A CRITICAL REVIEW OF CO-CREATING CURRICULA WITH STUDENTS-AS-PARTNERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

The participation of students-as-partners in the design of educational curricula re-envisions students and educators as actively collaborating in the co-creation of learning and teaching experiences. Building on historical theory relating to progressive education and critical pedagogy, this idea has been receiving an increasing level of interest in recent academic research.

This dissertation follows a desk-based, critical review approach to explore the academic literature regarding this emergent educational process in higher education. Specifically, this research examines the variety of influences and theories currently shaping the co-creation of curricula with students-as-partners, the activities involved, the challenges faced, and how its value can be understood from different perspectives. In turn, by synthesising what the research communicates across the literature, this study aims to be an introductory resource for guiding the translation of theory into practice for an organisation interested in adopting a partnership approach.

The research finds that the co-creation of curricula with student-as-partners is shaped by a range of concepts and narratives, which influence why and how the practice can be pursued. The review also explores a range of illustrative examples across various institutional and disciplinary contexts, which demonstrate a scale of co-creative activities and outcomes for different educational stakeholders. The research concludes that whilst there is much to be gained when the curriculum and its development are reimagined as something dynamic and shared, there is also a need to explore the transformational potential of partnership, for students, educators, and society more broadly.

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Acronyms and Definitions

C3	The Collaborative Curricular (re)Construction Scheme
CCWSAP	Co-creating Curricula with Students-as-Partners
CFL	Curriculum for Life
DBR	Design-Based Research
HEA	Higher Education Academy (UK)
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
NSS	National Student Survey (UK)
PD	Participatory Design
PE	Peer Educators
RQ	Research Question
SaP	Students-as-Partners
TEF	The Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Student Participation

The notion of students becoming more involved in their own learning experiences dates back to early 20th century educational philosophers such as John Dewey who suggested a 'progressive' approach to education which situates students more centrally in the discussions and decision-making about their learning (Dewey, 1986: 242-246). Building on such ideas, a critical approach to education developed in the 1960s and 1970s, characterised by a growing frustration with traditional schooling methods and their effects on children (Bovill, 2013: 462). Critical pedagogy was also birthed during this era, adopting a critical stance towards the long-accepted purposes and practices of education, questioning the dynamics between teachers and students, and arguing for increased collaboration and negotiation in new educational approaches which challenge the status quo (Bovill, 2013: 462).

More recently, a growing body of literature concerning student participation has coined terms such as design-based research, participatory design, co-creation, student voice, student–staff partnership, student engagement, and student empowerment (Martens et al., 2019: 1203). Markedly, co-creation and synonymous terms have been cited at a growing rate in higher education literature in recent years (Könings et al., 2020: 926).
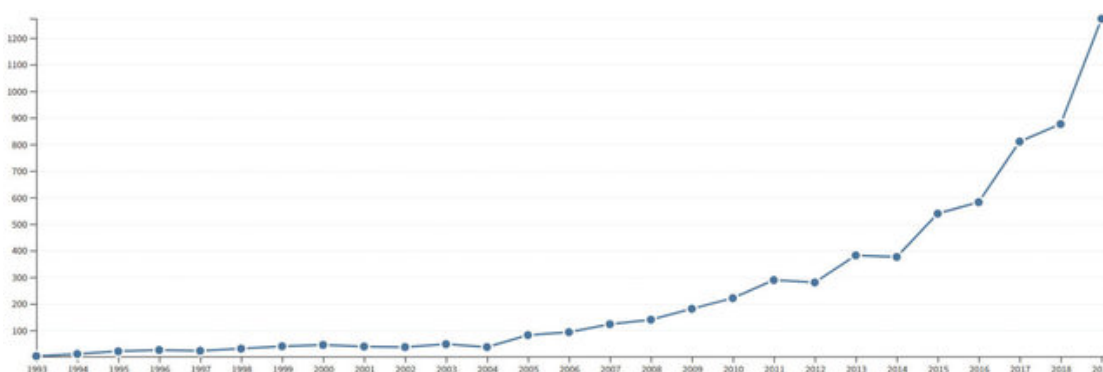
Figure 1. Number of citations on co-creation (or synonyms) in higher education (Könings et al., 2020: 926).

1.2 Students-as-Partners

Manifestations of these approaches towards student participation revolve around the idea of 'partnership'. The term students-as-partners (SaP) emerged out of a felt need to articulate students as colleagues and co-producers of knowledge rather than simply recipients, this being a counter-narrative to the more transactional, business-oriented rhetoric often found particularly in higher education (Cook-Sather et al., 2018: 2; Bovill et al., 2016: 195; Carey, 2013: 250). Indeed, this dissertation will explore the argument that 'the theme of staff-student partnerships reaches to the heart of debates about the values and role of the twenty-first-century university' (Levy, Little & Whelan, 2011: 2 as cited in Peters & Mathias, 2018: 54). This is because partnership concerns a way of doing things which is fundamentally process-oriented rather than outcomes driven (Matthews, 2016: 2; Healey, Flint & Harrington., 2014: 7). Whilst partnership can involve teachers, tutors, academics, professional staff and so on (Bovill et al., 2016: 195), my research focuses primarily on the student element of partnerships, and I follow the trend of much of the scholarly literature and refer to partnership in terms of students-as-partners.

1.3 Co-creating Curricula with Students-as-Partners

To clarify, this proposal understands 'co-creation' as essentially a collaborative approach to the design and creation of the experiences of learning and teaching (Bovill, 2013: 462-463). Importantly, the co-creation of curricula represents a shift away from the traditional idea of the educator-student relationship towards a shared approach where both students and educators have a voice, a part to play and agency to steer and participate in teaching and learning processes (Bovill, 2013: 463-464). In this review, I refer to 'co-creating curricula with students-as-partners' using the acronym 'CCWSAP'.

Moreover, 'curriculum' has a range of uses across different international contexts and a relatively open definition is often pursued to minimise limitations to our understandings of what co-created curricula might look like (Bovill, 2013: 463). I follow Bovill's (2013) approach and define curricula broadly as including the following areas: programme or course subject content; intended learning outcomes; the teaching and learning structure; processes of design and implementation; as well as the context of learning and consideration of broader skills and development (Bovill, 2013: 463).

Markedly, CCWSAP sits amongst a breadth of partnership type methods. These include learning by doing or 'active learning', as well as partnership in areas such as co-research and co-inquiry into learning and teaching in higher education (Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2014: 36). However, whilst students may also often engage in course evaluations or staff-student committees, they are rarely invited to be an active participant in the design of curricula (Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2014: 48).

1.4 Research Purpose

The research purpose is to critically examine the theories shaping contemporary CCWSAP, to explore illustrative case studies, and to understand the challenges of such practice and its value from different perspectives. As described in the following section, my focus is partly informed by the needs of an organisation looking to initiate partnership practices in the creation of a new curriculum. Therefore, this review is written as an introduction to what research on CCWSAP communicates across the literature, which can be used as a starting point to support the translation of theory into practice. Importantly, the purpose is not to collect generalisable data of 'what works', but rather to provide rich, contextualised information which might help to develop and support understandings of CCWSAP and highlight its potential.

1.5 'Curriculum for Life'

Of significance to the research purpose and focus is my role as a project coordinator for a newly established educational charity called 'Curriculum for Life' (CFL) (CFL, 2022).

Founded in 2019, the charity is building a curriculum which complements mainstream curricula and supports the development of a range of 'life skills', including capabilities, values, attitudes, and awareness, relating to what is termed 'whole life learning' (CFL, 2022a).

Based on a commitment to being 'youth-led', CFL is seeking to co-create the curriculum with young people (CFL, 2022b), specifically with those who have recently been through school and are in tertiary education settings. Whilst the organisation is currently initiating this co-creation through a test-and-learn process, it is eager to ground the practice in theory and insights from the scholarly field moving forward. Specifically, through a series of meetings with the team, I have established that the charity is keen to inform their approach with insights regarding: the *theories and concepts* underpinning participatory approaches; the types of *practices and activities* currently utilised in higher education; the *challenges* faced; and the *range of outcomes* of CCWSAP documented in the literature.

1.6 Timing and Wider Relevance

This research is believed to also be of relevance to educational organisations similar to CFL, as well as educators, learners and institutions interested in learning more about CCWSAP. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought a seismic shift to the ways in which educational institutions have had to approach teaching, learning and assessment. In turn, there have been renewed calls for educators and educational institutions and organisations to work more collaboratively with students to ensure a 'student-centred' approach going forward (Whelehan, 2020; Slick, 2020). Given increased calls for partnership, and the growth of such practices as a field of research (IJSaP, 2022), it is important to review and synthesise the more recent literature.

1.7. Research Questions

As described in the first section, the research focus is on the literature concerning CCWSAP. This focus, combined with the research purpose, has led to the construction of the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: What theories and concepts shape contemporary curriculum co-creation with students as partners?

RQ2: What recent case studies exemplify the practice of co-creating curricula with students-as-partners?

RQ3: What are the main challenges to co-creating curricula with students as partners?

RQ4: What is the value of co-creating curricula with students as partners?

Chapter 2: Research Design and Methodology

This chapter describes the research design and methodology. To do so, the chapter first outlines my positionality and epistemological perspective as a researcher and how this informs the research. The chapter then delves into the rationale behind the research questions and methodology.

2.1 Researcher Positionality and Epistemological Perspective

Acknowledgment of 'positionality', otherwise referred to as reflexivity, is drawn from a recognition that the events and experiences impressed upon us throughout our lives make it difficult to consider our 'positions' outside of this lived experience (Banks, 1998: 5). Notably, this represents a departure from positivism as the epistemological school of thought which has traditionally dominated social science research (Delanty, 2005: 13). A key feature of positivism is the idea that knowledge is based on sure and certain foundations which are built on the discovery of general laws as part of a reality external to the researcher. Since scientific truth is an explanatory statement about objective existing reality, it is arrived at independently of any personal subjective elements or ethical self-reflection (Delanty, 2005: 10-13; Hammersley, 2000: 17). Incidentally, as observed by critical educational theorist Henry Giroux, a 'culture of positivism' also exists as the educational context in many classrooms (Giroux, 1997: 20). In practice, a positivist culture leads to the treatment of knowledge as impersonal, ahistorical, and objective, and teaching practices which are about domination rather than emancipation, informed by 'principles of order, control, and certainty' (Giroux, 1997 as cited in Kehler, Verwoord & Smith, 2017: 3). As will be made clear, some partnership approaches challenge such an understanding.

In opposition to the lens of positivism, a range of schools of thought contend that 'objectivity' and neutrality mystify the inherently ideological nature of research. For example, 'standpoint epistemology' argues that all knowledge is situated and that particular social locations can in fact offer unique standpoints from which to better understand the social world (Harding, 2004: 3). A key implication of this is that our positionality and values are important to consider when conducting research (Banks, 1998: 5). This means 'making clear' the researcher's experiences, values, prejudices, and assumptions and how these influence and guide the research process (Woolmer, 2016: 123). In turn, I have taken a critically self-reflexive approach, presenting the necessary information which I believe the reader requires to consider the influence of my standpoint on the research.

For instance, of evident relevance to this study is my involvement with Curriculum for Life. Whilst this research is not commissioned by the organisation, I support the ambition and intent to engage in CCWSAP. Moreover, I support this not just as a technique to enhance the quality of learning, but as a means of transformation, reframing the who, what, why, and how of education. Importantly, this challenges the predominant understandings of the relationship between students as subordinates and those who design and deliver curricula as holding authority and decision-making power over students based on disciplinary expertise (Heron, 1992 as cited in Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten, 2014: 162). As I describe in greater detail later, I sympathise with the writing of scholars such as Paolo Freire (2005), who departs from a positivistic approach to knowledge and offers a new understanding of the learner as a critical and valuable partner in learning (Freire, 2005: 80).

This research is therefore driven in-part by my advocacy of socially just practices for developing - and engaging in - learning and teaching. Whilst some might assume this as a predilection of detriment to the validity of the research, my position and epistemological perspective have energised my ambition to adopt a balanced approach and particularly to discover the concepts driving debate and critical discussion so that

the review can provide pragmatic and useful information. Indeed, such a position is valuable because it 'provides important incentives to produce more 'objective' research to ensure that the researcher is providing […] the best possible information' (Bevington and Dixon, 2005: 192).

2.2 Research Focus

The research focus will now be detailed by expanding on the reasoning behind the research questions.

RQ1: *What theories and concepts shape contemporary curriculum co-creation with students as partners?*

As noted in the introduction, practices such as CCWSAP stem from the radical, emancipatory rationales which are often associated with progressive education and critical pedagogy (Bovill, 2013: 462). However, more recent literary discourse on co-creation is often less overtly political, focusing on concepts rooted in a more 'consumer-oriented' understanding of education such as student engagement, retention, and employability skills (Woolmer, 2016: 44). Therefore, the purpose of this research question is to explore the key theories and concepts which define and motivate CCWSAP, and to ensure that the research is informed of the political and ideological foundations which underpin the discourse.

