Co-creative learning: A comparative analysis of two integrative and collaborative methods of teaching/learning social work
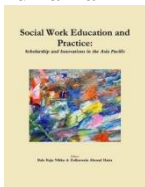
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Abstract

This article focuses on two methods of teaching and learning social work that have a principle of co-creating knowledge in common and are aimed at two very different cohorts of students; the beginners and the advanced. The Contact-Challenge method (CCHM) engages social work clients in the role of experts in helping beginning social workers become better practitioners while Academic Co-Creative Inquiry (ACCI) caters for more advanced students to engage them in the process of course creation and development, promoting inquiry learning and self and peer reflection.

Introduction

This article focuses on two methods of teaching and learning social work that have a principle of co-creating knowledge in common and are aimed at two very different cohorts of students; the beginners and the advanced. The Contact-Challenge method (CCHM) engages social work clients in the role of experts in helping beginning social workers become better practitioners while Academic Co-Creative Inquiry (ACCI) caters for more advanced students to engage them in the process of course creation and development, promoting inquiry learning and self and peer reflection. The pedagogical, andragogical and heutagogical principles of both methods are examined in the light of social work values and principles. This article critically examines the specifics and uniqueness of both methods as well as possibilities of wider applications that are outlined while providing an insight into learning processes that make a significant difference in student experience. A summary of evaluation of both methods and ways they can be contextualised to suit almost any academic or cultural context is presented as well as possibilities of training for these unusual but effective teaching/learning methods. Special emphasis is placed on co-creation of relevant, meaningful and useful activities that integrate theory, practice and personal experience and create changes in knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and skills.

The term co-creation has become a buzzword in a range of fields of human endeavour. The core idea is to create a context of collaborative engagement where the interaction is reciprocal, and where the benefits are mutual. Respect, contextuality, transparence, integrity and honesty are some of the key words that describe co-creative processes in a range of human endeavours. The term has been used in business (Alee, 2008; Darshan, 2010), emphasizing the importance of networking and transcending individual stakeholder boundaries and views in order to develop viable learning organizations continuously reflective of the ever-changing world. In this context, co-creation relates to the shift from an understanding of value traditionally determined by a usually linear and exploitative nature of the relationship between the supplier and user to a perception of real value with mutual benefit. Co-creation has ethics, social justice and improvement of quality of life at its core and its nature is trans-diciplinary and reflexive. It is based on idea that mutuality and reciprocity in learning are essential and that learning is co-created in the space in-between all participants. It happens in a spiral way, as opposed to linear, engaging all

participants in knowledge sharing and knowledge making. Students' experiences, culture, belief systems, background, passions are interests are utilized to improve the learning experience and enhance engagement.

The idea of co-creation has been used when researching less exact aspects of our life, like spirituality (Heron, 2006), art (Simon, 2010), sustainability and the open source movement (Metjoft & Gullickson, 2011). Successful co-creation embeds mutual respect, genuine curiosity and ability to engage in a co-creative relationship without preconceived ideas about the outcome. It is an inquiry approach devoted to the creation of new solutions and immersed in the idea of bringing forth the world (Capra, 1996) which requires global vision and local action. It attempts to change our perception of the world and it actively engages in shifting paradigms by replacing notions of owning and possessing with sharing and stewardship, competition with collaboration, local consciousness with global consciousness and globalization with localization. Humility and appreciation are at its core and hierarchical understanding is replaced with reciprocity and awareness of the interdependence of all aspects of life (Napan, 2011).

This article explores co-creative learning and focuses on two integrative methods of teaching and learning social work, which can both be adapted and applied in other areas of study. They are particularly relevant for social work education as they are based on social work values and principles and by engaging in social action they explore issues of social justice. I developed these two methods out of necessity and the insatiable desire to provide relevant, engaging and meaningful way of learning social work. Both methods have been evaluated and researched over many years. I hope this publication will make these collaborative teaching/learning methods available to universities across the world to experiment with, adjust and modify them to suit a range of cultural and educational contexts.

