Communities of practice in art and design teaching in higher education: Considering the literature

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ABSTRACT

This article provides an overview of relevant literature related to the broader research area of communities of practice, and indicates relationships between this literature and the disciplinary context of art and design teaching in higher education. Initially the rationale for selection of literature is provided, then the specific disciplinary context of the research area is indicated, through the lens of signature pedagogies, in order to situate the research in context and explore the use of these pedagogies in relation to learning and teaching art and design. Communities of practice, and developments within this concept, are explored through two discussion questions.

● In what ways does the communities of practice framework map to established practices of learning and teaching in art and design?

● What are the limitations for communities of practice in the diverse, post-lockdown art and design teaching landscape of 2024?

Finally insights from both bodies of literature are synthesised to indicate implications for art and design in higher education, and opportunities for further research.

Keywords: art and design education, communities of practice, signature pedagogies

Introduction

This literature review article explores the enduring appeal of Wenger's communities of practice (2008), as a framework for learning and teaching in higher education, with particular application in the learning and teaching of art and design in higher education, and to what extent this theory can be implemented in today's teaching landscape.

Wenger's theory of communities of practice, based in social learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and providing a framework for the ways in which learning can be socially situated, is discussed widely in learning and teaching scholarship. The idea of the community of practice, through which a group is formed over time through a common interest in development of a specific skill or interest (Wenger, 2008: 45), is understood to be a "a highly influential theory" (Tummons, 2018, p.2) within higher education research, with the ability to transform teaching and learning in a range of settings. However, while the application and adaptation of the communities of practice framework has been explored extensively in higher education scholarship, relatively little research exists on its specific relationship to learning and teaching in art and design, with most of this research focused on the engagement of external partners. This article adds to the understanding of the place of communities of practice within art and design learning and teaching by

outlining its relationship with signature pedagogies within the discipline, as defined by Orr and Shreeve (2018).

Further, this article identifies the need to revisit established theories such as these in response to changes in learning and teaching over the past five years. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns is still being felt across the sector, with increased amounts of learning and teaching taking place online or into remote formats, highlighting a need to consider if, and how, communities of practice can function in a de-situated arrangement. Additionally, increased discussions around identity, power, and privilege in higher education, sparked in part by the Black Lives Matter protests of summer 2020, indicate the necessity of revisiting and re-evaluating accepted concepts of learning and teaching to identify how these may disadvantage a diverse student body. By revisiting the concept of communities of practice in this context this article aims to further the discussion on how these existing concepts may be effectively implemented in today's teaching landscape.

The scope of this literature review is therefore framed by two research questions:

1. In what ways does the communities of practice framework map to established practices of learning and teaching in art and design?

2. What are the limitations for communities of practice in the diverse, post-lockdown teaching landscape of 2024?

Rationale

A broadly scholastic approach (Hart, 2018) was used to develop this study, with the emphasis on literature developed in the last ten years and within the specific context of learning and teaching in higher education. Orr and Shreeve's *Art and Design Pedagogy in Higher Education* (2018) is a landmark text in the scholarship of learning and teaching in art and design, and as such was central to the discussion of disciplinary context, with support from Shreeve's wider work in the area. Similarly, Wenger's *Communities of Practice* (2008) was a central text for discussion of pedagogic theory, and a library search revealed a range of responses to this work within the subject area. Themes arising from both areas were then synthesised to develop an overview of the usefulness of the communities of practice framework in understanding learning and teaching in art and design higher education.

Disciplinary Context

While art and design curricula share some similarities with other subject areas across higher education, disciplines working within the development of creative processes have acquired unique approaches to learning and teaching. Characterised by Shreeve et al. as "a kind of exchange" (2010, p.125), these approaches emphasise the reciprocal relationship between student and tutor, as well as the ambiguity embedded in the subject area.

The particular and unique approaches within art and design teaching are perhaps best understood through signature pedagogies, teaching and learning strategies embedded within subject areas which define what can be known, and how this becomes known, in the discipline (Shulman, 2005). Individual tutors in the field may not consciously adopt these pedagogies, but by continuing with strategies they experienced as learners they reflect established practices within institutions, thereby perpetuating signature pedagogical approaches.

