

Creativity and Collaboration: An Exploration of Inclusion, Empathy, and Resilience in Co-Creation of the Curriculum

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Abstract

This research article incorporates an inductive approach to analyse the nuanced nature of creativity within co-creation of the curriculum in higher education. Co-creation of the curriculum is one form of engagement in learning and teaching in which students and staff work in partnership so that each has a voice and a stake in curriculum development. Using qualitative research methods, this research uses elements of a grounded theory approach to analyse perspectives from 24 co-creation practitioners at five universities in Scotland. The creative practices of co-creation of the curriculum were important elements which arose from the data with key themes including: (A) innovation through dialogue and collaboration; (B) play and creatively trying new things despite risks; (C) enjoyment of creative learning and teaching; (D) shared ownership leading to intrinsic motivation and creativity; and (E) creatively challenging the status quo. This research draws new connections, suggesting that creativity within co-creation of the curriculum facilitates inclusion, empathy, and resilience of both students and staff. The author suggests that these attributes help students and staff to engage in authentic learning and teaching experiences that help them learn to cope with supercomplexity in today's ever-changing world.

Introduction

In the same way that creation can be defined as an act of developing or as an original, imaginative product, co-creation of the curriculum can be understood as a collaborative and creative process or as a product in education. Co-creation of the curriculum is one form of engagement in undergraduate learning and teaching in which students and staff work in partnership so that each has a voice and a stake in curriculum development (Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard, & Moore-Cherry, 2016; Bron, Bovill, & Veugelers, 2016; Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014). The "ladder of student participation in curriculum design" shows how student engagement in the curriculum can range from no engagement within a dictated, staff-controlled curriculum to significant levels of student engagement with student control of the curriculum (Bovill & Bulley, 2011, p. 180). Co-creation of the curriculum is often conceptualised in the middle, with significant student engagement in curriculum design through staff and students negotiating and sharing control over some areas of the curriculum (Bovill, 2013, 2014; Bovill, Bulley, & Morss, 2011; Cook-Sather et al., 2014).

Drawing on wide literature of creativity in primary education, creative pedagogy can encompass and further promote curiosity, imagination, play, exploration, ownership, innovation, and connection-making for both learners and teachers (Craft, Cremin, Hay, & Clack, 2014; Grainger, Barnes, & Scoffham, 2004; Jeffrey & Woods, 2009). Creativity can be autonomous but it is often a collaborative effort within a learning community (Craft et al., 2014). Drawing on the arts (Eisner, 2004) and games-based learning (Gee, 2003), it has also been suggested that creativity can reframe and enhance current educational practices to engage more diverse learners and promote

more effective learning and teaching practices. Furthermore, Chappell and Craft (2011, p. 365) state that, “Empathy is key to the creative process as an emotional journey with highs and lows, which is not always about ‘fun’.” Important aspects of creativity can include learning about differences, discussing and drawing connections, and negotiating where cultures and values can come together in new ways (Chappell & Craft, 2011) which can in turn promote social justice in the curriculum (Case, 2016; Lubicz-Nawrocka, 2016; McArthur, 2013; McLean, 2006).

Creative learning conversations and co-creation of the curriculum can bridge boundaries between traditional “student” and “teacher” roles by facilitating negotiation and open dialogue about best practices in learning and teaching (Chappell & Craft, 2011; Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Lubicz-Nawrocka, 2019). There are many benefits to students and staff when they engage in co-creation of the curriculum projects including enhanced student engagement, confidence, student/staff collaboration and trust (Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Lubicz-Nawrocka, 2017, 2018; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). Co-creation of the curriculum can also benefit students by helping them develop a better understanding of how theory relates to practice (Bovill et al., 2011; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). Some literature relating to co-creation of the curriculum such as Bron et al. (2016) and Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2017) also mentions “other benefits” including creativity, although they do not elaborate on how creativity is promoted or what outcomes of creativity result from these projects. This research article attempts to focus on this gap in the literature by analysing creativity within co-creation of the curriculum projects which promote student and staff engagement. It aims to analyse the nuanced nature of students’ and staff members’ conceptualisations of whether creativity can be conceptualised as a process and/or a product within co-creation of the curriculum.

