WORKING PAPER #2B

Ecological Perspectives on Social Care Practice, Education, Learning & Creativity APPLYING CONCEPTS, TOOLS & FRAMEWORKS

Norman Jackson and Louisa Goss

Introduction

This Working Paper (WP) sets out to explore how the idea of ecologies for practice, learning and creativity (Jackson 2016, 2017, 2019, 2020a & b) might be applied to social care professional practice, and education and training that prepares learners for practice in the field of social care. It supports a contribution to the Irish Creativity and Innovation in Social Care (CISC) Network's 2021 CPD initiative part of which is focused on creativity in social care work and education, and it is formed around the proposition that creativity, like learning and practice, is an ecological phenomenon that emerges as a practitioner with expert knowledge and skill, interacts with their environment and the things that matter to them in their environment as they work. The WP is in two parts: Part A introduced some concepts, tools and frameworks that help us appreciate and make sense of learning and creativity as experiential/ecological phenomena. Part B is a work in progress. It focuses on the domain of social care and shows how the tools and frameworks introduced in Part A might be used in the social care field.

Using a case study developed by Louisa Goss, we examine creativity as an ecological phenomenon in the educational context of programmes that have been designed to prepare learners for social care work. Here creativity is embedded and embodied in the signature pedagogy of a social care educational practitioner as she redesigns a module that has previously been taught face to face, for on-line delivery.

What is social care work?

The disciplinary focus for this exploration is social care. People who work in social care undertake, diverse roles in a range of contexts, involving a person or persons in need of care.

Their work involves them understanding the challenging situations and circumstances in which their clients live, providing them with emotional support that can only be provided through a meaningful relationship, and working with them to help them access the practical and financial support, resources and services they need to help them survive and flourish. They may also work directly with their client to encourage and facilitate their personal and social development. Social Care Ireland (2021) provides an authoritative succinct statement about the role of Social Care Workers.

> "Social Care Workers plan and provide professional care to vulnerable individuals and groups of all ages who experience marginalisation, disadvantage or special needs. As well as protecting and advocating for such individuals and groups, Social Care Workers professionally guide, challenge and support those entrusted to their care toward achieving their fullest potential. Client groups are varied and include children and adolescents in residential care; young people in detention schools; people with intellectual or physical disabilities; people who are homeless; people with alcohol/drug dependency; families in the community; or older people. Social Care Work is based on interpersonal relationships which require empathy, strong communication skills, self-awareness and an ability to use critical reflection. Teamwork and interdisciplinary work are also important in social care practice.
>
> The core principles underpinning Social Care Work are similar to those of other helping professions, and they include respect for the dignity of clients; social justice; and empowerment of clients to achieve their full potential.
>
> Social Care Workers are trained, inter alia, in life span development, parenting, attachment & loss, interpersonal communication and behaviour management. Their training equips them to optimize the personal and social development of those with whom they work. In Ireland, the minimum per-requisite qualification to practice as a Social Care Worker in the publicly funded health sector is a 3-year Level 7 degree."

In Ireland Social Care has two external set of standards: The Social Care Workers Registration Board (Quality and Qualifications Ireland. Colleges apply for their Social Care programme to be legally recognised as a 'professional' course by SCWRB (students can then register and work and this is ongoing and not all colleges applied) and QQI standards are required in all colleges. Neither standards nor proficiencies are prescriptive as each college determines the best way to meet them. Consequently, higher education teachers have considerable autonomy over the design and content of curricular and the pedagogical strategies they employ.

Experiential World of the Practitioner

When we engage in professional practice – such as a social care practitioner or social care educator might engage in everyday, we place ourselves in the practical and conceptual territory of learning through the experience of doing something in order to achieve something that is professionally valuable and reflecting on our experiences and the consequences of our actions. Through their doings both social care practitioners and educators share a common purpose namely to improve the lives of the people they are serving – clients or learners.

Learning through the experience of doing connects us to educational theorist John Dewey. For Dewey doing and the experience that emerges is always a dynamic two-way process. He referred to this process as a 'transaction': 'An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between the individual and, what at the time, constitutes the environment' (Dewey, 1938: 43).

"When we experience something we act upon it, we do something; then we suffer or undergo the consequences. We do something to the thing and then it does something to us in return: such is the peculiar combination. The connection of these two phases of experience measures the fruitfulness of experience. Mere activity does not constitute experience." (Dewey, 1916: 104).

Dewey suggests that experience involves both 'trying' and 'undergoing' (Dewey, 1916: 104). 'Trying' refers to the outward expression of intention or action. It is the purposeful engagement of the individual with their environment and the unfolding situations in it, in Dewey's words, *"doing becomes trying; an experiment with the world to find out what it is like"* (ibid). Through action an attempt is made to have an impact on the world. 'Undergoing', the other aspect of the 'transaction' in experience, refers to the consequences of experience on the individual. In turn, in attempting to have an impact, the experience also impacts on us. 'Undergoing' refers to the consequences of the experience for us (Ord 2012 p60).

Figure 1 provides a graphical illustration of Dewey's model of human experience (Dewey 1934) adapted from Glaveanu et al (2013).

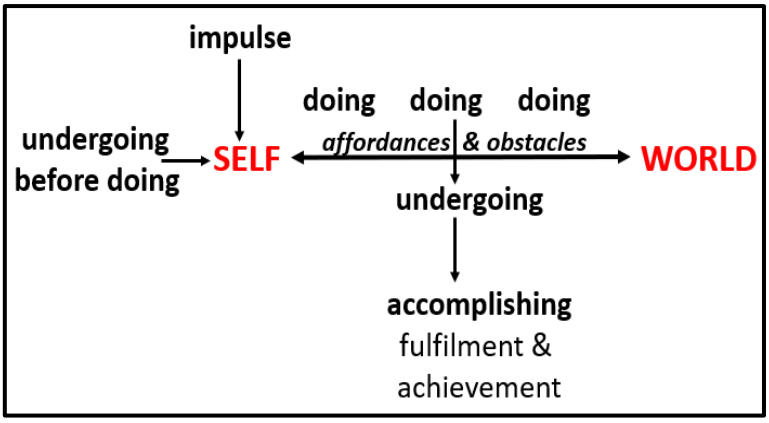
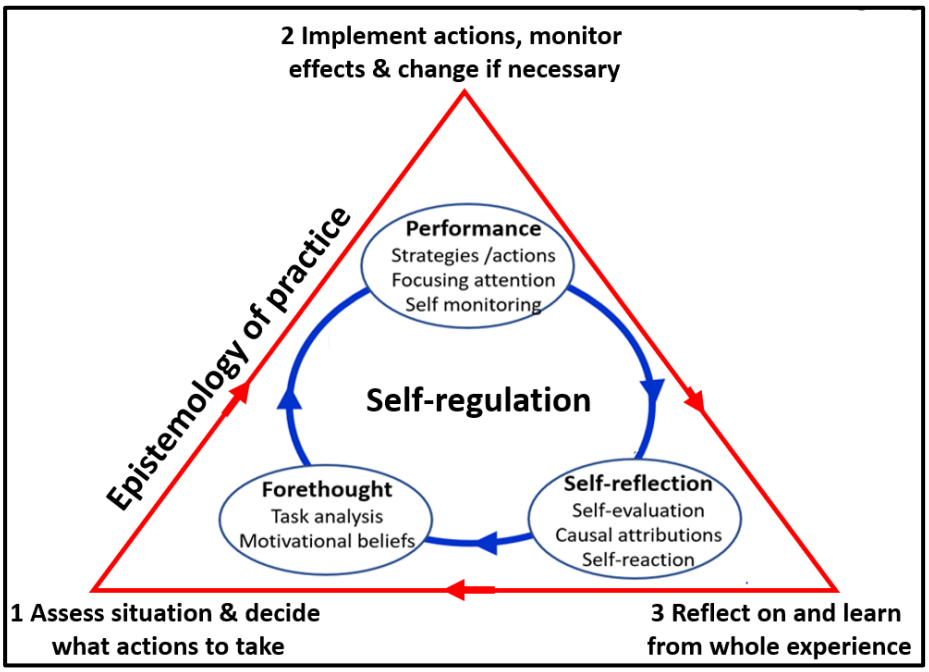