Qualities that Permeate both Teaching/Learning Methods

The Contact Challenge method has been researched via an extensive action research in two countries, Croatia and New Zealand (Napan, 1998), and then again in Croatia, after ten years of its continuous application (Urbanc, Kletecki, & Delale, 2009). Academic Co-Creative Inquiry has been developed and researched through nine years of its application (Napan, 2009; Napan, 2012b) via participatory action research and more recently with a group of

academics from four very different teaching institutions (Napan, 2012b), (Napan, 2012a; Napan, Dai, Marwick, Meinjen, & Quintern, 2012).

On analysis of students' and participants' feedback, certain qualities kept emerging regardless of the context of the application. These became guiding principles when developing courses based on the idea of co-creation. The qualities of: *context, flow, choice, trust, relevance, integration and integrity* provide focus for teachers to reflect on their teaching practice, needs of the profession, clients and students. Both Contact-Challenge and Academic Co-Creative Inquiry perceive social work teachers as lifelong learners and by continuously co-creating courses, they teach and learn in collaboration with students, clients and practitioners. Before embarking on a co-creative journey, some reflective practice is a prerequisite and when I teach teachers, they develop their courses through reflection and inquiry, addressing each quality and examining if it can be applied as a basic principle in their course development.

When these seven qualities are integrated in courses, they tend to engender competence, coherence, responsibility, doing one's best, more curiosity, love for learning, cooperation and fun and creativity in classroom. Students 'miraculously' become more engaged when theory, practice and personal experience are interrelated throughout the course facilitated in a co-creative manner. Students take responsibility for their learning and teachers ensure that course criteria are met adequately. In the following section the two methods will be presented followed by a comparative analysis and ideas for future development.

The Contact Challenge Method

Background

The Contact-Challenge method was developed at University of Zagreb in Croatia in the 1990's during the war, out of my desperation to change the way social work education was conducted at the time. With the demise of socialism and ideals of equality that were enforced more than internally embedded, all kinds of discriminatory attitudes started to surface. Nationalism, 'ableism', sexism and homophobia became openly expressed simultaneously with cuts in services provided to social work clients. Discrepancies between espoused values and realities of practice became visible and I noticed that students and social work clients

needed to get over 'othering' and perceiving one another as less valued and at the same time ensure that respectful and non-patronizing communication occurs[1].

I started my research by exploring student and the client's willingness to engage in a different kind of training and talked with social work practitioners to see if they were willing to take a more active part in social work education.

The method was needed at University of Zagreb because social work education at that time was mainly theoretical with very little experiential work. While studying there, although I gained knowledge in a wide range of social work theories and methods, I learnt very little about relating to people, respecting them and providing the social work service they wanted. When I became a teacher there, I soon realized I would either become a bureaucrat hidden behind a pile of papers or a fighter for social justice on the barricades, fighting against an unjust system that creates so many social problems instead of solving them. As neither of these options sounded appealing, I decided to come up with a creative solution.

Long term social work clients (elderly, people with chronic illnesses – somatic and mental and people with a range of disabilities) needed support, but did not generally trust social workers. My students wanted to 'save the world' and were longing to do something practically useful. I was also aware they were going into a field where they were not welcomed, and did not want their genuine enthusiasm to be replaced with cynicism or despair. We agreed that social work is a tool for social change and in order to be able to achieve that goal my students needed not only to become conversant in a number of social work theories, but also learn how to relate to one another in order to be prepared to network and interact with a range of clients from various backgrounds.

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[1] By "othering", we mean any action by which an individual or group becomes mentally classified in somebody's mind as "not one of us". Rather than always remembering that every person is a complex bundle of emotions, ideas, motivations, reflexes, priorities, and many other subtle aspects, it's sometimes easier to dismiss them as being in some way less human, and less worthy of respect and dignity, than we are. (http://therearenoothers.wordpress.com/2011/12/28/othering-101-what-is-othering/)

For the first year of their study, I devised a method that would allow them to learn theory, meet with social work clients, learn from them, experience joys and challenges of supervision, and have time to work on their personal issues, values and attitudes by practicing problem-solving with their colleagues.

