

ARTICLE

From Partnership to Self-Authorship: The Benefits of Co-Creation of the Curriculum

Tanya Lubicz-Nawrocka, Moray House Graduate School of Education, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK

Contact: s1475432@sms.ed.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

This research explores the benefits of co-creation of the curriculum, which is seen as one form of student-staff partnership in learning and teaching in which each partner has a voice and a stake in curriculum development. This qualitative research analyses participants' perceptions of co-creation of the curriculum in the Scottish higher-education sector. Initial findings show that some staff and students participating in co-creation of the curriculum perceive it to benefit them by (a) fostering the development of shared responsibility, respect, and trust; (b) creating the conditions for partners to learn from each other within a collaborative learning community; and (c) enhancing individuals' satisfaction and personal development within higher education. Using Barnett's conceptualisation of supercomplexity and Baxter Magolda's three-pronged view of self-authorship, the author suggests that critical and democratic engagement in co-creation of the curriculum can develop the self-authorship of both students and staff members, including their cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal abilities which help them adapt to an ever-changing, supercomplex world.

KEYWORDS

partnership, co-creation of the curriculum, negotiated curriculum, supercomplexity, self-authorship

INTRODUCTION

This paper shares initial research findings focusing on the benefits of the co-creation of curriculum initiatives in the Scottish higher-education sector. It seeks to add to the students-as-partners literature by examining trends in students' and staff members' perspectives across a variety of related projects within Scotland. The majority of this literature includes staff members' perspectives relating to small-scale, extracurricular projects that focus on reporting the benefits for students (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). In this paper, I value equally staff members' and students' views whilst seeking to understand

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the nuances of their perceptions of the benefits of co-creation of the curriculum for both student and staff participants. Since the literature on student engagement and co-creation of the curriculum has been criticised for being undertheorised (Macfarlane & Tomlinson, 2017), this paper also seeks to understand connections between the benefits of co-creation and theoretical work on the development of self-authorship. Self-authorship tends to focus on students' personal and professional development which "is simultaneously a cognitive (how one makes meaning of knowledge), interpersonal (how one views oneself in relationship to others), and intrapersonal (how one perceives one's sense of identity) matter" (Baxter Magolda, 1999, p. 10).

Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2017) use the following definition: "Students as Partners' (SaP) embraces students and staff (including academic/faculty and professional staff) working together on teaching and learning in higher education" (p. 1). Like Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten (2014), the research presented here is based on the premise that the relationship of staff working with students as partners should be reciprocal and based on respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility. I tend to use SaP terminology to denote partnerships in which students and staff work together to improve various areas of the wider student learning experience at university, both inside and outside the classroom. I use the term "co-creation of the curriculum" to specify activities in which students and staff collaborate and negotiate curriculum development decisions to improve learning and teaching. Based on the work of Barnett and Coate (2004) and Lattuca and Stark (2009), I take a broad view of the higher-education curriculum as an active process that includes both course-level and programme-level content, structure, delivery, assessment, and learning outcomes achieved through interaction and collaboration between students and teachers.

Co-creation of the curriculum promotes an open dialogue about meaningful best practices in learning and teaching whilst redistributing power in the classroom and giving students more opportunities, as well as added responsibilities, to take an active part in pedagogical decision-making (Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard, & Moore-Cherry, 2016). Students and staff members participating in co-creation of the curriculum can, and should, contribute different things to a partnership since their roles, expertise, responsibilities, and status are necessarily different (Cook-Sather et al., 2014). Despite ever-growing student numbers with the massification of higher education (Barnett & Coate, 2004; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991), efforts to engage in projects co-creating the curriculum are important since they treat learners as individuals, engage students in their own learning experiences, and tailor the curriculum to the needs of each student cohort. Crosling, Thomas, and Heagney (2008) and Kuh (2010) have previously highlighted these as important factors that promote student success and retention.

THE EMERGENCE OF CO-CREATION OF THE CURRICULUM

The idea of students co-creating the higher-education curriculum has become popular because it is student-centred and promotes more active engagement of both students and staff in the learning and teaching experience. Over the past thirty years, the concepts of student-centred learning (Cevero & Wilson, 2001; Entwistle, 1992), self-directed and autonomous learning (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991), and student involvement and engagement (Astin, 1984; Kuh, 2010; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005) have gained importance within the higher education and adult learning sectors. In particular, student involvement and engagement can contribute to student empowerment and agency (Baxter

Magolda, 1999; Bovill, Bulley, & Morss, 2011; Johansson & Felten, 2014) and success in higher education (Kuh, 2008, 2010; Kuh et al., 2005). Co-creation of the curriculum is a practice that has grown in prominence in the last decade. It draws on and extends these pedagogies to promote engagement and develop students' and staff members' shared ownership and responsibility within learning and teaching processes (Cook-Sather et al., 2014).