Methodology

Drawing on the literature and theories of student engagement, effective curriculum development, and student development, this research seeks to contribute to the emerging literature on how co-creation of the undergraduate curriculum can benefit both students and staff. As part of a larger study with a number of research questions, this research focused on the questions: *How do undergraduate students and staff at Scottish universities conceptualise co-creation of the curriculum, and why do students and staff want (or not want) to participate in co-creation of the curriculum?* Although creativity was not central to these questions, the theme clearly arose from the data.

Qualitative research methods were used to explore the nuanced nature of students’ and staff members’ conceptualisations of creativity. Fifteen individual staff co-creators at Scottish universities who facilitate projects co-creating the curriculum with their students were identified through criterion sampling using their publications, conference presentations, or word of mouth. Thirteen of these individuals (from five universities) agreed to participate in this research. Snowball sampling was then used with these staff members identifying a sample of fourteen student co-creators, eleven of whom agreed to participate. Participants’ subject areas varied widely, as seen in Figure 1.

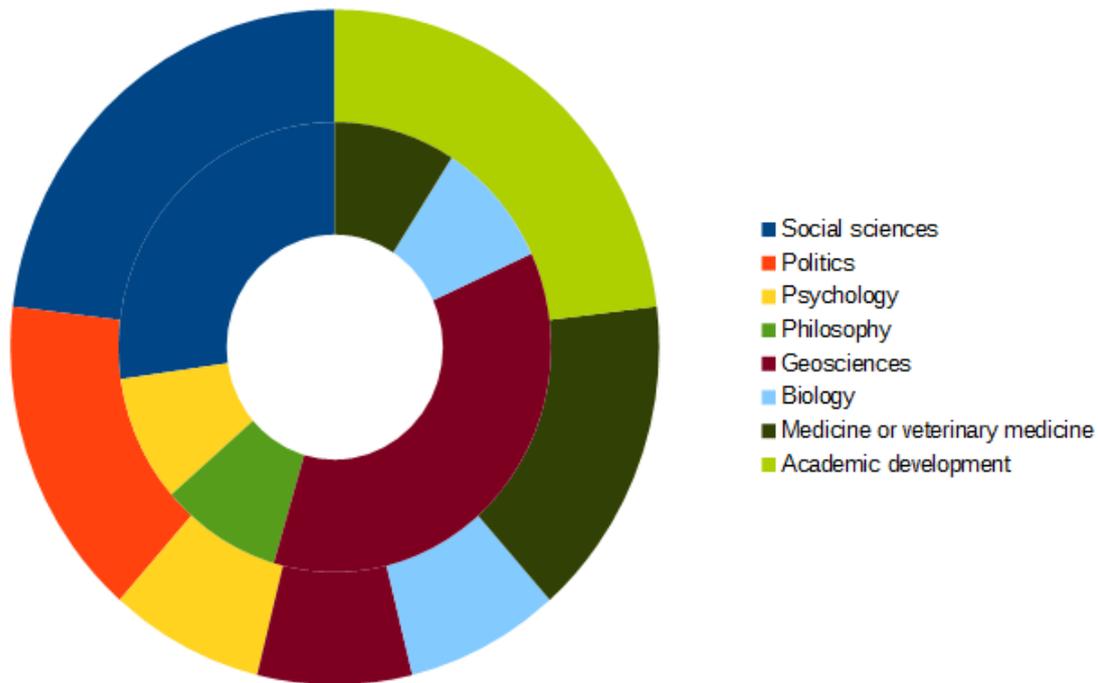


Figure 1: Participants' Subject Areas (Staff Members Shown in Outer Circle and Students Inside)

Level 1 ethical clearance was approved by the University of Edinburgh's Moray House School of Education Research Ethics Committee. The aims of the study and the voluntary nature of participation in the research were made transparent through participant information sheets and consent forms. Semi-structured interviews were used in most cases whilst working with participants and, in one case where three staff members had worked closely with one student co-creator, a focus group was deemed appropriate to meet together with all involved in the project. The interviews with staff lasted between 45 and 157 minutes and the focus group lasted 111 minutes, whereas the interviews with students lasted between 35 and 75 minutes. During the semi-structured interviews and the focus group with staff and student co-creators, topics explored included participants' experiences of working in partnership and their beliefs concerning the benefits and challenges of co-creation of the curriculum. They shared how they conceptualise co-creation of the curriculum, why they choose to engage in it, and what purposes of higher education they believe it will achieve. With permission from each participant, the input was audio-recorded and transcripts were produced. These qualitative data were then analysed drawing on a constructivist grounded-theory approach, using NVivo software and the constant comparative method to identify themes emerging from the data.