Figure 1 A model of human experience (Dewey 1934) adapted from Glaveanu et al 2013.

The transactional of experience involving people interacting with, impacting on and undergoing in the process, provides the foundation for the ecological perspective on practice, learning and other things like creativity that emerge through such human-environment interactions (Jackson 2016, 2019, 2020a & b). The way we think and act is conditioned by our perception and experience of the world in the specific situations in which we are a part, 'our cognition is the exercise of skilful know-how in situated and embodied action within an environment' (Thompson 2010).

Figure 2 How practitioners engage with their environment. Red Michael Eraut's epistemology of practice (Eraut and Hirsch 2008) and Blue - Barry Zimmerman's model of self-regulation (Zimmerman 2000)



Through their education and training practitioners develop highly specialised cognitive routines when they engage in a deliberate and structured way with a situation or problem in a work environment, which Michael Eraut calls an epistemology of practice (Figure 2). These routines enable them to assess situations in particular ways: to take in and diagnose a problem, decide what actions to take if any, implement these actions with awareness of the effects they are

having so that they can adjust them if necessary, and then reflect on the whole and learn from the experience (Eraut and Hirsch 2008).

Zimmerman (2000) and others express this integrated process of intentional, skilful and interdependent thinking and action in their model of self-regulation through which cognitive, emotional and physical activity are distributed through the domains of forethought, performance and self-reflection. Figure 2 attempts to integrate these two theoretical perspectives.

It stands to reason that the creativity of a practitioner is embedded in these cognitive and behavioural routines when applied to specific situations in specific work environments.

Dewey believed that action and creativity are brought together through human experience, defined precisely by the interaction between a person and their environment as they seek to create new value.

"For Dewey, what brings action and creativity together is human experience, defined precisely by the interaction between person and environment and intrinsically related to human activity in and with the world. …Action starts….with an impulsion and is directed toward fulfilment. In order for action to constitute experience though, obstacles or constraints are needed. Faced with these challenges, the person experiences emotion and gains awareness (of self, of the aim, and path of action). Most importantly, action is structured as a continuous cycle of "doing" (actions directed at the environment) and "undergoing" (taking in the reaction of the environment). Undergoing always precedes doing and, at the same time, is continued by it. It is through these interconnected processes that action can be taken forward and become a "full" experience." (Glaveanu et al 2013 p2-3)

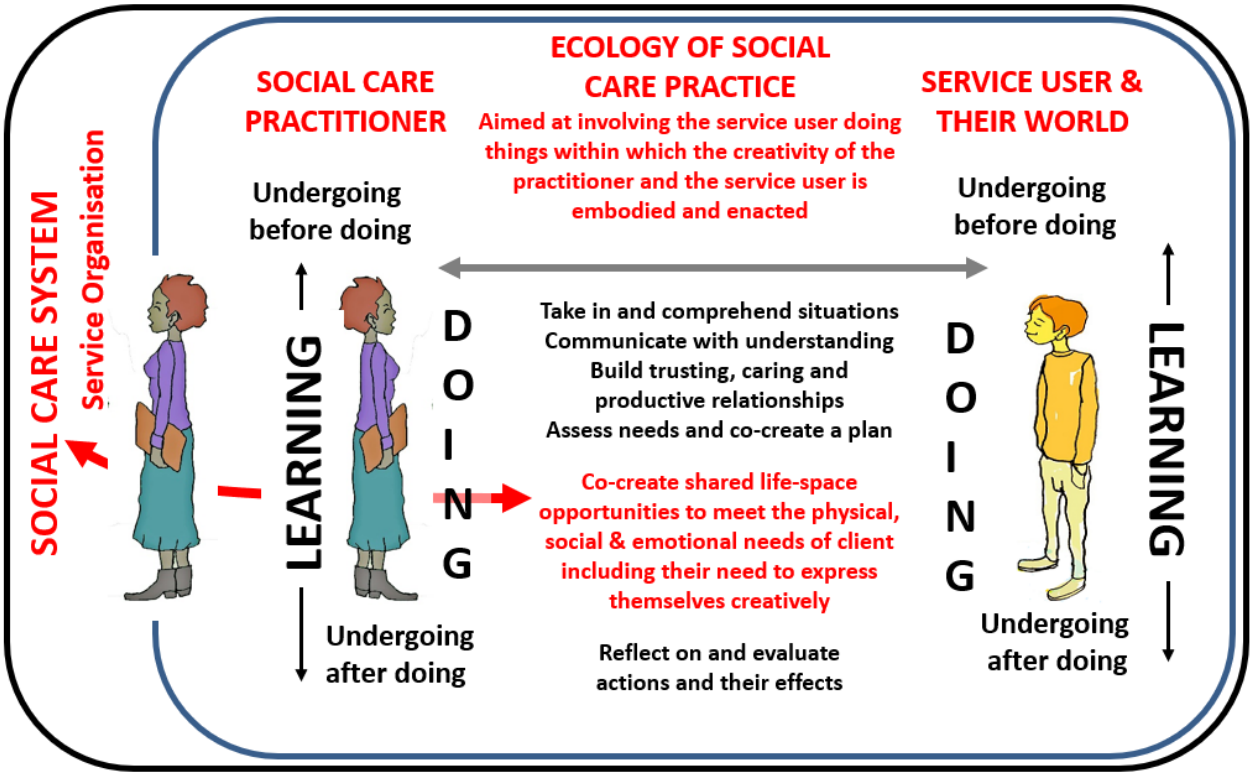
Creative self-expression is personal creativity in and through action. It lies in relating, connecting and weaving together different things from a world that has meaning and significance to the creator. Creative self-expression when applied in all the contexts of a person's life is:

"the ways and means by which a person connects, relates and interacts their inner cognitive/psychological world – their many selves holding beliefs, values, identities, perceptions, imaginings, reasonings and feelings, with an environment that has meaning to them, in order to share their thoughts and feelings and / or create something that is a part of themselves. Through this relational, enactive and embodied dynamic involving a person and

the environment that has meaning to them, the phenomenon of creativity emerges along with other things that are not creative."