I contacted the clients first and was initially met with disbelief and resistance. Lots of research has been done 'on social work clients', many researchers promised change, but clients said they had never felt the impact of any change, following their involvement. They felt like 'guinea pigs' for social work researchers and mentioning any student involvement or research would cause them to either politely withdraw or angrily refuse to participate. This attitude was a legacy from a unique form of socialism, which in one hand espoused beliefs that socialism solves all social problems and on the other hand used social workers to keep disenfranchised under control. Persons with special needs had all rights on paper, but in practice, the situation was quite different. In the nineties, people with mental illness still resided in closed hospital wards; young people with quadriplegia lived in nursing homes with elderly as there was no other place for them to live and a large number of refugees were roaming a country as a consequence of a senseless war that destroyed trust in humanity.

I started my project by dialoguing with clients about their dissatisfaction with current social work. I quickly understood that only through direct contact and communication we could instigate some kind of social change as a reaction to the patronizing attitude usually present in the social welfare system at the time.

I decided to engage 'experienced'[2] clients willing to share and help students to become better social workers and in turn, students would help them with simple everyday tasks but only if clients asked them to do so. The purpose was to put clients in a position of power and respect and allow students to make a contact without the pressure of doing any kind of therapy. I was aware that I needed to involve experienced social workers in this

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[2] Experienced in this context means people who have been at least five years involved with social workers due to their condition. They have experienced good and bad side of social work and they had the idea what kind of social worker would suit their needs. People involved had some kind of special need in a widest possible sense (intellectual disability, physical disability, elderly, people with a chronic physical or mental illness).

process making sure their involvement does not increase their workload. This was a challenge as social work practitioners would cringe every time we tried to organize placements as students were perceived as just another burden to their busy jobs. They got interested in Contact-Challenge when they realized that students would add value to the quality of life of their clients and their families and in that sense, make their jobs easier. They were also keen to be involved as supervisors in that process and share their experiences with students.

The Contact-Challenge method was evaluated and further developed through continuous action research cycles and then it became the essential part of my PhD completed in 1998 at Massey University in Auckland, New Zealand. During that period, the method was contextualized and modified to suit the New Zealand educational system and particularly adapted for Massey University's Master of Social Work Applied program which attracted students with bachelor degrees in various disciplines who wanted to gain social work qualification but had no prior experience in social work. The Contact Challenge was successfully contextualized to the South Pacific context bringing a range of new cultures, worldviews and an amazing co-creative potential.

At the same time, my colleagues at University of Zagreb continued applying the Contact Challenge Method (Urbanc et al., 2009) and it is still being used there with a group of now very experienced social work clients actively engaged in social work education.

Essential Features

The Contact Challenge is an integrative method of teaching and learning social work theory and practice through using client's knowledge and expertise in their condition as well as knowledge about managing social workers in order to create more socially just, responsive and appreciative social workers (Napan, 1997). The method comprises four or five interrelated components:

Component	Purpose	Teaching approaches	When?
Theory	Learning social work theories and how to adapt and choose a theory that will suit a particular client situation as opposed to trying to fit a client within a theoretical framework	Interactive lectures Dialogue Requirement of pre-reading Discussions Debates	Weekly for two hours with unlimited number of students, over a semester or a whole year
Skills training	Learning about importance of confidentiality, relationship	Students practice problem solving with one another	Once a week for two hours, maximum of 25 students in

	building, respect, normalizing having problems and learning how to overcome them	on real life issues taking turns in being a client, a social worker or an active observer	a group
Contact with clients	Learning to listen and hear clients
Learning how to perceive their strengths and abilities, relate to them and learn without any pressure to do any kind of therapy with clients
It is usually a humbling experience and each encounter provides a different challenge	Challenges are addressed with clients through respectful dialogue, during supervision or in skills training groups.	Once a week for two hours over the duration of the course (one on one).
Supervision	To tune students early on to the benefits of supervision and support them in learning from challenging situations.	Group supervision with social workers, field instructors.	Fortnightly either in groups focusing on the same field of practice or in small mixed groups, maximum of eight students in a group
Full fieldwork experience (optional, following CCHM depending on social work school's fieldwork requirements)	Providing a space for students to experience work in a professional social work agency **after** the informal contact with their clients enabling them to experience the service from the agency view and to fulfill a requirement of fieldwork placement	Traditional social work placement as required by qualification authority	48 days working full time in the agency that provides services for the client who is a consultant to student's learning

