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Fragments of anarchism in higher education critical art pedagogies

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Abstract

Higher Education (HE) continues to find itself subject to neoliberal doctrines of competition, standardisation, managerialism and marketisation. This paper presents selected findings from a grounded theory study in which creative arts practitioners working in HE institutions shared their understandings of the arts and the critical pedagogies inherent in their discipline within the context of a neoliberalised educational economy. The research shows that arts pedagogies and anarchist principles have similitude between them, with anarchist ideals directing and informing teaching practices through non-hierarchical modes of exchange, fluid approaches to teaching and co-operative learning practices in educational spaces. This perhaps indicates that despite the prevalence of neoliberal marketised governance infiltrating and influencing pedagogic practice in the arts there is still resistance to managerialist, stratified notions of education within this discipline.

Keywords

Neoliberal education, higher education, anarchism, critical arts pedagogy, marketisation

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Introduction

Higher Education (HE) in the United Kingdom and beyond has been subject to Neoliberal governance since the 1980s with a series of policies that sought to create a 'market' within the HE sector (Brown, 2010). As a result, students are increasingly positioned as customers of the university, and consumers of knowledge provided to them by their tutors (Bunce et al., 2017; Collini, 2018; Molesworth et al., 2011). As a result of this neoliberalisation of education, Creative Arts subjects have been subject to structural sector changes in HE throughout the latter half of the 20th Century that have influenced the pedagogies and values embedded in the teaching of these subjects (Souleles, 2013). Arts educators find themselves in conflict between the dominant structures of neoliberalised HE which favour standardisation, outcomes and quantified conceptions of knowledge (Thiel, 2019); against qualitative, subject-specific, values-driven pedagogies (Danvers, 2003; Dineen and Collins, 2005; Frayling, 1993; Morrish, 2020; Wilkinson, 2020). This paper will explore arts educators' responses to the neoliberalisation of HE by presenting selected findings of a grounded theory study which sought to understand their day-to-day experiences of teaching and working within HE institutions in England. One tactic which appears to have emerged and arts educators are embracing in the fight against the marketisation of their discipline and pedagogies are principles aligned with anarchist thought; non-hierarchical modes of exchange, fluid approaches to teaching and co-operative learning practices in educational spaces.

Although some of these traits have been identified in critical arts education previously, there is perhaps a worthwhile exercise into an exploration of what Ibanez refers to as "Anarchism outside its own walls" (2019, 11) in that we can observe anarchist values, without the direct reference to anarchism itself. This paper seeks to follow Ibanez's approach in presenting traits and values of critical arts pedagogies used in HE that appear to have an affinity with anarchist principles, building on the work of other scholars in this area (DeLeon, 2010; Rouhani, 2012; Stewart and Way, 2023). This research shows that arts pedagogies and anarchist principles have similitude between them, with anarchist ideals directing and informing teaching practices. This perhaps indicates that despite the pernicious effects of neoliberal marketised governance infiltrating and influencing pedagogic practice in the arts (Wilkinson, 2020), there is still resistance to managerialist, stratified notions of education within this discipline.

The Neoliberal University

The term 'neoliberalism' is often used pejoratively within educational discourse to decry the move towards education being subjected to values that do not align with healthy education practices (Giroux, 2009). Establishing an exhaustive taxonomy of neoliberal policy in HE is a difficult undertaking, but exposing institutions to market forces, the notion of 'purchasing' education, and the imposition of managerialist practices provide a useful overview of the current state of HE in England. Key moments such as the introduction of variable student tuition fees in England in 2006 of £3000 and then later £9000 in 2012 meant that students were now individually financially investing in their

prospective education and futures. We can therefore see a shift from an 'education citizen' to an 'economic citizen', a reorientation towards the economy and teaching had to change to suit this distinction (Ainley, 2016; Morrish, 2020). Furthermore, neoliberal policies are actively attempting to shift the discourse away from education benefiting society, to focus on the individual gain and cost (Lynch, 2006) as students are viewed as customers of the university (Bunce et al., 2017; Collini, 2018) there to gain human capital to then use in the neoliberal marketplace (Brown, 2019). We can therefore see neoliberalism influencing social interactions in HE (Ball, 2012) with students being positioned as passive consumers of education (Wilkinson 2020; Williams 2013). Furthermore, there has been an increasingly prevalent discourse on 'low value' or 'rip-off' degrees (Department for Education, 2023t), which emphasises the continued financialisation, and neoliberalisation of HE.