The question of what is creative practice then becomes one of understanding how, why and when certain things are related, connected and wove together by the practitioner. We can use these concepts to construct key relationships and interactions in the professional world of a social care practitioner (Figure 3). Just taking one of countless scenarios, we can imagine a social care practitioner working with a young person who is homeless, jobless and exposed to physical, drug and alcohol abuse. Her goal is to make a positive difference to her client's life by finding him safe and secure accommodation with other young people and developing a relationship of trust through which she can employ a range of strategies to change his negative perspectives of himself and his life so that, over time, he can build a new, more independent and productive life for himself.

Figure 3 Interpretation of Dewey's transactional / interactional model of experience shown for the Social Care practitioner within which learning and creativity emerge as they *try to do* and achieve something and undergo (learn) in the process.



At the macro- level the SCP works in a team for a publicly-funded or charitable organisation but they are part of large ecosystem of social care support containing state and charitable organisations and legal/regulatory frameworks, educational institutions and professional bodies. The SCP has been involved in this ecosystem from the moment she began her specialised education and training programme. Through her education, training and field experience she has 'undergone' - she has developed the knowledge, skills and attitudes to undertake her role. She understands the entitlements of her clients, and the nature of the support and resources that the ecosystem can provide them. Through her many interactions she has formed productive and sometimes co-creative working relationships with individuals in these organisations who can help her and her client solve their shared problem. Through her specialist education and professional training she understands the legal, regulatory and ethical frameworks within which she must work.

At the micro-level the SCP works with her vulnerable young person. Through his life experiences he also has 'undergone' to become the person he is. He inhabits an ecosystem living on the streets with his friends, gangs and drug dealers, police, social services and others. Her ability to solve the problem she shares with her client is dependent on her understandings of the person and his situations and circumstances and his life experiences that have brought him to this point. This is her focus for her professional leaning and it is learning that is profoundly personal, relational and experiential grounded in her day-to-day communications and other interactions with her client. Only when she has earned a relationship of trust can she 'guide, encourage, challenge and support' her client 'to achieve [his] fullest potential' and co-create solutions with him that stand a chance of working.

In her role of advocate and broker the social care practitioner must weave together in a new narrative, her client's present and immediate future with the practical and financial support, resources and services they need to help them prosper. Although there might be a plan things will not necessarily work out as intended and adjustments and improvisations may have to be made.

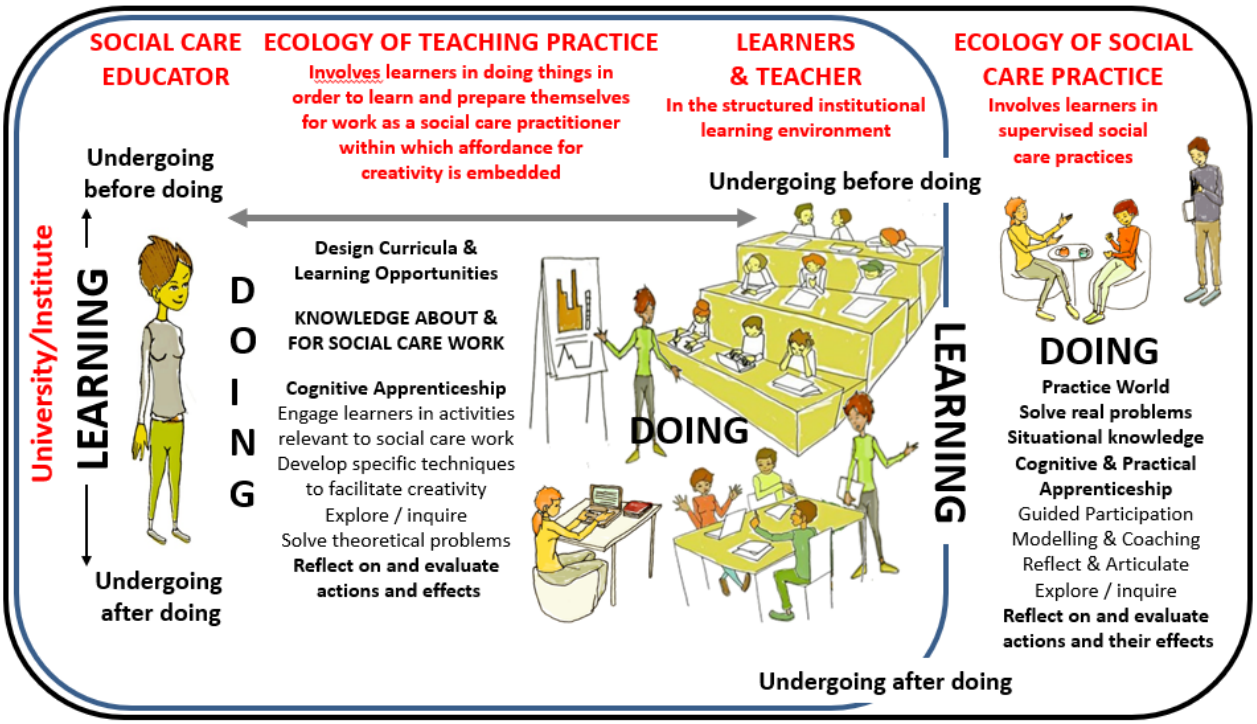
Applying Dewey's Model to Social Care Education

We can extend the use of Dewey's interactional model to the social care educational environment. Figure 4 provides a representation of a Social Care educator in a pedagogical relationship with her students who are learning to be social care practitioners. Most of the education and training of novice social care practitioners will take place within the educational

institution using forms of pedagogical practices that are used in many other disciplines. But some teaching and learning strategies may be particular to social care.

To become a practitioner in any professional field a learner must serve both a *cognitive apprenticeship* and a *practical apprenticeship* in which activities and tasks are undertaken in authentic contexts and settings (Pratt 1998). Cognitive apprenticeship, "learning through guided experience on cognitive and metacognitive [levels], rather than physical, skills and processes" (Collins et al. 1989 p.456), enables learners to develop the knowledge and ability to perceive, imagine and reason. They develop themselves *to think and act like* a social care practitioner within the framework provided by their particular programme. The practical apprenticeship enables the novice learner to develop and apply the skills they need in order *to practice* in their practice world.

Figure 4 Interpretation of Dewey's transactional / interactional model of experience shown for the Social Care educator in a pedagogical relationship with her students who are learning to be social care practitioners. Part of their education involves these novice practitioners engaging, under supervision, in real world social care practices.