Informing these signature pedagogies in art and design teaching is the use of project based learning, through which students are set a challenge, given a time frame and other parameters, and then work independently to develop diverse solutions (Orr & Shreeve, 2018). This approach positions tutors as facilitators, with students holding increased responsibility for developing a personalised curriculum that reflects their practice and understanding of what there is to be learnt within this. The flexible, autonomous nature of project based learning allows for this approach to be used throughout varied art and design disciplines, and adapted to suit learning and teaching across a spectrum of experiences.

Signature pedagogies of art and design interact with this project based learning approach in a variety of ways. To better understand this interaction an overview of the signature pedagogies at work in art and design education, as defined by Orr and Shreeve (2018) is given below.

The studio

The idealised physical environment in which learning and teaching takes place, the studio provides a physical and metaphorical structure for learning. The social nature of the studio, as students work alongside each other, and the visibility of work-in-progress on display allow the space to enable spontaneous discussion between students and tutors (p.90).

Pedagogies of Ambiguity

As previously stated, ambiguity and uncertainty are embedded in art and design education, where students are expected to find their own way to broadly defined subjective outcomes (p.91). As outlined by Vaughan et al. (2008) this is often a point of contention for students, who can struggle to make sense of the wide scope of arts education.

The brief

Used to begin the process of project-based learning, briefs provide a 'jumping off point' and series of parameters for students to follow their own paths through to an undefined conclusion.

The live project

Representing a link to industry practices, live projects are briefs set by industry partners to mirror their own working standards. Engaging with briefs of this kind allow students to enter the world of work, with the support of a university safety net (Orr & Shreeve, 2018, p.92).

Development work

Required across disciplinary contexts, development work in sketchbooks, blogs and other media provides a visual account of student progression through the project based learning process (p.93), allowing tutors to understand and assess this process, as well as final outcomes.

Research

Although "lack[ing] clear definition" (p.93) research is key to the process of finding information, and synthesising this into final outcomes. The nebulous definition of 'research' is often contested by students, and again speaks to the ambiguity inherent in the field.

Dialogic exchange

While written evidence of formative and summative feedback is often required by institutions, informal and social interactions are also viewed as a key element of the creative process, reflected in exchanges between students, peers and tutors throughout projects.

Materiality

At the heart of art and design education is the physical embodiment of student process, through development work as well as final visual outcomes. The distinct properties of material samples and outcomes provide "embodied knowledge" (p.94) which drive discussion, feedback and assessment within art and design fields.
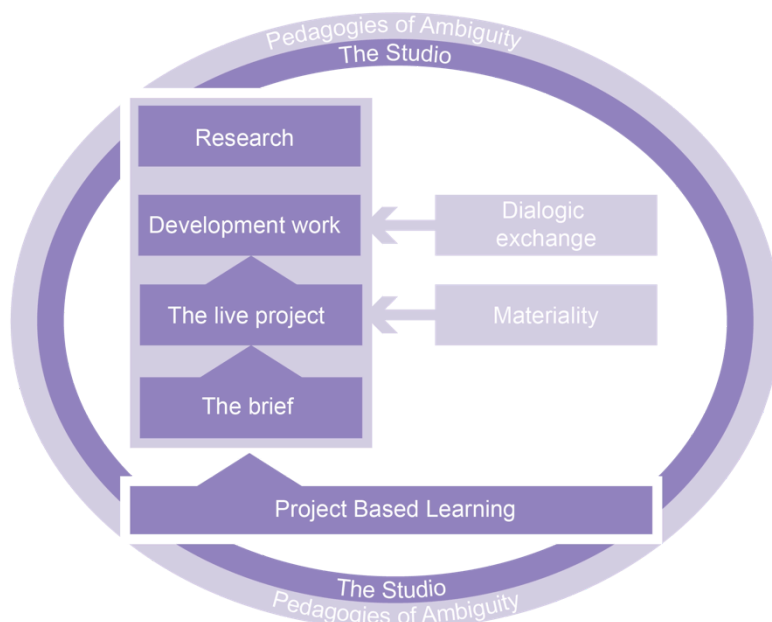
Figure 1 Relationship between Signature Pedagogies and Project Based Learning, visualisation based on Orr and Shreeve (2018, pp. 91-94)

Figure 1 indicates my understanding of the relationship between Orr and Shreeve's signature pedagogies and the wider context of project based learning, making clear the interconnectedness of these pedagogies and the value of pedagogies of ambiguity to the wider landscape of art and design teaching.

