Developing critical thinking skills with adult-learners in an art school: might a critical thinking manifesto be one way to visualise findings?

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Abstract This qualitative study is set in a UK art school where participants are adult-learners on a postgraduate course. A 'critical thinking club' is described at work in a constructivist classroom where meaning is built through experiential teaching and learning. Three themes of: barriers in education for adult-learners; scaffolded stages to develop thinking skills; and how practice-focused research could contextualise participants' art-practice are considered and discussed. Adult-learners articulate their thoughts about developing critical thinking in a 'community of inquiry' and results are visualised in a five-point manifesto, leading to a discussion on possible practical ways of operationalising and developing critical thinking with students.

Key words critical thinking; adult-learner; art student; scaffolded-stages; practice-focused research; manifesto; barriers.

Introduction

In a world of infinite scroll and social media 'noise', is there any time for thinking deeply, even during a university course? Do we have the skills in order to ask the right questions about what we receive in images and texts? My interest in critical thinking stemmed from a desire to unlock academic writing and thinking more deeply for myself as an artist-researcher-educator and for my art students. This paper has further developed my reflections on critical thinking (CT) in education. My aim is to facilitate the development of CT skills by working with my postgraduate students.

What is CT? In this context I am drawing on the thinking of Paul and Elder (2022) who spent their careers as educators and philosophers crystallising ideas around thinking about thinking. They point out that critical thinkers are clear as to the purpose at hand and the question at issue; they question information and

challenge assumptions or superficial points of view. They strive to be clear, accurate, precise and relevant. The educator Lipman (2010) developed 'dimensions of thinking'. That is, with critical thinking comes creative thinking and caring thinking. All three need to be at work so that CT in education might be a meaningful and lasting experience for educators and students.

In this literature review, three themes are introduced; barriers to learning, scaffolding CT and practice-focused approaches. Broadhead and Gregson (2018) consider adult-learners returning to education and the barriers they might experience, such as anxiety towards the academic writing in their coursework. Bernstein (2000) writes about the 'pedagogic rights' of enhancement, participation and inclusion. That when learners are scaffolded with these rights they can develop knowledge, understanding and meaning. Practice-focused research, as advocated by Richard Sennett (2009) and Barrett and Bolt (2020), considers the interplay between both tacit and theoretical understanding as being essential for developing thinking skills.

I am a visual-artist and researcher-educator. Visualising research is important. In this way a manifesto is a historically, and artistically valid way of representing ideas. The students I work with are also visualisers. Eco (1981) explains that semiotics – meaning the reading or hermeneutic interpretation of visual/audio/performative imagery, signs and symbols – is part of an art education. Manifestos such as the one Corita Kent created for her Californian art room in the 1960s (Pacatte, 2017) are visual and graphic, contextualised in their history, politics and geography. Somerson and Hermano (2013) understand that for art students, academic modules often feel like an adjunct, when in their hearts and minds their priority is the doing and making of art. The manifesto I offer in the results section is a simple five-point suggestion of how CT might be facilitated with students.

The method section begins with a constructivist ontology (Vygotsky, 2012), heuristically building experiential meaning, beginning with my own practice-focused research and making wider implications based on my findings. The epistemology is interpretive/hermeneutic (Gadamer, 2013), extracting meaning from practice-focused teaching and learning contexts.

The research design section responds directly to the research question – *how CT skills might be developed with adult-learners*. It brings together autoethnography (Bochner and Ellis, 2016) as one way of sharing teaching practice; narrative inquiry (Clandinin and Connelly, 2004) facilitating participants to tell their story; and community of inquiry (Garrison *et al*., 2000) group research developing CT together. I outline in the research design section who the participants are and what their demographic is. The co-creation method is summarised based on ideas from Durrant (2015). Ethics are a vital part of any research project that works with people (this is detailed in the method section). The ethics of coding participants is explained by using letters and numbers in the text to anonymise them.