The Contact-Challenge Rationale, Process and Reflection

The Contact-Challenge caters for beginning students to facilitate first contact with clients; for students to learn about respect, mutuality and reciprocity in an engaging manner. They are instructed to serve in the way clients asked them to and to learn to negotiate their way with families in order to provide useful service and at the same time use that experience for learning to become effective social workers.

The student and the client-expert meet for a first time and form a contract deciding how they would like to spend 2 hours per week over a school year or semester for mutual benefit. Contracts are living documents and can change over time. Any change needs to be mutually agreed. These encounters provide for a true inquiry learning process. Dynamics between students and clients, supervisors, teachers, parents, social service agencies and discovering how social work theories are applied or co-created in practice make learning exciting and engaging.

The Contact Challenge presents an integrated way of entering a profession encompassing development of the personal, professional as well as a political level. It

requires all participants to get to know one another well and continuously communicate while learning as challenges emerge. Theories and principles taught during lectures and through required readings are critically reflected on immediately as students check their validity and potential application while working with one another, practicing problem solving and meeting in supervision groups. The importance of human touch, forming the relationship, building a rapport and listening to the clients is a core of becoming a competent social worker and involvement with clients becomes instrumental. Prejudices get dismantled on both sides, clients feel empowered and engaged by contributing to young social worker's education, students overcome their fears, social workers in practice become more open to accepting students as they see them as providing important support to their clients and do not feel exploited by the school to do practice teaching on top of their already busy jobs. The idea of lifelong learning comes to the fore as in a program like this, all participants are teachers and learners and all prior knowledge and experience is seen as beneficial.

Assessment is usually determined by particular university policies, but when I applied it at University of Zagreb, clients and supervisors were involved in the process and all students had to undertake an oral exam and write learning journals, whilst at Massey University when applied at postgraduate level, reflective journals and peer and self-assessment were the main means of assessment.

When this method is employed, reflections on the various contexts, recognition of the flow, importance of choice, trust and respect and continuous links to relevance of what has been done is exercised in order to engender student integrity and integration of various aspects of learning.

The method has been thoroughly evaluated in New Zealand and Croatian contexts (Napan, 1998; Urbanc et al., 2009) over years and principles of reciprocity, engagement and mutuality kept showing up as main features that benefit clients and future social workers.

Academic Co-Creative Inquiry

Background

As opposed to Contact-Challenge which caters for beginning students, involving clients in the process of education and is based on andragogy, Academic Co-Creative Inquiry is based on notions of heutagogy (Blaschke, 2012; Hase & Kenyon, 2001). Heutagogy advances andragogy (Knowles, 1970) and builds on the work of humanists-phenomenologists (Rogers, 1969), reflective practitioners and theorists (Argyris & Schon, 1996) as well as participatory action researchers (Kemmis, 1988; Reason, 2001). It studies self-determined learning and goes beyond the difference between young and mature learners and acquisition of skills and knowledge by emphasizing a more holistic development of the learner and encouraging learners capacity to question one's values and assumptions (Blaschke, 2012; Hase & Kenyon, 2001). In this approach, the process of education becomes equally important as the outcome. Inquiry and contract learning resonate well with its philosophy. Heutagogical approach requires capable learners (and teachers) and reflects the uncertainty of today's work markets, a need for flexibility as well as lifelong learning.