One limitation of the research methods was the small sample size. This was due to constrained resources within the scope of this research and the current, limited scope of engagement with authentic co-creation-of-the-curriculum initiatives in Scotland since examples are often difficult to identify. In addition, co-creation initiatives tend to be grassroots-led and small-scale. The lack of diversity in the selection of student participants has been identified as a challenge across the wider, global landscape of students-as-partners initiatives (Bindra et al., 2018; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017) and also appears to be the case in this study with certain highly engaged students and staff members often self-selecting to engage in co-

creation projects. Despite these limitations, the following results provide an interpretivist account of creativity within co-creation of the curriculum, with the aim of facilitating dialogue about the benefits of upscaling these initiatives to become more prevalent and inclusive.

Results

Identified examples of co-creation of the curriculum varied considerably across multiple variables including (1) the number of students involved, from selected student(s) to the whole class; (2) the enrolment status of student partners as past, current, future, or unenrolled students in a relevant course or programme; and (3) the formally designated role of the student partners as consultants, co-researchers, or pedagogical co-designers. Co-creation examples from participants' work included student choice regarding significant aspects of the curriculum such as assessment; peer teaching embedded into graded courses; co-development of educational resources; students serving as learning and teaching consultants to staff; and student-led projects as a course unfolds. In one case, students developed their own multiple-choice exam questions with some then incorporated into future veterinary exams. Other cases involved fourth-year medical students who prepared and taught classes for second-year students; experienced students, who had excelled in a course previously, who worked with staff to design educational materials that would be used by a future cohort of students; and students and staff who co-developed and implemented their own service-learning or primary school teaching projects.

The theme of creativity emerged as a strong benefit of co-creation of the curriculum. The results below present the various sub-themes of creativity in co-creation of the curriculum as both processes and products of: (A) innovation through dialogue and collaboration within the community; (B) ownership and intrinsic motivation leading to creativity; (C) play and creatively trying new things despite risks; (D) fun and enjoyment of learning; and (E) creatively challenging the status quo.

A) Innovation through Dialogue and Collaboration

Many staff co-creation practitioners and several student participants reflected on how co-creation of the curriculum is a creative process of innovation resulting from dialogue between students and staff whilst drawing on their collective resources and ideas. For example, in addition to presenting subject content and theory, Staff 1 spoke about "trying to get things to happen" in his dialogic teaching:

...it's also trying to make spaces for people to play with those things and think about how that might be or not be relevant to their own learning. One of my assumptions is that the biggest resource in the room is the students themselves. They're more powerful than what's in my head.

This lecturer valued his students' knowledge, experiences, and contributions as he facilitated learning opportunities in which students could creatively exchange ideas to create new understanding. Student 5 also highlighted the creative processes of collaboration by "bouncing ideas off each other" to advance student learning.

Furthermore, Staff 2 reflected on co-creation of the curriculum:

It can be very a constructive, imaginative, and creative process and it's around how we do that collectively...

Other staff members also spoke about how co-creation of the curriculum has helped facilitate learning environments where they can employ their creativity.

In addition to creative learning and teaching processes, co-creation of the curriculum helped staff to think outside of the box whilst learning from their students and contributing to staff development. Student 6 shared:

If you are co-creating, then you're [staff are] going to be gaining knowledge from the other side [from students] as well. ...There's just more creativity because they don't necessarily know who their students are going to be.

This student suggested that staff can learn from each different cohort of students through collaborative partnership. Furthermore, Staff 6 shared how she learns from students by acting as a facilitator rather than an instructor:

I feel like I have ideas now which before I maybe wouldn't have had.

The process of working together within the learning community to facilitate student-centred co-creation projects not only benefited students but also staff.