In the same way as Lucia and Swanberg (2018), I designed a critical thinking club for postgraduate students, held outside class time where participants engaged with creative projects aimed to develop CT. The data collection method is discussed, using mobile phone group video interviews. Thematic analysis using colour coding on transcripts of interviews is utilised and reflected upon.

The results section contains the dataset analysis which is initially visualised in a five-point manifesto. Links are then made, bridging the manifesto findings and the three case studies. The discussion section explains how the manifesto helps focus the discussion thinking. It revisits the three themes and suggests how findings dissolve barriers for adult-learners, ways in which scaffolding might facilitate CT acquisition and how practice-focused research makes sense to practical art students. The summary section links the student experience to the manifesto, and the themes of the paper such as the value in practice-focused approaches to education. It finishes with a contribution to knowledge.

Literature review
Complexities of critical thinking in education

The constructivist learning context is one where knowledge is built, not passively absorbed. Dewey (2008) reminds us that thinking skills are most effective when developed with practical

and experiential learning. CT could be operationalised collaboratively; Garrison *et al*., (2000) call this a 'community of inquiry'. When investigative thinking happens jointly it can potentially offer wider solutions than one person thinking alone. Garrison *et al*., (2000) write that an educational community of inquiry is a group of individuals who together to engage in purposeful critical discourse and reflection, to construct personal meaning and confirm mutual understanding. In a community of inquiry using CT, students might collaborate and negotiate, demonstrating cooperation and dialogue which draw strongly on the pedagogic rights in education (Bernstein, 2000).

Sennett (1998) considers the inherent power imbalance in historical student-teacher relationships, within the superstructure of national education, and in the power dynamic of the architecture of educational buildings. Norton (2022) comments that for CT to be uninhibited by these traditional asymmetries of power, it may be useful for students and educators to find liminal spaces in which to think. Rohr (2021) explains that, in an educational context, liminality can indicate significant times, events and places that open us up to each other as whole human beings. This is important if we want to think freely together.

Narrative inquiry is one method by which to capture student stories about how they experience CT in education (Clandinin and Connelly, 2004). This involves understanding experience as lived and told stories. Habermas (in Lawton and Gordon, 2005) describes the elements within narrative inquiry as intellectual domains or arenas of discourse. The domains include the material world, aesthetics and story. When embarking on the facilitation of CT with students, the above concepts demonstrate the kinds of complexity I have navigated as an educator.

Barriers

Barriers to learning CT for adult-learners might include imposter syndrome (Broadhead and Gregson, 2018) or being unsure of institutional processes. Hurdles may be ethnic or gender differences, Baisnée-Keay *et al*., (2018), or may be lecturer time pressures and capitalist neoliberalist educational systems Bailey (2013). Barriers will be discussed in more detail in the discussion section.

What is a manifesto?

Danchev (2011) notes that, historically, manifestos were royal decrees and political declarations. In the context of this paper my manifesto is a positioning statement as an arts educator when developing higher-order thinking with students. Eco (1981) explains that, semiotically, we read the world through signs, symbols and signifiers. Through the medium of typography and imagery, the manifesto uses both of these tools to simply explain a set of ideas. Manifesto artist Bob and Roberta Smith (2014) stated in their manifesto that all schools should be art schools. Pacatte (2017) tells us that educator-artist Corita Kent, teaching in the 1960s, used a manifesto as a way of outlining an inclusive classroom. She advises her art students to always be around, to be in community and go to any cultural events. The Situationist International offered extreme political manifestos, their slogans appearing as graffiti during the 1968 Paris riots (Knabb, 2006). I consider how the manifesto, as part of an art education context, might be one way to concisely gather findings on facilitating the development of CT in an educational context. Other authors might use diagrams or bar charts; I am using the form of the manifesto to visualise and communicate results.

Practice-focused research

Nelson (2013) believes practice-focused research incorporates practice in the methodology and research output. Leavy (2019) points out that it is a transdisciplinary approach to knowledge building, which can be used during all phases of research. Gregson *et al.*, (2020) posit that practice-focused research methods can adapt the principles of the creative arts to address research questions holistically. This process of inquiry therefore involves researchers engaging in practice, be that teaching practice or making art as a way of knowing.