Academic Co-Creative Inquiry (ACCI) is an innovative way of teaching and learning inspired by Cooperative Inquiry (Heron, 1996). The original notion of Cooperative Inquiry needed to be modified to fit a hierarchical tertiary education setting which requires unilateral external assessment, coverage of prescribed learning outcomes and accomplishment of a predetermined graduate profile. Cooperative Inquiry is usually used as an empowering research methodology for participatory transformation and is deeply engaged with the human condition. Cooperative Inquiry had to be modified as in its original form, all participants in the inquiry are equal and there is no place for unilateral assessment by a teacher. ACCI involves self and peer assessment, co-creation is at its core and assessment is not unilateral, however, the positional power of the teacher as a representative of the learning institution is present. A teacher assigns a final mark, taking into account peer and self-assessment and making sure the attainment fits the graduate profile. There are many ways self and peer assessment can be incorporated in the final mark and these are negotiated with students at the beginning of the course. Prescribed assessment criteria are clearly presented to students and they are involved in co-creation of their own.

ACCI was mainly applied at Masters level, but it proved to be effective in Bachelor of Social Practice, Foundation Studies (bridging courses for students who have not completed secondary education but want to enroll at tertiary level), Bachelor of Adventure Tourism, Bachelor of Social Work and in its modified form in student academic support. The method's flexibility allows it to be modified and contextualised to fit any level of learning.

Essential Features

Through a collaborative process, teachers and students co-create the context and the content of the course and mutually assess its effectiveness and the learning achieved. There are no exams and there is a lot of choice in assignments as they can be done creatively, individually, in pairs or small groups and can take any form or shape.

Over years of development, the following features proved to be essential for effective performance of Academic Co-Creative Inquiry.

Component	Purpose	Teaching approaches	When?
Co-creation of the course content and process	Engagement Taking responsibility for one's learning Relevance Development of a sense of ownership	Dialogue Interactive lectures Transforming prescribed learning outcomes into personalised inquiry questions Student presentations Whole people learning Utilisation of prior knowledge Field trips Guest speakers of student choice	Over one semester
Learning contracts	Living documents and can change over time Allow for uniqueness and an individual approach to each student Maintain clear boundaries, allow every situation to become a learning experience and retain a minimum of necessary formality in the learning context Students learning about being reliable and sticking to what they decided to focus on as well as allowing for flexibility and the natural progression of learning Cater for any format of the assignment, from essays and journals to poems and movies.	Students guided to personalise prescribed learning outcomes and phrase them in a question or inquiry statement form Students define resources, obstacles, set assignment dates, marking criteria and formats of their assignments	At the beginning of the course, but can be changed up until two days before assignments are due Students start working on their assignments on the first day of the course and engagement levels significantly increase
Self and peer reflection	Mutuality in learning Acknowledgement of various forms of knowledge Improvement of quality of assignments Learning that there are many ways of covering	When assessing and reflecting on assignments, a student, peer assessors and a teacher compare what a student decided to do, and how they formulated it in their contract, with what was achieved Feedback becomes very relevant, reflexive and focused on further learning Self and peer reflection forms	Before assignments are due Students have a chance of improving their assignments in reflection to peer

	the same learning outcome Principles of mutuality and reciprocity are exercised	No two assignments are the same and student report benefits from having a chance to peer assess their colleagues' assignments.	feedback
Teacher's role	Facilitation, support, sharing of knowledge, reflection, feedback, assessment, coordination	Facilitates the process, collates all assessment activities including peer and self-reflection and assigns a final mark integrating prescribed criteria and students' chosen criteria Organises field trips and guest speakers on students' request. Co-creation of each course in partnership with students Defining negotiables and non-negotiables	Throughout the course

The Academic Co-creative Inquiry, Rationale, Process and Reflection

Prescribed learning outcomes are written by academics to correspond to qualification authority that confirms a degree and are often perceived by students as very dry and academic. Phrasing them as questions shifts students from a merely receptive mode into an inquiry mode. Over time, questions can change and the more they change the more relevant they become.