In addition to the creative, collaborative processes of co-creation of the curriculum, other participants highlighted the creative products which were developed. For instance, Staff 7 reflected:

There's a symbiosis between us and things that are in the ether now that weren't there before, that's a kind of creating. ...[We were] creating learning materials, creating learning experiences. This idea of the whole being more than the sum of its parts... so the learning can be an emergent property of the expertise of the lecturer and the lived experience of the student.

The ideas, learning experiences, and educational resources which were co-produced can benefit both current and future students, as well as staff.

B) Play and Creatively Trying New Things Despite Risks

Participants shared a perspective of co-creation of the curriculum as an innovative, non-traditional pedagogy in which staff and students share responsibility for aspects of learning and teaching. This necessitated flexibility and could be challenging for staff and students when sharing decision-making and creatively trying new things, but it could also be a rewarding and creative process of curriculum innovation.

Several co-creation practitioners such as Staff 5 reflected on how institutional structures posed risks while implementing co-creation projects, including:

...the bureaucracy and red tape, the timetabling. ...I say "just silly things like timetabling" but there are real issues so that people from different schools can come. ...These are really big things that can sink it. ... I think we do need to be a bit more radical. If it doesn't work, oh well – but just try.

Many participants highlighted risks in institutional structures and processes, although they persevered to try new things in co-creating the curriculum because of the potential positive impact that could be discovered.

Some co-creation practitioners reflected particularly on the risks posed for staff in co-creating the curriculum. Student 2 spoke about students' contributions of constructive critiques of their lecturer while providing suggestions for improvement in co-created projects:

I think it helped that all the way through the course he wanted continuous feedback on how we thought it was going, and I think it was a conscious decision on his part, the fact that he'd opened himself up for criticism...

In addition to critiques from students, Staff 3 described critiques from colleagues about co-created teaching methods:

...we were wondering "what would people at our university think of this?". No one had done this type of work before... There was some resistance, and in some cases it didn't work.

These participants reflected on the challenges of trying new methods involving students as co-creators, including some areas where they needed to learn from the unexpected.

Participants also shared how co-creation of the curriculum can pose risks to students when learning in non-traditional ways. Various participants highlighted the challenge that co-creating the curriculum was a new, unfamiliar teaching method for students even though it helped them develop important, transferrable skills. Describing co-created courses, Staff 11 said:

...we knew they were going well but we also knew we were asking people to do things that they had never been asked to do before and they were really uncomfortable at times...

In addition to the new experience of the co-creation pedagogy, Student 2 described how students embraced risk in a new, co-created assessment rather than an exam since they:

... actually made a more difficult assessment, one that you had a week to complete by yourself. Every other student I've come across agrees that's a much more constructive way to assess that actually makes you think about it.

By playing with co-creation of an assessment to make it more difficult, these participants recognised how co-creating the curriculum can pose risks for some students, highlighting the need for staff to support students through these experiences to work towards transformational learning.

Other participants, particularly staff, emphasised the rich learning experiences that came from learning from "failure". Staff 5 shared:

Some who get the best marks are actually the ones whose projects have gone a bit wrong, so they've had to change course in the middle. ...[It helped to] really get them out of their shells.

Similarly, speaking about fieldwork that involved co-creation of the curriculum, Staff 2 described the importance of learning from experiences that did not go as planned:

...students have a chance to fail, and fail kind of creatively. ...[Elsewhere] in the science curriculum, you'll be very aware that you need to process 50 students in the next three hours and the learning outcome will involve a particular laboratory technique, and it has to work... but the whole creative thrill – and the agony of failure – is squeezed out that kind of very simulated lab.

This participant went on to describe how he saw university examination boards as structures which he could use to mitigate risk. It is striking that this staff member highlighted the creative thrill of authentic learning experiences which allow students to fail. These are rich, playful learning experiences that facilitate creativity and confidence development for both students and staff.