While these signature pedagogies provide an introduction to the ways teaching and learning that may take place in fields characterised by ambiguity, they also present an idealised form of art and design teaching, outside the constraints of institutional life. Indeed, Shreeve et al. identify that these pedagogies may indicate more the "longing" (2010, p.134) that tutors feel for a utopian experience of higher education than the experience itself. However, the insight into the educational expectations of students and tutors these pedagogies provide is valuable in understanding lived experiences of art and design learning and teaching.

In recent years this idealised form of learning and teaching has been challenged further by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns. Although enacted and experienced differently across, and sometimes within, countries, disruption has been felt across the higher education sector, and within many art and design institutions studio learning was suspended, with students engaging in blended, or wholly remote, learning at home. Emerging literature has begun to consider how this change has affected learning and teaching in art and design, in particular the move from the uniquely physical space of the studio to the digital space.

As Marshalsey and Sclater make clear, "distributed learning changes how we teach and learn" (2020: 826). The dialogic and interactive signature pedagogies many teachers and learners are familiar with were

interrupted by lockdowns and restrictions, creating challenges in maintaining collaboration, dialogue and engagement. The feeling from Robertson, Thomas and Bailey that "intermittent home-based 'studio practice' would not truly replicate the practical and social experiences usually gained on campus" (2022: 274) was one shared widely throughout the field, and results from emerging studies into the impact of the pandemic on art and design teaching seems to support this.

This emerging response to the challenges, and possible opportunities, of remote learning through the COVID-19 pandemic highlights how deeply embedded in art and design education signature pedagogies have become, with many educators seeking to replicate these approaches in online learning environments. Marshalsey and Sclater (2020) sound a hopeful note though, suggesting that "the emerging picture is one of adaptation, experimentation and motivation to learn" (p.838) how these physical and online pedagogies can be developed together to generate new strategies for the learning and teaching of art and design.

Communities of Practice

Following the signature pedagogies discussed above, Orr and Shreeve (2018) suggest that the dialogic and collaborative nature of learning and teaching in art and design, and the ultimate goal of developing "neophyte creative practitioners" (p.22), can be understood as involvement in a community of practice, with students on the periphery engaging with experienced tutor practitioners at the centre (p.98).

The concept of communities of practice has its roots in social learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and, in its broadest sense, provides a framework for understanding the ways in which learning can be socially situated. For Lave and Wenger "there is no activity that is not situated", and for learning this means a holistic view of "activity in and with the world" (p.33), where learning takes place through involvement with the wider world rather than receiving a body of knowledge. They propose *legitimate peripheral participation* to describe these social practices which involve learning as a central component. Within this process newcomers become established practitioners through inclusion in a community of practice, highlighting that it is the structure of participation, rather than a formal curriculum, that guides learning (Wenger, 2008).

Simply defined, a community of practice represents a group formed over time through a common interest in development of a specific skill or interest (Wenger, 2008). Within Wenger's original conception, communities of practice are characterised by three distinct dimensions that work together to generate relations of community and practice. These dimensions (mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire) are described further below.

Mutual engagement

For Wenger mutual engagement describes "dense relations" sustained by members of a community of practice around the focus of their community. This is perhaps best understood by what it is not, Wenger being careful to describe mutual engagement as going beyond "declaring allegiance, belonging to an organisation, having a title, or having personal relations with some people"; it isn't based on "who knows whom or who talks with whom" or geographical proximity (2008, p.74). Mutual engagement refers, rather, to the meanings negotiated through group members in the pursuit of a shared aim.

Joint enterprise

Similarly, the idea of joint enterprise goes beyond a stated shared goal to describe "a collective process of negotiation" that generates a level of accountability between participants. Key to the joint enterprise is its

ownership by community participants, it "belongs to them in a profound sense" (p.77), in spite of all outside influences.

Shared repertoire

Finally, shared repertoire includes "routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts" (p.82) that the community has generated together throughout its existence. These aspects gain their meaning from belonging to the community, and their creation in the pursuit of a joint enterprise. This could include a wide range of elements, from scientific instruments to shared anecdotes, which when taken together gain coherence as artefacts of joint enterprise.