Although some educators place the onus on students to engage with learning, I, like Kuh (2009, 2010) and Trowler (2010), believe that student engagement should be a mutual responsibility of both students and staff. This is what happens during co-creation of the curriculum since teachers facilitate ways for students to take an active part in their own learning, and students often take up these opportunities to engage in deeper learning experiences. Student engagement is embedded in the Scottish higher-education sector through the instigation of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which sets the expectation that student representatives will work in partnership with staff to enhance learning and teaching and to participate in decision-making at all levels of university governance (QAA, 2012; sparqs, 2015). In my research, I examine how co-creation of the curriculum extends the notion of student engagement beyond student representation to facilitate collaborative curriculum development in various Scottish universities.

Although it is popular in theory, co-creation of the curriculum is not yet widespread in practice since it can challenge entrenched power dynamics as well as institutional structures and processes in the higher-education sector (Bovill et al., 2016; Brew, 2007; Levy, Little, & Whelan, 2011; Lubicz-Nawrocka, 2017). For instance, Bovill et al. (2016) state that challenges include "perceived personal and institutional risks of redefining traditional staff-student roles and relationships" (p. 199) as well as attempts to change institutional structures, practices, and norms. Since this literature focuses on challenges to co-creation of the curriculum, this research paper focuses on the benefits.

METHODOLOGY

In my research, I aim to provide both an explanatory account of co-creation of the curriculum and an interpretivist account of how participants work towards embedding partnership in the Scottish higher-education sector. To learn about the nuanced nature of students' and staff members' conceptualisations of these complex topics, I employed qualitative research methods. I identified individual staff members at Scottish universities (through their publications, conference presentations, or word of mouth) who facilitate projects co-creating the curriculum with their students. Bovill et al. (2016) classify student roles as co-creators as including consultants, co-researchers, pedagogical co-designers, and representatives. Identified instances of co-creation of the curriculum varied considerably along variables in (a) the number of students involved, from selected student(s) to the whole class; (b) the enrolment status of student partners as past, current, future, or unenrolled students in the relevant course or programme; and (c) the formally designated role of the student partners as consultants, co-researchers, or pedagogical designers. I did not identify any instances of co-creation of the curriculum at the course or programme level that included formally elected or selected student representatives (who are supported by both their student union and university). The individuals identified through criterion sampling included 10 staff members from four Scottish universities who engaged in one or more co-creation-of-the curriculum projects (see Table 1 with each project specified). I used

snowball sampling with these staff members to identify a sample of 14 students who had participated in the identified co-creation projects. Ten of these students agreed to participate in interviews to contribute to this research (see Table 2).

Table 1: Staff participants

Participant	Variables in Each Instance of Co-Creation of the Curriculum	University	Subject Area	Stage in Career	Length of Co-Creation Involvement	Gender
A1	whole class, current students, pedagogical co-designers	University 1 (research-led)	Education	Later career/experienced	1 year	M
A2	1) whole class, current students, pedagogical co-designers; 2) select students, previous students, co-researchers; 3) select students, not on course, consultants	University 2 (teaching-led)	Environmental Biology	Later career/experienced	5 years	M
A3	select students, not on course, consultants	University 2 (teaching-led)	Education	Early career	1 year	F
A4	1) whole class, current students, pedagogical co-designers; 2) select students, previous students, pedagogical co-designers and co-researchers	University 1 (research-led)	Medicine	Later career/experienced	7 years	M
A5	1) whole class, current students, pedagogical co-designers; 2) select students, current students, co-researchers	University 1 (research-led)	Geosciences	Mid-career	4 years	M
A6	whole class, current students, pedagogical co-designers	University 3 (research-led)	Service Learning	Later career/experienced	10 years	F

