping as part of course assessments and have produced some excellent results over the years. However, the focus is not always given to cultural diversity within communities. On reflection, I assumed that students would know that community mapping should involve insights into the diverse groups of people living in communities or participating within communities of function or interest. I now understand the need for me as an educator to be explicit about this. Gervedink [18] refers to the notion of culturally sensitive curriculum. I understand the need to ensure the curriculum I design reflects cultural diversity in ideas and literature, as well as promote the need for informal educators to do the same in their community contexts.

I must equip students as future informal educators with the knowledge and skills to understand the complexities of working with diverse groups and encourage them to celebrate and embrace cultural diversity. There are many ways that I can do this, and one includes enabling students to share their experiences of what has worked and what has not worked. The BACD regularly invites graduates to do Guest Lectures on the program, and some have been involved in Integration Projects as you were, Matthew. The Guest Lecture that you did on prejudice and white privilege was as enlightening for me as it was for the students. The notion of white privilege had gone unmentioned before then. It is important to create space to enable students, practitioners, and members of minority groups to share their insights and experiences. This should be a core part of the curriculum and not happen by chance. This should then translate into day-to-day practice when students graduate and become community workers and informal educators. Creating space to enable meaningful conversations for people to share and learn about experiences about being part of minority groups should be a core part of the job for all community workers and informal educators.

In recent times, I recognised that important topics had somehow drifted from the curriculum. The commitment to ensuring that students are aware of the importance of anti-discrimination and anti-oppression within their practice always remained. Nevertheless, the message was implicit at times. It is vital for us as educators of informal educators to be explicit in our teaching and to deal with complex and sometimes challenging themes. This includes ensuring that students understand the nature and impact of unconscious bias. This is underpinned by the need for students and community workers to be reflexive, examining their beliefs and judgments and how these translate in their day-to-day practice. This should be a core part of the curriculum and not depend on who is teaching a course. Similarly, enabling students to reflect on the ways in which white privilege permeates many aspects of life and institutions is crucial, as you suggest Matthew. This is an essential topic, particularly for students who are situated in contexts in which the population is predominantly white. Understanding intersectionality, as you mentioned, is also vital [17]. If, as educators, we do not discuss these factors that impact people's lives overtly, then our students may be reluctant to approach these subjects as they move into the field of community work. It should not only be those working in integration projects or projects working with asylum seekers and refugees who consider cultural diversity as a core part of their job. As you rightly note, we exist in a society in which injustice, inequality, and prejudice exist—as educators and community workers, we must use approaches that enable us to uncover these situations and strive for positive change. Paulo Freire's [3] approach to education involves consciousness-raising and dialogue, which necessitates critical analysis

of unequal societal structures. His ideas weave through many courses across the program, but some might ask if his ideas are relevant beyond Brazil.

7. Critical Pedagogy and Community Development
How Relevant Are Freire's Ideas in Contemporary Practice?

Louise: As mentioned in the introduction, I am heavily influenced by Freire's work, with his theories and principles as a lens through which I investigated youth participation practice in my doctoral study [12]. It is therefore easy for me to argue that Freire's ideas remain relevant in a contemporary context; I acknowledge my biased position. However, through my involvement with Youth and Community Programs in Higher Education Institutions in Scotland and England, I know Freire remains firm within the curriculum. In Macrine's view, 'the threatening triangulation of neoliberalism, conservatism, and nationalism has significantly intensified austerity politics, weakened gender equality, hollowed public education, created economic alienation, and harshened immigration policies' [19]; the picture is bleak. Across the globe, contemporary society faces many of the challenges experienced decades ago. In the 1960s, Freire initially developed his transformational educational approach in Brazil at a time when the masses experienced poverty and oppression. His approach aimed to support people to transform society, a process that enables the 'oppressed [to] exert their collective power to challenge injustice and ensure that people are treated fairly' [3].

Brazil remains fragile, much like many countries, with an economy that encapsulates a significant lack of employment opportunities and enduring poverty and inequality [19]. Despite this, the current Brazilian government has attempted to erase all traces of Freirean theories and approaches, with teachers prohibited to teach his ideas for fear of repercussions [19]. With the pervasive nature of dominant ideologies described by Macrine, Freire's critical pedagogy has never been needed more [3]. Giroux describes critical pedagogy as an educational approach that enables learners to engage in dialogue that begins with their lived experiences and incorporates critical analysis as routine, examining all aspects of society for systems of power that exclude [20]. It is based on hope and a vision for social justice for all.

The community development approach endorsed within the University of Glasgow is deeply influenced by Freire and critical pedagogy. The theories, principles, approaches, and methods are woven throughout all courses on the program. As lecturers, we must be clear about our position, that our 'brand' of community development is one that aims to challenge the status quo. Freire's critical pedagogy provides an approach to disrupt that which seems inevitable, offering a way to reimagine the future [3]. Freire urged against a sense of fatalism, or the hegemonic forces of neo-liberalism, where inequality is inevitable and 'opportunities for change become invisible' [3]. Jackson asserted that Freire's ideas were utopian, that his language of hope was too idealistic [21]. It cannot be denied that a language of optimism permeates the body of Freire's work. This is part of the reason that Freire's ideas remain relevant today; hope is needed to counter the negative impacts of neoliberalism and capitalism. Without a doubt, Freire's theories, principles, and methods remain firm within the curriculum. His ideas remain part of the community development worker's armoury to enable them to work with communities for social justice and equity. Are Freire's ideas and popular education approach still useful to you as a graduate and practitioner?

Matthew: I believe Freire's ideology still permeates through community development practice today. What resonates most is the concept of conscientisation [3]. This is a constant process of reflection and action where an individual becomes aware of his/her own social reality and then taking it a step further to take action to become active agents in changing the reality. As a researcher, adopting a critical perspective is crucial as it is how new truths and ideologies are derived. This was constantly communicated to me as a student on the BACD program by lecturers; they insisted that, as aspiring researchers and community development practitioners, we cannot take things for granted.

Contrary to traditional methods of education, we ought to encourage learners to think for themselves but also work cohesively together to overcome barriers to social justice. As you previously mentioned, Freire's concepts are often viewed as utopian. This is further exacerbated because the evidence on how to operationalise his ideas is relatively scarce. However, the BACD program provided space for students to experiment with approaches underpinned by Freire's ethos that are used today. In my second year in the program, I undertook a placement with a young people's community theatre group in Glasgow. It was here I was able to experiment with Augusto Boals' concept of using theatre as a platform for engaging communities in societal issues [22]. It was here that I saw concrete evidence of the various methodologies through which Freire's concepts can be operationalised in the most creative ways. The challenge in operationalising concepts like 'dialogue' is more on creating a safe space where communities can come together and begin becoming active agents in their own realities. One of the theories that elevated my work as a community development practitioner was Tuckman's theory of group development [23]. Tuckman initially identified four stages of development within the life of a group, which consisted of forming, storming, norming, and performing. He later added the final stage of development, which is that of adjourning [24]. It was useful to learn that groups go through each stage to reach peak performance. Understanding what to expect in each stage helped me incorporate Freirean concepts in my practice.

I believe that Freirean concepts can be replicated in any community, or educational setting, including formal education. It is imperative that learners engage in dialogue, sharing their lived experiences and understanding the structures of society. Dialogue must lead to action. Without action, conversations are simply verbalism [3]. Informal educators, or teachers, play a significant role in creating a conducive space where both educators and students participate in a learning journey together. Learners are not empty vessels to be 'filled' with knowledge to conform to societal expectations. Learners should be active in the process, with informal educators naming the world and shaping the world. Aronowitz reaffirms this in his dissection of Freire's Pedagogy of the oppressed. He highlights three key goals for learners to achieve to attain critical awakening. The first is critical reflection to develop an understanding of the world, including its psychological, economic and political spheres. The second goal is to become aware of the forces that control our reality by understanding that we are all products of a flawed society controlled by a hegemon. The third is to create an environment that produces new knowledge and structures, where power is shared between those who create the social world through transforming themselves and nature [25]. Freire's process of de codification provides a vehicle through which to achieve these goals. I agree that his ideas are still as relevant now as they ever were.

8. Conclusions

With some honest reflections, this article confirms Freire's assertion that we are all unfinished beings [3]. As an educator of informal educators and an informal educator, we discuss our responsibility to critically engage with the world and to critically reflect on our own practice to ensure we do not drift from our commitments to values. It affirms our obligation to challenge discrimination of all forms and to encourage anti-discrimination in those with whom we work. We recognise that we refer to a higher education program situated in the United Kingdom, underpinned by a typology of values that may seem particular to that context. However, the theories, approaches, and values are applicable in global contexts. This has been demonstrated by international students who have taken BACD courses as electives. This article is not an attempt to promote the BACD, but rather, it is a call for educators in formal settings, such as higher education, to bring ideas to life. For instance, it is not enough to name community development values—to tell informal educators they must embody these values within their practice. Educators of informal educators must elucidate how to bring values to life in day-to-day practice. Understanding and celebrating cultural differences is crucial for all community workers

and informal educators. The process of getting to know, and engaging with communities, is a core part of community work and should facilitate deep understanding of cultural differences and diversity [7]. This, in turn, should enable communities to co-exist and work together towards positive social change that will benefit all. Until injustice and inequality are eradicated, Freire's [3] transformational approach remains relevant in contemporary community work practice regardless of the context.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Article

Pedagogies of Discomfort and Care: Balancing Critical Tensions in Delivering Gender-Related Violence Training to Youth Practitioners

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Abstract: This reflective paper explores the emotions, ethics, and challenges of facilitating training for youth practitioners to tackle gender-related violence (GRV). This paper draws on insights from a training intervention that emerged from an EU-funded feminist project (UK GAPWORK project), which sought to bring together approaches to tackle violence against women and girls with challenging heteronormativity and homophobia. Drawing on accounts from facilitators and participants, the aim of this paper is to identify tensions, opportunities and strategies in developing training to support critically engaged practice around sensitive topics such as GRV, and to consider the significance of working with discomfort within any such training intervention. We reflect on how discomfort presented within the training space and the challenges presented. This paper examines how Boler's theoretical work on pedagogy of discomfort can be operationalised to think productively about designing and delivering training for informal educators on sensitive issues with ethical integrity.

1. Introduction

This reflective paper explores the emotions, ethics, and challenges of facilitating training on gender-related violence (GRV) with youth practitioners. We explore the complexities of facilitating and designing a specific training intervention for youth practitioners to recognise and tackle GRV. The training emerged from an EU-funded feminist project (UK GAP project) aimed at bringing together approaches to tackle violence against women and girls with challenging heteronormativity and homophobia.

This paper is concerned with the realm of emotions within training dynamics and the repercussions for ethically engaged pedagogy. We reflect on key learning from the UK GAP project with the aim of identifying tensions, opportunities and strategies in developing training to support critically engaged practice around sensitive topics such as GRV, to consider how discomfort presents and what responsibilities trainers and participants have towards one another within this process. This paper asks: How might social justice educators develop ethically responsive and discomforting training in tackling gender-related violence?

Theoretically, this paper draws on Boler's concept of the pedagogy of discomfort [1] in order to consider the emotional and ethical complexities of work on highly sensitive and troubling topics. Zembylas [2] draws attention to the ethical dilemmas implicit in bringing discomfort to education when exploring issues of social justice, which also provides an important theoretical orientation. This article begins by outlining the training context, before exploring how discomfort presented within the UK GAP training programme and the challenges this presented. Secondly, drawing on reflections from the training, we

examine how Boler's and Zembylas's theoretical work can be operationalised to think productively about designing training for informal educators on sensitive issues with ethical integrity. Finally, we are keen to map out the potential implications of taking discomfort and care seriously when engaging in social justice education and training with informal educators towards one of 'critical hope' [3]. The account presented arises from interviews with trainers, focus group reflections and finally, a reflective account from one of the trainers and co-authors of this paper.

2. Setting the Context: The GAPWORK Project

Co-funded by the EU, the 24-month GAPWORK project ran in four different EU countries (UK, Ireland, Spain and Italy) between 2013 and 2015. Here, we particularly explore the experiences of trainers and practitioners on the UK arm of the programme. The GAP project attempted to link practical work influenced by identity politics and feminist anti-violence initiatives with theoretical work drawing on critical pedagogies, Queer and feminist post-structuralist theory. The GAP project sought to bridge gaps and understandings of gender and violence in relation to adults and child services and conceptions of domestic violence and homophobic violence and abuse [4,5]. 'The broad definition of gender-related violence problematised the violence of normativities, as well as material forms of violence, irrespective of who was targeted' [5] (p. 3).

Each national context autonomously designed and developed local training interventions to support youth practitioners in tackling GRV. Here, we present data that emerged from focus group discussions and trainer reflections on critical moments within the UK training, rather than a pan-project analysis. The use of pedagogy of discomfort as an analytical tool has only been drawn so far in the UK context. This paper seeks to unpack these critical micro moments in order to consider how hierarchies of power/knowledge and expertise were contested and reflected the complex sex-gender dynamics between trainers and participants within and outside the UK training programme. This paper primarily concentrates on Day One of the three-day programme titled 'Unpacking Gender-Related Violence', as it appeared to elicit the greatest level of discomfort of the three days in the trainers' and the participants' accounts (see Table 1).

Table 1. The UK training programme.

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Content	**Unpacking Gender-Related Violence**	**Promoting Healthy Relationships and Sex and the Law**	**Action Planning**
	Focus on sex-gender as categories Define gender-related violence Inform to Act process	Focus on GRV and healthy relationships Legal context and remedies map for victims of abuse	Focus on reviewing GRV resources and action planning for local context

2.1. The Training Team

The UK training team incorporated a youth work organisation, a feminist law organisation and a University team. Trainers had expertise in feminist and anti-violence youth work, health education, diversity training and the law. Training was grounded in both gender studies and the law including the Equality Act [6], whilst also being flexible to engage with the organisational imperatives of the delivery settings. This brought together contrasting and, at times, competing perspectives. A simple characterisation of these competing perspectives is that, on the one hand, second wave feminist and post-structuralist and queer theoretical influences took a deconstructive approach which sought to challenge gender hierarchies and make less certain accepted individual and practice understandings, whilst on the other hand, the legal and (neo) managerial influences had a stronger orientation towards the pursuit of certainty in both content and training outcomes.

2.2. The Training Design and Participants

The UK project design was offered over two and half days for professionals working with young people. Over 128 participants completed the UK programme. Participants hailed from a range of diverse cultural and practice backgrounds and levels of experience, including trainees and experienced managers in a range of youth professions including primary and secondary teaching, youth work, fire service, sports coaches, social work and nurses. This meant a considerable time commitment from the employer and the staff. Although many youth practitioners elected to attend the training, others were mandated because their local authority employer had chosen to make this training compulsory. We reflect later how this mix of voluntary and compulsory participation shaped the experiences of individuals and groups within the training sessions.

Day One and the final half day were led by the youth work organisation and the youth work academics. Day Two was led by a feminist legal organisation and was primarily aimed at highlighting legal dimensions and remedies to issues such as child sexual exploitation and harassment. The first day offered an introduction to the concept of gender-related violence. Participants were encouraged to reflect upon the limits of normative sex-gender binaries, before exploring a range of gender-related violence case studies, before being introduced to the Inform to Act process (see Figure 1). Inform to Act is an assessment resource that was developed in the UK context in order to provide an auditing tool in identifying and taking action on gender-related violence. This included an exploration of the overlaps between inequalities and violence and the scope for such issues to be present within workplaces and organisations, and not just amongst the young people that the practitioners worked with and, as such, it linked the personal and professional to the institutional and societal.
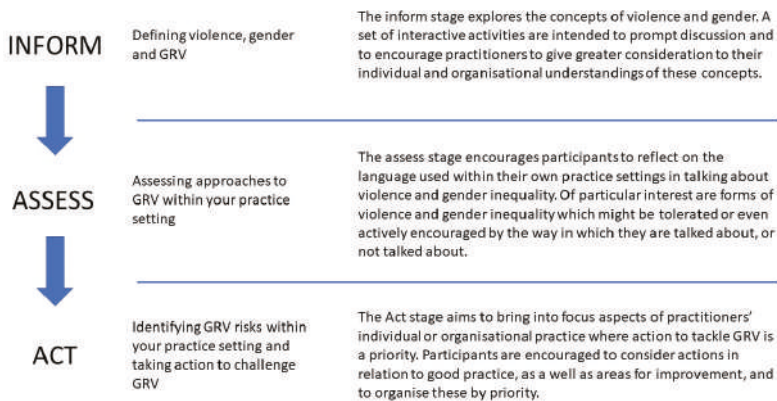
Figure 1. Day One—Inform to Act process.

At the end of the final day, participants were invited to contribute to a group evaluation where they reflected on what they had gained from the experience and areas that might be strengthened. Participants completed pre- and post-questionnaires focusing on their work base, and training experience. For more on the full evaluation, see the GAPWORK reports which provide a summary of each context [5]. In addition, the research team observed the session and trainers were interviewed. This article is written by one of the co-ordinators of the training, Fin Cullen, and one of the trainers, Michael Whelan. Our personal experiences as researchers, youth practitioners and educators are entwined in our reflection and representation in this paper. The data presented here arise from the following sources: GAPWORK reports [5], post-training UK focus group with participants, individual interviews with the UK training team and personal reflections from the training team and authors.

Here, we focus on issues of challenge and tension, which most commonly emerged on Day One and were subsequently raised in the group discussion on the final day, or amongst focused discussion with the researcher. It is perhaps unsurprising that areas of potential discomfort might emerge on the opening day. Much recent training and continuous professional development in public sector organisations has moved to an online self-completion format or entails brief half-day information-led training on issues such as child sexual exploitation. GAPWORK UK adopted a multi-day training approach and included reflection on the personal, the professional, and the institutional, as well as information sharing which had the potential to feel 'discomforting' and potentially personally and professionally exposing. Online training, by contrast, is marked by its relative cost effectiveness, and especially for asynchronous self-completed content, typically results in a training experience which is more impersonal in nature and negates the emotional messiness of a broader 'educational' experience. Online training can seem less messy, safer and more boundaried than forms of face-to-face training which emphasise dialogue and critical reflection on practice as a training resource. Day One placed this form of critical reflection centerstage—by questioning the sex-gender binary and taken-for-granted assumptions about reassuring essentialist categories that might offer certainty and solace. For example, the sex-gender binary assumes that sex and gender are immutable dualistic categories. Day One's opening activity invited participants to reflect on the fluidity and cultural contingency of such categories in thinking through "What makes a man, a man? Or a woman, a woman?" This framed the subsequent training within this deconstructive sensibility which questions common sense assumptions about the fixity of binary sex, gender and sexuality. This approach, perhaps unsurprisingly, prompted participants to reflect on their personal and organisational value bases and elicited personal disclosures.

The two-and-a-half-day model provided the apparent luxury of diving deeper into the various overlapping strands of gender-related violence. However, it also meant that understaffed workplaces facing stark austerity cuts were left without staff for several days. The local authority partners sent many of their staff to the course as mandated training adding an additional layer of complexity to understanding and working with aspects of the discomfort experienced within the training. As one trainer noted:

> *The issue of forced attendance appears to keep coming up through the training day, impacting not just on the reluctant attendee but also the rest of the attendees.* [5] (p. 70)

For some, especially those who had been mandated to attend, materials could seem obscure, irrelevant, and discomforting. Yet, without public sector organisations taking issues of equalities and social justice seriously, they are in breach of recent UK equalities legislation [6]. Moreover, if social justice training only 'preaches to the converted' then it risks remaining a marginal and marginalised issue of limited interest, and will little trouble existing workplace hierarchies that reproduce problematic and unjust workplace cultures; let alone begin to challenge such issues within client groups. Indeed, this was reflected in the legal trainer's account which noted that criminal justice workers expressed little interest in promoting positive relationship aspects of the training as they felt this was beyond the remit and loci of their practice.

> *These practitioners only wanted to engage on a limited number of issues and did not see themselves as people who could/would provide a more positive vision of a young person's engagement in relationships.* [5] (p. 69)

Here, it is evident that expectations, conceptions of practice, professionality and client group were entwined. Such framings also shaped expectations of what might be deemed as a legible and legitimate training experience—issues that we will return later in this paper. We turn firstly to the concept and ethics of discomfort and care and how this may manifest in education and training interventions that explore issues of social justice.

3. Introducing a Pedagogy of Discomfort

This paper draws upon Boler's conceptualisation of pedagogy of discomfort [1] to analyse the training process and experience. Boler's work has been fruitfully drawn on by scholars interrogating how critical pedagogy may cross over into the emotional realm when encountering and challenging injustice—especially in teacher education and beyond. Boler's work provides a powerful account of how the emotional—in the case of 'discomfort'—can motivate learners and disrupt hegemonic narratives that reproduce social injustice. Boler defines the concept of pedagogy of discomfort ' . . . as both an invitation to inquiry as well as a call to action' [1] (p. 176). The collective exploration enables new insights and forms new ways of being *and* doing. Such pedagogy does not prescribe action, but through collective witnessing invites dialogue and new ways of imagining practice (action). Even though Boler's work did not theoretically underpin the original design of this training programme, it helps in understanding and reflecting on the arising complexities and key learning. Indeed, Day One was clearly an invitation to inquiry before moving to action, as can be clearly seen in the movement and emphasis on Day One through to Day Three as noted in Table 1.

The aspects that are key to Boler's [1] conceptualisation are

- **Spectating versus Witnessing**;
- **Understanding and exploring anger**;
- **Avoiding the binary trap of innocence and guilt**;
- **Learning to inhabit ambiguous selves** [1].

We draw on these elements as we unpack areas of tension that arose during the delivery and production of the training.

Key here is the role of questioning and reflection within the realm of emotion, particularly when exploring contentious issues such as gender inequalities. As an important pedagogic tool, it can be used as a strategy to draw out tensions, and explore sometimes difficult feelings in order to gain collective personal and professional insights. Such practices demand a high degree of emotional labour for all participants. Boler notes that one of the most challenging arenas for such collective discomfort is that of racial and sexual oppression [1]. With this in mind, it is perhaps unsurprising that a 2.5 day training session on sexual and gender violence would provide a space of particular emotional challenge.

Such thorny ethical and pedagogical tensions have been explored by various scholars [1,7]. Prior work has theorised the arising dilemmas posed by social justice education and critical pedagogy and the nature of the relation between the pedagogue/participants. Previous scholarship exploring the area of teaching and critical pedagogy has attempted to theorise how the emotional and the ethical entwine within the classroom [1,2,7–9]. This paper departs from this scholarship as we are looking specifically at the training space; yet such prior work is also relevant and applicable to theorising work-based training. However, it is also recognised that education and training differ in regards to orientation, approach and expectations. The critical engagement with theory and the desire to cultivate spaces of critical dialogue, reflection and inquiry in the UK GAP training model shows a clear departure from narrow task and skill orientated training approaches which often predominate in the field.

Earlier scholarship has often examined the emotional and ethical dilemmas engendered within education for social justice within formal education settings. For example, the progressive classroom is not necessarily one of safety [10]. As Morley—writing in a university woman studies context—argues, discussions of sex/gender oppression can create unsafe tense spaces and necessitate increased emotional labour from feminist pedagogues who are required to manage the micropolitics of the classroom experience. Yet, the challenge here is the move to bring feminist and critical pedagogies into a workplace training model—where the ongoing support, emotional labour and careful nuanced reflection and 'collective witnessing' [1] on areas of challenge and contestation are squeezed into a 2.5 day programme.

Some participants were mandated by their employer to attend training workshops during company time and again, the 'expert' facilitator/trainer establishes the parameters of the agenda and leads the participants in acquiring the set learning objectives and potentially assesses their competency. Such simplistic conceptualisations of content and process of work exploring issues of social justice fails to engage with the myriad complexities and subjectivities that are brought into being within, through and outside training space. Moreover, the very nature of this training/education on gender/sexualities equalities and gender-related violence is rightly discomforting and yet, participants may be reluctant in both engaging with the content and process of training; particularly if they have been compelled to attend.

The emotional realm and feeling of discomfort and ambiguity framed discussion of challenging issues such as gender-related violence. Participants were asked to reflect on their own assumptions and investments. For example, by being prompted to critically reflect on the presence of violence and gender inequality in their own actions and relations, in addition to considering their organisational cultures. This challenged learners to consider how their professional role and their own values might be complicit in reproducing problematic norms and sustaining inequalities. Secondly, the *call to action* dimension emphasised operationalising what learners might do next in regards policy and practice areas in their workplace.

Via discomforting pedagogies, learners confront social norms. Yet, at the same time, while pedagogies can have transformative and radical potential, without due care, it also risks reinforcing and solidifying existing identities, rather than shifting the debate in challenging injustice. For example, one challenge here is training participants' own embodied and positioned subjectivities. Areas of potential tension include participants' own experiences as sex-gendered subjects, but also as employees in highly hierarchical structures and neoliberal policy regimes, can often feel intensely disempowering. Everyone is invested in the topic at hand; yet not all might feel that they can be an agentic subject within such hierarchical organisational and institutional systems. As a result, such felt powerlessness can result in learners dwelling on discomfort, and thus risks apathy, antagonism or disengagement, rather than a clear 'call to action' emerging from the training intervention.

Zembylas' work speaks to the themes explored in Boler's work in theorising and conceptualising aspects of the emotional, the ethical and critical pedagogy. Reflecting on Boler's pedagogy of discomfort, Zembylas and McGlynn [8] explore the limits and possibilities of (dis)comfort and note potential issues of safety and risk for learners and teachers alike [8]. Indeed, pertinent ethical questions concern the appropriateness of such contextual pedagogies; especially as they may have differential impact on learners. Rather than abandoning such discomforting pedagogies, Zembylas questions how we provide spaces of control and support within such learning contexts in an argument for critical pedagogies of compassion [2,9]. This argument is framed around how educators engage with challenging issues of suffering that move beyond those of simple sentimentalising or moralistic framings [9] (p. 507). Indeed, such simplistic framings can reinforce reductive narratives where learners refute, reject, contest or block engagement with such issues. For Zembylas, this manifests itself in a range of phenomenon that can arise in the classroom for learners confronted with challenging issues exploring social injustice, from students experiencing compassion fatigue, becoming indifferent, expressing emotional resistance and/or creating narratives of self-victimisation. Due care to the conditions of learning in addition to training content is thus vital to move learners beyond simplistic binaries of them and us, through an engagement with a critical compassion that provides scope for learners to grasp asymmetries of suffering [9] (p. 507).

Such issues are central to the GAP training's commitment in exploring the banality and ubiquity of gendered everyday violence as institutionalised through heteropatriarchy not just in the lives of children and young people, but also in the lives of the training participants, their families, colleagues and the institutions and structures inhabited by both

young people and practitioners. Such a pedagogic move is one of potential risk and danger. While only Day One particularly focused on deconstructing and questioning sex-gender norms, issues around homophobia and themes of gendered violence ran throughout and provided a destabilising presence that presented considerable challenges and unease. The next section explores some of the emerging tensions that arose during the training sessions and the importance of such critical moments in considering what constitutes a 'successful' training programme.

4. An Invitation to Inquiry

While the focus was that of combating gender-related violence, it was clear that practitioners also work within organisations which reproduce broader discourses of systematic and institutional oppression. Much scholarly work has explored the challenges of workplace bullying and harassment [11–13]. Post-austerity public services in England have seen savage cuts to jobs, training and support for youth practitioners and increasingly precarious and understaffed working conditions [14–16]. Moreover, a growing literature has explored the complexities of practitioners negotiating heteronormativity in the workplace [17–19]. Such work notes the engrained heterosexist organisational cultures and management regimes that silences and marginalises such practitioners' experiences. Even the most apparent progressive workplace can be framed within repressive organisation cultures that invisibilises, marginalises and silences worker and service user experiences of oppression.

On Day One, facilitators moved to draw on case studies and institution-based activities, yet the first morning brought the personal and the professional together in reflecting on understanding of key issues and capacity to act. The personal is *both* political and powerful. Experiential learning motivates this spirit of inquiry and early training activities invited participants to confront and reflect on their own assumptions. On reflection, it is clear that participants were thus encouraged to 'dwell in discomfort' [1] and ambiguity through critical reflection in order to gain new insights which could be then drawn on in the subsequent days' workshops, where legal implications of GRV and action planning were the main foci.

Boler [1] notes this as through engaging with complex issues we learn to live with our ambiguous selves. Exposing or dwelling on these complexities can potentially erode long-invested personal/professional identities. Indeed, personal disclosures during the training of professionals' experiencing first-hand gender-related violence in their personal life began to dismantle barriers. However, such disclosures also potentially risked exposing and destabilising carefully crafted personal and professional personas.

Participants working with young people to tackle gender-related violence might also face a variety of forms of direct and indirect violence themselves, from structural and institutional forms of oppression to cases of inter and intrapersonal violence from colleagues and clients. Such violence might take a range of forms from microaggressions to ongoing bullying or heterosexist norms that silence and marginalise. Participants thus already inhabit complex—and sometimes contradictory and ambiguous—positions as expert/learner, as rescuer/victim, as persecuted/persecuting with entwined personal and professional identities and subjectivities potentially remade and recast, reformed and questioned.

Twin themes of voice and silence shaped these dynamics. While the training activities provided a valued site of reflection and testimony for some, this was not the case for all. This usual silencing of experiences/identities within the office made the temporary space of the training room a particularly tricky professional site where such discussions and identities were made legible and rendered visible. Diversity programmes can create a space of backlash where participants wish to marginalise or suggest that such issues are relics of the past [1,2,7]. Yet, others might feel this ongoing erasure further marginalises and silences their personal identity. In this way, the training room, rather than becoming a safe space to investigate the needs of the 'other', became a site of ongoing tension and

negotiation about personal and professional identities and sites and systems of oppression. In focus group accounts, it was clear that certain topics and issues around oppression were seen as too 'hot' for the office and staff expressed caution about raising issues for fear of personal and professional consequences. For example, during focus group discussions, LGBTQ staff present noted the challenges of dealing with workplace homophobia. As one woman noted:

> . . . *we do go (sighs) round and round in circles in our office, cos no matter whatever you say or challenge, it always comes back in your face, and particularly me, being a gay person, if I challenged something that I feel or find offensive or shouldn't be said in our office, I'm always aware that it's me that's saying it and are they just thinking, oh it's her on her high horse again . . . ., whereas I just think it's harder to challenge something around gay equality cos then it is necessarily against racial politics <> I am aware that, yeah, I am cautious sometimes because I'm aware of . . . what I'm gonna get back, does that make sense?* (UK training participant)

Here, issues of gender, sexuality and race in/equality take on different characteristics and levels of importance and recognition in the workplace as noted in the Equality Act (2010) [6]. This meant, for example, that out gay members of staff felt burdened with raising issues around workplace homophobia. Participant accounts suggested concern about drawing attention to homophobic and heterosexist workplace culture for fear of being perceived as hectoring and facing further stigmatisation. Moreover, 'being a gay person' meant that the agenda was particularly charged as it often appeared that heterosexual staff felt less active in challenging or even recognising homophobic and heterosexism present in the workplace. The key arising question here is who owns the problem and how is it mobilised?

The training experience could be a tricky space—particularly if one was being trained alongside workmates. Indeed, workplace dynamics could spill back into the training room and vice versa, as was highlighted by another participant:

> *I don't mind challenging most things, but this topic is quite a sensitive one and especially in the workplace, it's one thing to challenge outside when you're with your family or your friends but amongst colleagues the repercussions are quite different.* (UK training participant)

These comments arose partly from the Inform to Act process (see Figure 1) that involved participants reflecting on their own workplaces and how gender-related violence could be normalised as part of everyday work cultures. There was clear recognition amongst participants that such issues around sex-gender oppression were apparent in office place dynamics—yet how individuals were positioned and policed within wider work-based hierarchies might prevent disclosure and challenge. Indeed, another participant presented negotiating such issues in the workplace as having much in common with playing a 'game of chess' in knowing how and when to react and challenge colleagues and oppressive workplace cultures.

5. Anger Is an Energy

Emotional labour lies at the heart of exploring issues of social justice and difference. As Williams [20] notes in his concept of 'structures of feelings', dominant social relations means that the hegemonic norms are internalised within the emotional realm [21]. Through collective witnessing, learners are encouraged to move beyond the 'inscribed emotional and cultural terrains' of those comfort zones to think differently [21] (p. 107).

Critical inquiry often means exploring difficult emotional terrain and difficult emotions. Multiple forms of anger can manifest within such sessions. Whilst not selling prescriptive dogmatic solutions, the very ambiguity of considering new ways of being can engender anger. This might emerge from an unsettling and 'moral anger' at social injustice—or a 'defensive' anger—as fragile identities and investments come under scrutiny [1]. Indeed, permutations of these different aspects of anger may be in play in

the same educational space and sometimes within the same person—whether learner or trainer.

Unsurprisingly, such dynamics played out on occasion in the training room. This might appear by resistance, reluctance, sabotage and/or disengagement, and is also potentially linked here to whether individuals had attended training from their own volition or because they were mandated by managers. For example, trainers on the team noted that discussions of violence and patriarchy created feelings of collective discomfort and 'violent' reactions from particularly male participants.

> *<Participants> thought they were coming into a training which is very much about the legal aspect of it and learning more about violence, and I think when we started to unpick patriarchy a little bit, and that started to threaten them, there were very specific incidences where they started to react violently themselves.* (Trainer/coordinator—Day Three)

Such discomfort and anger cascade in multiple directions between training participants and towards trainers. This is not unexpected when exploring such emotive and sensitive issues, but it had clear implications for training design and intent. Trainers reflected upon the complexity of negotiation between individual and institutional need and expectations. For example, two trainers noted moments of tension that had arisen where male participants voiced antagonism to some of the ideas presented by female trainers and/or participants. Several trainers noted a gender dynamic in play in the training space where older men questioned accounts by younger women trainers.

> *...sort of deliberately challenging you on whether this is something that really was important to be looked at and y'know or saying that or completely dismissing sexism against women as even being something that's a problem anymore...* (Trainer—Day One)

This discomfort reflects contemporary discourses shaped by post-feminist critiques that diminish, negate, or refute the continuing existing corrosive heterosexism and patriarchy [22,23]. By interrupting, changing the topic, working off topic or engaging in monologues about the natural 'fact' of gender inequality, such tactics further silenced and oppressed other less combative members of the group. Such gendered aspects also meant that gender identities came into play. For example, one male trainer felt it necessary to intervene and demonstrate his role as a political ally with the female trainer mid-session on Day Two, noting that he would be heard and taken more seriously by the resistant male members of the groups. This action created further complication as he reflected that it momentarily reproduced normative and problematic gender roles within the team

Discomforting topics create moments of challenge and complexity that question individuals' sense of self or world order, and may create negative feeling of discomfort or tension. The issue faced here is how to maintain the balance between empowerment and discomfort in a caring and compassionate way. As the launching point, for the training was to unpack (hetero)normative assumptions and values, participants felt their own investments and identities were under attack. Here, the emphasis is on the training team engaging with the ethical and pedagogical complexity at the design stage. For example, the trainer-coordinator on Day Three considered the ethical dimensions of asking participants to explore their own identities and reflected upon the arising resistance when identities were questioned:

> *I would build in more reflection time to day one and day two on very specifically the question of, how does this apply to your setting, and limit it at that and not really asking people to challenge their own identities, because I think where we did open that avenue of exploration, there was often a very violent resistance, especially from masculine identities that were being heavily critiqued within that.* (Trainer/coordinator—Day 3)

Indeed, while we draw on pedagogy of discomfort as a tool of analysis here, it also is a helpful design tool in developing future training interventions. For example, recognising the ethical and emotional aspects of discomfort enables participants and trainers alike to negotiate both moral and defensive anger as a way to understand how pedagogies of discomfort destabilise invested identities and open up new lines of rupture.

The issue emerges of how to work with such (defensive) anger. Without due care, from the educator, it can spiral into disengagement and a hollow sense of guilt and shame, neither of which are productive. There are few simple answers here. The ethical-emotional components are perhaps about educators being open about the process, the precarity to move beyond simple prescriptive solutions, binaries of guilt—so dwell with ambiguity— before calling to action and possible future selves. Here lies Zembylas' notion of critical pedagogies of compassion [9]. This has implications for the worldview and the experience of the trainer. An issue that we reflect in the next section where Michael reflects on how the work of Boler helps him understand the complexities of designing and delivering such training.

6. Reflections from the Author/Trainer

This section offers a reflection from one of the authors, Michael, who was the lead trainer on Day One. There are two related points worth noting before offering some reflections on the training. The first is that my role within the training was contained to developing and delivering the training, so I was not a member of the wider GAP project research team. The second related point is that in undertaking this reflective exercise with my co-author, who was a member of the research team, I have done so not just with the benefit of my own memories of the training experience, but also with additional insights from the research data. Insight from the research data has, therefore, enriched the reflective experience, but also highlighted aspects of personal and professional discomfort within the training experience which would have been unlikely to feature so strongly in my own initial recollections.

Although I reflect now on this training experience through a lens of 'pedagogies of discomfort', this pedagogy was not central to the planning or delivery of the training. It may seem contradictory but while I was aware that discomfort would be created during the delivery of Day One, I did not view that we were setting out to actively create discomfort. This establishes an important starting point in relation to this reflection and the use of work on pedagogies of discomfort. Boler emphasises the value of her ideas as a resource in the conscious and planned use of discomfort, which was not the case with the training experience being reflected on here. The intention within the reflection, therefore, is not to reflect on the application of Boler's concept but, rather, to, firstly, highlight some of the challenges that arise when the use of discomfort within an educational intervention is not more effectively planned and considered and, secondly, to consider retrospectively how these insights might help to structure more effective educational practice in working with discomfort around sensitive topics such as GRV.

In developing this training, we set out to achieve an approach to learning which sat somewhere between a 'training' and an 'education' approach. That is, the problematising of participants' taken for granted assumptions in relation to gender and violence seemed to be an essential component of the broader training aims and required a pedagogic approach which opened up uncertain spaces of enquiry. On the other hand, there was an expectation that participants, and perhaps more importantly the organisations they work for, would expect more tidy and certain outcomes more commonly associated with a 'typical' training experience. To come away from a training session thinking 'I am now less certain about a lot of things' is unlikely to be considered a positive outcome. On the other hand, to come away from an educational experience thinking 'it made me reconsider and question what I thought I knew' would be less likely to be considered a negative outcome.

A central challenge was the perceived need to bridge the divide between training and education—between a less certain space of critical reflection and enquiry, and the more certain space of an outcomes-oriented training session. My approach in marrying these two competing demands was to use the early part of the training day to open up or 'unpack', whilst using the later part of the day to close down or contain and re-orientate towards more certain outcomes. For example, as noted earlier, one of the key opening tasks was an introductory activity that prompted participants to reflect on binary gender by asking them

to consider what makes them a man or a woman. This always prompted lively discussions and opened up a level of critical thinking around the 'fixedness' of gender identities. By contrast, the language of risk assessment was drawn on in the afternoon session, when participants were asked to reflect on personal and organisational practice and highlight key areas of risk in relation to gender-related violence.

Openings and closings are a part of everyday life and often come with their own level of discomfort, like trying to find an opportunity (or the words) to end a conversation at a social event, or the awkwardness of repeated good-byes in ending a telephone conversation. The scale of discomfort, however, in the context of this training was heavily informed, firstly, by the level of opening up that we viewed as important in order to engage meaningfully with such a sensitive topic and, secondly, by the need (or pressure) for tidy endings or neat categorisations, which (as previously discussed) are increasingly considered an important 'product' of training interventions. This left a constrained space between openings and closings, within which there was only limited opportunity to work constructively with the discomfort created in the limited timeframe that was seen as possible within the broader institutional structures.

6.1. Working with Discomfort

One fundamental tension in the core premise of the training stemmed from the mix of mandated and voluntary participation. Where participants attend voluntarily, then those whose value bases are most likely to be challenged by the training (and arguably those you would most want to attend) are least likely to attend. However, if you require of people to attend, then reluctant participants are likely to start the training from a position of greatest discomfort and, possibly, least trust. If one accepts this line of argument, and the view that training of this sort should seek to engage with reluctant participants, then one must also accept that discomfort is not just a product of the training, it is also likely to precede the training and to bubble to the surface throughout.

A basic but important reflection from the training is that experiences of discomfort differed amongst participants, but also amongst trainers. The discomfort experienced by participants and trainers differed based on a range of factors, including characteristics such as age, gender, sexuality and ethnicity. By implication, discomfort in the training room was not evenly distributed. For example, my own observations, and trainee accounts, suggested that expressions of defensive anger in the room were felt much more personally by some than by others. This suggests the need to acknowledge that working with discomfort will be more upsetting and more challenging for some than for others.

Just as experiences of discomfort differed, so too did resulting reactions. As noted earlier, some participants, at times appeared to try to subject others to discomfort in response to their own experiences of discomfort. To put it more simply, some appeared to hit out when they found their value base being challenged. Trainer reactions to such anger or aggression also varied, particularly in relation to when and how to challenge it. As trainers, the absence of a clear strategy in relation to working with discomfort, combined with the drive to achieve the neat categorisations required of training interventions, meant discomfort was often treated as an unhelpful by-product, something to be contained, rather than actively worked with. The planned training left insufficient time to critically reflect and engage with such discomfort in a more meaningful way.

Although trainer and participant experiences point to significant challenges in working constructively with discomfort within a training intervention of this sort, Boler's [1] work provides helpful principles which might inform such work, and even points to some effective features of the training intervention. Indeed, Boler's work has proven illuminating in terms of my own understanding and reflections on the design and delivery of the training.

6.2. Spectating versus Witnessing

Boler [1] (p. 194) emphasises the importance of witnessing versus spectating. The distinction here is between viewing but not holding responsibility (spectating) as opposed making more proactive and ethical choices in relation to any abdication of responsibility (witnessing). This links back to the previous reflection on challenges relating to the 'reluctant' training participant, which highlighted the importance of the active acceptance of responsibility in achieving a more meaningful dialogue around discomfort.

If we accept that witnessing is unlikely to be achieved by requiring people to attend (or that it is, at the very least, an initial blockage to be overcome) then there are two important implications. Firstly, it suggests that training of this sort cannot be delivered effectively if attendees are mandated to attend. The second implication is that if we are not to exclude all reluctant attenders from such training, the work of moving potential trainees from the position of spectator to witness, must begin outside the training room. That is, delivering training which seeks to critically explore employees' value bases and prompt a critical examination of organisational cultures, must be done as part of a whole organisational approach. This wider organisational approach must include measures which seek to encourage employees to 'bear witness' (as opposed to spectate) and therefore to more proactively engage in spaces of discomfort, from a starting point that is not defined by anger, resentment and eroded trust. This is not to say that these experiences might not be an outcome of the training experience anyway, but that they are less likely to be the starting point for the training.

6.3. Learning to Inhabit Our Ambiguous Selves

Another point emphasised by Boler [1] is the suggestion that a pedagogy of discomfort requires of participants to learn to inhabit their ambiguous selves. This implies an application, not just to the challenging task of critically exploring many of the taken for granted beliefs and values which underpin our sense of self, but also the on-going task of holding this uncertain position open. There would have been value in enabling participants to become more skilled (or familiar, at least) with the process of inhabiting their 'ambiguous selves' prior to the training, which could have taken the form of some pre-training activities. A starting point for such activities might be an activity prompting reflection on personal values, and this could be extended to involve sharing and discussing these with co-workers.

Any such reflective exercises could prove exposing and would require participants' considered and proactive engagement, but it would also have implications for the organisations they work for. The ability of employees to commit to holding open fluid and uncertain spaces of critical enquiry suggests the need for wider organisational cultures which would not only facilitate such a process of 'bearing witness', but also be able to learn from and respond to such a process. While, the absence of an appropriate organisational context should not prevent the process of bearing witness around difficult but important issues, the challenge it presents for training participants should not be understated.

6.4. Avoiding the Binary Trap of Innocence and Guilt

Boler suggests that in engaging in a pedagogy of discomfort, it is important to avoid the 'trap' of positioning participants in the binary categories of innocence and guilt. For a judgement of innocence or guilt to exist, there must be some point of orientation, against which such a judgement might be made. Such a point of orientation, therefore, provides the ability not just to distinguish individuals on the basis of their stated position, but also to cast a view in relation to their stated position—you are against, and to be against is to be wrong and places you in a position of 'guilt'. Boler is not necessarily questioning the notion of judgement, rather she is problematising the use of judgement in a binary manner. Such binary positioning does not acknowledge the layered, complex, and sometimes contradictory nature of individual's experiences and perspectives. Rather, in a cruder way, it polarises our view of the innocent or guilty, in a manner that highlights certain attitudes,

beliefs or values, and filters out others. Such binary positioning is counterproductive to a key pursuit of a pedagogy of discomfort, that being to open up important, albeit challenging, dialogues around sensitive issues. If a person believes that much of their beliefs or values will be judged (negatively)—the prospect of them engaging meaningfully in such a dialogue is limited. Indeed—they are likely to revert to a position of defensive anger.

If we accept the principle of avoiding the binary trap of innocence and guilt, then it is possible to identify two important features of Day One training which were well aligned with this principle. Firstly, an important starting point for the critical reflection on practice within the training was the assumption that we are all guilty—or at least complicit. That is, it was assumed that there were aspects of all participants' individual or organisational practice that might be done better or differently. Thus, it was, arguably, more problematic to claim complete innocence than it was to acknowledge guilt. The second important point in relation to the treatment of innocence and guilt on Day One was the use of a continuum, or to be more accurate two continua. Such resources framed risk in relation to GRV as being informed by the intersection of cultures of gender inequality and cultures of violence (see Figure 2). The suggestion was not that these were the only factors affecting GRV, but they provided helpful lenses through which risk might be explored. Participants were, therefore, asked to locate their own practice, or that of their organisation, on two continua. One continuum related to cultures of gender inequality, while the other related to cultures of violence, and the scale ranged from 'proactively challenged' to 'actively reinforced'. The continua (and the scales used) helped to avoid the binary trap of innocence and guilt, but also reinforced the dynamic nature of challenging GRV, and the cultures that enable it.
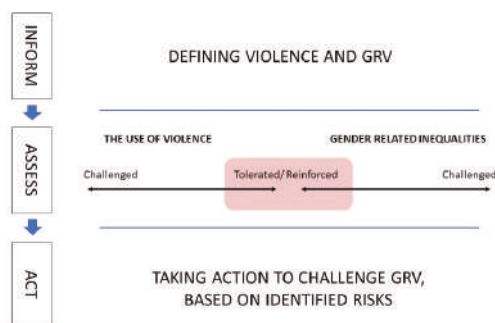
Figure 2. GRV continuum located within 'Inform to Act' model.

6.5. Understanding and Exploring Anger

The measures discussed above might help in mitigating some initial experiences of anger. However, Boler suggests an inevitability to experiences of anger. In Day One, this anger was experienced by both participants and trainers. It negatively impacted engagement in the training process and even resulted in levels of abusive behaviour. An important contributing factor in relation to the way in which anger was explored (or not), was the constrained space available to do such work, and the absence of a clearer strategy for approaching and facilitating this. However, even with time and a clear strategy, such exploration could be fraught. One example of this challenge is the uneven distribution of anger. Whilst the principle of understanding and exploring anger might seem a worthy aspiration, the implication is that certain groups or individuals are likely to encounter (or be on the receiving end of) greater levels of anger than others. Indeed, there is a real risk that pursuing a pedagogy of discomfort subjects the most vulnerable participants to the greatest level of discomfort. Whilst my reflections here have pointed to some important limitations in our approach to working with discomfort, they have also pointed to the potential value of such work in addition to highlighting some important parameters and

practical activities which might be put in place to ensure a less violent approach to working with discomfort.

7. Conclusions—Thinking through and beyond Discomfort

This paper emerges out of a training initiative funded by the EU to support youth practitioners tackle gender-related violence. The subsequent years have seen progress. Young people's activism from the #MeToo movement to campaigns against street harassment and the Everyone's Invited campaign—to highlight and campaign against sexual violence in schools—demonstrate the need to ensure gender-related violence is a pressing public and professional concern. Yet, education institutions and child and youth practitioners including teachers, whilst recognising their statutory safeguarding duties, often remain underprepared in how to recognise and take action against toxic gender violent cultures. In addition, many fear taking action, fearing institutional damage in raising the alarm.

This paper reflected on key learning and traced some of the tensions in developing responsive training in the area to support such practitioners. Challenges encountered included clashing perceptions of 'need' within neoliberal education and youth settings, which meant that perceptions around the 'ideal' content, format, and delivery of sessions on GRV were not always necessarily shared between trainers, employers and frontline practitioners. We argued that the nature of a pedagogy of discomfort requires careful planning, facilitation and reflection, and clear strategies before and after training, and the active buy-in from employers. It also points to some significant challenges in delivering such a piece of training in the context of neoliberal, target-driven practice cultures, a point which is much more evident when this reflection is located within the wider political and practice context. However, the reflection also points to some important learning that came from the approach adopted. The assumption that 'we are all guilty'—or at least, complicit —helped in managing levels of defensive anger. Additionally, the use of a continuum enabled trainers to avoid reproducing the binary trap of innocence and guilt, and offered the prospect, at least, of openings or the beginning of uncomfortable conversations.