This concept of the community of practice works together with legitimate peripheral participation to describe situated learning in action. For example, a knitwear designer, working in a studio setting with fellow knitwear designers, may become inducted into a community of practice through the shared aim of developing expertise on a particular machine. This joint enterprise would be supported by the mutual engagement of the group, and the repertoire of technical terms, machines, and routines that they share. For Wenger this participation would follow the path of situated learning, from "peripheral", as a newcomer, to "full participation", as an experienced practitioner, (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.36) through increasing commitment of time and effort, as well as development of an identity as an experienced practitioner. Through this process of legitimate peripheral participation, participants become established members and gain legitimacy in their domain of interest.

The framework of the community of practice has been embraced enthusiastically by a range of disciplines, and applied to a varied selection of professions, approaches and modes of social engagement. Tummons (2018) describes it as "a highly influential theory" within higher education in particular, explored in a "remarkable" (p.2) range of contexts. Indeed, within education the idea of communities of practice can, at times, take on an almost mythic quality, able to develop practice in a range of settings. For example, Mortier (2020) posits communities of practice as a valuable framework to explore in developing inclusive education, describing them as "inherently transformative" (p.335).

However, the narrow scope, and emphasis on legitimacy, within Wenger's theory has been challenged as a method of understanding learning. For example, Fenton-O'Creevy et al., in Wenger (2015), suggest that looking beyond communities of practice to "landscapes of practice" (p.43), within which multiple communities of practice overlap and interact, provides an opportunity for varied paths through communities, and makes space for participants who view themselves outside Wenger's periphery to centre model. They go on to identify these participants as "tourists", who pass through communities of practice briefly and are unchanged, and "sojourners", who participate more fully but do not view themselves as community members (p.44), giving a more nuanced understanding of the way in which legitimate peripheral participation operates. This is further illustrated by Nerantzi (2017), who finds that peripheral participation in communities of practice, rather than indicating a newcomer status or disengagement, may instead reflect a choice to remain in the periphery while participating in communities elsewhere (p.217).

The need for greater nuance indicates that, while communities of practice are now widely discussed within learning and teaching in higher education, their usefulness within the scholarship of learning and teaching may be questioned. In studies of new academics' experiences entering higher education both Jawitz (2007) and Gourlay (2011) have highlighted the model's limitations in discussing learning and teaching experiences that lack the necessary social interactions and fall outside the idealised journey of peripheral participation.

Further, it is evident that institutions are responding to the commoditisation of higher education by calling for the artificial creation of communities of practice (Flint & O'Hara, 2013). This managerial approach is limited in its impact on student experience, reflecting a struggle to deliver effective teaching with fewer resources, rather than a commitment to pedagogical change (Lea, 2005). This leads to an undermining of the potential for communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation to function as a heuristic framework to understand contemporary practice.

Smith (2022), on the other hand, considers how engagement with, and reconceptualisation of, communities of practice could function to expand ideas of learning, teaching, and the wider place of education in society. Drawing on fieldwork with the Gwich'in people of Arctic Village, Smith suggests a reframing of communities of practice as ecosystems of practice: "communities of practice that consider other-than-human actors to be key participants in the situated learning process" (p.1348). This inclusion of plants, animals, waterways and natural phenomena in the Situated Learning process would, Smith suggests, "move away from anthropocentric language and human exceptionalism" (p.1349) to embrace Indigenous epistemologies which decentralise humanity, thereby shifting perspectives within pedagogy to engage a more ecologically focused mindset. While it is worth noting that the use of Indigenous epistemologies to further settler pedagogy could be considered a continuation of exploitative practices enacted through education systems, Smith does indicate the ways in which Situated Learning and communities of practice can be reconceptualised and reimagined to extend their value as frameworks for understanding learning and teaching.

Implications for Learning and Teaching in Art and Design

Discussion Question 1: In what ways does the communities of practice framework map to established practices of learning and teaching in art and design?

Although the use, misuse and adaptation of the communities of practice framework has been explored extensively in learning and teaching scholarship surprisingly little attention has been given to its relationship to learning and teaching in art and design. While there is some scholarship in this area it is in the main focused on the ways in which communities of practice can be used to include external partners in teaching, while the relationship between established approaches to teaching and communities of practice as a framework are, it seems, taken for granted.