A7	whole class, current students, pedagogical co-designers	University 4 (teaching-led)	Psychology	Later career/experienced	20 years	F
A8	whole class, current students, pedagogical co-designers	University 1 (research-led)	Politics	Mid-career	1 year	F
A9	whole class, current students, pedagogical co-designers	University 1 (research-led)	Politics	Later career/experienced	1 year	F
A10	1) whole-class, current students, pedagogical co-designers; 2) select students, past students, co-researchers	University 1 (research-led)	Veterinary Science	Later career/experienced	5 years	F

Table 2: Student participants

Participant	Variables in Each Instance of Co-Creation of the Curriculum	University	Subject Area	Stage in Student Journey (At Time of Interview)	Mature Student?	Gender
B1	1) whole class, current students, pedagogical co-designers; 2) select students, previous students, pedagogical co-designers and co-researchers	University 1 (research-led)	Medicine	4th-year undergraduate	No	M
B2	1) whole class, current students, pedagogical co-designers; 2) select students, previous students, co-researchers	University 2 (teaching-led)	Marine Biology	Graduated two years ago	No	F
B3	select students, not on course, consultants	University 2 (teaching-led)	Career Guidance	Masters student	Yes	F

B4	select students, not on course, consultants	University 2 (teaching-led)	Psychology and Sociology	Masters student	Yes	F
B5	whole-class, current students, pedagogical co-designers	University 1 (research-led)	Geosciences	4th-year undergraduate	No	F
B6	whole-class, current students, pedagogical co-designers	University 1 (research-led)	Geosciences	4th-year undergraduate	No	F
B7	whole-class, current students, pedagogical co-designers	University 1 (research-led)	Psychology and Environmental Studies	3rd- year undergraduate	No	F
B8	whole-class, current students, pedagogical co-designers	University 1 (research-led)	Geosciences	4th-year undergraduate	No	M
B9	select students, previous students, pedagogical co-designers	University 3 (research-led)	Geosciences	3rd-year undergraduate	No	M
B10	whole-class, current students, pedagogical co-designers	University 1 (research-led)	Philosophy	4th-year undergraduate	No	F

The identified instances of co-creation of the curriculum within the Scottish higher-education sector include co-design of grading criteria and/or assessment, peer teaching embossed in graded courses, co-development of educational resources, students serving as peer reviewers and as learning and teaching consultants to staff, and student-led projects as a course unfolds. For example, students developed their own multiple-choice exam questions to be used in veterinary exams, and fourth-year medical students prepared and taught a class for second-year students. Another example included experienced students, who had excelled in a course, working with staff members to design educational materials that would be used by a future cohort of students. There were yet other examples where students worked in partnership with staff to develop and implement their own service-learning or teaching projects.

Level 1 ethical clearance was approved by the University of Edinburgh. The aims of the study and the voluntary nature of participation in the research were made transparent through participant information sheets and consent forms. The interviews with staff lasted between 45 and 157 minutes, whereas the interviews with students lasted between 35 and 75 minutes. It was apparent from the staff response rate and the average interview length that they were proud to share their innovative work, and many felt flattered that I showed

interest in their innovative projects to co-create the curriculum with students. The student participants were all happy to have had the opportunity to co-create the curriculum with staff, and many saw participating in an interview as a way of giving back to the teacher whilst also advancing academic knowledge in this area.

During the semi-structured interviews with staff and student practitioners of co-creation of the curriculum, I explored various topics including participants' experiences of working in partnership and their beliefs concerning the benefits of co-creation of the curriculum. I learnt about their perceptions of effective teaching and student engagement, how they conceptualise co-creation of the curriculum, why they engage in it, and what purposes of higher education they believe it will achieve. With permission from each participant, I audio-recorded the interviews and produced transcripts of the extensive qualitative data. These were then analysed using elements of a grounded-theory approach, using NVivo and involving the constant comparative method to identify themes emerging from the data.

RESULTS

Three main themes emerged from the results from students' and staff members' perceptions and reflections on the benefits of co-creation of the curriculum: (a) shared responsibility, respect, and trust; (b) learning from each other within a collaborative learning community; and (c) individual satisfaction and development. Each of these themes is presented below.

Shared responsibility, respect, and trust

Many participants shared their reflections on the changes that occur in the classroom when staff share responsibility with students and facilitate the creation of a learning environment based on respect and trust. Both staff and student participants highlighted that staff often take overall responsibility for the curriculum and choose to create spaces within the curriculum where they can work as partners. For instance, Student Participant 9 stated:

In terms of co-creation, I think of course the staff need to lead it because it is their job, they are paid for it, they know how to do it. But I think there is definitely an element for students to come in.