Literature review

A key text for this paper is Lipman (2010) and his 'dimensions of thinking', which encompass a threefold way: creative thinking, caring thinking and critical thinking. Lipman (2010) is committed to a student's right to a de-classed, democratic education system through the development of CT skills. Lipman's accounts of CT is thought-provoking, although he has not written specifically about

the UK or CT in art education. A critique of Lipman might question the business model surrounding his educational theories. His ideas and CT strategies are set behind a paywall making their access prohibitive to those on a low income.

Using experience, I hope to discover ways in which CT and art thinking could become enmeshed with the practical making and doing of art. Somerson and Hermano (2013), art educators, regard critical-making as part of CT. They believe that students activate their experience at art school via using, inventing and working with their hands as the primary form of expression. Although Somerson and Hermano (2013) are very much writing from an American point of view, there is a strong parallel to be drawn as they teach at a small specialist art school, as do I.

Method

Methodology

A constructivist ontology is employed (Vygotsky, 2012) in which I begin to construct meaning heuristically (discovery through experiential learning) from the social world and from my teaching context, referencing the works of Bernstein (2000) and Dewey (2009) in experiential learning. An interpretive, hermeneutic (Gadamer, 2013) epistemology is used, where multiple developing interpretations of a situation are observed and are indicative of phenomena within the texts and the social, educational reality. This starts with participants at the art school and inductively moves towards potentially generalisable understandings of wider educational context and concepts.

Research design

My teaching practice is used as data, together with lived experience accounts from participants. In his defence of adult education Coffield (2010) states that the current UK neoliberalist agenda would have us believe that the role of education is solely to fuel the economy and that adult-learners should be educated in preparation for problem-solving for industry. However, he gives prominence to, as do Broadhead and Gregson (2018), the importance of learning for learning's sake in the pursuit of leading a fulfilled life.

Community of inquiry, Garrison *et al*., (2000) is part of the design. The aim was that participants would feel they belonged to something, that they had a voice in the critical thinking club, using decision-making powers and autonomy. I set out initial structures and as the weeks passed and they gained confidence, enabled them to choose texts to read, art projects to develop as part of building their confidence in CT and bonding as a group through the research.

Narrative inquiry allowed students to recount their experiences. Clandinin and Connelly (2004) state that participants might reflect on storied moments (Gregson *et al*., 2020) of time understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities in order to understand experience. In the case studies presented in the results section, participants are able to tell their story.

The research design features my first-person narrative in autoethnography (Bochner and Ellis, 2016), where I draw upon an accumulation of knowledge and experience derived from over 20 years of managing and teaching in further education, higher education and postgraduate studies.

Participants/demographic
The participants come from the postgraduate master of arts programme. Students are adult-learners aged between 20 and 70. All participants were student volunteers who took part in the critical thinking club held outside class time. One issue with working with my students is what Burke (2001) sees as the insider/outsider bias in the classroom blurring the boundaries between the researcher and the researched. Hanrahan (1998) suggests that the insider/outsider issue may only be a problem in a positivistic/scientific system because in a qualitative, interpretivist paradigm, insider/outsider becomes a less relevant term. For participants, pressure during coursework submission time may cause them to prioritise and drop out of the research; this priority is correct as research comes secondary to education. To counter this, I aimed to create CT spaces, areas of research for participants that decentred traditional power structures usually at play in educational spaces (Foucault, 1988). This is to counter the possibility of any privileged point of view (Scott and Usher, 1996). The participants had an information sheet with my

contact number and email address enabling my accessibility to any of their questions. They were informed that they could drop out at any time and told how their data would be used. All ethical guidelines from BERA (2018) were applied. Participants were from a range of social and educational backgrounds and were anonymised using letters and numbers; for instance, participant 21MFAP – referring to their age and artistic practice. This method of coding is used in the results section for all the participants mentioned in the text.