Students define resources, obstacles, set assignment dates and marking criteria and soon become aware that the earlier they start gathering resources, the better for their inquiry. When they define obstacles they are asked to explore strategies to overcome them. Students set their own deadlines within prescribed academic limits and practice time management skills, so essential for effective social work. Prescribed and personal criteria are equally important and this approach facilitates management of the course as no extension forms are needed, students just change their contract and as long as the updated contract arrives at least two days before the assignment is due, there are no penalties and the old contract is simply replaced by a new one. If I do not receive a changed contract in time, I usually mark down for every day of being late as I want my future social workers to learn about responsible practice and working with deadlines. The main assessment criterion is coverage of learning outcomes, but the additional criteria are prescribed in the course outline and selected or created by students to reflect areas they would like to improve. Peer assessors and lecturers comment on both sets of criteria.

Peer and self-reflection are used to promote collaboration and learning from one another. This resembles appraisal processes in social practice, develops reflective practices

and significantly increases the quality of assignments. I experimented with many ways of doing peer and self - reflection. Usually, at the first year of their Bachelor degree, I ask students to share their work with a colleague of their choice, later in the program I ask them to provide two peer reflections, one from a student who thinks very much like them and one from a student who is very different to them. At a Master level, students need to submit one peer reflection from a colleague in the class and one from an external social practitioner. This provides very relevant feedback from two different perspectives. Peer assessors are formally thanked by a lecturer and sometimes they get interested in the course because of its unusual processes and enroll the following year as students.

This approach appreciates prior knowledge and each student can learn at their own pace focusing on a field of practice most relevant to them. It is student centered and they continuously learn from their differences by using various strengths in the group. Each course becomes different and unique, responsive to each group of students, contemporary and alive, which enables sustainability and social justice to feature in each course. Plagiarism does not happen.

A Comparative Analysis and Reflection on Both Methods

Contact-Challenge and Academic Co-Creative Inquiry are both based on social work principles and attempt to create authentic learning experiences for beginning (CCHM) and advanced (ACCI) students. Both use learning contracts which resemble the essence of the social work relationship. In CCHM the contract is between the student and the client-expert and it includes a supervisor and a teacher/facilitator. In ACCI the agreement is between the student and the academic institution and it may involve students working in groups and submitting joint assignments or undertaking project work. The element of choice is present in both but there are also very clear boundaries and clear distinctions between 'negotiables' and 'non-negotiables'. Criteria and standards of achievement are more visible in ACCI as it aims at more advanced students, however, a recent comparative research (Napan, 2012) proved it to be equally useful with students transitioning from secondary to tertiary education and in student support.

Both Contact-Challenge and Academic Co-creative Inquiry resulted in a very high engagement of students, remarkably positive feedback about the course, a very high standard of assignments and an increased collaboration between students.

Context, Mutuality and Reciprocity

When Contact-Challenge is applied, client involvement adds another dimension and enriches a social work program in a way no theoretical framework can. Over years, clients become very experienced and they now encourage new clients to get involved. In Croatia, from initial prejudice and refusal of most clients to participate in any kind of social work research or education, it became a matter of prestige to 'have your own student'. Initially, clients were not remotely interested in participating in any kind of student evaluation as they perceived it as teacher's job, however, they were quite keen to give them feedback as they perceived this as part of their client-expert role. These reflections often bring tears to students' eyes as only then they realize how much impact and quality they have brought to clients' lives and how their lives have been enriched by being in contact with their client. Students reciprocate by writing thank you letters to clients, sharing their learnings and experiences.

Ideally, Contact-Challenge should be performed over the entire academic year, but when contextualised in New Zealand, due to the timetable it had to be condensed over one semester. It still worked, but for clients with a severe disability, it is beneficial to have continuity and an engagement that lasts longer. Many students stay in touch with their clients upon completion of the program and report about transformational experiences of these encounters. The principle of reciprocity and mutuality comes to the forefront and upon experiencing the benefits of a genuine contact; students continue to be guided by this principle in their social practice.