Similarly, Staff Participant 9 said:

It is a partnership but I think there has to be a respect for expertise whilst also the experts, if you like, respecting the new insights and fresh insights of looking at things that students can provide.

Both Student Participant 9 and Staff Participant 9 share views on how academic staff members can create spaces and show they value students' perspectives and new ideas to enhance the higher-education curriculum.

When staff begin to share responsibility with students whilst co-creating the curriculum, both staff and students can at first find this to be more challenging than traditional teaching methods. However, they often highlighted benefits of increased student engagement. Staff Participant 1 shared initial challenges in developing this engagement:

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A lot of it just goes back to making sure that we don't look like we are just being really lazy, "there you go, create your own curriculum. . . ." We do need to throw stuff back [to students] and help people understand that it's good for them to lead the engagement part as well.

Similarly, Student Participant 2 spoke about the staff member she worked with during co-creation of the curriculum:

I think it was a conscious decision on his part: the fact that he'd opened himself up for criticism created this environment where we felt comfortable. . . . I think being treated with respect in that way really gives students a kind of satisfaction from the course and know that their views are actually being listened to because they're being treated like adults. I think there's a sense of empowerment from it so you really leave feeling that you can make a difference in that your views are really relevant enough to change something like that.

This student shared her views on how staff facilitating co-creation of the curriculum can feel vulnerable to criticism when they share responsibility with students. However, she also suggested that she felt empowered to engage because staff had respected and trusted students' views about curriculum design.

This theme of respect and trust emerged strongly in the data. Many participants emphasised their view that practitioners of co-creation of the curriculum create an environment where respect and trust helps students feel safer when choosing to engage in learning activities. Staff Participant 9 said:

I think there has to be the opportunity to say slightly controversial things. For us, we've always said that it has to be within a context of respect. . . . It's about providing support and an enabling environment but also a challenging one because actually we're about taking your views and then looking at them around in 360°, imagining different perspectives. I would say that that's one part of the environment, and allowing people to say silly things without feeling that they have to crawl away.

Speaking about the experience of sharing responsibility, Student Participant 10 reflected:

I guess you feel more important. . . . Throughout the course we worked in those groups of four to create our learning portfolios, to create our reading lists, all these things. I've ended up being best friends with those people in my group, when I hadn't really formed many good friendships with people on my course until now, so it's been a great opportunity in that respect as well. It comes back to the classroom not just being a cold environment; it's a place where you're friends. It does make a difference. You're more comfortable and feel safer.

This student suggests that spending time to build respect and trust can facilitate a learning community that improves students' academic experience. This theme will be expanded in the next section.

Learning from each other within a collaborative learning community

Many participants shared the view that co-creation of the curriculum helps them foster a strong learning community that encourages the active engagement of all participants. For instance, when speaking of the aims of his co-creation of the curriculum project, Staff Participant 2 stated:

Collegiality is different than just working together, so I think collegiality is about creating, working together to reflect shared values and go beyond just your individual interests. . . . I think working with students has a prospect for radical collegiality because it's challenging the idea that students are not colleagues. . . . Clearly they're not peers in terms of subject expertise, but they should be peers in terms of teaching processes because students have much more expertise actually. They obviously have much more experience knowing what it's like to be a student in our classes than we do.

This staff participant shared how he creates a learning community by respecting students as peers and learning from their experiences. Staff Participant 7 expanded on this idea:

There's a symbiosis between us and things that are in the ether now that weren't there before, that's a kind of creating. . . . I think I probably could squeeze it down into creating learning materials, creating learning experiences, this idea of the whole being more than the sum of its parts: it's a dialogue between the lecturer and the student. The learning can be an emergent property of the expertise of the lecturer and the lived experience of the student, making content relevant, scaffolded, and tailored to student knowledge of the subject.

This participant shows that co-creation of the curriculum can foster active learning experiences for not only students but also staff members.

Many participants underscored that co-creation of the curriculum helps them bridge the gap between staff and students within a learning community in which staff and students learn from each other. By promoting a more inclusive curriculum-design process, staff reflected that their students reacted differently to their teaching. For instance, Staff Participant 8 stated:

We tried as much as possible to let them see the nuts and bolts of the process, and how these things kind of get devised. . . . I think it took a certain amount of trust on both of our parts, and the trust has paid off. . . . they have not only more of an appreciation of what it is you do, but also they have more of an appreciation of what they need to do to achieve the marks they need to achieve.