C) Enjoyment of Creative Learning and Teaching

All participants in this study shared that co-creating the curriculum together was, on the whole, an enjoyable experience. This included many positive emotions including excitement and enjoyment of learning and teaching as co-creation of the curriculum took place. Furthermore, many participants described the longer-term impact this experience had on them. For example, participants such as Student 5 described co-

creation of the curriculum as “really fun” and Student 1 spoke about how it helped tailor learning and teaching to the interests of students and staff so “you get the passion behind it”. Furthermore, students also reflected on the rewarding nature of their co-creation of the curriculum projects from which they personally benefited, using words such as “lucky” and “grateful”. Student 7 said:

It was better than any course I'd taken here... I'm so grateful I found this class. Noticeably, every student participant involved in a co-created course stated that it was the best course across their entire university experience.

The theme of student and staff enjoyment by sharing a passion for their subject area is an important one in co-creation of the curriculum since students and staff appeared to inspire each other to learn and grow together. Staff participants also described both their own enjoyment of co-creation of the curriculum projects and students' positive feedback. Staff 12 stated:

The second year the module ran, it was so popular we doubled the number of students. After it, the feedback for the module was fantastic from the students, and feedback from the module coordinator was really amazing.

Furthermore, describing the experience of working with honours-level student co-creators to develop a new introductory-level course, Staff 8 said:

It was a great experience. I hadn't anticipated how much they would have enjoyed it. I think it took a certain amount of trust on both of our parts, and the trust has paid off. I would do it again in a heartbeat.

It was striking to see both staff and student co-creators' enjoyment of learning through being involved in co-creating the curriculum. Staff 7 also found it rewarding to have overcome institutional challenges to facilitate non-traditional forms of teaching and have innovative teaching methods recognised:

...it's exhausting but it's fun! I'd say that partly as a result of the University changing its attitudes, I now feel as if I've been given freedom to do maverick, unusual things. I'm encouraged to do it, and I'm valued for doing it and that is such a breath of fresh air.

These staff members shared their enjoyment of working in partnership with students and implementing creative teaching methods.

Other participants spoke about the wider impact of the enjoyment of learning and teaching on student satisfaction and retention rates. Staff 11 compared traditional, didactic teaching with co-creation of the curriculum by highlighting the story of one of his student partners:

...a lot of things that she felt she was doing in the initial stages bored her, so that was very much part of her getting involved with this group and she talked quite openly about that. I think it is fair to say that she would withdraw [from university] if she wasn't being stimulated. If you think about that as being the driver to come to university – that stimulation – if you can create that, then you are attracting people.

Furthermore, Student 10 stated:

I was actually considering dropping out throughout last year so having this course to look forward to was the main reason why I stayed really.

These participants emphasised how the excitement and stimulation they associated with creative learning and teaching methods were more than superfluous feelings; these emotions affected students' motivation and engagement with learning and teaching which could affect student retention rates in higher education.

D) Shared Ownership Leading to Intrinsic Motivation and Creativity

A variety of student and staff participants described examples of how sharing ownership over curriculum decision-making can increase students' intrinsic motivation to engage actively with their learning, which led to more creative outcomes. Staff 2 and 13 highlighted how some students are extrinsically motivated by assessment to approach learning strategically, but co-creation of the curriculum can help students move away from this mindset by giving them more space and freedom to develop intrinsic motivation to engage with learning. For example, Staff 13 said:

...when students come to university, they behave in a functional way: "I have to do this, and that gets me here, and now I have to do that bit...". It is that gap that this particular [co-creation] project has helped. ...It is not just about the functional. It is about the experiential, about the learning from that. It is about the development, and that articulation of that personal development is the bit that will make sure that you can... navigate your way in the world.

Similarly, Student 8 reflected on the difference between more traditional learning as compared to co-created projects:

It can just feel like you'd know what you've got to do then you put it in an essay. But with this [co-created] course, there's almost a completely blank page and you can do whatever you want with it.

This student highlighted the freedom and creativity involved in co-creation of the curriculum when sharing ownership with staff and seeing the impact of her work on others.

Furthermore, Staff 1 reflected on the different levels of intrinsic motivation and ownership over learning that he observed in students, noting particularly high levels in the arts:

...helping students actually make good judgements about the quality of work in their disciplines, maybe that's one of the things that helps them move towards a creator or co-creator position. ...We're thinking about how we help people make transitions from being a pupil to being a scholar.

Similarly, Staff 5 described projects co-created with students:

We're always amazed at some of the stuff they come up with. I think it's a pattern across the University: when you give them a bit of space and freedom... [we learn that] we underestimate our students a lot.