Pedagogically and ethically, Zembylas's cultures of critical compassion [9] provide a helpful bridging point between discomfort and care to think anew about how to reintroduce value-based interventions that bridge the emotional and ethical into professional training on sensitive themes. Careful and informed facilitation skills are key here for those leading such sessions. For example, further 'training the trainers' in such a nuanced and responsive approach for the education and youth sector is an important next step. Yet, ten years post-austerity, post-COVID-19 and in the UK at least, post-Brexit, the financial and professional energy to engage with such a process may be lacking.

Such an approach goes beyond mandatory safeguarding training to thinking about how embedded historical, cultural and gendered values facilitate norms that silence and enable oppression. This is partly about developing responsive relationship and sex education curricula, and beyond this, it is about developing critical, compassionate and responsive organisational cultures and supporting interprofessional dialogue about gendered norms and violence in all its forms. It is clear therefore that meaningful training on GRV for teachers, youth workers and other practitioners remains neglected in initial training. The need for ethically engaged and responsive professional development remains. We would argue that work on pedagogy of discomfort can provide useful tools in developing and engaging such work. We welcome further discomforting and critically-driven dialogue in these complex pedagogic and practice arenas.

Author Contributions: Both authors contributed equally in the production and analysis contained within this article. Both authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

University London (for the UK action) to develop training. Full details can be found at: https://bura.brunel.ac.uk/bitstream/2438/10299/1/FullText.pdf, accessed on 10 July 2021.

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Article

Educating Informal Educators on Issues of Race and Inequality: Raising Critical Consciousness, Identifying Challenges, and Implementing Change in a Youth and Community Work Programme

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Abstract: The debate regarding institutional racism and White privilege within higher education (HE) remains prevalent, and higher education institutions (HEIs) are not exempt from the racial equality debate. Youth and Community Work is underpinned by anti-oppressive practice, highlighting a need to educate informal educators on the structural underpinnings of Race and inequality, so that they can be challenged in practice to bring about social change. For Youth and Community Workers, this is primarily done through informal education and critical pedagogy. The research aimed to unearth race inequality within the Youth and Community Work programme at Wrexham Glyndŵr University (WGU). Critical reflection methodology was used to deconstruct departmental processes of recruitment, learning and assessment, student voice, and support. Research data was analysed using thematic analysis, determining three themes: critical consciousness, challenge, and change. These are discussed within the framework of Critical Race Theory and critical pedagogy. The research concludes that oppression, and therefore inequality, occurs in the Youth and Community Work programme. Further reading of issues reported in HEIs across the United Kingdom shows that more analysis and deconstruction is needed through CRT. Educating informal educators on issues of race and inequality to raise critical consciousness is one way this can be achieved.

Keywords: critical consciousness; critical reflection; inequality; racism; oppression; informal education; Youth and Community Work; social justice; transformative education; higher education; critical pedagogy; Critical Race Theory

1. Introduction

1.1. Clarifying Concepts: Racism and White Privilege

When considering the concept of racism, it is useful to explore descriptions of the phenomenon to attempt to understand some of its connotations. There are varying definitions for racism. It encompasses a complex system that affects people in multiple ways. Bhui [1] (p. 130) states that:

"Racism can be understood as an inability to accept and acknowledge differences of race. It might involve the treatment of some people of colour as inferior because they belong to a particular race, and it is usually used to demonstrate disapproval. Where racism is present there is an attempt to control and dominate the object that is felt to be different and separate".

Khan and Shaheen [2] (p. 5) argue that racism is "perpetrated and experienced as a denial of human dignity," and that "for the racist some groups of people simply aren't fully human, and so aren't owed equal moral obligations; nor can they be part of 'our' community" [2]. However, racism not only happens on a personal level but also at a structural level within institutions. Sian [3] discusses definitions of institutional racism,

arguing that institutional racism is impacted by structural and systemic practices that directly influence the opportunities available to non-White people. Furthermore, it is stated that institutional racism links closely to White privilege as it comprises covert racist values, beliefs, and practices. These impact on, and steer, systemic and institutional standards, behaviours, and expectations, by upholding the status quo from one particular view; the patriarchal hegemonic hierarchy [3]. According to Hesse [4], institutional racism can include, but is not limited to, subtle forms of racism that are "hidden, disguised, unacknowledged [and] denied but which [are] consistent in its impact of strategic effect" [4] (p. 144), therefore influencing institutional and structural environments and expectations in everyday interactions.

White privilege is a structural arrangement that affords undue advantages to "the expressions of Whiteness through the maintenance of power, resources, accolades, and systems of support through formal and informal structures and procedures" [5] (p. 19). For White people this means the colour of their skin will not impact on the trajectory of their life, or be something they are conscious of, and therefore they are not aware of racism experienced by others [6]. Paying attention to White culture and privilege is a missing link in racial equality [7]. Acknowledging White privilege should lead to accountability, as it allows for the recognition of unconscious oppression and discrimination towards non-White people, but also to the challenge of structural oppression that causes racism in the first place [8]. The failure to explore bias and challenge these results in further defensive actions and discrimination [9].

1.2. Recognising Institutional Racism and White Privilege

Identifying and challenging the nuances associated with institutional racism and White privilege is difficult, in that they take place in contrast to the "typical" or public understanding of racism [10]. These are hard to identify and so harder to call out, challenge, or dismantle [11]. Such acts of racism may include micro-aggressions; covert acts that can occur as unintentional and/or intentional systems, behaviours, or actions. This can lead non-White people to feel isolated, unsupported, dismissed, and lacking in belief of themselves [12]. The Macpherson Report [13] was seen as a turning point in formally recognising institutional racism, although Sian [3] argues that the definition provided by Macpherson [13] negates that racism is caused by systems or structures of oppression, and is a conflict between individuals of differing ethnic groups [13].

In 2021, the UK Government commissioned a report investigated by the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities [14]. The report stated that institutional racism no longer exists within the UK and that family structures and social class had a larger impact than race on how people's lives turned out [14,15]. The report was highly criticised by academics, researchers, and race equality charities from across Britain [14,16]. It was argued that more than twenty years on from the MacPherson Report [13], the problem of institutional racism still abounds. This was demonstrated by the resurgence of the Black Lives Matters Movement in 2020 triggered by the murder of George Floyd. The anger and uprising caused by Floyd's death spread across the globe to Britain and prompted the current call for anti-racist movements and the decolonisation of British structures [17].

1.3. Acknowledging Inequalities within Higher Education Institutes

It is argued that HEIs are one of the structures that require further scrutiny [18]. Although race inequality seems to be at the forefront of the current agenda, the focus had shifted to other protected characteristics and to social and economic forms of oppression in HE [19]. However, research has shown that racism and racial harassment occur within HEIs, that there is a lack of diverse staff, including senior leadership teams, as well as ethnicity pay gaps and Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority student awarding gaps [20,21]. Arday & Mirza [22] (p. V) assert that "there is little recognition of the role played by universities in (re)producing racial injustice," and therefore race needs to be deemed as a legitimate object of scrutiny in both policy and scholarship [22]. To do this, there is a

need to accept and confront institutional racism and White privilege within universities [5]. Without critical reflection, this could mean that equality of opportunity for Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority groups may be taken for granted, despite statistics showing that only 26% of UK students identified as belonging to these groups in 2019/20 [23], with less than 10% of Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minorities employed as professors within UK HEIs [24].

The Equality and Human Rights Commission [20] report Tackling Racial Harassment: Universities Challenged prompted a response by Universities UK [21] stating that it is crucial for leaders within HEIs to recognise issues pertaining to racial inequalities within their universities. It is argued that institutional racism can be perpetuated within HEIs in the United Kingdom [21]. In a guide entitled Strengthening Race Equality, Cousins et al. [12] argued that racial inequality cannot be tolerated in any form within the HE sector, stating that "ownership, accountability and responsibility" should fall on the institutions and not solely on individuals [12] (p. 3). It should be recognised that the acts of challenging, dismantling, and deconstructing institutional racism should be a collective and deliberate effort; inclusive of student and staff input from all levels of the HEI. Using a whole university approach should enable authentic opportunities for "transformative action" [12]. A number of recommendations have been made at both a school- and HE-level to challenge racism at a structural level. These include increasing the diversity of teaching personnel, increased racial literacy amongst staff, changes to teaching and assessment, and a curriculum that includes the teaching of colonial history [24,25].

1.4. Informal Education as Transformative Action: Raising Critical Consciousness

In 2010, Youth and Community Work became a degree entry profession in the UK, and therefore requires completion of an honours degree or postgraduate diploma from an HEI [26]. Foremost, transformative action is a core principle of Youth and Community Work, which is regarded as a countervailing force against the reproduction of social inequalities that formal education magnifies [27]. As a people-centred profession working with young people aged 11–25, Youth and Community Work has a "commitment to diversity, anti-oppressive practice and the provision of relational spaces in which individuals and groups can think critically about their lives and worlds, in order that they might act to shape them differently" [28] (p. xvii). Youth and Community Work is underpinned by the principle of anti-oppressive practice. This involves the recognition that society is fundamentally unjust, that structural and institutionalised oppression creates inequality, and therefore there is a need to work towards the equitable distribution of opportunity, privilege, and wealth across society [29,30]. Developing an understanding of the processes by which oppression occurs and maintained is key to anti-oppressive practice, and only by taking a critical stance can these "distortions" be uncovered [31,32].

To bring about transformational action, Youth and Community Work is best described as a process of informal education; valuing the voluntary relationship between Youth and Community Worker and young people, promoting association and experiential learning [33], but also, importantly, raising critical consciousness [34] to empower and promote participation in democratic processes to bring about social change. For Freire [35] (p. 33) this involves developing our own "critical capacity, curiosity and rigour" as well as that of the young people or students involved in the process of education. The work is collective, participatory, and inclusive, and involves people in an active educational process to bring about social justice and critical awareness for transformation and change [33]. This is translated into Youth and Community Work practice as conversation, empowerment, participation, critical thinking, and reflection [36], grounded in experiential learning [37]. As anti-oppressive practitioners, critically reflective practice and reflexivity is essential for self-awareness [29]. The role of the informal education practitioner is "to engage in dialogue with people and community members to enable critical consciousness to challenge oppression" [29] (p. 60).

1.5. Critical Pedagogy and Critical Reflection as Tools for Change

Critical pedagogy is an informal education tool that sets out to facilitate and encourage critical analysis of the world using dialogue [38]. It serves to transform oppressive relations of power, humanising and empowering people through teaching and learning [39]. Fundamental to critical pedagogy are Freire's [34] ideas of conscientisation, raising the critical consciousness of others through questioning their experiences, and praxis, the element of creating change or action. The change in epistemology that results from critical consciousness is a process that creates agency and informs action [40]. The process is inherently political as people connect their experiences with the social and political structures that aid their discrimination to create liberation and social change [41]. Watts et al. [42] argue that there are three key elements to critical consciousness: critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action. Critical reflection analyses the structural causes of social issues; political efficacy refers to an awareness of the capacity to effect socio-political change; whilst critical action involves actions taken to change society that usually sit outside of mainstream political frameworks [43].

1.6. Raising Critical Consciousness: A Critical Lens

Critical pedagogy is underpinned by critical theory [44]. Critical theory assumes that power is transmitted and maintained tacitly by dominant ideologies in society for domination [45] and that any critique of society should lead to action [46]. Foucault's [47] concept of power and Gramsci's [48] theory of hegemony, are tenets of critical theory. For Foucault, power and knowledge are interrelated so that everyone has, and can, execute power [49]. Domination is not a natural way of life but the result of hegemonic processes that need to be explored through critical reflection. By hegemony, Gramsci [48] proposed a process by which a small social class can maintain control over the majority in society, a process that can be overturned by organic and traditional intellectuals establishing a counter-hegemony [50].

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is one such critical theory. Within this research "Race" is acknowledged as a social construct, born in response to the treatment of Black people within the American legal system [51]. It is argued that racial categorisation and factors associated with race are constructed by society [52]. Delgado and Stefancic [51] state that:

" ... race and races are products of social thought and relations. Not objective, inherent or fixed, they correspond to no biological or genetic reality: rather, races are categories that society invents, manipulates or retires when convenient ... " (p. 9).

Delgado and Stefancic [51] discuss ways in which racialised minority groups are judged, treated, and discriminated against, based on a notion that has been derived by members who dominate the discourse and benefit from it. It is argued that the impact of racial categorisation directly affects the systems and opportunities available to these groups [53].

"Differential racialisation" highlights the way that the hegemonic [48] or dominant group racialises marginalised people in different ways, and at various times, to suit shifting societal needs [54] (p. 244), suggesting that social constructions of race can be changed over time to uphold the status quo. People have been defined by categorisations based on difference including skin colour. This has resulted in the creation of power, reiterating that the labels provided were created to uphold and maintain power by the "dominant" or "superior" group, thus ascribing privilege to White people over non-White people [55–59].

1.7. Educating for Change: Youth Workers as Informal Educators in HEI Settings

As Russo [60,61] argues, to challenge this " ... Teachers for social justice need to explicitly acknowledge that injustice exists in society and that, for various reasons, some people are more privileged than others" and so, it is not just Youth and Community Work practitioners, but also Youth and Community Work educators within HEIs that are required to demonstrate the principles of social justice, democracy, and equity through informal education and a commitment to anti-oppressive practices. True transformational

action can happen when work is completed from the bottom up to challenge top-down approaches [40].

1.8. Creating Learning Environments: Acknowledgment, Reflection, and Action

Cousins et al. [12] argue that there is a growing call for HEIs to not only gather and generate data, but also transparently highlight racial inequalities to allow for opportunities to tackle them. It is further stated that HEIs should encourage the development of safe learning environments that challenge working relationships and systems [12]. The purpose of CRT is to critically reflect on the taken-for-granted when analysing race, privilege, and patterns of exclusion [62], and this is required in the context of HEIs, to support them towards becoming more diverse and inclusive [18]. For Zinga and Styres [63], classrooms should be safe spaces to reflect on issues of race, oppression, and positionality, but this requires careful facilitation by educators.

1.9. Research Aims and Rationale

To ensure the Youth and Community Work programme at WGU can work to educate informal educators on issues of race and inequality; this research aims to unearth and address oppression in relation to these issues. "To encourage change we need to let go of the belief that we are inhabiting a level playing field" [12] (p. 19), therefore Youth and Community Work educators have a role in this process that begins with becoming critically conscious of structural racism and the impact of White privilege within their own departments, programmes, and educational practice. This will ensure that Youth and Community Work practitioners are aware of racial inequality and discrimination to effectively challenge practice and the structures in which they operate. According to the Welsh Government [64] only 2.2% of the Wrexham population is recorded as Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minorities, which suggests a greater need, and challenge, for the institution. Figures for WGU show that the proportion of students in these groups rose between 2017 and 2019/20 [23], though the percentage remains low (9%) in comparison to 23.6% of students from across UK HEIs who identify as Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority [65]. In addition, only 8% of WGU staff sit within this protected group [65], equating to 37 non-White staff compared to 502 White staff employed.

1.9.1. Demographics of the Researchers

The staff team on the Youth and Community Work programme has traditionally been comprised of White, privileged academics working in the White patriarchal system of HE. This presented a conundrum, questioning how to create the space for critical pedagogy and raise critical consciousness in academic roles and the wider profession. Improving the programme team's awareness of racism and oppression provides the opportunity to develop confidence and competence around understanding some of the structural issues affecting those who are categorised as Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority groups [20].

In 2020, the programme team expanded to include a team member whose research is focused on auto-ethnographic and collective narratives of "Mixed-Race" people. The team member's own experiences of racism and oppression provide a unique perspective to discussions around the social constructions of race, offering an opportunity to open dialogical conversation beyond the traditional White middle class and patriarchal perspective [55,56,66]. This offered the opportunity for an alternative first-hand perspective of a working-class Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority experience, in contrast to the White middle class experience the Youth and Community Work programme team had been immersed in. The aim being to make these experiences available to "outsiders" raising critical consciousness and creating social change [67] by unearthing and addressing racial oppression and inequality in the department by developing awareness and understanding [68] so that the programme team may work towards educating informal educators around these issues.

1.9.2. Research Objectives

Based on the discussion above, the research objectives were to:

- Critically reflect on key processes in the Youth and Community Work programme at WGU to identify areas of racial oppression and discrimination
- Critically reflect on the programme team's and students' White privilege and its impact on oppression and discrimination in educational practice and processes
- Identify recommendations to improve the educational practice and processes of the Youth and Community Work programme, and the university, to challenge race based oppression and discrimination.

2. Methodology and Method

2.1. Methodology

To address the research aim and objectives, critical reflection was adopted as a qualitative explorative tool to understand the research issue [69] and as a research methodology for the investigation [70]. Reflection is widely considered as a pedagogical tool to foster learning, critical thinking, and learning from experience [71]. As such, the process is considered integral to professional practice, particularly for welfare practitioners [29]. As researchers, the participants are also professionally qualified Youth and Community Workers, hence the importance of reflective practice is three-fold in terms of work with young people [72] as informal educators [73] and as adult educators [74,75].

Literature highlights the importance of reflective practice in qualitative research [44], or more specifically, the role of reflexivity in asserting validity and rigour in qualitative research [76]. There is a general acceptance that reflexivity in research accounts for the researcher's self-reflection and analysis of their positionality, how this impacts on the research, and recognising how the research experience might also impact on the researcher [77,78]. The research focused on the analysis of interpretations and perceptions of the participants, meaning that the knowledge created could not be objective, "indeed there is no knowledge apart from the researchers' tools, methods, and languages wherewith the research process is accomplished" [44].

Tilsen [79] asserts that the social and relational activity or practice of Youth and Community Work means that it is sympathetic to aspects of constructivism. In terms of questions of ontology, a relativist perspective is taken, and it is understood that there are multiple views of reality that are historically and culturally contingent [79]. These are embedded in either a dominant or marginalized form in linguistic systems. Through dialogue, these dominant or marginalized "versions of reality" may be reinforced or reconstructed [80]. Gormally and Coburn [81] therefore argue that, in Youth and Community Work, knowledge is created through social interaction; people act together to create a social reality; and so, individuals seek to make sense of the world through social interaction. This links Guba & Lincoln's [82] paradigm of constructivism and to a transactional and subjectivist epistemology that this research embraces [83], challenging positivist ideas of objective knowledge creation [78].

Even though sympathies with constructivism are declared, this research is also informed by Guba & Lincoln's [82] critical theory paradigm. Whilst critical reflection is founded in critical pedagogy, critical pedagogy is underpinned by critical theory [44]. Critical theory is a tool for exploration and navigation through multifaceted situations when challenging the status quo [84]. Theory and theoretical understanding are always subjective; shaped by our own experiences and the 'lens' through which we see the world [85]. Critical reflection in the critical theory paradigm provides a broader framework for researchers to undertake critical reflection, allowing them to make connections between individual experiences of power and the experiences of others. From a Foucauldian perspective, this is a courageous act as researchers dissect and reject established power structures [49], and simultaneously unearth where they are implicit in these power structures. Brookfield [74] emphasises the importance of critical theory in adult education to create a democratic society and overcome the tacit socio-political assumptions that permeate society. Draw-

ing on the critical theory paradigm the approach adopted in this research is cognisant of Mertens' [86] assertion that four key characteristics ought to inform research in Youth and Community Work. These are: that research places vital importance on the lives and experiences of marginalized groups, that research analyses how and why inequality exists and is reflected in power relationships, that research examines the results of social enquiry on equality and is linked to social and political action, and lastly, that research uses transformative theories to develop approaches and a theoretical framework [86].

As the epistemology of this research is underpinned by the philosophy that knowledge is socially constructed, it favours the multiple truths, methods, and paradigms of postmodern thinking [87]. Whilst a rejection of any objective truth may be unhelpful [88], the reflexive interrogative nature of the research lends value to this approach as the researchers become more aware of their practices and processes [44]. Although reflexivity has been critiqued by academics as self-indulgent [89,90], or even narcissistic [44], critical reflection within the postmodern paradigm establishes the space to develop new theory and thinking [91] with the view to facilitate social change [90].

2.2. Method

The research adopted critical reflection as a qualitative method and methodology to meet the aims and objectives of the investigation. The model of critical reflection adapted for the research is from Fook and Gardner [70] who see the process as:

"the unsettling and examination of fundamental (socially dominant and often hidden) individually held assumptions about the social world in order to enable a reworking of these, and associated actions, for changed professional practice" [70] (p. 21).

The model has mostly been developed as a pedagogical tool (e.g., [92–94]), but it has also been shown to have the capacity to bring about meaningful change [95,96]. There are four elements to the model that align with the methodological assumptions underpinning the research, which are: process, theoretical framework, purpose, and setting [92].

In terms of "process" four digital critical reflection sessions of two hours were held to ensure that an equal amount of time and analysis was allocated to each of the four areas of investigation. These were: recruitment and admissions, teaching, learning and assessment, and student support and student voice. The four areas for investigation were chosen because they are processes that influence the structure of the programme from the very start of a student's journey and are directly influenced by the power inherent in the academic roles held by the programme team. The participants in these sessions were the three members of the research team, all of whom identify as women, two of which are White middle-class women. The third woman in the team is Mixed Race and identifies as a Brown person.

Critical reflective tools and dialogue were used to re-count and dissect the current working practices within the Youth and Community Department at WGU. It was assisted by a set of questions adapted from Fook and Gardner [70] (p. 170) (Appendix A). These framed the critical reflection in the philosophical foundations of the research methodology and the "theoretical framework" that influences this model of critical reflection [97], namely reflective practice, reflexivity, post-modernism, and critical theory. The questioning process enabled connections to be made between the researchers and their wider socio-political and cultural contexts to enact social change as the "purpose" of the research, and to develop as anti-oppressive practitioners. These were consequently adapted to meet the demands of the research and "setting," which was a Youth and Community Work programme within a HEI in the United Kingdom.

A qualitative approach was employed to collect data where critical reflections were recorded to allow the team to unpick the rich, verbally generated data. Within the qualitative methodology, thematic analysis [98,99] was chosen for its flexible yet grounded approach. Data was analysed through a thematic analysis [100] of conversations generated through critical reflection methodology [70]. Recordings of the four critical reflection sessions were transcribed, and the data underwent Braun & Clarke's [100] six phases

of thematic analysis, which included becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining, and naming themes, and then producing them in the section below. This process of data analysis was chosen to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the qualitative data generated [99]. It is noted that a hybrid approach to coding and theme development was taken that involved a balance of deductive coding, derived from the experience of the researchers and existing knowledge of the topic, and inductive coding, where themes emerged from the participants' discussions, hence demonstrating further rigour in the research process [101].

2.3. Delimitations

Hickson [68] asserts that there are different ways to define critical reflection. These include an interrogation of values and assumptions, an analysis of process and results, and the inclusion of multiple perspectives. Critical reflection relies on multiple perspectives [102,103]. Brookfield [74] stipulates that critical reflection in education should include the four perspectives of the student, the educator, the educator's peers, and a theoretical framework. This research contains a small range of voices; it is limited to the practices and processes of the Youth and Community Work department of the researchers' institution and does not include the voice of students. Furthermore, the "peer lens" [74] is restricted to the full-time teaching team, which could be seen to limit the breadth and depth of analysis. However, the directed, in-depth focused choice of participants creates the space for reflexivity and reaffirms the validity and rigour of the data collection [104].

Fook [105] identifies the critical reflection model used in this research as a two-stage process. The first stage entails analysis and exposure if any hidden socio-political and cultural assumptions are held by the participants. This reflects the four two-hour facilitated critical reflection sessions that the researchers participated in. For Fook [105], the second stage involves dialogue and discussion of the exposed assumptions to direct action. This has partly taken place as the researchers write up the research; however, the time and workload constraints restricted the capacity for further processing, reflection, and discussion.

It is acknowledged that emotional labour may become apparent when reflecting on experiences relating to racism and oppression. Sian [3] argues that, for Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority staff and students, the psychological strain of being the minority [24] or the "other" [66,106] in HE cannot be underestimated. Where difference is recognised within these groups, Mirza [107] (p. 106) argues that the "emotional and psychological costs to the bearer of that difference" must be acknowledged.

Finally, it is acknowledged that the commitment to praxis as ethical professional informal educators has the potential to conflict with structural practices and processes within the HEI where the researchers are employed. As stated by Jeffs and Smith [33], "informal education and linked methodologies may not engender the smooth operation of bureaucracies and units" (p. 127). This potential for professional dilemmas in unearthing assumptions of power and racism in policies that may implicate the institution could impact on the authenticity of self-reflection and, therefore, the findings of the investigation.

3. Results

The research data generated from critical reflection was transcribed and underwent Braun & Clarke's [99] six phases of thematic analysis, which included becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and then producing them for discussion. The generated themes that came from this process were raising critical consciousness, challenge, and change.

3.1. Theme 1—Raising Critical Consciousness on Issues of Race and Inequality

Throughout the research process the team were very aware of the values and principles of Youth and Community Work and their professional identity as practitioners. Discussions focused on how these shaped approaches to recruitment, learning and assessment, support, and student voice specifically in terms of race. One participant stated for example:

"As Youth and Community Workers our practice, and this programme, should be anti-oppressive due to the principles of empowerment, participation, inclusion and social justice. But I think through our reflections we are going to conclude we could do more in terms of addressing racism and privilege".

The research data highlighted the theme of critical consciousness and awareness in terms of the researchers' perceptions of their own practice and a focus on this for students. Specifically, this increased critical consciousness raised several binaries in terms of professional identity as a Youth and Community Worker versus identity as an academic, education as a process versus education as a product, and social justice versus capitalism.

The process of critical reflection on race, oppression, and White privilege led to an acknowledgement that

"We know we aren't perfect, but we are opening ourselves up to be vulnerable to bring about change".

"Ignorance is bliss, but it's the Youth and Community Work course that brings an awareness about what this all about".

An area of increased critical consciousness was around power and White privilege for the academic staff team. Critical reflection focused on professional identity and conflict between the Youth and Community Worker and the academic. Specifically, as Youth and Community Workers, the focus is on anti-oppressive practice and redressing the balance of power through informal education. However, in formal education, power is afforded to academics, which impacts on decisions to admit students to the programme, the curriculum content, marking assignments, and whether to give voice or not in the class room. Individual critical reflection on power and privilege within the team was therefore essential to ensure that it was not discriminatory towards students, especially those who are Black and from other Ethnic Minority groups. One of the participants said:

"There is power inherent in our roles, we have both the capacity to bring about change, but also, the capacity to reinforce the status quo. At the moment the processes and approaches are not working because whilst our programme is more diverse than others at the university, it is not inclusive for people from Black and Ethnic Minority groups".

However, even within the programme team, an unequal distribution of opportunity and privilege was identified for the Brown participant.

"There is an expectation that universities are places of privilege and are generally not for people like me. This is due to class, but also due to race. I don't feel I fit the stereotype of a White professional or 'academic.' If I feel like that, how do the students feel? How do student's see me?"

Despite the best intentions of the programme team, there was a critical awareness that:

"We are getting unstuck and doing a disservice to Black people. Everyone comes under the one category of widening participation, but different approaches are needed for different groups of people. At the moment there is not equal access".

Therefore, to redress any oppression and discrimination, further discussion was needed to analyse any changes that had and could be made to the programme, and the challenges of upholding a commitment to inclusion and equality.

A further theme brought about from increased critical consciousness was challenges for educational practice at personal, institutional, and structural levels to address issues of oppression, specifically in terms of race. The data revealed an ethical commitment to explore the challenges presented by the increased critical consciousness brought about by the research process:

"Now we are aware there are issues we have a duty to critically reflect on these further. By not identifying what the challenges are, and not actioning them, it's actually worse than being ignorant to them. This is something we also need to consider when we raise the critical consciousness of our students around issues for race, for both the White students but also Black students who are living this on a daily basis".

"We have an ethical duty to act and support, especially now our own critical consciousness has been raised".

3.2. Theme 2—Challenges Faced When Deconstructing Institutional Racism

A number of challenges or barriers were identified for Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority students in relating to HE processes. Recruitment to the programme was one of the challenges, and whilst the Youth and Community Work programme is more diverse than other programmes at the university, it was acknowledged that there was underrepresentation of Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority students on the course. The data provided some discussion as to why this was the case, especially in relation to the formal university recruitment process, the UCAS application process, interviews, and the personal statement for application.

"Some Black students may not have had positive experiences of formal education before they get to us. We then expect them to conform to set processes to apply to further formal education. This is going to be a barrier in itself".

The team identified where they had already worked to address this, through more flexibility around entry requirements to the programme, encouraging direct applications, and focusing on informal conversations and workshops as opposed to interviews:

"We take our own initiative and approach to recruitment. We are Youth Workers and so we can be a bit maverick, but whatever changes we make at programme level, we are still constrained by university processes".

"There is an issue here, where we are trying to stick to our Youth Work values and principles, but battling with the view that recruitment processes need to be a certain way in order for the department and the university to be seen as 'professional.'"

It was argued that the lack of diversity on the programme means more responsibility to raise the critical consciousness of White students on their White privilege, as well as supporting students from Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority groups, which presents a challenge for learning and teaching.

"Due to the demographic of our course we need to flip the script. Our White students need to understand oppression and discrimination, but they also need to acknowledge their White privilege, because they are represented in the majority on this course. They will also be working with young people and communities from diverse backgrounds".

One issue identified was the lack of diversity experienced by White students, battling with colour-blindness or the belief that they do not see race and therefore do not hold racist views. Furthermore, because of personal experiences of oppression from factors such as gender, disability, or class, students cannot recognise their privilege. The challenge is to create learning opportunities in the curriculum to address this, without further alienating Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority students in the classroom. The data showed critical pedagogy can create space in the classroom for these discussions and for challenging conversations, though this needs to be done carefully and sensitively.

"It's our role to challenge the experiences of privilege and to have those challenging conversations".

"We need to create the opportunities for courageous and challenging discussions with students, using our critical pedagogic approach. This can be about not only creating experiences from which to learn, but also sharing and reflecting on experiences of others. It's our skill as educators to facilitate this".

"This is one of the things that sets us apart from formal education".

Examples were discussed relating to planned group activities, resources, and discussions, however:

"For some of the White students this can make them feel really uncomfortable. If facilitated correctly this can be a good learning opportunity, but for others it is too much. We have had some White students question their values and beliefs and ultimately leave the course".

The research evidenced that learning about race, oppression, and White privilege with colleagues and students has been beneficial for the White participants:

"I've learnt more about my own White privilege. It's impacted on me personally and my view of the world, but also my pedagogy and ability to challenge. I feel more confident calling out comments, attitudes or behaviour that are essentially racist".

However, this raised issues of authenticity relating to examples and experiences of racism shared in the classroom. For the White participants, this was particularly an issue when discussing racist incidents or experiences of others. For the Mixed-Race participant the issues are around sharing individual experiences and professional boundaries, the emotional labour of reliving these with others, and being challenged about the legitimacy of Critical Race Theory and the concept of White privilege. For the Black students in the class, the team were mindful how learning about race may impact on their relationships with other students, could raise critical awareness about their own lived experiences of racism, and how they should avoid placing any emotional burden on them. Furthermore, when reflecting on covert and overt racist incidents, alongside conducting reading activities to support the group reflections, an awareness was triggered that highlighted incidents in which the Mixed-Race team member recognised that they may have been discriminated against, without realising it at the time.

"It depends how I'm feeling on the day. Sometimes I'm so emotionally exhausted by the challenge, and the relieving of experiences I don't even go there. I know I should because I have the power in the classroom to make it a learning experience. I'm looking round the class for someone else that gets it and I don't want to overly rely on the only other Black or Brown person in the room. It's not their responsibility. It's everyone's responsibility".

A sense of belonging for Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority staff and students was highlighted as a further issue relating to the lack of diversity on the programme, and the university:

"On paper the values of the organisation mirror my personal values and beliefs in terms of widening participation and inclusion. But the reality is there is no diversity. It is noticeable when I walk through the door I'm not represented here. If I feel like that, how do students feel"?

"There's little representation in the student's union either, or in other university departments. If I need support, where do I go? Where do students go? It's important that those channels are there and to be heard by someone who understands issues of race and racism".

There was also an awareness that any discrimination relating to race was at a structural level, with one participant stating:

"It's bigger than us, and it's really hard to see".

"It goes way beyond the class room. The class room is the safe space to discuss and challenge issues of race, but it needs to go to the structural".

One participant commented that the reflective method of data collection had led to an awareness of her "institutionalisation," more specifically how:

"There's a need to navigate through oppressive systems in the institution. This process of critical reflection has helped me to see this".

Here, the data showed discussion particularly focused on assessment practices, student support, and student voice. Traditional forms of student assessment were seen as oppressive because academic staff have the power to design them, set deadlines, and pass and fail students, all within a system of university processes, regulations, and timetables. The process of requesting extensions was found to be disempowering, because students' must explain and evidence their requests. The data showed how this made the participants feel uncomfortable, and further discussion led to the conclusion that, for Black, Asian and, Ethnic Minority students, there was a danger that:

"We think we are empowering people to achieve, but actually are we empowering Black students to feel good about achieving in a colonial system and succeeding in it"?

At the same time, formal opportunities for hearing the student voice are determined by the university to include scheduled Student Voice Forums and structured module feedback forms at certain points in the year.

"The opportunity for student participation in democratic processes is determined by the organisation. Its encouraged but on their terms, in their format and in their timetable. If students don't fit the structure or don't have experience of formal meetings are they going to want to participate? That may be an issue for some Black students who already have experience of being excluded from participatory and democratic structures, so they don't bother".

3.3. Theme 3—Change: Informal Education as a Tool for Redressing Inequalities in Higher Education

The research data evidences a focus on transformation and change and a hope that through Youth and Community Work's distinct approach to education, some of the challenges outlined in the themes above could be redressed.

"It's also not just about how we practice as informal educators, it's about who we are as individuals. It's our belief that education should bring about some form of personal change or transformation. If we can transform someone's belief about race so that it's not oppressive or discriminatory then that has to be a good thing".

"From an informal education perspective, we want to create change, and we believe that we can. It's about working around the barriers to take more holistic and anti-oppressive approach that focuses on social justice and tackles discrimination again Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority people".

Examples were given of changes that have already been made to challenge oppression and discrimination based on race. These included a redesigned curriculum that ensures a focus on anti-oppressive practice from level 3 to level 7; the addition of an International Youth Work module that focuses on cultural identity and cultural competency; a commitment to decolonising reading lists, the recruitment of a more diverse staff team, and a range of assessment methods to meet the needs and educational experiences of students. These changes could be implemented by other programmes. Additionally, a university-wide project has been developed by the team to engage in conversations to address cultural oppression and encourage discussion about race amongst all departments and levels within the HEI.

"I think we have come a long way in the last five years, but there is more that could be done. It's about acknowledging the achievements made in the department, and embracing the fact that others in the institution may see us as radical, but we see that as a good thing"!

Some areas for future development identified by the data include, firstly, a diverse teaching team of two team members when learning activities and sessions focus on race and privilege, to balance the emotional load and address issues of authenticity. Secondly, consideration of more flexible assignment deadlines determined by students. Thirdly, increased support for Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority students who need to navigate increased critical consciousness about racial oppression and the discrimination they face as result of their learning. Finally, the possibility of an outreach education project in the community with Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority groups. Again, these recommendations are not limited to the Youth and Community Work programme but could be extended across the university.

"If we want to make a real change we need to be out in the communities. We need to be working with diverse groups of people; building relationships, supporting people to feel empowered and ready to participate in education. Often, they need support to overcome the external chaos of their lives and barriers caused by the bigger picture. Until this happens, they are not going to be in a place to come to university and focus on formal education".

"We are good at making those personal connections, this is what we do as Youth Workers, but it's having the time and the space to do this, and I suppose recognition that this our role as academics too. Education isn't about capitalism, it's about social justice".

4. Discussion

By engaging in critical reflection, this research committed to an analysis of the structural causes of racism and a questioning of self through interrogation of ways of doing and thinking [108] in relation to interpretations of White privilege and departmental processes. The critical element of this process and its potential for liberation [75,109] enabled the researchers to adopt "their position as a creature of praxis" [110] to address unintended oppression and dehumanisation [34]. By engaging in authentic dialogue as equals in the learning relationship, and listening to others to make sense of them, the educator needs to let go of their own preconceptions. It is a "humanising speech, one that challenges and resists domination" [111] (p. 131).

4.1. Theme 1—Raising Critical Consciousness on Issues of Race and Inequality

The theme of critical consciousness was evident throughout the data, both in raising the researchers' own critical consciousness in terms of race, oppression, discrimination, and White privilege, and that of the students on the programme. The reflexive process enabled critical analysis of positionality in the research, assuring validity and rigour [76] and self-awareness [44]. Grounded in experiential learning theory [37], the reflective process evidenced the first stage of critical consciousness [42] by being critically reflective. This created the space for theory and thinking [94] and praxis in relation to race and privilege so that the need to create change or action became evident [34]. However, this presented conflict between ethical professional practice and structural processes, evidencing the tensions between informal education methodologies and formal institutes [73].

This meant that the research evidences the second stage of critical consciousness, political efficacy [42], or the awareness of the capacity to effect socio-political change [42] in relation to challenging racism within the department, across the university, and in the community. The challenge of enacting structural change was exposed in the findings as paired binaries. These occurred between the seemingly opposite concepts of Youth and Community Worker and academic identities, education as a process or product, and social justice versus capitalism. However, the postmodern thinking underlying critical reflection allows for such conflicts and contradiction, offering a way to deconstruct hegemonic ideas and potentially create new theories for change [105]. In particular, the researchers' roles as professional Youth and Community Workers and academics both hold elements of power. According to Gramsci [48], as academics, researchers can serve as the traditional intellectual, where they are part of the dominant ideology that legitimises knowledge and power to the few that can access university [112].

Conversely, as Youth and Community Workers, the research team are also organic intellectuals [48] committed to the political cause of oppressed groups, and, concurrently, as Youth and Community Work educators in a widening participation university, they are taking part in a counterhegemony, committed to the socio-political cause of the adults they teach [113]. Bell et al. [114] highlight the personal and intellectual challenges facing educators in the classroom when addressing social justice issues. hooks [115] (p. 188) summarises this in asserting that "fear of losing control in the classroom leads educators to fall into conventional teaching patterns where power is used destructively". The distribution of power, however, was not equal for all members of the research team, and consequently, students, but was skewed towards those who identified as White.

4.2. Theme 2—Challenges Faced When Deconstructing Institutional Racism

Analysis of the data also raised the theme of challenges, one of which included raising the critical consciousness of students around their White privilege. The researchers asserted that initial conversations with students often led to assertions of "reverse racism" and then to perceived "White victimhood" [6]. This is particularly the case with students who are overwhelmingly from widening participation groups that have faced other forms of oppression due to poverty, disability, sexuality, and gender and do not see themselves as privileged. However, being taught not to see difference results in a failure to explore bias,

and challenges to this position result in defensive actions [9]. It was therefore identified that the challenge is to create space in the classroom and in the curriculum for conflict and emotion [7] so that personal prejudice and structural racism can be deconstructed by both students and the researchers. The challenge was therefore identified to ensure that the emotional load [12] was not placed on Black students and the only member of the team who is not White.

Johnson [116] argues that a primary obstacle preventing an understanding of racism as a form of systemic oppression is the dominance of the White racial frame [117]. Students' viewpoints, emotions, and ideologies are rooted in this, shaping actions and thinking in everyday situations to rationalise racial hierarchy, yet they are often unaware of this. Bonilla-Silva [118] supports this by stating that students are cautious of discussing race and use colour-blind frames of reference to minimise the salience of racism, and this presents an immediate challenge when teaching about race, especially when there is a lack of diversity in the classroom. Although the Youth and Community Work programmes are more diverse than others at WGU, McIntosh's [8] (p. 11) assertion stands that "many, perhaps most, White students think that racism doesn't affect them because they are not people of colour. They do not see 'Whiteness' as a racial identity". Adopting a critical pedagogy therefore encourages students not only to understand the concept of White privilege but also to acknowledge their own privilege, undoing the formal educational process of teaching people not to see the invisible systems that confer racial dominance [8]. To challenge racism, a pedagogy is required that goes beyond the teaching of concepts to help students develop competing frames of reference, which do more than critique and promote an alternative understanding of reality [116]. Making classrooms a safe space where students and educators can critically reflect on their own positionality is fundamental [63].

The research findings show that the Youth and Community Work programme is in a unique position in which to achieve this safe space. Gulati-Partee & Potapchuk [7] recommend creating a container with intentional group norms, exploring accumulated advantage and disadvantage, and reflecting on White culture. As Bhopal [5] asserts, there is also a need to move away from a Eurocentric curriculum, which contributes to the normalisation of Whiteness [119]. At times, the Youth and Community Work programme is guilty of relying on content that is stale, male, and pale [120], but any work that makes Whiteness visible must weaken its power [121]. Therefore, through Youth and Community Work education, adopting a critical pedagogical approach in our own classrooms may be one such container with which to challenge.

It was acknowledged in the findings however that one of the challenges was in bringing about change at a structural level, with concerns about institutional processes of recruitment, learning and assessment, support, and student voice. These are not unique to one institution but are reflected across all HEIs [22]. The findings denoted that the research participants have navigated these processes within their programme to bring about greater equality of opportunity, but there was an awareness of the danger of empowering Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority students and staff "to feel good about achieving in a colonial system and succeeding in it". Critical analysis of what Butters & Newell [27] (p. 39) term as "cultural adjustment" is needed here to prevent "making people more like us" [8]. This is especially pertinent as Young [36] asserts that the purpose of Youth and Community Work is to support young people's personal and social development, engaging young people during adolescence at a point when identity is formed, helping them to question their identity and role in the world. Supporting young people to explore their racial identity, creating critical consciousness around structural forms of oppression, and empowering young people to challenge this, is crucial to Youth and Community Work and, therefore, the education of Youth and Community Workers.

One tool in which to understand the themes identified in this research, and specifically, a structural understanding of racial oppression and White privilege in HEIs, is Critical Race Theory (CRT) [18]. Specifically, an understanding and application of CRT for staff and students within HEIs can lead to greater awareness of racism in educational settings

and systematic complexities that further disadvantage Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority students [18]. Critical race theorists place race and racism at the heart of the analysis of inequality, and so it offers a lens for theorizing the educational inequality discovered in the research to create an educational movement [11]. As anti-oppressive practitioners, the research team can use the assumptions of CRT to understand the White hegemonic oppressions in curriculum, processes and practice presented in the findings [122]. Even though these are unintended, the ideologies and discourses that serve White power become entrenched and unjustified racist policies and practices. The CRT lens assumes it is there and demands action [123]. As with critical theory, Critical Race Theory is critiqued for excessive subjectivity and abstract theorising, and therefore lacking in scientific rigour [122,124]. However, as informal educators and critical pedagogues, through praxis the research team will use the research to inform a critical race pedagogy whilst also taking action to overcome any disclosed inequity in their practice. This will help to embed a commitment to anti-racist policy and practice, moving beyond recommendations to act [125] and work towards the education of informal educators around issues of race and oppression.

4.3. Theme 3—Change: Informal Education as Tool for Redressing Inequalities in Higher Education

Analysis of the data identified a third theme of change, which demonstrates the Watts et al. [42] final stage of critical consciousness, critical action. The research was able to identify changes that had already been made to challenge racial oppression and White privilege within the programme and across the university, as well areas for further critical action. These include:

- Ongoing individual and collective critical reflection on power and privilege within the team to navigate binary thinking about professional identity, education, and social justice
- Implementation of changes to the programme to ensure a commitment to inclusion and equality is upheld; these include changes to recruitment, learning and assessment, and student voice and support
- Ongoing individual and collective critical reflection to explore the challenges this presents, and to identify changes to practice in educating informal educators around issues of race and oppression, and specifically around White privilege.
- Some areas for future development identified by the data analysis include:
- A diverse teaching team of two team members when learning activities and sessions focus race and privilege, to balance the emotional load and address issues of authenticity.
- Consideration of more flexible assignment deadlines determined by the students.
- Increased support for Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority students who need to navigate increased critical consciousness about racial oppression and the discrimination they face as result of their learning.
- The possibility of an outreach education project in the community with Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority groups.

Advance HE [24] explores additional measures that can be taken to overcome structural racism within HEIs. Some of these include visible representation of Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority staff in all areas; developing robust anti-racist reporting processes for racial harassment and hate crimes; closing the gap on award, retention, and progression of Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority groups; and making changes to curriculum, research, and reading materials that are representative of contemporary Britain and the diversity of the UK. Arday [126] (p. 3) suggests that:

"Diversity facilitates a collective challenging of stereotyped preconceptions and encourages critical thinking, in addition to facilitating individuals to be able to communicate and engage effectively with people of varied backgrounds".

By meeting the recommendations for change that arise from this study, it is hoped that the capacity and capability for critical thinking will be enhanced for both staff and students involved in the programme and across the HE sector.

Fedotora & Nicholaeva [127] discuss the difference between education that can and should be orientated to radical social change, as per the influences of Freire [34] and Giroux [128], and new techniques for teaching and learning that fall outside of the mainstream pedagogies of formal education. To this end, the Youth and Community Work programme adopts a philosophy of education that incorporates both critical pedagogy as a theoretical concept, and as an alternative educational practice, to challenge oppression and encourage and nurture anti-oppressive practice. Smith [38] argues that there is no simple anti-oppression formula that we can follow; we are in a constant state of trial and error and radical experimentation. This is reflective of our position on the Youth and Community Work programmes at WGU as we focus on the education of informal educators around race and inequality. HEIs must allow space to encourage these changes to happen; we "must build communities in order to create a climate of openness and rigor" [67] (p. 40). The research has highlighted that raising the critical consciousness of the team, not only impacts the lives of students but also the structures and systems used within HEIs.

5. Conclusions

Through critical reflection on key processes, the research has served to unearth and address hidden inequality in relation to race within the Youth and Community Work programme at Wrexham Glyndŵr University. This includes acknowledgement of the programme team and students' White privilege, its impact on inequality and discrimination in educational practice and processes, and an understanding that this needs further analysis and deconstruction through CRT. The research has led to several recommendations for improving the practice and processes in the Youth and Community Work programme that could be adopted by others. The project could act as a pilot to create a critically reflective tool that can be shared to create action plans for deconstructing racism and oppression across our own institution and beyond. This could, in turn, empower colleagues, institutions, and students to do the same, so that all students, not just informal educators, are educated on these issues.

This research concludes that it is vital to challenge the oppressive structures in HEIs that are facing individuals identifying within Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority groups. It has highlighted that across our own institution and the Youth and Community Work programme, it is the responsibility of White staff and students to work alongside Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority students to navigate the White-privileged patriarchal hierarchal systems. Despite these conclusions it is important to note that in no way do the researchers claim to be experts with a narrow specialist knowledge of Youth and Community Work. Instead, they are committed to questioning perceived ideas and apparent understandings in the effort to breakdown stereotypes and reductive categories that limit human thought and communication [129]. Their role in acknowledging racial oppression and White privilege within the Youth and Community Work programme is, as Carmichael & Hamilton [130] (p. 12) state, "to ask the right questions, to encourage a new consciousness and to suggest new forms to express it".

Author Contributions: All authors contributed to all areas of the research and manuscript. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Ethical review and approval were waived for this study because the participants are the authors, in keeping with the methodological framework of critical reflection. There were no additional participants.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: Data is available from request by emailing the authors directly.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix A

Critical reflection questions used for the research process and taken from Fook and Gardner [69] (p. 170).

1. What does our account of (insert process) imply about our basic ideals or values, our beliefs about power, our view of ourselves and other people, what we believe about professionalism?
2. Are there any gaps or contradictions between what we say we do and what is implied by what we do?
3. How do I influence the situation through my presence, my actions, my preconceptions or assumptions, other people's perceptions of me, my physical well-being on the day?
4. How have the tools we used to understand the situation affected what we saw?
5. How might I have acted differently if I was from a Black, Asian, or Ethnic Minority group?
6. What does this say about my own biases and preconceptions? How has who I am affected what I noticed or felt was important?
7. What might be the perspective of other players in the situation?
8. Why is mine different?
9. What perspectives are missing from my account?
10. What binaries, or "either—or, forced choice" categories have I constructed?
11. How have I constructed myself, or my professional role, in relation to other people?
12. What do these indicate about the way I am constructing the situation?
13. What assumptions are implicit in my account and where do they come from?
14. How do my personal experience and beliefs from my social context interact in this situation?
15. What functions (particularly powerful functions) do my beliefs hold?