Furthermore, Staff Participant 9 learnt about the effect of teaching students about pedagogy:

For me, the thing that's come out [of the co-created course] that had never occurred to me before, which maybe shows how daft I am, was that showing your workings to students makes a huge difference. . . . [It] had never occurred to me to talk to students about basic pedagogic principles. Now it seems such a simple thing to have done which I had never done. Actually those couple of weeks on pedagogy had a transformational effect on students. . . . it really made them incredibly active and reflexive. I just thought, "I've been missing a trick for a couple of decades on that!"

The language and repetition that this participant uses suggests that engaging in a more collaborative and creative curriculum-design process can have a transformative effect for not only students but also for staff. Similarly, Staff Participant 10 said:

The more you engage students in activities like this, the more they empathise with the role that academics play. That comes back to my thing about bridging the gap between staff and students, bringing the communities closer together.

It was not only the staff members who noticed that co-creation of the curriculum provoked a change in the dynamic of teaching. Student Participant 4 stated:

The first time I did the project it was completely new and the staff were also learning at the same time. That was positive, I think, because it helped to know everyone was in the same boat. Even although they were the specialists in this area it was nice to know there wasn't an "us and them" divide.

Helping students understand curriculum design processes and including them in decision-making can help students engage more within their learning community with peers and staff.

Satisfaction and development for staff and students

Both staff and students reflected on their positive experiences of co-creation of the curriculum. Many staff participants in this study emphasised the positive effect of co-creation of the curriculum on their teaching, professional development, and job satisfaction. Staff Participant 4 stated,

There is a fantastic synergy and collaboration with the students who are doing the writing, and that's very rewarding for staff—striking up some intimate academic relationships.

Similarly, Staff Participant 7 explained:

You're being active in the process of the enterprise [of teaching] and the social relationship is more authentic. . . . It gives life meaning to both the student and the lecturer; it turns the enterprise into a meaningful and worthwhile one.

These two participants reflected on the exciting collaborative work with their students during co-creation of the curriculum, which was rewarding when they got to know their students professionally. Furthermore, as mentioned above, staff tend to learn more from

their students when participating in co-creation of the curriculum than they do from the feedback they receive in traditional courses. For instance, Staff Participant 6 stated:

It's made me more interested and excited about teaching, I think, being able to do this and to improve and develop my teaching.

Therefore, in addition to being a more enjoyable form of teaching for staff members, it can also help them in their professional development by working to enhance their teaching practices.

Students also compared co-creation of the curriculum with their experiences of more traditional teaching methods. Student Participant 4 stated,

One of the downsides to University is you do very much learn what you need to learn to pass exams. Same, I think, in the British education system in general, but when you are co-creating something in the curriculum you are immersed in it, you can't avoid learning things. I think that's a good way to learn for actually remembering things and getting a good grip on the knowledge and the theories. I think it's beneficial.

Similarly, Student Participant 10 reflected poignantly on the impact of co-creation of the curriculum:

Yeah, I was actually considering dropping out throughout last year so having this course to look forward to was the main reason why I stayed, really. . . . You feel like what you're learning is really relevant to your life rather than just something you can put in your short-term memory and forget about once the exam is over or an essay is over. . . . Everything I've learned [in this co-created class], that's for the rest of my life and I know that people will be benefiting from it in years to come.

These two students shared views that co-creation of the curriculum helped them learn more about their subjects in a way that facilitated their enjoyment of learning.

Furthermore, many students spoke about the personal and professional development that they gained through participation in co-creation of the curriculum. Student Participant 7 shared her thoughts:

I also learned a bit more about responsibility. I think having that close interaction, that close engagement with professors, you're held accountable for more. . . . I think there was less room for me to casually do it or just pass by, which in other classes that's easier to do if there's less accountability and trust that's made, that bond.

Student Participant 10 stated:

I think it taught me to challenge authority a bit more. . . . It meant that now, going into the workplace and the wider world, I know just because someone has a higher status than me. . . . I can still challenge them and I should still have the confidence to question things and not just take things because I'm on a lower level than them.

Similarly, Student Participant B4 said:

It's been a really good experience of gaining confidence in my own ability because it's too easy to say, "you're just a student" when there's no "just" about it. Just because you're learning, doesn't mean you don't know or don't have the authority to say things.

These students appear to have developed considerably whilst participating in projects co-creating the curriculum.