Critical arts pedagogies in the Neoliberal University

Pedagogies attributed to subject areas are bound by their cultural surroundings, epistemological structures and historical practices (Löytönen, 2017). Although the neoliberalisation of HE has impacted practices across institutions, there are perhaps particular tensions that emerged within the arts due to the imposition of neoliberal policies and the specific critical pedagogies embedded in this discipline. Although the purpose of this paper is not to provide a detailed critique of critical arts pedagogies, a brief exploration is offered here in order to contextualise the subsequent findings of anarchist principles being inherent in the arts.

Arts educators embrace less stratified and authoritarian approaches to teaching to that seen in other subjects, with tutors identifying themselves as facilitators or guides (Orr and Shreeve, 2018) as opposed to a figure of authority (Vanada, 2016). Shreeve et al. (2010) consider specific signature pedagogies embedded in the arts, that ultimately have a 'kind of exchange' between staff and students that facilitate the core the work students undertake.

Critical arts pedagogies also incorporate emancipatory, transformative aspects which question and actively challenge institutional power and practices, and forms of oppression (Darts, 2004). Mernick (2021) discusses how critical arts pedagogies have a specific intentionality on being anti-racist, anti-exploitative and campaigning for social justice. Specifically, Mernick explores how critical arts pedagogies must be 'liberating' and allow students themselves to challenge these injustices. There is therefore, an inherent sense of possibility of what comes from this resistance and students are encouraged to create these new visions through art (Dewhurst, 2014; Goessling, 2017). Critical arts pedagogies also therefore draw on influences outside their teaching environment, referring to industry or real-world examples to influence their work often blurring the distinction between them (Orr and Shreeve, 2018).

There is a rejection from within arts-based subjects that anything goes within this discipline (Orr and Shreeve, 2018). However, it has been referred to as the pedagogy of ambiguity (Austerlitz et al., 2008; Danvers, 2003), and irrationality (Elkins, 2001) due to its complex nature. Elkins draws attention to the assumption that teaching, understood in

its broadest sense, is framed by an acceptance that it is highly rationalised and employs propositional forms of education, which teaching in the arts does not ascribe to. The recognition of its difference, and attempted validation of these core differences highlight the value driven nature of the arts and its pedagogies. Other scholars have explored the complex nature of the arts pedagogies, including Orr and Shreeve who describe it as 'sticky' as it is "messy and uncertain", "embodied" and "troubling and challenging" (2018, 7).

The emphasis upon non-hierarchical, exploratory, complex and emancipatory pedagogies can prove problematic for arts subjects in the context of the contemporary university, as they frequently find themselves operating within the increasingly managerialist structured domain of HE. Frayling (1993), for instance, has explored the contrast between quantified managerialist approaches to learning that are common in academia, and the highly qualitative modes of enquiry that are present in arts teaching; Frayling likewise emphasised the importance of experiential embodied modes of understanding. However, in the context of the arts, there is an emphasis upon novelty, experimentation and the production of the new, which when coupled with the emphasis upon pluralism, contingency, anti-essentialism and ambiguity that arose in the transition from the modern to the postmodern period can prove problematic within the quantified, neoliberalised domain of HE in the UK (Elkins, 2001, 2018; Orr and Shreeve, 2018). In a neoliberal context in which knowledge is sought predominantly for capital enhancement (Brown, 2019), pedagogic practices in the arts which historically promoted self-expression face deep, systemic challenges. We can see, therefore that a subject area and pedagogy which is messy, irrational, embodied may have particular issues to face as it is constrained within an environment that prioritises structure, predictability, quantification and conformity (De Lissovoy, 2017).