RQ2: *What recent case studies exemplify the practice of CCWSAP?*

Many educational institutions and organisations around the world already engage in co-creation of different forms. The purpose of this research question is therefore to explore the details of such practices and unpack what can be learned from them. Importantly, as indicated by the growth of partnership research and the creation of journals such as the International Journal for Students as Partners established in 2017 (IJSaP, 2021), there is a growing diversity of co-creative and students-as-partners

contexts, practices, and activities. Whilst the case studies I explore are not comprehensive, the aim is to examine some illustrative examples of CCWSAP.

Moreover, whilst there may be ways to adapt some of these examples to the work of organisations such as Curriculum for Life, generalised recommendations will not always be suitable (Dollinger, Lodge & Coates, 2018: 222). Notwithstanding this, this research question is based on a belief that contextualised and richly described case studies can help to reveal both the complexities and possibilities of CCWSAP.

RQ3: *What are the main challenges to CCWSAP?*

This research question recognises that there are likely a range of challenges to pursuing or successfully carrying out CCWSAP, as such activity often challenges existing assumptions, practices, and structures in many educational environments. Moreover, delving into the most challenging aspects of practice recognizes that we often learn most from instances of failure to achieve what was intended or hoped for. Working through the complexities of practices requires iterative planning, experimentation, and reflection as partnership processes are revisited and revised (Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten, 2014: xviii). This research question therefore aims to highlight the importance of carefully considering aims, methodology and context before springing into action.

RQ4: *What is the value of CCWSAP?*

This question seeks to explore why CCWSAP should be considered by curriculum development organisations, educational institutions, educators, and students. Whilst some see partnership as an opportunity to reimagine the who, what, why, and how of learning, CCWSAP can be influenced and motivated by different agendas and what is deemed 'valuable' is subjective and contextually dependent. This research question therefore seeks to explore the idea of value from different perspectives, this including an exploration of the outcomes of collaboration which have been identified by students, educators, and educational organisations across examples of practice.

2.3 Finding the Literature

Importantly, I have found a systematic review of the outcomes of partnership practice
(Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017), a PhD thesis on the experiences of those involved in
curriculum co-creation across several UK universities (Woolmer, 2016), and a
summative guide of partnership practices for educators (Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten,
2014). My strategy for how to move forward with these previous works in mind was
informed by the methodology employed in a review by McGregor (2015). Firstly, so as
not to duplicate valuable work, I considered the works and explored the extent to which
their approach, information and findings could be utilised to answer my research
questions. Whilst some key insights from the works are included and referenced in this
dissertation, my research questions, desk-based methodology and research purpose are
distinct from the previous research. Moreover, I have only examined relevant empirical
literature from 2016 onwards, as this is the earliest point from which I can be sure that
the previous works may have failed to pick up relevant case studies.

2.4 Search Strategy for Academic Journals

I have used a range of databases to search for relevant academic journal articles,
including Education Source, the British Education Index and Web of Science. The
search strategy considered the search strategy of the systematic review of
Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2017), the educator guide by Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten
(2014) and the 'sensitivity' and 'specificity' of conducting relevant searches (Petticrew
& Roberts, 2006: 83). Whilst sensitive searches retrieve a high percentage of the total
number of relevant studies, specific searches recover a low percentage of irrelevant
results, but may in turn miss potentially relevant studies (McGregor, 2015: 14). A
specific search for this research was 'curriculum' AND 'co-creation' AND
'students-as-partners', which indeed yielded a low number of highly relevant studies. To
build on these, I searched for further relevant literature through 'snowballing'; by
searching for relevant references in the bibliographies of the relevant articles.

A more 'sensitive' approach uses a variety of synonyms and related terms in different combinations. In the case of this research, given the limitations of time and resources to process a high volume of results, such an approach was only applied in the fields of title, abstract and keywords using synonyms found in the literature and in the thesauruses of the databases referenced. Decisions as to which literature to include were then made on the assessment of abstracts in the literature found. Subsequent full-text analysis provided another opportunity for irrelevant texts to be removed. Given my research focus and the emergent nature of the literary field, sensitive searches yielded a higher yet manageable volume of studies. The literature inclusion criteria below were informed by these initial searches, which highlighted an opportunity to take advantage of the sensitive search approach.

2.5 Literature Inclusion Criteria

- Population: Involving university students
- Language: Written in English
- Outcomes: Those relating to students, staff, or entire organisations
- Year: Published between 2016 and 2022
- Setting (see section 2.5.1)
- Type of study (see section 2.5.2)

2.5.1 Setting

I considered any study conducted in a formal higher education context. This was primarily because the setting and average age range of students at tertiary level aligns with the population which CFL is seeking to engage in co-creation with. Whilst I may have also considered CCWSAP in informal or non-formal educational contexts such as youth work settings, focusing solely on higher education contexts narrows the scope of the literature to what is manageable within the confines of this dissertation. Moreover, focusing on the singular setting of higher education ensures a certain level of consistency in terms of pedagogical environment, which supports the potential relevance

of the insights gleaned from the cases explored to those interested in taking up such activity in similar contexts.

2.5.2 Type of Study

Regarding the types of study, I considered any text which addressed the research questions. Fortunately, in exploring the literature concerning illustrative examples of practice (RQ2), I realised that I was able to limit the scope of my literature inclusion criteria to studies only written by those who initiated or were involved in CCWSAP, and where the viewpoints, experiences and outcomes for multiple stakeholders are captured. Beyond this, I also considered studies detailing research on the challenges, outcomes, and value of CCWSAP, and relevant texts engaging in theoretical and conceptual discussion relating to the topic more broadly. This ensured that theories or concepts driving critical discussion from the wider literature could be found.

2.6 Analysis Method

A coding scheme using the qualitative research software 'Taguette' was developed to analyse all the texts. The software enabled me to produce an analytical coding framework by allocating particular texts and sections of text to different 'highlights' pertaining to different research questions. The software enabled me to systematically thematise, analyse and compare the texts I found.

Rather than beginning with a set of predefined categories, I used an inductive 'ground-up' approach to ensure that the highlights regarding themed groups of theories, concepts and outcomes could be adjusted as the research process progressed (McGregor, 2015: 17). Following this, I carried out a more detailed data-extraction of the selected texts and began the process of synthesising the literature to answer the research questions.

2.7 Methodological Limitations

Notably, in acknowledging the resource limitations of this research, it is not possible to claim that all the most appropriate and potentially relevant literature have been identified. Moreover, definitional issues relating to the inclusion and exclusion criteria of literature relevant to the research questions should be considered given my potential interpretative bias as a solo researcher. Therefore, whilst claims to the systematicity of this research require qualification, it has been written primarily as a narrative synthesis and critical review of practices and outcomes of recent literature concerning CCWSAP. In turn, the research aims to present the relevant knowledge with confidence that it can support learning, further dialogue, and the application of theory to practice.

Chapter 3: Conceptual and Theoretical Foundations

The nature and purpose of CCWSAP is driven by a multitude of theories and concepts. However, as it is still a relatively emergent area of practice, the literature is yet to establish itself around a common theoretical framework with which to consistently describe and categorise activity. Indeed, literature on the co-creation of curricula has been criticised for being under theorised (Macfarlane & Tomlinson, 2017: 7 as cited in Lubicz-Nawrocka, 2018: 48). This may be as there is a diverse range of practices described in the field that fall under the banner of CCWSAP, which can vary significantly in form depending on contextual factors. Nonetheless, this chapter builds on some of the concepts outlined in the introduction and delves deeper into some of the commonly found theoretical elements underpinning similar research (e.g., Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017; Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten, 2014; Woolmer, 2016). In doing so, this chapter responds to RQ1: 'What theories and concepts shape contemporary CCWSAP?'. The chapter also provides important theoretical context for answering the latter research questions and ensures that the academic exploration of CCWSAP is informed by the ideological foundations which underpin the discourse. The following conceptual and theoretical perspectives have therefore been chosen based on their relevance to the research questions and because they appeared as recurring themes across the literature I explored, which became apparent during the inductive literature analysis process:

- Classifications of CCWSAP
- Critical pedagogy and principles of partnership
- 'Students-as-consumers' within higher education
- Evidencing the value of CCWSAP

After introducing these theoretical perspectives, I then summarise the chapter by outlining the connections between them and their relevance to the research questions.

3.1 Classifications of CCWSAP

Firstly, Bovill et al (2016) offer a typology of the different student roles that can be adopted when engaging in partnership practices such as CCWSAP. Four roles are identified: *consultant*, where student(s) share and discuss their perspectives on learning and teaching; *co-researcher*, where students collaborate in researching teaching and learning and/or subject based research; *pedagogical co-designer*, where students share responsibility for designing elements of learning, teaching, and assessment; and *representative*, where student voice contributes to decision making across a range of settings (Bovill et al., 2016: 198).
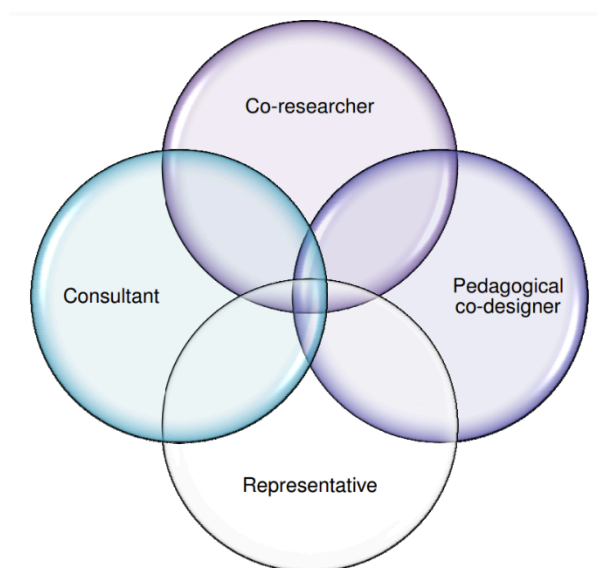
Figure 2. Typology of student roles in co-creation of teaching and learning (Bovill et al., 2016: 199)

Notably, the first three roles are typically staff-created opportunities for collaboration, which is often the case in CCWSAP, whereas the student representative role is usually student-led insofar as the representative bodies are run by students (Bovill et al., 2016:

198). Moreover, the overlapping circles highlight that partnership practices such as CCWSAP regularly involve students fluidly adopting various and sometimes multiple roles at different points (Bovill et al., 2016: 198).

Additionally, Bovill and Bulley (2011) developed a conceptual model which helps to better understand how such roles can differ in terms of the extent of participation involved. By adapting Sherry Arnstein's (1969) 'ladder of citizen participation', they developed a 'ladder of student participation in curriculum design', presenting eight rungs on a scale of participation (Bovill & Bulley, 2011: 5). In disentangling the various terminology associated with students-as-partners, Marten et al. (2019) clarify three different levels of student participation as defined by Bovill and Bulley (2011); design-based research (DBR), participatory design (PD), and co-creation.
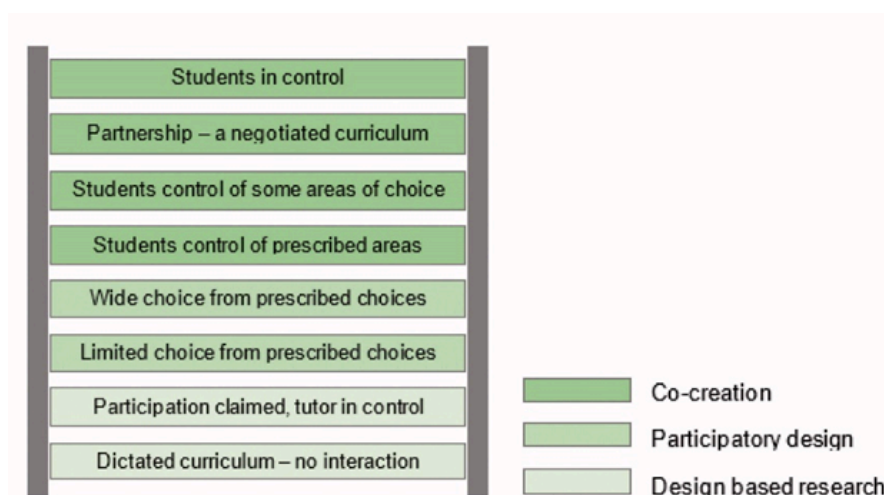
Figure 3. Linking DBR, PD and co-creation approaches with the ladder of student participation in curriculum design (Martens et al., 2019: 2).