Critical thinking club

Here, participants engage in academic reading, debate and thinking through making. An aim for this club is for participants to make art and feel the connection between thinking and making (Somerson and Hermano, 2013). In the club the academic reading and speaking work to a culmination of objects/writing/images/performances, physical making and doing as part of their creative art practice. The club hoped to more deeply prepare adult-learners/participants for the rigours of a postgraduate course.

The critical thinking club is diverse, using an expanded field of art and design, to mirror the diversity of participants who range from textile artists, painters and graphic designers to performers. My only stipulation was that we moved towards an outward-facing exhibition or self-published 'zine' by the end of week 27 of the club.

The critical thinking club curriculum was varied and included academic reading, creative writing, thinking through making and collaboration. This timetable was drawn up with participants, so they had a stake in the offer. Sessions were iterative, building on learning; for example, participants developed a set of art words, and responded to the words with visual arts. They then paired up and swapped artistic practices; for example, a song writer/film-maker swapped practice with a painter. The participants develop CT through empathy, collaborative working and transferable skills. A light-touch teaching style was used allowing the participants to feel included and involved (Bernstein, 2000). Lucia and Swanberg (2018) believe the success of such clubs depends on participants and the facilitators having clear purpose and

incentive. They suggest that CT must be integrated into the curriculum. Paul and Elder (2022) recommend building student confidence with encouragement and cultivation. Students can then learn to think for themselves, to form rational viewpoints, draw reasonable conclusions, despite possible deep-seated obstacles. From the results of the critical thinking club, I implemented CT skills development into my postgraduate curriculum, applying educational theory to my teaching contexts.

Data collection method and critique

I used peer-group video interviews to collect data for the research, using my mobile phone to record interviews, and transcribing them later. Ethically, I pointed out the recording device, when it was recording or off. Pirie (1996) writes that video recording is a permanent record that can be revisited during the data analysis stage. An issue could be that filming introduces what has been known as 'reactivity'. By having the phone visible but out of the way once participants began talking, students often forgot we were recording and avoided reactivity.

Co-creation as method

In this process I was a co-participant (Durrant, 2015; Burke, 2001), facilitating rather than dictating the programme. The aim of the critical thinking club was to help participants develop higher-order thinking skills. During the club I hoped to collect data, to answer the question of whether CT might be developed with adult-learners, and with the results develop my curriculum. The club aimed also to add value to the student experience, get to know the participants better and create a community of inquiry so the participants owned the group and had autonomy in the group's direction. These methods allowed participants to tell their stories in a safe, non-judgemental space; to be seen, to be heard and to be creative.

Durrant (2015) describes how he developed a community of inquiry and became co-authors with his students. I hoped to emulate this positive experience when I designed the research to become a facilitator, not a teacher but a co-creator with the participants who in turn become co-researchers.

Dataset construction is therefore created from the perceptions and lived experiences of social actors. In this research, the actors participate with the researcher to co-write the critical thinking club programme (Durrant, 2015; Burke, 2001). Care is taken in remembering throughout this study the ethical issue of insider/outsider in data collection when using my own students. Durrant (2015) as a researcher and facilitator describes how he asked his participants to voluntarily collaborate with him, just as Norton (2019) and Burke (2001) do with their student/participants.

Thematic analysis
This is a flexible way of working with dataset analysis (Nowell *et al*., 2017) providing rich, unexpected insights and detailed knowledge. It offers a clear, uncomplicated and straightforward qualitative study (Javadi and Zarea, 2016). It uses visual markers denoting basic coding, using symbols and colours. My mantra was 'let the data speak'. This led me to unearth themes in the datasets and bring together experiences to create meaning (Robson and McCartan, 2016). One disadvantage of thematic analysis is that while it is adaptable, this flexibility could lead to inconsistency when developing themes. Robson and McCartan, (2016) explain that this can be avoided by making explicit my qualitative and interpretivist epistemological position. Here is a selection of the most common themes extrapolated from the typed transcripts of video interviews; see Figure 1 (below).