The cognitive apprenticeship model is most directly related to situated cognition. In situated approaches learners collaborate with one another and their teacher to co-create shared understanding of problems and situations. Teachers who engage learners in such approaches

believe that they can process concepts and information, and develop solutions to problems, more thoroughly and more usefully when multiple perspectives, beliefs or possible solutions are shared within a group. Cognitive apprenticeship requires making explicit the thinking, behaviours and processes of practitioners visible to novice learners, so that they can observe, practices and reflect on them (Collins et al., 1989). Teaching strategies in cognitive apprenticeships include (Dennen and Burner 2007 p.427):

Modelling - Demonstrating the thinking process
Coaching - Assisting and supporting student cognitive activities as needed (includes scaffolding)
Reflection & Articulation - Verbalizing the results of thinking about thinking and actions
Exploration - Learning through inquiry and the formation and testing of one's own hypotheses

The idea of cognitive apprenticeship is closely linked to the *signature pedagogies* used by teachers*:* the 'types of teaching that organize the fundamental ways of educating future practitioners and are used to transfer skills of how *to think*, *to perform* and *to act* with integrity in their professional work' (Schulman 2005, Guring, et al. 2009, Chick et al. 2012). Through their signature pedagogies teachers create *signature learning experiences* that enable students to learn to 'inhabit' environments that are identical or close to the environments they will encounter in their future practice world. They enable learners to develop the perceptual awareness they will need to interpret and act in the work environment in the way a practitioner would. This is why work-placements are so important in higher education courses that have a strong vocational orientation.

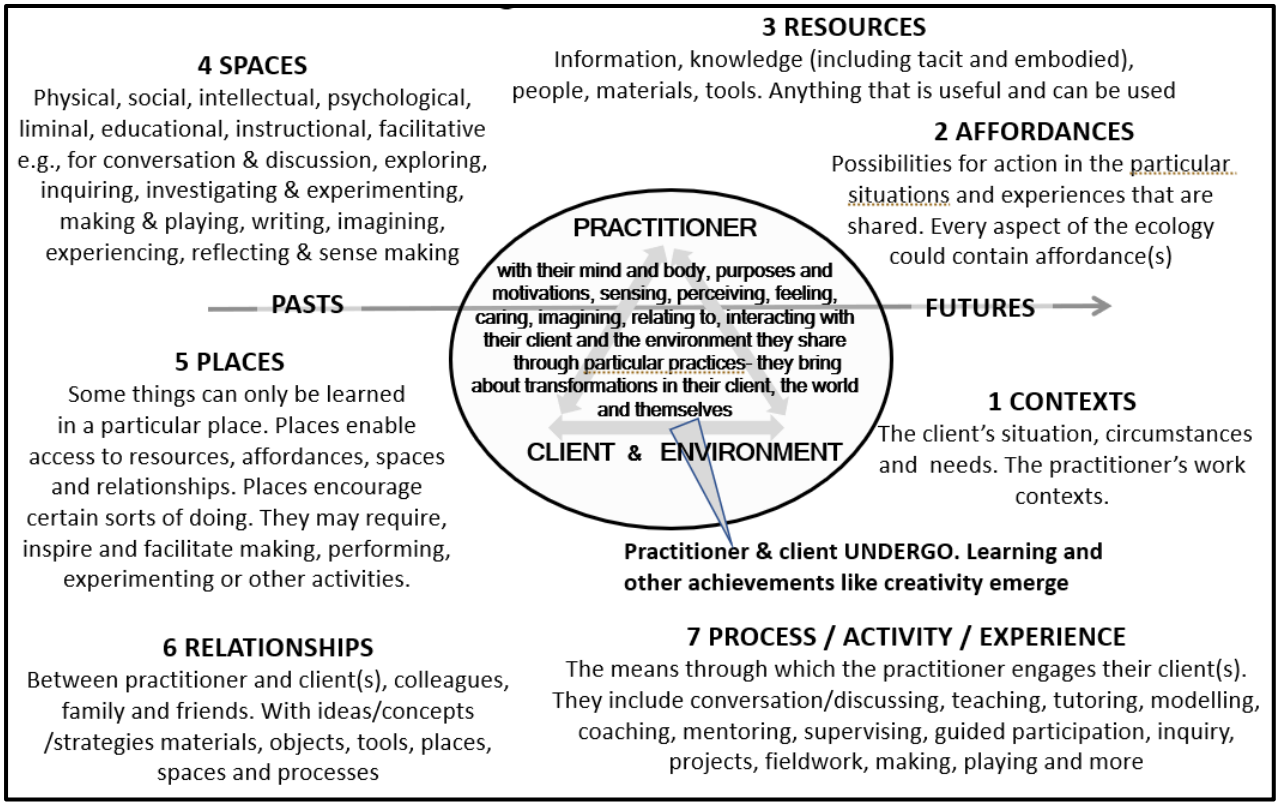
We can interpret signature learning experiences through the frame of an ecology for learning that enables learners to relate to and interact with the whole environment in which they are situated (Figure 3). Such a perspective enables us to link the worlds of learners engaged in cognitive apprenticeship in a higher education environment to the practice world outside higher education for which they are preparing.

A higher education programme, taught within a university or college, provides students with a purpose which they must make their own, a set of contexts and circumstances for learning and development, environments containing spaces, resources, people, and programmed activities and experiences, within which the student is provided with, or discovers for themselves, affordances for learning, developing and achieving. Contained within these affordances are the opportunities for creative action and expression.

Ecologies for Practice Involving Clients (users of services) & Students

Seeing learning as a personal, situated phenomenon which emerges as people interact with their environments lends itself to the idea that learning is an ecological phenomenon. The ecological perspective on practice sees learning as a consequence of individuals and groups of people relating to and interacting with their environment in purposeful/intentional and sometimes improvised ways. When a practitioner encounters a new situation, problem, challenge or opportunity they use their senses and mind to perceive and comprehend the situation and act in ways that are appropriate for the context (Eraut and Hersch 2008, Zimmerman, 2000). Effectively, they create and inhabit an ecology whose components are outlined in Figure 5 that enables them to interact in a dynamic way with their client, the environment they share and the particular things that matter to them within it.

Figure 5 A model for an ecology of practice in which learning and other achievements are embedded. This version emphasises the practitioner - client relationship embedded in their shared work environment (Jackson 2019, 2020). The labels 1-7 explain the key dimensions of the ecology as a person senses, perceives and interacts with their environment but they do not say how they interact. This is revealed in narratives of actions and achievements. The components of the ecology do not stand in isolation. They can and do connect, interfere and become incorporated into each other.



The heuristic attempts to embrace the complex interactional and continuously unfolding dynamic of a whole, thinking, feeling, acting practitioner, to their circumstances and contexts, their needs, desires and purposes, and the situations they are dealing with. This version of the framework has been developed for the context of a practitioner interacting with a client or clients and it is relevant to understanding how, why, when and where creativity can emerge in the process of trying to accomplish something.