Anarchism

When it comes to political terminology, there is perhaps no other term that has been so widely misunderstood than the term 'anarchism'. Anarchism or anarchy has broadly come to be used in a derogatory way to describe situations in which there is a lack of control or disorder (Suissa, 2006). However, this characterisation is an oversimplification of a complex ontology and is rejected by anarchists as a slur which seeks to re-assert control and dominance. Anarchism as a political concept and associated principles was formally explored in the 19th Century through seminal texts written by Kropotkin (2015, 2021), Proudhon (1876, 1851), and Bakunin (1990, 1970, 2004), which first postulated some key principles of Anarchist thinking. Marshall (2008) and Woodcock (1963) later explored the histories of anarchism and detail a wide-ranging ideology that encompasses individualist interpretations of anarchism that promoted the uniqueness of each person and rejected the notion of society, through to mutualism and collective anarchism, which was based around the social doctrine and collective action. This has meant the categorisation of anarchist positions is notoriously difficult to do, given the spectrum of positions anarchism can legitimately cover (Fowler, 1972).

However, despite the multiplicitous definition of anarchist positions, key traits can be identified which underpin anarchist thought and span across the spectrum of anarchism. Perhaps most famously is the rejection of authority and domination, which is needed to establish the core underlying principle inherent in Anarchism – that of freedom and equality (Kinna, 2019; McLaughlin, 2012). This has manifest itself in a rejection of many forms of dominance; most notably the state, but has also been used to reject patriarchal systems, imperial systems, property ownership, religion and other elements of state control such as the police, courts and the prison system (Woodcock 1963). The rejection of hierarchies and pursuit of freedom has in turn led to horizontal, collaborative, non-hierarchical approaches underpinning anarchist interactions – most notably mutual aid, free association and self-organisation (Kinna, 2019). Anarchists also reject representative democracy, due to its ties to the state and governance. Instead they favour direct, radical democracy in which individuals and societies make decisions themselves (Chrostowska and Ingram, 2017).

However, as Carter points out, "anarchists have never won a permanent victory" (2010, 1), meaning that anarchist approaches to various aspects of life have most commonly existed *within* other hegemonic societies, cultures and governance. Notable recent moments of anarchist principles guiding approaches include the occupy movement of the early 2010s (Gibson, 2013), the absence of leaders within the Arab Spring (Bamyeh, 2013) and the widespread emergence of mutual aid during the COVID-19 pandemic (Chevée, 2022). Anarchist principles have emerged within educational settings as part of broader (anti) political projects that seek to develop a society based on anarchistic principles such as in Rojava (Dirik, 2022) and Zapatista controlled regions of Mexico (Maldonado-Villalpando et al., 2022). Anarchist ideals have also been developed and embedded in schools and other educational settings around the world without being developed in, or necessarily working towards a utopian anarchist society (Gribble, 2018). Anarchist principles therefore have the adaptability to be explored and applied both within and outside societies that are anarchistic, which has exciting, disruptive possibilities for current educational movements and policy.

Anarchism & education

Anarchism has often been overlooked in educational discourses (Lupinacci, 2012) despite the view that anarchism has been described as having "revolutionary implications for education" (Krimerman and Perry, 1966, 11). There have, however been instances of anarchist principles embedded in schools, notably at the turn of the 20th Century, such as the Escuela Moderna and La Ruche (Suissa, 2006), with subsequent "Modern" schools opening and sustaining around the world (Gribble, 2018). Anarchist educational practices manifested perhaps most illustratively through the Anarcho-syndicalists of Catalonia in the 1930s (Ealham, 2015). There are also influential historical figures in education who have, despite not being referring to themselves as anarchists, have elements of anarchist principles in their work. Perhaps most notably, Dewey, has had his work linked to elements of anarchism as a result of his questioning of the state and associated doctrines (Bartenberger, 2015; Manicas, 1982; Price, 2014). Similarly, Paulo Freire's seminal work

has been discussed alongside anarchist thought (Larkin, 2012; Mueller, 2012) with his questioning of pedagogical authority and desire to implement co-operative practice through mutuality and dialogue can be seen to have affinities with anarchism. Suissa (2006) explores historical elements of anarchist education and the philosophical perspectives inherent in anarchist positions to education, charting what she refers to as the utopian vision of anarchist education, attempting to rescue the word "utopia" from its negative connotations and reclaim it as an "urgent and committed form of social hope". In this sense, her work charts anarchist educational practices that seek to improve the social conditions of those learning and wider society through the pedagogies inherent in that endeavour.