Pedagogic intervention	Duration	Number of partici-pants	Operational-ised actions	Categories of thinking. Using Lipman's *Thinking Dimensions.*	Dataset themes from thematic analysis
Critical thinking club	27 weeks	45	Developing thinking, speaking, listening, performing, collaboration, making and writing skills.	Plausible generalisability, inclusion, a place to safely fail, share power, building stages of understanding, Practice-focused.	Arts-based research, liminal teaching spaces, democratic, decentred teaching, constructivist, scaffolded learning, technical/rational debate.

Figure 1: Dataset collection methods

Reflection on the method

The critical thinking club aimed to build cultural and social capital so participants might be socially mobile, qualify within their coursework and progress. The effect of developing CT with students is wider than individual progress. By learning to think critically participants are making opportunities for their families and their future employment.

A critique of the critical thinking club is that in the initial stages I treated it like another class; planning each session so that, initially, I did not give enough freedom for students to choose their own themes. However, participants soon gained confidence and ultimately the club was designed so participants could take ownership of the group, which they did after a few weeks.

Results

From the dataset analysis I offer a five-point manifesto (Figure 2) by which CT in art education could be scaffolded by educators/trainers in an open and democratic way, allowing it to grow and be practically employed.

Manifesto for Developing Critical Thinking with Students

1. **Encourage CT dialogue, thinking and speaking.**
2. **Create democratic liminal spaces where students can think Critically for themselves.**
3. **Use Practice-Focused CT to eliminate barriers to education.**
4. **Create scaffolded stages of development to develop CT.**
5. **Create a CT Community of Inquiry for staff and students.**

Figure 2. Five-point manifesto for developing CT with students.

The following explains the relevance of the five-point manifesto.

Manifesto point one: dialogue is part of the structure of the critical thinking club and encourages oral and aural skills or thinking aloud together.

Manifesto point two: building informal, liminal and democratic spaces during the critical thinking club. Seek places where informal teaching and learning spaces can be, spaces where participants can explore ideas, theory, and practice free of expectations and qualification-based learning.

Manifesto point three: aim to eliminate barriers to learning through practice-focused CT, developing the ability, courage and confidence to be themselves and overcome barriers to accessing education, and use practical solutions. This involves being present and alive to the educational moment in order to encourage positivity and empathy in the critical thinking club.

Manifesto point four: is scaffolded stages in CT. The critical thinking club offers participants a space to think aloud and together in order to solve political/personal/arts-based problems.

Manifesto point five: is building a CT community of inquiry, developing knowledge and meaning making together.

Entering arts education can be an intimidating experience for new students. Broadhead and Gregson (2018) explain that adult-learners might be apprehensively entering a new learning context. Broadhead and Gregson build upon the work of Bernstein (2000). They propose that for students to feel they are part of the cohort at university they should be encouraged to access the 'pedagogic rights' in being offered experiences that help them feel enhanced, included and able to participate in order to create a constructive and reciprocal dialogue. Data from this study suggest that spaces such as the critical thinking club offer a sense of belonging and community which in turn could give students confidence in their courses.

There follows three case studies taken from the critical thinking club which illustrate the five-point manifesto for facilitating CT in educational contexts and highlights the three themes of barriers to learning, scaffolded stages and the use of practice-focused contexts.

Case study 1: Overcoming barriers

In this case study, participant 21MFAP at first sees barriers but then becomes an agent of their own story. This links with Point 3 of the manifesto: using practice-focused CT strategies to

eliminate barriers to education. Practical art students need practical ways to allay fears and gain confidence. 21MFAP talks about being present in the group; community of inquiry has given them motivation and reason to participate:

> 'I didn't think I was going to like it as much as I did. When I was asked if I'd like to join the group, I said I'm just going to pass through sometime. But now I think, oh it's Wednesday, it's critical thinking club. I do actually want to make sure that I'm there.' (Participant 21MFAP).