As illustrated, DBR can be assigned to the two bottom rungs of the ladder, as students participate in evaluation rather than controlling their curriculum. PD is found in the two rungs above, where students are given some choice and control of prescribed areas. Lastly, co-creation is located in the top rungs of the ladder, where students have the highest level of influence in decision making (Marten et al., 2019: 1204). Whilst this

model is useful for a basic understanding of participation in curriculum design, Bovill (2013) clarifies that co-creation in this field is complex. Students and staff at any given educational institution or organisation bring different levels of expertise to different processes, and when and where their respective voices should have more influence is dependent on contextual elements such as the relative experience of staff and students, their attitudes, what is being discussed and so on (Bovill, 2013: 464). This point is supported by Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten (2014), who highlight that whilst all participants in partnership processes should have the opportunity to contribute equally, partnership should not be understood as a 'false equivalency'; students and staff can and should contribute in different ways (Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten, 2014: 7).

Furthermore, 'rhizomatic learning' is one approach which encapsulates the difficulties of classifying CCWSAP, particularly when it is pursued at the highest rungs of student participation. The approach uses rhizomes as a metaphor to describe how CCWSAP can be re-envisioned, not only as concerning the design of curriculum, but also the direction of learning and the creation of knowledge (Healey, Flint & Harrington, 2014: 52). Inspired by the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1988), Cormier (2012) describes how learning and the creation of knowledge are comparable to the roots of rhizomatic plants, which have no centre, grow in multiple directions, and spread via experimentation and adaptation (Cormier, 2012: 1). Curricula, in this sense, are not predefined by those with subject matter expertise, as something 'to be learned [and] something independently verifiable with a definitive beginning and end goal', but are negotiated and constructed in real time by those engaged in the learning process (Cormier, 2008: 1). Such a perspective thus highlights how the process of CCWSAP contains the potential to be a transformational learning experience in of itself. Indeed, it has been argued that this more fluid conception of co-creation promotes learner responsibility, peer support and helps students prepare for working with uncertainty and complexity in the future (Cormier, 2012 as cited in Healey, Flint & Harrington, 2014: 52).

As I attempt to outline conceptual and theoretical foundations for this dissertation, the rhizomatic model highlights how co-creative practice may take paths which do not fit into neat classification models. Notwithstanding this, the models outlined above highlight the different roles students may fluidly adopt in curriculum co-creation and the different levels of participation at which collaboration and partnership in this activity may take place. What the rhizomatic learning approach emphasises is that CCWSAP does not necessarily entail the construction of a curriculum prior to 'actual' learning; co-creation with and by the learning community can *be* the curriculum (Cormier, 2008: 1).

The following section explores the roots of such ideas in historical literature concerning progressive education and critical pedagogy.

3.2 Critical Pedagogy and Principles of Partnership

Whilst the idea of CCWSAP may seem radical, the origins of the practice are not new to education. Over a century ago, John Dewey critiqued traditional conceptions of formal education and argued for schools where students would have a stronger voice and more agency in their own learning experiences (Dewey, 1916). Since then, many educational theorists have advocated similarly radical ideas (Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten, 2014: 10). For example, discontent with the way governments were approaching schooling peaked in the 1960s, where formal education was seen as preserving a narrow canon of what was deemed to be valuable knowledge (Bovill, 2013a: 2). During the same period, a range of scholarly works returned to some of the ideas advocated by Dewey: Heidegger's 'What is called thinking' (1968) argued for more freedom and openness in the teacher-student relationship; Illich's 'Deschooling Society' (1970) highlighted the ineffectual nature of much of formal education; and Habermas' work (1973) critiqued the interests of formal schooling systems and questioned its underpinning values (as cited in Bovill, 2013a: 2). It has been noted that Habermas' work (1973) in particular influenced a range of scholars who developed the idea of critical pedagogy over the following decades, such as Michael Apple and Henry Giroux (Bovill, 2013a: 2). Rather

than delving into the details of the scholarship, this synopsis merely aims to illustrate the range of historical literature underpinning contemporary ideas about the co-creation of curricula.

However, Brazilian educator Paulo Freire is one scholar whose work warrants further description, given how it has influenced my epistemological position and motivated the focus of this research. Whilst it is impossible to do full justice to Freire's ideas in brief here, one of the key criticisms described in his work is that of the 'banking model' of education, where students are essentially characterised as empty vessels who passively receive expert knowledge from teachers. Freire claims that this is characterised through a range of stultifying attitudes and practices, including:

> The teacher teaches and the students are taught;
> The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing;
> The teacher thinks and the students are thought about;
> The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined;
> (Freire, 2005: 73).

Moreover, the students in this banking model of education are understood as 'marginal' individuals who deviate from the status quo and require 'incorporation' into society via paternalistic pedagogical approaches (Freire, 2005: 74). A further observation and criticism from Freire is that this model presents teaching as a politically neutral act whilst also promoting an unquestioning acceptance of the way things are, in turn damaging 'our ability to be human; to hope, dream, love and grow' (Peters & Mathias, 2018: 55).

However, of particular relevance to this research is Freire's description of how we can break from the banking model of education, by learning *with* each other; learners and teachers coming together to co-create learning experiences through dialogue, shifting the dynamic of the traditional teacher/learner relationship:

> Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the
> students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges:
> teacher-students with student-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely

the-one-who-teaches, but who is himself [sic] taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach (Freire 2005: 80).

In this alternative model, education is not solely about the transmission of predefined answers, but instead about genuine curiosity and the asking of questions. Freire inspired a range of academics, such as bell hooks (1994) and Henry Giroux, who was the first to use the term 'critical pedagogy' (Giroux, 1983) and who emphasised the use of a critical lens on education to challenge the teaching of only 'accepted' forms of knowledge (Peters & Mathias, 2018: 57). Whilst this form of critical pedagogy focused predominantly on school education, it has influenced theory concerning higher education (Crowther et al. 2005 as cited in Bovill & Woolmer, 2019: 408). Moreover, in exploring education beyond school contexts through this lens, Freire coined 'popular education' as an overtly political model of education focusing on the needs of adult learners and on supporting people to become conscious of their often oppressed position in society (Bovill, 2013a: 3). At its core, such education seeks to reveal and question existing power structures and dynamics, to highlight them as problems to be explored and to encourage the co-creation of pragmatic alternatives (Peters & Mathias, 2018: 56). However, as will be outlined later, whilst the literature I explore concerning co-creation today often cites Freire-inspired commitments, such transformational intentions are less common. Nonetheless, some of the key practices and principles considered crucial when adopting this more democratic approach to education clearly inspire partnership and co-creative practices today. These include that learning should be meaningful; that students should have freedom of choice; that the student-teacher relationship should be collaborative; and that the learner is understood as a knowledgeable and valuable partner in learning (hooks, 1994 as cited in Bovill, 2013a: 3).

A contemporary idea stemming from these notions is that those engaging in partnerships should seek to foster 'learning communities' through a commitment to certain principles (Healey, Flint & Harrington, 2014: 25). This notion recognises that partnership is most successful when it is reciprocal, involves students as active participants, and is emphasised by educators as a *process* of engagement (Sterenberg et al. 2018: 99).

Building on this, Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten (2014) argue that the principles of respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility are the most powerful and efficacious towards this end (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014: 2). Based on observations across a range of examples of practice, they note that commitments to such principles place educators and students in reciprocal, open discussions, where direction and outcomes are negotiated, where the inputs of both parties are taken seriously and valued without judgement, and where risk and ownership are shared (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014: 2; Healey, Flint & Harrington, 2014: 14-15; Woolmer, 2016: 22). Additionally, these principles have been noted as being particularly important for generating a sense of community which can support and sustain partnerships beyond discrete initiatives (Healey, Flint & Harrington, 2014: 8).

However, whilst such principles align with a Freirean pedagogical approach and emphasise education as 'learning together', they may not envision this as 'a means of questioning, challenging, and changing our world' (Peters & Mathias, 2018: 56). Moreover, as will be explored, whilst contemporary ideas regarding partnership practices owe much to the earlier conceptions of progressive education, the literature does not always acknowledge or draw upon the more radical and emancipatory rationales found in critical pedagogy (Bovill, 2013a: 4).

Notably, the importance of this point is underpinned by the argument that the transformational potential of partnership is defined by the extent to which partnership between students and educators is truly deemed valuable in and of itself truly, rather than pursued merely as a means to an end (Matthews, Cook-Sather & Healey, 2018: 25). For Freire, *learning about something* and *doing something* about it are combined; the practice of education entails learning *via* action (Peters & Mathias, 2018: 56). As he describes, 'democracy is taught and learned through the practice of democracy' (Freire, 1997: 91 as cited in Peters & Mathias, 2018: 57). However, action without reflection, and conversely reflection without action, is insufficient to transform the realities of those engaged in partnership (Freire, 2005: 48-53; Matthews, 2017: 4). Therefore, simply

'doing' partnership as a technique or strategy, without considering why it should be pursued and why it matters for learners and education more broadly, limits its transformational potential. Genuine partnership, in this sense, is an act of resistance to the traditional, often implied but accepted, hierarchy of educators having power over students in the creation of teaching and learning (Matthews, 2017: 4).

Some of the contextual realities which might limit the transformational potential of partnership are outlined in the following section concerning the nature of higher education today.

3.3 'Students-as-Consumers' within Higher Education

The notion of 'students-as-consumers', particularly within marketized higher education environments, stands in contrast to the ethos of the scholarly literature described above (Bovill et al., 2016: 195; Carey, 2013: 250). In the UK, it has been observed that the concept of students-as-consumers emerged as part of the development of the consumer society in the 1970s (Kaye, Bickel & Birtwistle, 2006: 86; McMillan & Cheney, 1996: 2 as cited in McCulloch, 2009: 172). In this metaphor, the university acts as a service provider and students act as consumers (McCulloch, 2009: 171). Whilst it has been argued that this notion has supported the improvement of the student experience (McCulloch, 2009: 172), it also represents a challenge to partnership and co-creation as student expectations have changed, class sizes have increased, and economies of scale place practical limits on what is possible and manageable by educators (Dollinger & Mercer-Mapstone, 2019: 76; Cooper, 2017: 62).

Moreover, research has found that students often perceive themselves as consumers and universities as businesses, and that calls for increased student engagement and participation are often driven by discussions on how to enhance student satisfaction rather than how to democratise learning dynamics (Dollinger, Lodge & Coates, 2018: 220; Carey, 2013: 251). One study in the UK, for example, found that the main ideological framing of higher education amongst students - across years, subjects, and

institutions - emphasised 'value for money' as part of a 'consumerist ethos' (Kandiko & Mawer, 2013: 5 as cited in Healey, Flint & Harrington, 2014: 17). Moreover, it has been observed that the positioning of students-as-consumers has only increased since the introduction of fees and the high level of managerialism emblematic of Western-style higher education contexts (Dollinger & Mercer-Mapstone, 2019: 76). Importantly, this perpetuates the view of students passively consuming their education, as critiqued by Freire.

However, an emphasis on listening to students' preferences and their individual voices can, to some extent, be situated both within a consumerist rationale oriented towards quality enhancement *and* as a means to achieve social justice (Dollinger & Mercer-Mapstone, 2019: 74). For example, 'student engagement' has become a key way in which universities are measured within marketized environments, and the UK Quality Assurance Agency's guidance has placed student engagement at every level of quality enhancement (QAA, 2012 as cited in Carey, 2013: 251). Moreover, 'partnership' is now increasingly integrated into documents relating to university strategy and policy (e.g., University of Edinburgh, 2022; University of Queensland, 2022; McMaster University, 2022). That said, it has been argued that the adoption of these terms responds to multiple different discourses and bodies of research across the educational sector (Dollinger & Mercer-Mapstone, 2019: 74) and that such engagement is often limited to quality enhancement and assurance mechanisms (Carey, 2013: 250; Peters & Mathias, 2018: 58). Moreover, whilst there has been an increase in the popularity of such terminology, much of higher education is still structured around hierarchical relationships between students and educators (Healey, Flint & Harrington, 2014: 19). Consequently, it has been argued that partnership practices are often diluted and 'appropriated' (Matthews, 2017: 5) in higher education and that partnership is 'less a matter of collaboration and more a case of co-option' (Peters & Mathias, 2018: 57).

Given this, it has been argued that 'all partnership is student engagement, but not all student engagement is partnership.' (Healey, Flint & Harrington, 2014: 7). Indeed, the

differing intentions and motivations underpinning the students-as-consumers narrative versus a Freirean approach to partnership implies that they are competing ideological influences on the practice of CCWSAP in higher education (Woolmer, 2016: 13). Whilst the former emphasises individual student transformation within a context of enhancing education as a service, the latter promotes collective transformation on a societal level underpinned by principles of democracy and social justice. Adopting a Freirean approach to students-as-partners practice goes beyond adopting a few partnership-aligned techniques or strategies. It entails a personal, philosophical commitment based on genuine reflection and a dedication to collective effort (Peters & Mathias, 2018: 64). With this in mind, the next section considers how the *value* of the partnership practices such as CCWSAP can be understood, evidenced and articulated from different perspectives.