Nevertheless, the relationship between communities of practice and signature pedagogies of art and design can be clearly drawn. Orr and Shreeve (2018) suggest that the dialogic and collaborative nature of learning and teaching in art and design, and the ultimate goal of developing "neophyte creative practitioners" (p.22), can be understood as involvement in a community of practice, with students on the periphery engaging with experienced tutor practitioners at the centre (p.98). Figure 2 illustrates how the central characteristics of communities of practice interact with Orr and Shreeve's signature pedagogies of art and design. Within this example, *mutual engagement*, the relationships through which community norms are developed can be understood as the dialogic exchange through which learning and teaching occurs; *joint enterprise*, the community's understanding of its central purpose, can be understood through the specific strategies employed in art and design teaching, for example the live project; and *shared repertoire*, the shared resources characteristic of communities of practice (Wenger, 2008, p.72), can be understood as the research and materiality embedded in art and design teaching. Each of these characteristics is then situated within the wider pedagogy of ambiguity within which art and design teaching sits. This demonstrates the

flexibility of the communities of practice framework, as well as the ease with which embedded practices of art and teaching design can be mapped to the communities of practice structure, and begins to suggest the extent to which this relationship may be seen as an expectation, rather than a feature, of art and design teaching.
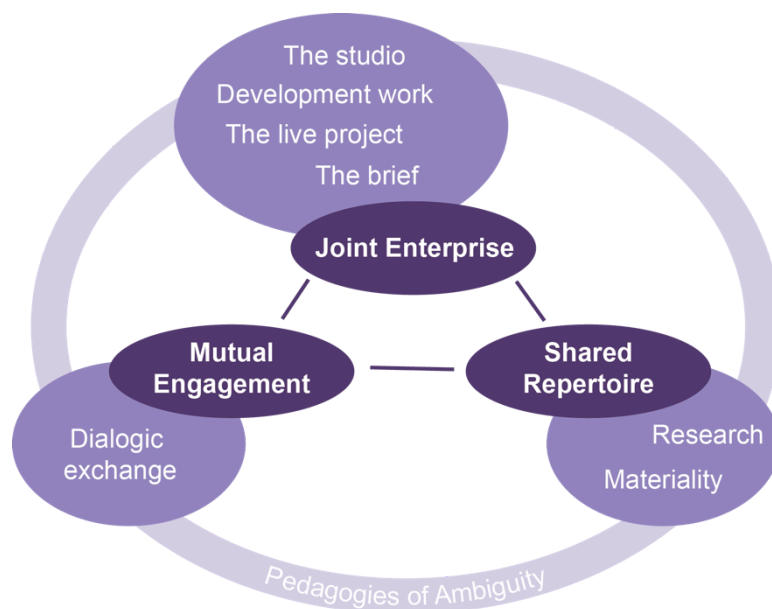
Figure 2 Interaction of Signature Pedagogies and Communities of Practice. Based on Wenger, 2008.

Logan (2006), for example, demonstrates how the communities of practice framework demonstrates "the best theoretical match" (p.339) for the graphic design teaching observed in their study, as students working in the studio developed "insider characteristics" (p.338) allowing them access to "graphic design's inner circle" (p.339) and the knowledge therein. This demonstrates how the communities of practice framework can be applied to existing teaching practices common to art and design teaching, reflecting the shared repertoire, joint enterprise and mutual engagement already at work in design teaching. Further, Logan suggests that this educational community of practice reflects industry wide ways of working, and can be considered an "overlapping [circle] of activity within a wider graphic design 'community of practice' " (p.342), with the conventions of design teaching practices informed by industry practice.

Further, Orr and Shreeve's (2018) discussion of student engagement in communities of practice within art and design teaching is extended to educators themselves, who engage in communities of practice based around teaching practice. One they particularly identify is the assessing of students' practical work, and the specific challenges this poses as compared to written or examination based assessment. Orr and Shreeve point out that the standards used within staff teams to assess student work "don't leap off the page into tutors' and students' heads" (p.138) rather they are formed and confirmed through dialogic exchange in educator communities of practice. This demonstrates how Logan's "overlapping circles" (2006, p.342) of communities of practice in art and design teaching extend beyond educator/student and education/industry to include existing educator/educator communities through which the standards and expectations of art and design teaching are shared.

As stated earlier, the wealth of scholarship concerning the relationship between communities of practice and art and design teaching is focused on the potential for inclusion of industry partners in teaching. This is

perhaps felt to be more crucial in art and design than in other discipline areas as the induction into a wider industry community of practice is essential for student success following graduation (Logan, 2006), as students learn the intangible expectations of industry while also developing practical skills. As Mavri et al. (2020) point out, through membership in an industry facing community of practice "students were gradually exposed to critical information about the real-world practice and generally, the conditions, criteria and prospects of the broader domain, while still at university" (p.13), getting a 'head start' on professional standards crucial to success in industry.