Principles of mutuality and reciprocity express differently in these two methods; ACCI uses more peer and self-reflection as well as peer assessment from practitioners in the area of students' practice. This contributes to the integration of theory, practice and experience and appears to be useful not only for students but for peer assessors as well. When evaluating both methods, students reported about personal integrity that developed during this process and emphasized the importance of the context of inclusiveness that was co-created where all voices were heard and where a range of alternative views were appreciated and explored for

learning about respecting difference. In ACCI students can choose to give their assignments to clients to read (when appropriate and beneficial for students and clients) and, as the method is co-creative, a student can choose the level of the client's involvement in student assessment. For example, for an assignment for a Spirituality and Social Practice course, a student decided to do a cooperative inquiry into spirituality with a multicultural group of female clients. A student decided to do this separate from her private practice, free of charge, for a group of women who were interested in exploring their spirituality. In that group, a same student was not a counselor, but an equal participant and an inquirer. All five women reported that these group encounters were more beneficial for their personal growth than individual counseling as the camaraderie that developed sparked more new ideas than one-on-one counseling can provide. The inquiry process was peer and self-assessed and the assignment produced was of publishable value, but the student and her co-inquirers were not interested in publication stating that benefits they experienced were enough for them to feel satisfied about the process and the content of their inquiry.

Co-creativity and the Flow

The principle of co-creation where all voices are heard and all ideas explored has the potential of bringing a lot of uncertainty. When students are used to a 'banking' (Freire, 1970) approach to education they initially come with an attitude : "I don't know what I need to learn. You are a teacher, you tell me." I take that comment seriously and at times even prescribe what I believe is needed. These comments are rarely heard at Master level, but are very common at Bachelors. When applying ACCI within our Bachelor of Social Practice program, I had a Book of Readings for one of my courses with a selection of readings for students who wanted to do a bare minimum and just pass the course and for those who were not sure what they wanted to learn and focus on. Some students took that option, but after few weeks of very directed learning and focusing on specific reflective questions, they developed an idea of what they really needed to learn, self-assessed their prior knowledge and as a result have made a more informed choice about their assignments. At times I would advise them to phrase one of the learning outcomes as "I would like to pass this course" and then work backwards, figuring out what they needed to do to achieve this. However, most students love having choices and focus on fields of practice they are interested in, at the same time assuring that all prescribed learning outcomes are still covered. I have noticed that when

students truly engage with the material of the course the 'flow' happens and they do more than what is expected. When they do group assignments as a choice and not as a prescribed requirement, synergy happens and the quality of assignments and learning skyrockets. For example, a group of students chose to do a movie covering seven learning outcomes for the Professional Practice course on the first year of Bachelor of Social Practice degree. The prescribed learning outcomes were:

1. Evaluate social practice as a tool of social change and social control.

2. Evaluate professional practice for elements of oppression.

3. Analyse purpose and principles of anti-discriminatory practice.

4. Critically analyse and apply theories relevant to social practice.

5. Critically evaluate at least one model, theory or approach used in social practice.

6. Explore and analyse vulnerability and resilience of clients in crisis and propose strategies for crisis intervention.

7. Evaluate the role and function of supervision in professional practice.

They personalised them as inquiry questions and directed, acted in and recorded a 20-minute movie that covered all learning outcomes through a case study of a young man visited by a social worker and how his story of recovery unfolded. In the movie, they demonstrated they were fully conversant with all prescribed learning outcomes and that a lot of reading, exploration and reflection went into the process. As well as receiving highest marks, they became friends, learned to rely on one another and enjoyed the process immensely.

Choice and freedom

Both approaches need commitment and careful consideration of initial learning contracts as they offer a lot of choice and change over time. Good file keeping, updating and quick response to students when they exercise this freedom is necessary. This investment of time at the beginning is very useful later, as good contracts set up students for some exceptional learning and give them necessary focus to expand on their prior knowledge and at the same time become open to unexpected learning.

Trust

This freedom to choose and flexibility contributes to a sense of trust in the classroom. The trust that clients develop over years of CCHM application in the social work profession,

system of education and their students is palpable. Developing a sense of agency and the ability to contribute to the way social work education is delivered, has also built a lot of trust between social workers, academics, students and clients.