There have also been moments and projects of resistance to the neoliberal university which can seen to be influenced, at least in part, by anarchist principles. For example, student occupations took place in 2010 and 2011 in 46 universities in England as a result of the increase in tuition fees (Ismail, 2011). Though this may not have represented the radicalism that embodied the New Left in the 1960s – dubbed at the time as the 'new anarchism' with anarchist ideals of horizontal spontaneity (Marshall, 2008), the protests demonstrated anarchist-like resistance can still be observed and is to be noted. The discontent saw the emergence of alternative educational provisions such as The Social Science Centre in Lincoln, which saw subjects taught with students and teachers alongside each other. In a flattening of power dynamics, a central tenet of anarchism, the terms 'students' and 'teachers' were not used and everyone attending was referred to as 'scholars' (Neary and Winn, 2017). The 'Really Open University' established in Leeds was established on non-hierarchical principles which challenged the commodification of knowledge in the neoliberal HE landscape (Pusey and Sealey-Huggins, 2013). Projects such as 'Student as Producer' at The University of Lincoln sought to recreate the university as a 'new form of social institution' away from 'academic capitalism' (Neary, 2012). Key to the theoretical positioning of 'Student as Producer' was the idea of the institution of the common to produce shared 'living knowledge', 'self-education', and 'co-research' drawing on the writings of Giggi Roggero whose work is grounded in anarchist sociology (Roggero, 2011). We can therefore see the subtle influence of anarchism in these projects in their resistance, flattening of hierarchies, mutual organisation and co-operative practices. In many respects, observing anarchist practices in a sector that has transformed the university into an entity that is increasingly structured to *only* provide human capital may in fact demonstrate a radicalism that is greater than it seems at face value, something which requires further exploration.

Materials and methods

The primary task of the study from which this paper is taken was exploring educator responses to utilising e-learning tools in the arts. A constructivist grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2014) was used in order to explore the different elements this broad question could cover. The constructivist position was taken as it recognises the social interactions and interpretive understandings we have throughout our daily lives, and to reject essentialism (Burr, 2015). A constructivist grounded theory design facilitates

a flexible, exploratory approach that constructs new knowledge and is not a method of verification, symptomatic of a positivist position (Charmaz, 2014). Therefore, the flexible exploratory approach was vital to gaining an insight into the intricacies that the research produced as it was carried out.

Ethical approval was received from the institution (ref RW0406982-1). The interview participants were initially selected through a process of initial sampling, with the research question leading the sampling strategy (Devers and Frankel, 2000). Participants were working in arts departments in HE institutions in England and had an interest in e-learning (evidenced through academic publications or projects) were emailed and invited to interview. A total of 17 participants were interviewed using semi-structured interviews and a topic sheet to guide the process. The interviews were conducted both online and face-to-face.

Transcripts were coded using a line-by-line method (Glaser, 1978) which offers an initial insight into the themes and topics that immediately emerge. This type of coding also enables the researcher to maintain a critical, analytical enquiry-driven perspective, as opposed to becoming immersed in the research participants' views and not questioning their responses (Charmaz, 2007). A second phase of selective coding was conducted to establish key themes in the data. Memos were also used during the coding process as part of situational analyses (Clarke, 2005) and the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1999).

An important detail to consider was the specific power dynamics that existed in the interviews, as the researcher conducting the interviews had limited experience in practices in the arts. The interviewer was keen to place the balance of power with the interviewee as they were the experts in the research field. Giving control and power to the interviewee can lead to them expressing themselves further, leading to rich data informed by the participant (J. Corbin and Morse, 2003). This inexperience allowed the researcher to push further on certain details which participants often assumed were an implicit shared understanding. This was particularly prevalent when it came to the intricacies of their arts pedagogy. For example, there was an assumed understanding of implicit difference within the arts. Participants often assumed the researcher was in agreement that their practices were different, and as a result, discussions around this difference had to be carefully articulated in order to try and encourage extensive debate. In this way they were able to use their outsider perspective to explore specifically the details of what they meant within their implicit definitions.