DISCUSSION

There is strong overlap across the three themes reflecting that co-creation of the curriculum benefits individuals by promoting (a) shared responsibility, respect, and trust; (b) learning from each other within a collaborative learning community; and (c) satisfaction and development for individuals. The first theme captures staff and students' views of curricular co-creation as that which is developed on a foundation of shared responsibility and respect for different views, which promotes trust. Participants highlighted that academic members of staff often take overall responsibility for curriculum development decisions due to their subject expertise, teaching experience, and job responsibilities within university structures and quality-assurance processes. Even though curriculum development usually relies on academic staff members' choices in curriculum design and planning (Lattuca & Stark, 2009), staff members facilitating co-creation of the curriculum actively create spaces to work collaboratively with students to hear their views, experiences, and alternative perspectives and to inform curriculum decisions.

Like in the work of Cook-Sather et al. (2014), participants in this study also emphasised three key aspects of co-creation of the curriculum: respect for different opinions, reciprocity by sharing different (although not necessarily the same) expertise and perspectives, and responsibility shared amongst students and staff. These tend to be both foundational prerequisites for co-creation projects as well as outcomes because they are strengthened through the experience of working together. Several participants reflected on the risks, vulnerabilities, and challenges that co-creation of the curriculum can present; however, they also noted that shared responsibility, respect, and reciprocity tend to create safe learning communities where they feel comfortable challenging themselves and others whilst developing personally and professionally.

Participants highlighted various ways in which students actively contribute through participating in co-creation projects: (a) through students sharing their lived experience both as students and as individuals living in the 21st century, (b) through staff incorporating students' ideas when applying theoretical knowledge to practical examples, and (c) through students and staff learning from each other through dialogue and exploration of complex issues. By facilitating student engagement in these ways, students contribute their existing knowledge and perspectives so that the curriculum is tailored to their aims and interests and becomes more relevant to their lives. Both Dewey (1916/2004, 1934) and Kuh (2010) emphasise the importance of tailoring learning and teaching experiences to the needs, interests, and aims of students. Co-creation of the curriculum often facilitates a dialogue between students and staff to align their needs, interests, and aims whilst making the educational experience more relevant and meaningful for students. In particular, co-creation of the curriculum can recognise students' perspectives to internationalise and

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diversify the curriculum by incorporating the needs and interests of the student body of the 21st century. This, in turn, can often help students feel that their academic experience is relevant to the “real world.”

Many student and staff participants in this study shared that co-creation of the curriculum had a transformational effect on student participants who felt respected, valued, and more confident to contribute not only in the classroom but also in wider society. Kuh (2008, 2010) in particular highlights how high-impact educational practices recognise students’ talents, empower them, and help students rise to meet new academic challenges. Educational practices like co-creation of the curriculum help students become active members of their learning community and also model and teach students how to become active citizens in democratic society outside of the classroom, which was also shown by Bron, Bovill, and Veugelers (2016).

Both the student and staff participants in this study used phrases such as “crawl away” and “cold environment” that reflect their negative experiences with some forms of traditional teaching. This contrasts sharply with their feelings of comfort and safety within an “enabling environment” in which students feel “important” and respected. Similarly, Noddings (2005) highlights the importance of care, mutual respect, and responsiveness in the classroom which positively contribute to the learning and teaching experience of both students and staff. Although Noddings’ work focuses on children and younger students, it seems extremely relevant to the views presented by participants in this study. Care and respect are important aspects of robust learning communities that can help both staff and students feel safer as they explore new learning and teaching practices. Student and staff participants in this study reflected on the absence of care and respect in traditional forms of teaching, and noticed their presence within more innovative and collaborative co-creation projects.

Traditional teaching in higher education can be characterised by entrenched hierarchies (Brew, 2007; Levy et al., 2011). However, participants in co-creation projects often try to challenge these hierarchies by working in partnership with students and, where possible, promoting equality in the classroom by involving students in democratic decision-making. This is also apparent in the work of Bron et al. (2016) and Cook-Sather et al. (2014). Student participants in particular shared views on how co-creation of the curriculum contrasts sharply with traditional teaching methods and hierarchies with a “sage on the stage” lecturing to students and presenting him/herself as an expert who knows all the answers. These students reflected on the negative and often alienating impact of lecture-based and exam-based higher-education pedagogy.