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Article

Idealistic Assertions or Realistic Possibilities in Community and Youth Work Education

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Abstract: Community and youth work (CYW) practice has been articulated as striving towards a more socially just and equal society and is theorised as a catalyst for social change that seeks to overcome power differentials. Yet, despite these claims, there is limited empirical evidence to inform knowledge about the extent to which 'equality work' is featured and practiced in CYW programmes in higher education. This article draws on perspectives from current and former CYW students in the UK which routinely claim critical pedagogy as the bedrock of professionally approved degree programmes. Utilising a survey approach, our aim was to examine the experiences of students to find out if teaching, learning and assessment practices in professionally approved CYW programmes can be argued as helping students to articulate practice as emancipatory. The findings indicate that there was coherence and a strong understanding of core theories that confirmed CYW programmes as helping students to articulate emancipatory practice. In relation to teaching and learning, programmes were not as aligned with critical pedagogy, inclining more towards traditional and formal methods than alternative or informal methods. Finally, an imbalance between the persistent use of standardised assessment methods over more flexible and creative assessments suggested a reluctance to seek, or develop, more emancipatory sustainable assessment alternatives. The article concludes by arguing that informal education and, specifically, CYW programmes are well-placed to drive institutional and social change forward.

Keywords: critical pedagogy; community and youth work; constructive alignment; social justice; equality

1. Introduction

In line with the contemporary literature [1–5], we have identified community and youth work (CYW) as a critical and optimistic practice for 'people and practitioners to work together in order to achieve the kind of social change that is needed for improved equality and social justice" ([6], p. 172). Yet, there is a gap in understanding the extent to which 'equality work' is practiced, and authenticated, in higher education (HE) professional degree programmes that espouse critical pedagogy [7,8] as a bedrock of practice. Building on Biggs' [9] conceptualisation of constructive alignment, and the idea of sustainable assessment as learning for the longer term [10], we question whether practices within higher education embody social justice values and principles. Our research sought to understand how working at the interface between formal and informal education, could help to create knowledge and develop more sustainable teaching, learning and assessment practices in HE. This offered scope to consider more widespread use of alternative methods to bring learning, teaching and assessment practice into constructive alignment with our theorising and teaching of critical pedagogy for social justice [6,11,12].

Antonovsky's [13] work on salutogenesis sought to understand what makes a good healthy life possible and reminded us of what we truly value: spending time with family and friends, and having a sense of community, coherence and freedom. As university

lecturers, taking time to pause and reflect on our practice, we are able to re-theorise our world and assess if higher education (HE) contributes positively to society. This article considers the impact of HE values and approaches to learning that are pertinent to providing students with a positive educational experience.

CYW degree programmes are designed to facilitate student learning that is aligned with informal education with a clear democratic purpose. Critical pedagogy is portrayed as key to professional learning and is noted as offering an alternative to neoliberal frames that seek to regulate, reduce and standardise students' university experience. According to Taberner [14], the student experience has become fragmented and reduced to marketable outcomes, rather than advancing democracy. Yet, the application of critical pedagogy [15] offers a transformative learning process [16] that aims to help non-traditional students gain a professionally approved degree qualification, whilst becoming an emancipatory practitioner. Such programmes are required to meet both internal institutional scrutiny and external professional approval. This involves negotiation across educational boundaries, in order to mitigate distinctions in the expectations of formal education requirements at HE level and in the expectations of informal education methodologies as the focus of CYW practice. While joint validation processes appear coherent in facilitating synthesis to complete programme approval, this article examines student perspectives that show the extent to which this coherence persists across qualifying programmes, where their specific focus for qualification is located in their professional roles as informal educators in CYW contexts.

This article also examines current contexts in higher education and professional CYW practices. It explains our research methodology and results that offer insights into student experiences of studying CYW. The discussion considers the extent to which CYW students' experiences were constructively aligned with institutional and professional community practices [9]. This helped us to draw conclusions on how learning, teaching and assessment in HE are aligned with critical pedagogy in helping students to articulate their practice and its emancipatory purpose.

2. Materials and Methods

Knowledge was created from a constructo-interpretive epistemological standpoint [17] as a means of interpreting how students come to know and understand their HE experiences. Our ontological position was grounded in the equality of capabilities and conditions [18] to understand how student perceptions were aligned or at odds with assertions of CYW lecturers in HE. Thus, our aim was to undertake a survey of teaching, learning and assessment practices in CYW programmes to consider the veracity of these assertions. Holding a mirror up to HE practice, we expected this survey to inform understanding of the complexities and challenges we face in crossing practice boundaries as informal educators within formal educational contexts.

Data were collected through an online questionnaire (via Microsoft Forms, MF). This offered a rich dataset of evidence that underpinned this article. The questionnaire asked a mixture of closed and open questions. This provided quantitative data that were analysed to produce numeric percentage calculations (generated by MF) and open questions that were analysed to produce qualitative themes, which were generated by an inductive thematic coding process to produce robust and trustworthy results. This involved using highlighter pens to code raw data, which were then grouped together to create themes [19], which enabled us to make sense of participant ideas rather than introducing existing theories or pre-established codes.

Participants were recruited through open invitation distributed via social media, relevant professional bodies and CYW higher education institutions. An open 'link' to access the questionnaire was circulated and posted on social media, which meant that our sample was opportunistic, comprising those who were able to access the link. This process gained 136 responses from graduates (112) and current (24) students on CYW HE programmes. Of the 136 participants, 128 completed a professionally approved programme,

3 completed a non-qualifying programme and 5 were unsure of their programme status. The majority of respondents (73) graduated between 2011 and 2020, while 27 respondents graduated between 2001 and 2010, 11 between 1991 and 2000, 2 between 1981 and 1990, and 1 graduated pre-1981.

The geographical split was UK-based, with only 1 participant from Zambia, who was studying with a UK institution. Despite seeking to recruit a broad range of participants, of the 135 in the UK, 86 were from Scotland, 22 were from England, 22 were from Northern Ireland and 5 were from Wales. The higher rate of Scottish students most likely reflects the fact that all three researchers are from Scottish higher education institutions. Despite this, we argue that so long as participants were studying or had studied CYW at this level, their perspectives were important within a whole country (UK) view, but not geographically representative of each of the four discrete parts of the UK. Our focus was on their headline experiences of learning, teaching and assessment, rather than being overly concerned about the distinctions in devolved governments and funding councils across all four UK nations. We may consider whether these distinctions are important in creating a more nuanced interpretation of praxis, but for now, our findings were analysed at the UK level. Further, as the focus of our research was grounded in CYW programmes as a practice cohort, we did not collect data on specific identifiers such as age or ethnicity. We believed that specific sociodemographic profiling was not applicable to this research, as our focus was on students' experiences in higher education on the CYW programmes without breaking into routine demographics.

Ethical approval for this project was gained from The University of the West of Scotland ethics committee. Questionnaires were fully anonymised, with no names, identifying features, or locations collected. Consent information was communicated in the introduction section of the questionnaire, and taken as given by submitting the form. Only the researchers had access to the results via the MS Forms responses table. All electronic files and documents related to the research were stored on password-protected computers, and any paper documents were securely stored in a locked location. There were no potentially or obviously upsetting questions, and as the subject of this research was their experiences of a programme that they were not responsible for, the risk of being harmed was mitigated.

3. Results

The results for this paper are centred on three areas. The first relates to the understanding of theories that underpinned CYW programmes, questioning whether they align to emancipatory practice. The second is the alignment of teaching and learning with critical pedagogy to create powerful and professionally relevant learning, and the third is analysing assessment methods in professional development, questioning the role of traditional and sustainable approaches as learning for the longer term.

Figure 1 shows that the core selected subject area was 'critical/radical pedagogy and social pedagogy' (75 respondents). This was closely followed by youth work/youth studies (66), ethics/values/self-care (59), groupwork/collaborative and partnership working (57), power and empowerment (56) and community development/activism (55).

As shown in Figure 1, this indicated that the theoretical focus of CYW programmes was aligned with non-traditional pedagogical ideas that were driven by critical or radical theories that were prioritised over more traditional theories. To see these areas of critical, radical and social pedagogy at the forefront of degree programmes that routinely claim this area of educational expertise was heartening.

Building on such theories, it was unsurprising that values and group work or working collaboratively and in partnerships were key subject areas in theorising practice that works across professional boundaries and in a range of contexts. The focus on youth work and youth studies as key was also unsurprising, given that many HE programmes across the UK have an explicit 'youth' focus. The slightly lesser focus on community development/activism may demonstrate that whilst youth work is a central focus for many programmes across the UK, theorising community development principles, community

activism and questioning what community is and how community is differently theorised remain important areas for study in CYW programmes. Unpacking the way in which these key subject areas were explored in CYW programmes is vital in understanding how students translated theory into practice and vice versa.

CORE SUBJECT AREAS (Left to Right on Chart)	
Academic Study	5
Adult Education	18
Leadership/Leading Practice/Social change	7
Community/Community of Practice	51
Community Development/ Comm Activism	55
Critical Pedagogy/Radical & Social Pedagogy	75
Culture/Cultural Planning/Cultural Contexts	5
Educational Theory/Practice/Curric. Devt.	18
Ethics/Values/Principles/ Self-care	59
Groupwork/Collaborative/Partnership Work	57
International Development/Perspectives	5
Issue Based/Emancipatory Practice	13
Political ideologies/ Social Movements	16
Power/Empowerment	56
Practice/Occupation Standards/Competences	22
Project and People Management	5
Psychological Perspectives	4
Reflective Practice/Animation/Coaching	50
Research Methods/ Evaluation	26
Equality/ Human Rights/ Social Justice	38
Social Policy/ Policy on Subject Area	23
Sociological Perspectives	21
Participation/Collaboration/Engagement	23
Youth Work/Youth Studies	66
Other	2

Question 17 asked participants to identify the top five core subject areas that were a focus in their study programme for theorising practice. This figure shows the prevalence of selected methods, among participants in this study.

Figure 1. Student perspectives on theorising emancipatory practice.

3.1. Critical Pedagogy

Freire [20] advocated for education to be reflective of societal issues. It was therefore affirming to see critical pedagogy as a focus for theorising practice in CYW programmes:

'Critical pedagogy was a huge influence . . . [it] . . . really changed my thinking . . . how I seen power dynamics . . . I became much more critically aware'. (Participant 6)

When asked about theories that opened their minds to new ideas, 25 participants specifically noted Freire's work, which was summed up by one participant as 'Genius', while another stated that 'Freire blew my mind' (participant 29). Critical pedagogy was useful in shaping students' thinking specifically in relation to education and educational institutions,

'Critical pedagogy in particular was an important aspect . . . it helped my understanding education, and power relations. This helped me reframe my understanding and emotional relationship to education and learning'. (Participant 99)

Two participants explicitly connected theory in critical pedagogy to emancipatory practice which challenges injustices,

'It's recognising rights . . . Who has them and who doesn't. Who's excluded and why? What kind of world do we want and how nurturing it is'. (Participant 58)

This form of 'transformative praxis' [21] was key for students' capacity to see direct relevance in a theory they engaged with, and putting it into action:

'Studying Freire . . . was incredibly useful on a theoretical level that can be very directly applied into practice. The emphasis on trying to help people to see their contexts in a new way has helped me also open doors to new possibilities in my work and my own learning . . . the emphasis on seeing . . . overlapping oppressions and dehumanizing systems, helped me put in more concrete terms what I had been feeling about the world through years of working internationally'. (Participant 83)

That students have identified critical pedagogy as a core theoretical positioning on CYW programmes demonstrates the capacity to adopt critical pedagogies in formal HE institutions. Critical pedagogy focusses on the interplay between power and knowledge [22], which participants also noted.

3.2. Power/Empowerment

Fifty-six respondents specifically discussed power and empowerment.

'Paulo Friere and Saul Alinsky opened up my thinking . . . It's about the ideas of knowledge and power and the acknowledgement of how these are essential in everyday life'. (Participant 58)

Another participant noted uncomfortableness in reflecting on power differentials but subsequently had a positive impact,

'Power and Empowerment stood out I felt really uncomfortable at the time doing the activities . . . it pushed me out of my comfort zone . . . It irks me to hear colleagues from across the partnership say they 'empower' communities. I believe that we could all do more in this area'. (Participant 116)

Highlighting key theories on power and the importance of language, the challenging of tokenistic inclusion and dialectical teaching [23] were articulated as key lessons for CYW lecturers involved in educating informal educators.

3.3. Ethics and Values

Explicit links between theories attached to ethics, standards, benchmarks and the capacity to be a good practitioner were noted,

'Some of these subjects were about shaping what kind of . . . [practitioner] . . . we would be and our values—empathy, believing in and understanding equality, ensuring that young people know their rights'. (Participant 54)

Participants clearly aligned areas of critical pedagogy, power and CYW practice. Additionally, the theorising of ethics, values, and self-care was also important,

'Our ethics and values were drilled into us... Most CLD practitioners know these off by heart and I think that is important as it should underpin all work and always be our starting point'. (Participant 11)

The fact that CYW is explicitly a value-driven profession [24,25] may explain why ethics/values and self-care featured so prominently. For others, this process facilitated a thinking of the world they wanted and the type of practitioner they would be,

' . . . working in an emancipatory way for social justice and built on CLD ethics and values'. (Participant 87)

' . . . exploring ethics and values to allow yourself to see how you are coming across to others'. (Participant 31)

The highlighting of the key subject areas on CYW programmes provides some headlines that are important for our community of practice. It is positive that students articulate critical pedagogy as a key focus of our programmes and demonstrates that theoretically, at least, our degree programmes do align with a view of the world which we strive for. However, despite this theoretical positioning, student responses on teaching and learning did not align so strongly with critical pedagogy.

3.4. Student Perspectives on: Alignment in Teaching and Learning

Martin [26] posited that within the neo-liberal environment that currently permeates the educational system, a lack of programmes offering students the opportunity to engage in alternative ways of learning and thinking is troubling. As CYW educators within higher education, we feel that it is imperative that a variety of teaching and learning methods are implemented as a means to creating an equally viable education journey for the varied skill sets of students. Lynch and Baker [27] identified a need for equality of conditions within education and rather than social processes being the same for everyone, this is "about equalizing what might be called people's 'real options', which involves the equal enabling and empowerment of individuals" (p. 132).

From personal experience, we acknowledge that our pedagogy and practice reflect a blended or hybrid approach that uses a mix of face-to-face teaching, synchronous online engagements and asynchronous online engagements. We align our practice and pedagogy with CYW values to developing an informal and socially constructed and trusting relationship with students [23,28,29]. This is not simply about achieving a minimum level of learning, knowledge and understanding required to graduate, but is explicitly connected to the development of ongoing learning, continuous reflection and professional development within and beyond the programme.

From this perspective, it was important to gain a deeper understanding of how students are engaging with the different teaching and learning methods that are offered on the CYW programmes.

Above, Figure 2, shows the response from participants regarding teaching and learning methods on the programmes they attended. These were interesting, in that it came as no surprise that the top three picks were practice/placement (104), group work exercises (103) and collaborative/peer group learning (100). These were fairly typical expectations for a practice-based programme, which showed that the programmes the research participants engaged with offered a pedagogically sound learning experience, indicative of the field of practice. Exposing students of CYW programmes to community-based work in practice seem obvious as a teaching method in this field, where Jakubowski and Burman [30] stated that '[t]here are many reasons pedagogically for bringing classroom and community together' (p. 165), where students have an opportunity to develop ongoing relationships with community members over time.

However, it was interesting to note, that other choices featured in the middle ground. Methods such as critical pedagogy/social pedagogy (48), informal/creative/alternative methods (35) and peer teaching/peer support (22) were less frequently selected. This suggested that while some programmes clearly offered these options, they did not do so as often as those in the top three picks. This is noteworthy to the extent that we routinely see ourselves as advocates of alternative, informal methods in practice, yet this evidence suggests that practices within higher education may not be modelling these methods.
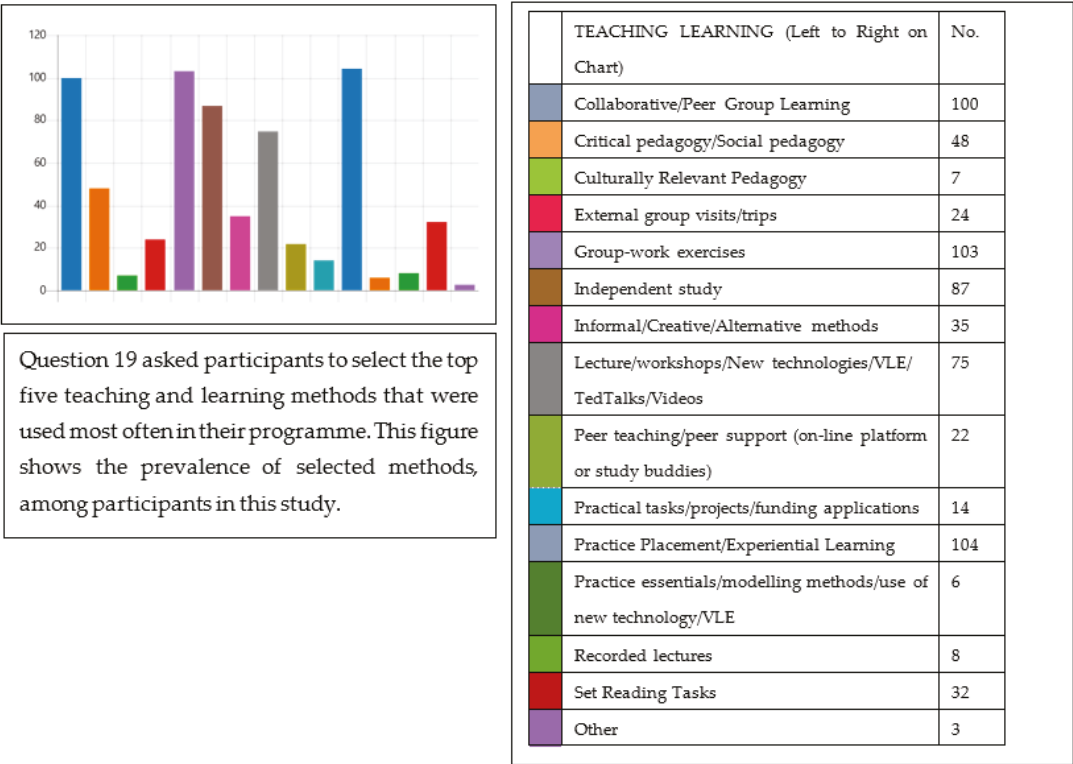
	TEACHING LEARNING (Left to Right on Chart)	No.
	Collaborative/Peer Group Learning	100
	Critical pedagogy/Social pedagogy	48
	Culturally Relevant Pedagogy	7
	External group visits/trips	24
	Group-work exercises	103
	Independent study	87
	Informal/Creative/Alternative methods	35
	Lecture/workshops/New technologies/VLE/ TedTalks/Videos	75
	Peer teaching/peer support (on-line platform or study buddies)	22
	Practical tasks/projects/funding applications	14
	Practice Placement/Experiential Learning	104
	Practice essentials/modelling methods/use of new technology/VLE	6
	Recorded lectures	8
	Set Reading Tasks	32
	Other	3

Question 19 asked participants to select the top five teaching and learning methods that were used most often in their programme. This figure shows the prevalence of selected methods, among participants in this study.

Figure 2. Five methods for teaching and learning that were most often used in your degree programme.

3.5. Powerful Learning Environments

Being advocates for alternative methods in teaching and learning is not without complexity. Combining alternative informal methods with the more traditional formal notions of education requires creative thinking. Steffes [31] considered alternative approaches and made reference to 'powerful learning environments' for students which incorporate a 'view of learning that integrates their real world experiences with classroom lectures and discussion' (p. 49).

There were some interesting responses from participants to suggest that a broad range of learning was (and still is) happening.

'The methods employed ensured total immersion in the subjects and a critical understanding of our place and views- personally and professionally in relation to everything'. (Participant 32)

'These areas helped my learning because it was a multi-faceted approach, covering a range of learning styles and scenarios, from reading assignments, to personal study to peer group work, this allowed me not only the time and space to form my own conclusions about the work and topics, but when working with peers it allowed me to see and discuss the similarities or differences between our approaches and mindsets allowing me to take those into consideration, improving my overall practice'. (Participant 37)

'I found it difficult to understand the creative methods of assessment in an academic course but it actually worked to ensure everyone had the chance to showcase their learning styles. The placements are where most learning takes place for me'. (Participant 63)

'A good mixed variety was used which pushed students out of comfort zones at times which would happen in the workplace so readied me for that again after years away from the field; new ideas and theories from workshops and reading from recommended reading lists or watching suggested videos etc stretched my mind and offered more knowledge and insights into topics and areas I had none or little in. More class time was what I and most fellow classmates said we would have liked more of. Sometimes group work was a hindrance when other group members would or could not make themselves available to meet and work together leaving others carrying them or when personalities clashed too much'. (Participant 87)

These responses provided insight into how participants felt about the teaching and learning methods in the programmes attended. The above comments show the importance of the variety in methods used as a means to create critical understanding, accommodate different learning styles, facilitate peer learning and dealing with situations that require negotiation and compromise.

However, the results do suggest that there is a heavy reliance on the top three picks, and without these, the programmes would suffer. Modules such as practice placement are vital to the learning experience on CYW practice-based programmes, which is also common-place in most higher education programmes [32–34]. So, if we are to hold a mirror up to our own practice as critical pedagogues, and practice what we preach, we have to find a way of pushing through the other alternative methods that we argue to be so valuable. The difficulty lies in how that might be implemented.

3.6. Student Perspectives on: Assessment as Learning for Now, and the Longer Term

Traditionally, assessment practices were engineered to ensure congruence between instruction and alignment with the curriculum [9]. Formative feedback was provided to improve and guide learning, and summative feedback was given at the end of the learning process to determine grades or award credit on the summation of the student's work [9,35]. Advances in formative assessment have accelerated learning, optimised the quality of learning, and have also raised individual and collective attainment [36,37]. However, Boud and Falchicov [38] noted that higher education assessment practices had not reflected a need for students to develop learning for the longer term.

The findings in Figure 3, show that essay (118 respondents), presentation (101) and reflective accounts (80) were selected as most prevalent, followed by research dissertation (62), course work (62), and practice portfolio (57), which included practice-based tasks and practice observation. The middle-ground assessment methods comprised case study (35), debate (32), academic posters (29), and peer-led seminars (18). Finally, the less frequently selected assessment methods included creative output (14), which included short film- and image-based methods, a capstone project (12) and critical incident analysis (12), game design/training exercises (9), designing learning materials (9), problem solving (7), contribution to the VLE (4), and web-based assessment (4), which included website development/blogs and podcasts.

When asked if assessments did more than simply help to achieve a particular grade, 87% said yes, and typically offered short answers on predictable areas of added value, such as: prompting critical or deeper thinking; creating or consolidating knowledge; and developing understanding of a specific subject area. Typical responses from the remaining 13% who answered 'no' included because the assessment was fit for purpose in achieving a pass grade or was viewed as a 'tick-box exercise', 'the questions had not been changed for years', or 'they were a means to an end'—these answers were indicative of traditional associations with assessment in awarding credit as an immediate or short-term means of grading student work.
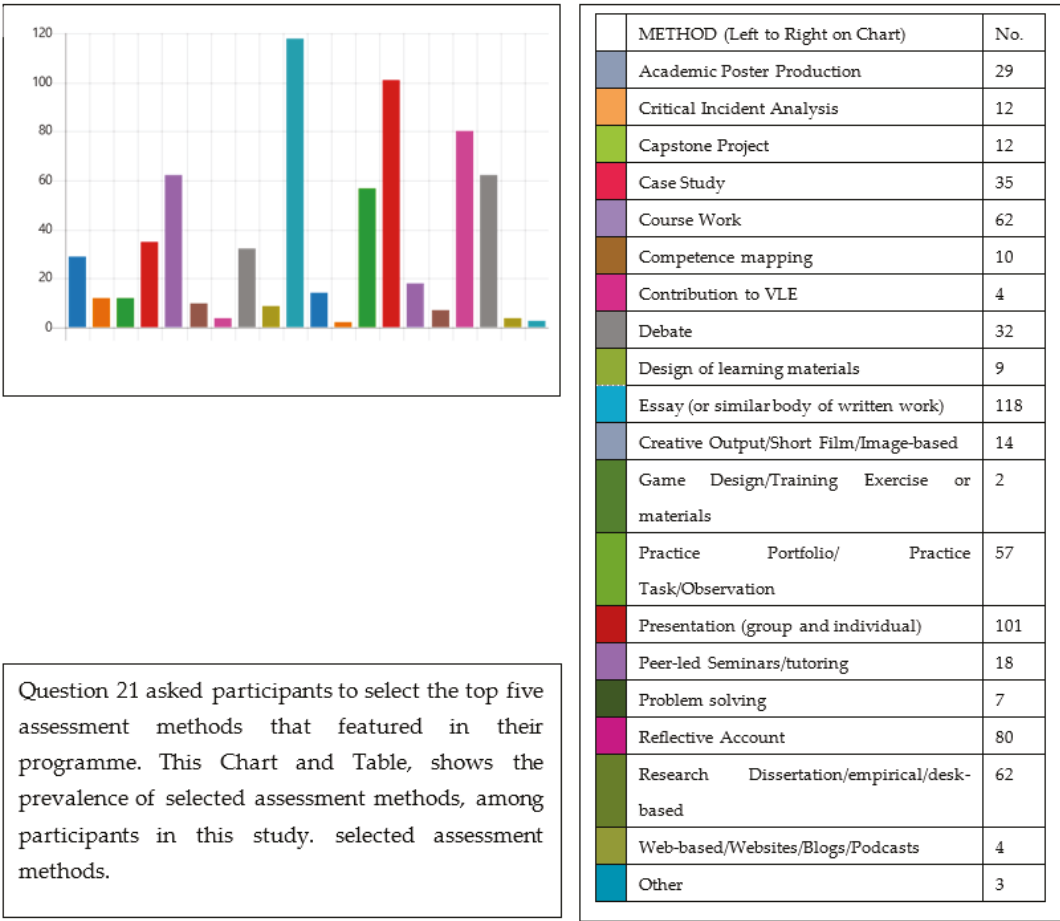
	METHOD (Left to Right on Chart)	No.
	Academic Poster Production	29
	Critical Incident Analysis	12
	Capstone Project	12
	Case Study	35
	Course Work	62
	Competence mapping	10
	Contribution to VLE	4
	Debate	32
	Design of learning materials	9
	Essay (or similar body of written work)	118
	Creative Output/Short Film/Image-based	14
	Game Design/Training Exercise or materials	2
	Practice Portfolio/ Practice Task/Observation	57
	Presentation (group and individual)	101
	Peer-led Seminars/tutoring	18
	Problem solving	7
	Reflective Account	80
	Research Dissertation/empirical/desk-based	62
	Web-based/Websites/Blogs/Podcasts	4
	Other	3

Question 21 asked participants to select the top five assessment methods that featured in their programme. This Chart and Table, shows the prevalence of selected assessment methods, among participants in this study. selected assessment methods.

Figure 3. The top 5 assessment methods featured in your programme.

Routinely, written work underpinned all or most student grades, due to the exclusion of other forms of assessment. While all written assessments were graded, formative assessments or coursework were viewed as facilitating feedback that was not graded. This privileging of written essay-type assessments was assumed, rather than considering alternative methods, for example:

'I don't really understand this question? Other than the e-portfolio, all of my assessments were written'. (Participant 108)

'It was a distance learning programme and the assessments were written'. (Participant 91)

In not being familiar with alternative assessment methods, participant 108 did not understand the question, and participant 91 believed that a distance learning programme, by design, necessitated written assessments. Yet, where more creative and varied assessment methods were available, participants noted:

'Critical pedagogy module was in the format of showing it ... [Critical Pedagogy] ... in use by an assessment that involved us ... [students] ... in teaching the class and in facilitating learning'. (Participant 79)

'While written work was required at times, there were assessments to be completed in the form of presentations, debates, posters and games'. (Participant 71)

'I felt just as scrutinised during other means of assessments and got just as critical feedback compared with written work'. (Participant 35)

These comments show why 41% believed that written work was not privileged over other forms of assessment. Responding to questions on assessment methods, the findings show balance, in that essays and written assessments were beneficial in grading and requirements for formal reporting, while creative or alternative methods were beneficial in widening student learning and enhancing capacity for different intelligences to shine. Thus, the findings clarify that assessment methods were varied and could be used or adapted for assessment and learning beyond the immediate purposes of academic credit [35,38], which included aspects of professional development.

The prevalence in the selected methods gave a total of 671 responses. It is concerning that 71% of this total showed persistence in the use of traditional formal methods comprising written essays, dissertations, presentations and reflective accounts, while 18% of responses showed middle-ground assessments comprising case study, debate, academic posters and peer-led seminars and 11% of respondents selected methods, such as web-based assessment, creative outputs, capstone projects or learning design. This imbalance suggests that assessment practice in HE was inconsistent with critical pedagogy.

4. Discussion

CYW practitioners in the UK work with the most excluded and vulnerable in society, many of whom have borne the brunt of austerity measures and the negative impacts of COVID-19, which intensified levels of poverty and human suffering. Austerity measures were described as 'a harsh and uncaring ethos' by Alston [39] who, as UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, also noted a 're-discovery of social protection in a global pandemic' [40] (p. 5). Yet, Alston [40] asserted the need for longer term social change where, 'economic recovery...contributes to poverty eradication and the reduction of inequalities' (p. 21). This connects directly to our HE role in teaching informal educators, as preparation for a career in striving for equality and social and structural change within CYW.

This aligns with perspectives that emphasise a role of higher education Institutions (HEIs) as a catalyst for social change, whereby:

'Community—university engagement . . . [creates] . . . a two-way discourse that engages the community and the students to produce socially relevant contemporary knowledge based on active participation . . . to make the world a better place to live'. ([41], p. 4)

This discourse on civil society and social responsibility in higher education is consistent with CYW practices, in our aspirations for professional learning in which critical pedagogy connects to both community development and the emancipatory educational purpose that:

' . . . relates to a wider conception of education that connects matters of politics and to matters of powerful learning within and beyond the institutions . . . [that] . . . explicitly encourages . . . boundary crossing in which community and institutional values coalesce'. ([12], pp. 143–144)

While much has been written about the influence of critical pedagogy on formal and informal educational practices [8,15,42], there was a gap in the understanding of CYW student perspectives on whether this knowledge was influential in changing and authenticating practices in HEIs across the UK.

These research results provide robust evidence that, in preparing students for professional practice, CYW students are provided with a solid grounding in theoretical perspectives that are aligned with emancipatory praxis. Helping students to understand critical theory was articulated by students as transformative in facilitating a deep understanding of why CYW practice is important.

The prevalence of critical, radical and social pedagogy, and the analysis of power in theorising practice, was aligned with results that established grassroots practice-based learning and group or peer learning as the most highly selected methods for teaching and learning. This confirmed our expectations for professional grassroots practice that resides in a conceptualisation of critical pedagogy where education is proposed as the practice of freedom [7,8]. In critical pedagogy, education is understood as praxis, where a fusion of theory with practice engages people in 'action and reflection upon the world in order to change it' ([43], p. 206). Aligning critical theory with a strong focus on the practical application of alternative and creative teaching methods was shown by students as key to facilitating social change. Thus, the findings are consistent with Biggs' [9] ideas on constructive alignment, as the results are directly aligned with professional competences for working with people to enable them to engage in learning and to take action that brings change for themselves and their communities [44].

Furthermore, according to Lynch [45], who raised concerns about education as 'being incorporated into the market as an instrument of capitalism and profiteering' (p. viii), there is a requirement for resistance, as a moral imperative, against social and educational injustice. Our findings show that being grounded in ethical practice values and powerful learning environments was useful in creating authentically aligned teaching and learning methods in CYW programmes. These were different from traditional educational theories and methods and thus, we suggest, enacted the kind of resistance called for by Lynch [45]. Yet, evolving circumstances emphasise a need to challenge the marketisation and individualisation of education, in order to emerge from it in a world where all people, not only those who can afford it, have an increased chance of making a good life within a fairer economy that is driven not only by the market but also by well-being [46].

As the first whole-country empirical research of student perspectives specifically on their experiences of CYW programmes, this research adds to the work of Seal [42] to assert that across the UK, HEIs are already engaged in practice that is resistant to traditional theories and methods in education. This suggests that in educating informal educators, alternative, critical and radical theories and a range of teaching and learning methods are routinely, and in some instances strongly, applied in CYW programmes. Yet, this constructive alignment in teaching theory and modelling practice was not so obvious in assessment practices. Here, there was less evidence of alternative or sustainable practices. Despite results that show that some HEIs did use assessments that were constructively aligned [9] to professional roles and values, by utilising a full range of assessment methods, this was often not the case.

The imbalance of formal and traditional assessments, compared to the use of innovative, technologically, or varying from written assessments, was at odds with critical pedagogy and CYW values for emancipatory practice. The utility and scope for aligning assessment practices in HE resides in the evolution of alternative assessment methods that can assist in developing student dispositions as lifelong learners and as assessors of their own and others' learning [10,47,48]. Increasing creative and technological methods for face-to face and web-based assessment needs further consideration in the evolution of assessment in HE, as part of the wider contribution of a civic university.

Rather than simply measuring progress within the curriculum, as a means of grading coursework, assessment has been proposed as a means of 'equipping students to learn in situations in which teachers and examinations are not present to focus their attention' ([10], p. 3). If we aspire to achieve more sustainable assessment for CYW students, lecturers and students will be required to reflect on how assessment might be more usefully aligned with CYW praxis. How can assessment be reconfigured, enhanced and developed sustainably as a means of creating an authentic constructive alignment on the boundaries of informal and formal education?

Our analysis of student perspectives on educating informal educators has thus raised more questions than answers, particularly in areas that were not selected by respondents. For example, the lack of focus on international development/international perspectives is

concerning, as many programmes pride themselves on the international links they try to forge. Yet, within this predominantly UK context, it seems that students and graduates do not see international perspectives at the forefront of their curriculum. Other examples of low selection areas (less than five responses) included psychological perspectives, project and people management, culture/cultural planning/cultural contexts and academic study. These responses make us reflect on the future progression and focus of CYW professional HE programmes.

Analysis confirms that we can claim to apply critical pedagogy as an emancipatory practice which 'offers a powerful device for enabling us to challenge mainstream representations' ([42], p. 40) within the context of a power-laden university environment. However, this is not without its challenges. As Seal [42] noted, 'we teach it in universities, which are formal, rule bound, with distinct hierarchies and often elitist and reinforce multiple hegemonies' ([42], p. 24). This work, drawing on case studies from academics around the world, about teaching critical pedagogy exemplified the applied nature of civic education in Finland, where graduates were identified as community educators as part of an aim to 'educate experts for professional working life' ([42], p. 59). However, it did not offer empirical evidence or case study examples on how these theories were applied to the HE teaching practices of their home institutions. Thus, in considering the extent to which critical pedagogy is modelled in teaching emancipatory practice in CYW programmes, our analysis offers insights on a kind of civic education of professional CYW practitioners. In turn, this aligns with the idea of a civic university, where more effective engagement between HEIs and local communities is key to enabling institutions to meet their social responsibilities and 'to act as catalysts for social change with the potential to address and mitigate a variety of social problems' ([41], p. 4), where it is argued that 'critical pedagogy . . . offers not just a framework for action, but a set of guiding principles that might inform aspects of teaching, research, citizenship and knowledge exchange' ([12], p. 142).

5. Conclusions

Reflecting critically on student perceptions regarding teaching, learning and assessment in CYW programmes demonstrates a resistance to mainstream representations of institutional power. Our assertion is that boundary crossing persisted at the interface between the formal and informal paradigms. Furthermore, there was evidence of a more holistic and critical pedagogical approach in areas of teaching and learning that was aligned with methods from CYW practice. To a lesser extent, there was some evidence of shifting assessment practices in HE that did model critical pedagogy, but more traditional methods persisted. This showed that across a range of professionally qualifying degree programmes, critical pedagogy was theorised and taught as an emancipatory practice that operated on the boundaries between formal and informal learning within HEIs and was constructively aligned with CYW professional praxis.

Having held a mirror up to our own HE practices, the results of our analysis of student and graduate views inform our understanding that we are effective as informal educators within formal educational contexts. The discussion showed that in theorising, and in many teaching and learning contexts, CYW students provided evidence of an experience that was clearly and constructively aligned with critical pedagogy. This finding aligns with recent work from Seal [49] in advocating for hopeful pedagogies and celebrating those pedagogies in HE that challenge dominant discourses and strive for a more utopian reading of the world.

Yet, when it came to assessment, this alignment was less obvious, particularly in relation to assessment methods. Our focus on the application of critical pedagogy in HE practice as a catalyst for institutional change suggests that there is much to celebrate in the research results, as CYW programmes do prepare students as experts in critical pedagogy that can be applied in CYW practice. However, the results also show that many programmes seemed to be constrained in shifting pedagogic and assessment practices to fully embrace and model this alignment with emancipatory practice. There remains a

challenge in bringing about more widespread change within HE institutions to enhance the experiences of our students and their emerging role as community practitioners. The idea of social responsibility in HE creates an opportunity for working within our various institutions to change practices. Our research confirms that we are already working at the interface between formal, informal and professional education within many HEIs. In seeking to promote social responsibility as a framework for equality and social justice, our CYW programmes are well-placed to drive institutional change forward in the interests of our students, our profession and the communities we serve.

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Education and Heritage of Medieval Warfare. A Study on the Transmission of Knowledge by Informal Educators in Defensive Spaces

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Abstract: Historical reenactment is becoming a top-tier teaching tool in the countries of Southern Europe. In Spain specifically, this discipline is experiencing a boom as a heritage education method, particularly in informal settings. This article is the outcome of a qualitative research study of the results obtained from one hundred and fifteen educators from historical reenactment groups. The study analyses the methods used by the exponents of this discipline to teach war in the Middle Ages, specifically in three Spanish castles dating from the 11th to the 12th centuries. It has made it possible to analyse how the educational discourses are organised in relation to Medieval war within military spaces from this period, and how historical reenactment is a coadjutant in the construction of teaching/learning spaces from a heritage education perspective.

Keywords: historical reenactment; conflict; heritage teaching; informal education; war spaces; warfare

1. Introduction

The point of departure set forth by the researchers of this study is to analyse which educational discourses are used in informal settings in relation to military history, and in particular, war in the Middle Ages. These discourses take place in heritage centres or museums, in which the military past linked to the heritage preserved and spread is explained. The 21st century and post-modernity have combined to build a story around war in the Middle Ages that relativises or even trivialises the conflicts; literature, films, television or video games are the main agents of this trend. With a view to educate for peace, this study aims to research and analyse the information given about this phenomenon through a very specific educational sector: the associative agents or groups using historical reenactment to educate in medieval war and conflict for the purposes of heritage education.

We firmly believe that hiding war and its horrors leads to nothing but ignorance, the same ignorance that is largely responsible for starting a great many of the wars. To know about the wars of the past is to promote a conscientious reflection on the same, an essential process for human growth, common sense and intellectual and behavioural maturity. Hence, we firmly believe that to show war is the best thing we can do to educate for peace [1] and thus create a more advanced, cultured society grounded in knowledge [2].

It is nonetheless true that in the current moment in time, the distance from which we approach it is equal to or greater than the distance from which we relativise it, which is why it is necessary to know that it exists and has made us the way we are. It is not so much a question of showing its horrors as it is of educating that they occurred. It is important to remember that in the learning and teaching spaces—both formal and informal—that may evolve in the scenarios that were once sites of war "a terrible true story is brought close" ("Un acercamiento a una terrible historia real") [3].

The initial hypothesis of this research is that the museum discourse applied in heritage settings directly related to medieval conflict by educators who use historical reenactment lacks a general perspective in relation to the historical period and a reflection on the same.

The phenomenon of war is isolated, hinging on specific or anecdotic aspects, such as elements of the material culture, tactical, strategic or poliorcetic data without orchestrating a discursive frame that links with the knowledge the audience has about the medieval military past to consolidate general and complex constructs implicit in the historical period, such as causes and consequences, long time structures or reflections enabling the student to think historically. This discourse has also been observed in a certain way to be tainted with clichés and popular elements which heritage education finds structurally difficult to rid itself of, despite also invalidating and annulling the same through historical reenactment, as we are aware. All of these issues constituting the exploratory hypothesis aim to draw conclusions for the subsequent development of methodological foundations to enable the correct elaboration of these discourses, in such a way that they come as accurately close as possible to an education for peace.

The objective of this research is two-fold. On the one hand, it aims to analyse the scope of the museum-centred discourse in relation to historical reenactment as a heritage education tool in the subject of war and conflict in the Middle Ages, with a view to an education for peace and the development of citizen competences. And on the other, along the same lines, it aims to understand which discursive aspects historical reenactment focuses on in its educational role in relation to the war phenomenon as a whole.

Additionally, this study also includes other secondary objectives, in turn subsumed under the overall objective. In this research we aim to:

- Gain an understanding of how the historical reenactor of the Middle Ages documents the cultural material they reconstruct and explain.
- Verify the level of scientific praxis the reenactor imprints on the documentation, and subsequently the education, process.
- Explore the reenactor's own consideration as an informal heritage educator of the work they perform.
- Analyse how the reenactor of the Middle Ages tackles the historical contents associated with war heritage.
- Analyse whether the war phenomenon is explained and divulged out of context, or through a *continuum,* linking facts and historical periods for a more complete communication, implicit in an education through historical structures rather than isolated events.
- Ascertain to what extent the educational praxis of historical reenactment contributes to the achievement of the historical and citizen education goals.
- Understand whether historical reenactment in the area of war is aided by educational resources such as empathy or interaction with the audience in informal contexts.
- Analyse how and to what extent the educational discourse on medieval conflict is belied by notions garnered from or influenced by popular culture.
- Ascertain the extent to which the historical reenactor values their praxis as a positive heritage education tool, and how it contributes to an education for peace.

2. Educating on Conflict: A View from Southern Europe

Tackling conflicts and the wars resulting from them may trigger unproductive and problematic ideological debates in education, which is why it is considered an unpleasant topic that tends to be avoided [4]. This is further aggravated in the event of recent civil wars as, according to Hernàndez Cardona [5], war represents violence with armed groups that wish to dominate a spatial area and the human and economic resources of the same. This is why he believes the aspects that explain why the process of teaching/learning about war proves so difficult are:

▪ Parts of our history have been excluded out of fear of controversy. Besolí [6] indicates that the political and ideological component present in war has a negative impact on its inclusion in the cultural offer or its use as an educational resource, to the point that it may interfere in the historic, and therefore scientific, treatment of the same.

- The economicist approaches consider wars to be anecdotic elements within what really matters.
- In the creation of nation-states, war takes centre stage, in contrast to the neighbour's reality. Wars are taught with this nationalist undertone that fosters the development of bonds in the collective "us" [7]. The contrary reaction to that war story, will show it in a militaristic light and therefore something negative that has to be avoided.
- Pacifism, in the development of a culture for peace has pointed to war as an element to be eliminated in historical practise. Wars are manifested in a living spectacle that reflects human suffering [8].

Further to these aspects, we may ask ourselves whether there is any need to explain and analyse violent conflicts or wars in either formal or informal education. The answer is a resounding yes; the aspects mentioned are not reason enough to exclude wars and conflicts from education. Conflict enables us to see other points of view, accepting diversity or cultural, religious and ideological differences, while learning to be more tolerant and to manage our thoughts and feelings [9].

We are direct heirs of battles and their outcomes, as history has been determined by the events of the past, including battles. The organisation of the space we live in at present has been historically organised by the outcomes of these battles. Hence, they are essential to understand our present. The dichotomy idealising self and conceptualising the other [10], that separates us into "goodies and baddies" or positions events between right, ours, and wrong, those carried out by the enemy, needs to be avoided. While the past may frequently have been decided on the battlefield, the study of war has been based on the analysis of the specific facts with the decisions made by its leaders from a simplistic and easily understood perspective [1]. John Keegan [11] broke away from this dynamic in an attempt to understand the development of war, but also of the people who took part in it by focusing on other types of factors. Conflicts represent far more than a series of battles, as components of a different nature, such as social or economic, have a strong presence in them. "If one is unable to regard war as a function of particular forms of social and political organization and particular stages of historical development, one will not be able to conceive of even the possibility of a world without war" [12]. Authors such as Leandro Martínez [13] explain how war affects all the aspects and bonds of a community and threatens the survival of the State. Yet at the same time, it also goes so far as to become the cause of the development of society itself:

> In the face of the terrible human consequences every armed conflict brings, making it the least desirable of all the phenomena caused by mankind as a whole, the influence wars exert on societies has been, is—and most probably will unfortunately continue to be—highly varied, worsening and even annihilating many aspects and serving to develop others, occasionally with beneficial effects. It should not be forgotten that the origins of blood transfusions, painkillers or the Internet can be found in the attempts to meet different needs generated by war in the societies that gave rise to them [13] (p. 5) ("Frente a las terribles consecuencias humanas que todo conflicto bélico lleva aparejado, y que lo convierten en el más indeseable de todos los fenómenos generados por la humanidad, a nivel colectivo, el influjo que las guerras ejercen sobre las sociedades ha sido y es –y cabe pensar que, por desgracia, seguirá siendo- muy variado, deteriorando e incluso aniquilando muchos aspectos y sirviendo para desarrollar otros, en ocasiones con efectos beneficiosos. No olvidemos que las transfusiones de sangre, los calmantes o Internet tuvieron su origen en los intentos de satisfacer diferentes necesidades impuestas por la guerra a las sociedades que les dieron origen.").

From the present-day perspective, we must, in a critical way, underline the cruelty of war, but we cannot transfer this to the historical plane as we would be ignoring the mindset of the time [1]. The correlation between war, law, technology, religion or politics is so close that we cannot forget it when speaking of history as its influence is undeniable.

Manuela Fernández [14] reminds us how, for certain authors, war is politics continued in other mediums.

Although antimilitarist reactions link war to the formation of nations, it is important to remember that societies participated in and suffered conflicts prior to the existence of the current-day political foundations. For a long time, war was seen as the only solution presented by leaders in the face of conflicts, whether out of habit or because war was to the taste of society, with its fascination for adventure, danger or extreme violence [10]. This notion of rendering leaders or part of the population responsible has been criticised by García [1], who claims it is a form of criminalising the same rather than trying to understand the values and mindsets of each era, which is what should truly interest us about a war. The fact that these education for peace policies have allowed war to disappear from education is contradictory given that its presence on social media, television, films, comics or video games has grown owing to society's interest in the subject [1]. This interest is understandable given the relevance the listener finds in national histories [15], including wars, as they identify with them. This may explain why young people, in studies of what they know about their past and specifically about important events linked to world conflicts, engage with these national histories, imbuing them with meaning in a complex and critical way [16].

A change in the approach from an aesthetic dimension to a critical dimension must be considered. It is possible to promote both historical thinking and critical thinking through history, participating in an education that acts a driver of human rights. Conflicts are one more element of the past through which we can learn to decipher the present, in addition to understanding the world and ourselves better [2]. There is no need to fear including war and conflict in the classroom, or out of, it given that they work towards peace, as long as they are not approached from ideological perspectives. López Facal [17] insists that the wars that marked our history must be explained and that conflicts should not be hidden, as by explaining them we develop the capacity to defend our own points of view, while also respecting the opponent's. This fosters critical thinking, which as Hernàndez Cardona y Rojo [3] indicate, combines with the idea of making a denouncement in favour of peace through knowledge about war and its context.

These ideological perspectives must be avoided in our approach to conflicts as history, like science, should not be manipulated for partisan purposes. On the contrary, scientific knowledge must form the basis of our work, using past evidence to obtain it, with a view to developing educational proposals.

3. Reflections on the Teaching of Medieval War in Spanish Education

Although this research revolves around the informal educational context, it is nonetheless important to associate the start of the research with a series of epistemological reflections on how war in the Middle Ages is taught in formal Spanish education, specifically in primary and middle education. There is no doubt that the epistemological assumption of the teacher lies behind the nature of the teaching type they will implement. The scientific paradigm chosen will determine the selection and filtering of contents, the methodological resources or the design of the curricular elements needed to evaluate the teaching/learning processes [18,19]. The predominant theory in our education programme or design will form the backbone of the knowledge bases that in turn allow us to answer three fundamental questions that every formal educational fact must address: what is being taught, why is it being taught and for what purpose is it being taught [20]. In light of these reflections, it is necessary to clarify that the study of how war is taught in primary and middle education in Spain, whether obligatory or not, has been overwhelmingly conditioned by this paradigm.

If we accept that in recent years the Social Sciences teaching has partially focused on educating towards a critical citizenship [21–23] and the adoption of democratic values [24] it is also true that, based on different hypotheses and epistemological approaches, war, adorned with all its current and historical accessories, requires a very specific type of treatment to be included in the new curricular plans [1,25]. These authors, based on the

approach that supports knowledge of history through Social Sciences education, allude to "The historical perspective in the construction of democracy, the historical memory and historical awareness as a consciousness of time; that is, the relationships between the past, the present and the future", as a capital element in the construction of a youth with democratic values" [24] (p. 359) ("La perspectiva histórica en la construcción de la democracia, la memoria histórica y la conciencia histórica como conciencia temporal, es decir, las relaciones entre el pasado, el presente y el futuro", como un elemento capital en la construcción de una juventud con valores democráticos"). It is also a fact that the teaching of war tends to be omitted from these plans. In reality, it appears obvious that if war is currently filtered in among the curricular contents or even the methodological processes to educate in citizenship and in democratic values in primary and middle education it is precisely as a pretext to contribute to this education in citizenship. Thus, bringing contemporary war processes such as the Spanish Civil War or the Second World War into the classroom is justified by that interrelationship with it. Nonetheless, in this case war is used as an argumentative vessel for an educational task that, though close to it, is at the same time removed from it. It is worth noting how different this would be if we were to consider studying the 14th-century War of the Two Peters for the same purpose. Therefore, the inclusion of armed conflicts within the curricular contents to educate in these values will logically be limited to contemporary facts linked to our own current paradigm of citizenship.