Results: Anarchist pedagogies in arts

Three distinct elements that are present in anarchist thought were displayed in the values of arts pedagogy explored by participants. These three elements are a rejection of hierarchy; the reflexive, fluid nature of the arts; and co-operative, mutual approaches to learning. Furthermore, these aspects of anarchist principles are initially established by an inherent resistance to the neoliberal pedagogic impositions of the institution in which participants were working. Working from this established position of resistance therefore allows alternative pedagogies to emerge, as detailed below.

Rejecting hierarchy

> "It's kind of stupid to think of me or someone else being in charge. It doesn't work like that." P001

Much of the descriptions of the various aspects of arts pedagogies were built on the premise of relational, non-hierarchical structures and interactions. Although this key component emerged from the data during analysis of focussed codes, this non-hierarchical principle was also referenced directly in interviews:

> But I'm also keen on peer learning, and the fact that there shouldn't be a hierarchy really; professors, students lecturers, all just learning in the same subject area but at different stages P008

> We can't have hierarchy in these spaces, we need to be on a level to work properly together p013

Participants directly detailed the desire to work without hierarchies and often felt that the university systems tried to coerce them to work in hierarchical ways because of the increasingly marketised institutions in which they worked. This, at times, limited their ability to maintain close personal relationships with their students and impacted their desire to work without hierarchies (Wilkinson 2020). More broadly however, the participants rejected managerialist, hierarchical approaches to learning and teaching, which dominate the current HE landscape (Brown, 2010; Collini, 2018; Molesworth et al., 2011). Interview participants explored the relationships between tutors and students with the reciprocal peer-learning model – all of which are fundamentally non-hierarchical.

As the original study was exploring the use of e-learning tools in the arts, interview participants articulated their aversion to hierarchical exchanges with students when discussing how traditional e-learning tools instil these hierarchies:

> I think there are a whole set of assumptions built into a conventional VLE which is a particular model of TAL which is quite different to how A&D generally does it…. in Art it's a lot more emphasis on the student generating the content. P015

> And blackboard and other systems are very top-down hierarchies, and this is my bias as well, that's how I see them and I don't use them for that reason. P007

These quotations point to the lack of horizontal exchanges available to educators when using institutional VLEs. Again, these institutionally approved technologies promoted a particular type of interaction between staff and students that positioned staff as the deliverers of knowledge; thus positioning them hierarchically above the students.

Rejecting hierarchies has practical ramifications in a HE context, as it requires educators to actively resist approaches favoured by HE institutions. As interview participants articulated their desire to work without hierarchies, they also spoke about their

resistance to elements that interfered with their values and pedagogy and embrace elements of rebellion against these perceived threats:

> We like to see it as the rebel alliance. You might try to impose the empire on us but we know what's good for our students so we're going to do what's good for them and you can deal with it later. P011

> So that natural tendency for Arts students to be rebellious, which we encourage, …I think our students in particular want to feel like they're in control of their own learning. P015

This presented an understanding of the need for arts practitioners and departments to question and innovate when it came to university policy, which requires agency and the ability for them to develop their own pedagogies. By naming their active rebellious beliefs and practices, participants displayed a defiance to HE structures which sought to impinge on their teaching. They therefore placed themselves in direct opposition to the powers which they viewed were attempting to control their pedagogic practice. In this instance educators are stepping outside of institutional structures and directives, taking direct control of learning for their students away from the university.