Through their ecology for practice the practitioner and individual/client develop a relationship and interact with each other and their physical environment and the physical and psychological spaces and places they share, containing the affordances (opportunities for action), and resources (knowledge, materials and tools, and literally anything that is useful) necessary for doing and accomplishing something that is of value. In this ecological relationship the practitioner skilfully engages her client(s)/ individual in carefully chosen and constructed activities. For example a social care worker or social care educator of might engage their clients/students in discussion, or a meaningful practical activity like an artistic making processes which connects their intellectual, psychological and emotional worlds. It is through these relationships and interactions that new meanings/understandings emerge.

Applying the Concept of an Ecology of Practice to Social Care Educational Practice

This section of the paper applies the ideas, concepts and tools introduced in Working Paper 2A and in the first part of this paper, to an example of social care educational practice to show how learning and creativity are experiential/ecological phenomenon. There are two steps to applying the ecological framework and tools for making sense of creativity. The first is to create a narrative including sufficient details to be able to map and evaluate the experience using the ecological framework and conceptual tools. In presenting the case study and commentary on creativity, our hope is that it will encourage the development of further case studies to aid exploration of these ideas.

EXPERIENTIAL CASE STUDY by Louisa Goss

The Case Study describes a partnership approach between Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) and RehabCare. The project was led by Louisa Goss (LG) and involves social care students, social care workers, and adults who use the services of RehabCare in Dundalk, a community-based resource centre for adults with intellectual disability (ID). Working in groups,

students undertake a ten-week collaborative arts project over three months from February to April with adults with mild to moderate ID with additional support from care workers, culminating in an event or exhibition. Technology was to the fore in the current iteration of the project using Zoom as a platform to connect eight members of RehabCare as well as their families with twenty-six students in Year 2 on the BA (Hons) in Social Care programme at DkIT. While other technology tools were used in the weekly sessions for creative engagement the emphasis was on physically making art using non-digital methods. The culmination of the project was the creation of a website to showcase artwork and stories created by the participants using Google sites.

This initiative has been running for 6 years and sits within LG's 2nd year Inclusive Arts module. It presents a real world learning opportunity for social care students to develop their own creativity and support the creative development of service users through collaborative working, as well as enhance their self-relationship and relationships with other people. In previous years the module was delivered face-to-face but because of the social contact restrictions associated with covid 19 pandemic, the challenge was to deliver the module through an on-line medium without any face-to-face contact. In pedagogical and experiential terms, I was venturing into entirely new and unfamiliar territory. I was excited by the possibilities that this challenge would present for me and the idea of creating something new both independently and in collaboration with others.

This year's socially engaged social care project sought to explore places and spaces we love and promote wellbeing through creative engagement based on the collective needs of the participants. The project also aimed to fulfill a social need of RehabCare participants, that was in making new connections with other people during Covid and as such contributed to the enhancement of their lives through inclusion in a new community group.

In September 2020 LG contacted one of the managers at RehabCare to discuss the possibility of moving their usual face-to-face collaborative arts project online due to the Covid situation. During this meeting LG proposed Zoom as a platform to connect service users and students and outlined ways in which she would keep participants safe whilst learning online including the use of the security feature in Zoom and the creation of a group agreement. Following a meeting of staff and managers in RehabCare it was agreed that the collaborative project would continue this year albeit at a distance.

At this point I began to consider how the project might work in the virtual world and drew on my experience of participating in online workshops during the summer especially features of

those sessions that I found to be successful. I had some ideas about themes for the project and artistic mediums but held off on fine tuning my thinking as I wanted to work from the interests and needs of the service users. This is my approach to working with community groups – the theme of a project is decided by the participants and I use my knowledge and skills to realise our shared goal.

During a follow-up meeting in January 2021 with the Programme Supervisor (PS) at RehabCare, we discussed ideas for the project and materials that might be of interest to the group. The PS was interested in the idea of a project involving casting with concrete, however the budget for this project would not be sufficient to cover the materials and associated costs for a project of this nature (e.g. concrete, polystyrene etc.) and it would be impractical for those people logging on from home with limited space.

It was clear from our conversation that promoting service users' wellbeing through creative activity and the creation of a positive experience for all would need to be at the heart of this project. Our discussion on wellbeing brought us to relaxation exercises that service users would have typically engaged in pre-Covid including meditation and mindfulness. The idea of promoting creative self-care chimed with me as these are forms of relaxation that I value and make use of in my daily life and I noted that similar exercises could be incorporated into the design of the workshops, for example body scans and relaxing guided meditations.

Spending considerably more time in my home environment during the covid pandemic had led to me to immerse myself in the rural landscape around me and discover a deeper connection and relationship with the place in which I live. This got me thinking more about places and spaces we inhabit which in turn led to the idea that this could form the core theme to our collaborative project. I presented the idea of exploring places and spaces we love to RehabCare: I felt it would be uplifting and meaningful to everyone participating given the stark reality of our lives in a locked down Covid world. Given the restrictions we were all experiencing I felt some expansions of participants' mental, physical and emotional worlds could be achieved through imaginative exploration of those places and spaces they treasure, real, imaged or both. At this point I suggested paper collage, painting and 3D model making as artistic mediums for exploration of the theme as well as the use of art packs (materials for use in the online sessions). The RehabCare PS liked these ideas and we agreed that this would be the core theme for our collaborative project.

I was energised by the positive feedback I had received from RehabCare for my idea for the project. I began drafting a plan for the weekly sessions mindful that the activities in each

workshop would need to build upon each other and have enough flexibility so that each person could engage with them in ways that were personally meaningful to them. I considered other artistic mediums outside of art that could be used in an interdisciplinary way for exploring ideas about places and spaces and choose art and storytelling because I have experience of using both art forms with a range of groups to good effect and I was aware that the service users participating in this project regularly use these mediums to express themselves and communicate their ideas. My prior experience of using art and storytelling was mainly in face-to-face sessions that involved the use of traditional art materials and some digital resources.

I drew on my skills and knowledge (including past experiences) in this area of my artistic practice and incorporated postal art packs (something which I had used in the delivery of my practical classes the previous semester) into the project plan for the paper collage, painting and 3D model making activities. I also wanted to utilise digital tools such as 'Reveal the Image' (which had been introduced to me by a colleague) as games to enhance observational skills, as well as encouraging interaction among participants. I wanted to encourage participants' creative self-expression through the making of artistic artefacts and therefore privilege the physical act of making artwork rather than allowing technology to dominate the experience.

But of course the online environment was essential because it enabled RehabCare staff, students, service users and for the first time their families to meet and interact. Indeed, the range of different people involved in the project has been central to its success. The project connected students, and adults with ID and their families at home with social care workers and service users in a day centre as well as in a horticulture unit. It afforded the participants an opportunity to connect with each other in ways that may not have been possible pre-Covid.

Facilitating a co-creative collaborative learning experience in which participants felt a sense of ownership of the project and where a culture of participation was fostered was at the core of this initiative. At the next stage in the planning process I involved students during our preparation for working online workshops inviting them to contribute ideas for exercises and games that could be included in the online sessions. The idea of communicating feelings through colour or imagery was popular among the students. One suggestion to use landscape imagery to describe emotions (e.g. seascape, mountains and forests) was chosen as our creative check-in for each workshop) while storytelling activities that focused on memories of places visited was also included. Many other engaging ideas were offered but time and space did not allow their use in this occasion. However, they have been recorded on a Padlet whiteboard with the intention to use them in future projects.