Nonetheless, if we define a working space in which to position war among the contents to teach within Social Sciences, it must irrefutably be included in the History syllabus. In this context, however, it is our belief that there is a tendency to make two errors. The first lies in the fact that at present war is not taught unless a specific conflict is fundamental within a series of specific contents from a specific period. That is, war processes or conflicts are not mentioned if they are not of capital importance to understanding the historical context and, evidently, the war phenomenon is not prioritised over other paradigms of primary learning such as the economy, society, the arts or other aspects currently included in the Social Sciences and History contents of the Spanish syllabus. Related aspects are covered in the study by Lopez, Carretero & Rodriguez-Moneo [26], linked to the teaching and construction of identity-building or national discourses through the prolonged war campaign of the *Reconquista*. However, this approach must be considered erroneous insofar as it separates war from other historical processes that are not understood without it, approaching the study of history through sealed and isolated compartments. In fact, the war-related phenomena are behind a large part of the historical changes and the explanation of the same, yet when it comes to teaching history they are relegated as accessory elements in the belief that it would be better if they hadn't existed, when, paradoxically, even if it weighs on us, they have made us who we are.

The second error is the direct denial or elimination of the conflict from any educational programme. Behind this debate lies the false belief that to educate for peace it is essential not to explain what war is [27]. As Capmany, González y Marín state:

> If we are incapable of breaking away from these ideas we will be collaborating in the justification of imperialism. The educational discourse built around war as an axis of history becomes one more tool in the service of power. Thus, we will be strengthening the national arrogance that justifies the dominion or exclusion of some over others. We will, in short, be blessing the flags of those who lay the ground for a war: a mass killing [28] (p. 22) ("Si no somos capaces de romper con estas claves estaremos colaborando en la justificación del imperialismo. El discurso pedagógico construido alrededor de la guerra como eje de la historia se convierte en un instrumento más al servicio del poder. Así, estaremos reforzando la soberbia nacional que justifica el dominio o la exclusión de los unos sobre los otros. Estaremos, en definitiva, bendiciendo las banderas de los que preparan el camino a lo que es una guerra: un asesinato en masa.")

Many education professionals forget that to educate is not to incite. Television, video games or certain inappropriate online contents may show outrageous scenes of violence, though that is a subject for a different debate, yet if we deprive students of the only weapon that will enable them to discover and learn reflectively what violence was and what it meant, we will be paving the way for these extracurricular stimuli.

All these issues arise as a by-product of an epistemological approach in which didactic mediation makes the mistake of not detaching itself, of previously judging the story to prevent the students from doing so themselves. It is, in that moment, tarnishing the educational fact with the teacher's personal beliefs or values [29]. It is our opinion that to teach is to foster the development of tools for reflection, critical thinking and knowledge construction, not to insert previously digested learnings. In the majority of cases, war is hidden due to a series of criteria that fall within the second and, in our view mistaken, option.

War entails too many aspects interwoven into human nature itself, however dull that may sound. It combines a violent dimension, replete with anti-values, with a social, economic, technological or thinking-related, and therefore humanistic, dimension. The study of wars is an irreplaceable tool for the development of critical thinking and reflection on conflict-solving. In fact, as some authors have indicated, to educate in conflict implies positioning it head-on. Cascón Soriano separated the "preventive" actions of this school context into three phrases: "An appropriate explanation of the conflict, including its human dimension. A knowledge of the structural changes necessary to eliminate its causes. And a promotion of conditions that create the right climate and favour cooperative relations that decrease the risk of new outbreaks, learning to tackle and resolve the contradictions before they become antagonisms" [30] (p. 14). ("Una explicación adecuada del conflicto, incluyendo su dimensión humana. Un conocimiento de los cambios estructurales necesarios para eliminar sus causas. Y una promoción de condiciones que creen un clima adecuado y favorezcan unas relaciones cooperativas que disminuya el riesgo de nuevos estallidos, aprendiendo a tratar y solucionar las contradicciones antes de que lleguen a convertirse en antagonismos"). The use of dynamics to analyse the causes of wars may give rise to spaces for reflection and debate that strengthen negotiation capacity, empathy or the establishment of convention models for the resolution of an imminent conflict; for thinking, from a more general perspective, historically [31,32]. Educational resources which are, therefore, educating for peace ("[. . .] peace is more than just the absence of war." [33] (p. 3)).

The complexity of the military, social, economic or institutional prolegomena of a conflict can serve to develop skills like no other case of historical models offers. Hence, at the end of the day war constitutes the consummation of human violence and, therefore, can help us educate to prevent it [34]. It is not a question of showing the horrors of war, but of guiding a teaching/learning process based on past war phenomena that enables the construction of a framework for student reflection on the scope of human suffering, with a view to preventing violence in general. In this regard, the social repercussion wars have on the population is particularly interesting. According to Moreno-Vera, raising the visibility of people who have suffered war is very positive for students, allowing them to reflect on the consequences for the civil population. It gives rise to subjects such as shortages, prices or even the conceptualisation of the woman [35].

On the other hand, a lack of knowledge about military history from a holistic perspective tends to, perhaps deliberately, repudiate the fact that it houses a heterogeneous array of dimensions, not only relating to violence, reprehensible human conduct or suffering. The convergence of the violent encounters of all armed conflicts have contributed some of the most complex, lucid and brilliant passages to the history of human thinking. Military genius has served to develop profound strategic reflections to confront problems of military inferiority, the prolongation of ceasefires, the obtainment of economic resources, the growth of logistics foundations, adverse orography, negotiation, geopolitics, and an endless list of considerations innate to the field of military strategy that may serve as models to develop the strategic thinking of students. Today, the world's main military academies use these mechanisms to develop the best strategic thinking of future commands,

giving rise to real processes in which the *cognoscenti* must tackle challenges that allow them to reach satisfactory solutions, in the majority of cases on historical hypotheses that actually happened. These mechanisms, adapted for the purposes of education, constitute methodological tools of the highest level to develop fundamental student competences in the different educational stages. Traditionally, strategic thinking has erroneously been linked to competitiveness, when in reality it consists of a series of universal guidelines that are essential for the development of critical thinking, social relations or the preparation of any citizen to form part of our current societies [36].

Lastly, within these reflections on the teaching of war, we should not forget that the conflicts of the past represent a large part of the cogs that make up identities:

> [. . .] the teaching of history and the creation of (mainly national) identities have been entirely interconnected and largely continue to be. The genesis of this relationship between history and identity lies in the birth of the liberal State and the rise of the nineteenth-century nationalisms. In fact, in practically all western countries the generalisation of history teaching occurred from the first third of the 19th century, when the liberal States and the nationalist programmes started to impose in their educational programmes the teaching of a subject which, from that moment on, would have little to do with the humanist and citizen values it had held in the 18th century [37] (p. 334). ("[. . .] la enseñanza de la historia y la creación de identidades (principalmente nacionales) han estado totalmente ligadas, y en buena parte siguen estándolo. La génesis de esa relación entre historia e identidad se encuentra en el surgimiento del Estado liberal y el auge de los nacionalismos decimonónicos. En efecto, en la práctica totalidad de los países occidentales la generalización de la enseñanza de la historia surge a partir del primer tercio del siglo XIX, cuando los Estados liberales y los movimientos nacionalistas imponen en sus programas educativos la enseñanza de una materia que, a partir de ese momento, poco va a tener de los valores humanistas y de ciudadanía que había tenido en el siglo XVIII.")

It is true that post-modernity has given rise to a balance in the configuration of these, which have gone, or are in the process of going, from being fundamentally national and concomitant with the cultural and ideological precepts of the nation-states, to being considered multiple by certain authors [38]. This process is paving the way for the atomisation of cultural identities in which Social Sciences education plays a very important role [39]. Thus, in the post-modern emergence of territorial identities history tends to constitute a basic and frequent cog, particularly when the national identity models of the 20th century have been splitting into similar paradigms in line with post-modernity. Armed conflicts such as those that took place in Hastings (1066), Las Navas de Tolosa (1212), Aljubarrota (1395) or the Siege of Barcelona (1714) are perfect examples of this identity-building model in themselves, having gained protagonism decades ago in the strategies designed by the powers that be to include public policies relating to this configuration. Thus, whether we like it or not, war continues to form part of the construction of identities. And not only in a school setting, obviously.

The truly fascinating part of studying the cognitive and psychological principles involved in the didactics of history and heritage is that some of the hypotheses in existence since Comenius announced them in the 17th century have been expanded on or consolidated through the psychology of learning in the subsequent centuries, and currently through what we know about educational neuroscience. We now know that, in the different brain development stages from birth to adulthood, including childhood, puberty or adolescence, the brain construction processes experience the opening of what is known as "plastic windows" [40] (p. 40) or "critical periods" [41,42] (p. 20), in which the brain, through exogenous stimuli, builds the mechanisms of the complex cognitive network, including speech, critical thinking, calculation, among many more. Moreover, these windows can in turn be subdivided into "sub-windows" and even "micro windows", meaning the brain is predisposed to construct neuronal pathways and therefore learning in very specific,

and even time-limited, moments more so than others [40]. All of these matters will be essential in the future to train teachers, and to help build methodological structures that combine the psychology of learning with neuroscience.

Going back to the reflections on the actual teaching of war in the classrooms, of all these theories listed so far, a general pattern of justifying the use of principles that create knowledge through the war-related facts of the past and all of their associated dimensions, emerges. The verb used: justify, is not chosen by chance. It would appear that inertia, in spite of ourselves, obliges us to defend epistemological bases rather than enunciating them. This occurs as a consequence of living in a society like the Spanish which is fiercely antimilitaristic. The repudiation of all things war-related in the past tends to hide it, distance it from the present, and also from the school settings, when in reality, as we have said above, it is knowledge of the same that is going to allow us to face up to the future with guarantes. However, there is no doubt that a large part of society abhors war as a whole, without understanding that there are also learnings to be gained from the hard and bitter moments of the past.

In our opinion, the primary factor that triggers a study like this one on how to teach history in the military heritage, is the belief that war is indissoluble as a coadjutant and necessary phenomenon in the comprehension of the long-lasting structures or times. Paradigms such as the heavy feudal cavalry that, like a millpond, absorbed through its origin and military nature all the cracks in the social or economic structures of the High Middle Ages; or gunpowder, that was similarly responsible for bringing about an unprecedented change in structure and mindset that encompassed diverse contexts, are very patent general examples. Theory that works along very similar lines to what Prat puts forward in relation to the historical concepts in the teaching of history: "They have an *intensive dimension*, in so far as they describe a reality in all of its depth, an *extensive dimension* in so far as, with variations, they offer characterisations that are constants in the historical processes, a *time dimension*, in so far as they vary according to the historical period in which they occur and, finally, a *relational dimension*, in so far as they are only explicable in relation to other realities" [43] (p. 46). ("Tienen una dimensión intensiva, en la medida que describen una realidad en toda su profundidad, una dimensión extensiva en cuanto que, con variantes, ofrecen caracterizaciones que son constantes en los procesos históricos, una dimensión temporal, en la medida que varían en función del tiempo histórico en el que se dan y, por último, una dimensión relacional, en la medida que sólo se explican con relación a otras realidades"). The second lies in the pedagogical nature of the so-called centres *of interest.* Medieval war acquires practically hagiographic connotations in the popular mindset, reducing many of its complex elements to images or mental paradigms close to modern societies thanks to literature, film or television. This imaginary is riddled with *includer* links that enable us to provide a methodological frame affecting not only the war phenomenon itself, but also the general historical circumstance behind it.

It was Braudel who put forward the differentiation between short term, medium term or the *conjunctural* and long term or *structure* as fundamental elements of *Historical Time.*

> "[. . .] this inquiry is inevitably destined to end in the determination of social conjunctures (and even structures); and nothing can guarantee in advance that this conjuncture will have the same speed or slowness as the economic" [44] (p. 70). ("[. . .] esta encuesta está abocada forzosamente a culminar en la determinación de coyunturas (y hasta de estructuras) sociales; y nada nos asegura de antemano que esta coyuntura haya de tener la misma velocidad o la misma lentitud que la económica").

The long term would be a lasting construct in time. In general, it is not consciously present among us and serves as a common thread for economic or psychological paradigms involved in the historical cycles. It may go beyond time periods and conventions and transversally explains the changes and permanence of the human being in the past:

The second and far more useful key consists in the word structure. For good or ill, this word dominates the problems of the *longue durée*. By structure, observers of social questions mean an organization, a coherent and fairly fixed series of relationships between realities and social masses. For us historians, a structure is of course a construct, an architecture, but over and above that it is a reality which time uses and abuses over long periods [44] (p. 71) ("La segunda, mucho más útil, es la palabra estructura. Buena o mala, es ella la que domina los problemas de larga duración. Los observadores de lo social entienden por estructura una organización, una coherencia, unas relaciones suficientemente fijas entre realidades y masas sociales. Para nosotros, los historiadores, una estructura es indudablemente un ensamblaje, una arquitectura; pero, más aún, una realidad que el tiempo tarda enormemente en desgastar y en transformar.")

This premise connects with a concept of the future of humanity rooted in historical processes framed between transformations, that *per se* explain historical evolution [45]. Hence, the engagement of mindsets in these processes of change, far from constituting futile determinants, are replete with common threads that form the backbone of such evolutions.

It is therefore irrefutable that an exercise in abstraction in accordance with this theory may attribute the war processes a capacity that few other paradigms can offer. We may even select more or less general, or more or less trivial elements as links or points of departure through which to teach the changes in the history of Humanity. A battle, a highly strategic defensive space or a military object—the spur, the stirrup, the sword—may represent the genesis of the reflection processes needed to understand the long-term historical constructs [46]. Through these, more complex paradigms may be introduced to explain the changes that have occurred in economic, social or cultural *conjunctures* or *structures*. The interconnection of war with these elements is a highly valuable methodological tool.

This approach associated with war paradigms—or rather the humanistic dimension around war—to contextualise more complex or longer-lasting historical processes finds a very powerful ally in the theory of the *centres of interest.* This is a method coined by Ovide Decroly, midway between the 19th and the 20th centuries, the application of which includes the consideration that the student perceives the elements of reality through the *principle of globalization,* which tends to condense information or interpret what they are seeing as a whole before focusing on its parts or details [47]. Santacana and Llonch worked on this epistemological basis from the perspective of Social Sciences education for the development of methodologies under the didactics of the object [48,49].

4. War in the Middle Ages: Informal Education and Historical Reenactment

A contextualisation of the conceptual framework on the didactics of conflict and the didactics of war, in addition to the state of the Spanish question in: Español [50]. They mainly include defensive spaces, but also others such as battle fields or war scenes (camps, prisons, destroyed towns or villages, hospitals . . .), selected on the intuition of those involved as "sensitive, vulnerable or geostrategic" points [5]. Battle fields have become a controversial resource for the teaching of history and landscape in countries such as the United States of America, Great Britain, France or Belgium [51]. These landscapes hold evocative power as spaces for memory and oblivion, as points of reference for identity that constitute wounds or celebrations within a community [52]. Which is why the search for these scenarios is becoming increasingly common, even the old roads and entrance ways [53].

The educational possibilities of defensive spaces in which the biggest advances and learnings of each era were applied in their construction and improvement, using all the resources available for this purpose, are of enormous interest to us. For Cuenca [54] the castles and forts are among the most evocative for society when it comes to monumental heritage. The grandeur and power they communicate render them remarkable resources for the learning of history and, in particular, for the comprehension of social conflicts.

MacManus [55] points out the need to visit battle grounds. By travelling those places related to conflicts the visitor is able to imbue them with a material substance and a personal view, in turn gaining a better understanding of the past. The first-person experience makes it possible to delve deeper into the concepts, acquire the procedures and work the values. Of great interest is the proposal put forward by Cuenca [54], in relation to the Andalusian fortifications, where he positions the castles as centres of interest in the educational processes. These educational processes make it possible to cover the concepts related to said fortifications, that cannot be understood without these defensive or geostrategic processes innate to the conflicts [1]. They also allow for procedures such as the handling of historical information sources, fieldwork, spatial location or spatial measurement to be worked on. Finally, by working on values we also include all those attitudes such as education for peace, coexistence, respect for different cultures or the preservation of heritage [56], mentioned above and also reflected by Jaén [57]. This experience places the student at the centre of the learning process, as explained by Sáenz del Castillo [58], bringing them close to the historical aspects of everyday life that are omitted from the great narratives. Raising the value of these cultural landscapes may generate a very valuable learning of history and the territory, while also attracting economic resources in a historical-cultural tourism context [51].

The experiential analysis of scenarios and protagonists awakens emotions, values [58–60] and positionings of empathy that lead to increased learning motivation. This historical perspective is essential when it comes to promoting comprehension of the story, putting oneself in the shoes of a character from the past to understand their attitudes and motivations [61,62]. The necessity of an emotional engagement within the exercises of historical empathy is subject to debate [63], between those claiming the emotional component leads to a better understanding [1,61], and those who attribute it a more cognitive component, given that this emotional engagement does not constitute a form of Historical Thinking [35,62].

When analysing these heritage remains, archaeology is essential and becomes a useful tool that, as Santacana [60] points out, enables us to understand our existence, with a common, shared past that we descend from. It fosters active learning using investigation and discovery as systems that awaken motivation and curiosity [64]. Archaeology is furthermore attractive for the viewer, regardless of age, developing imagination capacity while also facilitating the introduction of historical thinking [60]. Seixas y Morton emphasise the importance of presenting this historical thinking to students to help them learn to manage the past. Furthermore, "learning to think critically about the mistakes and horrors of the past contributes to development of student's historical consciousness" [65] (p. 171).

While traditionally archaeology has been associated with the oldest times in our history, in reality it is a science that is perfectly useful for more recent times [59]. For the subject at hand, there is a subfield of archaeology known as conflict archaeology, that investigates the heritage remains linked to violent conflicts over the course of history. Hernández Cardona [66] points out that this archaeology focuses on wars, battles and fortifications, and on those collateral aspects that may prove interesting and revealing [67,68] in sites such as shelters, destroyed zones, graves [69], areas of repression . . . Conflict archaeology is a response to the deterioration of the heritage associated with war-related events, with the aim of documenting, interpreting, preserving and spreading them [58].

While a great deal remains to be defined and polished in archaeological research, very significant advances have been made with the development of very specific techniques and methods to recover and record evidence of conflict and interpret how the battles occurred [70]. Yet it is important to bear in mind that, as Hernàndez Cardona y Rojo [3] explain, the material remains generated may be very diverse and come from different conflicts, they may even not be proportional to the importance of the same. Quesada [71] warns of the risk of impoverishing the scientific discourse and research by compartmentalising according to specific interests. In spite of these warnings, advances have been made in these subfields, allowing them to gain ever-increasing protagonism in the 21st century, concentrating on modern or contemporary periods. This proximity has led to

a very significant political component affecting it which, according to authors such as Hernàndez Cardona [66] is inappropriate and may detract historical rigour. The celebration of battlefield and conflict congresses in countries like Scotland, Sweden, the United States or England, since the year 2000, has allowed this speciality to advance even further, with the use of new analytical techniques and *geographic information systems* (GIS) in data collection. Studies such as those conducted by Spennemann demonstrate the possibilities resulting from the use of new technologies applied to the study of old battle fields, in this case the Second World War [72]. At the same time, it has grown chronologically to encompass any other history period, including prehistory, to study the development of battles [70,73]. The explanation of this type of heritage remains can pose a veritable challenge for the educator, both in formal and informal education, but to manage it, as Feliú [59] states, means being able to form a historical consciousness that enables participation in society and collective decision-making in the community.

Archaeology, however, has not only permitted the study of these memory spaces from the perspective of immovable property elements but also the analysis of the movable property heritage, with objects and artefacts that speak of the conflict itself, and of the people who experienced it. Santacana y Llonch [49] demonstrate how the object has very extensive educational possibilities, establishing a series of benefits resulting from them being primary and secondary sources, from being real and tangible, for fostering imagination and being *inclusors of the mind*, while also being motivational. To understand the development of a conflict, the utensils and participants of the same need to be considered, as the weapons, the weapons of siege [74,75], the saddles and even the technology applied to the foodstuffs will be decisive for its outcome [1]. The detailed study of aspects such as weaponry makes it possible to understand the possible adopted strategy and the role and lifestyle of the individual in war [70]. In the event of more modern conflicts this weaponry may still be preserved *in situ*, with the problems the presence of major complexes or weaponry from countries in geographic locations that do not fall under their jurisdiction can cause for the conservation of the same. Management of this heritage becomes difficult, even more so if it is fruit of treaties resulting from conflicts solved via negotiation, which is why supra-national organisations should be responsible for it [76]. This information enhances and completes the rest of the historical sources, such as documentary records or oral sources.

How can we be capable of joining the defensive spaces, the real or reproduced archaeological objects that appear in them, the data provided by conflict archaeology and put together an educational proposal of the highest standard?

At present, cultural habits of leisure and consumption have given rise to different ways of investing our free time, creating service industries in which, in the majority of cases, the public administrations have taken on a significant guiding and promotional role. This is the case of the culture industry of historical festivals and evocations, consolidated in the last two decades as models of local identity and tradition, which in the case of the Southern European countries has acquired peculiarities of its own [77].

In the last two decades, the Iberian Peninsula has experienced a remarkable increase in the proliferation of these events; the so-called historical festivals. In Spain, the media and public bodies also call them historical reenactments, unlike other European countries which dissociate the two concepts from an institutional and scientific perspective [77–80]. Historical festivals, though present in the majority of European countries, are a very typical product of the Mediterranean and Southern European states. Ultimately, they are a way of interpreting the phenomenon of commemorating the past through an autochthonous lens. Festivals and fun are innate signs of identity of the Mediterranean culture, which is why it is not surprising that even the distinctions and titles given to these events by various state levels is that of *"Fiesta de Interés"* (Festival of Interest). The street emerges as the place for meeting and fun, taking advantage of the past and identity to generate social and cultural projects with citizen-determined organisational criteria, with different degrees of specialisation.

Such events are structured according to the organisational criteria of the local authorities and volunteers. Their goals tend to be to boost local and territorial commerce and tourism. This model contributes to the creation of groups of local volunteers who act under the structure of tourist or cultural associations and private events management and promotion entities [81].

On the other hand, it's important to differentiate what is internationally known as historical reenactment. In Spain, though still in the early stages of growth, it is increasingly conducted on the basis of criteria grounded almost entirely in philanthropy. We understand that historical reenactment is "the practise of reconstructing uses, customs, material culture and aspects of the past in accordance with strictly scientific guidelines, to attain objectives of cultural dissemination and education" [82] (p. 335). ("La práctica de reconstruir usos, costumbres, cultura material y aspectos del pasado a partir de pautas taxativamente científicas, para lograr objetivos relacionados con la divulgación cultural y la educación"). Nonetheless, it is important to understand that for a while now the investigative dimension of this discipline has been gaining ground [74,83,84], although it does allow the inclusion of the experimental method within the historical method, the scope of which tends to be somewhat limited by the finitude of sources. Historical reenactment is therefore different to other manifestations related to history that lack this scientific framework and the irrefutable dissemination factor [78,85–87].

This discipline has proved itself to be a method capable of placing tools for reflection on the past at the disposal of different audiences [86]. This premise suggests that the study and preservation of heritage is insufficient; without the dissemination and democratisation of historical knowledge, a large part of its cultural and social value is lost [88]. Additionally, it advocates an irrefutable social function: it not only consists of disseminating and interpreting history, but the heritage it has bequeathed to us must be preserved and handed down in the future as part of our identity [80,89–92].

Historical reenactment in the south of Europe and specifically the countries of the Iberian Peninsula is undergoing a slow but progressive transformation towards academicism in the reconstruction of cultural material. Nonetheless, in spite of this progress, it is important to consider that in many aspects it tends to persist in its omittance of fundamental factors that are inherent to it beyond the capital element consistent of applying a historical method for said reconstruction. These factors are those relating to its educational activity, in both the formal and informal setting. Our point of departure, as researchers, is the consideration that the groups responsible for the reenactment which work with governmental bodies and other managers of educational or heritage centres show knowledge of that which they are recreating, but tend to lack the methodological resources relating to heritage education. This results in a number of consequences, like disconnection for example, from the perspective of formal education, the curricular contents relating to cultural material and what is shown in the different periods recreated.

When in museums or heritage sites knowledge is socialised or there is education in conflicts—particularly those of the Middle Ages, the subject at hand—through historical reenactment, our initial experience tells us that the segmentation and isolation of the contents relating to armed conflicts result in a discordant discourse, often taking it out of the context of the historical period in which it occurred. Similarly, the clichés and influences of popular culture taint the discourse with truisms and trite concepts, which at the same time blur the reality of the conflict and the medieval war, tending towards trivialisation or a normalisation that impels a lack of reflection [79].

In any case, one of the general challenges faced by these heritage education and historical reenactment projects in the coming years is to develop permeability between the academic, heritage and museum contexts. This connection will allow the discipline to mutate towards higher quality projects. Because the attainment of higher degrees of specialisation in historical rigour, heritage discourses or complex scientific subjects does not mean that the public is incapable of accessing them; in reality, the specialisation of the educators and exponents behind this will be capable of converting this complexity

into accessible, meticulous, educational and digestible programmes for all types of public without losing a serious cultural motivation, worthy of an advanced society.

Nonetheles, it is important to remember that reenactment in Spain is still far from a direct relationship between transference, the academic world and a collegial educational effort alongside the government bodies. As we have mentioned above, the vast majority of the reenactors see the discipline as a hobby. Its exponents do not yet form part of official education or museum projects for which they would receive grants or official commissions. The consequence of this is that in the majority of cases, their educational activities—if there are any—do not tend to be subject to professional requirements or regulated demands. Similarly, the joint work done between university departments or research projects with these reenactment groups remains insufficient, although it has increased slightly in recent years.

The relationship with Spanish museums is also still minority. Nonetheless, we are starting to see some groups increasingly collaborate with museum-related institutions. It is also true that, for the subject at hand, reenactment of the Middle Ages in its role of providing educational support to museums lags far behind that of other eras, such as Classical Antiquity or the Napoleonic Wars [79]. In any case, these groups rarely offer educational projects of their own when collaborating with museums, or adaptations of contents to fit the audience characteristics, or any other methodological elements innate to heritage education. These are new challenges the discipline must rise to in the future. At present, all of these issues have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic which has led to the inactivity of the majority of the groups involved in medieval reenactment, or to smaller but minority activities online. In general, the philosophy ruling reenactment activity in Spain during the pandemic has been to wait for better times.

5. Materials and Methods

The analysis of informal education in the area of medieval war through historical reenactment in heritage sites has been conducted as a study based on fieldwork focusing on a specific group, in its role as heritage educator: the historical reenactors. It is, therefore, an evaluation of the didactic method applied by these educators, either individually or following group action processes, in the educational usage of the heritage representation spaces, specifically those linked to the military past in the Middle Ages, following, in this case, the lines of research in Didactics of the Social Sciences put forward by Prats [93].

The methodology has consisted of an anonymous survey of different members of reenactments groups and associations, to understand how the medieval war discourse is built in the different heritage settings where they act, which socially-acquired disruptive elements are present in these discourses, and how this informal education contributes to a significant learning, education for peace or the development of historical competences in the area of citizen education. The survey was designed in Google Forms with five different sections covering: the general information; the perspective of the reenactor; the contribution of reenactment to history and heritage; the teaching of history through historical reenactment; and the teaching of war. Respondents were informed that participation was voluntary and implied consent for responses to be used to research the value of historical reenactment in teaching history and specifically teaching medieval war. Likewise, they were also informed that the data was anonymous and would be erased from the web on conclusion of the research. The survey was distributed via the social media of the actual reenactment groups that collaborated to ensure they reached the maximum number of people possible, establishing a time limit for the acceptance of responses.

Specifically, the reenactmentist educators who participated in the study are those who partake in the heritage education actions conducted yearly in three of the most noteworthy castles in the region of Aragon (Spain): the castle of Monzón (Huesca), the castle of Peracense (Teruel) and the castle of Loarre (Huesca). Thus, although the reenactors may form part of other educational projects pertaining to other specific eras, this study focused on those operating in poliorcetic heritage sites from between the 11th and the 14th centuries.

The study model through an anonymous questionnaire has been based on the implementation of a qualitative information collection tool in relation to the research goals established. Processing of the information obtained was organised according to a database with qualitative categories closely and directly relating to the research questions. The information was generated using graphs and tables for a structural analysis of the research itself, on the one hand, and as the development and publication of the results of the same, on the other. Hence, its analysis has inevitably been conducted in direct association with the objectives and the considerations prior to the study.

A series of imporant prerogatives were taken into account in the design of both questionnaire and study. The first being that it has been appraised and validated by a committee of experts in the subject. The research and questionnaire have been positively reviewed and evaluated by a committee of researchers linked to the research group the main researchers belong to, and the university institute this group is located in. The group and its team have extensive research experience in informal education, museum studies and educommunication; the comments of this appraisal have been included in the final modifications and result of the questionnaire. Additionally, though not an element of clinical research, this questionnaire has been designed in accordance with the criteria, general principles and requirements of the Declaration of Helsinki on the ethical principles for medical research involving human beings.

6. Results

One hundred fifteen people collaborated in the questionnaire with a large majority of males (82 of them), all of adult age, the largest age group being that of 26 to 45 years-old (50 of the respondents). Although 57% have been carrying out historical reenactment for over 5 years and participating in over 3 events per year, except this last year due to the pandemic situation, the majority do not have a work relationship with historical reenactment, or even with heritage. In spite of this, over 58% adopt great professionalism, trying to live like someone from the era, some even replicating the practises, attitudes and linguistic usages of the period being recreated.

The first data yielded by the study worthy of consideration informs us that the relationship between the exponents and the discipline is philanthropic, not professional. This may contribute to an understanding of some of the aspects linked to the educational approach used for military heritage and the war-related past in these teaching/learning settings. In any case, and in spite of this, the respondents indicate that they take a professional approach to the praxis in relation to the documentation of the cultural material and the real objectives of the educational intention that historical reenactment promotes. This aspect, however, affects the answers relating to educational planning and management of the educational contexts and situations generated during their practise. In the reenactments that questionnaire respondents participate in, both the use of the theatre and the performance of the characters, as well as the presence of a *cicerone* to explain the scenes recreated are prioritised almost equally, though the latter holds a slight advantage (Figure 1). Nonetheless, when they decide the importance of both options for a good reenactment, 72.2% consider the figure of the mediator to be recommendable, while the presence of closed scripts is more controversial, with the maximum number of opinions taking a neutral stance and leaning slightly more towards the opinion of considering them unnecessary (Figure 2). Thus, the reenactors tend to consider the use of an educational mediator a necessary resource in the educational process, acknowledging the benefits of the theatrical performance, but also considering the one-way nature of their discourse. 80% considers interaction between the reenactor and the audience fundamental, while 87% allows the public to use, experiment with and handle the reenactment material, specifically that relating to war, under their supervision. When asked about the public reenactment model that tends to be used in the events participated in, with regards to that contact with the public, 39.1% subscribe and adapt to the way in which the organisers have arranged the museum discourse and the contact with the audience. 27% recreate their scenes and offer

individualised explanations, either when the audience requires information or on the initiative of the reenactors themselves. Those who wait for the audience to congregate around their scene or set to develop explanations, workshops or a specific museum discourse, constitute 13%. Finally, 20.9% do the same, but having previously assessed the knowledge level of their audience about what they are going to explain (Figure 3). Thus, the possible professional gaps in the design and implementation of museum discourses are observed when the reenactors tend to mould themselves to fit the organisational plan of the heritage site they are operating in, adapting more to its museum or exhibition criteria, in spite of the fact that when it comes to their own praxis, the majority prepare and sequence the museum discourse of what they are going to show or explain -60.7%-.
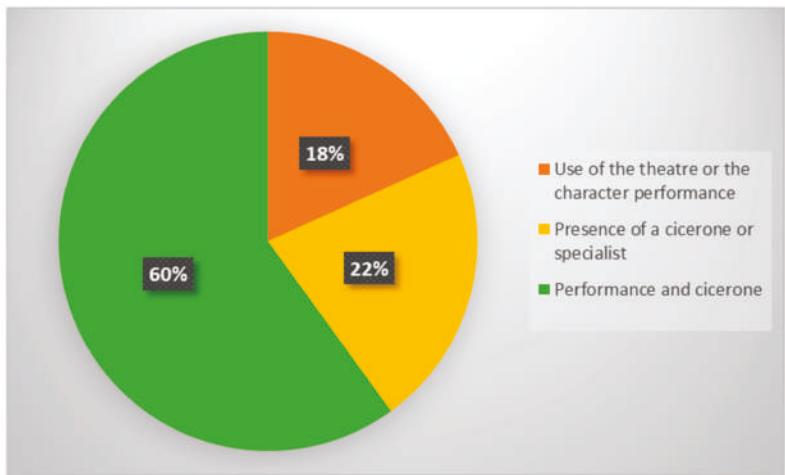

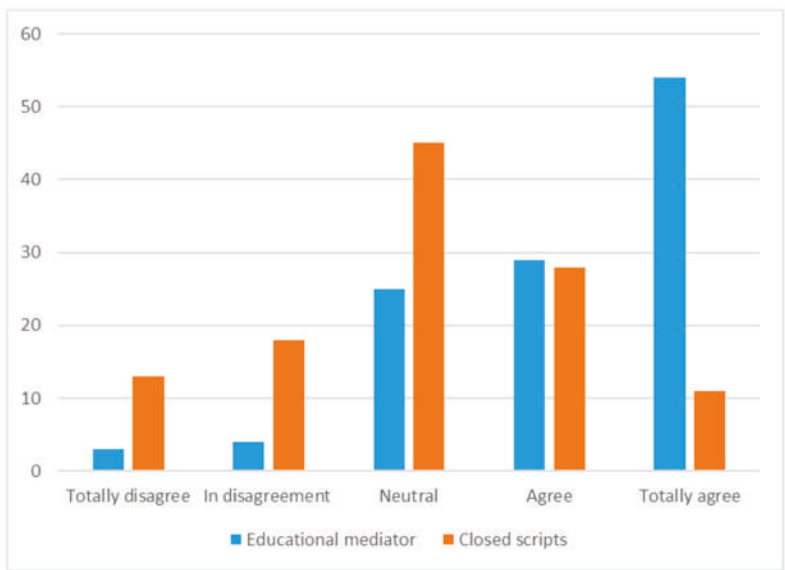**Figure 1.** Fundamental method in knowledge transmission.

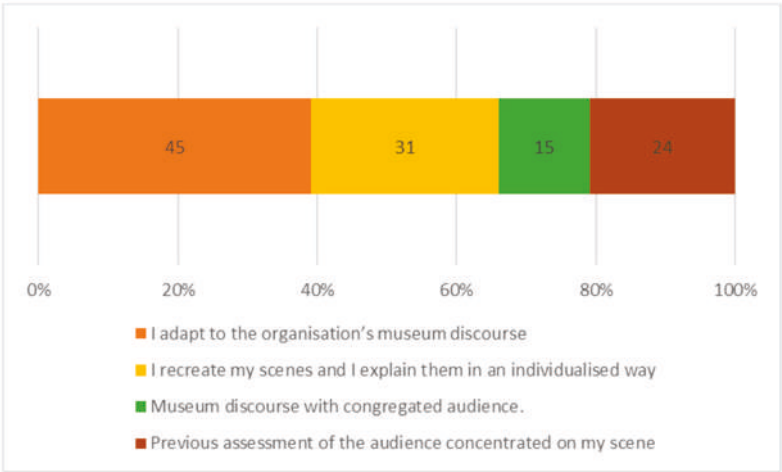**Figure 2.** Mediation between the reenactment and audience.

Figure 3. Model of public reenactment in the mediation.

Of the respondents, 46% believe the historical reenactment focuses on epic passages of the military past, compared to 22.6% who think they also highlight other types of elements (Figure 4). When the reenactors who have participated in the survey were asked about rigour in different aspects of the reenactment, they mention that military life and its material culture, with 86.9%, or the poliorcetic, with 66.1%, is developed or highly developed, compared to other facets such as diet (46.1%), music (29.6%) or the linguistic (19.1%) (Figure 5). The reenactors are capable of observing very clear differences between aspects that form part of the reenactment in relation to how rigorous they are. This demonstrates that the same level of care is not applied to all these aspects, those relating to war being the most meticulously cared for.
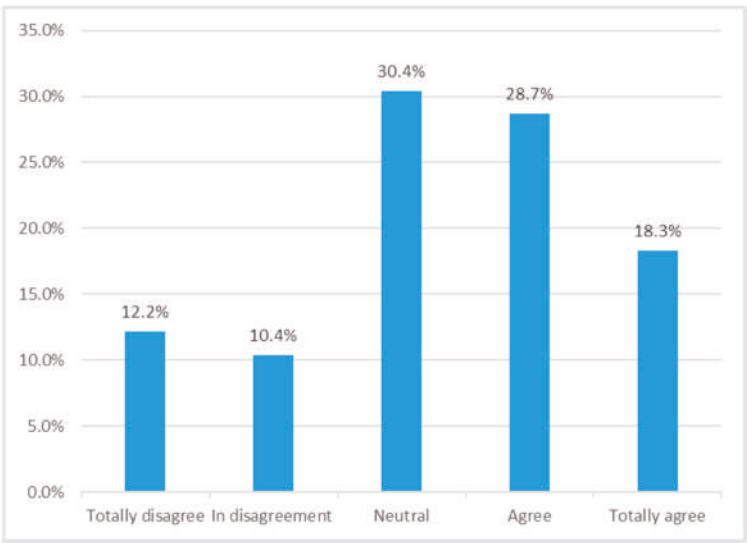

Figure 4. Historical reenactment focuses mainly on epic and glorious aspects and passages of the medieval military past.
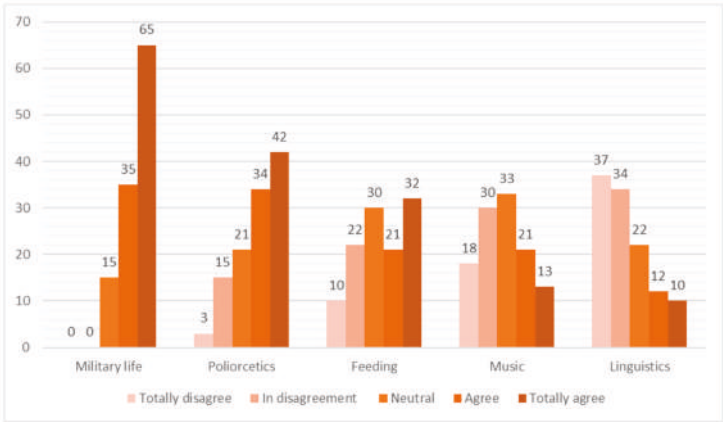
Figure 5. Rigour of the different aspects of the reenactment.

When asked the question, 'Is reenactment *per se*, without intermediation, capable of explaining complex historical structures?', the possible answers are very closely matched, but with 55.7% of negative answers. Nonetheless, 94.8% of these reenactors consider historical reenactment capable of complementing the teaching of more complex historical structures on war in the Middle Ages—such as structural causes and consequences, characteristics of a war-related phenomenon, military strategies, etc.—and is not exclusively limited to the cultural material it recreates. The answers acknowledge that reenactment alone cannot educate in said matters but, at the same time, indicate that it may have real educational possibilities, as long as it is used as a complementary tool in the educational process.

Within a historical reenactment event, the reenactors highlight interactivity as being fundamental (80%), they believe it awakens emotion in the spectator and the reenactor themself (94.8%) and allows them to understand the emotions and actions of the people from the past (80%). But when asked to choose which is most effective as an educational resource they opt for interactivity, with 61.7% preferring the reenactors to interact with the audience, either through dialogue and reflective processes—asking questions, conversing, allowing elements to be handled . . . —or performance processes. 25.2% prefer the use of empathy, attempting to get the audience to adopt the perspective of those who lived in a certain period in time. Finally, 13% prefer the use of emotions to explain and show elements of the past, causing the audience to engage with the educational process (Figure 6).
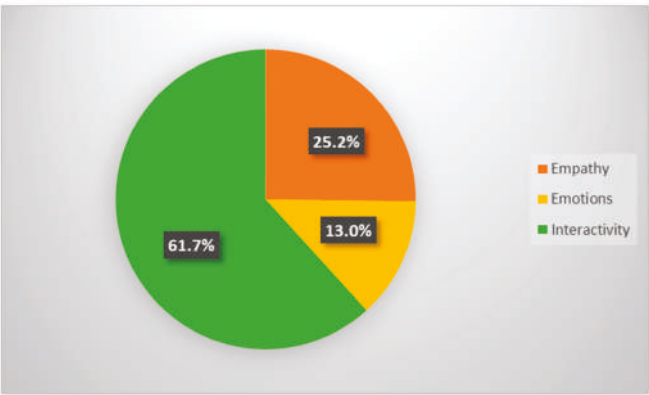

Figure 6. Most effective educational resources.

In relation to the teaching of medieval war through historical reenactment in heritage settings, we can state that 81.8% agree or completely agree with it taking place in the actual scenarios—battlefields, monuments, archaeological sites . . . —in which the history occurred. Precisely because of the fact that they took place in historical military sites and under the auspices of scientific methods, 60% of respondents state that historical reenactment must prioritise war education over other resources such as video games, literature or film or, at least be positioned on the same level (28.7%). Some even consider their practise a pastime without any investigative or educational faculties (11.3%) (Figure 7). Said results, in our opinion, reflect the stagnation between the professionalism/philanthropism that characterises historical reenactment. In a way, it is identifying the inability of a sector of the discipline to consider itself qualified to educate in the subject of war through its practise, whether conscious of the complexity and difficulty of the former, or not.
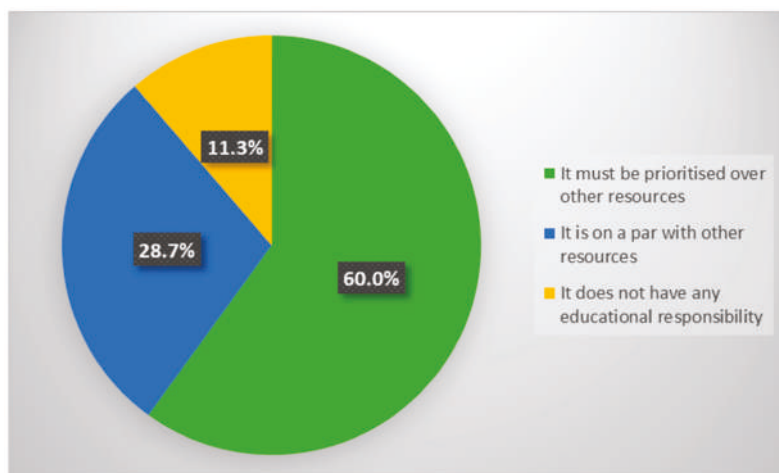

Figure 7. The role of historical reenactment in education on war.

From the current military science perspective, the war phenomenon must be considered from a triple dimension: strategic, tactical and technological. Thus, if we consider the study of war in the Middle Ages from this triple nature, the same scientific criteria should be applied to the approach used for its diffusion. Possibly linked to this increased historical rigour in creating the scene of the war and poliorcetic, as seen above, the reenactors believe that historical reenactment achieves a cultural approximation to the technology of war, teaching and showing replicas of the past (89.5%), but also a very accurate approximation to what military tactics were like in the Middle Ages (67.8%). However, do they achieve an approximation to what the complex military strategies were like in the Middle Ages, such as attrition warfare, siege warfare, geostrategy or military logistics? The majority believe so, with 50.5% agreeing or completely agreeing, but a significant group remains neutral (26.1%) or opposes this statement (23.5%). In relation to this question, the reenactors believe that medieval war may contribute to the development of competences such as strategic thinking. Based on the respondents' answers, we observed a broad consensus in considering reenactment an excellent tool to educate in technological material, obvious given that this discipline is mainly founded on the reconstruction of material culture. Nonetheless, a smaller percentage of the reenactors state that the actual practise itself is valid for teaching the tactical dimension, and an even smaller percentage sustain its validity for teaching the strategic dimension. The results (Figure 8) show that a large number of respondents is aware of the limitations of reenactment in this sense, but consider it optimal to educate in the subject of complex aspects. However, it is important to remember that it is not easy to reconstruct military tactics—on the battlefield, in poliorcetic spaces,

etc.—through reenactment; and it is practically impossible to organise learning contexts on military strategy—geostrategy, logistics, diplomacy, etc.—with material culture alone, without the support of more complex resources, which demonstrates: either a profound lack of knowledge about military science and therefore how to educate in medieval warfare, or that the concept the reenactor develops through their practise comes closer to dissemination—with the aid of a *cicerone* to explain these more intricate aspects- than to a complex museum and educational context.
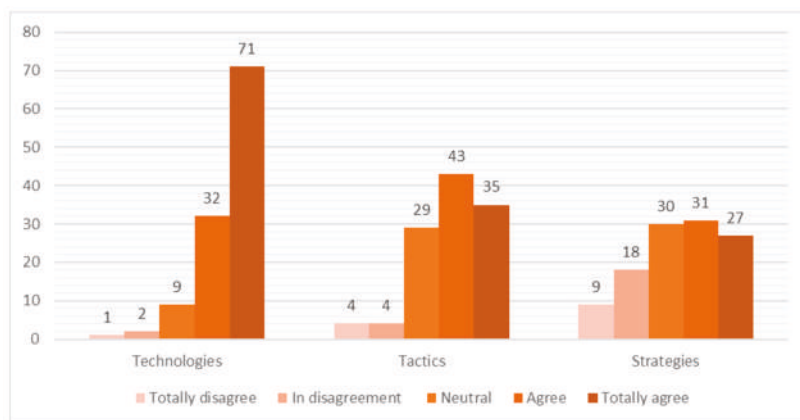

Figure 8. Historical reenactment achieves a very accurate approximation to what technologies, tactics and strategies were like.

These majority opinions are not reflected in other aspects such as education for peace. We should remember that in the theory arguments we indicated that education on war is largely avoided as it promotes violence. 90.3%, a wide majority of the reenactors believe that teaching war in the Middle Ages in particular, does not contribute to fostering violence and inciting the most execrable side of the human being. 47.9% agree or completely agree that historical reenactment educates for peace, insofar as it reflects on the suffering caused by war: the death, famine, disease, refugees, pain. On the contrary, 26% disagree or completely disagree with this statement. What does trigger more controversy is the question of how far to go with education for peace. Do we need to rebuild the discourse we have built on wars, avoiding teaching and delving into its most sordid side? This generates major bipolarisation of opinions, 34.8% against this question, versus a small majority, 39.1%, who would be willing to avoid this more sinister side. This data (Figure 9) shows us how the historical reenactors believe that war teaching does not foster violence, but at the same time they clearly believe it can be used to educate for peace, with doubts about whether or not to avoid the most miserable aspects in this teaching.

To conclude, another of the aspects worthy of note is that teaching about war in the Middle Ages may contribute to a comprehension of more complex historical structures, of which the war phenomenon is an essential piece (Figure 10). 94 out of 115 respondents either agree or completely agree with this statement, seeing the direct relationship between war and other aspects of the Middle Ages such as politics, economy or society.
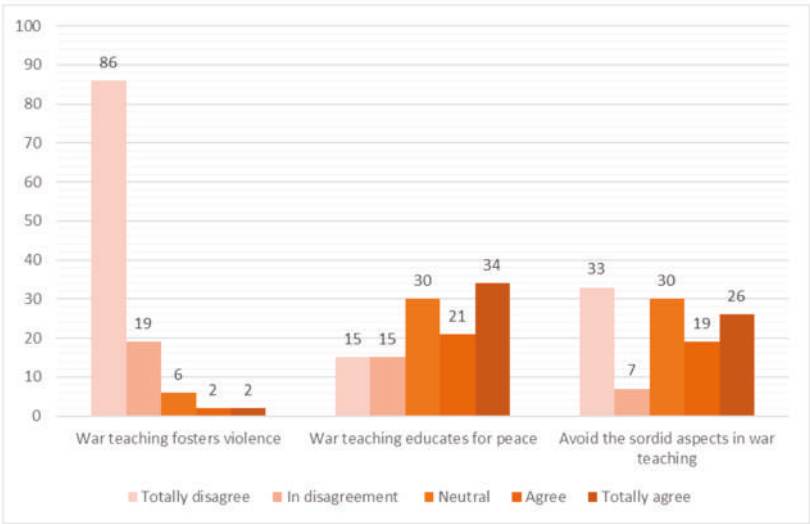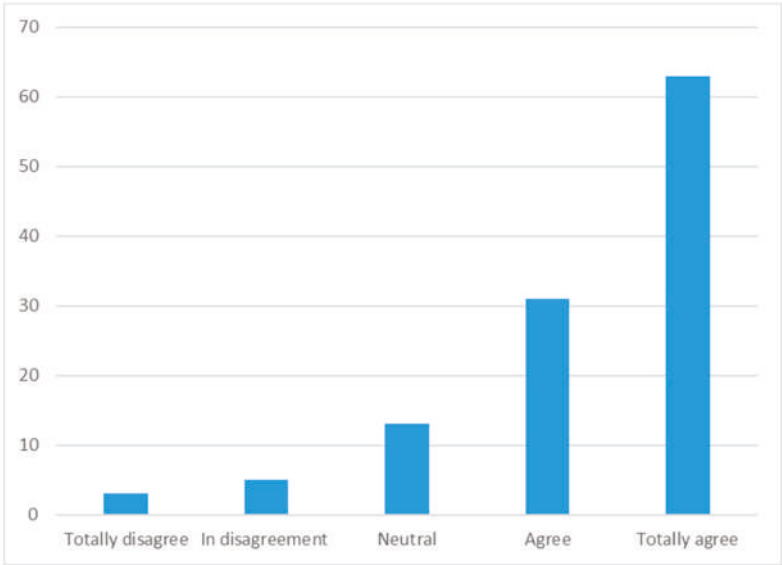
Figure 9. Education for peace.