3.4 Evidencing the Value of CCWSAP

Firstly, the students-as-consumers narrative is also part of a wider culture which prioritises measurable targets and key performance indicators (KPIs) as the main way in which educational institutions can demonstrate 'value for money'. As observed by Bamber & Stefani (2016), those working in educational development are predominantly asked to demonstrate 'impact' and to produce evidence for the learning of students. For example, The Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) used in higher education institutions in England relies heavily on metrics and has a strong focus on measuring 'Learning Gain' from attending university (Bamber & Stefani, 2016: 242; Woolmer, 2016: 75). However, as is often the case with practices such as CCWSAP, terms like 'impact' do not align with the concept; indeed, it can be particularly hard to evaluate such activity and to demonstrate the value and significance of what has been achieved. Bamber & Stefani (2016) also argue that the prioritisation of quantitative measurable data leads to an overly dominant focus on outputs such as attendance or simple feedback forms, as opposed to outcomes such as changed behaviours or practices (Bamber & Stefani, 2016: 243). The emphasis of measuring impact therefore presents a

challenge to capturing the value of partnership as 'a way of doing things, rather than an outcome in itself' (Healey, Flint & Harrington., 2014: 7). Moreover, a Freirean approach would encourage critical curiosity regarding this aspect of education; collectively questioning what and why such measurement systems are required and holding our assumptions up for question (Peters & Mathias, 2018: 63).

Additionally, as recognised by Gray and Randolff (2008), the notion of 'impact' is not a value-free, neutral concept and cannot be easily captured by simple measurements. Indeed, the term 'impact' is often mainly used for rhetorical purposes, being conflated with words such as 'achievement', 'effect', 'return' and 'success', to persuade and accentuate positivity (Gray and Randolff, 2008: 99). However, if we are to consider the idea of impact with regards to partnership, then we must do so in a contextual, layered and long-term manner (Gray and Randolff, 2008: 103 as cited in Woolmer 2016: 75). For example, we can challenge the dominant discourse of 'measuring impact' by reconceptualising evaluation in terms of 'evidencing value' and by involving a wider range of stakeholders to triangulate evidence of this (Bamber & Stefani, 2016: 245). This may involve gathering a range of evidence types, including the experiences of the students, peers and educators engaged in partnership learning activity, making context-specific sense of such insights and then - as is the ambition in this dissertation - harnessing the findings to guide future thinking (Bamber & Stefani, 2016: 247-248). Moreover, by combining the personal and collective narratives of those who have engaged in partnership, one can bring the evaluative process to life and ground it in real world narratives and complexities (Bamber & Stefani, 2016: 249). Notably, this point informs both my literature inclusion criteria and the lens through which I analyse and the case studies I explore to answer RQ3 concerning the value of CCWSAP; the case studies I examine contain the exploration of multiple stakeholder experiences and I seek to unpack these as I expand the scope of what might be considered 'evidence of value'. This links to the purpose of this research more broadly, to provide contextualised examples of practice which can support understandings of CCWSAP and highlight its value from different perspectives.

3.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter can be summarised through a description of how the theoretical elements interlink in relation to my research questions. Firstly, the models explored in this chapter outline classifications of different roles students may adopt in CCWSAP and the different levels of participation at which collaboration and partnership may take place. Whilst such models can to some extent frame the practices and processes illustrative of CCWSAP, literature highlights that labelling and classification will not always be useful given the fluid, cross-cutting, and sometimes 'rhizomatic' nature of such activity. Importantly, regardless of the scope and direction of partnership practices, principles such as respect, reciprocity and shared responsibility are noted as essential for fostering communities which allow for genuine, self-sustaining co-creation to take place (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014: 2).

Furthermore, different perspectives define why partnership practices are pursued and how ideas of 'value' are understood, articulated, and evidenced. The theoretical perspectives underpinning CCWSAP are rooted in the ideas of influential scholars such as Dewey, Freire and Giroux who, alongside others, highlighted the limitations and restrictive nature of 'traditional' modes of education and how we might think and act differently to address this. However, whilst contemporary partnership practices owe much to these earlier ideas, CCWSAP can also be influenced by a consumerist notion of higher education, which represents a departure from more radical notions of partnership. In turn, Freire-inspired partnership literature emphasises that the transformational potential of partnership is limited and defined by the extent to which student-educator collaboration is truly valued as worthy in and of itself (Matthews, Cook-Sather & Healey, 2018: 25; Matthews, 2017: 4; Peters & Mathias, 2018: 53). Moreover, from this perspective, practices such as CCWSAP are not merely a means to an end, and therefore solely assessing and measuring such activity via traditional mechanisms misses the point. Yet, if we are to attempt to capture the value and impact of such practices, then we

must move beyond simple metrics and reconceptualise evaluation to consider and seek to evidence the value of the process for those engaged in partnership and beyond.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

This chapter examines a range of illustrative examples of CCWSAP. Co-creative projects described in the literary field vary in terms of scale from a single class meeting to partnerships across multi-institutional networks (Felton et al., 2019). Whilst I will not be able to provide a fully comprehensive set of all the activities which could take place across this spectrum, the goal is to explore a relatively diverse range of approaches across different disciplinary fields and institutional settings to answer RQ2; 'What recent case studies exemplify the practice of CCWSAP?'. Given the confines of this dissertation, the case study accounts are described as 'vignettes'; brief yet informative illustrations, which may be inspirational or useful as starting points for those who have an ambition to adopt similar practices in their own context.

The vignettes are analysed in sections aligned with both the research questions as well as the theory and concepts outlined in the previous chapter. Firstly, in line with RQ1, I extract the context and any *theoretical perspectives* outlined in the scholarly account of the vignette. Secondly, as per RQ2, I outline the details of the *practice* and process illustrative of CCWSAP. Thirdly, following RQ3, I explore accounts of any challenges faced by stakeholders during partnership and assess the outcomes and evidence of *value* of the practice as described by the authors, as per RQ4.

The six vignettes I explore are organised into pairs across three intersecting categories of CCWSAP as follows:

1. Co-designing entire courses
2. Co-producing learning resources for a course
3. Co-developing assessment

These groupings serve as loose organisational strata which reflect the key inductive thematic codes identified during literature analysis. They have also been selected to ensure a relatively broad illustration of project types and practices for consideration. Markedly, the co-creative practices described within these categories take place across different subjects, university settings, and with varying numbers of students.

4.1 Co-designing Entire Courses

Course design represents a valuable opportunity for co-creation in partnership with students. The 'checklist' of elements that must be considered when engaging in the design process provides a structure for educator and student partnership which allows both parties to plan, deliberate and develop confidence in their work (Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten, 2014: 29). However, given that some educators may have a level of apprehension towards initiating partnership, based on the uncertainty involved, they may often initiate co-creation with a small group of students or with more mature and experienced students (Bovill, 2011: 465). Moreover, as clarified by Bovill & Woolmer (2019) there may be co-creation *of* the curriculum, this being the co-design of a course or program before it takes place, or co-creation *in* the curriculum, meaning co-design during a course or program (Bovill & Woolmer, 2019: 409). Partnership may often start with smaller scale co-creation *in* a curriculum rather than *of* a curriculum, as this may be seen as a low-risk entry point into the practice in educational settings. Indeed, the co-creation *of* entire courses defies the common academic assumption that disciplinary expertise gives educators complete authority over the planning, implementation and evaluation of learning (Bovill, Cook‑Sather & Felten, 2011: 136). Yet, each party will bring something different of value to the design process, and whilst educators will likely have the specialist knowledge, student partners bring valuable perspective and insights which may not have been considered or fully appreciated by educators. Moreover, combining educators' knowledge with the insights of students in course design can increase how engaging and effective learning can be (Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten, 2014: 29).

As outlined in the first vignette below, a pragmatic way in which the experiential knowledge of students can be utilised is through course redesign with students who have previously taken a given course and are familiar with its contents, pedagogical approach, and objectives.

4.1.1 Vignette 1: Collaborative Curricular (re)Construction at Creighton University, USA

Context and theoretical perspectives

The Collaborative Curricular (re)Construction scheme (C3) saw educators pair with students to engage in backward course design over the course of a year to redesign learning modules across a range of disciplines (Duda & Danielson, 2018: 39). In discussing the motivation and theoretical justification for the C3 initiative, the authors of the scheme cite inspiration from a progressive view of pedagogy where 'students are agents in the process of transformative learning' (Fielding, 1999 as cited in Duda & Danielson, 2018:40). Moreover, they state a motive to explicitly challenge the 'conventional conception of learners as subordinate to the expert tutor/faculty in engaging with what is taught and how' (Bovill, Cook-Sather, & Felten, 2011 as cited in Duda & Danielson, 2018: 40).

Practice and process

Educators were invited based on a set of criteria including their reputation for openness to curricular innovation and their willingness to collaboratively engage with students (Duda & Danielson, 2018: 41). Upon invitation, educator participants were asked to identify a module that would benefit from co-creative input, recruit a student participant who recently graduated the course, and attend at least six meetings over a semester, both individually with their student partner and in groups (Duda & Danielson, 2018: 41).

Four educator-student pairs took part and were given nominal compensation, but it was noted that the educators were predominantly motivated by the opportunity to improve their own practice through collaboration with students (Duda & Danielson, 2018: 41). The first meeting consisted of an introduction of the participants and courses and an explanation of the workgroups' purpose. The second meeting involved a workshop on backwards design principles and group discussion on the purpose and learning objectives of the modules under consideration. Following this, meetings three through five saw the pairs engage in the reconstruction of the module syllabus, key learning activities, course content, readings, and evaluation tools. Lastly, meeting six involved the pairs feeding back to each other, sharing the module redesign and their implementation plans (Duda & Danielson, 2018: 41-43).

Value and outcomes

In reflecting on the practice, the authors reiterate the process of student engagement as a valuable end in and of itself; 'students need to be part of the discussion about learning' (Huber & Hutchings, 2005 as cited in Duda & Danielson, 2018:40). The study also used a mixed methods approach to study the long-term impacts of the C3 initiative five years after the first cohort, exploring faculty and student development, student learning and whether a culture shift had taken place at the institution. Students were observed to be changed learners in terms of having a deeper understanding of subject matter, an increased appreciation for the importance of learning objectives, and an increased desire for more active engagement in their own learning (Duda & Danielson, 2018: 44-48). All educator participants believed their courses were strengthened, and that student learning was enhanced through participation in the initiative. This was supported by assessment data which provided further evidence of a statistically significant increase in higher examination results across multiple courses (Duda & Danielson, 2018: 46, 48, 50).

Additionally, in interviews with faculty it was found that the C3 model was an effective tool for development, nurturing faculty creativity and pedagogical flexibility and giving faculty permission to start 'experimenting in their courses as they had only "contemplated in the past"' (Duda & Danielson, 2018: 50). The authors note that some faculty members struggled to overcome the natural urge to intervene when they saw students struggling, but it was found that the model increased faculty awareness of student perspectives, difficulties, and challenges, leading to new pedagogical approaches such as flipped classrooms and more active and experiential learning (Duda & Danielson, 2018: 43-44). A more widespread curricular and cultural change was also observed, where faculty who had not participated in the C3 initiative were persuaded to personally experiment with new pedagogies and increased student participation in module revision (Duda & Danielson, 2018: 48-49).

Markedly, whilst the authors of the initiative state they were primarily inspired by more democratic pedagogical approaches (Duda & Danielson, 2018:40), inviting students to participate as 'pedagogical co-designers' (Bovill, et al., 2016: 199), the collaboration did not include negotiation of the purpose and learning objectives of the modules under consideration (Duda & Danielson, 2018: 41-43). Additionally, the co-creation was initiated, structured, and scoped by the educators. However, given the challenge of navigating institutional norms and accountability measures (Bovill et al., 2016), it is rarer for students to be included right from the start in how such elements of curriculum design are negotiated (Bovill & Bulley, 2011: 6).

Moreover, the educators were noted as outcome-oriented in their motivation, engaging primarily with students 'to improve their own teaching' (Duda & Danielson, 2018: 41). Therefore, whilst this practice may not explicitly demonstrate a more radical partnership approach, the account illustrates how different motivations for engaging in CCWSAP can successfully intersect and lead to valuable outcomes for educators and students alike.

The following vignette seemingly goes further up the ladder of student participation in curriculum design, although it should again be noted that higher does not necessarily imply better at all times (Bovill, 2013: 464).

