

Affordances Of 'Unhoming Pedagogies': Reflecting on Two Decades of Activating Learning and Teaching For Social Justice In UK Universities

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Abstract

Activating learning and teaching for social justice requires the adoption of pedagogies of discomfort and critical inquiry. Such processes demand emotional and logistical labour in transforming affordances of 'unhoming pedagogies' into transformative spaces of belonging in the classroom and the Academy while embracing socio-cultural accounts of differing intersectional identities of learners, emphasising ethical academic citizenship, a dialogic ethos to democratic debates in classrooms that can become the stage for social change and pathways to promote and accelerate new ideas through knowledge co-production and exchange.

Learning through and towards social justice develops critical thinking, collaboration, respect, care, compassion and self-reflection skills necessary to foster better societies. Learning and teaching for social justice perceives students and lecturers as co-learners of themselves, others, institutions, practices, etc. and enables empowering for all to voice concerns and question unjust situations in their individual and collective lives and the lives of those on a

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regional, national and global scale. In this extended abstract I aim to share key reflections on that two decade journey while pedagogically engaging with cultural politics, intersectional and feminist approaches, decolonial and post-colonial epistemologies, narrative analytics and the critical sociologies of public scholarship, and, while embracing a feminist ethics of care and a social justice for community development activist and anti-racist academic agenda.

Such an agenda requires a difficult plunge into reflexivities that contextualise the public and pedagogic sphere as spaces of what I term 'unhoming' and can yield experiences of displacement through processes of rupture, exclusion, racialisation and by extension as a form of gendered violence which is psychosocially and emotionally saturated in the toxicity of how individuals and groups in pedagogic spaces are othered through everyday sexism, ageism and racism. My critical intervention draws from a threefold theorisation of a *discomforting of politics* (cf. 'politics of discomfort', Chadwick 2021), through bridging *liminal affectivity* (cf. 'affective liminality', Waerniers and Hustinx 2020) while interrogating *radical praxis* of the 'human condition' (Arendt 1958). As a form of feminist affective radical praxis, engaging with discomforting politics in teaching and learning is integral to the development of inclusive, emancipatory and alternative feminist knowledges. Along the line as theorised by Chadwick (2021) in exploring 'discomfort' as 'sweaty concept', transformative as an epistemic and interpretive resource with intensity and resistance, I push for 'discomforting' feminist knowledge politics to engage with an Arendtian political participation in society as the exemplification of action in becoming 'human'. Negotiating feminist ethics also involves immersing reflexively into intersectional affect (Christou and Bloor, 2021) that can become a window to understanding ourselves, others and how the co-creation of knowledge and co-production of learning can shape ethically the journeys of youth and their pedagogic aspirations (Christou and Michail, 2021).

Post-pandemic pedagogies will require a more inclusive shift in re-imagining active learning to more dialogical and relational ways to encourage conversations with ourselves and others. Such conversations can become feminisms of resistance and activism through connected, compassionate and caring mentoring initiatives (Christou, 2016) and through combining solidarity, emotions and championing the gender discourse in academia to include intersectionalities across all aspects of academic employment, curricular and research

practice (Christou and Janta, 2019). As a result, classrooms can continue to be interactive stages for social change and productive pathways to learning, so as to conceptualise new ideas which can be promoted in an accelerated mode to turn theory and practice into societal action. In that vein, critical thinking skills, self-reflective opportunities and collaboration become transferable skills in fostering regeneration contexts to make societies better, delivering more equity, humanity, and justice. Thus, teaching social justice in theory and practice should translate into empowering students to identify and rectify inequalities and injustice, to strive to contribute to an ethical social and environmental citizenship while identifying solutions to world problems.

Including diverse experiences, connected histories, alternative backgrounds and stories of multiple identities can strengthen classroom community through learning variable perspectives that resonate with student experiences. This approach has to also apply to curricular materials to ensure that diverse voices and cultures are visible in the learning that takes place. All these elements allow for educators to foster learning communities of practice, dissent, and inclusion, while enabling thoughtful debates and global discussions to critically engage with any issue. Finally, social justice learning should be transformed into community service and community action, both formative and summative assessments can become the vehicle to enable such practice to materialise. Following the interactive learning and classroom discussions, assignments can connect this learning to their local communities through both short and long-term projects. These can embed activist strategies, including social media campaigns, social enterprise awareness raising activities, internships, and other types of engagement, that link such activities to writing assignments, enabling students to reflect on their positionality, ethics, and actions, invoking societal change and social justice transformation.

Yet, social justice learning cannot be contained in one lesson, one module, one dissertation project, rather, it requires continued institutional commitment of the kind that sees University strategic visions accountable for each programme, department, school, and faculty toward the social justice contributions they make to students and society.

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