Embracing fluidity

> "There's all sorts going on, it really is different every day" P014

Challenging institutionally driven practices requires a degree of confidence and reflexivity in practitioners' approaches to their work, particularly as their approaches directly confront what have become normative practices in the current HE educational economy. Participants described discursive, reactive processes in the arts, which required them to be flexible and reactive in their work. They described responding to students with learner-centred, reactive approaches to student-led initiatives. Rather than delivering a prescribed or pre-determined mode of teaching, arts pedagogies allow and encourages flexibility in student learning. This flexible approach is a core aspect of an arts-based pedagogy, meaning it is hard to define, freeform and adaptable:

> In terms of doing things within our teaching its quite difficult because of the range of stuff that students are doing…. So, I think it's hard to go "this is what we should do" because it varies a lot because the programme is so multi-faceted. P009

> One year's teaching to the next will be completely different if you look back at it because we're constantly updating our techniques and methods and ways of doing things. P011

These statements highlight the reactive nature of arts pedagogy, responding to the work created by students and collaborating alongside them. It also shows that although educators are responding to students whilst they are in learning spaces, the work of redesigning and reflecting on materials and methods is taking place outside these spaces,

indicating this non-static approach is embedded on a number of different pedagogic levels. In addition to the materials and teaching techniques being reactive, the way the material is explored is often non-linear and freeform:

> I think it may be that the structure thing is a concern in that it's just not as structured in that we tend to be a bit more freeform and we turn up in the studio and you respond to something that's just happened that morning. So you can't prepare in advance so much. P018

> Therefore, the guided learning journey must be structured, very linear, sequential week by week. And we in the school of Creative Arts said we don't work in that way. P018

These examples above provide broad insights into the flexibility needed from staff in arts departments. They are also sympathetic to messy (Orr and Shreeve, 2018), ambiguous (Trowler, 2014) and even irrational (Elkins, 2001) modes of interaction. In many ways therefore, much of critical arts pedagogy can be described as non-quantifiable, which is problematic within an increasingly striated, monitored landscape of HE (Thiel, 2019). There were repeated rejections of structure and linearity, as well as descriptions of practitioners being 'freeform'. Discussions extended to rejections of formalised teaching spaces and times, with interactions taking place in different locations and outside traditional teaching hours. A more structured, ranked series of interactions would create distance between tutor and student and position tutors' role as delivering knowledge, which is antithetical to both anarchist principles and the values espoused by the interview participants.

This fluidity extends to the need to reject other rules or directives in favour of the pedagogies and values that are inherent in their practice. The idea of questioning protocols, or institutionally delivered instructions is described as being intrinsic to an 'arts place'

> … it can't be an arts place if there's a protocol for everything….It fundamentally doesn't make any sense. Because you're supposed to be stepping outside all the time…. but also its our job to encourage students to constantly be questioning and kind of destroying and rebuilding P002

There is therefore an openness and willingness to question orthodoxies wherever they present themselves in their educational spheres. This again points to the recalcitrance towards authority and a desire to ensure that nothing remains in a fixed position in their teaching.

Staff-student co-operation – a mutual exchange

> "We work together really closely; the students teach me so much" P007

In addition to the flexibility needed whilst teaching, the non-hierachical nature of their work ultimately led to co-operative learning experiences for staff and students. The sense

of co-operative mutual learning was described as being vital to Arts pedagogy with practical examples such as shared feedback from both tutors and peers (Motley, 2016; Orr and Shreeve, 2018) and students collaborating with each other on shared interests. Participants also referred directly to how they learned from students:

> So, my own knowledge has been growing alongside them because they're always looking at new things and I'm having to find out about them to help them. So, I end up enriched by them. P004

> Especially for an art and design school, we do things slightly differently here to some places. It's not just about delivering course material it's about a two-way exchange of work and things P010

This reciprocity is a result of the non-hierarchical relationships that arts practitioners strive for and students leading on their learning. Although peer learning has become widely adopted across HE generally, participants detailed how this approach was a particularly important element of their approach to their subject:

> But there is something about that community of practice where you learn to be an artist by talking and being with other artists. P001

The communal two-way exchanges between student and tutor and peer-learning strategies that participants described offer an insight into a sense of community within arts-based subjects. These quotations also provide further examples of the reflexive, non-hierarchical nature of arts pedagogy; much of the learning is done in response to events or prompts that occur during these exchanges as opposed to being predetermined, before the exchanges take place. This communality is linked to the personal nature of the arts (Wilkinson, 2020) but also stems from the experiential and relational experiential nature of the subject (Orr and Shreeve, 2018).