The main challenges identified by the student group related to communicating online with people who might have speech impairments as well as building rapport and forming relationships in the virtual learning space in the absence of the visual cues that arise when in the presence of a person. I drew on my personal creativity in constructing solutions to these problems which included workshops on communicating with people with ID and a talk on the services of RehabCare provided by a member of staff to prepare students for working with service users in an online environment.

In the delivery of the 10 weekly online sessions I organised students in groups of 4-5 plus one person from RehabCare for small group work which took place in the breakout rooms and used the main room for the creative check-in, demonstrations and closing discussion at the end of each session with the whole group. The design of each session required significantly more structured thinking and planning than I would typically use in face-to-face delivery to facilitate engagement and learning. For example, I had to better acquaint myself with the functionality of the software to ensure that I was using it competently and to best effect in the delivery of the project and include action learning strategies that aligned with the objective of each session. In the online delivery of the project I adopted the role of technician in addition to my central role as facilitator of creative experiences. However, as this narrative reveals it would be more accurate to say that I moved in and out of different roles as the project evolved.

It is clearly evident from feedback (which I gathered online) that students experienced themselves differently throughout these experiences as their interactions with people who are different to them challenged their assumptions about disability as well as being creative. I would extend this notion of experiencing oneself differently to myself as the creative processes in which we engaged in led to a redefining of the role of student practitioner and teacher/facilitator from ‘worthy helper’ to “the more radical role of collaborator” (Fox, 2015). In so doing, the spotlight was on learning through these processes and the quality of the creative contributions of each participant. Learning became a two-way process as students learned from those with a disability and vice versa, and I also learnt from the participants, and they from me. I would suggest the nature of this exchange had a ripple effect on all participants. For example, I recall being placed in the role of creative writer as requested by one of the service users. In this instance I collected his ideas for the content of the story which later became a poem which I presented to the group the following week. I enjoyed the spontaneity with these workshops as it gave me the chance to think on my feet, use humour, express myself, and do things differently from the plan. It was a very satisfying experience as I could bring more of my personality to the shared experience and strengthen my interactions with others. I believe this way of relating was meaningful to students also in terms of expressing themselves creatively

and the associated benefits. Students spoke about how impressed they were by the quality of the creative achievements of the service users and the way in which it gave them confidence to open-up and be creative. One student commented that when she worked in a small group in the breakout room to write a story about what was going on in her model one of the persons with a disability who is competent in creative writing (she engages in the creative writing programme on a regular in the centre) shared tips and advice on writing a short narrative with her as she felt less confident with this medium.

In the experience I have just recounted my creativity was directed mainly towards achieving a task. I made use of my professional knowledge, skills and competence in designing curricula and facilitating real world learning experiences, emphasising a collaborative and co-constructed approach in keeping with the realities of the workplace environment. That said, I had moments within the project when I brought my own artistic self-expression forms of creativity to the fore, for example through practical art demonstrations and the writing of a poem. This shows that creativity takes many forms and is manifested in many different ways in everyday life.

For me, this experience has highlighted the importance of involving a diverse group of people in co-creating the learning environment for successful educational outcomes and learning and creative achievements that cannot be measured. The consequence of this action for me is such that in re-designing the practical classes to suit online delivery I have widened my repertoire of skills and most importantly developed a richer understanding of the notion of experiencing oneself differently as I moved back and forth between various roles. Writing about this experience has helped me appreciate the complexity of ideas contained within this initiative, something that I would have glossed over until I have thought about them using the ecology of practice framework. I would not have thought about this project in these terms but as I think deeply about how individual sessions and the whole experience unfolded, I now come to view the magic that occurred in the complex weaving of ideas, people, materials, tools, spaces, places, processes and situations, as my ecology of practice through which I transformed myself and my world.

Making Sense of Creativity in Social Care Education & Practice

This is a story of adaptation and transformation driven by necessity because of a fairly unique set of circumstances. They say necessity is the mother of invention and in this case, the underlying context of social contact restrictions because of the covid 19 pandemic, demanded that a module requiring close physical interaction, be changed for on-line delivery. It can be argued that the narrative reflects a set of situations that align closely with an emergent and

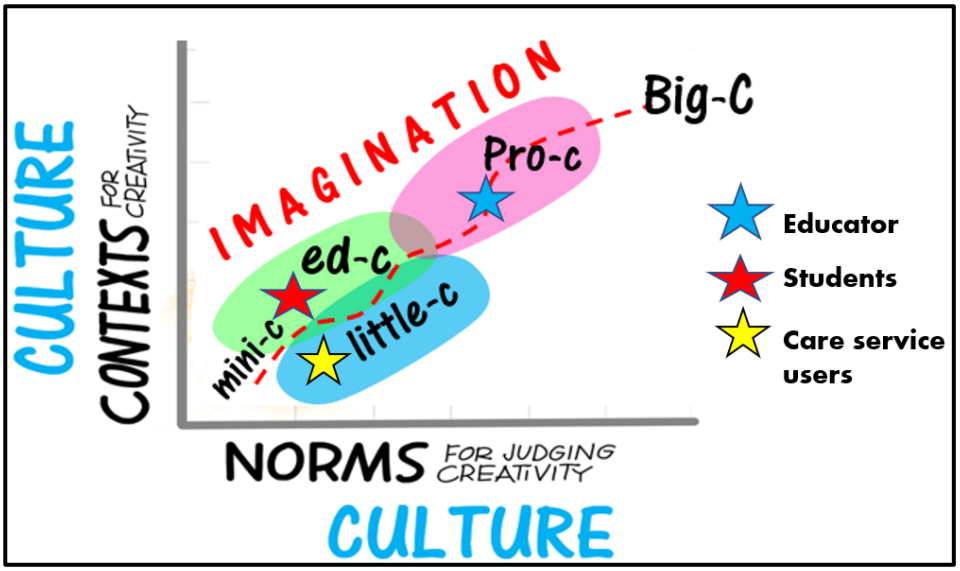
transformative concept of creation: *'the emergence in action of a novel relational product growing out of the uniqueness of the individual on the one hand, and the materials, events, people, or circumstances of [their] life' (Rogers 1960 p.).* We might view the redesigned module as 'a novel relational product', but we might also view the set of new relationships and practices, and the learning and achievements gained through the collective experiences of all participants, and the sense of wellbeing gained by adult users of social care services as they expressed themselves in the making of artistic artefacts – as novel relational products. We must not forget the acts of reflection that are embedded in the process which enable deeper meanings to be understood. As LG recognises, the whole experience had a transformative effect on her.