Compared to the distance that tends to separate teacher and student roles in more traditional forms of teaching, this study found that co-creation of the curriculum can shift the dynamic to a more collegial relationship. Some participants suggested that this more collegial, democratic relationship is beneficial for preparing students for the professional relationships needed to solve the world’s complex problems and to live in an age characterised by “supercomplexity,” which is at the same time global, ontological, and personal (Barnett, 2004). Speaking about our current supercomplex world, Barnett (2004) notes that the world is changing at a pace faster than ever before and argues that “neither knowledge nor skills, even high level knowledge and advanced technical skills, are sufficient to enable one to prosper in the contemporary world. Other forms of human being are required” (p. 253). Barnett’s philosophical conceptualisation of the sense of critical “being”

is similar to the concept of self-authorship in developmental psychology which was advanced by Baxter Magolda (1999), drawing on the work of Perry (1970).

Baxter Magolda (1999) emphasises that self-authorship involves cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal development. Similarly, findings presented above show that projects co-creating the curriculum have helped both students and staff develop cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal aspects of self-authorship. Both student and staff participants appear to have gained interpersonal self-authorship through working in partnership, respecting each other's contributions, and learning from each other. Participants in co-creation projects have also shared how they perceived increases in students' and staff members' cognitive development relating to learning and teaching, including the ability to analyse their perspectives critically and to apply knowledge and theory to their lives and academic subject areas. Furthermore, many participants perceived that students developed what Baxter Magolda would recognise as intrapersonal self-authorship by developing responsibility, initiative, confidence, and the ability to challenge authority in the classroom and the wider world.

Although Baxter Magolda (1999) focuses on self-authorship within adolescents and young adults including university students, Barnett's notion of supercomplexity emphasises the need for lifelong learning and the continual adaptation and honing of abilities in order to cope with an ever-changing world and an unknown future (2004). In this sense, this study has found that projects co-creating the curriculum have also helped staff in continuing to advance their self-authorship. Co-creation of the curriculum has helped them develop interpersonally within vibrant learning communities, as well as cognitively by causing them to reflect on and develop their professional practices, try new teaching methods, and receive critical feedback from students to promote teaching enhancement and excellence. At the same time, some staff have continued to develop a sense of intrapersonal self-authorship by evolving their identities as both teachers and learners who are confident in their abilities as they open themselves up to risk and criticism by giving students more ownership in co-creation of the curriculum. In these ways, both staff and students appear to have developed critical "being" and self-authorship through participation in co-creation of the curriculum.

CONCLUSION

Initial findings from this study suggest that co-creation of the curriculum can be a more collaborative and rewarding form of teaching and learning that can benefit students and staff in various ways. Key benefits include the development of shared responsibility, respect, and trust; learning from each other within a collaborative learning community; and satisfaction and development of individuals. Whilst there are also significant challenges with participating in co-creation of the curriculum, including increased responsibilities for students, increased time and effort involved for both students and staff, and institutional inertia as both students and staff challenge the status quo (Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Lubicz-Nawrocka, 2017), these have been explored elsewhere, and this paper has emphasised the benefits. This research focuses on co-creation of the curriculum within the Scottish higher-education sector; however, it is likely that findings could be relevant to other contexts since this research extends on findings from other relevant students-as-partners research (Bovill, 2013; Bovill & Bulley, 2011; Bovill, Morss, & Bulley, 2009; Bron et al., 2016; Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017).

This paper also attempts to draw new links between co-creation of the curriculum and philosophy of education theory as well as psychological development theories. It is hoped that these links between theory and practice can be further explored through future research in other contexts for both students and staff. This paper attempts to show how co-creation of the curriculum can promote democratic values and model democratic engagement in the learning community, which may help students and staff to advance their cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal senses of self-authorship and critical “being.” Extending beyond the skills and knowledge that are often emphasised within traditional higher-education teaching, this development of self-authorship and critical “being” can help both students and staff to adapt to an ever-changing, supercomplex world. When students and staff form partnerships based on trust and respect, they can advance more intrinsically rewarding forms of collaborative teaching and learning that benefit not only individual students and staff, but also their communities.

This research was approved by the Moray House Graduate School of Education (University of Edinburgh) Ethics Committee using approved processes.

NOTE ON THE CONTRIBUTOR

Tanya Lubicz-Nawrocka is a PhD student conducting higher education research at the Moray House Graduate School of Education at the University of Edinburgh. Her research interests include student engagement, teaching excellence, purposes of higher education, and benefits and challenges of co-creation of the curriculum.

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