Figure 10. Comprehension of more complex historical structures through the teaching of war.

7. Discussion

We believe a reflection on the initial hypothesis of this research is an appropriate place to start the discussion of the study's findings, then subsequently analyse the secondary goals set down in the introduction section. The primary objective of our study consisted of an analysis of how the museum discourse of historical reenactment is structured when operating in military spaces of the Middle Ages, and the dissemination of the war phenomenon in that same period.

However, prior to this analysis, it is interesting to establish the objectives for which a historical reenactment activity is carried out and whether these are shared by the reenactors.

When asked about the objectives they deem appropriate for a historical reenactment activity, they mainly mention the socialisation of knowledge and the promotion of heritage as being fundamental. These objectives were already present in authors such as Cózar [78], Sebares [94], Español y Franco [95] and Rojas [77], among others. But in addition to these two objectives, others should also be mentioned including associative stimulation, the roots of identity [96] or constituting a research tool [79]. There are even objectives that come close to postures related to the so-called historical festivals and economic matters [97]. All these objectives appear among the reenactors' responses alongside others such as martial arts or the fun component and personal leisure.

Philanthropy is undoubtedly an element that conditions the performance of this practise, beyond the individual conception each exponent has of it. In fact, the double artist that historical reenactment presents: on the one hand, the heuristic to document reconstructed culture, and on the other the educational vocation, is affected by the dedication of its exponents, who may see it as a pastime that does not generally require specialisation from them. Nonetheless, the reenactors state they take their practise professionally in both dimensions. The truth is that as this training is not mandatory, aspects such as didactic design or educational planning in general may not meet the necessary requirements, also in the area of the war phenomena diffusion, obviously. This becomes apparent when many reenactors state they adapt to the museum requirements of those who manage the heritage sites they operate in, although at the same time they say they are the ones who draw up the discourse and the educational-communication strategies.

What does this data tell us? We observed that the exponents of historical reenactment make a huge effort to make the discipline a scientific praxis, in both of its dimensions: documentation and education. However, the lack of training in both areas and the fact that this is a philanthropic practise for them represents an obstacle to a certain degree for its consolidation as a top-tier tool for education and heritage management. We also believe it worth noting here that the separation of the discipline in Southern Europe from the institutions and centres of knowledge constitutes an added problem [79,81,82], which serves no other purpose than to worsen the existing situation.

It is important to remember that within this primary objective, we were also interested in a more in-depth exploration of which specific discursive aspects historical reenactment focuses on in its educational activity in relation to medieval war in heritage settings. To do so, the questionnaire probes how the historical period is managed within said educational processes, and whether the historical reenactment is capable of overcoming the finitude of its material nature. Thus, the reenactor shows an awareness that reenactment, *per se*, lacks the didactic resources that allow the teaching of historical time structures, and even complex historical processes inherent to shorter time periods. Nonetheless, they show an awareness of their own potential in this respect, and of the fact that the trend should be to veer towards these precepts.

More specifically, in relation to the field of heritage education, we observed a very interesting dichotomy. Again, it derives from the reenactors' own considerations on the educational fact they protagonise. For many, their action is exclusively limited to the area of dissemination, already noted by some authors at the time [78]. We observed this when a percentage of the respondents appears to want to maintain the academicism of the historiographic science in the discipline of historical reenactment itself. This is observed in the preference for a dialogue-based interactivity with the audiences, over and above other educational resources such as the use of emotions or empathy/perspective. The almost total preference for interactivity, on the other hand, as an educational vessel of primary importance, reveals that many reenactors are unaware of the use and application of other educational resources in the war education processes they carry out in the heritage site. Does historical reenactment not educate? Does it only provide data and knowledge without concerning itself with didactic transposition? We are undoubtedly looking at a consideration that may give rise to future lines of research.

If we focus on the analyses of the informal teaching of war in heritage sites of the Middle Ages, the answers also raise important debates. First and foremost, it catalyses the reenactors' own conception of the discipline they practise, when they consider that it should take precedence over other informal resources such as video games, film or television in the subject of warfare. The average reenactor here extols their role as exponents of a discipline that emerges as an appendix of the scientific contexts to vindicate themselves over other educational stimuli spread throughout our societies.

It is nonetheless necessary to bear in mind that in order to structure the educational planning of the military past of the Middle Ages, the three dimensions of military science we alluded to in the previous section must provide the backbone. Otherwise, we will be providing out of context information about the war phenomenon in general, removed from the postulates of military science. The answers show an obvious increase in the educational capacities inherent to reenactment as we move through the three dimensions, in which education in technological material is the best integrated in their own recreative praxis. As we noted above, reenactment is notoriously a discipline rooted in the reconstruction of material culture, meaning it is obvious that artefacts, objects and movable property heritage can be disseminated through this tool. As we probed deeper into the tactical and strategic dimension implicit in the war phenomenon, the reenactors acknowledged that dissemination of the same is more problematic. It is hard to understand how natural reenactments of people, artefacts and skills, on a 1:1 scale, can educate in the subject of tactical movements or military geostrategy, unless they use laborious displays that, ultimately, need to mould to fit the contemporaneity of our time, meaning the violent, ideological and cultural reality of a past that no longer exists is also blurred. Indeed, this is the same as the issue dealt with above, referring to whether this discipline is capable of overcoming its determinants to be able to teach complex aspects of the past. The subject of discussion worthy of particular note is, similarly, the fact that a large part of the reenactors interviewed accept that the reenactment *per se* is capable of tackling these more intricate issues, giving rise to the possibility of future lines of study to evaluate specific educational methods through tools such as direct observation, case studies, meta-analysis or audience studies. It is, in reality, the way to ascertain the extent to which historical reenactment takes on functions of dissemination peppered with the reproduction of material culture, or whether it actually has educational components allowing for structural components to be explored in depth.

With regards to the treatment of values and contents—many of a delicate nature-implicit in education in the subject of medieval war, the answers of the respondents tend to be more uniform. A higher proportion of reenactors admit to recreating aspects of the military past associated with "glorious" moments, even occasionally with identity-building or national historical passages. There is a general consensus that teaching war educates for peace. This is a consideration that we, as researchers, agree with. The concept of dissemination that the reenactor implements also comes close to a meticulous elaboration of the discourse, which we believe should be fostered above other informal stimuli that do not aim to disseminate or educate. Nonetheless, regarding how to approach what is taught about this war, the divided opinions become apparent. A small majority does not teach, argument or put forward sordid or gruesome aspects of the war-related past as they do not consider it necessary for the ultimate purpose of teaching the war phenomenon in its complexity.

8. Conclusions

In light of the data, certain conclusions linking the results obtained with the prospect of future research and even action should be included. We observed that the actual discipline, profiling itself as a very positive tool in the subject of heritage education, and specifically in relation to war in the Middle Ages, *per se* poses certain obstacles that must be considered. These hurdles—the philanthropic practise or its material nature- may affect the educational budgets and intervention we propose in war heritage, which occasionally implies the need

to provide specialised support to the practise. This support also becomes necessary when we wish to overcome the finitude of the mere reconstruction of material culture if we wish to teach structures of the historical time or complex aspects; it is, without a doubt, the unresolved issue this discipline must tackle.

It is, nonetheless, worth drawing attention to more specific aspects of the function of historical reenactment in heritage settings, begging the question of whether it should be considered an educational tool, in all of its aspects, or simply one more resource for dissemination, akin to the printed materials of a heritage site or its signage. This debate should take place henceforth, placing the emphasis on the actual exponents of the discipline, without forgetting that audience studies could also help evaluate the education processes that reenactment sets in motion.

To conclude, we believe it is important to put forward the prospect of a research study in relation to the military fact of the Medieval period in poliorcetic spaces, in light of the findings obtained. We understand that historical reenactment emerges as a resource worthy of consideration, as long as any museum project or intervention implementing it—or informal educational action—is aware of the limitations and strengths this study has enabled us to ascertain. These include the need to provide it with complementary resources for it to be effective in the teaching of complex historical processes; resources, which, in our opinion, should go beyond the use of a *cicerone* to translate what has been recreated, to encompass others of a graphic, technological or audio-visual nature, even though this may distort the nature and essence of the discipline in the eyes of the exponents and the public. Thus, as far as we are concerned, a whole range of actions allowing for the possibility of integrating historical reenactment into other educational and museum formats opens up to us. This is a prospect, therefore, that integrates the necessary and didactic discourse that accompanies the live reconstruction of history, with other elements that multiply its educational possibilities without compromising the traits that render it valuable, including interactivity, empathy or the use of emotions, among others.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, D.E.-S. and J.G.F.-C.; methodology, D.E.-S. and J.G.F.-C.; investigation, D.E.-S. and J.G.F.-C.; writing—original draft, D.E.-S. and J.G.F.-C.; writing—review and editing, D.E.-S. and J.G.F.-C. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Article
The Education of Informal Educators

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Abstract: No undergraduate or postgraduate programmes currently exist for the professional education of informal educators. The authors outline the development of previous programmes and consider the emergence of informal education as a discrete concept. The article then highlights some key failings in the professional education of informal educators and outlines some changes in the orientation and content of programmes.

Keywords: informal education; professional education; pedagogy; group work; social pedagogy; YMCA

1. Introduction

Over the last fifty years, exploration of the processes and orientation of informal education has been erratic. The topic was researched for a short time in English primary education post-Plowden and was glimpsed in UK youth work in the 'Albemarle period' but only much later returned [1–3]. We find a more consistent presence within adult and lifelong education via Brookfield [4] on adult learning in the community; Coombs [5] on non-formal education; Kolb's [6] return to Dewey via experiential learning; and Lave and Wenger's work on situated learning [7]. There has, however, been a strong and continuing tradition of addressing pedagogic processes and orientations within continental European social work and care—and education more broadly. While this area of exploration has had a marginal impact upon care and social work training in the UK [8–10], it has been largely ignored or misunderstood within 'Anglo-American' traditions of thinking and practice concerning education [11].

This paper looks briefly at these arenas of practice and highlights three fundamental problems. The tendency on the part of both academics and practitioners to:

- Stay within familiar silos of thinking and practice that are both past their 'sell-by date' and lack an educational imagination.
- Avoid grounding exploration in the social thinking and moral philosophy necessary to root and guide practice as pedagogues and teachers.
- Pay inadequate attention to the subject matter of the teaching activities of informal educators.

The result overall is a profoundly misdirected professional education arena.

2. Informal Education

Predictably, we cannot vouchsafe the date when the term 'informal education' first surfaced but can say it has tended to be used in two main ways. The first is to describe educational activities taking place in non-school settings. The second usage delineates two contrasting processes of, and orientations to, facilitating learning—one largely instructional and organized by a curriculum, the other emerging from experience, reflection, and conversation. As John Dewey [12] put it, 'In what we have termed informal education, subject matter is carried directly in the matrix of social intercourse. It is what the persons

with whom an individual associates do and say'. The challenge for Dewey was how best to balance informal and formal education, and incidental and intentional learning.

Within Anglo-American practice the development of thinking about how to prepare practitioners as informal educators has largely centred around the work of three groups of people. The first was a formidable set of academics following in John Dewey's footsteps and based in the American YMCA and YWCA in the 1920s and 1930s. The second was a similarly impressive group of women working in the UK at the National Association of Girls and Mixed Clubs during the 1940s. The earliest full-length treatment of informal education [13] grew out of their activities. The last group was based at, or connected with, the YMCA George Williams College in London. They drew on the work of the other two groups, added in contemporary contributions, and then developed, and ran the only dedicated professional development degree programmes in informal education in the world. Wrapped up with these were also developments in primary schooling, community education and specialist education.

2.1. Chicago and Group Work

We can see a focus on setting in the pioneering activities of staff teaching at George Williams College (Chicago) in the mid-1920s. Informal education or what was more often dubbed "recreational and informal education" emerged as a portmanteau term utilised to identify the educational work undertaken by settlement houses, youth-serving organisations (such as the YMCA, YWCA, uniformed groups, and the boys' and girls' clubs), neighbourhood centres, and adult education programmes. Interestingly, professional preparation programmes such as those based at George Williams College (Chicago) 'were grounded primarily in the educational philosophy of John Dewey' [14] but this had not fully found its way into the conceptualisation of informal education in use there.

George Williams College staff during the inter-war years were anxious to extend their portfolio of degree programmes and to offer courses that would equip individuals to work in the recreational and informal education sectors. However, rather than launch an informal education degree programme with specialist routes it opted to develop programmes linked to what they termed "social group work". Most of the key figures in the development of social group work either taught at the college—Hedley Dimock, Charles E. Hendry and Harleigh B. Trecker; or worked closely with it—Gertrude Wilson and Gladys Ryland (Chicago YWCA), Neva Boyd (Hull House Settlement, Chicago) and the doyen of group work theorists Grace Coyle who was employed by the YMCA for most of the 1920s and 1930s. Their reasoning for doing so was that:

> *Informal education leaders entered their fields with the assumption that small group face-to-face encounters provided the best context within which people, including children, could solve their common problems or set new goals. A well-functioning small group was seen as a powerful agency for change. Consequently, under the guidance of a skilled guide, these groups and their members were fully equipped to establish and pursue appropriate goals and/or solve problems encountered in their paths. With help, young people in particular, could be led to discover, intelligently respond to and better manage the challenges and opportunities they faced.* [14]

The decision clearly reflected a desire to equip graduates with a skill set that would enable them to survive in highly demanding settings. This was a period when youth serving organisations often found themselves catering for numbers that are not currently encountered. Chicago YMCA in the 1930s had a membership of 32,000 and operated from a thirteen-storey headquarters plus five large outreach centres. The boys' club run by Hull House Settlement nearby to the College—and a venue where students undertook placements — had a membership of 1500 [15]. Social group work was viewed as a method that would enable a restricted number of professional workers to operate with large numbers to create educational opportunities and foster relationships. Besides the Chicago group, there were others working for the YMCA involved in developing thinking around informal and lifelong education in the States. Notably, these included two writers heavily

influenced by Dewey—Eduard Lindeman [16] who briefly taught at George Williams College between 1918 and 1919 and Ruth Kotinsky [17] who worked for the National YMCA in the 1920s and 1930s [18]. Later they were followed by Malcolm Knowles who is now known for his work on andragogy but who also wrote *Informal Adult Education* [19].

2.2. The National Association of Girls and Mixed Clubs

The first book-length exploration of informal education appeared in 1946. Written by Josephine Macalister Brew, it argued that education should be taken 'to the places where people already congregate, to the public house, the licensed club, the dance hall, the library, the places where people feel at home' [13]. She explored how educators can 'insert' education into such units. In particular, she focused on what we might describe now as the process of creating and exploiting teaching moments. In an earlier book, she had started to explore how to do this:

> *Only by the slow and tactful method of inserting yourself unassumingly into the life of the club, not by talking to your club members, but by hanging about and learning from their conversation and occasionally, very occasionally, giving it that twist which leads it to your goal, is it possible to open up a new avenue of thought to them.* [20]

Brew was a member of a talented team of women who during their time with NAGC&MC and after they departed were prolific authors and influential practitioners. These included Eileen Younghusband (who was later to write several seminal books and reports in social work); Madeline Rooff, Lesley Sewell, Desiree Edwards-Rees and Pearl Jephcott — a gifted social researcher, worker, and organizer [21,22]. One of the significant features of this group is that while they were focused on work with young people, they had also been active in a range of settings including educational settlements, school, and university teaching, social research, social settlements, and social work, as well as youth work.

2.3. YMCA George Williams College

The only extant undergraduate or postgraduate degree programmes in 'informal education' appeared some sixty years after the Chicago pioneers. Developed by the *YMCA George Williams College* (London), these ran from 1992 to 2015 [23]. The programmes led to professional qualifications for both UK youth work and Community Learning and Development (CLD) (Scotland). From 2012 onwards the College developed a focus on pedagogy offering degrees, for example, in social pedagogy and in work with children, young people and families. YMCA George Williams College effectively closed in 2021 [23].

The College had been established in 1970 to train youth workers and developed a distinctive approach. In significant part this was shaped by M. Joan Tash, the senior tutor. At the core of the *modus operandi* lay an emphasis on the development of the whole person and the connectedness of human life. At one level this should not be surprising given the YMCA triangle of body, mind, and spirit, and the Humanics orientation of the first YMCA College opened in Springfield Massachusetts in 1885. Humanics being the term first employed to describe the broad syllabus developed by the College to train YMCA Secretaries via the study of human nature, relationships, and affairs [24,25]. Tash embraced a focus on process, reflection, individual supervision, and groupwork. Josephine Klein adopted a similar mix in the new Goldsmith's College training programme launched in 1965. However, there were also differences linked to their contrasting professional backgrounds (Klein's in sociological research and psychotherapy; Tash's in the YWCA, non-managerial supervision, and fieldwork research).

As a 'monotechnic' institution the College was unhampered by the 'research assessment' procedures that have blighted UK universities since the late 1980s. College tutors were free to focus on writing and commissioning material associated with the very worlds of practice their students engaged with [23]. Hence informal education became a focus for exploration and rethinking of the role, functioning and processes of education outside curriculum focused practice [3,26]; the nature of accompanying and helping was explored and debated [27–29]; the character of grassroots practice examined [30]; and the state of

faith-based youth work investigated [31]. As was the case with the NAGMC group, staff were drawn from a wide range of academic and practice traditions but were operating within a framework created by membership of an international movement, and by links to a wide range of local, community-based organisations across the UK. In part, this arose from the College's work with the Rank Foundation, which between 1988 and 2017 funded an extensive array of long-term developmental projects.

The College had recognized that a return to John Dewey and others' concern with community, process and orientation was needed. Furthermore, there was an appreciation that delineation between informal and formal education could be traced back to ancient Greece and the different approaches and concerns linked to diadacts and pedagogues. The former were basically instructors (*didáskalos*) and their task was to teach their subject. Pedagogues (*paidagögus*) had two common roles. One was to be an accompanist or companion; the other, and more fundamental, task was to help their charges learn what it was to act well. This they did by a combination of, for example, conversation and disciplining. Greek pedagogues were, in short, moral guides [11]. Unfortunately, in recent Anglo-American usage, teaching and pedagogy became simplistically confused. The latter is commonly defined as the art and science of teaching [32] and the full contemporary meaning of pedagogy has thus been obscured.

3. Youth Work

Little effort was made in the youth work sector in the UK over the forty years following Brew's [13] work to locate and build upon informal education's theoretical roots or to explore what being an 'informal educator' might mean in practice. Post-war austerity significantly reduced funding for the work, and in the 1950s, programmes like the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme attracted attention (Brew herself was one of the main contributors to the design of the scheme). Additionally, developments in US group work garnered interest—and US-based writers were joined by UK-based practitioners and researchers such as Josephine Klein [33,34]. Their work was marked by an ability to draw on contemporary research, engage in a sustained way with practice, and to connect with developments in social psychology and psychoanalysis.

With a growing moral panic around the behaviour of young people, the English government set up the enquiry that resulted in *The Albemarle Report* [35]. Significant expenditure upon training, employing a cadre of full-time workers, and building new youth centres followed. The Youth Service was seen as having two central functions: (a) the socialisation and social education of the mass of young people a majority of whom at the time of publication entered the workforce at age 15; and (b) the control and containment of a deviant minority. While there was talk of informal and social education, the terms were not defined or the relationship between them discussed in the report. Influential works by Goetschius and Tash [36] and Davis and Gibson [37] were to explore the nature of the later as a way of expressing process and purpose, but after the 1960s it too was rarely subjected to serious enquiry [1,38].

Another long period of austerity, combined with the extension of schooling, and changing leisure habits and social attitudes, had brought about a substantial reduction in the number of young people involved in youth work from the late 1970s—especially amongst those aged 15 and above. Structural problems arising from deindustrialization, financialization, and growing deprivation and poverty were also taking their toll. 'Youth' was therefore no longer a consistently helpful organizing idea for intervention [39]. Yet, little effort was made to rethink training and practice and to address the elephant in room. Youth services had been established to offer leisure and educational opportunities to those over the school leaving age of 14 and up to 18 years who were in full-time employment. Most of this age range were now remaining (or in many instances trapped) in full-time education and displayed no sustained interest in youth service provision. Thus, the long-term decline in state-sponsored youth services was unlikely to be reversed, resulting in

it withering away [1,39]. However, there remained a possibility that provision linked to religious and civil society groups may survive and even flourish [40,41].

4. Schools, and Informal Education

Within English primary education following the Plowden Report there was a brief flowering of practice that looked back to Dewey's concerns with experience, reflection, and exploration. Chapter Two of the report famously opened 'At the heart of the educational process lies the child' [42]. Such 'child-centred' education was often talked about as involving schools moving away from 'acting upon' students, to becoming places 'for growing and developing' [43].

The result was a growing focus on activity or discovery methods, and the use of group work—for example drawing on the work of Leslie Button [44] to develop active tutorial work, and later attempts to reform the primary school classroom [45]. We also saw the development of 'open' classrooms and schools [46,47]. Thereby, 'informal education' was gifted a recognised presence within many schools, particularly those with larger classrooms that allowed students to work collaboratively in groups with interventions from a team of teachers. 'Open' was often used in a rather literal sense—that of physical space — rather than as an orientation or being open to new ideas and experiences. Key writers like Lillian Weber explicitly drew on Dewey and his forerunners and their work was informed by contemporary social psychologists and educationalists like Susan Issacs, Jerome Bruner, and Basil Bernstein. Weber, for example, attended to setting, relationships and processes in her discussion of informal education:

> *Informal, as I understand it, refers to the setting, the arrangements, the teacher-child and child-child relationships that maintain, restimulate if necessary, and extend what is considered to be the most intense form of learning, the already existing child's way of learning through play and through the experiences he seeks out for himself.* [48]

There was a major backlash against these developments in schools in both the USA and the UK [49]. In part, this was based on the growing political influence of product-oriented approaches fixated with the acquisition and testing of a narrowly defined band of core knowledge; and a focus on skilling. However, we can also see that many teachers and school administrators struggled with the sophistication and stance of informal educational practice—and the extent to which it put the control of learning into the hands of the learners. It entailed having to embrace and balance both a didactic and a pedagogic frame of reference. It involved cultivating an educational imagination.

In some places this orientation was linked to, or found an expression in, the development of community schools in England—notably in the Cambridgeshire village colleges and subsequently in Coventry and Leicestershire [50]. These initiatives both opened schools to local communities including enabling adults to learn languages etc. alongside young people, as well as providing facilities for the use of local groups. They also often included substantial youth work and adult education programmes located within the school [51]. With the rise of the national curriculum, a narrowing of focus, substantial cutbacks in funding and the transfer of schools from local authorities to trusts, informal education of this kind largely faded from view—although there are some examples remaining from later Scottish initiatives—particularly in rural and island communities.

5. Adult Learning, Community Organization and Community Education

Within many countries there had been a long tradition of what might be called community adult education. This had existed alongside autonomous adult learning and discussion groups, and opportunities for learning within community action and community development initiatives. The latter had become more visible in England at the same time as the exploration of informal education was at its height in primary schooling [52]. Influential examples of UK practice could be found in the work of Eric Midwinter with the Liverpool Education Priority Area [53,54] and his establishment of the University of the Third Age in 1973; and Tom Lovett's work on adult education and community action [55–57] and

in the establishment of Ulster People's College. In Scotland, we see the emergence of 'community education' as a way of thinking about, and integrating, the activities of youth workers, community organizers and adult educators—especially after the publication of *The Alexander Report* in 1975 [58].

Looking further afield—and emerging out of the need to examine the work of non-governmental organisations like the YMCA and YWCA in development programmes —there was 'refinement' of the definition of education by a setting or organizing agent. Within bodies such as UNICEF it was being argued that formal educational systems had failed to adapt to the socio-economic changes around them [59]. The result was an influential classification that placed non-formal alongside formal and informal education.

> *Formal education: the hierarchically structured, chronologically graded 'education system', running from primary school through the university and including, in addition to general academic studies, a variety of specialized programmes and institutions for full-time technical and professional training.*

> *Informal education: the truly lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influences and resources in his or her environment—from family and neighbours, from work and play, from the marketplace, the library and the mass media.*

> *Non-formal education: any organized educational activity outside the established formal system—whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader and learning objectives.* [5]

It provided a neat categorization for administrators and was attractive to some practitioners and academics perhaps because it appeared to chime with Illich's [60] argument for deschooling and Freire's [61] work on literacy, dialogue, and praxis. However, this categorization activity was deeply problematic pedagogically, especially in the way it mixed institutional settings with processes, and schooling with education [62]. Identical processes, for example, could be found in each of the categories. The same group discussion of ethics, for example, could be conducted in a university seminar room, a community centre, or around a table in a bar. It was in this context that Brookfield [4] undertook a seminal exploration of adult learning in the community which looked at deliberate processes aimed at learning that did not have closely specified goals. This took us neatly back to Dewey, and to using conversation as a major organizing idea for informal education and curriculum for formal.

6. Stuck in Silos, and Lacking an Educational Imagination

It was obvious to those who looked that practitioners in quite different sectors— residential work, schooling, probation, community development, youth work, lifelong learning, and religious organisations—were engaged in informal education [2]. Most shared, even if they were unfamiliar with his writings, Dewey's concern with the enlargement and emancipation of experience, and with building a life in common; drew upon similar roots in liberal education; and placed a value on conversation and reflection. However, they were working in arenas of practice that often lacked the tools or understandings to recognize the worth of what they were trying to do.

One of the abiding features of contemporary organisations and fields of practice is the extent to which their members thoughts and actions are fragmented and ensnared. They are also commonly trapped in occupational silos as a consequence of professional training and cultures that place an emphasis on the supposed uniqueness of their mode of intervention. In this setting it is easy to ignore the commonalities of practice and shared realities that link crafts and professions. One key quality, as Richard Sennett [63] has pointed out, is an aspiration for quality. Another, according to Peter Korn is a concern with creativity, bringing 'something new and meaningful into the world' [64]. Silos result, all too often, in tunnel vision, failure to recognize risk and change, and inability to innovate [65].

As Daniel Kahneman [66] put it, 'We can be blind to the obvious, and we are also blind to our blindness'.

We can see this process at work in Scotland in the attempts to integrate adult education, community development and youth work following the Alexander Report [61] First, each of the groupings had fairly negative views of each other and different orientations. Adult education was organized around classes and teaching and had a largely middle-class clientele; community development workers focused on groups in deprived communities and were concerned with animation, advocacy and policy change; and youth workers tended to be based in clubs in working class areas and focused on the provision of activities [67]. There were constant complaints from each of the three arenas that the interests of their 'clients' were not being addressed. Second, it took some time for government agencies to define what they meant by 'community education' [68] and there was no coherent policy for integration, certainly not one that addressed 'the human relations issues arising out of . . . interservice and inter-institutional rivalries' [69]. Third, Scotland, like many other countries, has experienced short phases of development followed by cuts and long periods of austerity often driven by decisions made in Westminster. Participative and reflective approaches to learning have been discarded under a strong central government emphasis upon schooling, skilling and datafication [70].

While there have been developments in the way we can understand and embrace informal education, they have not gained much traction either in the field or the academy. Too many have been unable to escape or even recognize the silos they are in. There were elements of this in the Scottish experience of community education even as the thinking about practice morphed into community learning and development. Practitioners and academics in the area had to deal with a strong, and ill-informed, emphasis on measurement and outcomes, and with an increasingly centralized state. That said, the framework developed in Scotland for professional education in community learning and development was more coherent and more appropriate to the needs of informal educators than that south of the border in youth work and community development [71]. It was, for example, used to shape the degree programmes in informal education already discussed at the YMCA George Williams College.

For all the talk of 'education' within the sectors that are our concern here there is a fundamental problem at their core, they lack an 'educational imagination'. Within Anglo-American traditions there is a strong tendency to confuse education with schooling, and as we have already seen, teaching with pedagogy. Much schooling and teaching cannot be accurately described as 'education', neither can a great deal of youth work and community development work [72]. Many practitioners and academics lack a particular 'quality of mind' that enables them to frame 'what is going on in the world and of what may be happening within themselves' [73]. This is not just a case of thinking like an educator, but also of being one. It entails accepting that teaching and pedagogy, in each and every setting—formal and informal—is a calling, a vocation. It matters not if they occur via the medium of conversation, dialogue, role-modelling, or a PowerPoint, nor that it might take place in a community group, club, out on the street, in a corridor, classroom or wherever; the how and where are unimportant if the practitioner accepts that it is in essence a calling and a craft. In an inspirational passage, worth quoting at length, George Steiner encapsulates much of this reality in relation to teaching.

> *To teach seriously is to lay hands on what is most vital in a human being. It is to seek access to the quick and the innermost of a child's or an adult's integrity . . . Poor teaching, pedagogic routine, a style of instruction which is, consciously or not, cynical in its merely utilitarian aims, are ruinous. They tear up hope by its roots. Bad teaching is, almost literally murderous and, metaphorically, a sin. It diminishes the student, it reduces to gray inanity the subject being presented. It drips into the child's or the adult's sensibility that most corrosive of acids, boredom, the marsh gas of ennui. Millions have had mathematics, poetry, logical thinking killed for them by dead teaching, by the perhaps subconsciously vengeful mediocrity of frustrated pedagogues . . . . In actual fact, as we*

> *know, the majority of those to whom we entrust our children in secondary education,*
> *to whom we look for guidance and example in the academy, are more or less amiable*
> *gravediggers. They labour to diminish their students to their own level of indifferent*
> *fatigue. They do not "open Delphi" but close it.* [74]

This absence of educational imagination is not limited to the formal sectors of education but is also a feature of professional training courses through much of the informal sector.

What, then, does the educational imagination involve?

First, as can be seen in Figure 1, it entails what Joe Sachs [75] talks about as an 'active condition' and what Aristotle discusses as *hexis*: a readiness to sense and know. It also entails a calling to act. Second, it requires a guiding *eidos* or leading idea. John Dewey [12] classically talked about educators engaging with people 'to enable them to share in a common life' and, in Aristotle's terms, to flourish. Third, there is a disposition, what in German traditions of social pedagogy is described as *haltung* or stance [76]. Pedagogues are called to act in the belief that, as Bertold Brecht put it some time ago, 'when taking up a proper bearing, truth . . . will manifest itself." [77]. Here we can describe this as a concern and a calling to act respectfully, knowledgeably, and wisely. A focus on dialogue and learning, and action that is informed and committed flows from this orientation [78].
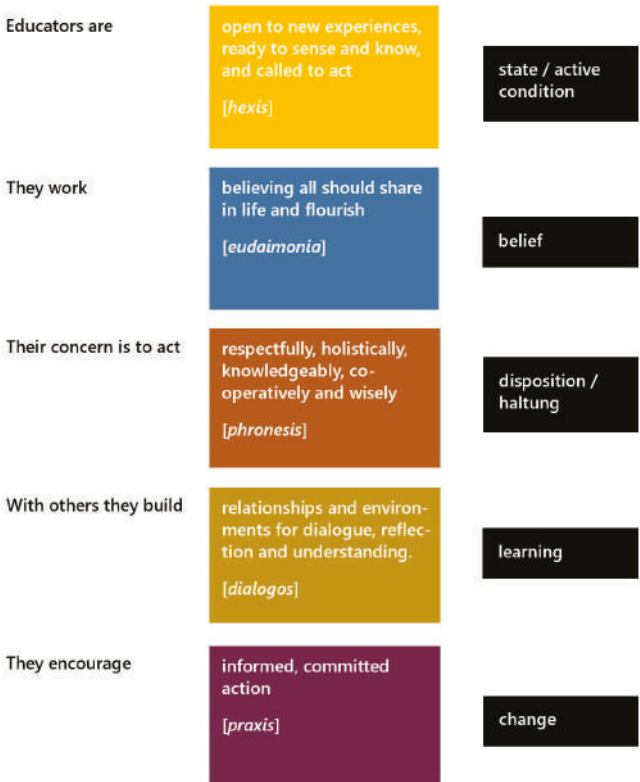

Figure 1. The educational imagination.

7. Little Grounding in Social Sciences and Moral Philosophy

Once we recognise that at the core of education is a stance or *haltung* that requires practitioners to act respectfully, knowledgeably, and wisely, it becomes clear why a solid grounding in the social sciences or what Barrow [79] refers to as the foundational disciplines, psychology, sociology, history, and philosophy, are essential for all those involved in

education, in any setting. Without these and a moral philosophy we cannot respond to situations appropriately. We will lack the means to make sound judgements. This understanding was central to the activities of the Chicago pioneers of training for informal education and social groupwork in the 1930s. Sadly, it has been lost (or never found) in many professional programmes. A growing emphasis on skills, delivery, set procedures, and the measurement of predetermined outcomes tends to substitute often ill-informed technical objectives for dialogue and the emergence of wisdom.

'Good teaching', Parker J Palmer [80] argued, 'cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher'. The same can be said of helping relationships generally [29] and for informal educators and pedagogues specifically. The Social Pedagogy Professional Association, for example, expects a particular philosophy and *haltung* to be 'held in a [pedagogue's] heart and guide their way of living and working' [81]. Palmer talks about good teachers (and here we can add pedagogues) possessing a capacity for connectedness.

> *They are able to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their subjects, and their students so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves . . . The connections made by good teachers are held not in their methods but in their hearts—meaning heart in its ancient sense, as the place where intellect and emotion and spirit and will converge in the human self.* [80]

These ways of talking about teachers and pedagogues do not sit well with the current orthodoxies within schooling, social work, community learning and development, and youth work. Within professional training for these areas, inadequate attention has been given to the 'who' or selfhood of the practitioner, and their interconnectedness with others and the world around them. Wrapped up with this, scant consideration has been given to deepening and extending practitioner's appreciation of moral philosophy, social psychology, social anthropology, social policy, economics, and the historical origins of contemporary practice. The overall result is that practitioners struggle to form an identity and frame of reference as educators and pedagogues (and get stuck in silos); lack the knowledge and disposition to make informed judgements and formulate useful theory; and are more likely to fall in line with policies and procedures that disadvantage the individuals and communities they are working with. As Quintilian, writing in the first century A.D., warned:

> *Let no one however demand from me a rigid code of rules such as most authors of textbooks have laid down . . . Most rules are liable to be altered by the nature of the case, circumstances of time and place, and by hard necessity itself . . . Rules are rarely of such a kind that their validity cannot be shaken and overthrown in some particular or other.* [82]

Quite aside from a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of education and pedagogy, there are also forces within higher education institutions that have contributed to the failure to ground student practitioners in the basics and develop professional identity. These include a growing tendency to view course participants as customers rather than students; the use of modular degree programmes where 'customers' can mix and match courses according to their own tastes rather than what they need in order to be professional and meet the needs of those they work alongside—clients and colleagues alike; and a valuing within universities of the publication of 'research' over engagement with practice and the individuals, contexts and agencies doing so involves. In short, they have been unable to create an environment where students can grow and create together the knowledge, wisdom, and ability to connect and engage with people that are necessary for teaching and pedagogy.

8. Problems of Content

Linked to the above there flows a further failure in training for informal education. Programmes have not generally addressed the issue of what exactly those qualifying are

competent to 'educate' others in. Informal educators look to experiences, conversations and 'teachable moments', they also engage in formal programmes of teaching. Formal and informal education are not separate entities, 'they are rather a continuum shading gradually into one another' [83]. All alike are involved in an improvisational endeavour. One that requires practitioners to possess an arsenal of knowledge or what Lucy Shuker and Naomi Thompson [84] dub 'literacies', which they can communicate to others in a logical and lucid manner. Therefore, they must be fluid, nimble and flexible to adapt to the ebbs and flows of conversation and dialogue, and the variability of the world around them. We therefore must ask, what are they equipped to 'teach'? There are two main things to consider here: the subject knowledge and understanding that flows from a grounding in the social sciences and moral philosophy, and the specialist knowledge and skills in particular areas. We will look at the latter first.

We will seek to illustrate this by considering in part the work of the many informal educators working outdoor education. It entails them running training and coaching programmes and being qualified in the activities they are facilitating and teaching. They must maintain and extend their skill levels, be up to date on developments in their specialisms and be regularly re-accredited. National standards and structures are in place to facilitate this. In this respect they are no different from the 'coaches' and 'instructors' they work in tandem with. In one setting, for example, all three must be competent to teach novices how to safely mount a horse, sit in the saddle and walk it out. However, educationalists, outdoor educators and informal educators must be equipped to do much more than instruct novices in the rudiments of riding.

For a start, they must be able to draw upon a well of experience, information and theory that allows them to explain this 'skill' and contextualise and locate it within a conceptual framework. Possessing that framework means when the opportunity arises, they can, for example, exploit it to reflect upon equine physiology, the history of the different breeds, the design and manufacture of saddles or animal psychology. Equally, the conversation accompanying the task and experience might be nurtured by the educator so as to enable the group to reflect upon the moral and ethical issues relating to the 'exploitation' of horses for human enjoyment by drawing on the ideas of writers and philosophers such as Peter Singer [85] or Erica Fudge [86]; or alternatively to a consideration of the aesthetics of horse-riding, or reflection on the rich array of art linked to the horse for instance the paintings of George Stubbs (1724–1806), Edwin Landseer (1802–1873) and Alfred Munnings (1878–1959) or the sculpture of G. F. Watts (1817–1904).

The range of topics that might arise from the ostensibly mundane series of tasks is boundless yet utilising the opportunity to exploit these for learning requires that the informal or outdoor educator possesses a deep appreciation of the theory and history of what they are teaching plus the facility to foster conversation and dialogue. In this context conversation must not be mistaken for idle chatter or banter which tends to manufacture winners and losers. Rather, it is what Michael Oakeshott calls 'an unrehearsed intellectual adventure' involving individuals freely coming together to share their thinking and experiences who are content to let thoughts 'take wing' [87]. It is this form of conversational adventure that accomplished informal and outdoor educators are equipped to nurture and nourish.

Of course, it does not end there. Eventually they will be taking the group riding in open country. At which point they will need to be armed with a knowledge, for example, of *fauna* and *flora*, agriculture, geology and local history. As the setting or group changes so will the mix of subject-matter to be drawn upon.

Alongside this concern with teaching and teachable moments, runs broader pedagogical stream. Pedagogy can be seen as a process of being alongside others or accompanying people as well as:

- Working to bring flourishing and relationship to life (animation).
- Caring for, and about, people (caring).
- Drawing out learning (education) (Figure 2) [72].

Figure 2. Animate, care, educate.

Many of the conversations in which pedagogues and informal educators participate involve questions that people have about how to deal with situations arising in their lives, relationships with others, and feelings about themselves. As Kerry Young [88] has pointed out, they involve the same question: how do I live life as well as I can? They are engaged with moral philosophy—and in a sense these conversations are the bread and butter of informal education and pedagogy. They require the ability to draw upon a broad range of knowledge. This includes:

- Appreciating the various elements that can contribute to people's happiness.
- Knowing how to animate and work with others to reflect on their situations and experiences and form judgements about what might lead to their, and others, flourishing.
- Being familiar with what is required to encourage and support action.

This adds up to a formidable body of expertise.

Alongside all this there are practical tasks of helping and care (which in turn require knowledge, skill and a particular *haltung*). Tasks can range from sorting out food for them to eat, and clothes to wear, to direct physical assistance with mobility and other everyday actions. In these days of austerity with cutbacks in care budgets and growing poverty, many schools and community organisations have had to make a sustained response in these areas, and this has led to some fundamental questions about future priorities.

We are not implying that informal educators must be polymaths who know everything about everything. Rather, that they must be able to lay claim to a rich and broad general education and be an ardent scholar ceaselessly searching out new ideas, information, and experiences. We would argue that the essential starting point for those seeking to become a professional pedagogue and informal educator should be a three-year degree in the Liberal Arts comprising five key strands:

- Humanities—including art, literature, linguistics, philosophy, religion, music, language;
- Social Sciences—including history, psychology, sociology, law, politics, economics, informatics;
- Natural Sciences—including astronomy, biology, chemistry, physics, botany, zoology, geology, earth sciences;
- Formal Science—including mathematics, logic, statistics.
- Reflection and Dialogue—including listening to, and engaging with, ourselves and others, whatever the context; exploring the processes of deepening understanding and making judgements; and fostering wisdom.

Undergraduate Liberal Arts programmes, which have long been popular in the United States, already exist in the UK, therefore the basis exists for the creation of such a model. Upon completion of the undergraduate programme potential entrants could then undertake a one-year post-graduate programme that focussed on pedagogy, teaching, and informal education.

It is here that the full implications of the failure of programmes to ground practitioners in the liberal arts, social sciences and moral philosophy become clear. It is not just that they have been sold short in terms of their ability to be teachers and pedagogues, they have also lost the chance to develop their subject knowledge. David Hume after reading the accessible yet informative essays of the journalist Joseph Addison vowed to ensure that henceforth he would endeavour to write with similar clarity so that he might become a 'a kind of resident or ambassador from the dominion of learning to those of conversation; and shall think it my duty to promote good correspondence betwixt these two states, which have so great a dependence on each other' [89]. This ambassadorial role is in essence the function of the informal educator. However, to fulfil that role they must be in possession of the learning required to make a meaningful contribution to the conversations they partake in.

9. Conclusions

It is difficult to envisage that programmes of the sort discussed here will be unveiled soon. The demise of courses should not unduly amaze us. It has always been the case that the popularity of subjects wax and wane. For example, forty years ago there were over 70 undergraduate and postgraduate Humanics degrees running in North America. Linked to these were thriving university departments, scholarly journals, annual conferences, and a national accrediting body. Today nothing remains but a handful of stand-alone optional modules provided for under-graduate students by lone colleges scattered across the USA. To all intents and purposes, the subject has vanished from view. Similarly in the UK during the 1970s around a quarter of universities provided courses, nearly all postgraduate, in adult education. Most were designed to prepare students to work in a then thriving adult education sector. Today the courses and the sector alike have become all but extinct.

Given the decade long year-on-year fall in both the number of courses and students in attendance it seems likely that within a few years secular youth work education in the UK will suffer the same fate as adult education, play work and community work professional education. Christian youth work degree programmes may be all that remains, but their numbers have also dwindled, but at a markedly lower pace [90]. Whether or not that is the case, what might be loosely termed the 'informal education' sector within Higher Education is experiencing a period of prolonged crisis. Of course, that does not mean that informal education as an activity and pedagogical genre is teetering on extinction. Indeed, the current absence of an informal education presence in higher education should be viewed as an opportunity to think afresh regarding what it might be; to ask ourselves the crucial questions as to what might we expect a well-educated informal educator to know? Then, we can proceed accordingly.

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Article

"It's Like Being Back in GCSE Art"—Engaging with Music, Film-Making and Boardgames. Creative Pedagogies within Youth Work Education

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Abstract: Creative pedagogies within youth work practice are well established. Practitioners working with young people are often called upon to utilise their own personal and professional 'toolboxes', as a way of supporting 'Creative Arts Youth Work'. However, within Higher Education (HE), creative methods for teaching and learning within the university context are often overlooked. The problem posed by this article is: how can HE 'catch-up' with more advanced pedagogies in the field of practice? Despite a recent focus on the personalisation of learning within HE, how can arts-based pedagogies, including digital storytelling, be drawn upon to enhance the learning experience? This article reports on three areas of pedagogical innovation engaged with by students undertaking the Youth Studies degree at Nottingham Trent University. Three experimental initiatives are explored, which assisted in educating informal educators, through creative learning techniques. Engaging with music, film-making and boardgames are given as examples of creative pedagogy, reporting on both my own practical experience in organising these activities and student feedback. Results showed that the symbiosis of creative pedagogies with relational and experiential learning, key tenets of youth work practice, offered expressive and authentic conditions for learning that are based upon student's experiences. Therefore, there is much to learn from youth work courses within HE, not only in terms of engaging and encouraging students through creativity, but also setting the scene for the future of creative youth work practice.

Keywords: youth work; creativity; pedagogy; youth; arts; popular music; film-making

1. Introduction

This article reports on three areas of pedagogical innovation undertaken by students on the BA (hons) Youth Studies degree at Nottingham Trent University. Three experimental initiatives are explored, which assisted in educating informal educators, through creative learning techniques. I report on an educational action research project which sought to capture the value of (1) storytelling through popular music, (2) documentary style film-making and (3) creating and playing boardgames as examples of creative pedagogy. An evaluative account is given drawing on both my own reflective practical experience in facilitating these activities and student feedback. Exploring gamification, relational and experiential learning theories, I argue that creative pedagogies within Higher Education (HE) are vital for 'setting the scene' for future youth work practitioners. Therefore, I conclude that there is much to learn from youth work courses within HE, and beyond, in terms of encouraging, engaging and inspiring students pedagogically.

Creative pedagogies within youth work practice are well established. Practitioners working with young people are often called upon to utilise their own personal and professional 'toolboxes' as a way of supporting what Beggan & Coburn term as 'Creative Arts Youth Work' [1]. Whilst current research clearly articulates the benefits of creative pedagogies within youth work, less attention has been paid to how these pedagogies are propagated within a HE context. This study aims to increase our understanding of the

educational impact of creative learning techniques for informal educators. Building on existing knowledge in relation to creative and arts-based pedagogies, this article highlights effective practice with the potential to augment student learning experiences across HE.

2. Research Background

Whilst young people are frequently overheard saying that they "can't draw" or "don't see themselves as artistic", creative pedagogies within youth work are an omnipresent strategy of pedagogic engagement [2] which is skilfully facilitated by informal educators. Youth work that engages with artistic practice enables a 'pedagogy of the here-and-now' which can serve to challenge more instrumentalist versions of youth voice [3]. The Stories from Practice collection of case studies created by In Defense of Youth Work [4] draws on the particular theme 'from improvisation to creativity' within youth work practice. The exploration of qualitative data from both youth workers and young people highlights an off-the-cuff approach of youth workers to use the arts as a tool to approach sensitive subjects with young people. From these case studies, it is clear that the arts are a valuable vehicle for carrying young people on testing personal and emotional journeys, that are process, rather than product led. However, the emphasis on youth workers bringing their own personal 'toolbox' [5], which may involve some activities around the arts, has implications for unequal practice. This reliance on individual inclinations, if not addressed within HE contexts, may actually restrict a more creative approach to youth work.

With pedagogical advances within the field of youth work practice, HE teaching and learning need to adapt to keep pace. Beggan and Coburn's [1] recent framework of Creative Arts Youth Work (CAYW) denotes the combination of creative arts and youth work as an effective participatory means for young people's expression of voice. As a form of critical youth work, young people are encouraged to tell their stories using newly acquired arts-based skills developed through informal education practices. Benefitting from the creative pedagogies within youth work, young people are free to express thoughts and feelings based on their own personal interests and experiences. Whilst the current literature clearly evidences these kinds of affordances of creative pedagogies within youth work practice, such as CAYW, less is known about how these pedagogies are engaged with and nurtured within those training to be informal educators within HE. One example is Purcell's [6] study on creative pedagogy within a Youth and Community Work course, which highlights how this approach embraces the transformative agenda of the youth work profession. His exploration of LEGO modelling in particular was designed to enable students to overcome a particularly complex concept and drew on both the creativity of lecturer and students. A further example is recent research focusing on digital storytelling as a pedagogical tool for sharing ideas and feelings as a way of presenting students' personal experiences to others [7], which aligns with the current focus on 'new literacies' within HE [8].

Building on this body of evidence, on the benefits of creative youth work practices for young people, this article takes a step back and instead focuses on the value and potential of creative pedagogies for youth workers 'in-waiting' through their experience of youth work courses within HE.