We are interested in the motivations that drive creative thinking and action. In LG's case study, as in many professional situations, there is a job to be done - teaching a module (extrinsic force) but what is actually done and the way it is done is in the control of the autonomous practitioner. By generating an idea that a practitioner finds interesting, they can relate to and see value in, they are able to create strong intrinsic motivational forces that drive and sustain thinking and action. LG tells us that the core idea for the project grew out of the particular circumstances of her life – the idea that drove the projects was itself a relational product with all the positive emotional forces that idea created.

> *Spending considerably more time in my home environment during the covid pandemic had led to me to immerse myself in the rural landscape around me and discover a deeper connection and relationship with the place in which I live. This got me thinking more about places and spaces we inhabit which in turn led to the idea that this could form the core theme to our collaborative project.(LG narrative).*

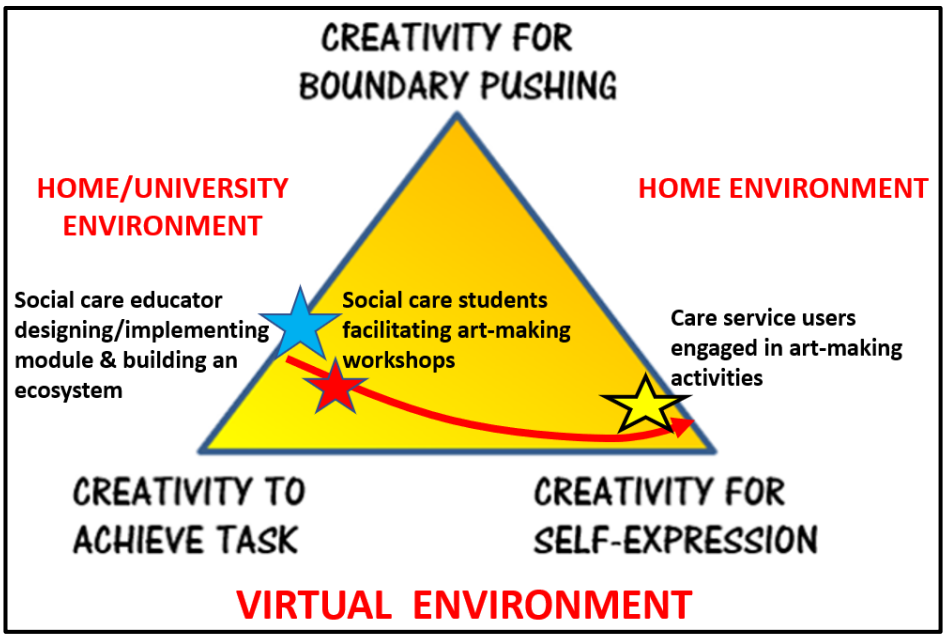
At the highest level we must see LG's creativity as embedded in many different actions and practices that resulted in the whole module design and the whole experience of participants. The narrative is grounded in LG's professional practice and work as a social care educator. Using the 4C (Kaufman and Beghetto 2008) and 5C (Jackson and Lassig 2020) models of creativity LG's activities are clearly located in the Pro-c domain (Figure 6) in which she is drawing on her specialised pedagogical knowledge and experience of teaching in order to achieve the transformation. But her workshop designs were intended to engage students' creativity in the ed-c domain of the 5C model of creativity and the adult users of the care services and their carers in little-c creative self-expression. In this was we see the power of an ecology of practice created by an educator/teacher to become an ecology for social learning and achievement.

Figure 6 5C model of creativity (Jackson and Lassig 2020) that subsumes the 4C model of Kauffman and Beghetto 2008).When displayed in this format it becomes a tool for evaluating and understanding creative efforts and achievements.



Acts and achievements involving creativity require effort and such effort is directed to three types of goals – self-expression, task accomplishment or pushing at the boundaries of what is known or has been experienced (Lassig 2012, 2020 and Figure 7). Each act will be embedded in one or more environments which will shape the nature of the creative efforts and the achievements from such efforts. LG's efforts to transform a face to face module to an online experience was clearly a task-based enterprise but it also involved her pushing herself pedagogically into an entirely new experience so there is an element of personal boundary pushing. When implemented her designs enabled students to draw on their own creativities to accomplish the tasks that they had been set and their facilitation enabled adult care service users to engage their creativity in acts of self-expression.

Figure 7 Three orientations for creative efforts and achievements (Lassig 2012, 2020). When displayed in this format it becomes a generic tool for evaluating and understanding creative efforts and achievements.



LG was immersed in two situations that influenced her thinking – she was at home during covid lockdown and she had to adapt a module for on-line delivery. In thinking about, designing and implementing the new module, LG used her perception, reasoning and imagination, and drew on memories of past experiences, in the manner depicted in Figure 8.