Relevance

Relevant social work education asks students to do only purposeful work and when students are aware of why they are doing certain tasks they usually apply themselves fully. The main purpose is for students to explore and become aware of their prejudices, learn how to make a genuine contact with another human being, address personal issues that may prevent them from becoming effective social workers, learn about a range of theories and assess which approach suits their style of working and beliefs. This principle is reflected differently in ACCI as students make their inquiry questions relevant and all assignments are directly related to their future or present practice.

Integration and Integrity

When CCHM is applied, some students realize that the social work profession is not a good choice for them. They leave with dignity and the intensive first year contact with clients helps them to make this decision. I believe it is much better that students discover this at the beginning of their studies rather than ending up in a profession they dislike for the rest of their lives. Both methods integrate theory, practice and personal experience on many levels. CCHM does it through exploration of theories in the classroom and then through practicing problem solving with one another on real life issues. Engagement with clients and supervision enables students to reflect on their practice and the four components of CCHM (theory, skills, experience and reflection) get embedded in everything a student does. Early in their education, students realize that theories are practical, that beliefs shape our actions and the importance of supervision.

When ACCI is applied, integration is at the core of the course as students put into practice their strengths and abilities, reflect on their practice and expand their knowledge in order to become effective practitioners.

Both methods require competent, experienced and devoted teachers prepared to be transparent about their teaching and comfortable with their material enough to be able to 'play' with it is allowing students to change or modify the course during the academic year. It is essential a teacher knows what is negotiable and what is non-negotiable within their academic context. The CCHM requires continuous networking and maintaining contacts with clients and agencies that support the program. The ACCI requires a teacher being comfortable not to teach the same course ever again as each inquiry is unique and although prescribed learning outcomes may stay the same, the essence of the course changes as each group brings its own unique way of inquiring.

Instead of Conclusion

I found that when teaching co-creatively, a solid structure in the background and clearly outlined non-negotiable parts of the program enable students and teachers to freely experiment and 'play with' changeable aspects which in turn enables all to focus on their strengths, interests and skills that need to be further developed. Good understanding of social work processes, theories and values as well as sound knowledge of these unusual teaching methods enables academics to allow flexibility in delivery and contributes to courses being student centered but at the same time ensuring that graduate profiles are met and that competence is reached.

The question that comes to mind is: what is the purpose of education in the age of transformation? Is tertiary education a business, a basic human right or a service to the community? The education system is a reflection of the political system that rules the country and beliefs promoted by that system permeate it. With increasing competition by international social work training providers keen to open training establishments around the world, we must be mindful to retain the local currency of the social work profession and carefully contextualise imported topics and processes. Social workers work with the most vulnerable populations and social work should never become a 'profitable business' or decontextualised. Regardless of how paradoxical the 'business model' looks in social work, this is exactly what has happened to education in the western world. The perception of the need for more and more specialized academic degrees combined with good marketing, has turned education into one of many profitable industries, often blind to the needs of the

community and interested in student numbers, retention and evaluation of measurable outcomes. Social work courses are developed and at times 'franchised' to developing countries without contextualisation of these courses. The essence of effective social work education is in awareness of global issues and debates and in its foundation in local, indigenous, authentic, organic movements and ways of being.

The aim of this article was to present and compare two co-creative teaching-learning methods developed in two very different contexts. The Contact Challenge was brought to New Zealand from Croatia and contextualised to fit the New Zealand context. This process of contextualisation further developed the method and made it more flexible and able to be contextualised elsewhere with possibly only a week of training for course developers. This contexualisation process is reciprocity in action, as any new application and modification of the method enriches it as well as all participants in the process. The Academic Co-creative Inquiry was contextualised across a range of providers and courses. ACCI with 17-year-old Foundation studies students learning Sociology differs from ACCI for Masters students exploring trans-cultural social practice. However, the qualities mentioned at the beginning of this article permeate both methods no matter where applied and the specifics of each country and the context where applied make them unique and relevant every time.

I am interested in further development and contextualisation of both methods and at present am involved with a group of academics keen to experiment and play with Academic Co-Creative Inquiry in a range of contexts. If interested please contact the author at ksenijanapan@gmail.com

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