These staff participants reflected on how giving students freedom can develop their intrinsic motivation, ownership, and critical thinking skills that can help them to be more creative, independent thinkers who surpass expectations.

Student co-creation practitioners also shared their excitement for being given more responsibility over their own learning. For instance, Student 7 said:

It was amazing, I was so happy. ...They definitely gave me a lot of autonomy in what I wanted to do... Things were sometimes not in your control necessarily but the way I managed my time and my creativity were really used in this, which I really liked because those two are in my control.

By having the autonomy to design her own project and take ownership over its management and outputs, this student learnt to deal with uncertainty by drawing on her creative problem-solving skills and focusing on what she could control to make it a success. Similarly, Student 11 shared:

To me it is about being conscious, not only about what you are doing, but what you are capable of doing and definitely to challenge staff and other students. ...It is about going to university and not being passive and waiting for people to tell you what to do. It's getting into an environment where you are able to really get your creative side out and trying to see what you can do... and be confident in what you are doing.

Engagement in co-creation of the curriculum helped this student become reflective, confident in her capabilities, and creative in learning actively while contributing to her university.

E) Creatively Challenging the Status Quo

Various participants highlight how the creative and collegial nature of co-creation of the curriculum challenged the status quo of higher education hierarchies and processes. As seen above, some co-creation practitioners spoke about the risks that they take in co-creating the curriculum, and some described how this could be at odds with the conservatism of other students and staff. Student 4 speaks about this challenge with respect to more traditional classes:

I was frustrated at the amount of people who either wouldn't read the work in advance or, when the lecturer asked them something, sat silent and didn't talk. I think the education system fails people because the creativity's beaten out of us because nobody wants to be wrong. Right from primary school, you're ridiculed if you're wrong so when you get to this level still people won't just put their hand up, answer the question, or talk things through with the lecturer.

This student co-creator described how a lack of creativity and risk-taking can be at odds with co-creation of the curriculum which necessitates high levels of student engagement. Furthermore, some staff participants highlighted how co-creation of the curriculum – and, more broadly, creativity and innovation within teaching – can challenge norms. For example, Staff 5 said:

I can kind of see that if you're really busy you're not really going to rewrite your course and do all these wacky, crazy things. You're just going to fall back on what you always do. There's that conflict but I do think it is quite a conservative environment and that's something we need to change a bit...

Staff members can focus on research, spend time on university committees, and work in other roles outside of the classroom which can reduce the time available to be creative in their teaching. However, for those who do have the time and inclination to engage in innovating and co-creating the curriculum, it could feel like an uphill battle against a conservative higher education culture.

The collegial nature of co-creation of the curriculum can challenge academic hierarchies by increasing collaboration and creative thinking opportunities, and fostering empathy and respect between students and staff. For example, Student 4 said:

It does get rid of the "them and us" barrier a bit...

In addition, Student 3 described:

[X teacher] refers to it as the "black box of teaching". ...[Co-creation of the curriculum] allows the students to understand the human side of academic staff and staff members and to start to take on board some of those responsibilities and issues...

Many participants described the empathy, respect, and trust that were developed throughout co-creation of the curriculum projects, and the recognition of each other's talents and passion for learning and teaching.

Other participants emphasised how co-creation of the curriculum facilitated a wider culture shift in some universities by promoting collegiality and inclusion when staff gain respect for what students can contribute to enhance curricula. Speaking about his co-creation of the curriculum work, Staff 2 spoke about the values that are key to his creative practices:

A lot of it is about how we take the constraints that we have to live with and work against them to create those communities of trust and genuine learning... and that's exciting.

This staff member highlighted the values of respect, reciprocity, trust, democratic and collective engagement, and creative problem-solving that underpin co-creation work. He went on to describe how he challenged some of his colleagues' views to advocate that students' knowledge and experience should be recognised by staff as valuable contributions to curriculum development. Similarly, Staff 13 reflected on a culture change with her colleagues starting to embrace creativity and collegiality:

...you are trying to shift that massive culture from concentrating on "my module"... There has been a shift, and there are more people thinking creatively. There are more people thinking outwith those boxes of the module development and starting to think a bit more collegiately.