3. Theoretical Framework

Arts-based pedagogy has a rich history, stemming back to the 1960s and the Community Arts Movement in Britain [9]. Developments in informal education practice ran parallel with the publication of the Albemarle Report (1960) [10] and [11]. Whilst these historical roots are framed within the English context, arts-based pedagogy has international significance for strengthening the effectiveness of teachers through quality learning experiences and 'authentic' leadership [12]. As a pedagogical framework, arts-based learning has an impact on both students' personal and professional identities [13]. For example, arts-based pedagogical strategies have been successfully applied within a range of subjects in HE, such as business studies, as a way of fostering students' creativity and stimulating new

ways of thinking and working [14]. Arts-based pedagogy, therefore, has global significance for educators and informal educators alike.

In addition to the focus on arts-based pedagogies within youth work education, I draw upon relational learning and experiential learning in the analysis of the educational action research conducted. Relational learning refers to the 'social' aspects of learning, which is about building relationships and new connections within students' social and emotional lives, which encourage co-operation rather than competition between young people [15]. Taking a more individualistic approach to learning, when creative pedagogies are combined with relationality, the conditions for learning become based upon the students' interests, experiences and relations with others. The experiential learning offer of creative pedagogies manifests not only in the hands-on approach to learning, but also the 'secondary reflective experience' championed by the American educational reformer John Dewey [16]. Extending beyond a simplistic cycle of plan-do-review, experiential learning supports a purposeful engagement of the individual with the environment [17]. Before sharing the results from the creative activities in this article, firstly I shall give further details on this study.

4. Educational Action Research

This article shares the findings from an educational action research project, which sought to test out and adapt creative learning activities based on the interests and responses of the students. The action research methodology was qualitative and methods such as questionnaires and interviews offered 'thick description' [18] of student's different experiences. The participatory approach taken as part of the action research cycle was designed with a concern for student voice [19]. Three groups of students (42 in total) undertaking the BA (hons) Youth Studies degree at Nottingham Trent University took part in the activities. Data were collected at the university setting, and often within seminars over a period of five months, November 2019 to March 2020. As Course Leader for the Youth Studies degree, I had good access to potential participants. Ethical approval was sought and granted from the School of Social Sciences Ethics Committee, Nottingham Trent University, prior to commencing this study. Informed consent was sought from the student cohort as a whole initially and then on an individual basis, depending upon which students wanted to take part in the activities. In particular with the film-making activities, consent was sought to share the recordings with the rest of the group. Participation was voluntary and no incentives were offered to take part.

A variety of co-productive roles existed within this project between Lecturer/Facilitator and Student/Creator. For example, it was my role to propose the activities as a creative catalyst for learning, whereas the shape, direction and outputs of the arts-based work were led by the students. The action research cycle was brought full circle when ideas and artefacts could be shared amongst the group as a springboard for reflection and discussion. With the music and boardgame activities, these were introduced as part of a groupwork session, and the film-making activity, 12 students came forward to take part. Following the activities students were asked to give feedback on the experience of both contributing to and learning from the activity. Paper-based questionnaires and individual interviews were used to gather these data. In addition, with the 4 film clips created, these were shared within a pedagogical context to enable discussion and reflection as a teaching and learning resource.

The analytical framework for this research was based upon Lewin's 'Action Research Cycle' [20], more recently adapted by the Higher Education Authority [21]. This dictated that planning, implementation and review should happen collaboratively and that reflection should happen throughout the research process, not just at specific points. In contrast to reflective practice, which is a key tenet of youth work pedagogy, action research is more structured, involved data collection and is designed for an 'outward audience'. The findings of this small-scale study were disseminated not only with the course team but also with the students themselves as a way of completing the action research cycle [22]

and 'closing the feedback loop' [23]. In the following section, I give a reflective account of facilitating these activities, which is supported with student feedback such as the title of this article: "It's like being back in GCSE art".

4.1. Storytelling through Popular Music

Previous research has demonstrated that utilising music within lectures is an effective way of engaging students [24] and addressing issues of social justice [25]. With this in mind, I decided to deliver a music listening and discussion activity with a Year 1 cohort. At the end of the lecture, I played the track *Miami 2 Ibiza*, by Swedish House Mafia. I selected the YouTube clip with the lyrics rather than the music video as I wanted students to focus on the words (see Figure 1). I introduced the track as a cultural perspective of youth depicted by consumerism and discussed the cultural signs and signifiers within these lyrics, in particular the use of acronyms. I then closed the session by inviting students to select their own tracks of cultural significance reflecting their youth experience at the start of the session next week.

Figure 1. Screengrab of lyrics from *Miami 2 Ibiza*, by Swedish House Mafia.

The following week, I re-introduced the activity by asking for suggestions for songs students had thought of to reflect their cultural experience of youth. One student, a regular contributor in discussions, volunteered a song—'stressed out' by 21 Pilots. I found the track on YouTube with the lyrics and we watched it and listened together. This led to a brief discussion around social media, reminiscence and the particular smell of being young. Following this, another student, who did not usually contribute to discussions, chose the track 'Sirens' by Dizzee Rascal. I was unable to find an annotated version of the track with lyrics on YouTube, so we watched the full music video and read the lyrics on a webpage alongside. Showing this music video sparked an interesting discussion of race and the experience of 'black' youth—one which I could never have predicted for this session. In particular, this student was able to relate and communicate his own personal experience. A key challenge for me as facilitator within this was being able to respond to the different songs and lyrics chosen by students and relate those back to the module content, i.e., race, gender, mental health.

Feedback from students on this short activity included how they had found the form of music, written lyrics and YouTube accessible, but also appreciated having the time to think about their music track. Generating a personal response to a cultural artefact, such as a popular music song, enabled students to "learn in a better way" about the experience of young people within society. However, the most striking feedback for came from the student who had chosen the Dizzee Rascal track who came into my office the very next day and thanked me for making the content relevant and including him in the discussion.

On first reflection, I had felt a level of anticipation about the activity, as sharing music can feel quite personal and leave individuals vulnerable to criticism due to diverse tastes within popular music. However, what was encouraging was the reaction of the second student, who was normally disinterested in the lectures. Music both shapes (through agentic autonomy), and is shaped (by social and cultural structures) by a particular kind of learning self-identity [26]. Therefore, engaging with music listening, discussion and critique is an effective way of encouraging students to think about sameness and difference. The pedagogical value of this activity demonstrates encouragement for students to think about the deeper cultural significance of music, as well as enabling usually unheard voices in the group to be heard.

Embedding equality and diversity in the curriculum, with activities such as this, enables potential, belonging and engagement [27], as well as fostering good values which preserve and respond to diversity [28]. A key asset of creative pedagogies, and youth work curriculums in particular, is the process of self-reflection which would provide opportunities for understanding their cultural biases through learning and teaching [29]. Engaging with popular music, as just one example, enables students to engage with a range of different theoretical perspectives, including gendered, international and cultural approaches. As an introduction to post-war British youth subcultures, students can engage with popular music, such as Stormzy, to understand the present-day relevance of cultural and political figures today. In this way, and through engaging with creative pedagogies, students can explore their own reactions to their own cultural heritage and practices within the context of the world around them. This, in turn, is a key affordance of the practice that youth workers then take out with them into the field.

4.2. Documentary Film-Making as a Pedagogical Resource

Film-making has been used previously in teaching and learning as a way to encourage students to think for critically about the world they encounter and their place within it [30], with short and high-impact clips being used as a tool for learning and an opportunity to enhancing student understanding [31]. The production of digital stories, in particular, can stimulate affective learning [32] and led to higher levels of both reflection and understanding of the topics under focus [33]. I was able to engage students in film-making across two different modules: one where students volunteered to be interviewed about how a young person is defined and their experience of being a young person (see Figure 2); and another where students interviewed youth workers about their role and the value of informal education within their local communities (see Figure 3). With the first group, I acted as a discussant posing the same set of questions with eight different students: How do you define a young person? Do you think young people are free to choose or constrained by society? Do you think young people are a problem for society or is it society's view of young people that is problematic? The finished film edited together all the diverse and often contradicting responses from the eight students and I was able to use this film as a resource for discussion with the rest of the cohort of students.
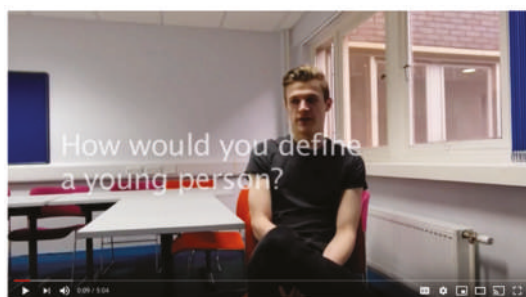

Figure 2. Screengrab from concepts of youth film.

YMCA Youth Work film

Figure 3. Screengrab from student interviewing a youth worker.

With the second group, I encouraged students to devise their own questions that they wanted to ask the practitioners that would be of value for them in their future roles. With this group, I was able to make a series of three short films, which we watched together as part of a workshop following the visits and were uploaded to the learning room as a future resource for students to access. Through these film-making activities, I was able to draw on my youth work practice prior to teaching HE, where I would often work with groups of young people to create issue-based film. These films were an engaging process which developed skills of reflection upon various social issues, as well as a sense of pride in the project the young people were working on. However, I do recognise that I was drawing on my own personal 'toolkit' in these endeavours. On a practical level, I already had the film editing skills and access to equipment to be able to undertake this. Also, this activity did take extra time with planning and post-production, but there was the potential to extend these skills to the students in more of a collaborative practice.

With both groups, I invited feedback on both the process of making these films and the end product in relation to their learning through an online form which elicited short responses. One student commented that watching the videos back was useful for reflection, but also how "more creative tasks that are set really help to apply what we're learning to real world context". Another participant commented on the process of being involved in creating the film clips, that it enabled them to develop their interview technique and the experience of presenting as a potential practitioner in the field, stating that "I really like how everything we learn is linked back to practice and put into real life scenarios". Feedback included comments about recognising shared experiences with others, which enabled a sense of connection to the course and peers. One student commented that some of the prior life experiences he had shared in fact could be used as a springboard to generate discussion as it linked to some module content. These comments show that not only were these documentary-style films a pedagogical resource through aiding memory, stimulating discussion and preparing for assignment writing, but that they were also useful tools in capturing the social capital conferred through meeting with practitioners who worked in the field. Making the film clips represented students' engagement in the intervention, but also the creation of student-centred learning resources [34] as film clips created sought to acknowledge and celebrate the diverse perspectives.

Creating the short documentary-style film with a small group of students from the Youth Studies course was an opportunity to represent and celebrate non-traditional transitions to university. Taking the form of 'digital stories', the film clips offered a transformational learning experience in relation to meaning-making and identity [35]. This enabled other students to recognise the different starting points of their peers but also to realise the benefit that different life experiences brought to the group. Within youth work education, in particular, the diverse perspectives and range of prior knowledges students bring, are celebrated. University curriculums should accommodate by generating pedagogical resources using film-making. In relation to creative pedagogies, film-making activities such as these draw on a student-centred approach, which encourages students to 'practice what

they teach' [36]. Interactive, inquiry-based and problem-based learning approaches such as this enable students to interact creatively and critically with course curriculums.

4.3. Creating and Playing Boardgames—Structure vs Agency

Sociological debates on the constraints a young person may have on their ability to possess and draw upon their own personal agency through institutional, political and economic structures, is key learning for all Youth Studies students. Previous feedback when I had approached this topic in a year 1 module had been that students found the theoretical elements dry and unengaging. In response to this feedback, I adapted an activity that was published as a blog in The Sociological Review—Undisciplining and the Board Game Workshop. I decided to set the students a challenge of creating a boardgame based on the journey of a young person's life and the intersections of Structure and Agency, as key concepts we were learning that session. Having presented a few slides on the sociological underpinning of the concepts, I asked students to create a list of opportunities and social advantages that young people face, alongside a list of disadvantages and constraints. I then showed the group a prototype I had made and showed them two different styles of board games—snakes and ladders and a grid formation. Students then worked in groups to design their own board game and I brought dice and counters so that they could play each others' games and give feedback. Examples of two of the simple designed games are below (Figures 4 and 5).
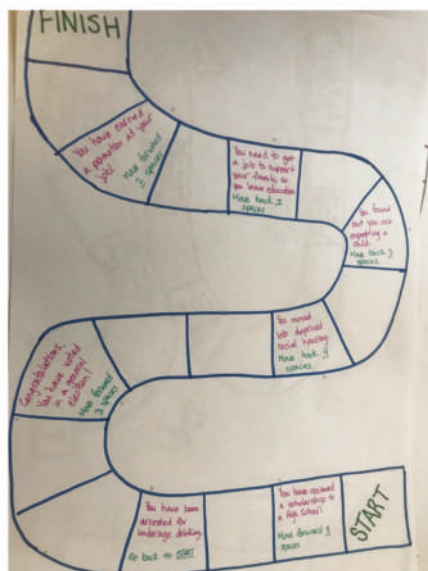

Figure 4. Photograph of life journey style board game.

Whilst facilitating the session, students expressed their enjoyment of being able to work with large sheets of paper, coloured pens and design materials, with one student gleefully exclaiming that this was "like being back in GCSE art". Having the opportunity to focus on making something with their hands, discussing and sharing designs was an enjoyable experience for the students, as well as developing their learning around the sociological concepts. Feedback on this activity included "I like that we do interactive tasks instead of just listening and writing notes" and that "the physical aspects, creating games etc really helps the way I learn, as I learn more by doing things". Gauntlett [37] argues that the making of 'external things' can 'impress the seal of their inner being' and that there is value in giving participants something to do or something to make, while they are thinking

about their responses. With the boardgame activity, the process of making and playing together gave students an opportunity to explore the concepts within their own worlds and enabled them to spend time being playful and creative as a form of pedagogical practice.
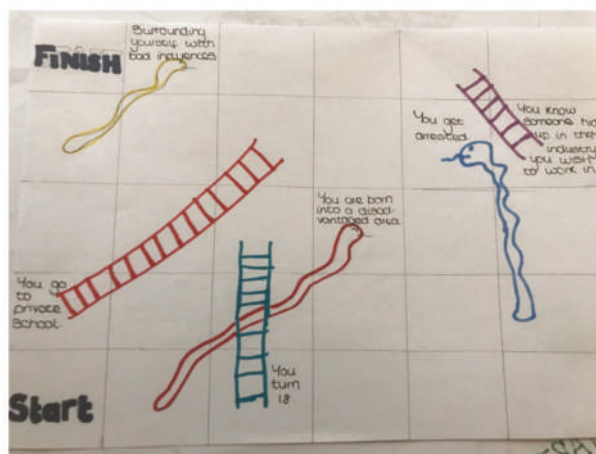

Figure 5. Photograph of Snakes and Ladders style board game.

Creative activities such as this are designed not only to encourage students to express opinions and form arguments, but also to introduce game-like elements in order to keep students engaged. Whilst gamification has been shown to positive benefits, these are dependent on the context in which it is being implemented [38]. Designed as a springboard for discussion and small group work, these student-designed boardgames create a playful environment where students are encouraged to express their own perspectives [39]. Curriculum approaches of gamification uphold a particular view of games as learning activities that are both personally meaningful and experiential [40]. These pedagogical innovations, frequently found within youth work courses, are effective in apprenticing students to be able to replicate these progressive and expressive pedagogies with young people in their work beyond HE.

5. Discussion

Within HE in England, there has been much focus on the personalisation of learning as a way of developing more inclusive curriculums. However, many initiatives have been critiqued as a weak version of personalisation which positions the student as consumer and customer, learning only to consume [41]. Johnson [42] argues that it is not so much the content of learning (curriculum) in courses which is attractive, but the method of learning (pedagogy) and that students are engaged more by pedagogical style than content. Therefore, this article brings attention to creative pedagogies within the university context, which are often overlooked. Purcell [6] argues that educators should provide catalysts for developing creativity in others, and that youth work courses are best positioned to take this up. The examples given in this article of engaging with music, film-making and boardgames as creative forms of pedagogy within a Youth Studies course, have highlighted the value of relational and experiential learning approaches, which are encompassed within creative activities.

Within the popular music activity, students were able to build connections with their social and emotional lives and then in turn be able to relate to the lives of others and their different experiences. Creative pedagogies encompass students' personalities, own interests and prior knowledge within learning scenarios [13]. To be able to de-code the meaning of lyrics, to be critical of diverse youth perspectives and to think about how students may encounter young people in these situations is a valuable process. Therefore,

this relational learning approach builds upon the core values and principles of youth work practice [43]. Another example was the student-created film clips, in particular where students were able to interview youth work practitioners, and engage with the films created as a way of envisaging themselves in those roles. Playing the Structure vs. Agency boardgames, based on the opportunities and constraints of the students own lives, exemplified relational learning within the context of socioecological pedagogies [44]. Creative activities such as these afford co-operation and relationship building, which are key skills and attributes developed by students on youth work HE courses.

In relation to experiential learning, the approaches details in this article offer hands-on inquiry-based activities that could be replicated within any HE degree, within any university. Creative pedagogies effectively enable students to apply their learning to real-life situations [12]. The symbiosis of creative pedagogies with experiential learning sets the scene for a powerful and at times transformative learning experience. For example, within the student-created film 'Concepts of Youth', being able to share their experiences as a young person and see that juxtaposed to a different experience of a student within the same cohort was an expressive and expansive undertaking for year 1 students. Taking the time to think deeply about popular music song lyrics, or a simple story shared and recounted through film, offered students the time to fully reflect on the significance of something that may have passed them by in everyday life. As key tenets of John Dewey's *Experience and Education* [16], being able to engage with the 'secondary reflective experience', for example within the narrative of student's own pathways to the point of university, was valuable for students. In this way, the creative activities shared in this article demonstrate conditions for learning that are based upon student's experiences, whilst acknowledging expressive forms of knowing.

These findings are not without limitations, which should be carefully considered. For example, important questions have been raised about the ability of educators to support any 'emotional fallout' from issues raised and their own capacity to manage the rigours of witnessing students' stories [45]. Whilst informal education approaches are best placed to deal with emotive issues, there are implications for the application to creative pedagogies across wider HE. In addition, with increasing pressure on university staff due to personalisation objectives, there may be limited resources in terms of time for all educators to maintain this approach. Despite the positive outcomes for students demonstrated in this article, some HE educators who adopt creative pedagogies may face difficulties in justifying time spent on designing the learning within a 'workload' model. Whilst supporting wider decolonialisation and diversity agendas, these findings do seek to challenge and push back upon narrower and more instrumentalised conceptions about what counts as 'learning' in HE. Therefore, the recommendations for practice that stem from this research are that each student should be able to express their own life experiences, cultural knowledge and have the opportunity to reflect upon this within their field of practice, whether this be youth work or not. My main argument within this article is that creative pedagogies provide an effective vehicle to do just that.

6. Conclusions

Creative Arts Youth Work [1] is a growing and expanding participatory practice and there is a need for these creative methods to be supported and nurtured within HE. This article has presented a reflective account of three experimental initiatives which assisted in educating informal educators through creative learning techniques. Varying degrees of student participation were explored, which served as both discussant and pedagogical resource. Within this study, creative pedagogical practice encompassed sharing and interaction as a form of productive collective endeavour. Therefore, this article makes a particular contribution to the emerging field of youth work pedagogy and its intersection with creativity.

Creative pedagogies within HE are an important (and commonly used) experience for future youth work practitioners. These pedagogical approaches of applying learning to 'real

world' scenarios are regular practice within youth work courses and should be expanded elsewhere in HE. Looking forward, it is clear that course curriculum design should take into account the possibilities of working across modalities to stimulate discussion, support engagement and maximise the potential for responsivity. Building a 'learning community' through creative pedagogies offers an alternative to the 'transmission of knowledge model', which fails to be inclusive. Research tells us that students are more likely to succeed in environments where they feel that their needs are being met and the course content is challenging yet responsive [46]. Where students are able to 'see a part of themselves' within the curriculum [47], whether this be applying theory to recent examples of their relevant experiences, or thinking about how their backgrounds have driven them to where they are today, the diverse knowledges that all students bring can be celebrated. Whilst the reflections offered in this article may represent a common understanding and experience for other lecturers within this field, there is value in championing and disseminating good practice to a wider audience. HE, and beyond, has much to learn from the creative pedagogies of youth work courses in seeking to be responsive to, engaging with and inspiring for future generations of students.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted according to the ethical guidelines of the British Educational Research Association, and approved by the School of Social Sciences Ethics Committee, Nottingham Trent University.

Informed Consent Statement: Written informed consent has been obtained from the patient(s) to publish this paper.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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The Contested Terrain of Critical Pedagogy and Teaching Informal Education in Higher Education

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Abstract: This review explores how critical pedagogy, often cited by educators of informal educators as a key influence, actually informs teaching of informal educators in higher education and assesses its potential to do so. It explores the background to critical pedagogy, its principles, aims and approaches and examines its worldwide influence on the teaching of informal educators. The authors argue that critical pedagogy is crucial for the teaching of informal educators, enabling lecturer and practitioners to interrupt the hegemony of neo-liberal and neo-managerial thinking in their practice and in higher education, and re-orientate themselves and examine their positionality within their institutions. It will focus on practical examples of enabling critical pedagogy in the teaching of informal education in higher education institutions.

Keywords: critical pedagogy; informal education; curriculum; assessment

1. Introduction

For many years and for many youth and community workers and informal educators the ideas of Critical Pedagogy and the transformative power of education, as described by Paulo Freire [1], have been at the cornerstone of their practice. However, this has not always translated into how youth and community work and informal education is taught in higher education.

This review will explore the degree to which and how it is possible to bring the principles and practices of critical pedagogy to bear in the teaching of informal education. Other volumes, such as Davies, M & Barnett R's (2016) *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Thinking in Higher Education* [2], have covered aspects of critical pedagogy but has a much wider reach examining critical theory and multiple contexts and a more theoretical and conceptual, rather than pedagogic, orientation. Groenke, S. L., & Hatch, J. A (Eds) (2009) 'Critical Pedagogy and Teacher Education in the Neoliberal Era: Small Openings' [3], and Cowden, G & Singh, G (2013) 'Acts of Knowing: Critical Pedagogy in, against and beyond the University' [4] both share a focus on finding openings and spaces in higher education where critical pedagogy can be enacted. However, Groenke and Hatch concentrate on teacher education as a context and Cowden & Singh on Social Work. Cowden and Singh do examine wider classroom contexts, and also, as their title suggests, against and beyond the university, including student activism and making links with wider social movements.

However, to date teaching informal education and youth and community work in higher education has not been sparsely explored within the literature and therefore to do so will constitute our contribution to it. Uniquely in 2015, Charlie Cooper explored the potential for critical pedagogy in one chapter of his book 'Socially Just, Radical Alternatives for Education and Youth Work Practice: Re-Imagining Ways of Working with Young People' [5], although he was pessimistic of the possibilities. Aside from this there was little written until 2019. Indeed, little attention has been given to the teaching of informal education and youth and community work in higher education at all. In the UK, the

Professional Association of Lecturers in Youth and Community work, which represents the interests of academics, educators and researchers in the field of youth and community work, has existed for over 50 years and has an annual conference exploring and developing best practice. In 2014 this conference, hosted by Mike's institution, explored its member's pedagogic practice (it also did in subsequent conferences in 2019, 2020 and 2021).

As a result of the 2014 conference, Mike was invited to host a session by the British Council for a group of lecturers in youth work across Europe. Discussion and collaborations led to a successful Erasmus bid for a strategic partnership sharing good pedagogic practice between Finland, Estonia and the UK. At the time these were the only countries to have university based specific professionally qualifying courses in informal education and youth and community work in higher education. Over two years, partners discussed their practice, met policy makers and practitioners, and found some common ground. Following on from this another partnership bid enabled us to pull together ideas and resources from across Europe and beyond on how we teach and develop our pedagogic practice. This led to the publishing of 'Teaching Youth Work in Higher Education: Tensions, Connections, Continuities and Contradictions' [6], which this review draws on substantially. Mike was the books editor.

More recently, a number of chapters on the pedagogic practice of lecturers in youth and community work and informal education were published in the book 'Hopeful Pedagogies in Higher Education: Dancing in the Cracks' [7], again edited by Mike. More recently still, Mike and Alan are about to publish 'Enabling Critical Pedagogy in Higher Education, for Critical Publishing', again this book draws on a broad range of examples, but is heavily based on teaching informal education and youth work, this being Mike and Alan's background. This review intends to be complementary to that book. It specifically examines the context of youth and community work and informal education.

This review will also explore the tension of trying to enact critical pedagogy in the teaching of informal education and youth and community work in higher education. Informal education as a practice is inherently spontaneous, organic [8], based on the needs and imaginations of the young people we work with [9], democratic, seeks to break down barriers between adults and young people, the teacher and the learner [10] and offers a counter to more formal education that has often failed, and as many [10,11] would argue, deliberately so, young people. However, we teach it in universities, which are often un-democratic, formal, hierarchical, with a curriculum determined by tutors or national bodies, which often re-inscribes existing privileges and is distant from lived experience [7].

Higher education has also been commodified, alongside other attributes of higher education, as Universities compete in the marketplace [12]. However, we take the view that, unlike in schools, informal education academics develop the curriculum, devise the teaching and learning strategy, quality assure and assess courses in a way which embodies the underpinning values and practices which it teaches. This is also done relatively close to the ground, at lecturing team and programme manager level. This review will catalogue and evaluate attempts to incorporate critical pedagogy into courses on informal education with integrity, looking at how we mediate staff, student and institutional resistance, quality frameworks and neo-liberal cultures and evaluative regimes, concluding it is possible—just.

It will explore how, as lecturers, the demands of an institution's quality assurance processes, marketisation, expectations around teaching, learning and assessment, and even the professional, statutory and regulatory bodies' demands seem to straitjacket and curtail his models of empowerment through education. It will give examples of how critical pedagogy can inform the curriculum, assessment, pedagogical approaches, the use of spaces-in-between and engagement with strategic intuitional issues. We offer a step model of how to enact critical pedagogy in higher education and a way of re-thinking about curriculum development that moves from seeing curriculum as a straitjacket, to a curriculum that builds on experiences and cultivates hope

2. Context

Critical pedagogy shares many of the attitudes and approaches of youth work and informal education, as expressed above [13]. In this article, we will argue that adopting critical pedagogy as a framework offers a way that informal educators can connect, and re-connect, with our subject and our teaching, making for a better experience for our students and ourselves. We also think critical pedagogy offers educators a way of reconnecting with themselves, in understanding their own positions in society and within our institutions, contextualising and mediating the forces modern academics are subject to.

One of the key debates within the critical pedagogy field is whether it is even possible to enact 'true' critical pedagogy within higher education. Several authors argue that the forces of neoliberalism, neo-conservatism and new managerialism within higher education have such a deep hold that authentic critical pedagogy is not possible and we should seek to enact it outside of higher education [13,14]. We have some sympathies with post critical pedagogy writers such as Hodgson, Vlieghe and Zamojski [15], who critique the utopianism of come critical pedagogues for utopianism, forsaking the present with a 'cruel optimism' for an unattainable future.

We are reminded of Alinsky's [16] criticism of rhetorical radicals who prefer highly principled failure over the murky waters of trying to maintain integrity while working in the belly of the beast. We make the case for celebrating pedagogies of HE that operate in liminal spaces and in the cracks of contradiction that are always a part of neoliberalism, neo-conservatism and new managerialism, hoping to widen them further. We both recognize the challenges of enacting critical pedagogy in our teaching of informal education, where the modern, neo-liberal university operates as a business, scrutinized by external powerholders, replicating existing hierarchies of knowledge and power [17].

We think that while fighting outside of the system can be liberating, it should not be conflated with effectiveness. The dull grind of working within the modern university is far less appealing and often less rewarding, but it does allow the possibility of direct influence in the here and now. We also think that we should not succumb to constructing the inside/outside higher education debate as an either/or—we have to work in tandem. The cracks that emerge from the irresolvable contradictions within the neo-liberal university need to be created and opened from both inside and outside the University for maximum purchase. We believe that critical pedagogies are possible in higher education, but there are permanent tensions to be ameliorated in trying to enact them.

Similarly, Critical Pedagogy goes right to the heart of the fundamental questions of what education is about, who it is for and how it is done. Biesta [18,19] is useful here. Since 2004 he has talked about the three domains of education. First is qualification, which constitutes the knowledge and skills that we want a person to know and understand. It may also include a literal qualification that certifies that we (the University Examination Boards and our Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body) are convinced that the person has acquired these skills and knowledge and can apply them to the situation they are intended for. This is an important aspect of knowledge, but knowledge cannot be reduced to it.

The second domain he describes as socialisation. This is where the student learns the norms, values and structures of the society and culture within which they exist, with the university as a microcosm of society and a transmitter of this knowledge. Critical pedagogy does not say that is wrong. It is to pretend that education does not do this, and is somehow neutral, that is wrong. Socialisation extends to the subject specific knowledge the student has just learnt, and for our courses it is also the socialisation that occurs in practice-based learning which informs and inculcates the professional identities required by the Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body. It is also cultural, contextual and contingent.

Perhaps the most important domain for critical pedagogues, and arguably for educationalists is subjectification. This is where students learn how to be a subject. They learn to be critical, to question, to have an enquiring and inquisitive mind and to create and evaluate knowledge. All higher education, and arguably all education, should enable these qualities

in students. A side effect of curbing criticality for political reasons, stopping students challenging the dominant political hegemony they are subject to, is that they stop being critical about all knowledge. This makes for bad education all round. Primarily critical pedagogy makes for better education all round as it engages with Biestas [18,19] domains.

3. History of Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy has existed as an approach to education for almost fifty years, with antecedents going back much further than this [12]. It has roots in the enlightenment and working- class political education in the eighteenth century [20]. The ideas behind critical pedagogy, in its modern form, were described by Paulo Freire [1] and since developed by authors such as Henry Giroux, Ira Shor, Michael Apple, Joe L. Kincheloe, Shirley R. Steinberg and Peter Maclaren. It is a broad school that combines critical theory, a neo-marxist approach, and educational theory, although Freire himself drew on humanism and existentialism, and in later years post-colonial thinking and feminism [21,22].

Critical pedagogy grew out of a concern that education was being used as a method to re-inscribe power relations in society [23] to create a 'common sense' that saw dominant elites' social positions as 'natural and inevitable', excluding all others from achieving their full potential. The aim of critical pedagogy is therefore to reverse this and illuminate the oppressed about their oppression. It moves beyond the 'banking' approach [1] which limits and constrains learning to a fixed curriculum, expecting students to accept this without question, and instead exemplifies a critical pedagogy approach in our practice.

4. Principles, Aims and Approaches of Critical Pedagogy

We [12] recently articulated a model of critical pedagogy outlining underlying principles, a set of aims and number of possible approaches. As the diagram (Figure 1) below indicates, these all stem from, and nestle within, each other.
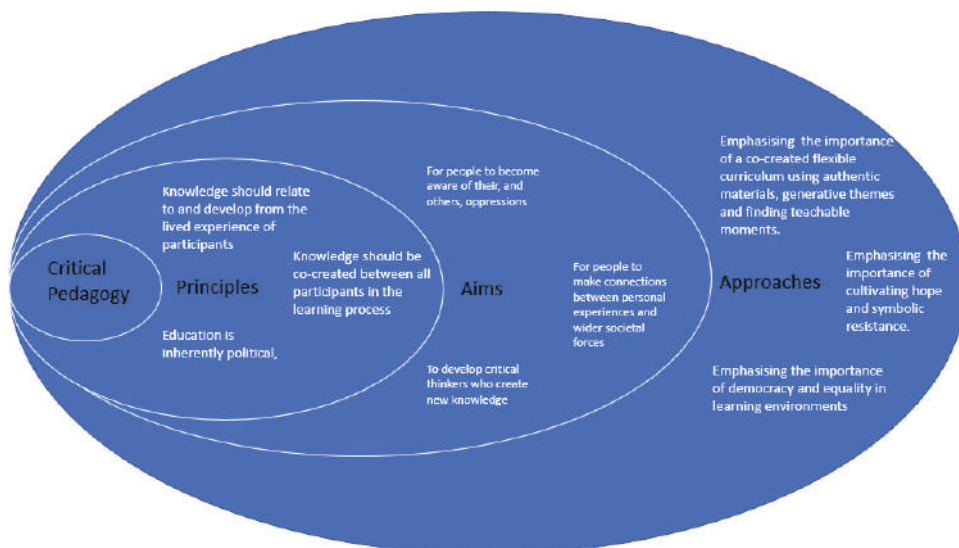

Figure 1. The principles, aims and approaches of critical pedagogy (Seal & Smith, [17] 2021).

5. Principles of Critical Pedagogy

- Education is inherently political.
- Knowledge should relate to and develop from the lived experience of participants.
- Knowledge should be co-created between all participants in the learning process.

Critical pedagogy seeks to de-neutralise education and knowledge creation, seeing these processes as inherently political, particularly where it concerns human relations [1,12]. Freire [1] outlines how an association with knowledge, and particularly theory, is that it is something created or discovered by 'objective', 'neutral' 'experts', often under scientific conditions. As importantly it aims to give to students, and people in general, the tools to undo, rethink and challenge their received wisdoms about what constitutes knowledge and education. This is the starting point for critical pedagogy. Often, knowledge and theory making are abstracted from most people's everyday lived experience in the name of being objective [12].

For critical pedagogues, theory needs to relate to the lived experiences of people, and where it does not, theory needs to change [18.19]. Learners have their own theories and ideas about the world, and this needs to be our starting place (Bolton, [24] 2010). When we combine theory with practice, we embrace praxis, and critical pedagogy has consistently described itself as a praxis [25–27]. Praxis is often interpreted as the synthesis of theory and action; however, it is more complex, subtle and radical than this. Critical pedagogy has a dynamic, dialectical view of how knowledge is created [28] where knowledge is an evolving and collective thing [29].

Critical pedagogues view knowledge as something we create through dialogue with each other [1], something informal educators will recognise in our professional debates about the youth work curriculum, and reminiscent of Jeffs and Smiths [30] 'Negotiated Curriculum' model on a continuum between conversation based informal education and formal set curriculum. Cho [31] describes knowledge as *'democratic, context-dependent, and appreciative of the value of learners' cultural heritage'* p 315. As Cho (2010) [31] indicates, the creation of this evolving knowledge is an active democratic process that entails interrogation of the world by all parties. This means not simply acknowledging the diversity and multiculturalism in the room, as this would construct people's views of cultures, including their own, as monolithic. Critical pedagogy may well entail challenging and changing cultural norms [1] (p. 12). Being oppressed does not make one less subject to dominant hegemonies.

6. Aims of Critical Pedagogy

- To develop critical thinkers who create new knowledge.
- For people to become aware of their, and others, oppressions and develop the will to act.
- For people to make connections between personal experiences and wider societal forces.

For critical pedagogues, our most important aim is to enable people to become critical thinkers and knowledge creators, able to apply and synthesise new ideas and information into new ways of thinking as situations change and evolve [32]. Its starting point is to help people recognise and honour their indigenous ways of doing this [33]. The break between experience, practice and theory needs to be challenged and students need to see how they have a right and duty to create new knowledge [34]. However, for learning to be critical it is often challenging [32,34] Smith [34] detailed how people are distanced from their natural critical thinking skills, through educational processes, and encouraged to think individualistically about their views, as though they are commodities to which they have a right. We think both of these aspects need to be challenged.

For Freire, [35] becoming a critical thinker entails 'conscientisation'. People need to become aware of their own oppression, and by extension understand how others are oppressed. However, there are issues with the idea of conscientisation, particularly the idea of 'false consciousness', whereby people are not aware of their own oppression. Ranciere [36] critiqued Bourdieu's for privileging the role of the intellectual and condemning the masses as unknowing and in need of liberation. Instead, Ranciere views people as being inherently capable of learning and developing intellect, but they have been led to believe that they are not intelligent by a system that deliberately undermines their self-belief and they consequently lose the will to use their analytic abilities. In the face of seemingly monolithic social

forces where they have been forced to prioritise short term survival. For Ranciere, the role of the informal educator is two-fold. First, to act on people's will, self-belief and efficacy, the will to engage and challenge themselves and others, and to wish to learn. Secondly, an educator's role is to attend to the content of what argument people are creating, but only in terms of ensuring people's arguments have logic and internal consistency, but that they attend to and deconstruct the language behind those arguments and the concepts behind the language.

7. Approaches in Critical Pedagogy

- Emphasising the importance of democracy and equality in learning environments.
- Emphasising a co-created flexible curriculum using authentic materials, generative themes and teachable moments.
- Cultivating hope and symbolic resistance.

Elsewhere [12] we detail how critical pedagogues need to challenge the colonisation of democracy in education through its construction as consumerism. Critical pedagogues need to deconstruct with students how consumerism is a constricting and deceptive form of democracy that placates rather than liberates, and individualises rather than develops mutual concern. Being truly democratic means educators have to acknowledge and challenge the structures they operate within, including the power and privilege it bestows on them [37] and this can be intimidating and feel disempowering [38]. We need to disrupt learners' passivity in our relationships [39], without infantilising students.

Some of the fundamental techniques within critical pedagogy that flow from these principles are having a flexible curriculum with authentic materials [39], finding teachable moments [2] and discovering generative themes [40], all things which may appear at odds with the limitations which timetabled classes, modularization and measuring learning outcomes may require.

Flexible curriculum and using authentic materials. For critical pedagogues, no one methodology can work for all cultures, populations and situations [39]. All decisions related to curricula, including the material to be studied should be based on the needs, interests, experiences and situations of students [41,42]. Furthermore, the resources used for education should come from and have resonance with people's everyday lives [43–45]. It is in linking people's everyday experiences and crises to wider socio-economic forces that people start to see 'both the reproductive nature and the possibility of resistance to problematic content' [45] (pp. 24–25). Within courses, this will often emerge through more discursive teaching and learning strategies, assessed presentations, debates or reflective journals.

Generative themes. Generative themes are where the group, in deciding the curriculum and theme to be explored, is seeking themes with certain characteristics [40]. Themes should firstly be a galvanizing force for people. Secondly, themes must have tensions and contradictions within it, things that do not add up that need to be worked through and have a potential to create something new that resolves these tensions. Generative themes should also open up discussion about, and relate to, wider social issues. In doing so they can lead to the opening up of other generative themes. Finally, generative themes must have potential for action, that something concrete can be done.

Teachable moments. One of the characteristics of critical pedagogy is the ability for all participants to think in the moment and improvise [46,47]. This can mean recognizing that a particular session plan is not working, or having resonance, and adjusting it accordingly, something which I am sure informal education practitioners recognize in their youth work practice. On another level it can mean spotting and seizing an opportunity to relate a discussion to wider issues. However, the responsibility for this should not lie with the pedagogue alone. Spontaneity should be cultivated for all. One of the dangers of critical pedagogy is that it engenders and reinforces senses of hopelessness [46,47]. We should therefore always cultivate hope. Freire warns that the hope of the progressive educator cannot be that of 'an irresponsible adventurer' [48] (p. 77), where people are reminded of the dynamics of their oppressions, but still feel powerless to act.

8. Critical Pedagogy, Youth Work and Informal Education

Informal education, and particularly youth and community work has traditionally allied itself with critical pedagogy in the UK [6,7]. Authors such as Freire appear on most modules reading lists and the title of our sector skills council, when it existed, was Paulo, in Freire's honour. However, at a European and International level, critical pedagogy as an influence of the pedagogy of youth and community work courses is far more contested [44]. In former Soviet countries there is a move away from collectivist approaches with an embracing of individualism (Kahrik, [49] 2019). Kahrick (2019) details how many young people and their youth workers were at the forefront of the movements that rejected the soviet regimes. In the pulling together of the book 'Teaching Youth Work in Higher Education: Tensions, Connections, Continuities and Contradictions' (Seal et al. [6] 2019), we found that critical pedagogy, with its Marxist base, simply does not have positive resonance for many countries. More widely, youth work education in universities is a minority sport, only being delivered in any form in 17 out of 44 countries in Europe. [50]. Kiilakoski [47] found that within these 17 countries, there are very different emphases, with some concentrating on youth policy, some on management, often leisure management, some on sociological studies of young people, some taking a social work and support approach. Only five took an educational approach, three from former soviet countries.

Wider than this, at least in the west, it is again a mixed picture [51,52]. Canadian youth work, and consequently the educating of its practitioners, very much takes a therapeutic approach to youth work [52]. Youth work education in the United States, as with its youth work, is eclectic, localised and fractured, and there is little national consensus. Most of its education is within social work departments and faculties [52]. Debates around professional identity and professionalisation abound, the latter as much of youth work in the UK is non-statutory, part time, low paid and undertaken by unqualified workers [53]. Much of its theoretical base comes from a youth development perspective, and while it draws on progressive education, it is often from a Deweyan, rather than Freirean perspective [54]. Michael Baizerman [55] has also traced the existential influence upon youth work and youth work education in the United States.

Australia, according to several authors, [51,52,56] very much follows a UK model, as many of youth work education early pioneers came over from the UK [51]. However, as Corney [48] goes on to say, youth work has increasingly been delivered at tertiary level, through the private sector, and within reductive neo-liberal frameworks, leaving the Freirean approach severely eroded [51]. New Zealand also follows a youth development model, although as Brooker [52] notes, it has developed a unique combination of west approaches to youth development combined with indigenous approaches from Native American and Māori cultures, and ecological psychological models. The emphasis is very much on developing intercultural competence, which while similar in feel, differs in its political analysis.

Looking to the Global South, the commonwealth has been an influence in terms of its Commonwealth Diploma in Youth Development Work, which has been delivered for four decades through more than 30 universities and academic institutions in Africa, the Caribbean and South East Asia. More recently the Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work (CHEC4YW), led by the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth of Learning and the University of the West Indies, has been developing frameworks at undergraduate and post-graduate level. It is very much based on a youth development model akin to the United States Deweyan Model, although there have been recent moves to make it more sensitive to indigenous cultures. Critical pedagogy is not a strong influence.

9. Critical Pedagogy Informing the Teaching of Informal and Community Education

Yet, while critical pedagogy permeates our curriculum in the UK, the degree to which it informs the pedagogy on youth and community courses is more contested [45]. To give an illustrative example: Mike started teaching at the now sadly gone YMCA George Williams

College. He was told that the full-time teaching course had a strict one-hour lecture, followed by a one-hour seminar structure. In contrast the distance learning course was the ultimate flipped classroom with students being sent out learning materials and coming together every six weeks for a six-hour session that was entirely student-determined and led. Conversely all the assessments were written, and the vast majority were traditional assignments. On deeper inquiry he found that colleagues were in reality teaching in much more diverse ways, with workshops, roleplays, artwork, etc. However, formal assessment remained all written.

Positively the literature does have examples of critical pedagogy being enacted in the teaching of youth and community work in higher education. Thompson and Woodger, [57] explore the process of experiential group work that is central to the youth and community work programme at Goldsmiths. The emphasis on social justice within the programme's curriculum, and the importance of the student group learning from and with each other underpins the teaching methods across the programme. Dialogue, interaction and sharing of experiences lies at the heart of training reflective practitioners who can connect and work successfully with groups and individuals, promote social justice, and empower themselves through exploring their own experiences of oppression and power. This enables them to critically engage and intervene effectively with institutions and be active agents of change. This approach values collective learning over individuals—and the process of learning over its product, representing a challenge to the dominant culture in Higher Education. Many of these practices and values are reflective of Critical Pedagogy, but perhaps have a slightly different emphasis placed on them.

Similarly, Connaughton, de St Croix, Grace and Thompson [58] explore the use of storytelling as part of a curriculum and method for teaching youth work within an HEI environment; primarily using the In Defense of Youth Work (IDYW) storytelling process and resources. They explore how the storytelling process is well regarded in certain academic fields of practice, especially, for instance, in history where there is a long tradition of using narrative and oral history methodology to illuminate specific events; storytelling is long-established across many cultural groups, particularly those that value oral traditions. Again, to recognise that knowledge should relate to the lived experiences of participants is central to the principles of Critical pedagogy. Within the youth work context, Banks [59] has applied the method of Socratic Dialogue as expressed by Turnbull and Mullins [60], here the authors, as youth and community work lecturers, seek to enable students to explore their practice from the personal, political, philosophical and social perspectives. For them, storytelling and writing are valid methods of inquiry, methods of research, where "writing no longer merely 'captures' reality, it helps 'construct' it" [61] p84. This point is crucial to the overt political nature of the IDYW stories methodology. It is the very act of countering the dominant discourse, of challenging the prevailing attitudes, what Gramsci called 'hegemony'; that the telling and sharing of stories becomes a radical transformative act, and youth workers become Gramsci's 'organic intellectuals'.

Bowler, Buchroth, Connolly and Wooley [62] (2019) claim that if youth work education should be attentive to conditions of domination, then resistance to unjust authority must remain a critical component of pedagogical practice. The neo-liberal thought woven into the business of HE affects the everyday, creating a complex relationship between governance and pedagogy. This presents critical educators with a paradox where pedagogy cannot stand outside governance. One solution identified by Giroux is to talk about them in an interrelated manner. The pedagogical concerns about the power of unmediated non-critical expressions of experience demand lecturers acknowledge the ways neo-liberal governance commodifies 'public time [into] corporate time' [63] (p. 2). Their chapter draws from work of Giroux and leading subject academics, offering theorised examples of how the programme team of Community and Youth Work at University of Sunderland remain proactive in ensuring that resistance to neoliberalism is not futile.

Achilleos & Douglas [64] present a case study of how assessment and feedback on the Youth and Community Work Programme at Glyndwr University, have been designed and

developed to redress the balance of power in youth and community education since the profession's move to Degree status. They acknowledge the challenges of achieving this balance in a formal education setting, whilst adopting transformative learning practices [65] that mirror the values and principles of youth and community work. Assessment 'for' and 'as' learning [66] are identified as processes that place students at the centre of assessment and feedback; supporting students to reach higher levels of thinking as equal partners in the process of knowledge construction. The case study also explores how assessment practices create the space for dialogue, drawing on Freire's [1] work in terms of oppression and education; helping to form communities of practice [67], and examine professional identity.

Some courses have modules dedicated to exploring critical pedagogy specifically. Bardy and Gilsenan [68] discuss the experiences of students undertaking these modules. One of the most interesting debates that emerged with the students was about this sense of freedom. Students reported really struggling with the freedom they had, and with being able to determine the content of the module, and the shift in power and responsibility in the learning relationship.

10. Discussion: A Step Change Model for Enacting Critical Pedagogy in the Teaching of Informal Education in Higher Education

We have developed a step model to enact critical pedagogy, recognising that people may have different levels of influence over the structures within which they teach. We argue that they may have more influence than they think, but is incremental [12].

Step one—change how you teach and your relationships with students.

We recommend that lecturers change what they can within the restrictions they have. Often, as a lecturer, we are given a module, with set learning outcomes, a set curriculum and a set assessment. We have even heard of colleagues that have their power points and learning materials scrutinised, with reasons of quality assurance and even Competition and Marketing Authority (CMA) compliance given as reasons (neither of these regimes ask for these things in fact). However, they cannot control what happens in the classroom, how we manage the power points we may have been given, and how we spin off them and work with student comments and contributions. If you do this, students will respond and 'engage' and 'participate' more, all things that higher education struggles with. They will also often do better in terms of marks and retention as a result, again things that will give you leverage.

For those of us who have lived through the challenges of working in higher education during the global coronavirus pandemic, so much has changed that could help address the power imbalances within the classroom, and higher education in general. Students have seen lecturers delivering classes from their own homes, removing the power imbalance that can so easily manifest in a classroom or lecture theatre. In the early days, as the online pivot occurred, many lecturers relied on the students to navigate—whether it was asking about screen-sharing, or the best platform to share video content.

Friere [1] famously critiqued the lecture approach to teaching as being a banking model. As Clark [69] articulated 'Looking at HE from a Freirean perspective, it might be considered that the lecture does not fulfil any of the aims of critical pedagogy, or of a transformative HE more generally'. If this is the case, how do we find those teachable moments that we described earlier, our shared experience has included deconstructing the lecture, questioning who gets to teach and is seen to have expertise in the room, re-defining tutor groups as a location for co-creation and the idea of self-directed learning/'flipped' learning and re-articulating the academic conference or seminar—one of Alan's colleagues recently delivered a 'Key-Not' with a group of students at the University's annual staff conference [70].

Step two—Push the structure as far as you can and build alliances.

Once you have some success, you will have leverage to build on what you are doing, mainly because you are dovetailing with institutional priorities. All assessment criteria and learning objectives are interpretable and we will give examples of how people have worked within these constrictions. Learning objectives are full of vagaries such as 'exploring

relevant social policy and theories' which we can interpret in our favour. As lecturers we need to move away from thinking, 'how do I get across to students the information I know they need to know?' to thinking 'how do we explore what information is relevant, and how can we find out about it, together?'.

This reframing of the teaching can be achieved with relative ease, but assessments are often reviewed annually, and courses revalidated every five years. This means you will have opportunities to change the structures you work within, but this can take time. In some institutions, it is possible to say that the learning objectives and assessment will be negotiated with students, you just have to win over quality assurance professionals as to why this is needed and see them as an ally. All this will mean winning over colleagues, who will be naturally curious about what you are doing, particularly if it is seen to be working.