4.1.2 Vignette 2: Peer-to-Peer Education at the University of Louisville, USA

Context and theoretical perspectives

The Peer Educator Program is an eight-semester initiative in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Louisville (Storey, Eckel-Sparrow & Ransdell, 2021). The program catalyst was one dedicated faculty member who describes an ambition to position students as 'actors', in opposition to the prevailing view of students as docile objects or consumers (Felton et al., 2019: 194 as cited in Storey, Eckel-Sparrow & Ransdell, 2021: 98). The authors describe the Peer Educator Program as addressing this issue of agency by inviting students to participate as both pedagogical co-designers and as teachers.

Practice and process

Each semester the program is composed of six to ten self-selected volunteer students who have completed an introductory, general education course in cultural anthropology (ANTH201). The 'peer educators' (PEs) meet once a week with a faculty lead to build knowledge on active learning, facilitation, and lesson planning. The PEs then work in groups through a collaborative and iterative process to plan and facilitate a series of sessions for the students enrolled in the current semester's ANTH201 course. The course is conducted without faculty attendance and sessions are designed and led only by the students. After each session, PEs then have an opportunity to collectively reflect on the collaborative process, the facilitation of the

session, and the development of their teaching skills (Storey, Eckel-Sparrow & Ransdell, 2021: 99).

Value and outcomes

The value of the PE Program is described by two of the co-authors of the study, who were PEs themselves. Firstly, they claim that peer-to-peer teaching restructures responsibility within classrooms in a manner that cultivates student agency, both for PEs themselves as well as those being taught by the PEs. For the PEs, they build agency through taking on the responsibility for researching, creating, and leading learning sessions. As self-reported by the PEs, they also gain a wide range of career-supporting practical skills such as time-management, event planning, public speaking, and problem-solving (Storey, Eckel-Sparrow & Ransdell, 2021: 100-101). For the peer-educated students, the authors claim that the program supports a varied, durable learning experience which keeps students challenged and engaged. Moreover, it is stated that the comfortable atmosphere created by the PE format overcomes the barriers to engagement which sometimes occur when students are required to speak with professors rather than their peers (Storey, Eckel-Sparrow & Ransdell, 2021: 101).

However, one of the authors, who initiated the Peer Educator Program, describes difficulty in not having wider faculty or institutional support. Whilst the relative autonomy of acting alone was beneficial, the author describes challenges in terms of time, energy, and resource limitations (Storey, Eckel-Sparrow & Ransdell, 2021: 102).

Similarly to the previous vignette, the authors of the PE Program stated a driving ambition to enhance student agency, although in this case the freedom and autonomy given to students represents a more radical form of partnership. A significant aspect of this form of partnership, which is unfortunately not deeply explored in the case study, is that engaging students as peer educators requires them to take ownership of teaching and

learning in a manner which often involves a challenging renegotiation of power, responsibility, and identity (Reeves et al., 2019: 42). Whilst such negotiation contains the potential for resistance and failure (Ntem & Cook-Sather, 2018; Goff & Knorr, 2018 as cited in Storey, Eckel-Sparrow & Ransdell, 2021: 98), this process can also be rewarding and critical as spaces of partnership are defined (Storey, Eckel-Sparrow & Ransdell, 2021: 98). Moreover, the 'democratic spaces defined by co-labour', which such negotiation may produce (Cook-Sather & Luz, 2015 as cited in Storey, Eckel-Sparrow & Ransdell, 2021: 98), would seem to align with a Freirean approach to partnership and education as collective problem solving (Peters & Mathias, 2018: 56).

4.1.3 Section Review

The accounts outlined here indicate some of the activities and outcomes which can occur when partnering with students to co-design, and indeed co-deliver, courses. A range of outcomes are noted in the vignettes which are consistent with what has been found in reviews of the outcomes of partnership practices (e.g., Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten, 2014; Healey, Flint & Harrington, 2014; Mercer-Mapstone et al. 2017; Woolmer, 2016). For example, an unsurprising cluster of commonly found outcomes - for both students and educators - concerns *engagement* that enhances motivation and learning (Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten, 2014: 101; Healey, Flint & Harrington, 2014: 20; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017: 11). The vignettes support this theme, with descriptions of increased student engagement in the process as well as the outcomes of learning (vignettes 1, 2), deepened student learning (vignette 1) and increases in students taking responsibility for their learning (vignettes 1, 2). Markedly, whilst perhaps limited in their broader transformational intent, the outcomes of these practices would seem to have useful implications for how active, effective and engaging learning for students might be achieved to remedy the lack of agency associated with traditional 'sage on the stage' approaches.

Additionally, wider research highlights that partnership often supports engagement outcomes for educators, such as transformed thinking about and practice of teaching, as

was seen in the case of the C3 initiative (Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten, 2014: 109; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017: 12). As described, the effects of such activity can begin to 'snowball' once partnership has been experienced. Indeed, it has been noted that once academic staff engage in partnership to design a course with students, 'many academic staff apply […] transformed notion[s] of engagement to other collaborative ventures with students' (Cook-Sather, 2013: 556 as cited in Healey, Flint & Harrington, 2014: 50). This supports the idea that the transformational potential of partnership increases with the extent to which collaboration is truly valued (Matthews, Cook-Sather & Healey, 2018: 25). Moreover, this aligns with Freire's notion that the dialogical interaction between educators and students in partnership can lead to new and lasting dynamics between educators and students (Freire 2005: 80).

The vignettes also highlight a few of the common challenges faced when engaging in partnership, for example that institutions or educators can sometimes be resistant to co-creation. Vignette 1 highlighted that a process had to take place to recruit educators who were 'open' to curricular innovation and 'willing' to collaboratively engage with students (Duda & Danielson, 2018: 41) and vignette 2 noted the difficulty in not having wider faculty or institutional support (Storey, Eckel-Sparrow & Ransdell, 2021: 102). Such resistance often stems from a 'habit towards an existing practice and perceived risks associated with the innovation' (Sheth & Stellner, 1979: 1 as cited in Bovill et al., 2016: 4). Educators may also have valid concerns regarding the time and energy required for partnership and co-creation on top of heavy workloads, or the lack of pedagogical expertise of students. Likewise, students may ask what the benefits of such practices are and why they should step away from their usual (often comfortable) role to engage in co-creation (Bovill et al., 2016: 4). However, as will be explored later, rather than simply problematizing such issues, these challenges offer partnership advocates the opportunity to embody the principles of partnership and to engage in foundational conversations exploring the value and complexity of co-creation.

4.2 Co-producing Learning Resources for a Course

Another way in which CCWSAP can be operationalised is through the co-production of learning resources and materials for use within a course and as part of the learning. However, scholars have noted barriers to pursuing this form of co-creation, including concerns over the quality of produced material, as well as more general issues such as time pressure and discomfort with new student and educator roles for those involved (Bovill, 2014; Dollinger et al., 2018 as cited in McDonald et al., 2021: 103). Yet, co-created resources do not replace the need for teacher expertise or oversight, but rather primarily represent an alternative learning process (Bovill & Woolmer, 2019: 104). Indeed, partnership literature highlights that deeper comprehension of content can be realised when students actively co-create their own learning materials (Draper, 2009; Greene & Crespi, 2012 as cited in Doyle, Buckley & McCarthy, 2021: 494).

The co-creation of learning resources aligns specifically with the concept of 'students-as-producers'. As a sub-concept of the notion of students-as-partners, students-as-producers specifically characterises students as *knowledge* producers*, rather than simply passive recipients of knowledge content, as within banking models of education (Freire, 2005: 73). Learning is grounded in research-like activities, discovery and contribution whilst working in collaboration with educators and other students (Hynes, 2018: 1-4). As an illustrative example, the following vignette describes the co-production of educational board games, which produced learning content well suited to the needs of students and enhanced the students-educator relationship.

4.2.1 Vignette 3: Co-creating Educational Board Games at Southampton University, UK

Context and theoretical perspectives

This case study explores the co-creation of educational games by Project Management students. The authors of the practice note that teaching and learning practices in business schools have been criticised for failing to provide curricula which prepare

future managers for the challenges they will face, resulting in graduates having difficulty coping with complex organisational realities (Reynolds, 2019 as cited in Gkogkidis & Dacre, 2020: 2). They also question the conventional dynamic of staff being considered as encompassing all knowledge and students as passive receivers (Gkogkidis & Dacre, 2020: 2). The authors see co-creative Game Based Learning practices as operationalizing a more democratic approach to education, which can address these issues. The study of the practice sought to explore evidence as to whether these practices were also valuable teaching and learning experiences in and of themselves (Gkogkidis & Dacre, 2020: 1).

Practice and process

The authors hosted two two-hour workshops with eight Project Management undergraduate students, who volunteered and took part outside teaching hours. The first workshop introduced game design, and an exercise where participants reflected on games they had played in the past and their characteristics. The participants then worked in teams on initial prototypes of their games, which were based on project management frameworks suggested by the facilitators. Those involved were free to manage their own process without pre-allocated roles or responsibilities and the facilitators provided feedback at points throughout the activity. The teams were then asked to playtest the games by explaining them to the other teams and observing what worked well and what could be improved. The second workshop saw the participants implement changes based on the feedback gathered to generate a final prototype (Gkogkidis & Dacre, 2020: 5).

Value and outcomes

Focus groups were chosen as the data collection method and conducted with each team at the end of the process to explore the value of the process for the participants (Gkogkidis & Dacre, 2020: 5). Firstly, the authors found that both students and

educators found traditional transmissive teaching techniques such as lecturing to be alienating to the learning process and that co-creating a game was a successful remedy to counter such an issue. The shift in the power dynamics was found to have built a more fruitful relationship between students and educators, who were perceived as more accessible for students to ask questions and exchange ideas with (Gkogkidis & Dacre, 2020: 9-10). Additionally, the authors found that there were clear improvements in students' engagement and participation as well as knowledge development and the ability of students to reflect and identify their own knowledge gaps (Gkogkidis & Dacre, 2020: 8). However, the level of freedom the teams were given in approaching the task was deemed problematic by some participants, who suggested that a more rigid structure would have increased productivity and lessened confusion (Gkogkidis & Dacre, 2020: 11).

Again, similarly to previous vignettes, the authors of this study based the co-creative practice on an argument for a 'model of knowledge creation where knowledge is negotiated, and students are viewed as active stakeholders rather than customers' (Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014 as cited in Gkogkidis & Dacre, 2020: 3). Yet, co-production took place in 'prescribed areas' (Bovill & Bulley, 2011: 5-6); co-creating *in* a predefined curriculum and seemingly primarily for students' learning purposes. Whilst situated on a lower rung of participatory co-creation, and again limited in its demonstration of the transformational potential of partnership, the account highlights how the process of partnership can be of value on an individual level. Indeed, even when the scale and extent of co-creation is limited to the workshop-based co-production of educational board games, the process can enhance the student-educator relationship, levels of student engagement, and student learning.

The following vignette takes place within a context where the institution's pre-existing democratic approach allowed for a higher level of freedom in the process of co-production. Markedly, the vignette describes both co-creation *of* and *in* the

curriculum, as well as partnership with students as co-researchers (Bovill & Woolmer, 2019: 409; Bovill et al., 2016: 198).

4.2.2 Vignette 4: Co-creating Podcasts within a Co-designed Journalism Course at Bishop's University, Canada

Context and theoretical perspectives

Students at Bishop's university in Canada co-designed an experiential learning course in journalism, wherein students produced a podcast series dedicated to 'exploring the conditions that enhance transformative learning in higher education' (Pohl, Liatsis & Riddell, 2018: 115). Contextual institutional factors supported the possibility of the podcast course: Bishop's is a liberal university with rich extracurricular programming including many experiential learning activities; many faculty are supportive of co-creation; and there is a high level of student-educator interaction. The course facilitator and student coordinator also claimed to have had a particular interest in challenging didactic models of teaching and learning in favour of a more equitable, holistic, and collaborative model with 'shared responsibility' (Pohl, Liatsis & Riddell, 2018: 117).

Practice and process

Firstly, the course was designed by two student leaders and a 'faculty champion' selected by the student leaders based on their reputation as an open, creative collaborator (Pohl, Liatsis & Riddell, 2018: 116). The team met extensively in advance of the course and assumed roles based on their interests and expertise. The faculty champion was responsible for course administration, timetable and syllabus, and the student leaders conducted research on podcasting, interview techniques, and all the technical aspects required. The course involved 15 undergraduate students, who were organised into groups based on their skill sets. For example, students with strong

editing skills were matched with those with strong time management skills (Pohl, Liatsis & Riddell, 2018: 116). The groups were then encouraged to explore what transformational learning meant to them and to investigate this topic through interviews with faculty members. Students then ensured that each podcast met the guidelines established by the class (Pohl, Liatsis & Riddell, 2018: 116).