Some co-creation practitioners worked to challenge the status quo in higher education to shift values to become more welcoming of creative learning and teaching practices.

Discussion

In the qualitative data presented above, participants shared rich accounts of how co-creation of the curriculum is both a process of creating, as well as a pedagogy that fosters the development of creative products. With respect to the latter, participants provided examples of collaboratively developed ideas, knowledge, and educational resources. These creative products can also benefit future cohorts of students by being relevant to students' needs and interests, and by serving as launchpads for further co-created work.

In addition to the creative products developed through co-creation of the curriculum, it is the process of creating where this pedagogy is particularly notable. This process-oriented focus of partnerships in learning and teaching is also highlighted in the work of Matthews (2016) and Cook-Sather et al. (2014). Furthermore, participants in this study highlighted how co-creation of the curriculum facilitates nuanced processes of innovation, collaboration, inclusion, and overcoming challenges that facilitate learning and development. Key themes of the results are explored below, focusing on how co-creation of the curriculum facilitates inclusion, empathy, and resilience.

Inclusion

The higher education curriculum itself is rarely defined and can have various meanings, seen by different individuals as a product or a process (Fraser & Bosanquet, 2006; Lattuca & Stark, 2009). For example, Lattuca and Stark (2009) conceptualise the curriculum as an academic plan that is developed by staff but is

affected by factors both internal and external to the university. Although they emphasise continual adjustment of the plan while reflecting on experiences and evaluation, they largely focus on the academic plan as a product which is a staff member's vision of learning outcomes, content, instructional processes, instructional resources, and sequencing of subject matter based on learners' needs (Lattuca & Stark, 2009). However, Fraser and Bosanquet (2006, p. 277) identified four categories of staff members' conceptualisations of the higher education curriculum ranging from a product-focused, teacher directed view of the curriculum as the content and structure of A) a course or unit or B) a programme of study to a process-focused, student-centred view of the curriculum relating to C) students' practical learning experiences or D) staff and students' collaborative, dynamic, and emancipatory experiences of teaching and learning. Furthermore, Boomer (1992) and Bron et al. (2016) describe the creative process of curriculum design as "curriculuming", emphasising the active, iterative nature of the curriculum which is continually negotiated and adjusted to meet students' needs. Co-creation of the curriculum practitioners in this study appeared to conceptualise the curriculum as C and D, focusing on shared ownership and responsibility within a process-focused, student-centred view of the curriculum that makes space for creativity and continual development to enhance student engagement. As such, co-creation of the curriculum is a creative and collaborative pedagogic approach to teaching and learning methods, strategies, and decision-making that fosters students' agency.

Like Eisner (2004) and Gee (2003), participants in this study showed how creativity can engage more diverse learners and promote non-traditional learning and teaching practices which can be extremely effective and, in some cases, transformative. Negotiation is a key aspect of co-creation of the curriculum when students and staff share ownership (Boomer, 1992; Bron et al., 2016; Lubicz-Nawrocka, 2018). Furthermore, Chappell and Craft (2011) emphasise that an important aspect of creativity is negotiating where cultures and values can come together in new ways as individuals learn about differences and draw new connections. By respecting students and inviting them into curriculum development practices, co-creation of the curriculum is a creative process that promotes inclusion of diverse individuals and perspectives, while refuting the idea that students cannot be experts in their own learning.

Empathy

Participants emphasised the importance of trust and respect in collegial relationships which serve as a foundation to support innovation through dialogue and collaboration. The creative process of involving students in aspects of curriculum design facilitates empathy as well as inclusion by allowing students to see into the "black box of teaching" – as referenced by Student 3 – by making mysterious curriculum development processes more transparent. This helps students learn about the complexities of decision-making involved in designing effective teaching and learning experiences, and it also helps staff to learn about students' needs and interests to enhance the curriculum by gaining new insights and ideas.