Participants also detailed how the sense of co-operation and community extended beyond traditional academic spaces and into the spaces in and around the institution:

> You come into somewhere, say it's a studio, like <location> you come in every day you make a cup of tea you chat to the person who, I don't know they might have an estates man…you see the receptionist every day. You see other artists every day you might chat about your practice, you might chat about politics. P006

Again, themes of limited hierarchy and dynamic, fluid pedagogies are expressed in this quotation, as arts practitioners operate in an inclusive exploratory way to develop a community of practice in and out of teaching spaces. It also speaks more broadly to a type of holistic, interconnected pedagogy that arts practitioners considered vital to their work, which encourages students to situate their learning in their own context and draw on their own experiences. In this we see co-operative, relational exchanges which sit outside standardised educational HE norms.

Discussion

The themes presented above detail three distinct facets of critical arts pedagogies that are also core principles of anarchism. Although participants did not explicitly name their pedagogies and values within or alongside anarchism, the anti-hierarchical, fluid and co-operative approaches to their educational practice demonstrate an affinity with these key anarchist principles. Anarchism is a useful lens through which to understand these specific values in arts pedagogy, given its adaptability in a variety of settings. Indeed, without a specific moment of actualisation Kinna contends that anarchism can be read "backwards and forwards from its origins and plotted from multiple geographical sites and at different angles…anarchism has strong affinities with a wide range of non-anarchist ideas and practices" (2019, 8-9). Similarly, Gordon recognises that contemporary anarchism and anarchist studies exists within the intersection of other movements (2008).

Perhaps the most direct articulation of a principle synonymous with anarchism was the desire for interview participants to work non-hierarchically with students. Hierarchical approaches, even those with historic value within the subject, have been rejected by CA (Belluilgi, 2016; Elkins, 2001; Frayling, 1993; Orr and Shreeve, 2018). Dineen and Collins state that in order to foster successful outcomes for students, tutors should resist an authoritarian approach to their interaction with students and encourage them to take ownership of their work (2005) and collaborate within an egalitarian community without hierarchies (Lorenzi and White 2019). Students should be encouraged to experiment and work with their colleagues (Boucharenc, 2006) with the learner-centred, constructivist approach, aligned with the uncertain nature of creativity (Shreeve et al., 2010).

The rejection of hierarchies in arts pedagogies involves implicit ways of learning, such as working co-operatively and responding to students as well as co-producing knowledge alongside teaching staff and their peers. It also requires a resistance and challenge to hierarchies when they are proposed or attempt to be embedded in teaching practices. The most prominent example of this during the interviews was from P011 rejection of the "empire", in this image, the institution "imposing" things on their students – which they rejected and were willing to deal with the consequences afterwards. There was in some sense that this analogy of resisting the encroachment of the 'empire' was specifically about *only* resisting and not, to follow the metaphor further, *attacking* the empire more broadly – the neoliberal university and its practices in spaces external to their departments. This is perhaps because participants were acutely aware of the stresses they had to contend with in their jobs, as well as recognising, in some cases, the precarity of their positions under neoliberal dogma. There was however the sense that these acts of resistance and rebellion constituted a commitment to continually re-inventing their critical pedagogy. That resistance embodied an implicit attack in that they had been able to stand against this continued encroachment, and not submit to a different way of teaching – the ultimate rejection of subordinating to the institution.

However, anarchism or indeed arts pedagogies do not reject hierarchies ubiquitously, instead hierarchies are examined for their legitimacy and purpose. Bakunin states:

> Does it follow that I drive back every authority? The thought would never occur to me... I listen to them freely and with all the respect merited by their intelligence, their character, their knowledge, reserving always my incontestable right of criticism and verification. So there is no fixed and constant authority, but a continual exchange of mutual, temporary, and, above all, voluntary authority and subordination