Building alliances is crucial and working in the spaces in-between, enables us to expand and define our relationships outside of the classroom and become a true partner in learning. Seal and Smith [12] give examples of how it is possible to critique and engage the institution and professional bodies re-shaping the partnerships we develop, the research we undertake and the communities we engage. Examples include students and lecturers coming together in challenging aspects of the course, coming together, within a critical pedagogy group, to engage with and challenge other strategic aspects of higher education institutions, engaging with PSRBs and engaging with the wider institution, creating leverage for the university to take seriously its espoused commitment to civic responsibility.

Step three—be seen as a pedagogic expert, internally and externally.

While being an expert is in some ways an anathema to the critical pedagogue, you may need to become an expert in deconstructing the idea of being an expert. This means engaging with the teaching and learning process of the university, getting your FHEA, SFHEA and PFHEA and national teaching fellowships through your expertise in critical pedagogy. It also means writing, and there are plenty of publishers and journals who will be interested in your work. It also means taking research opportunities—most universities have funds for undertaking staff-student partnerships, and these are perfect for enacting critical pedagogy. As a sector, we have often been too focused on our teaching practice, rarely questioning the underpinning pedagogy and only a few people actively researching and promoting it. This collection offers an opportunity to redress that process, but to embrace the opportunities and hope that Critical pedagogy offers, we must work together to share our lived experiences, co-creating new knowledge and making connections between the personal and the political. Becoming actors in the wider social world, embedding democracy and challenging oppressive forces.

10.1. Developing an Inclusive Curriculum

We think there is a need to re-think curriculum development, moving from curriculum as straitjacket, to a curriculum that builds on experiences and cultivates hope [12]. Such discussions and debates are not new to youth and community workers and informal educators, in fact our history includes numerous attempts to qualify and quantify the curriculum, and a recognition for both of us, that it is our experience of working in youth and community work during the late 1980s and early 1990s, when we saw the challenges faced when curriculum is imposed, without recognising that the values and ethics which underpin our profession are built on models of empowerment and overcoming oppression. In an attempt to respond to these tensions, youth and community work embraced the notion of curriculum as process rather than just product, something which Eileen Newman and Gina Ingram recognised in 1989, and which Jon Ord extended further in 2008. In both cases, they recognised the need to use the language of curriculum, but to define it in a way that was neither straitjacket or outcome driven. In so doing, they created a debate and a multiplicity of definitions that ultimately allows us to imbue the values and practices of critical pedagogy within Higher Education.

10.2. A Representation of the 'Curriculum Straitjacket'

We hope this model of curriculum embraces and addresses a great many factors that impact our work. In developing the model above, we wanted to show the 'hard lines' of explicit 'control' that are exerted, but also the dotted lines, which are implicit and shape or limit our willingness to be radical or creative, these are often the unquestioned assumptions and beliefs about what is possible, and the power we assign to the other factors which are at play (see Figure 2):

- Subject benchmarks, defining what makes up the integrity of a named award or subject discipline;
- Quality Assurance Agency threshold criteria, pre-determined 'scaffolding' that defines both level and expectation;
- Sector norms, what are our 'competitors' doing, we feel the need to comply with sector expectations rather than take risks—the cold hand of marketisation,
- Admission, institutional criteria about which students you can accept, rarely embracing experiential knowledge or contextual realities, without 'proving' equivalence to the accepted 'academic' benchmarks,
- Academic Regulations, the framework which seeks to guard and protect academic integrity, based on an implicit sector norm that seeks to replicate and constrain creativity, and
- Validation criteria, the point of scrutiny where those asking the questions (internal and external) are already the products of an existing, power-laden system.
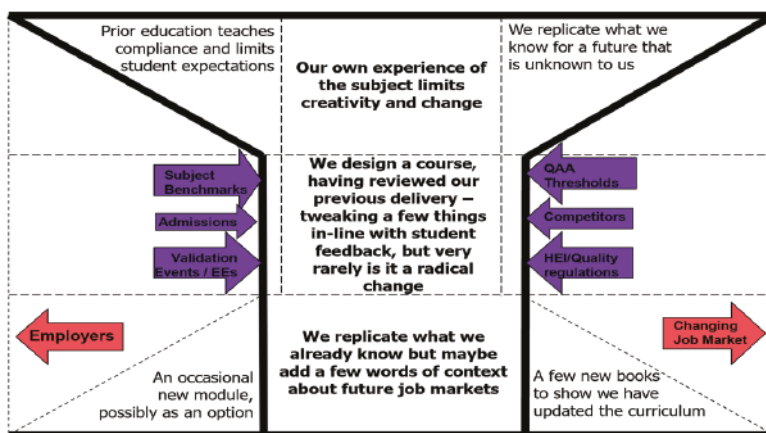

Figure 2. A straight jacketed curriculum [12].

In response to these, we replicate rather than re-imagine, we ask previous students to contribute—knowing they are the product of a previous system, and we rarely reform or reconsider the curriculum in its entirety, as that would also question our identity and purpose. In revalidation, we seek the views of employers and students, to reflect 'what is now' rather than 'what will be' in four years, when our first graduates emerge. We might add an option module, to address a local or contemporary issue, not really believing it will be a constant, and we update our bibliography and reading lists to show we are current in our thinking.

Recent debates have at least challenged the white, middle-class guardians of knowledge and expertise to consider the breadth of their 'givens'—a challenge to decolonise the curriculum, and an emerging narrative that seeks to question the hierarchy of knowledge. Similarly, the recent global pandemic has required teacher and student to reconsider how they teach and learn, as we respond to the online pivot—for many academics, they have less knowledge and experience of this online world, and have needed to at least begrudg-

ingly accept their students may bring some knowledge to the teacher-learner relationship. To move beyond the minor changes, we might have to broaden a reading list, or a more inclusive model of assessment to reflect diversity in all its forms; what fundamentally is needed is a new model of curriculum development. Not one that ignores the established frameworks, but instead uses them to enhance and develop the curriculum, rather than merely replicating it.

10.3. A Re-Imagined and Empowering Model of Curriculum

In an attempt to offer an alternative curriculum model, we have tried to re-imagine the factors which currently 'limit' a creative and empowering model of curriculum, and view these as opportunities and guides, rather than a straitjacket. [12](see Figure 3).
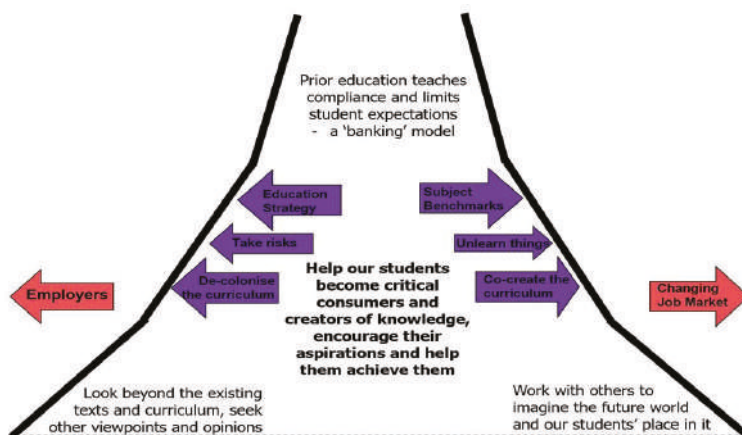

Figure 3. A Re-Imagined and Empowering Model of Curriculum [12].

In this model, we must still acknowledge that the prior experience of students is informed by a more traditional, 'banking' model of education, but instead of seeing this as limiting student expectations of higher education, we must help them 'unlearn' these things, and work with them to shape a meaningful and contemporary curriculum. Students' no longer the passive consumers of 'our' collective and historical knowledge, but participants, critically engaged in shaping their knowledge and curriculum. Such a model seeks to draw attention to the limitations of their prior learning, asking them to take risks and look beyond the existing texts and curriculum. You will see this model does not have the implicit 'scaffolding' that seeks to constrain learning, instead it aims to push boundaries, and co-create the curriculum through sharing viewpoints and opinions, valuing an individual's knowledge and life experiences. However, this requires a significant reframing of higher education, a willingness to seek creative and untested ideas, rooted in critical pedagogy and underpinned by effective and robust quality assurance.

11. Conclusions

We hope that this review has offered some ideas that build hope. Critical pedagogy is possible to enact in the teaching of informal education in higher education. Going forward, we would like to offer three points of reflection.

Do not self-censor—Like us, we are sure you have heard a lot of self-censoring from colleagues on building critical pedagogy into the curriculum in higher education. A common refrain is that 'quality' structures do not allow for such innovation, with their demand for aims, learning outcomes, pre-determined teaching strategies and set assessments, etc. However, in many cases colleagues have not actually tried, they have

all too often self-censored—assuming that they would not be allowed to embed critical pedagogy, or other innovations.

It is at the point when we try to enact critical pedagogy in our daily practices that the 'straitjackets' and self-censorship start to emerge, and doubt creeps in. Yet, both authors of this review have good working relationships with colleagues in their institutional quality teams, and recognise and value the significance of external validity and transparency. Mike often describes that as long as you take the approach that you have something you would like to do or a challenge to overcome; you can work with institutional policy and procedures and forward-thinking colleagues in Quality bring their expertise to help you make it work.

Some structures that could be written off could still have integrity—we hope that we have illustrated with regard to curriculum. Assessment is another interesting case in point. Assessment is generally rejected by critical pedagogues as being reductive, individualised, inaccurate and creating divisions between students and students and students and lecturers. However, both Shor [23] and Freire [1] disagree. Assessment, in its original form of examining whether and what learning has taken place, has an essential role in terms of accountability, if we are working towards people developing critical consciousnesses. Whilst at Newman University, Mike recalls the creation of a second-year module called Contemporary Issues in Youth and Community Work. In the module, students identify an area of the overall subject that they would like to explore, they have to come up with the learning outcomes and outline the curriculum they would like to be taught.

They finally design the assessment that will 'test' their learning. In terms of dovetailing with the overall learning outcomes of the programme this approach sees students testing many of their transferable skills: to problem solve; design programmes; critically analyse and ultimately to be able to understand the theoretical terrain of their subject. 30% of the available marks are reserved for the testing of these abilities to come up with learning outcomes, a coherent curriculum and a meaningful assessment task. In their second-year students do similarly in a module on critical pedagogy—the difference being that the terrain of the module has to be broadly within that of the curriculum of critical pedagogy—something which requires them to understand it's underpinning principles, it's challenges and ultimately the freedom which it can create.

Assessment can examine Praxis. In a module on community leadership, Mike co developed with students a group assessment that followed the process for developing generative themes. Firstly, the group explored what interests and issues they had in common. They then had to examine the wider societal issues, tensions and contradictions behind these issues. They then had to come up with a plan of action, looking at power and influence around the issues, but also identifying what agency they had in the situations and what meaningful impact they could have. For some it was linked to placement so that they could actually undertake the action and make a real-world impact. The issues the students chose was transport. The group found that there was an issue with transport to the university. For some this was car parking space, for others public transport. Rather than being divisive the group recognised that they would take public transport if they could. The problem was that it was an erratic service stopping at seven p.m., meaning that people could not stay late to study.

On further investigation they found that this similarly affected the cleaners and catering staff at the institution, as many had to get expensive taxis to work if they were working late or early. Going out into the community students found that local people were also similarly affected. Looking wider, the transport system had been systematically run down for years, and also disproportionately did not serve outlying estates that were not seen as politically important, such as the estate around the university. It was linked to wider social issues of political elites not valuing public transport. The student group then mounted a campaign, gaining the support of local people and local politicians (their majorities were all small and they relied on the estate's votes) to lobby the local authority

to extend bus services and make them more frequent to the estate, citing their espoused commitment to public transport and that the local authority had got regeneration money on the basis of improving local services. The campaign was successful.

Recognise that we may still have skills to develop—Of the pedagogic skills we need to develop the most important seems to be to be able to react in the moment—being able to look for teachable moments, to be able to work the room, mining people's ideas and linking them, and enabling students to make their own connections. Yet, reflection in action [71] is very under theorised [44,72]. The ability to be able to respond authentically, effectively and pedagogically in the moment and take it to a developmental place is by no means easy and we have to learn to hone it as a skill. Pete Harris [8] in his article, drawing on his jazz musician's background, calls it improvisation. Improvisation is not just making it up on the spot. It is about drawing on a vast vocabulary and applying it to the moment, and in that moment creating something new, one of the aims of Critical pedagogy—developing critical thinkers who create new knowledge. Positively, improvisation can be learnt and taught [8].

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Informal Education Pedagogy Transcendence from the 'Academy' to Society in the Current and Post COVID Environment

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to consider the following two notions; (1) that the use of 'informal education pedagogies' within teaching and learning in the 'academy' can both support the learning process within the 'classroom' but also transcend to society via students; and (2) that synergies exist between informal education and social pedagogical concepts. The discussions are situated from the perspective of an experienced practitioner and academic who is currently teaching youth related degree courses within a Higher Education Institution. This experiential learning has informed knowledge acquisition, understanding and skills application from professional practice to the teaching environment. An experiential learning perspective will be the primary method adopted; the value of this paper lies in its potential to re-affirm that degree courses which embed a 'practice the practice' approach in their teaching methodology support the embedding of core values of the said discipline. The paper argues that the ethically value-based principles and practice of informal education pedagogy, and social pedagogy, are relevant for the current and post COVID-19 pandemic environment.

Keywords: informal education; social pedagogy; pedagogical synergies; teaching methods/approaches; educational practice; practice contexts

1. Introduction

This discussion paper poses an overarching argument that informal education pedagogies have value to teaching and learning in universities for their own practice and also for creating future and/or broader social relations.

Firstly, the notion that the academic role may have a 'duality' function through a combination of academic and practitioner activity will be explored. 'Macro' and 'micro' contexts will be discussed highlighting the marketised higher education environment where power and politics play out. Examples of informal education pedagogic concepts for teaching and learning within Higher Education/university educational practices will be presented for consideration. Secondly, it argues that synergies between 'pedagogies', informal education pedagogy and social pedagogy', have the same value base and draw upon the same range of methods/approaches. A comparative discussion will be offered of how concept examples could be applied both in the classroom and the practice context. The following section will consider how informal education pedagogies could be drawn upon within differing learning settings, posing the argument, for example, that it could be utilised within a lecture theatre. Such teaching and learning pedagogy could be drawn upon in any setting and context as a vehicle to explore the subject matter. The discussion will move to drawing out the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for teaching and learning. Through the use of examples, it will aim to identify how informal education pedagogy has been evident throughout the pandemic. Finally, it will argue that such pedagogy transcends into wider society in how students could become 'social justice champions', personally,

professionally, and societally (putting value-based theory into practice). It will argue that student practice in the field is influenced by the pedagogical style they have experienced within their learning.

2. Informal Education Approaches—A Brief Introduction

Firstly is a brief discussion of informal education pedagogy through the discovery of the academic role becoming that of a 'duality' function. The approach to teaching and learning and how this presents itself between academic and student, 'macro' and 'micro' contexts will be touched upon, highlighting the marketised higher education environment, where power and politics play out.

Considering the concept of informal education as posed by Freire, he notes that "informal education is a dialogical (or conversational) rather than a curricula form ... " and that such "dialogue involves respect" [1]. Such an approach is not just theoretical but has practical application, as and when required. This can also be explored when he argues the notion of the teacher-student roles that can play out both in the established traditional education setting, and other learning domains such as within communities, workplaces and society at large. The 'duality of roles' is created rather than the binary traditional definition that can be seen as maintaining hegemonic power. He argues that:

> "Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with student-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow". [2] (p. 53)

A similar notion can be suggested for the academic who has been, or still is, a practitioner with relevant practice experience, knowledge and understanding of informal education contexts and settings. A symbiotic role thus emerges as the practitioner becomes the academic or the academic remains a practitioner. The significance of this relates to the key argument being posed that educators create a 'duality of roles' within the learning setting, such as the lecture theatre or classroom. This 'duality of roles' is where the theoretical concepts and the experienced practice merge in offering validity to the theory and authenticity for the students. Opportunities are created to expand and develop teaching and learning through an array of differing educational practices, such as the use of informal education pedagogy methods and approaches.

If academics consider themselves as practitioners and/or 'practice the practice' then this can suggest several possible notions. A synergy of the practitioner and the academic can combine, forming that of a 'pr-academic', not a theoretical based and valid definition, but more of an anecdotal observation. The suggestion that those that have practice experience and embed the core values of informal education pedagogy, such as youth work methodology, also embed these within their academic contexts is not one that can be assumed or expected. As the UK has become more and more marketised over the past few decades with the focus upon quantifiable numbers of students completing degrees to maintain the marketisation discourse, the curriculum can be diluted or replaced. Concepts such as 'reflection, anti-oppressive practice, etc.' can be topics that are reduced or removed from the curriculum to focus upon other directed themes. The argument posed, as by Ryan, presents a 'critical activist type approach' in enabling such informal education pedagogical concepts to remain in the curriculum;

> "Pedagogic decisions about reflective activities should be cognizant of the stage of the program/course and should recognise where students have been introduced to reflective practice; how and where it is further developed; and what links can be made between and across the years of the program/course. Choosing reflective tasks with due consideration to levels of professional knowledge and prior experiences with reflection, can enable higher education students to develop these higher order skills across time and space". [3] (p. 25)

Applying such reflexive activities within the teaching and learning environment from the perspective of being an integrative and important function embeds the concept of reflection itself. As the collection of teaching and learning methods are encountered by the students through a systematic planning approach, these become the 'norm' for students as educational practices alongside traditional theory-based knowledge acquisition. Informal education pedagogy can offer students access to explore 'how' concepts can be understood and utilised within practice. Reflecting upon their learning as they encounter formative tasks and exercises (case studies, researching and presenting, argument forming, positionality, moral and ethical debates, etc.), individually and in groups, enables the development of their learning before they apply it in practice. Through such activities the theoretical concepts can be discussed and critiqued in the learning space, exploring the meaning, with the ideal of moving from being 'reflective to reflexive'. Using informal education pedagogy approaches students can develop the meaning of the subject matter, in readiness to expand their deeper knowledge and understanding in discovering other concepts as they draw upon this continual developing learning process.

Within this 'duality of roles' there are also instances where core values are able to be maintained that form the personal and professional identity of the individual and thus become the bedrock of the 'duality' role they play as an academic. If such conflicts exist within the 'marketised academy', the very same skills and abilities the practitioner holds within a practice context can become transferable to the academy. However, the 'academic' may or may not see their role or function in such a way, but rather just as the teacher of knowledge. This is posed by Waite et al. explaining that "activism can take place in a variety of settings, including education. Although most educators may not think of themselves as activists, their actions may nevertheless qualify as activism" [4] (p. 9). These include the ability to be 'problem-posing and solving', solution focused, imaginative and creative, empathic and understanding, developing opportunities and possibilities, offering alternative suggestions, facilitating shared dialogue etc. This can be presented within a notion of a continuum whereby the focus is to continue to engage with the prescribed challenges faced, but creating solutions and practices within the constraining framework of the institution. However, it could also be presented as one of the fundamental building blocks of informal education pedagogy, the willingness to challenge and critique where some form of injustice or 'control and contain' infrastructure exists. Such approaches are evident more in the 'macro' sphere of an institution whereby waves of power exist at varying levels of structural organisational hierarchies. The relevance of the 'problem-posing', 'solution-focused' concepts and methods as an academic are paramount; as mentioned, the 'marketised academy' can become consumed with external drivers that can influence and impact upon the internal organisation of the functions and role of the institution. Where this does happen, such methods can offer firstly an awareness raising function regarding the issues at hand, and secondly methods in considering and presenting possible solutions. If these are utilised and modelled by academics, then they can offer significance to students too within their own learning and, within practice.

To consider the areas where we can explore and try to understand the 'micro' contexts whereby such pedagogy may exist, then we move to the space where the teaching itself takes place, the classroom and/or lecture theatre. Such domains can be those where power can exert itself, with the 'teacher' or 'lecturer' being the one holding the power over the learner or student. This is possible in such an environment where assessment and grading are very much at the behest of the marker with some options open to students to challenge. This power dynamic can be held and maintained both by the potential holder or the receiver of the power. If the hegemonic pedagogy is not challenged in such a way as to unpick and change it, then this will remain. Waite et al. remind us that "if educators and leaders are to advance social justice in schools and communities, they must acknowledge that educational institutions are political entities. The various approaches to politics in education, each in their own way, are useful in this enterprise" [4] (p. 8). The core values of informal education pedagogy lays this as a key bedrock of practice. This does not necessarily place

itself within formalised curriculum-based courses but exists as an addition, usually by the 'pr-academic' who creates the space and place for such discoveries to be made, while such themes are collated within the curriculum, understanding and application, usually by how these are interpreted by both the academic and learner, within the 'classroom' and practice settings. Such spaces and places exist as Jeffs and Smith [5] explain, it is often a spontaneous process of helping people to learn. This spontaneous aspect can only take place if such environments are created for the learner to explore such notions, then transfer the learning to practice. This has been identified as being the significant difference between the subject-based curriculum of formal learning and humanistic-based learning which occurs in the process of informal education pedagogy, for example, about identity, about others and our relationships with them, about relationships with the wider world and the contexts of our lives [6] (p. 2). The theoretical concept of informal education pedagogy can be found within specific degree modules as a continuum from formal educational pedagogy, or applies itself within more generic modules that can have limited coverage. However, within such a hegemonic 'academy' whereby specific pedagogies have dominance, the challenges that exist are apparent in how aspects are presented and perceived. As Batsleer [6] (p. 2) suggests, the notion of empowerment . . . asking the questions . . . What is power? How do informal educators engage with power dynamics and conflicts that are relevant? The 'art of conversation' is one such notion that exists within the informal education toolkit. This is a key learning tool that encounters many aspects of communication including linguistic, cognitive, purpose, exploration, etc. As is well documented, this works through conversation [5] and learning through conversation . . . as the most important method of informal learning [6] (p. 2). However, conversation also requires a more Socratic approach in discovering learning which is why the notion of dialogue [6] (p. 2) enables the exploration and enlargement of experience [5] to develop.

3. Pedagogical Synergies

As Batsleer states;

"most professional informal educators are not described in this way in job descriptions. The term 'non-formal learning' is also used in the context of European debates, as are the terms 'social pedagogue' . . . ". [6] (p. 1)

This leads to consideration of the possible synergies between informal education pedagogy and social pedagogical theory and practice. Notions of dialogue, accompaniment and situational learning are key factors of informal education, but similar notions exist within social pedagogy. This is supported as Eichsteller and Holthoff [7] (p. 34) explain: social pedagogy is a social construct, 'it emerges through dialogue about theory and practice . . . ' [8]. The exploration and understanding of 'Life–space' is where the space that exists between the professional and the service user (e.g., young person) is one where the life of the young person explores, develops, learns, usually through an everyday activity, a notion that many informal educators can recognise and resonate with and holds significance within social pedagogic contexts, especially within residential care settings.

If we consider that social pedagogy is about enabling holistic learning and well-being through empowering and supportive relationships [9], these could be aspects that the informal educator could validate as a basis for how they carry out their practice. Relating to the notion of students becoming social justice champions:

" . . . social pedagogy is concerned with well-being, learning and growth. This is underpinned by humanistic values and principles which view people as active and resourceful agents, highlight the importance of including them into the wider community, and aims to tackle or prevent social problems and inequality . . . ". [10] (p. 155)

Such focus upon preventing social problems and inequality situates itself well within the value-based theory and practice of informal education pedagogy. This is more so as "within informal education and social pedagogy, the character and integrity of practitioners

are seen as central to the processes of working with others" [11] (p. 3). The synergies mentioned here have significance and relevance within society as the consideration of preventing social problems and inequality can be seen as key subject matter that is explored within HE curricula that are heavily informed by such pedagogies. The purpose here is enabling students to unearth the complexities of such issues alongside theoretical methods and approaches in tackling them.

The infographic by Hatton offers an overview across social pedagogy, informal education, and youth work synergies (See Figure 1).

Social pedagogy	Informal education	Youth work
Micro level	**Micro level**	**Micro level**
Holistic view of young person	Holistic view of young person	Holistic view of young person
Belief in young people's agency	Commitment to young people's capacity	Focus on agency/capacity of young people
Mezzo level	**Mezzo level**	**Mezzo level**
Common Third Creativity, outdoor activities Partnership Head, Hands and Heart	Co-production of activities Creativity, art, outdoor activities Focus on non-traditional, experiential learning	Co-presence, working together Creativity, focus on young-people-led activities
Macro level	**Macro level**	**Macro level**
Equality – belief that young people have agency Transversalism Structural change pedagogy of the oppressed (Freire)	Education as the practice of freedom (Freire), social education	Focus on social change – more noticeable in radical interventions, which emphasise need for social struggle, more limited foci in mainstream work

Figure 1. Similarities between social pedagogy, informal education and youth work [10] (p. 161).

We can see that across the three levels from 'micro', through 'mezzo' to 'macro' that many similarities and synergies exist. The micro level highlights the common approach of agency and a holistic view of the young person is applied, the application of a shared space and/or activity that enables the learning journey to begin and flourish across the mezzo level. Finally, the overarching macro level considerations are presented as social justice and social change through education pedagogy informed and led by the young people.

This section is focused upon the similarities and synergies argued to exist between social pedagogy and informal education pedagogy, rather than a broader and deeper theoretical based discussion, and thus does not relate to such. The reader may be interested in a deeper exploration of social pedagogic theory that would offer an underpinning knowledge base, including the long historical context and an overview relating to its emerging theoretical concepts; culturally informed variations; and the array of key theoretical thinkers from a range of disciplines, mainly sociology, psychology and philosophy. As Hamalainen states:

"Social pedagogy is not a method, nor even a set of methods. As a discipline it has its own theoretical orientation to the world. An action is not social pedagogical because certain methods are used therein, but because some methods are chosen and used as a consequence of social pedagogical thought . . . ". [12] (p. 77)

As such the historical theoretical underpinning of the varying influences would be useful to consider how these emerge and transcend across domains of current practice. This is argued by Eichsteller and Holthoff [7] as social pedagogy is:

" . . . transcending national boundaries to the extent that inspiring ideas can be influential across different cultures". [8] (p. 5)

The synergies I would highlight are concepts in social pedagogy such as the 'diamond model'; 'head, heart, hands'; 'the relational universe'; 'the common third'; the 'learning zone'; the 'zone of proximal development'; the '3 P's—professional, personal and private'; and finally, 'Haltung'. Further explanation, alit in summary form, offers some understanding as to their relevance, significance and relation to informal education pedagogy.

'Diamond Model'—this is the notion that individuals have many 'riches' of knowledge, skills and abilities inherent within them and these can be 'rough' to begin with but over time can be smoothed to develop their potential in order to shine. To enable positive experiences through this process, social pedagogy has four core aims closely linked: well-being and happiness, holistic learning, relationships and empowerment [13]. Such experiences are argued to be fundamental and Eichsteller and Holthoff [14] suggest that positive experiences become an important vehicle in meeting the four core aims [8] (p. 49). This concept relates to the academy learning environment as the students begin their academic journey as 'rough diamonds', having existing knowledge, understanding and skills that they bring with them as valuable capital to draw upon. Through the learning journey, students can smooth their sometimes more strategic understanding to become much more detailed and deeper thinkers. Using a holistic approach to students' learning the academic can harness their development in such a way as to enable them to develop academically but also personally and professionally. It is argued that if students are happy and have a healthy well-being then they can engage with academic learning more effectively. Drawing upon a range of differing teaching and learning methods also presents a holistic approach whereby the students' learning styles, even though this concept is contested, can be adhered to across the student cohort. Holistic learning, though, can go further as the adoption of the importance of relationships and empowerment of students is applied, then their potential to become 'shining diamonds' is in reach.

'Head, Heart, Hands'—this concept considers the three domains of a person who draws upon social pedagogic theory to inform their practice. The 'head' engages in reflection to consider the concepts and theory being used and refers to the knowledge we have and our ability to connect this to the information we are given [8]. The 'heart' is where the emotional domain is encountered and offers the opportunity to use one's personality and positive attitude to build relationships. This is sometimes a controversial aspect of professional discourse, but in social pedagogy is inherent, as the notion of love is considered as a means of conveying the passion for incorporating human rights and social justice [8] (p. 36). The 'hands' are the vehicle by which engagement and interaction between people is enacted via a mutually beneficial activity. This activity can be varied according to the interests, relevance and purpose of the interaction. Even though this was suggested to be a concept that can be applied within the practice context, it can also be argued that it can be applied within the 'academy'. If the logic of this concept is applied to the classroom setting, then it can be considered in such a way as to aid the learning process itself. The 'head' brings cognitive functions to the fore in drawing upon the notion of reflection to support the uncovering of the complexities of theories within the subject matter and consider how these relate. Engaging with reflection from the 'head' domain offers opportunities for thinking to take place before any future action is considered and applied, a very relevant method in relation to working with people. The 'hands' enable the academic to draw upon a range of differing activities that are relevant for the specific subject matter to be explored. These can vary and can include, but are not exhaustive to, activities such as icebreaker games; role-play scenarios; case study deliberation; creative and arts-based activities; visual and audio based activities, etc.

'Relational Universe'—this is where the 'agency and emancipatory' practice of individuals is fundamental. The relevance of those around the individual is the most important aspect as they determine the significance of each person. The universe around them includes spinning relationships, like planets that are constantly moving, and thus such relationships may change over time. This is where the significance of those around them can change. As Thempra explains:

"In practice, it is therefore important for the child to define their relational universe, supported in this by carers and others as the child explores who they feel is able to support them now or in the future". [15]

However, we must remember that from the moment we are born, we are connected to various individuals [8] (p. 46). Some of these are thrust into an individual's relational uni-

verse, but hopefully over time these can be chosen and applied significance or importance to by the individual. Within the 'academy' context the 'relational universe' for students will also vary, influenced and/or impacted upon by the social and cultural capital that students bring with them. This can be a very useful resource for many students as many will be exploring a whole new place, environment, expectations, independence, and responsibilities for the first time. From this the 'relational universe' will be wide reaching, complex, with new relationship building, re-alignment of those they rely upon, developing new 'persons of importance', etc. For others this will be limited, simplistic, relationship-building but not by choice, relying upon 'persons of importance' too much, or not enough. Students' 'relational universe' will also be informed and influenced by their particular 'needs and wants' as they travel through their new learning journey. This self-defining moment for many is a valued and fundamental building block for developing as a person, whereas for others it can be a very challenging and difficult period. However, as this journey unfolds the 'persons of importance' will change according to the context of the present situation, whether it is not a choice, such as which academic teaches the students, or is a choice, where the student can choose who to speak to regarding an issue of concern. For the academic this is of importance as awareness of this can enable the students to grow, thrive and flourish, as well as creating a circle of support if needed.

'Common Third'—This requires the intervention of an activity between individuals as a way to support relationship building and thus strengthen the relationship [8,16]. The shared situation of the activity taking place is the focus of the learning, with an equal status placed upon each individual, rather than the relationship itself. Exploring this shared situation of equal status within the 'academy' can be somewhat difficult where organisations inherently have systems, and sometimes (but not always) cultures are contrary to this approach. However, such shared situations can be found within the classroom environment, with the academic enabling these educational practices, again, applying the concept of equal status, even though it could be argued that this will not be fully reached. Using activities that explore, critically analyse and consider methods and approaches to aspire to equal status is where student learning can be developed to enable application in practice. As with the 'hands' domain mentioned above, the activity is the mutual method by which the process takes place and is where the individuals concerned, in the academy, both students and academics, experience the shared situation.

'Learning Zone'—This approach requires the need to go through a particular learning process in order to further achieve. As Gardner [8] explains, growth and development can only take place in the 'learning zone', but to arrive at this zone the individual must reflect and establish their current starting point. This starting point is identified as the 'comfort zone' where [17] things are familiar to us, we feel comfortable, and we don't take any risks. However, if we move too far too quickly then the 'panic zone' is entered where developments can be hindered, with risks not being manageable. The 'learning zone' is where carefully managed risk is situated but sufficient support needs to be available to enable the learning to take place. For many students, the 'comfort zone' or the 'panic zone' can be the places they tend to fall within, foregoing the 'learning zone' altogether. This can be presented as students maintaining a safe space and position in not exploring new knowledge, concepts, skills, etc., with the repeating of subjects in their learning. The opposite is where sometimes students jump from a safe space to the area where major issues of concern and problems begin to occur as they fall into their own 'panic zone'. This can present itself as students struggling with engagement, missing deadlines, lower grades, reduced attendance. This is where such teaching and learning pedagogies carefully support students to keep, as much as possible, between the 'comfort zone' and 'panic zone' and within the 'learning zone' where new knowledge, understanding and skills can be explored and potentially mastered. This will need careful consideration to maintain an approach of both 'challenge' and 'support' for students to further develop, while ensuring that they don't become fearful or anxious about their learning. The process can be one of

'constant flux' as students fluctuate 'back-and-forth' between the zones as they manage the complexity of the varied subject matter they are exploring.

'Zone of Proximal Development'—This concept [8,18] was created by Russian psychologist Vygotsky who defined this as;

> " . . . the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers' . . . ". [19] (p. 86)

The ability to explore a process together with the intervention of another to share potential abilities can offer consideration of increased options, rather than exploring individually. This reflects and draws upon the notion of learning from others as well as oneself. This concept sits well within the 'academy' as there are inherent systematic processes that enable and support this to take place. These can include the various assessment types (diagnostic, formative, summative) and development methods (feedback, feed-forward, grading, threshold concepts). Such systems can aid focus on where the actual development has taken place and where potential development could lie. This could enable higher grades, deeper and wider content exploration, and improved critical analytical arguments. However, the ability to draw upon such systems is one that relies upon engagement to enable potential to be explored and possibly reached. If 'problem-solving' techniques are explored and understood within the teaching material, then these can be drawn upon in supporting the above processes.

'3-P's: Professional, Personal, Private'—these are suggested to be intertwined with each other as the practitioner encounters relationships and intervention with others, while recognising 'how' they impact upon this. As Charfe and Gardner [8] explain, the 3-P's offer a reflexive framework which allows practitioners to understand and manage these three aspects of self. The 'professional' explores the purpose of the role and is fundamental [20] to the relationship. The 'personal' draws upon the exploration of who one is [20] in enabling the relationship to become more genuine. The 'personal' also enables the opportunity to share attributes that can foster connectivity between individuals. The 'private' [20] sets the personal boundaries of what we do not want to share and is not brought into the relationship. The '3-P's' become a 'moral compass' [8] as they enable navigation through the process in keeping these in check. Such a concept within the 'academy' may hold more relevance to many as they explore the role that they play as academic, educator, and person of knowledge. Some academics would revert to the 'teacher-pupil' perspective where the boundaries and lines are clearly demarcated and never overlap. The personal and private are never dawn upon within the professional domain of the relationship, with a particular status of authority being applied. However, considering another perspective, students in HE are adults (over 18 years old in the UK) and the same approach may not succinctly fit this context. If such roles are not explicitly demarcated as both 'learner and educator' as adults, with the expectation that 'social-norms' apply in how they are to be treated, regarded, related to, etc. then this can cause a 'fuzzing' of the three domains. However, from a pedagogic perspective this would be welcomed, albeit carefully applied and led by the individual and organisational policies and procedures. For the academic to share some very carefully chosen and relevant personal aspects of their lives with students for the purpose of developing learning can be useful, offering authenticity to the learning. This does not compel either student and/or academic to do so and should be a carefully considered choice. For example, if the subject matter is exploring the 'education system and its impact upon young people's development', then an academic sharing some personal experiences of how their education journey impacted upon them could offer some connection to the students in considering their own educational experiences, and more importantly that of others.

'Haltung'—This concept could arguably be considered as the core element of social pedagogy and can resonate extremely well with informal education pedagogy, as it is derived from within the person and how they think, see the world around them and those

within it. 'Haltung' is a German word or term which roughly translates as ethos, mindset or attitude [7,8,21]. This is where beliefs and values [8] (p. 35) shape us as individuals and is based upon our values, philosophy, morality and concept of the world [7]. For the academic, this concept can be one that can either be the 'guiding light' as they navigate through the 'academy', or a constant challenge as they wrangle with conflicting issues and demands and with their own values and beliefs. Within the pandemic, this has been 'played out' as it impacted upon the HE sector with an array of issues for students including morale and well-being, general health, motivation and engagement, attainment and attendance, limited ability to travel and meet others, anxiety and worry, changing approaches to teaching and learning from initial expectations. Whilst students were affected in differing ways, it impacted upon all. The 'Haltung' that was applied across the sector varied as many HE institutions took an approach so as to enable a connectiveness to be continued through a number of initiatives; adapting assessments, applying reasonable adjustment to deadlines, increasing the remit of 'exceptional circumstances', working with professional and regulatory standards bodies for many 'applied courses' for guidance to apply reasonable adjustment to the standard requirements, offering increased pastoral support, re-alignment of learning and IT resources to meet changing needs, additional support with accommodation, offering food parcels, etc. For some academics this would resonate with how practice settings responded to the pandemic, as many did, with many academics applying similar approaches with their student cohorts. To align this with the classroom setting, 'Haltung' can sit well within the subject matter of many 'applied courses', working with people as the bedrock of exploration before other concepts are covered, thus setting the foundation for how and why the subjects covered are relevant. More importantly the approach taken is to understand these concepts and their purpose for both knowledge acquisition and their understanding of how to apply in practice.

To summarise these concepts, social pedagogy encompasses a range of aspects including being child/person-centred; has a strong focus upon relationships, increasing engagement and agency; and draws upon the rights of the individual in challenging social problems and social injustice. This is underpinned in seeing the individual in a holistic way regarding both education and well-being. The various concepts discussed above, individually explored with significant examples, have links and connections to each other and are not necessarily suggested to be used separately. The 'head, heart, hands' and the 'common third' concepts have overlapping aspects with the use of 'activity' in the shared learning experience. Others have ethical and value-based aspects that overlap: 'Haltung' and the '3-P's: Professional, Personal, Private', with the 'Zone of Proximal Development' and the 'Learning Zone' lending themselves more to an understanding of exploring what is possible to further develop, while carefully challenging oneself. While these concepts are not mutually exclusive, and many others can be considered in relation to learning in the 'academy', it is argued that they are an inter-linked tautology and can be utilised as such. These can form a part of the academics' educational practice in developing a teaching and learning strategy that becomes a framework or scaffolding to hold the various subject matter together. This can have significance, enabling students to feel that they can 'hold on to' and manage their own learning.

Finally, as Storro [22] (p. 70) reminds us . . . "it is everyday life that a social pedagogue carries out much of [their] work . . . in . . . ordinary everyday situations." The notion that such practice takes place in the 'everyday' is also where informal education pedagogy takes place, suggesting that such pedagogies are in synergy. Considering the notions of dialogue, accompaniment and situational learning along with 'Life-Space', it could be suggested that these have many aspects in common with each other.

4. Pedagogical Impact

To explore and understand where such examples of pedagogical impact exist and what they present themselves as, we need to consider the many actions, direct and indirect, that academics or 'pr-academics' carry out. These are usually supported with a

core rationale and/or purpose for carrying out such types of practice within the classroom environment. Some education pedagogies suggest that these teaching practice examples are not necessarily possible to be drawn upon in lecture theatre environments due to the practical and logistical arrangements of tiered seating and tables. However, this is contested as informal education pedagogy can take place in any setting and context. The exploration of how learning is connected is a key factor as Bridgstock et al. put forward: "much learning is inherently social, and the roles that social relationships and networks play in professional and lifelong learning are of great relevance to universities that wish to strengthen the employability of their graduates (Field, 2009)" [23] (p. 6). Examples of this could be using the 'art of conversation' and 'dialogue' so that students discuss and debate a relevant issue with peers besides, above and below them. Practice activity could lend itself to the explanation of informal education approaches as students are able to explore and develop new learning experiences while in such a confined space, hence situational learning [24] taking place. Others are the planned tasks and formative exercises placed within the formal teaching schedule that offer students the opportunity to experience such practice, exploring topics of interest in such a way as to pose the problem to the students in applying the task of solving the issue posed. This then creates and enables the space, as Freire suggested, for 'problem-posing' learning activity to take place [1]. Such a space can generate an almost organic unfolding of social interaction, problem solving, conversation and dialogue, understanding, knowledge, experiences, and group work through the shared learning experience. However, it is not just the tacit activity in which informal education pedagogy takes place, but also in the continuous social interaction between academic and student or 'teacher' and 'learner'. As Bovill argues;

> "You need positive relationships between teacher and students, and between students and their peers, in order to establish the trust necessary for co-creating learning and teaching. And through co-creating learning and teaching—involving shared decision-making, shared responsibility and negotiation of learning and teaching—teachers and students, and students and their peers, form deep, meaningful relationships . . . ". [25] (p. 2)

The focus of relationship building is one of the key concepts and methods that informal education pedagogy draws upon in establishing a meaningful learning environment. This becomes the 'vehicle' for the individual and shared learning journey to flourish. The notion of who is the teacher and who is the learner in this duality of relationships is not in question, but does offer some reflection upon the consideration of how the learning takes place. This is also underpinned with the concept of reflection, as the learning experience, even within the classroom setting, becomes one that enables the exploration of reflection in considering the above problem-posing issues. Teaching in such a way offers experiential learning within a 'safe space' for students to practice their developing skills set in readiness for the practice context. As Brookfield re-affirms; "teaching in a critically reflective key is teaching that keeps us awake and alert. It is mindful teaching practiced with the awareness that things are rarely what they seem" [26] (p. 22). The theoretical concepts that underpin the pedagogy can be drawn upon by the professional (academic) in how these are utilised and delivered. This, however, is where the teacher then needs to provide a 'modelling' of the concepts for students to model themselves with their peers, through group work exercises and other formative tasks assigned within the classroom setting. This presents the transparency of shared learning in that "showing students how we apply critical reflection to our own teaching and naming for them that this is what we're doing, also helps us earn the moral right to ask them to engage in the same process" [26] (p. 21). The showing of engagement by the teacher can enable students to engage in the learning process. This approach is one that informal education pedagogy draws upon when working within the practice context. The ability and openness of the practitioner to engage in the learning journey together enables and develops a stronger relationship between them and those they are supporting. This can present an authentication of shared learning, as Freire noted;

"The teacher's thinking is authenticated only by the authenticity of the students' thinking. The teacher cannot think for her students, nor can she impose her thought on them. Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about reality, does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication". [2] (p. 50)

A further key concept of informal pedagogy is that of drawing upon a 'toolkit' of skills that enable engagement to take place using 'activity'. This draws together individuals through the shared experience of the activity itself. Within the teaching context, utilising such methods and approaches can offer a wider accessibility for students with varying learning needs. As Brookfield re-affirms in relation to using a varied teaching approach: "if skillful teachers create classrooms that connect to what we know about how students learn, then we need to work intentionally to integrate imagination, play, and creativity into our teaching" [26] (p. 126). This varied approach is where the practitioner can adapt and apply the 'toolkit' of methods in relating to and engaging with others across many contexts and environments. Again, such approaches bring together the concepts of problem-posing, creativity and reflection through Freires' praxis cycle when he states: "problem-posing education bases itself on creativity and stimulates true reflection and action upon reality, thereby responding to the vocation of persons as beings who are authentic only when engaged in inquiry and creative transformation" [2] (p. 57).

This can encounter the academic's personal value base that informs their professional values and principles when presenting themselves to their students. This too has links with Freires' praxis concept as " . . . praxis–action that is informed (and linked to certain values). Dialogue wasn't just about deepening understanding—but was part of making a difference in the world" [1]. Through this process a cycle can occur of reflection, action, development of theory and thus development of new knowledge. This new knowledge can be further developed as the cycle is constantly drawn upon. This is further supported through the work of Ford and Profetto-McGrath who drew upon the praxis concepts as informed by Freire, Habermas and Grundy [27]. They argued that "praxis is a form of action and reflection; action that is informed by reflection, and reflection that is informed by action" [27] (p. 342). Examples of this can be the various types of support and guidance offered including the caring for others' well-being. As well as the usually timetabled student tutorials that take place, whether individual, group or peer, many academics go beyond this forging space and time to offer more support as needed. This additional time and space could be just the moment that the student is in a metaphorical place of self-fulfillment, achievement, or safety/well-being. Other aspects are also important to consider as the approach used by the academic with the student can be the fundamental trigger for acceptance or refusal of any support or guidance. As Jeffs and Smith [1] explain:

"In these settings there are specialist workers/educators whose job it is to encourage people to think about experiences and situations. Like friends or parents, they may respond to what is going on but, as professionals, these workers are able to bring special insights and ways of working". [1]

This ability to respond in such a way is also supported by Bridgstock et al. "Valuable learning is achieved through situated practice that is embedded into the framework of social support and development" [23] (p. 6). This also reinforces the 'modelling' approach for students in the hope that they can also re-enact this within the practice context.

5. The Pandemic and the Potential Impact within Society

Since the unfolding of the pandemic, society as a whole has changed insurmountably as it has affected the general population so significantly that the infrastructure has been under major pressure to maintain its current state. The impact has been both personal and professional for so many, as has been seen in the public admiration for those working in the National Health Service, social care and those deemed as key workers. Informal educators such as youth workers were eventually given key worker status along with the array of support that was offered to many young people and families in need within many communities across the UK. In contrast, the devastation it has inflicted upon many

families of loved ones lost, and many still living with the aftereffects of COVID-19, has been evident. The professional impact has also created an environment of possible change in how the workplace is perceived, with the previously argued need to work 'on-site' or 'in the office' no longer relevant, as was shown when many had to work from home, and still do. For informal educators this in itself presented many challenges, but an array of creative methods and approaches were used to continue to meet needs. These ranged from continuing 1:1 support work via online platforms or telephone, home visits with carefully 'socially distanced' rules applied, and adapting the usual programmes of work to respond to the local needs of communities, such as delivering food parcels and offering outside leisure activities. Where informal education pedagogy came to the fore was in how the population came to adapt to the situation in learning new modes of everyday life activity such as using technology to link with family, friends, and colleagues. The emergence of new knowledge, understanding and skills development has shown that learning can take place when not expected, as again "it is often] a spontaneous process of helping people to learn" [1]. The exploration of the 'personal' has also been highlighted within society as the means to 'stop' or 'slow down' has created space for personal connections to be reviewed or re-established, and even for the forging of new ones. These created spaces can be suggested to be where learning has taken place in a unique situation through a variety of methods seldom drawn upon, such as more virtual platforms, increased interaction with those not usually in contact, and even a conscious effort to connect with those not normally or frequently connected with. This could present the suggestion of situational learning that Lave and Wenger [24] explain as social relationships forming through a process of co-participation where informal education pedagogic learning is seen to be a process of social participation, even if using differing methods or approaches and in differing contexts and settings. Such learning can be deemed to occur through the everyday situations of the action's individuals take via the social process of thinking, perceiving, problem solving and interacting in forming such relationships. These everyday situations can be described as individual narratives or life narratives as Goodson et al. suggest: "the stories we tell about our lives and ourselves can play an important role in the ways in which we can learn from our lives" [28] (p. 2). As the pandemic has presented an array of life changing narratives, both positive and negative, such stories have been fundamentally impacted upon by the pandemic in ways that could not have been imagined. However, there has also been a differing approach to learning both in the 'academy' and society at large. With the increase in virtual learning, teaching from home, developing new skills, social structures (e.g., families) being in the same place for longer periods of time, and the emerging support for a range of public services and for neighbours, new learning can take place: "such learning, in turn, can be important for the ways in which we live our lives. But the relationship between life, self, story and learning is a complicated one" [28] (p. 2). Such learning has also offered the opportunity for shared learning experiences, both through choice and being forced to change as circumstances change.

To offer relevance to informal education pedagogy within the pandemic environment and situation, a possible 'community of practice' can be considered to have been formed. The population shares the same pandemic environment which could be suggested to be where practice emerges at being one community (within the pandemic bubble). As [29] explained, learning is formed from a combination of community, identity, meaning and practice. The community creates belonging from the physical and social disconnection the pandemic has created; while the new or developing individual and their identity become more than before, in that the experience that takes place creates a new meaning of the different social world surrounding oneself, and the notion that learning is formed through the 'doing of activity' that forms developed practice [29] (p. 220). Even though the social world around us has changed, the ability still to be involved is still present, but in different forms and contexts, as we are all involved in communities of practice all the time; at work, at school, in family life [29].

Such new spaces and places of learning that have emerged within situations forming 'communities of practice' may also need a more emotional state of mind to carry them through to whatever a post-pandemic environment, if there is to be one, will look like. Through this dialogue, Burbules [30] alludes to the human feeling of hope that is central to our achievements through learning, as often it is not clear what we will gain or learn, but faith in the inherent value of education carries us forward. If so, then we can flourish in the changing world, via the informal education pedagogy that has presented itself to us. This, it could be argued that this is needed more so now in the current context of the pandemic as well as due to other socio-economic factors (austerity cuts, marketisation of education, marginalisation of particular demographic groups) which have impacted upon society, and which will be discussed further in the following section.

6. Transcendence of Pedagogy

The final section argues that such pedagogy transcends into the wider society in how students become 'social justice champions', personally, professionally, and societally (value-based theory into practice). It explores the notion that student practice in the field is influenced by the pedagogical style they have experienced within their learning.