They are tentative at first, not being sure what the benefits might be. They think they might only attend irregularly, but conclude by using CT to question their motives and resolve to stay with this new experience (Lipman, 2010). Linking with Point 1 of the manifesto, to encourage CT dialogue, thinking and speaking, during the critical thinking club participants had the chance to discuss and debate academic texts, as well as use creative writing. This was done in a group format, giving participants greater understanding of academic language and the ability to feel included in the academic process, a beginning to dissolving barriers.

Case study 2: Building strong scaffolding

Datasets show that when a student first encounters CT, they need direction, some information and a safe environment in which to use their new skills (see participant 55FTD comments below). This links with Point 4 of the manifesto in creating scaffolded stages of development to develop CT, such as reading academic texts aloud and unpicking difficult language together. After practice, participants develop their CT muscle memory. 55FTD reports how there are four stages of developing critical thinking:

> '... In critical thinking club thought comes first, speaking come second, making comes third and writing comes last. Writing is not privileged in this instance; writing has a place.' (Participant 55FTD).

The participant particularly enjoyed working within Lipman's 'dimensions of thinking' (2010); using *creative* and *holistic* thinking they gained a sense of *belonging* from the group. This links to Point 2 of the manifesto: to create democratic spaces

where students can think critically for themselves. When a space is allotted for an informal group to meet, the power balance within the hierarchy of education shifts and becomes more democratic, and gives more freedom to the members of the group. They made strong friendships which continued after graduation as a working art group.
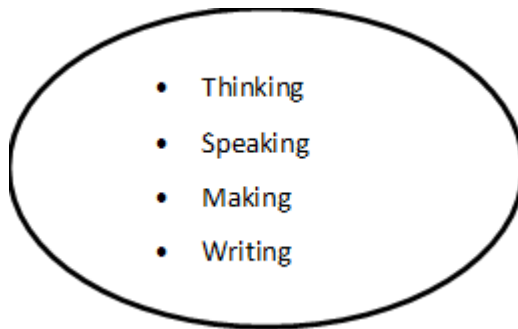

Figure 3: Participant 55FTD's stages for developing critical thinking

Participant 21MFAP speaks about uncertainty and is observed gaining confidence and knowledge of criticality. The critical thinking club offers a liminal space where they can be creative, giving expression to emotion and thought. It is a place to listen to other participants too, using Lipman's 'dimensions of thinking' (2010) 'caring thinking', of 'generosity' and 'appreciative thinking'. In making those stepped moves 55FTD is entering into discovery. In this example of scaffolded learning, Lipman's *critical* 'thinking', 'caring thinking*',* and 'creative thinking' (2010) are equally important.

Case study 3: Practice-focused development

Adult-learners often choose an art education to immerse themselves in the practical application of creativity. This links with Point 5 of the manifesto, create a CT community of inquiry: working together the group of art students look for practical applications of theory on their art practice, discovering thinking through making together. Participant 32FFM uses critical thinking as a conduit for practice-focused research:

> 'Moments of reflection show critical thinking is not about perfection but "just do it." I can fail, it is ok, I can learn from

my mistakes. Coming from a sports background, I had to be the best. Art has taught me just to do my practice and be happy, gain confidence in doing my practice.' (Participant 32FFM).

32FFM comes to the realisation that they do not need to compare themself to others in the class. This links with Point 3 of the manifesto: using practice-focused CT to eliminate barriers to education. Some barriers may come from feeling they do not fit in, and anxiety about comparisons. At work here is Lipman's 'creative thinking' using 'inventiveness and independence'. They understand that creative expression is uniquely their own. An important part of developing CT is having a safe space to fail and to learn with no academic consequences. The critical thinking club offers such a space.

Discussion

My political goal in developing this scholarship is to make my classroom a place of democratic learning; a place where I introduce students to CT in a scaffolded and community of inquiry setting; where the door to academic language is opened and adult-learners are helped to feel confident in using the language of the academy. The aim is for students to use thinking through making, so as to speak and write critically about their own work, about visual art culture and more widely about the society they inhabit.