Value and outcomes

Students all journaled their experiences throughout the process and all course objectives were found to have been successfully achieved (Pohl, Liatsis & Riddell, 2018: 116). Notably, the role and power of faculty was not simply shifted to students; rather, 'student leaders facilitated discussions while still participating fully in the learning experience' (Pohl, Liatsis & Riddell, 2018: 117).

When considering assessment, the course design team drew on literature that highlights the value of involving students to further enhance learning. Assessment focused on peer review and formative feedback. Through combining quantitative questions on perceived learning experiences with space for qualitative reflection, the class was able to create a rubric which measured academic rigour as well as the value of the process for the students involved (Pohl, Liatsis & Riddell, 2018: 119). This process was conducted at the halfway point of the course for formative feedback purposes, and at the end of the course before students then refined their podcasts and uploaded them online (Pohl, Liatsis & Riddell, 2018: 119).

Challenges encountered included that students' technical aptitude varied, which was reflected in sound quality and editing issues, and that students did not always adhere to deadlines through the peer review process, which was partially attributed to the lack of a professor as authority figure to determine consequences (Pohl, Liatsis & Riddell, 2018: 120). However, the qualitative research highlighted that inquiry-based and experiential learning design was a key strength which enabled students to feel they

> were 'in control of their learning' and that a real-world working environment had been meaningfully simulated, where they were required to collaborate with kindness, and diplomacy (Pohl, Liatsis & Riddell, 2018: 120). The self and peer-assessment methodology also encouraged critical reflection and students to talk about their failures, as well as supporting the development of skills in giving and receiving productive feedback (Pohl, Liatsis & Riddell, 2018: 120).

Notably, the nature of the co-creation in this instance, and its focus on co-researching the conditions that enhance transformative learning in higher education, is more closely aligned with a Freirean emphasis on education as collectively 'questioning, challenging, and changing our world' (Peters & Mathias, 2018: 56). Indeed, the vignette illustrates the explorative and collaborative knowledge co-production possible when partnership is valued and accepted on a broader, institutional level, rather than just pursued as an isolated technique. Whilst concerns over the quality of co-produced material may be valid (Bovill, 2014; Dollinger et al., 2018 as cited in McDonald et al., 2021: 103), this is arguably outweighed by the potential of co-production to support the development of 'learners rather than merely skilled technicians' (McCulloch, 2009: 181).

4.2.4 Section Review

Again, these examples reflect findings regarding outcomes documented in the wider literature. Firstly, both vignettes included accounts from students and staff regarding how the partnership practice positively shifted power dynamics and enhanced student-educator relationships, remedying the lack of voice and agency associated with traditional transmissive teaching techniques. Moreover, vignette 4 included accounts of a 'more fruitful relationship' and educators being perceived as 'more accessible' (Snelling et al., 2019: 67). These findings echo what was described earlier; that collaboration between students and staff based on the principles of respect, reciprocity and shared responsibility can lead to the emergence of mutually beneficial 'learning communities' wherein learning and teaching is reconceptualised as a collaborative process (Healey,

Flint & Harrington, 2014: 28, 20). As indicated in the vignettes, and found elsewhere, this sense of community supports the learning process and 'enhances [students'] confidence, motivation and enthusiasm' (Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten, 2014: 103; Healey, Flint & Harrington, 2014: 20).

Challenges were also highlighted in the vignettes which are consistent with wider findings. For example, as described in vignette 4, the level of freedom given to students was deemed problematic by students and there were calls for 'more structure' (Gkogkidis & Dacre, 2020: 11). Similarly, in vignette 5, the lack of an authority figure was identified by students as somewhat obstructing the collaborative process (Pohl, Liatsis & Riddell, 2018: 120). Notably, it has been argued that such issues may be attributed to the level of uncertainty that comes with new partnerships, especially for learners who are unfamiliar with the process of co-creation (Könings et al., 2020: 930). Indeed, when learners and faculty make a transition from simply enacting what is required of them towards partnership, wherein what constitutes learning is consciously analysed, they change 'not just what the learner knows […] but also who the learner is' (Dreier, 2003 as cited in Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten, 2014: 113). However, the implications of a Freirean approach to partnership emphasise that such shifts are an important part of an 'on-going transformative and collaborative process of being and becoming' (Peters & Mathias, 2018: 64).

4.3 Co-developing Assessment

Another way in which to engage in CCWSAP is via the assessment process. Notably, power dynamics between teachers and students are likely to be uniquely challenging in assessment partnerships. Approaches to feedback and assessment significantly influence 'what, how, and how much students study' (Bevitt, 2012: 4 as cited in Healey, Flint & Harrington, 2014: 40) and assessment has 'a range of powerful impacts on what [...] teachers do' (Carless, 2015: 9 as cited in Ní Bheoláin, Lowney & O' Riordain, 2020: 1). Moreover, assessment is not just about student learning and credentialing, it is also a significant part of the accountability regimes emblematic of impact agendas and

influences decision making regarding student retention and teacher evaluation (Bourke, 2018: 827).

For context, in 2012 the Higher Education Academy (HEA) in the UK published findings from nationally sourced module and course level feedback, as well as the National Student Survey (NSS), that 'Assessment and Feedback' was receiving consistently low levels of satisfaction from students (Ball et al., 2012; Higher Education Academy, 2012 as cited in Andrews, Brown & Mesher, 2018: 32). Following this, there has been an increased recognition, in the European Higher Education Area and beyond, that for students' experiences of assessment to be 'successful', they should have a level of agency, engagement and investment in the process (Ní Bheoláin, Lowney & O' Riordain, 2020: 1,3). Whilst what defines 'successful assessment' is open to debate, it has been recognised that assessment can be multifaceted in its use and value, especially beyond the summative purposes it is best known for. These different uses are concisely captured in Figure 4.
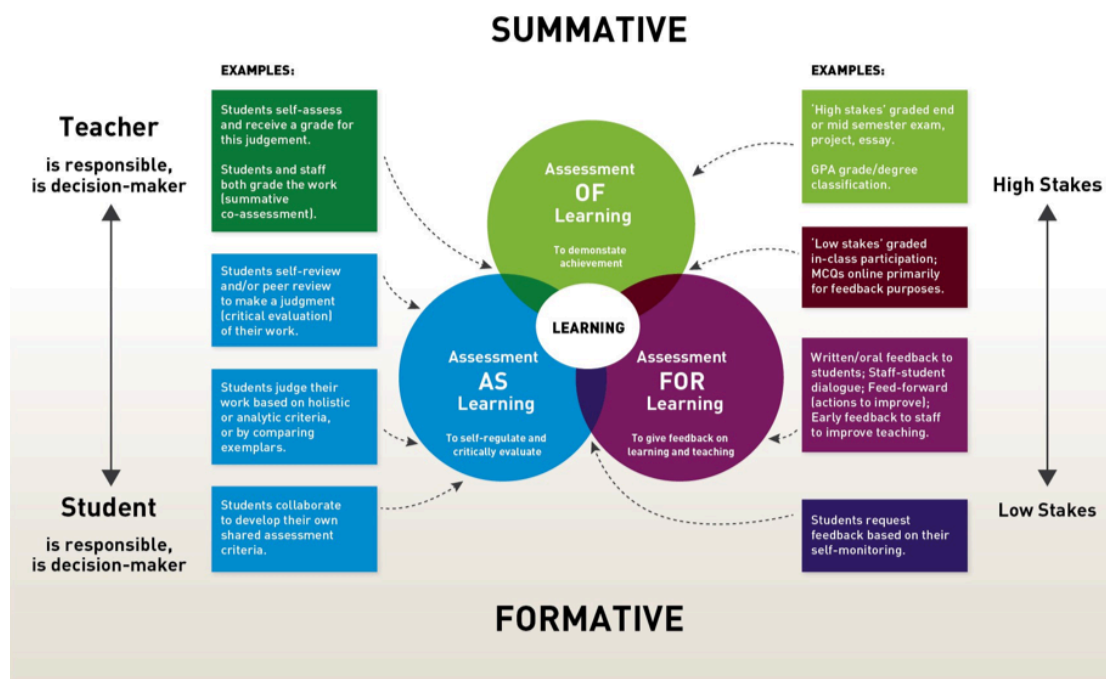
Figure 4. Assessment and feedback terminology and examples (National Forum, 2017: 2).

Beyond the common *assessment of learning,* the formative approach of *assessment for learning* establishes teachers and students as learners in dialogue to support both parties in improving their learning and teaching. Likewise, *assessment as learning* empowers students to critically self-evaluate their learning and performance (National Forum, 2017: 3). Although the regulated nature of assessment may limit the extent of shared responsibility in partnership, these approaches emphasise genuine curiosity, the asking of questions and dialogue in a more democratic manner emblematic of CCWSAP.

As for what form partnership activity in this field can take, self and peer assessment are common areas of collaborative assessment, alongside practices such as co-developing assessment criteria and activities (Ní Bheoláin, Lowney & O' Riordain, 2020: 11).

4.3.1 Self and Peer Assessment

Firstly, self-assessment can take various forms but has been broadly defined as incorporating 'assessment activities that require students to examine and understand their own learning' (Bourke, 2018: 828). Understood as 'assessment *as* learning', this can involve students: applying an educator's assessment criteria to their own work; identifying criteria to apply to their own work and making judgements as to whether they have met such criteria; or using exemplars to judge their work (Bourke, 2018: 831; Ní Bheoláin, Lowney & O' Riordain, 2020: 11; National Forum, 2017: 3). Markedly, the benefits of self-assessment have been long-established in academic literature (Falchikov & Boud, 1989; Ozogul & Sullivan, 2007; Brown & Harris, 2013 as cited in Ní Bheoláin, Lowney & O' Riordain, 2020: 12).

Peer-to-peer assessment involves similar activities, but encompasses practices where students evaluate or are evaluated by their peers (Li et al., 2020: 1). Like self-assessment, peer assessment has been shown in a recent meta-analysis to positively impact student learning, as well as assessment literacy; helping students to establish a common understanding with educators of what is required to perform well in assessment (Li et al., 2020). The following vignette outlines a simple example of peer-to-peer assessment as part of co-creation *in* the curriculum (Bovill & Woolmer, 2019: 409).

4.3.1.1 Vignette 5: Designing and Implementing Peer-to-Peer Formative Feedback within an Online Learning Environment at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand

Context and theoretical perspectives

This study focused on the use of peer-to-peer formative feedback during an online post-graduate course in ICT in education. The course was hosted online, and all teaching and learning was facilitated asynchronously. The authors cite a 'need' to support students in taking an active role in their learning and the processes of assessment involved, and that such active engagement is especially critical in online

settings where students are expected to take on primary responsibility for their learning (Gikandi & Morrow, 2016: 155). The authors cite previous research that effective formative assessment depends on feedback which is dialogical and constructive, as opposed to simple information transmission (Gikandi, Morrow & Davis, 2011 as cited in Gikandi & Morrow, 2016: 155).

Practice and process

16 students participating in the course were continuing graduate professionals in education and the teacher was also a key participant and co-researcher in the study. During the course, asynchronous discussion forums allowed for formative peer-to-peer feedback on conceptual understandings, developing thinking and work-in-progress, and students' polished artefacts (Gikandi & Morrow, 2016: 160). The authors note that interactions took place between the students, and between the students and teacher, prompting the sharing of perspectives and the negotiation of meanings in a manner which generated constructive responses to and from peers, resulting in formative feedback (Gikandi & Morrow, 2016: 160).

Value and outcomes

The authors sourced data from interviews with the students after the course, as well as via online observations, and archived online discourse. An initial key finding was that discussion regarding the meanings of learning goals and expected outcomes on the learning platform was effective in supporting formative peer-to-peer feedback. The space to do so stimulated students in monitoring the learning needs and understandings of their peers and therefore supported peers in providing feedback to each other. Moreover, it was found that the documentation and sharing of artefacts promoted additional formative peer-to-peer feedback and generated further meaningful interaction and reflection. Lastly, the authors found it evident that iterative peer-to-peer feedback helped develop a 'supportive learning community' through

which students developed 'reflective and self-regulated learning dispositions' (Gikandi & Morrow, 2016: 159-165, 167).

In this instance, whilst the peer-to-peer approach aligns with a shift towards more democratic and dialogical forms of education, the implementation of peer-to-peer feedback was primarily motivated by its effectiveness as a pedagogical strategy that could support achievement of the programme goals (Gikandi & Morrow, 2016: 156). Although it may be argued that focusing on outcomes limits the transformational potential of such partnership, the approach seems to have nonetheless supported a form of community-fostered learning; 'constructed and negotiated in real time by the contributions of those engaged in the learning process' (Cormier, 2008: 1).