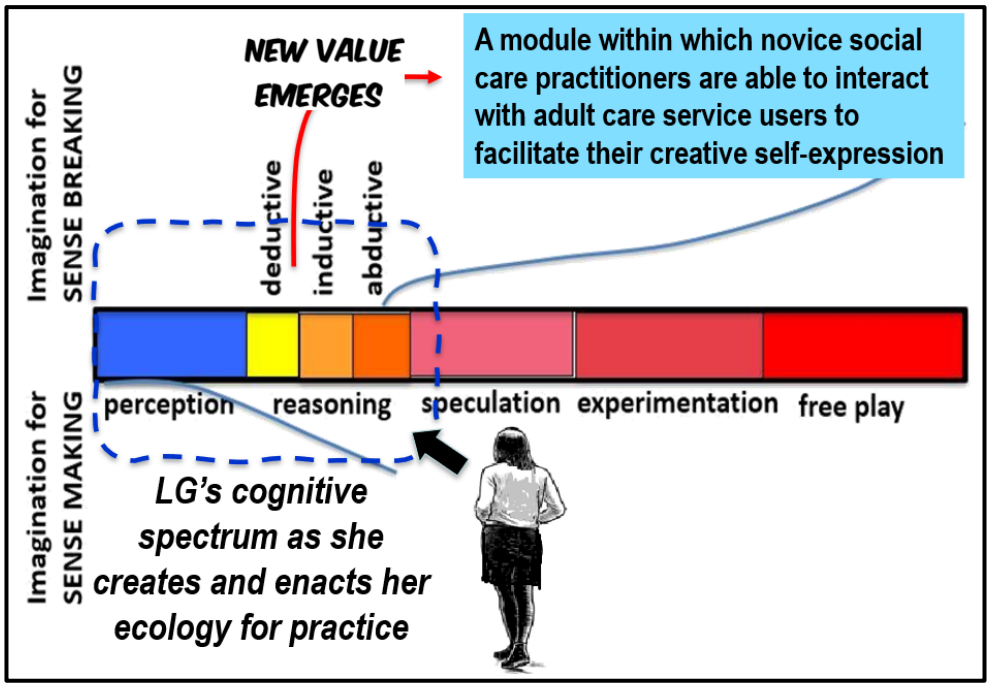
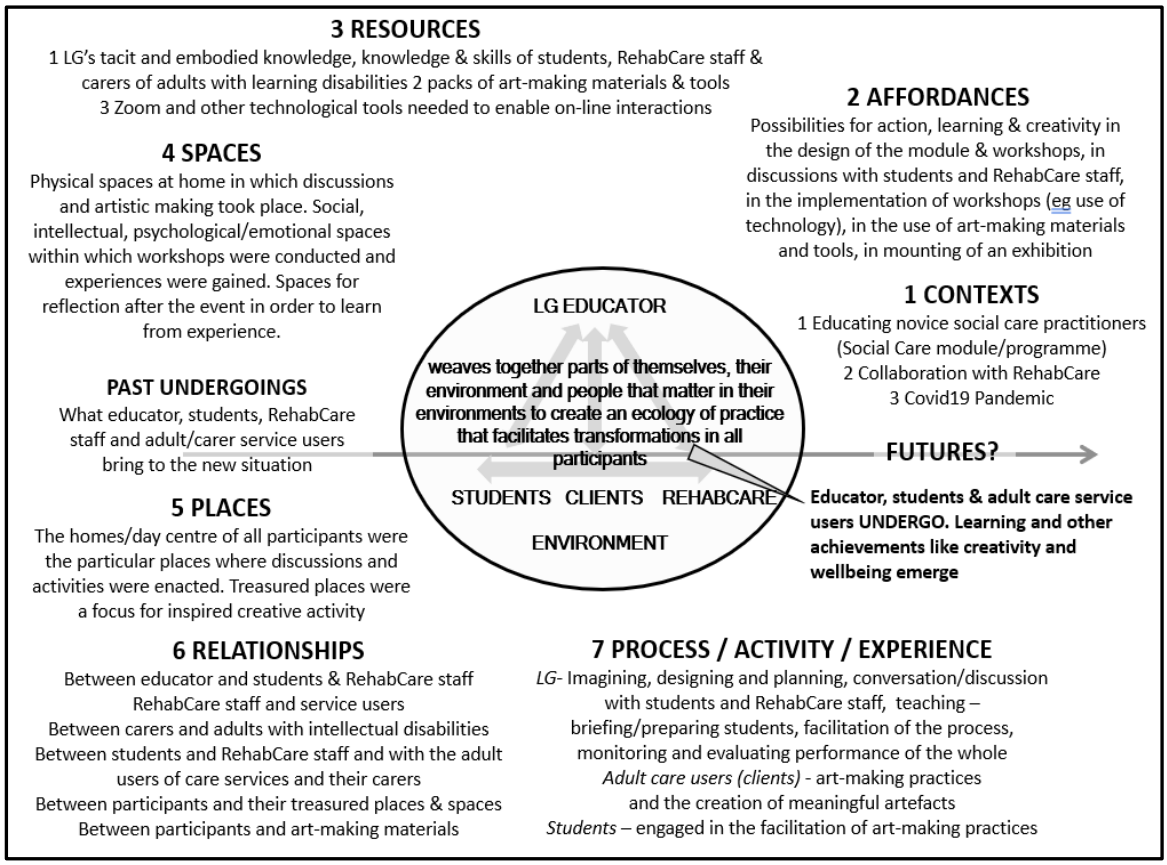


Figure 8 A model of the cognitive spectrum (Pendleton-Julian and Brown 2016 p68) showing that part of the spectrum that was most likely to be involved in LG's project

We might speculate that her imagination enabled her to visualise the form of the educational design and experience she would try to create and it enabled her to play with and speculate on ideas which she evaluated using her critical reasoning. In this way her pragmatic imagination, which is so often the sources of creative ideas, was integrated with reasoning in order to imagine and make sense of situations in her future world. Her creative thinking is deeply situated in the task and circumstances in which she is embedded.

LG's narrative reveals how a social care educator, concerned with the cognitive and practical development of novice social care practitioners, created .a complex ecology of practice (Figure 9). The ecology enabled student novice practitioners to participate in meaningful practical activities and gain valuable experience relevant to future careers in the field of social care. It enabled them to facilitate workshops through which they encouraged and helped a group of adults with intellectual disabilities and their carers, engage in arts-based activities that enabled them to express themselves creatively and enhance their wellbeing. The map reveals an abundance of affordances for creative thinking and action for LG and for all other participants.

Figure 9 Representation of LGs ecology of practice for the case study described above



At the heart of this ecology of practice is a set of complex relationships (element 6 in Figure 9) without which the module would not have been able to run, students would not have had their educational experience and the adult care service users and their carers would not have enjoyed the benefits of the activities the students were able to provide. Building and sustaining relationships provides significant affordance for creativity which can be manifested in conversation and discussion in which ideas and imaginations are exchanged and in the co-creation of activities, such as when students co-facilitate a workshop.

In creating and implementing an ecology of practice, within which people can express themselves creatively the social care educator or practitioner is utilising the affordances, contexts, tools, resources, spaces, relationships and activities of an aspect of the arts to engage care service users. At the core of using any form of arts-based practice in a care or therapeutic setting is the belief that participating in art making, or artistic performing, promotes self-expression and self-awareness with the potential to have a transformative effect on participants. A skilled social care practitioner using an arts-based approach helps people to find meaning and intention. Through artistic activity they effectively engage their client in novel ways of experiencing themselves and understanding art making as the third entity (practitioner + client + art making/performing) in the interactional relationship. In the therapeutic context

Kramer (1986) suggests that this points to a system of interaction and co-created meaning making, rather than simply the imposition of shared knowledge and skills on clients. Such a system, becomes a unique interpretation and synthesis applied to particular people, in particular situations and circumstances at particular moments in time (Hluska 2016).

If we view creativity as an emergent property of interactions between a person, their projects (like developing and facilitating a trusting collaborative relationship with a client) and their utilization of resources, tools, spaces, contexts through processes and activities they create then the affordances for creativity are everywhere, and creativity can emerge at any time. But the primary focus within all arts-based social care practice, must be in the relationships and interactions with between a practitioner and their clients in order that the practitioner is better able to relate to and empathise to help them achieve the positive physical, behavioural and psychological impacts they are trying to bring about.

Drawing on the ecological ideas outlined above, the system to which Kramer refers, can be represented as an ecology of practice for professionals working in social care using arts-based approaches to promote wellbeing and personal transformation.

Concluding Remarks

We hope that these ideas are useful. Our intention in sharing them is to stimulate thinking and promote deeper levels of awareness of what creativity might mean in the context of social care education and practice. We welcome feedback on the ideas and additional reflective narratives. Please send any comments to Louisa Goss louisa.goss@dkit.ie

See also

WORKING PAPER 1

Jackson, N.J. (2021) Survey of Perceptions of Creativity in Social Care Work & Education. Available at: http://www.normanjackson.co.uk/cisc.html

WORKING PAPER 2A

Jackson N J (2021) Ecological Perspectives on Social Care Practice, Education, Learning & Creativity CONCEPTS, TOOLS & FRAMEWORKS Available at: http://www.normanjackson.co.uk/cisc.html

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