There is an array of literature relating to this notion across a selection of differing disciplines and disciplinary professional fields, investigating the possible link between learning experience and field practice. Many present the case that existing teaching and learning tends to be highly theoretically based, with only some having opportunities to explore links with practice, but an expectation that the student has the inherent ability to make these links. A selection of research literature across disciplines such as nursing, teacher education and some arts based subjects seemed to adopt this theoretical, expected approach, whereas other disciplines such as social work and some medical areas tend to relate to the importance of the learning experience for practice. However, there are mixed opinions regarding nursing degree learning, with some adopting this approach while others lack focus upon practice and experiential learning, especially relating to leadership practice. Some of the previously discussed methods and approaches drawing from an informal education pedagogic perspective, such as observation, feedback and modelling forming a 'community of practice', can be drawn upon from the researched literature. Additional methods explored include using 'simulation-based learning', 'interpretative pedagogy' and 'problem-based learning'. When exploring students' ability to master the art of conducting, Postema (2015) noted that students struggled to link the approach of 'professional artistic direction' with a shift of approach to 'educational conducting' [31]. He argued that:

> "Students through observation and feedback have the opportunity to create their own ideas about what is appropriate or inappropriate behaviour when conducting an orchestra. Observation and modelling also provided possibilities for students to develop and evaluate their self-efficacy and self-reactiveness". [31] (p. 20)

Observation and feedback are key attributes within an informal education pedagogical approach to education practice, both within the classroom setting and within the practice context. Students' practice experience is monitored by supervisors in the field offering feedback as they progress, hopefully achieving a standard that will enable them to become independent practitioners themselves. Within the learning environment academics can draw upon observation within formative tasks and activities and the use of visual assessments such as presentations, offering verbal feedback accordingly. This can also include the method of 'modelling' whereby the student re-enacts the approaches of others both in practice and in the classroom. Postema (2015) noted that learning together in groups and/or with peers was also seen as a useful method;

> "The theory of 'communities of practice' suggested learning itself, is an improvised practice and apprentices learn mostly by their relationship and participation with other apprentices and expert others". [31] (p. 20)

This can also be echoed when students work with their peers on tasks and group assessments, as well as learning from others in practice. A repository of experience can be stored and built upon as students develop and master new knowledge, understanding and skills. This importance of experience was identified as Jones and Vesilind (1996) explored reasons as to why student teachers became more reliant upon experience than was expected, throughout their training period and assessment. It was noticed that "pre-service teacher education programs traditionally offer students courses in theory and methods and then require student teachers to implement these during student teaching" [32] (p. 111) with the expectation that they can apply them accordingly. Their research found that this was the area where such expectations changed to drawing upon a differing method, that of experience. This was alluded to as follows: "the picture of student teaching that emerges from this study is of several processes by which student teachers used experience to reconstruct prior beliefs and definitions" [32] (p. 111), whereby the student brings with them some prior resource that they can draw upon, but with the requirement of further experience to build upon this resource. The findings were profound as they highlighted in their conclusions: "this study suggests that student teaching experiences do more than simply confirm or elaborate the pedagogical knowledge held by student teachers prior to teaching" [32] (p. 111), thus highlighting the importance of experiential learning. Within disciplines and professional fields where experiential learning, a key informal education pedagogic method, is part of the learning process, this can support the arguments posed by Jones and Vesilind (1996).

Other methods and approaches within the literature, 'simulation-based learning', 'interpretative pedagogy' and 'problem-based learning', appear to have an affinity with that of informal education pedagogical education practice as key skills that would support students learning from the classroom setting to the practice context. As discussed earlier, 'problem-posing' techniques from a Freirean perspective were highlighted as an approach that could explore issues using criticality to analyse the details, to be ready for what could emerge in the future. This relates to the research by Kwan (2008) when exploring the adaption of teaching and learning approaches to 'problem-based learning' types within teaching education programs. After analysing the data, she found that;

> "It appears that the problem-based scenario inductive inquiry workshop mode of delivery, which offers hands-on experience of a variety of teaching approaches, deserves greater attention and has higher preference in the teacher education programme by addressing both conceptual mastery and pragmatic practice". [33] (p. 340)

The suggested link of particular methods and approaches used, mentioned in the literature, re-affirms that informal education pedagogical approaches offer the link between theory and practice though experience via the use of a collection of methods such as 'problem-based learning'. Such learning has been claimed to be able to transcend into practice from the classroom as "problem-based learning can also help to strengthen a positive professional attitude by pursuing the ideal of life-long, self-directed and group-based collaborative learning" [33] (pp. 340–341).

As identified from the literature, 'simulation-based learning' and 'interpretative pedagogy' was discovered to support the contextualization of learning in McPherson and MacDonald's (2017) research into how effective leadership practice is needed for qualifying nurses as they venture into their practice settings. They argue that "interpretative pedagogy speaks to a fundamental transformation in the nature of education—moving from the epistemological to the ontological (Doane & Brown, 2011). This shifts a nurse educator's view of the relationships between teachers and learners, the way learners interact with the material, and how this is connected with clinical practice (McGibbon & McPherson, 2006)" [34] (p. 50). They noticed that particular types of teaching and learning practice impacted upon trainee nurse's ability to contextualise the theory as;

> " ... traditional lectures where learners assume a passive information-receiving role continue to be the mainstay for many nursing programs (Applin, Williams, Day, & Buro, 2011). This passive learning undermines critical thinking skill

development and active engagement with the concepts. Active learning strategies have been shown to contextualize learning and to overcome many barriers in nursing education, such as content overload, classroom time constraints, and large student numbers (Hudson, 2014)". [34] (p. 50)

This highlights the Freirean concept of 'banking' teaching where the recipient is the vessel of depositing knowledge and becomes passive in the process. The 'active learning strategies' McPherson and MacDonald refer to include methods whereby the student becomes engaged in the learning process as an active part. Referring to such approaches and methods, "in interpretative pedagogy, the focus of study for both student and teacher becomes that of enhancing and evolving students' ways of being so they become responsive, knowledgeable, ethical, and competent beginning practitioners" (Doane & Brown, 2011) [34] (p. 50). This change in approach offers the ability to the student nurse to move from trainee to qualified professional and be ready for the demands required. Throughout this process it was claimed that "interpretative pedagogies encourage students to process the multiple perspectives that exist, which can lead to deeper thinking and promote shared learning, bringing students and teachers together in a community of learning (Kuiper, 2012)" [34] (p. 50). Including "simulation-based learning as an approach to education that provides the learner with an opportunity to contextualize the information and emulate the practice setting" [34] (p. 50) creates the opportunity to explore the requirements of the practice within the learning environment of the classroom. Again, similarities exist with informal education pedagogical approaches whereby the learning environment creates the space for shared learning to apply the theory to a practice context, where exploratory knowledge and understanding can be harnessed.

The literature discussed argues that student practice in the field is influenced by the pedagogical style they have experienced as McPherson and MacDonald clearly state:

"(simulation-based learning) . . . supports transition to practice and is more congruent with the needs of professional practice (Curtis, Sheerin, & Vries, 2011), . . . and 'interpretative pedagogies' help us to bridge the science and the art of practice-based professions (Gilkison, 2013), bringing health professional students from merely knowing to informed and effective action". [34] (p. 50)

Considering the notion that informal education pedagogy offers its purpose as to cultivate communities, associations and relationships that make for human flourishing [1] it is argued that this has a place in the new post-pandemic world. In doing so the question remains of how this transcends into society at large, especially in those communities most impacted by the pandemic. To transcend such notions then considerations not just from the past and present but the future are needed, including drawing from the pandemic experience in such a way as to move on from the hardship faced by so many. As Rogers [35] suggests, there are two main ways in which we all learn based on the ideas of Dewey: education as a process of living and education as a process for future living. The shift that the pandemic may have offered is towards the latter, education as a process for future living, in that informal education pedagogy can be presented as a realistic and useful approach to draw from, offering a more credible status across the education continuum.

The 'messengers' of such an approach are those placed within the relevant context of such knowledge and understanding, the students. This is how students can become 'social justice champions' personally, professionally, and societally (value-based theory into practice). As a reminder, 'Informal Education' is an educational practice which can occur in a number of settings, both institutional and non-institutional . . . and is . . . a practice undertaken by committed practitioners [6] (p. 1), such committed practitioners being the students, as they move into the relevant practice settings and professional contexts where informal education pedagogy exists and can be considered. The array of settings and contexts, institutional and non-institutional, vary from the large local authority or charity whose organisational culture enables informal education pedagogy to become one of the many approaches used, to the small-scale local organisation that has a range of committed volunteers offering much needed activities and learning opportunities within communities.

This is supported by the idea that informal educators go to meet people and start where those people are, with their own preoccupations and in their own places [6] (p. 2). This supports the argument as to how transcending of the pedagogy takes place, both in its values and principles, but also in the approaches used. However, this may not be a straightforward task as many challenges could be faced by the informal educator in the post-pandemic world, not just from the health and well-being perspective, but from available allocated resources that could become more targeted than previously. However, returning to the arguments of Ford and Profetto-McGrath, they pose that: "praxis is not action that maintains the status quo, but rather action that changes 'both the world and our understanding of it' (Grundy, p. 113)" [27] (p. 1). This is where informal education pedagogy can maintain its position, as part of the role of the informal educator is to keep the condition for conversation alive, even in situations of conflict [6] (p. 8).

Keeping such conversations alive has been evidenced throughout history but also through the pandemic environment, with issues raised and brought to the public consciousness more succinctly such as the Black Lives Matter global campaigns emphasising major issues of concern regarding prejudices within mainstream institutions and how citizens are perceived and treated. As well as the loss of life, there has been a challenge to the social, political and economic discourse, underpinned by historical narratives, that has presented an unequal and prejudiced based view of life. This has resulted not just in many campaigns but also in the challenging of civic heritage, statues and other municipal artefacts. Furthermore, the exploration, and much needed, challenging of historical facts, as originally portrayed, in the literature that informs the current discourse, through such approach as decolonisation of education within the academy, is currently the focus of much attention as the HE curriculum is being reconfigured. Other such issues of concern have been the climate change debate, especially placed clearly in the public domain by young people such as Greta Thunberg, with a mass global following. The ability to champion, empower and enable young people to campaign on a key issue against the hegemonic rule of states, such as missing school or college, has been one that has shown that young people do have a voice. The use of 'campaigns' to present a shared voice has had mixed results, but the scale of influence and impact has shown that agency can be enacted, with Greta attending the various Climate Change Conferences. Placing this within the context of informal education pedagogy, it could be suggested that these young people stepped outside the usual conformist way of voicing their opinion and sought another. This is another example of where young people have created and gained their own agency in a collective way both to show their views and opinions, but also to challenge the current neo-liberal and capitalist way of thinking. A question posed by many young people is why they should go to school/college based upon an outdated economic system if their future is going to be bleak in relation to climate issues such as severe weather changes, increased poverty, animal species becoming extinct, the poorer getting poorer with the rich getting richer, and further inequalities. This can be noted where . . . in a shared engagement with everyday problem-posing, new learning occurs . . . because the learning is of immediate significance to those involved, rather than derived from a pre-established curriculum [6] (p. 2). This immediate significance has been identified with the young people concerned but, it could be argued, not necessarily with those in power. The question posed could be, are young people citizens of today or tomorrow and is there any significance to this perception? The sometimes suggested apathy of the general public and their lack of interest in wider issues that may not directly affect them could be contradicted by the examples mentioned here. However, the understanding and perceptions of how a citizen is defined varies in differing contexts, culturally and politically. This was explored by Biesta et al. who argued:

> " . . . rather than to blame individuals for an apparent lack of citizenship and civic spirit, we should start at the other end by asking about the actual opportunities for the enactment of the experiment of democracy that are available in our societies, on the assumption that participation in such practices can engender meaningful forms of citizenship and democratic agency". [36] (p. 10)

These meaningful forms of 'citizenship and democratic agency' [36] exist where individuals come together through a shared concern and/or issue in challenging where the power of citizenship lies, as well as who determines what meaning is defined as.

It can be argued that many students themselves form part of this mass campaign in airing their views and opinions, and indirectly/directly become 'social justice champions'. Many such students will be participating in professional practice settings as part of their learning experience, or working/volunteering additionally to their academic learning can be situations and contexts in which such informal education pedagogy exists. But does utilising such pedagogies suggest that an individual is also a 'good citizen'? On the contrary, if such pedagogies were not drawn upon in reaching those most affected within society, then does this make the individual a 'bad citizen'? It can be said that many 'good citizen' acts of kindness and support presented themselves more commonly throughout the pandemic, than would have happened in the pre-pandemic environment. This leads to the question;

" ... whether the good citizen is the one who fits in, the one who goes with the flow and the one who is part of the whole, or whether the good citizen is the one who stands out from the crowd, the one who goes against the flow, the one who 'bucks the trend' and the one who, in a sense, is always slightly 'out of order'". [36] (p. 1)

Asking such critical questions draws attention to how society treats citizens, as objects or subjects? If students are to become 'social justice champions', does this mean their role and function is somehow impacted upon, changed, differs from their predecessors? In a globally connected environment where people can immediately see, usually through social media platforms, the array of injustices taking place, then does this offer a purpose, for some, to challenge the current approach? Utilising informal education pedagogy as an approach through 'social justice champion' acts of agency may create and develop this sense of purpose through a mixture of new knowledge and previous experiences, in oneself as well others. As Dewey alluded to in his discussion of how experience and education are inherently linked and can offer an alternative philosophical way of learning for educators:

"The formation of purpose is, then, a rather complex intellectual operation. It involves (1) observation of surrounding conditions; (2) knowledge of what has happened in similar situations in the past, a knowledge obtained partly by recollection and partly from the information, advice, and warning of those who have had a wider experience; and (3) judgement which puts together what is observed and what is recalled to see what they signify". [37] (p. 69)

The combination of citizenship with agency and meaningful purpose could be the tools for students to enact a transcendence of the 'social justice champion' role and/or function within society utilising informal education pedagogy.

7. Conclusions

This discussion paper presented the overarching argument that informal education pedagogies within teaching and learning have significance both in the learning environment and in a practice context within society.

Firstly, it explored the notion that the academic role may have a 'duality' function through a combination of academic and practitioner activity. 'Macro' and 'micro' contexts were discussed, highlighting the marketised higher education environment where power and politics play out. Examples of informal education pedagogic concepts for teaching and learning within educational practices were presented for consideration. Secondly, it was argued that synergies between 'pedagogies', informal education pedagogy and social pedagogy, have the same value-base and draw upon the same range of methods/approaches. A comparative discussion offered concept examples of how they could be applied both in the classroom and the practice context. Next it was considered how informal education pedagogy could be drawn upon within differing learning settings, posing the argument,

for example, of whether it could be utilised within a lecture theatre. This suggested that such teaching and learning pedagogy could be drawn upon in any setting and context as a vehicle to explore the subject matter. The discussion thread moved to the impact that the COVID pandemic has had upon society, including teaching and learning. It was identified, sharing examples, how informal education pedagogy was evident throughout the pandemic within society. Finally, arguments were posed that such pedagogy transcends into the wider society in how students become 'social justice champions' personally, professionally, and societally (value-based theory into practice). It argued that student practice in the field is influenced by the pedagogical style they have experienced within their learning.

The current pandemic has brought to the fore many inequalities and injustices, many already existing, but having been thrust into the 'public eye' with vivid examples across society. This has touched many aspects of everyday life for many people across health, education, financial security, employment, and poverty. However, it has also brought new ways in which people have related to each other, such as neighbours and work colleagues, within communities and society at large. An outpouring of support for institutions such as the National Health Service, social care, education, and front-line workers maintaining everyday services has also emerged, not necessarily recognised previously. An increased use of social functions such as flexibility, adaptability and change has taken place throughout the pandemic, but for those having the available social, cultural and financial capital, being able to draw upon such capital aids a reduced pandemic impact. The pandemic has also presented many examples of philanthropy for those most in need, supported from those known to them but also initially not known to them, drawing from the perspective of 'human flourishing' and a 'caring nurture' notion coming to the fore. Such philanthropy has been evident in many individuals but also other bodies, including many small to medium non-governmental organisations, working in communities with a range of issues from food poverty to education support and general well-being.

The value-based, person-centred and reflective elements of informal education pedagogy, and social pedagogy, could be those that can forge such changes. In forging such changes, it is clear that students could be the vehicles as 'social justice champions' in transcending informal education pedagogy, and taking it from the 'academy' to society, adding to the existing philanthropy. As Freire reminds us "in problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation" [2] (p. 56).

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Article

Re-Imagining Approaches to Learning and Teaching: Youth and Community Work Education Post COVID-19

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Abstract: This article draws on research undertaken by the Professional Association of Lecturers in Youth and Community Work (PALYCW) in collaboration with the Open University, University of Glasgow and the University of Hull. The authors are all part of a community of practice of lecturers teaching in higher education on Community and Youth Work (CYW) degree programmes. These CYW programmes are professionally endorsed by Youth Work and Community Development professional bodies across the UK. They adopt informal methodologies and have a strong focus on preparing students to work as informal educators with young people and communities. The unique contribution of this paper is highlighting the experiences, issues and challenges presented and exploring creative approaches that have been developed by programmes that adopt these approaches to educate professional practitioners. Looking forward in a context of great uncertainty, the research also set out to consider what the future might look like for CYW programmes, located in the neoliberal university. Questions explored included the extent to which the pandemic might lead to longer term changes in learning and teaching methodologies in CYW in higher education (HE) and how CYW programmes should be preparing students for navigating practice in the society that unfolds post COVID-19 as the basis for taking action in communities in response to new formations of social injustice and inequality with conscious intent.

Keywords: COVID-19; community and youth work; higher education; teaching; research informed practice

1. Introduction

The world is in a time of profound change and extraordinary uncertainty, with the fourth industrial revolution [1] and its complexities colliding with the impact of COVID-19. The fallout from this collision is destabilising society, calling into question the utility of social institutions. Inequalities and exploitation have been made inescapably visible for marginalised groups and those living in poverty, in poorly paid insecure jobs and living in inadequate housing [2].

At a micro level, the recent pandemic has shaken up everyone's lived experiences, patterns and routines. We are having to rethink how we experience social relationships and arrangements to the way we live, work and socialise. For Butler [3], 'However differently we register this pandemic we understand it as global; it brings home the fact that we are implicated in a shared world.' She puts forward the imperative that to 'create an inhabitable world means to dismantle rigid forms of individuality which we argue is a perquisite for 'breaking through' [4] new formations of social injustice and working collaboratively to deepen democracy.

The current situation has opened up different spaces and places in different contexts to explore what type of other world we want to live in, how we work to build for now, the

future and what our legacies might be [3]. Through the pandemic there has been increased mutual self-help building solidarity from the grass roots in the face of state failure [5].

The context of the pandemic provides a strong foundation and rationale for the profession of Community and Youth Work (CYW) Programmes in facilitating informal and community education-led recovery in practice. Organising differently and co-operatively in the creation of alternative approaches to learning and teaching in CYW education in response to such challenges requires a deep questioning of the role of universities. The research drew on Participatory Action Research methodology to pursue multiple lines of inquiry including exploring how research participants are positioned as academic subjects. This provided a context for research participants to explore possibilities for using their positions of relative privilege and the platforms that this provides as the basis for analysis, advocacy and action about learning and teaching practices in CYW education. The research opened space to begin to explore pressing questions that hold implications for informal education, including, how do we continue to commit to being active in the creation of intentional teaching and learning spaces alongside each other, CYW students and practitioners? How do CYW educators in HE learn alongside local communities about new forms of organising, solidarity and mutual help as the basis for refreshing how and what is taught as part of professionalising CYW education? The research inquiry into CYW is both situated and contextual, located in a particular historical moment in time capturing the perspectives of lecturers in CYW teaching in UK-based universities. This paper critically reflects on the initial themes generated through the process of inquiry. The themes explored in the paper are not intended to be understood as fixed claims to knowledge but consistent with the principles of Participatory Action Research offer an opening for further investigation and a focus for the further development of informal education methodology in CYW teaching practices.

2. Literature

2.1. COVID-19 Context

The emergence of COVID-19 in 2020 changed society and the way in which people conducted their lives. The vast inequalities in social and economic conditions prior to the pandemic have had a direct impact on the unequal death toll [6]. In this context, Williams connects a critical and intersectional analysis of multiple social inequalities and social justice with questions of political practice and: 'not only how to 'do' social politics but also how our lives together might be better lived' [7] (p. 1). Such questions are significant at a time when the UK's austerity agenda, deeply criticised for subjecting 'great misery' with 'punitive, mean-spirited, and often callous' policies [8], intensified the impact of COVID-19. The '... fatal weakening of the community's capacity to cope and respond over the past 10 years ...' [9] (p. 4) ensured that COVID-19 had devastating impacts on the most vulnerable in society. 'Many of those groups, already struggling to stay afloat, have also borne the brunt of the economic and health impacts of COVID-19' [10] (p. 2).

The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on some social groups more than others is situated within a series of hostile social policies, forcing a crisis in social welfare that provides insights and analysis into the treatment of vulnerable groups. This holds specific implications for CYW educators and students who often are classified as non-traditional students, may be from disadvantaged groups and who almost certainly work alongside them. This provides unique contributions to the knowledge as to how HE programmes, working with non-traditional students and disadvantaged communities, have dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic and how they envisage their future working practices in establishing the society they want. With this critical reflection at the forefront of our mind, Arundhati Roy [11] writes, historically, that pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers

and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world—and ready to fight for it.

The portal that Roy discusses, and what happens next in terms of informal education, can be reflected upon via the views gathered from CYW lecturers and is therefore the focus of this paper. Making new meanings for the world, critically questioning experiences during these times whilst considering, can we walk lightly together and contribute to a reimagined world, or will it be 'back to normal' as quickly as possible? seems pertinent not just now but for CYW practice in HE in general.

2.2. The Current HE Context

COVID-19 has had a profound impact on teaching and learning in HE, on the lives of students studying and on the work of academics teaching and researching in universities [12,13]. Lockdown across the UK in March 2020 resulted in a cessation of face-to-face teaching across the HE sectors and a rapid transition to online learning and teaching. Since this time, as COVID-19 rates have continued to fluctuate, university teaching across the UK and globally [13] have increasingly shifted to more 'hybrid' models of learning and teaching, with elements of face-to-face teaching being offered alongside teaching delivered online. At the time of writing, in March 2022, the UK is slowly emerging from all imposed lockdown restrictions. The future trajectory of the impact of the pandemic and what will emerge as the 'new normal' as a lasting legacy for HE learning and teaching continues to be emergent and therefore uncertain.

The impact of the pandemic on the lives and the learning of students has been highlighted in academic publications as well as in the UK media. Particular concerns have been raised about the effect the pandemic has had on students' mental health [14]. The Sutton Trust has highlighted the disadvantages some students faced due to COVID-19 across their university journey, with the poorest hit hard [15]. Among Scottish students, for example, 73% were concerned about managing financially during the pandemic, and 14% reported using foodbanks [15]. In a difficult economic context, students graduating from university programmes are also facing a challenging entry into the labour market.

Challenges were faced by all those teaching on degree programmes. In this paper, we suggest, however, that programmes such as CYW have a unique insight into the impact on students from non-traditional backgrounds as well as the communities in which these students live and work. Therefore, analysing the views of lecturers committed to a more socially just world, who educate professional practitioners to work alongside the most disadvantaged communities, is vital in understanding HE's social responsibility more broadly.

The experience of COVID-19 has 'revealed much of the deficiencies of the higher education sector and much perhaps of what needs to change in universities' [16] (p. 624). It has highlighted the flaws of the neoliberal model of HE, of a marketised competitive university system where students are positioned as consumers, with institutions focusing on rankings and measuring performance; and the position of academics is becoming more insecure [17]. Existing shifts towards the wide-scale digitisation of university learning and teaching, and of university processes and practices, have been accelerated in the circumstances of the pandemic [17,18]. The impact of COVID-19 on the financial stability of some institutions has been identified as another area of concern [19]. As we emerge into a post-pandemic future, higher education commentators discuss the future of universities and what a re-imagined university might look like. This study focuses on a subset of academics whose practice is underpinned by informal methodologies, adopting critical pedagogical strategies to address social disadvantage and ensure that the voices of the most marginalised are included in policy creation and societal formation. It is for this reason that we now discuss the unique contribution that CYW programmes offer in the current context.

2.3. Community and Youth Work—Inside and Outside Higher Education

Many CYW HE programmes explicitly align their practices to critical pedagogy. Critically engaging with the political, cultural and economic context through dialectical theory, critique and praxis should position these programmes in a unique place to address injustices intensified by COVID-19.

Whilst approaches to teaching on such programmes are not alone in this endeavour, they certainly offer valuable insights into how society could be reimagined and how the HE sector can be more responsive to the needs of communities who are most marginalised and those who faced the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic. The use of critical pedagogy prior to the pandemic by CYW programmes offers learning for the broader HE sectors both practically, in terms of teaching, and structurally, in terms of policy. The literature demonstrates the discursive and distinctive ways in which critical pedagogy is put to work as a part of a values-driven approach to informal education practices that hold value both for students and in sustaining communities and socially just practices. Darder, Baltodano and Torres [20] (p. 22), for example, optimistically argue that critical pedagogy will continue whilst '... there are those who are forced to live under conditions of suffering and alienation—and there are educators who refuse to accept such conditions as a 'natural' evolution of humankind.' The importance of dialectical teaching and 'starting where the person is at' does not easily subscribe to pre-set outcomes, agendas or targets in professional practice or broader HE. The neoliberal project of our times has necessitated a formalised shift with a systematic dismantling of informal approaches in favour of increasingly individualised and responsibilised approaches [21–23]. CYW in the broadest sense, as a discipline and as a profession, has struggled to earn public recognition for the social value of its practices.

The value-driven nature of our professions [24,25] align with critical pedagogy in challenging oppression [26] and using education to challenge injustices. Critical pedagogy attempts to make the learners' experiences meaningful and provides tools for consciousness raising and action. However, often in formal educational institutions 'the learner is made visible, but power is rendered invisible, and the learner sees only the tasks and the tests which they must undertake' [27] (p. 48). A mirroring is happening in CYW practice where the data-driven context of 'performativity' and pre-defined outcomes often jar with the time required to build relationships and to work with young people at the centre of the process, potentially jeopardising the entire field of CYW [22,27].

In practice, the austerity measures impacted local youth services in England particularly hard, with 4544 local authority youth service jobs cut between 2012 and 2019 and at least 763 youth centres closing their doors since 2012 [28]. Despite this bleak context, COVID-19 reignited an interest in notions of community, in building relationships and in supporting our most vulnerable in society. These are things that CYW's have been advocating for and doing, day in and day out, despite the systematic dismantling of social protections and services [29–31]. For many, communities have been a 'hidden good' during this time. A recent Citizen Enquiry captured youth work stories during the pandemic. The Enquiry highlighted different ways in which practitioners across the country encouraged solidarity and mutual support with young people and communities. Key values of co-operation, connection, compassion, kindness, caring and common good were distinctive through the diaries in the actions taken [32]. It is with this context in mind that the research sought to explore in writing and in dialogue with lecturers of CYW their experiences during these unprecedented times and collectively to reflect on learning through the process and implications for practices going forward.

3. Materials and Methods

The researchers are themselves teachers and researchers in the field of CYW and located within the community of practice in which teaching and learning in HE would be explored [33]. From the outset, consideration was given to matters of methodology including the importance of developing an approach to research inquiry, which was consistent with the practices of CYW. A key consideration in the initial stages of research design was

the need to work with a methodology that was developmental and orientated to making a difference in approaches to informal methods of teaching. Participatory Action Research (PAR) was agreed as a methodological approach capable of providing a loose organising structure to the research process that has synergy with CYW principles and practices with an orientation to social justice [34].

PAR can be understood as an approach to research in which the false binary between the researcher and research is collapsed, as both are constituted as being with the process of inquiry. At a level of generality, PAR can be understood as a framework for conducting research that is flexible and responsive to the issues identified by participants themselves. The methodology is underpinned by the premise that those most impacted by the research should be integral to generating questions and setting agendas related to the participant's own teaching practices within their own settings. This is, more broadly, a part of a collective endeavour within a community of practice in which the process of PAR might act as a catalyst for action and serve to narrow the gap between research and action-orientated steps to making a difference [34].

Historically, the theorisation of PAR can be broadly associated with Freirean approaches with an emphasis on democratic processual and relational practices. It has also been widely linked to indigenous epistemologies and anti-racist and feminist theories, which give recognition to the value of making meaning through collective knowledge-making practices in ways that are both situated and contextual [35]. PAR can be further described as a methodological approach that is grass roots, as the process is generated from within communities and, in this instance, from within a community of lecturers in CYW. The methodology is distinctive, as it is orientated to action that advances agendas for social justice, which is of primary concern to lecturers in CYW drawing on the critical pedagogy referred to in the previous section [34]. Drawing on these framings of PAR, the role of critical dialogue and reflection was also considered integral to the generation of themes through the research process, and that would provide the context for action emerging from within our own CYW teaching practices.

Ethical approval for the research was obtained from The Open University's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) in December 2020 on behalf of the research team. Data was collected between January and March 2021, during a period of UK-wide lockdown. Information about the project, and an invitation to take part in the research, was circulated to members of the Professional Association of Youth and Community Workers (PALYCW). Information was also shared across professional networks via Twitter. Eighteen participants were recruited from thirteen higher education institutions across the UK; they all had roles teaching on CYW programmes or researching in this area. Participants were given information about the purpose of the research and were informed of their anonymity and right to withdraw in line with BERA guidelines [36].

Participants were able to engage with the project in two ways. They were invited to provide short written accounts, their own stories and narratives of their experiences teaching on CYW programmes during the COVID-19 pandemic, the issues and challenges that COVID-19 was presenting for them and ways in which they were addressing (or maybe trying to address) these challenges. They were also invited to contribute to two collective discussions that took place online via Microsoft Teams. These collective discussions were facilitated by the researchers and were loosely structured around the research questions. The intention was to create spaces for critical reflection and discussion and to share experiences and understandings. The first discussion focused on experiences of learning and teaching during the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the second discussion, participants were asked to look forward, in a context of great uncertainty, and to consider what the future might look like for CYW practice and CYW programmes located in HE. Questions explored included whether the pandemic would lead to longer term changes in learning and teaching methodologies on CYW undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes and how these programmes should be preparing students for navigating and shaping practice as society learns to live with COVID-19. The collective discussions were

recorded and transcribed. A distinctive aspect of the methodological approach was the commitment to create space and time for dialogue about the data generated through the research process, which was distilled into generative themes for analysis and to potentially inform further processes of research inquiry. The use of Teams facilitated a virtual democratic and accessible online space for reflection that removed geographical and time barriers to participation. Information about the project was also equally accessible to researchers who also used Teams as a collaborative writing space to make meaning in relation to generative themes that were emerging. As the research sessions were recorded, there was the intent to watch video footage understood as data. A key limitation in the research process was that the recordings did not save, and it meant that researchers needed to rely on auto-generated transcripts from the research and manual notes taken by researchers. The core research team engaged with a process of thematic analysis to identify commonalities that emerged from the research sessions and writing contributions [37].

Researchers paid particular attention to the affective dimensions of dialogue where an issue, idea or theme appeared to resonate with participants and take off in uncertain and unexpected directions. Themes were cross referenced with writing that participants had submitted. Issues broadly associated to 3 emergent themes that will form a focus for further inquiry over the longer term. The PAR methodology put to work was distinctive in that it was open to the issues and interests that participants bought into the research space drawing on their own practice-based experiences. Questions posed provided a loose organising structure revisable in practice dependent on where participants wanted to take issues identified through the dialogue and writing. The methodology and methods and the researcher and participants' perspectives all informed the meaning making that emerged from within the process in intra action to generate themes. The themes presented in this paper were not the only ones and therefore should be understood as a partial unfolding of areas for inquiry.

A range of ethical dimensions required careful consideration, not the least of which because of the complex relationships that develop through collaborative approaches to research and the need therefore to clarify, and not assume, accountabilities [38]. Ethics in this research was understood as being more than 'following the rules'. The approach to the research required being attuned and open to the possibility that differences may occur within the process of working intra-actively [39]; although we are a community of practice, we are not univocal. Power differentials through the process did arise with different ideas about how the research should be approached and what constituted 'data' within the process. It also raised a more fundamental question about the values and ethical approaches that inform and hold our practices to ensure that differences are encountered with respect and recognition for the 'other'. As the research was based on the principle of collaboration, the team made time and space for debriefing through all aspects of activity, including to consider matters of how to work together through the process and adapt approaches in response to participants [38]. This also held implications for how data was understood in the research process. Here the researcher's engagement with the data was understood as happening through a series of ethical encounters in negotiating meanings. Data in this context was not, therefore, approached as if it was static or fixed but as having agency within the process of inquiry and therefore with the power to influence and shape actions [40].

4. Results

A number of themes were identified through an analysis of the data, which chimed with the principles of CYW practices generally. The themes are: going with the flow and adapting teaching practices; creating spaces for learning; relationships and fun; CYW in HE and the role of the CYW academic in the post-pandemic university.

Data extended beyond the analysis provided in this article given the depth and breadth of discussions. For example, participants reflected on their experiences of living through a pandemic that had had a profound effect on their work and their personal lives. For

some, the precarity of the HE sectors in general was further exacerbated by the pandemic. Work patterns being shaped and mediated through technology, algorithms and metrics without the supportive relationships of working face to face with programme colleagues has impacted everyone within HE. It has been a 'roller coaster journey' with increasing workloads and work intensification.

Across the two research sessions, those teaching in CYW education always referred to the 'doing' of teaching. There was also frequent reference to 'the field', not meaning the academic field per se but the practice field of CYW. The intrinsic connection between higher education and the professional practice field is crucial when considering teaching practices and entanglements with the role of research in shaping a future yet to come.

4.1. Going with the Flow and Adapting Teaching Practices

All participants had been required to make rapid changes to their learning and teaching practices in response to the unfolding COVID-19 crisis in the UK in March 2020. This included the general shift to an online approach to teaching. Participants generally reflected on those changes during the research inquiry conducted in March 2021. Alongside this, the pandemic had 'brought the pastoral relationship to the fore'. They talked at length about the impact that COVID-19 was having on students, particularly non-traditional students or those living in situations without strong social support, with existing health conditions and mental health issues and those who had children and other caring responsibilities. As one participant commented:

> *'We are not only teaching very differently, and mixing different processes for teaching and learning, but we're also spending even more than routine time, on kind of one-to-one support for students, and that in itself is quite traumatic, some of the experiences they're going through and we're carrying all that and soaking it in like a big sponge.*

Another observed that 'I've always felt I've been a bit of a youth worker in this role, and some of the individual struggles of students have been stark.' The professional background many CYW lecturers come from provides them with an existing knowledge base and skill set to draw upon when working with students facing increased difficulties. The amalgamation of roles, part lecturer and part CYW practitioner, came to the fore during the pandemic.

However, amidst the significant challenges of the past year, participants also identified positives and opportunities that had been presented by the experience of the pandemic. Approaches to teaching and learning underpinned by CYW values and principles had equipped them well for being flexible and adaptable in the rapidly changing HE environment, and for developing responses to COVID-19 and meeting institutional requirements. In dealing with the circumstances of the pandemic, they had also drawn on their own professional skills as community and youth workers. Participants noted that the pandemic had led to a renewed 'recognition of the importance of community' and highlighted the strength of approaches driven by CYW, which emphasised the 'mutuality of support' and the value of 'learning through collaboration' within and across 'creative practice partnerships'. As well as highlighting the importance of CYW as a practice and as a profession, the pandemic had presented an opportunity for lecturers in CYW to showcase and share their approaches to learning and teaching with academic colleagues teaching in other disciplines.

Learning and teaching in the context of a global pandemic had also presented opportunities for rich conversations that developed students' critical thinking: to chat and comment on their perspectives about what they saw happening personally, professionally, nationally and globally with big, complex learning debates and discussions. Collectively, CYW lecturers and students had worked to find ways forward; as one commented: 'we problem solved together.' The pandemic had demonstrated students' creativity and ability to be innovative, including in situations where they had been enabled to continue their practice in communities.

4.2. Creating Spaces for Learning

The role of technology in shaping and mediating teaching and learning spaces intensified during the pandemic, accelerating changes that were already evident in learning and teaching in HE. Spaces for learning have become increasingly individualised and personalised in ways which unsettle ideas about space as linear or bound by time [27,41]. The research identified that, along with students more generally, CYW students have been given increased choice in when and how to access learning resources synchronously and asynchronously. Participants working in some institutions had been given the autonomy to develop their own creative responses to teaching online, and some of this experience had been positive. However, a number of participants shared how they had been given 'set formulas' for the development of learning activities, which potentially undermined the role of the collective and group work in CYW teaching. A key theme explored by participants was the implications for critical pedagogy in hybrid approaches in HE to teaching that may 'prioritise the individual over the collective'.

Whilst COVID-19 resulted in all HE providers transitioning to online learning, recent research [41] (p. 476) found, 'The ability of teachers and learners to engage affectively in relationships showed to be central to meaningful educational experiences'. Participants explored and shared different ways in which they had used the distinctive approaches of CYW education, in terms of power sharing, and equity, in the creation of virtual spaces. A key question was raised about the role of the CYW educator in working alongside students to make spaces in which societal and professional change can be imagined. In this context, one research participant talked about the idea of online spaces being conceptualised as 'laboratories for learning' that require the enactment of a range of 'ethical and professional considerations.' In other words, academics have to be active in space making alongside students to create conditions in which the collective is valued to counter the impact of more individualised, technical–rational approaches [42]. This is a major challenge when utilising informal methodologies mediated through a computer screen. Another participant spoke about the importance of creating unconditional spaces in which educational relationships are prioritised as resistance to the increasing colonisation of space through managerial requirements. Participants were mindful of the dangers and limitations of online working as well as recognising its potential and possibilities. Several participants emphasised the importance of sharing power through democratic practices, drawing on lived experiences to negotiate and make meaning about future-orientated CYW practices. The process of space making becomes pivotal in creating conditions for learning that prioritises relationships and encourages spontaneity, fun, risk and playfulness.

4.3. Relationships and Fun

The importance of relationships was highlighted by participants both in discussions and in their written reflections. Cottam [43] supports this, arguing the need to 'remake relationships and revolutionise the welfare state'. Participants questioned the nature of educational relationships with students and space-making activities that create conditions of possibility in ways which align with Cottam's manifesto for social revolution, where revolution is understood as a practice that requires 'all our participation'.

A number of participants spoke about the challenges of forming relationships with colleagues and students that they had only ever met online. However, they had worked to find ways of creating more humanised, informal dialogical spaces. One participant described the introduction of an online drop-in as a positive approach to making educational relationships that were less didactic, more horizontal and where 'experiences and feelings mattered and were made to count.' Participants highlighted the importance of working collaboratively with students to make unconditional spaces where relationships could be prioritised over attainment. This was seen to be fundamental at a time where students were struggling to remain engaged with their CYW education, studying in challenging circumstances, including living in overcrowded spaces and with limited connectivity. One

area that was discussed extensively in a breakout room was the need to reintegrate 'fun' into our work.

'We do not know what is next because we never anticipated this . . . We are not living in colour at the minute we are living in black and white and how do we start to bring that colour, that fun back? . . . We need to get back to the fun, that UNCRC, right to play, supporting young people to be together, to developing social elements. It is all really serious; everything is serious and where is that fun aspect . . . ?' Segal [44] agrees, arguing the need for 'radical happiness', a process of transformative, collective joy in contrast to the current era of individualism. Community and youth workers have always known the importance of fun. It is not only vital for development but why people engage, the solidarity, collectivity, relationship building and identifying common purposes for action. Notions of happiness and fun should not be deemed as oppositional to serious and misery; rather, as Segal [44] argues, it is in the recognition of struggles, difficulties, difference and 'in consciously combating the hierarchies of privilege and power consolidated around difference—creates spaces of excitement, respect and hope'.

Despite this ambition, many participants highlighted concerns that COVID-19 may, in contrast, progress a pathologising, 'fixing' agenda which has already been levied at communities and young people. One participant commented: 'I do think there is a danger because of the narrative of the harm caused, the educational deficit, the mental health epidemic, all of that . . . It is there and it needs to be addressed but it is not the only thing that needs to be addressed in the context of this and how do we balance those very real and immediate needs without being driven by that singular agenda of 'fixing young people' or 'fixing communities.'

The targeting, stigmatisation and placing blame on particular communities and young people is not new. Giroux [45] highlighted the neoliberal promotion of compliance to punitive policies directed at such groups. The deficit discourse on 'fixing' young people who do not 'fit' [46] has been well documented and challenged in realms of CYW literature [47].

For some participants, the current context was an opportunity to tell others what 'we have always known' and cited an example that 'fixing a family for a fortnight for a fiver is the world we have been living in and I wonder because of elements of the pandemic it is forcing, not necessarily us because we have always known that is shoddy way of going about stuff, but forcing people to acknowledge that that doesn't work'.

A common narrative that came from the conversations on future was that collectively people working in the area 'know' what is needed, and that relationships are central. As one research participant stated: 'if there is a shift towards placing more value on the relational stuff, which of course we know is what it was all about anyway and it has been what it's about since the 1840s, despite what the Government says, no it is about buildings or targeting resources to the neediest, or it is about getting young people into jobs. We have known the whole time it is really about those relationships. So, if funders and I include the government in this as well, if they have taken this on board and if COVID-19 has helped them recognise that 'it's about relationships stupid', as they said about the economy . . . if there is a shift towards that type of targeted funding then it could be quite exciting'.

Another participant noted that the pandemic had already disrupted the status quo and routine practices within HE 'enabling new alliances and understandings of CYW education teaching practices in the context of COVID-19 to emerge between partners beyond the UK.' Participants also identified the precarious nature of their practice from within their own university but how new relational formations had renewed a sense of identity and dynamism about what is possible working across institutions.

4.4. CYW in HE

In relation to the future of CYW within HE, participants identified a difficult dichotomy between maintaining the prerequisites required in the HE environment whilst still meeting the needs of organisations and, fundamentally, communities and young people. The lack of understanding of some HE providers in recognising the importance of this professional

field is not new, but for some it felt heightened under the current context. However, our focus on the field of practice does potentially raise issues in meeting the requirements within HE. As one participant noted, 'the HE agenda is a corporate business and if you don't meet this line, we get rid of you'.

Questions around how to address these challenges collectively and strategically were raised by participants. The need to support each other within the field of CYW particularly in relation to conducting and producing research was often discussed. Reflections on how CYW academics have come together over the last few years to support one another, to promote the field and to further our academic standing was noted. However, for others, the current context made us question whether HE is conflictual with our underpinning values and practice history illustrated when one participant stated that 'we might get caught up in just being a part of the HE machines and whether when you look back on our roots of how CYW emerged, responded to, whether at times we might even become blind to the fact that we are trying to prop up something that we probably shouldn't be trying to prop up and do we need to make are there are other routes that exist outside the HE machine'.

This raised some interesting discussions about the need for parity of professional esteem, how informal educators work within the formal HE environment and how to ensure that, as academics with a professional focus, we can meet the requirements of both HE and the field. For some, it felt like they needed to work doubly hard in meeting the demands of both, when one is not always fully recognised by the other.

Nevertheless, a mantra of collective action, of supporting each other and of being seen as not quite professional enough, not quite academic enough and not quite good enough to have sustainable investment in our practices is not new. Working at the margins is what we have always maintained, and as one participant reminded us, 'is this not the perennial issue for youth and community workers? It has always been like this; we have always been fighting against the tide ... From that kind of adversity and disinvestment, creativity happens, people coalesce and come together and fight for what is important and in a sense that has made us stronger I think ... '

This strength was articulated through the distinctiveness of approaches to teaching underpinned by the values and principles of CYW. This had equipped participants to be adaptable and flexible in responding to the rapid changes that were unfolding in the HE environment. Seeing lecturers in CYW as a professional community of practice creates conditions where it was possible to plan and to negotiate [48], 'local ways of belonging to broader constellations' [48] (p. 149). These local connections to broader structures and practice became evidently important to participants throughout the research. That we have unique, yet at times comparable, experiences to other HE lecturers allows our learning and experiences to be jointly shared in creating a space and vision for informal methodologies to be used effectively in HE environments.

4.5. The Role of the CYW Academic in the Post-Pandemic University

One participant asked, 'What are we here for within all of this—including as a Professional Association of Lecturers in Youth and Community Work?' The driver for this question featured implicitly and explicitly through discussions across both research sessions and in written accounts. Participants raised concerns about the changing nature of HE and the continued precarity of CYW programmes generally. Whilst recognising the many and varied benefits of teaching and learning both driven and mediated by technology, academics expressed concern about the potential for a shift too far in which the academic role could be replaced with automated functions supported by technicians and instructional designers. Those concerns are more broadly reflected in wider research (see for example [17]).

Fraser and Sunkara's [49] book 'The Old is Dying and the New Cannot Be Born' takes its title from a quote from Gramsci's analysis of the crisis of the 1930's. As the world emerges from the current crisis of the pandemic, there will again be a need for education to act as an 'emancipatory social force as something that clearly aligns with CYW aims and

values.' Situating teaching practices across CYW programmes in critical pedagogy is an explicit attempt to raise consciousness and challenge hegemonic norms, enabling people to challenge the 'taken-for-granted without experiencing paralysing anxiety' [50] (p. 13). Without such approaches, there is also a danger that lived experiences are diminished, and that intolerance of differences and processes of othering sharpen as unequal power dynamics are accepted uncritically. As Darder [20] (p. 100) notes, the unacknowledged conformity of the classroom and economy are perpetuated by way of contradictory hegemonic structures and social mechanisms that condition students to think of themselves as solely individual possessors and consumers with little regard for the common good of sense of responsibility for our communal existence.

Critical pedagogy has continuing relevance in the shaping and making of educational relationships and in the professional formation of CYW students as agentic professionals, but it also shares this in common with other informal CYW educators [51]. CYW lecturers located in universities have a key role to play in preparing community and youth workers for practice in a post-pandemic future and in the process of re-imagining and shaping that future. Working collaboratively, within and across different HE institutions, they can act as catalysts in opening HE spaces in ways that are accessible to marginalised groups. They are also well placed to work co-operatively, and to create alliances with, adult educators, community and youth workers, young people and communities to create change.

5. Conclusions

This research has opened up a space to continue dialogue about the role of CYW educators in exploring possibilities of teaching in CYW as we learn to live with COVID-19 and its impact. It is hoped that the process of research has acted as a developmental tool to support collaboration and collective working across the CYW sector. PALYCW, as a member-led professional association, has a key role to play in opening up spaces for collaboration. It also promotes collective approaches to research inquiry in relation to learning and teaching practices.

Reimagining CYW education teaching practices is a complex process. It is relational, processual, situated and contextual. The challenge of our times is how we can continue to work collaboratively as a community of practice? Emerging from this is an imperative to explores strategies to build a shared understanding of the current context for teaching CYW education and to understand the intended and unintended consequences on the professional formation of future generations of CYW's. CYW educators must find ways to work co-operatively, collectively and in situated ways to make differences orientated to the creation of socially just practices. We suggest that there is a political and ethical imperative to make connections and political alliances with other educators struggling with the same emancipatory goals, in and across educational contexts, including trade unions and allied professions, such as adult education. Our resistance must ensure that we do not subscribe to anti-intellectual ways [52] and focus on what our teaching practices are doing in material and concrete ways.

The research has explored some of the challenges and possibilities that have occurred through lockdown during the global pandemic. Inevitably, the research produces more questions than provides answers. The data and themes that have emerged through this research inquiry have agency beyond the parameters of this paper, which offers an initial and partial exploration of challenges in the current context of teaching in CYW. The paper concludes by suggesting that there is an ongoing need to continue to explore ways of teaching CYW that resists the instrumentalism of the neo liberal university more broadly. One of the issues that has emerged through the research process and that requires further exploration beyond this paper is the need to 'start somewhere else' in research inquiry and, in doing so, counter the impact of increased formalisation and administration of learning relationships [53]. Initial findings from the research have emphasised the affective dimensions of teaching practices and highlighted the potential of the concept of fun in teaching and learning, time space and relationships. All have the power to disrupt the

impact of instrumentalism in the teaching of CYW and perhaps provide an initial way of starting somewhere else that has synergy with the principles and practices of CYW. 'Starting somewhere else' [53] will require a continued refusal of linear methodologies and a continued focus on the processual and relational role of research inquiry that informs teaching and alliance-making activities. In this paper, we suggest that such a strategy can create conditions for distributed agency across a variety of networks that enable informal teaching methods to flourish and to set agendas for a new era of theorising teaching practices in CYW education that are mediated by technology, research and practice inquiry. Acknowledging the dialectical synergy between practice and academia places CYW in a unique position as informal educators develop PAR both in grassroots communities and in educational institutions. Highlighting the importance of issues that affect people's everyday lives, recognising the difference they can make and developing the capacity of those often silenced by formal educational processes and policy creation is key. As one CYW educator articulates, 'People do not lack the capacity, they lack the opportunity'; and, as Williams [54] reminds us, 'To be truly radical is to make hope possible rather than despair convincing'.

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