4.3.2 Co-developing Assessment Activities

A further way of partnering with students in the assessment process is through the co-development of assessment criteria and activities (Tiew, 2010; El-Mowafy, 2014; Andrews, Brown & Mesher, 2018 as cited in Ní Bheoláin, Lowney & O' Riordain, 2020: 18). Notably, difficulty in understanding the vocabulary used in assessment criteria and in differentiating between various classifications has been identified as an issue and source of anxiety for both students and educators (Andrews, Brown & Mesher, 2018: 32). As an antidote to this, involving students in the development of assessment criteria, and providing opportunities for clarification, can support students in developing a sense of ownership over the assessment process and reduce the potential anxiety involved (Topping, 2009: 24-25). In practice, this could involve creating and responding to peers' quiz questions, suggesting criteria for assessing fellow students, or co-developing assessment *for* learning tools, such as assessment glossaries (Ní Bheoláin, Lowney & O' Riordain, 2020: 18-20).

Similarly, students may partner with educators in collaborative grading to stimulate learning by 'performing' their understanding via assessment of their peers' work (Blythe

et al., 1998 as cited in Cooper, 2017: 73). Notably, this has been identified as a participatory process which can encourage closer engagement between students' academic work and associated professional practices (Cooper, 2017: 62). The following vignette outlines an example of collaborative grading as part of co-creation *in* the curriculum, illustrating assessment *of* and *as* learning.

4.3.2.1 Vignette 6: Collaborative Assessment of Students' Placement Learning at the University of Plymouth, UK

Context and theoretical perspectives

This study explored a summative collaborative assessment process that was implemented to assess a professional practice module on a Youth & Community Work bachelor programme (Cooper, 2017: 62). The rationale for adopting a collaborative approach was grounded in wider calls for improvements in assessment and the low satisfaction with assessment rates from students. To address this, the authors stated an ambition to pursue the 'students-as-partners agenda' as 'a catalyst for change' (Cooper, 2017: 61-62). The authors also noted a desire to enable the agency of students to make judgements about their own learning and performance on placement, and to support the application of their learning within a community of practice (Cooper, 2017: 63).

Practice and process

As part of their placement, students were required to plan, deliver, and evaluate a six-week youth work intervention. The assessment focused on this process and sought to assess the quality of students' sense-making and participation within a 'community of practice' (Cooper, 2017: 63). The collaborative grading process consisted of a series of meetings between the participating stakeholders. The first meeting concerned the grading criteria, which had been generated by both students and educators in a

pre-placement workshop. Following this, the students discussed their placement project, detailing their approach to needs assessment and their overall aims and objectives. Subsequently, a 'professional discussion' about the 'quality' of the students' practice took place, where the educators asked prompting and 'generative' questions to stimulate 'macro-level dialogue' (Cooper, 2017: 63). This process supported the students in demonstrating their sense-making skills in a way that went beyond focusing on the micro-level practices of what they did, rather focusing on what they might do in the future. Students, educators, and supervisors then independently decided on and declared a mark using the co-developed marking criteria, before a negotiation between the three took place to decide on the final mark (Cooper, 2017: 63).

Value and outcomes

The authors acknowledge that there is a degree of tension that can arise in collaborative assessment, stemming from the shift in power embedded and the 'giving up' of control by educators, which can be of concern to some (Cousin & Deepwell, 2005; Tan, 2008 as cited in Cooper, 2017: 63). However, in this case, despite the subjective interpretability of the assessment criteria to the stakeholders involved, the authors note that there was a sufficient level of consistency between the grades awarded across three years of collaborative assessment (Cooper, 2017: 63).

Additional findings regarding the experience of collaborative assessment for the students involved were discovered via semi-structured interviews. Firstly, given the level of exposure that comes with collaborative multi-stakeholder assessment in comparison to other forms of assessment, students referred to a degree of anxiety that came with this exposure. The collaborative approach was particularly daunting for some students who were less confident in articulating thoughts, compared to others who enjoyed the process and found it 'much more authentic' than conventional models of assessment (Cooper, 2017: 74). However, the collaboration was generally

> seen as 'a deeper approach to learning' and as a positive learning experience which fostered reflection and active critical thinking (Cooper, 2017: 73).

Interestingly, this case study illustrates a more dialogical and negotiated form of partnership compared to previous vignettes, aligning with a Freirean emphasis on the value of learning and transformation through combining of action and reflection (Freire, 2005: 48-53). However, whilst the new roles embedded in partnership can lead to positively transformed student and educator identities (Peters & Mathias, 2018: 64), this account highlights that those engaging in partnership must recognise that students are not a homogenous group, and that the inclusivity of practices must be considered. In this case, preferred learning approaches may have varied depending on various factors, such as a students' level of development (Cooper, 2017: 73). Notably, had the student-educator dialogue been initiated earlier, then a recognition of such factors could have potentially informed the structure of the partnership practice.

4.4 Section Review

Importantly, co-developing assessment can empower students and give them agency and ownership in a manner which is authentic and meaningful (Ní Bheoláin, Lowney & O' Riordain, 2020: 22). Beyond the simple assessment *of* learning, partnerships can also highlight the importance of assessment *for* learning and *as* learning, where student-educator interaction and dialogue enable students to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their own and others' work (National Forum, 2017: 2). Partnering with students in this manner not only embodies shared reflection and a more dialogical form of education, but can also be a powerful process that supports learning, critical thinking, reflection, and self-regulated learning dispositions (Gikandi & Morrow, 2016; Cooper, 2017; Ní Bheoláin, Lowney & O' Riordain, 2020: 22).

However, the accountability agenda and its focus on standardisation, conformity and comparison represents a challenge to the co-development of assessment. Whilst

institutional KPIs prioritise the collection and dissemination of quantifiable information and the achievement of specific outcomes, partnership and co-creation emphasise the value of creative processes that can result in unexpected outcomes (Healey, Flint, & Harrington 2014: 58). As is also the case with co-creation generally, these competing agendas mean that some educators may be concerned about trying new, more participatory assessment methods due to a perceived misalignment with the processes involved and external moderation (Orr et al., 2012: 15). Interestingly, whilst stimulating learning and testing achievement are interdependent, they are often experienced as being at odds with each other (Price et al. 2011 as cited in Cooper, 2017: 62).

Lastly, the practices here illustrate how assessment partnership can be of value to students, educators and the learning process and environment, even within the confines of accountability agendas. However, a Freirean approach would perhaps encourage deeper critical curiosity; collectively questioning what and why conventional assessment techniques are required and holding our traditions and assumptions up for question (Peters & Mathias, 2018: 63).

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

Building on the vignettes and analysis presented in the last chapter, I now critically explore the meaning and implications of my findings for my research questions and outline my conclusions. I also supplement my findings with wider insights from the literature to support the implications of my findings for practice.

5.1 RQ1 Discussion: 'What theories and concepts shape contemporary CCWSAP?'

Firstly, whilst it is evidently challenging to apply a consistent theoretical framework to CCWSAP given the diversity of contexts and practices involved, the models presented in chapter three provided a rudimentary framework with which to classify and

understand partnership practices (Healey, Flint & Harrington, 2014: 25; Bovill & Woolmer, 2019: 409). As described, where students may only have been recipients of a 'dictated curriculum' and done the minimum to drift through their education, the literature highlights that students may be invited to engage in co-creation - both *in* or *of* curricula - as 'representatives', 'consultants', 'co-researchers' and/or 'pedagogical co-designers' (Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten, 2014: 9; Bovill et al., 2016: 199). Moreover, this can take place across a spectrum of participatory levels; from within 'prescribed areas' of the curriculum all the way through to fully 'negotiated' curricula (Bovill & Bulley, 2011: 5; Bovill & Woolmer, 2019: 409).

Yet, whilst such terminology may help guide those wishing to engage in partnership, it is evident that co-creation often involves stepping out of traditional roles to engage in a process which can evolve in unpredictable, 'rhizomatic' ways with a level of risk and uncertainty for those involved (Cormier, 2012: 1). Given that this can be 'a challenge both to imagine and to do' (Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten, 2014: 9), it has been argued that how we label and understand the different possible forms of CCWSAP matters less than the principles that support partnership (Woolmer, 2016: 263). As an implication for practice, the literature communicates that those involved in collaboration should work together to create a shared purpose. Practice may be grounded in community-fostering principles such as respect, reciprocity, and shared-responsibility (Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten, 2014: 2), or defined by those engaged in collaborative processes locally (Healey, Flint & Harrington, 2014: 57).

Notably, as illustrated in the examples of practice explored, CCWSAP and the principles chosen to underpin it can be motivated and shaped by a range of theoretical rationales. Some educators may pursue a partnership as a means to enhance teaching and learning (e.g., vignette 1; Duda & Danielson, 2018: 41). Others may be catalysed by the positive outcomes of partnership evidenced and documented in scholarly literature (e.g., vignette 5; Snelling et al., 2019: 63). Some may also initiate partnership because of external pressures, such as institutional priorities or wider changes in the higher education landscape (Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten, 2014: 123). However, the most common

motivation underpinning the practices explored in this dissertation was explicitly associated with beliefs in the importance of creating more democratic, engaging, and transformative forms of teaching and learning (e.g., vignettes 1-4, 6). Yet, the vignettes arguably differ in the extent to which they truly enact a Freirean partnership approach and challenge traditional hierarchies in higher education. As discussed earlier, it has been stated that partnership practice is often appropriated under a banner of 'student engagement', rather than stemming from personal, philosophical, and political commitments to alter the why and how of learning (Peters & Mathias, 2018: 54, 64). It is therefore understandable that some observe Freirean approaches to partnership and the students-as-consumers narrative as two competing agendas, and that the former is vulnerable to dilution and 'domestication' by the latter (Woolmer, 2016: 13; Peters & Mathias, 2018: 55). Whilst the narrative of students-as-consumers may justify student engagement and improvement of the student experience of education, the transformational potential of partnership is defined by the extent to which partnership between students and educators is truly valued (Matthews, Cook-Sather & Healey, 2018: 25). Moreover, if partnership is to be understood more as 'an ethos' than an activity (Healey, Flint & Harrington, 2014: 55), then Freire arguably offers a stronger collective guiding vision to inspire and guide partnership. Notably however, the vignettes illustrate that CCWSAP can be valuable to students, educators, and their relationship, regardless of whether partnership is explicitly motivated by an agenda to affect collective change beyond such local contexts.

5.2 RQ2 Discussion: 'What recent case studies exemplify the practice of CCWSAP?'

As per RQ2, I have gathered, analysed, and described illustrative case study vignettes of how CCWSAP has recently taken place across various institutional and disciplinary settings. The inductive approach used in this research uncovered a range of forms of CCWSAP. These included the co-design of entire courses, where students play an active role in negotiating the scope and plan of learning; the co-production of learning

resources, where students are situated as valuable knowledge producers; and the co-development of assessment, where students are empowered to engage in assessment activities to support themselves and their peers. Importantly, the range of examples explored is intended to support individuals and organisations in making decisions based on their particular needs, contextual realities and objectives.

However, upon review, the vignettes support the observation that co-creation activity currently 'appears to be centred in particular countries' such as 'the UK, USA, Canada, Scandinavia and Australia' (Bovill & Woolmer, 2019: 409). Readers should therefore be cautious when considering the applicability and usefulness of this dissertation outside of these educational systems.

It is also noticeable that most of the examples explored were initiated by educators, who were in control at least during the early stages of partnership, and that the practices mainly took place on a relatively small scale. In turn, the extent to which the vignettes illustrate the full possibilities of CCWSAP is limited. Indeed, although each example is predicated on a level of power-sharing, it is arguable that none fully exemplify the theorised potential of partnership; as an act of resistance to the traditional student-educator hierarchy with truly transformational implications for students, educators and beyond (Matthews, Cook-Sather & Healey, 2018: 30). However, as discovered, partnerships often rely on the passion and initiative of individual educators who work within the constraints of educational realities. Whilst examples such as the C3 initiative (vignette 1) or the Peer Educator Program (vignette 2) demonstrate how some educators manage to integrate partnership practices more systematically across an institution, partnerships seem to often be limited to individual classrooms or courses, as illustrated across the other vignettes. An implication for practice would therefore seem to be that partnership advocates should be patient with regards to the wider adoption and development of such practices. Considering this, the vignettes should not be understood as singular exemplifications of CCWSAP, but as collectively representing particular points across a spectra of possible partnership motivations, practices and journeys.