Tovey (2015) uses the international community of automotive designers as an example of an industry wide community of practice, identifying it as a site of "explicit and tacit knowledge and information" (p.39) of particular value to students in this area. Tovey then demonstrates how this community of practice is engaged with the transport and product design scheme at Coventry University, through strategies such as live industry projects, the engagement of former professionals as teaching staff, and professional placements and internships, suggesting that the positive feedback given by industry partners on student performance demonstrates the value of overlapping these communities.

Further, Cocchiarella and Booth's (2015) discussion of the Unit X module at Manchester Metropolitan University foregrounds the live project and industry partnership as a key factor in developing a community of practice through the project, while also highlighting the importance of space and the development of a "vertical studio" (p.327) as central elements in developing effective communities. The strategies given here will be familiar to many art and design educators, particularly the live project and the importance of the studio, identified by Orr and Shreeve (2018) as signature pedagogies of art and design, suggesting again that the communities of practice model maps neatly to accepted conventions of art and design teaching.

However, while the value of the inclusion of industry partners in communities of practice is clearly perceived as a positive for art and design teaching, it is worth noting the limitations of this relationship. Orr and Shreeve identify the potential for "values clash" (2018, p.44) between educators and industry partners, with values forming a "tacit and unexamined element of art and design education" (p.43), in part developed and shared through communities of practice. As communities of practice overlap the potential for these values to clash becomes apparent, suggesting the potential for tension in the development of these relationships.

The examples discussed here begin to show that the communities of practice framework is intimately connected to ways we learn and teach in art and design, so much so that it is perhaps taken for granted as beyond the need for further analysis. When this scholarship is undertaken it indicates that the communities of practice framework is perhaps more meaningful in describing what is already happening, and identifying current communities of practice at work, than guiding what might happen next.

While this is perhaps the most valuable application of Wenger's (2008) framework, this acceptance of the theory, and lack of interrogation of the concept itself, can lead to limitations in how these communities can function, and the value they can give to individual members. These limitations, with particular regard to the challenges of the post-lockdown teaching landscape, are discussed further in this paper, while the potential for values clash and tension between communities of practice suggests a potential area for further study.

Discussion Question 2: What are the limitations for communities of practice in the diverse, post-lockdown art and design teaching landscape of 2024?

To understand the teaching landscape of higher education in 2024 we must look to two defining factors: the COVID 19 pandemic, and the social justice actions of the summer of 2020. Each of these represented shifts in teaching and pedagogy at individual and institutional levels, and can help us understand the ways in which a communities of practice model may face limitations in contemporary teaching.

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns have had a host of long ranging impacts on many aspects of life, and have lead to some lasting changes in teaching and learning in higher education widely, and in art and design specifically. Samuli et al. (2022) emphasise the speed at which institutions were forced to make changes, and the "paramount role" education technologies played in this, while also highlighting the "additional cognitive load" students faced "due to the holistic changes to their lives and the looming pandemic threat" (p.1). This emphasises the variety of challenges faced by higher education institutions in the early days of the pandemic, as well as the practical challenges of teaching and learning remotely staff and students experienced increased health and wellbeing challenges, impacting their abilities to teach and learn 'as usual'. Further, Pan (2020) outlines some of the further impacts triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as "panic buying, maskaphobia, anti-China sentiment, racism and hate crimes" (p.323) which further altered the routines of everyday life throughout the year 2020 and beyond.

These factors have all contributed to a significant shift in understandings of learning and teaching across higher education, from increased use of technology and remote learning, to changes within classroom demographics, and represent a timely opportunity to reconsider accepted understandings of pedagogical frameworks and theories, such as Wenger's (2008) communities of practice.

Further to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, increased mainstream awareness and discussion of racial justice following high profile police brutality cases in the summer of 2020, led to individual and institutional questioning of accepted philosophies and practices, highlighting discussions of racism, colonialism and identity in higher education. Perhaps the first challenge in discussing higher education in this landscape is clearly defining what is under discussion, as diverse and anti-colonial teaching practices are defined in many ways, none of which may be entirely fit for purpose. For example, Tuck and Yang (2012) challenge the widely used 'decolonised curriculum' in its use as a metaphor for the very real ongoing fight for decolonisation of settler-colonial states, while Verma (2022) contests that the institutional title of EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) can be questioned in its usefulness for anti-racist teaching. In this article the term 'EDI-informed teaching' will be used, in an effort to encompass the wide range of identities within classrooms, as well as the range of strategies employed to develop inclusion in higher education.