However, in an educational context there are in some respects inevitable hierarchies that exist in a student-tutor relationship, which exists within a neoliberalised educational setting that positions students as customers and consumers of their learning (Bunce et al., 2017). This alone therefore, could be considered paradoxical when considering anarchist pedagogies in the arts (Fretwell, 2020). Indeed, although participants articulated a desire to work without hierarchies, they still had distinctions between their role as tutor, separating themselves from students, thus creating a power dynamic. May (2009), through his reading of Foucualt considers the way conscious and unconscious power can be applied resulting in oppression and exploitation. However, May also discusses how power can be used in practices that are not oppressive, considering whether those power dynamics, can in some respects benefit from that arrangement; indicating that not every hierarchy is exploitative. We can see this within the testimony from participants as they had confidence in knowing how to help educate their students, they "know what is best", thus asserting their power to work towards a beneficial outcome for their students. Tutors use their power to dissolve hierarchies, encouraging students to be in control of their own learning, with tutors guiding the process as opposed to being led by them (Vanada, 2016). There is therefore pedagogical authority in an arts-based context that has non-hierarchical exchanges at their core. Where authority exists it is not through coercion or enforcement, but through a recognition of expertise through relational exchanges that limit oppressive hierarchies or domination.

The desire to operate non-hierarchically requires reflexivity and fluidity in pedagogies, as tutors respond to student-led work which students often collaborate on together (Boling, 2016; Goldschmidt et al., 2010). This ambiguous, reflexive pedagogy within the arts is celebrated (Austerlitz et al., 2008) and negotiation without a fixed outcome or goal is also inherent within anarchist pedagogies which prefer discovery and exploration; "(it) is not accounted for entirely by a rigidly promethean or epimethean perspective, but is rather to be found in the experimental and dialectical tension between the two" (Mueller 2012, 24). Being fluid and reflexive means that both arts pedagogies and anarchism can respond to the conditions they each find themselves in. In an arts-based context that was the learning experiences and outcomes of students. In anarchist philosophies and practice the rejection of prescribed notions of organising mean that it rejects formal distinctions of a fundamental philosophy, allowing it to be responsive to changes in power structures that it seeks to eliminate (Ibanez, 2019).

Alongside being reactive to student experiences and learning, this fluidity extends to the rejection of fixed policies and protocols, questioning, destroying and rebuilding in their work (Participant P002). Students are actively encouraged to be free to experiment (Boucharenc, 2006) and challenge embedded practices; working from a position of continual reinvention and 'radical innovation' (Kaye, 2015). We can therefore see that this

destruction and recreation points to a fluid ontological position that encourages staff and students to explore the best options for them and their peers. Indeed, students in arts have been referred to as explorers, finding their way through unchartered territory (Dineen and Collins, 2005) or to use another travel-related metaphor, students do not follow a path in their learning, they leave a trail (Buss, 2008). Similarly, we can understand anarchism as being in a perpetual sense of development, and in contrast to other doctrines it's simultaneous strength and weakness is that it is not tied to any philosophy (Richards, 2015). Emma Goldman offered a clear description of the open-ended nature of anarchism:

> Anarchism is not, as some may suppose, a theory of the future to be realized through divine inspiration. It is a living force in the affairs of our life, constantly creating new conditions. (1910, 63)

Furthermore, the notion of rebuilding and destroying has a clear affinity with anarchism; anarchism is a creative political theory, with even destructive acts (often associated with anarchism) creating something new (Loizidou, 2022). This reluctance to remain in stasis and challenge embedded and emergent practices allows both anarchism and arts pedagogies to shape to the needs of those living or learning within it.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the synergies between pedagogies in arts education and anarchic theories, practices and ideas. There is a fundamental unwillingness by arts educators to accept the neoliberalisation of arts education in HE, and this resistance is manifested through radical anarchist pedagogies that challenge the power dynamics, commodification and consumerism that are prevalent in neoliberalism (Holohan, 2019). Both anarchism and critical arts-based pedagogies work to operate without hierarchies; have flexibility and reflexivity embedded; and also value co-operative approaches. They are both built from the foundational aspect of resistance to an established way of operating, instead favouring constant re-invention and flux. The emergence of anarchist values within critical arts pedagogies in HE is perhaps surprising given the increasingly striated, marketised HE system which values structure, hierarchy and individualised ideals of education. However, strategies for resisting the neoliberalisation of pedagogies are being displayed in the arts, and this research has shown that arts educators are determined to maintain their commitment to re-inventing and re-imagining their radical approaches for the good of their subject and students.

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