5.3 RQ3 Discussion: 'What are the main challenges to CCWSAP?'

Markedly, the examples explored in this dissertation have primarily exemplified *successful* instances of partnership initiation. Whilst this may be because it is often only successful work that is shared and published, we can sometimes learn more from instances of failure to achieve what was intended or hoped for. Rather than hide the examples of where partnership did not happen, it would be useful to explore what happened in such instances and why this was the case. Indeed, we might reconsider what 'failure' means in such a context. If, for instance, an educator fails to see the reasoning behind engaging in partnership then this can trigger an important discussion, albeit 'difficult', about teaching and learning (Healey, Flint & Harrington, 2014: 60). Given the lack of emphasis on difficulties and challenges in the vignettes explored in this dissertation, it may be argued that the accounts suffer from the positive reporting bias evident in wider academic research on partnership practices (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017: 15). Therefore, whilst this section expands on some of the challenges to co-creation already introduced in the previous chapters, it also weaves in some of the wider literature on challenges, which were uncovered during the literature review and analysis phase. Additionally, although the growing diversity of partnership contexts and practices means that general recommendations are not always suitable (Dollinger, Lodge & Coates, 2019: 222), this section also explores some implications for practice.

5.3.1 Navigating Institutional Norms, Practices and Structures

As explored, educators in some institutional contexts may perceive certain structures, practices, and norms as in tension with co-creative partnership (Bovill, et al., 2016: 6). For example, as described in chapter three, whilst partnership and co-creation emphasise the value of creative processes that can result in unexpected outcomes, accountability regimes prioritise the collection and dissemination of quantifiable information and the achievement of specific outcomes. Moreover, in situations where the marketized nature of higher education systems is particularly apparent, the 'expansion of numbers on the cheap has dramatically diluted the level of attention to individual students that most

universities can provide' (Collini, 2012: 179 as cited in Bovill, 2013: 6), in turn placing limitations on what can be expected of already overstretched educators regarding new approaches to teaching and learning. In such cases it has been argued that individuals and institutions aspiring to implement partnership practices should seek to justify such activity through other influential discourses (Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten, 2014: 138-139; Healey, Flint, & Harrington 2014: 58), such as those relating to university strategies and policies, for example (e.g. University of Edinburgh, 2022; University of Queensland, 2022; McMaster University, 2022). Moreover, in contexts where partnership is countercultural, it may be more manageable and less risky to start small and pursue co-creation in individual classrooms, such as in vignettes 3 and 4, rather than trying to establish such an approach across an entire institution, discipline, or course, such as in vignettes 1 and 2 (Delpish et al, 2010 as cited in Bovill et al., 2016: 6).

5.3.2 Managing Resistance to CCWSAP

Resistance at an institutional, educator or student level may also occur for other reasons, and it should not be assumed that all participants will embrace co-creative practices. Challenging traditional power structures and dynamics can be daunting for those involved and students usually enter higher education from schools where high stakes testing and the transmission model of teaching are the norm, rather than partnership, shared-inquiry, and co-creation (Cook-Satther, Bovill & Felten, 2014: 17, 133). Moreover, practices such as CCWSAP share similarities with 'threshold concepts'; conceptual gateways that lead to a transformed view of something in a way that is often 'irreversible' (Cook-Sather, 2014: 177). Yet, at the beginning of such a journey, the first steps towards co-creation often involve entering a liminal space where there is a level of risk and uncertainty for those involved. Partnership is not easy, and the challenges of reworking roles, responsibilities, and educational discourses hold possibilities for resistance and failure (Ntem & Cook-Sather, 2018; Goff & Knorr, 2018). However, the process of addressing such challenges can be rewarding and critical as spaces of partnership are defined (Storey, Eckel-Sparrow & Ransdell, 2021: 98). Indeed, rather

than simply problematising resistance, it should be accepted as a normal part of the sense-making processes that allow for collective consideration of the complexity of genuine partnerships (Matthews, 2019: 1). Moreover, drawing on Freire's work, this can be understood as a natural aspect of education as dialogical and action-based problem solving (Freire, 1997: 91 as cited in Peters & Mathias, 2018: 56-57).

However, educators and institutions may instead manage resistance by offering rewards for participation, as illustrated in some of the vignettes. Indeed, during literature analysis it was found that students may engage in partnership for a range of rewards, including financial remuneration (Duda & Danielson 2018: 41), course credit (Goff & Knorr, 2018: 115), formal recognition via a certificate of participation for students' CVs (Snelling et al., 2019: 67), as well as purely on a voluntary basis (Gkogkidis & Dacre, 2020: 5). However, partnerships that follow a transactional model are governed by contractual relationships which require students to accept a predefined arrangement. Whilst this form of partnership circumvents issues of resistance and the messiness of authentic and meaningful personal interaction (see Felten, 2017 as cited in Peters & Mathias, 2018: 58), it can also de-emphasise the values of openness and trust and the human element central to partnership (Peters & Mathias, 2018: 62). Rather than basing partnership on transactional relationships, such practice should involve working together towards commonly agreed purposes that can lead to enhancements for all involved (Peters & Mathias, 2018: 58). An implication for practice would therefore be to invite participation rather than to 'hire' it or make it compulsory.

5.3.3 Ensuring Inclusivity in Co-creative Approaches

Those aspiring to integrate partnership practices must also be aware of the issues of inclusivity that have been documented in the wider literature. Whilst this was not highlighted as an issue in any of the vignettes described, students are not a homogenous group and there must be a balance between selection and inclusion, particularly of underrepresented students and faculty members. Given that educators typically initiate partnership practices and invite students to join, there will likely be a level of difficulty

in determining which students are capable of taking part and contributing and whom to invite. As seen in vignettes 3-6, educators can structure co-creation in a manner which includes all students in a particular course. Educators may also intentionally choose students who are particularly disengaged as a means to increase their engagement (e.g., Snelling et al., 2019: 63), or invite 'those who have often been excluded from, or underrepresented in, higher education communities' (Bovill et al., 2016: 7). In turn, giving thought to who is invited and who is not decreases the risk of only 'super-engaged' students dominating partnership practices (Bryson, 2014 as cited in Woolmer, 2016: 37).

Moreover, different students bring different perspectives, capacities, and assets to co-creative practice, which can enable the development of thoughtful and informed pedagogical practices to suit a diversity of students and educators. Whilst partnership with an entire class of students may offer a solution to some of the challenges of selecting students to collaborate, in instances where selection must take place, it would seem critical that selection criteria are transparent so as to establish and maintain trust. Those initiating partnership should consider whose voices are heard and whose are not, and what this implies for co-creative projects, the institutions they are a part of, and the participants involved (Bovill et al., 2016: 7-8).

5.4 RQ4 Discussion: 'What is the value of CCWSAP?'

Firstly, consideration of the value of CCWSAP must acknowledge the intent behind the foundational and influential scholarship of writers such as Dewey, Freire, and Giroux; to think and act differently with regard to the practice and purpose of teaching and learning and to address the limitations and restrictive nature of traditionally transmissive modes of education. A Freirean understanding of partnership highlights the value of such education as a transformative experience intended to support the growth of all who take part. The value lies in the salvation from banking models of learning and teaching which no longer understand education 'as formative, but simply as training' and 'limit education to technological practice' (Freire, 2015: 4). Such partnership emphasises the

value of learning *with* each other, tearing down the barrier between educator and student, and education as 'the practice of freedom' (Freire, 2005: 80; hooks, 1994: 207).

However, as discussed in chapter three and illustrated in the vignettes, how individuals conceive of value is subjective and can be influenced by different agendas. Therefore, a key implication for practice, in terms of understanding and evidencing 'value', is that we should look to capture the subjective outcomes and transformations which occur for those engaging in the process of CCWSAP. Indeed, a wider implication of my research is that quality assurance mechanisms and accountability measures should be more flexible and open to partnership practices justified via indicators of value on a local level.

Moreover, whilst the C3 initiative study in vignette 1 explored the longer-term impacts of co-creation on the students, educators and institution involved, the other cases studies only explored value and outcomes during or just after the implementation of practice. This research would be stronger had more examples of practice been examined which also explored the longitudinal impacts for different stakeholders, both of short and longer-term initiatives.

Nonetheless, findings from the vignettes align with the broader scholarship, which contains numerous case studies and research projects where the many interrelated 'benefits' of partnership practices such as CCWSAP are identified for different educational stakeholders. These include deepened understandings of learning and learning processes, increased learning engagement, enhanced motivation and enthusiasm, and stronger student-educator relationships (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017; Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014; Healey, Flint & Harrington, 2014; Woolmer, 2016; Bovill et al., 2016). Moreover, as illustrated across the vignettes, students engaged in co-creation can become more critical - more intellectually engaged and capable and to support their own and their peers' learning, as well as that of future students. In turn, this supports students in becoming more responsible for, and active in, their learning. Students shift from passive to active and 'from merely doing to developing a

meta-cognitive awareness about what is being done' (Bovill, Cook-Sather, & Felten, 2011: 134), which can be of value to all involved in the learning process. Mutual understandings of objectives, theory, and the development processes of curricula support students in learning more effectively and their interrogation and comprehension of how, why and what they are learning in a given context.

For some educators, such activity can also re-energise teaching and support engagement outcomes, such as transformed thinking and practice regarding teaching, which can then snowball into further collaborative ventures and potential beneficial outcomes for more students (Cook-Sather, 2013: 556 as cited in Healey, Flint & Harrington, 2014: 50). For others, co-creation can be valuable insofar as it is a manifestation of their commitment to ideas from the field of critical pedagogy. Indeed, as identified across the research projects, partnership practices have significant potential to positively shift power dynamics, enhancing the classroom experience and more fruitful and accessible student-educator relationships to remedy the lack of voice and agency associated with traditional transmissive teaching techniques. From a Freirean perspective, this is the first step of an act to support students in becoming 'active, democratic citizens, capable and confident of transforming their world' (Peters, 2018: 187 as cited in Peters & Mathias, 2018: 64). Given this, there remains a need to discover and explore the full potential of partnerships working towards this end.

5.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this research has been to critically examine the theories shaping contemporary CCWSAP, to explore illustrative examples of associated practices, and to understand the challenges of such activity, and its value for those involved and beyond. This focus is informed by the needs of an organisation looking to initiate partnership, and it has therefore been written as an introduction to what research on CCWSAP communicates across the literature, to support the translation of research into practice. Rather than simply collecting generalisable data, the aim has been to provide

information which might help to develop and support understandings of CCWSAP and inspire readers to be open to the opportunities of partnership.

My findings indicate that CCWSAP can be described using a range of theories and concepts, which guide and support the comprehension, classification, and application of practices. This was explored through a range of examples of CCWSAP across various institutional and disciplinary contexts and practice types, including the co-design of entire courses, the co-production of learning resources, and the co-development of assessment. Alongside illustrating a range of activities and modified student and educator roles, the vignettes also introduce some of the different reasons why partnership is pursued. Regarding this point more broadly, my research makes a distinction between two competing discourses driving partnership: the narrative of students-as-consumers, which bases partnership on the principle of enhancing education as a service; and a Freirean approach to partnership promoting collective transformation underpinned by principles of democracy and social justice. Whilst my research finds that many may be motivated by the idea of creating a more democratic classroom, I argue that there remains a need to explore the transformational potential of partnership, for students, educators, and society more broadly.

Nonetheless, in exploring the question of value regarding CCWSAP, I have sought to discover further reasons why such practice should be considered, particularly by those not already motivated by the worthiness of democratising the student-educator dynamic. In turn, I have explored the various interrelated outcomes for students, educators, their relationship, and the learning process, across a range of partnership practices as well as beyond. This has highlighted how co-creation can be a transformative process for those involved because of - as well as despite - how it often goes against the grain of educational norms and practices. However, 'partnership is no panacea' (Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten, 2014: 132) and my research and observations from wider literature highlight some key challenges to CCWSAP, including the navigation of institutional norms, structures, and accountability regimes; managing stakeholder resistance; and ensuring that practices are inclusive. Yet, the process of addressing such challenges can

be rewarding and critical as spaces of partnership are defined in local contexts. To guide this, research highlights the value of starting small, being patient, and ensuring that partnership is based on a shared vision. Further implications for practice include that partnership should aim to be invited rather than transactional, involve participatory evaluation, and that the inclusivity of practices be carefully considered.

Without the time and resource limitations of a dissertation, this research could have included a wider range of practices and examples across a broader and more diverse set of international settings. It would have also been beneficial to explore more radical forms of partnership, as well as examples of CCWSAP where challenges and failures were more deeply explored. Moreover, whilst first-hand accounts of practice were explored, the research would have been richer had there been added qualitative elements such as interviews to fully elicit the experiences and narratives of those involved across the case studies in question. It would also have been interesting to more deeply explore the longitudinal implications of the partnership practices described and to capture the experiences of how partnerships developed and matured over time. Notably, such exploration and analysis could be of merit for further research.

In conclusion, there is much to be gained from co-creating curricula with students-as-partners, for those engaged in the learning process and beyond. Importantly, reimagining the curriculum as something dynamic, shared, and emergent has the potential to significantly reframe the who, what, why, and how of learning. Given this, I argue that there remains a need to discover and explore the full potential of partnership.

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