Educational barriers for adult-learners

Art education can often be a daunting place for new adult-learners as they try to work out where they belong. Broadhead and Gregson (2018) write about adult-learners being unsure about subject-specific language and the customs of the institution. Art education involves creativity and academic course work. Learners might see the latter as an obstacle, in contrast to their enthusiasm for skill acquisition workshops. If reduced to practical skills only, however, art education could be accused of limiting human experience and ignoring other ways of knowing.

Bernstein (2000) states that for students to feel they belong they need to feel included, confident and able to participate in learning. The critical thinking club aims to help students develop a

narrative using CT skills, in expressing articulate, tacit (touch-based) knowledge with learners in a no-pressure environment. Bailey (2013) sees barriers in lecturer time pressures generated by capitalist neoliberalist educational systems. Systems, he believes, should be resisted for the good of students and lecturers. Brookfield (2004) contends that a curriculum which includes CT is capable of overcoming blockages as it enables adult-learners to challenge assumptions and question dominant ideology. The critical thinking club aims to offer an alternative non-curriculum time with no assessment pressure.

In the UK, an enculturated and normalised class-system may be a barrier, Colgan (2002) writes about working-class students who feel disenfranchised by middle-class academic models of pedagogy. Holding the critical thinking club at lunch times is convenient for students since it is outside class time so adult-learners do not have to pay for extra childcare or return to jobs that fund their education. Lavender (2015) posits that barriers for adult-learners can also come from feeling out of place among a much younger cohort. Broadhead *et al*., (2019) suggest that universities must do more to accommodate non-traditional and working-class adult-learners.

Neurodiverse learning differences, such as dyslexia, is disproportionately common in art institutions (Royal College of Art, 2015). Data from this study suggests that CT can be a way of using verbal questioning and oracy to encourage art students to interrogate their creativity with academic skills (Westby and Coletta, 2016). Baisnée-Keay *et al.,* (2018) write about hurdles from societally imposed gendered and ethnic identities; by seeing education in inclusive, non-judgemental liminal spaces students can resist damaging ways of seeing themselves. Broadhead *et al*., (2019) report that adult-learners have barriers to overcome even before entering the classroom and it is a complicated decision to continue their education (Norton and Gregson, 2020). Caring commitments and employment are also entailed in such a decision. In effect, this large decision allows for other smaller educational decisions, like joining the critical thinking club.

Can scaffolding facilitate critical thinking acquisition?

Adult-learners are continually interpreting reality in visual, written and object-based formats. Constructivist learning theory is student-centred (Freire, 2017). The role of the teacher in a constructivist classroom is to create a collaborative, problem-solving environment (Brookfield, 2004) where students become active participants in their own learning. Bernstein's 'pedagogic rights' (2000) are part of the conditions that create an educational democracy. Sennett (2009) writes about scaffolding stages, where learning a skill, he notes, needs a repertoire of procedures and 10,000 hours of practice to gain mastery of a craft. Sennett (2009: p. 50) states that the path to mastery has stages, starting with observation, watching, researching, reading, looking, absorbing. This is accompanied by imitating, emulating, seeking, mirroring and echoing. After that is the practice, repetition, rehearse, study and train. Finally, transcendence, gaining mastery and innovating. In disseminating the development of CT to educators it will be important to stress that students need scaffolding to build iterative understanding.

Practice-focused research and critical thinking

Within the context of art pedagogy as with other subjects, CT is used to consider practice-focused research. Here it is used to understand how the practice of making art and its underpinning theories might come together. Arendt (2018) believes all peoples need to engage in everyday CT, political action or praxis. There appears to be a feminist practicality and work ethic about the views of Arendt, a willingness to engage in the petit-narrative on a domestic level to comprehend the meta-narrative (Lyotard, 2004) of world politics.