By sharing ownership and respecting others' views, co-creation of the curriculum promotes social justice by modelling empathy and democratic engagement in the classroom. As seen above, empathy and respect are foundational aspects that allow staff and students to share ownership as they play with collaborative curriculum

development. Students strikingly reflected on how the opportunity to co-create the curriculum is one of the best experiences throughout their higher education degree, which can have implications for increasing student satisfaction and lowering drop-out rates. Like in the work of Barnett and Coate (2004), both students and staff in this study emphasised that higher education should not only focus on content and skills but also how to develop *critical being* including the attitudes, confidence, and resilience to deal with challenges. Participants clearly show how co-creation of the curriculum can benefit students' personal and professional development as they move away from instrumental views of learning to develop enjoyment of learning which they feel is rewarding. By becoming more intrinsically motivated to learn, students often engage more creatively and meaningfully as they learn to become independent actors in higher education and the wider world. Furthermore, the results also show how staff develop as they learn from their students while co-creating the curriculum. These staff co-creators display many of the core attributes of teachers who demonstrate teaching excellence, including putting concerted effort into teaching, showing a commitment to engaging students, breaking down student-teacher barriers, and providing reliable support for students (Lubicz-Nawrocka & Bunting, 2019).

Resilience

As shown in the results above, there are risks associated with co-creation of the curriculum when this pedagogy challenges the status quo in higher education. Here it is relevant to return to the powerful quotation from Chappell and Craft (2011) who suggest that "Empathy is key to the creative process as an emotional journey with highs and lows, which is not always about 'fun'." Serving as foundational values, empathy and respect can support co-creation of the curriculum practitioners to embrace the risks that non-traditional, co-creative pedagogy can pose for students, staff, and their institutions. For example, participants described how co-creation of the curriculum can take students and staff to uncomfortable positions that may not be enjoyable at the time if they open themselves up to criticism, institutional bureaucracy, and academic challenges. However, participants also showed how these challenging learning experiences are relevant to the world outside of academia.

Co-creation of the curriculum can provide authentic learning experiences since they support "the formation of critical being" (Barnett, 2007, p. 160) and "give students access to valued practices for engaging the world more mindfully" (Sullivan & Rosin, 2008, p. 18). Writing about supercomplexity, Barnett (2004, p. 253) highlighted how the world is changing at a pace faster than ever before, and "neither knowledge nor skills, even high level knowledge and advanced technical skills, are sufficient to enable one to prosper in the contemporary world. Other forms of human being are required". Furthermore, Kreber (2014, p. 96) suggests that academic challenge or "'Strangeness' propels us to question assumptions, which opens up the opportunity for authenticity. The relationship between authenticity and 'strangeness' is reciprocal". Therefore, the process of dealing with challenges during co-creation of the curriculum helps learning and teaching to become more authentic, thus enabling students and staff to develop resilience while challenging the status quo in higher education and dealing with supercomplexity.

Conclusion

Creativity and play are under-studied aspects of higher education curricula. This inductive analysis shares valuable accounts of how co-creation of the curriculum is both a process of creating, as well as a pedagogy that fosters the development of creative products. Co-creation of the curriculum is a process of creating since it fosters innovation through dialogue and collaboration within the learning community as students and staff play and creatively try new learning and teaching methods despite risks. It is also a pedagogy that fosters the development of creative products including educational resources, inclusive curricula, enjoyment of learning and teaching, shared ownership, intrinsic motivation, and authenticity whilst challenging academic norms. By giving students freedom to develop their intrinsic motivation and responsibility for learning, students can be more creative, independent, and critical thinkers who are successful in higher education. Creativity is a central aspect of co-creation of the curriculum that can promote inclusion, empathy, and resilience among staff and students alike.

Creativity in collaborative curriculum development has implications for teaching excellence and social justice in higher education. Collegiality and partnership help shift the culture of universities to humanise the higher education experience. The results suggest that many participants shared the view that higher education should develop not only students' knowledge and skills but also a sense of *critical being*. It is through creative, imaginative, and collaborative processes of learning and teaching such as co-creation of the curriculum that students and staff can improve higher education curricula to develop *critical being* and increase the relevance of curricula to individuals' lives. Dealing with risks and challenging the status quo whilst participating in co-creation of the curriculum provides rich learning opportunities for both students and staff to engage in authentic learning and teaching experiences that prepare them for challenges within and beyond academia. Therefore, it is hoped that co-creation of the curriculum can help students and staff to learn to cope with complex problems by working collaboratively to generate creative, socially just, and sustainable solutions.

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