Practice-focused research has the possibility to be a transformative (Mezirow and Taylor, 2009) research method. Students might use CT to consider social ideas such as feminism, identity politics, sustainability or decolonialisation to inform the artwork they make. Lourde (2017) describes practice-focused research as intersectional, holding the tension between discrimination and privilege within the pedagogical context.

Broadhead and Gregson (2018) describe Aristotelian practical wisdom or 'phronesis', stating that understanding cannot be taught, only experienced or practiced. Barrett and Bolt (2020) state that personally situated knowledge adds authenticity to research by including lived experience to narrative inquiry and autoethnography of the researchers' journey, which I employ in this paper.

Summary

The manifesto (see Figure 2) as a visual semiotic reference (Eco 1981) and one way of visualising findings, responds to the initial question of whether CT can be developed with adult-learners in an art school, how to overcome barriers such as lack of confidence, and looking for a safe space to experiment and try new ideas. The points made in the manifesto are offered as suggestions. I hope they are presented with enough plausibility to render them helpful to other educators and readers who may be considering developing CT in their practice. Lucia and Swanberg (2018) recommend making CT a mandatory part of the curriculum so all might be involved.

Lipman's (2010) 'thinking dimensions' is used as a focusing device with thematic analysis. My contribution from the perspective of the art school where I teach is that I have been able to try out the theories offered by Lipman (2010) in the arena of practice-focused research to see first-hand how the thinking dimensions operate when developing CT with small groups of my students. They found they prefer teaching and learning which contains dialogue and experimentation, allowing them agency in their own research. When they have agency, this gives them confidence to make their own discoveries. This interrelationship between pragmatic and practical methods of developing CT with students may become a functional piece of information that can be put into action by other educators hoping to work with CT in their curriculum. Figure 1 (above) shows the kinds of thinking students developed during the critical thinking club.

An important finding is to recognise that adult-learners may at first be sceptical and resistant to CT. To develop CT with students

there needs to be scaffolded stages. The critical thinking club offered adult-learners a forum in which they could think, listen and get into useful dialogue with each other. This might lead to 'communitas', 'inclusion', and 'enhancement' while solving joint problems or creating fresh writing and forms of art.

Participant 55FTD pinpoints and actualises the sequence of their thought process (Figure 3, above); thought first, speaking second, making third and writing last. It seems apparent that 55FTD's staged system could be one beginning of the further development of the critical thinking club involved in this study. This scholarship is informed by experience and literature. Datasets from this paper suggest that adult-learners can be more motivated and confident in their thinking and writing when they use CT. Here in this paper I offer insights into the way that I introduced my students to CT and how they responded on an individual and group level. I hope that these insights will be helpful and of use to other educators.

Contribution to knowledge

The primary purpose of an art education is to educate artists, to help them gain qualifications. CT will only ever be a side issue to that overarching purpose. Datasets show that students who engaged with CT completed the course, progressed in education, went into creative freelance self-employment and the creative industries. For instance, 55FTD now works as an art tutor, 21MFAP and 32FFM have now graduated in film-making and fine art. Participants have also come together to create their own critical thinking club, to continue their community of inquiry. They now make funding bids so they can facilitate art projects to work with local groups of people. This data shows the agency adult-learners developed in the critical thinking club. Adult-learners with jobs and families, took their creative community forward in the face of life and work barriers that could have impeded their progress. Datasets support the view that using CT develops transferrable ideas, skills and understanding into new contexts.

The introduction of CT emphasises the democratic rights of students to an education. The critical thinking club advocates the use of CT leading to students who have a community, who listen to and are interested in their story and have views as whole

human beings. I would argue that CT in practice-focused environments, developed with stages of learning, gives voice to those adult-learners who are not always heard in the formal teaching context.

My recommendations from this research are that this CT manifesto for supporting and developing CT skills with adult-learners could be explored further by practice-focused researchers who are interested in adding philosophical thinking approaches to teaching and learning. I have already begun to disseminate my findings on developing CT with students in peer-reviewed publications and international conferences.

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