To understand the wider context of discussions around EDI-informed teaching we can look to research that suggests that, while classrooms are increasingly diverse, barriers to inclusion persist. Warrener and Douglas (2023) outline that "based on data for 2019–20, only 18 per cent of academic staff at universities in the UK were from global-majority communities" (p.1), and these staff members are more likely to be employed in precarious and part-time contracts, while "'Black women are three times less likely than white women to attain professorship and half as likely as Black men'" (University and College Union quoted in Warrener & Douglas, p.2). This, they suggest, "demoralises and undermines the abilities of UK universities to offer inspiring and inclusive curricula for all students" (p. 2). Advance HE (2023) also highlights gaps in pay, progression and attainment for staff and students across gender and disability characteristics, as well as race and ethnicity. These findings indicate that while classrooms are increasingly diverse, the learning and

teaching experience is impacted by a range of identity characteristics, and these need to be considered in discussion of existing pedagogic frameworks.

The combination of events experienced through 2020 and onwards have brought to the fore questions about learning, teaching and 'business as usual', as illustrated by Bornstein (2023)in Figure 3. It is in this context that the communities of practice framework can be reconsidered, tested, and further developed to question if it is 'fit for purpose' in a contemporary landscape.
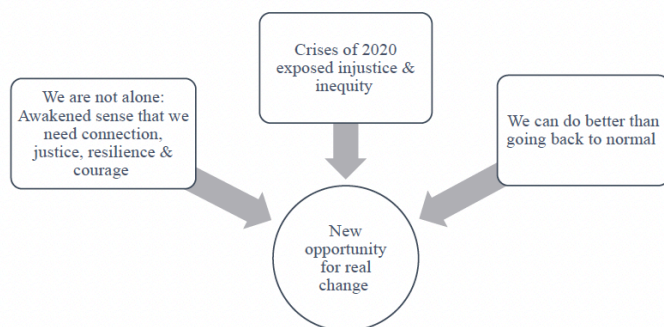
Figure 3 Leading with solidarity rationale, Bornstein (2023, p.275)

To consider the limitations of the communities of practice framework in the context of a post-lockdown teaching landscape we need to consider the specific context of teaching in 2024. While teaching has largely returned to the in-person classroom, some aspects of teaching and learning have remained online, and the overall approach to teaching has shifted for many. This has lead to a more blended style of teaching, possibly with the hope of 'future-proofing' teaching and learning against any further similar lockdowns. We can also consider the ongoing impact of lockdowns on current students, whose prior social and educational experience has been disrupted, and in some cases has led to changes in learning preferences.

For art and design teaching in particular disruptions to in-person teaching have impacted the signature pedagogies of studio teaching, dialogic exchange and material outputs, thereby disrupting the joint enterprise, mutual engagement and shared repertoire elements of communities of practice, to which these pedagogies are mapped (see figure 2). The idealised physical environment in which learning and teaching takes place, the studio provides a physical and metaphorical structure for learning (Orr & Shreeve, 2018). The social nature of the studio, as students work alongside each other, and the visibility of work-in-progress on display allow the space to enable spontaneous discussion between students and tutors. These discussions are seen as essential to the development of a shared repertoire of "routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts" (Wenger, 2008, p.82) within communities of practice, and the site where the "dense relations" (p.74) between members of the community are maintained.

The enforced move from the physical environment of the studio generated a range of challenges for art and design education through the early days of the pandemic. Robertson et al. (2022) describe how "physical spaces and studios… are designed to nurture creative practices through… discursive collaboration" (p.273), with spatial restrictions required in response to the pandemic disrupting and preventing much of this informal collaboration. This signature pedagogy of "dialogic exchange" (Orr & Shreeve, 2018) faced further challenges through remote learning, with studies reporting that "students felt separated and distant

from their educators and peers" (Marshalsey, 2021, p.707), while "trauma-related, negative emotions quickly became apparent through the general demeanour of students, with clear signs of anxiety and a distinct lack of motivation, resilience and confidence" (Robertson et al., 2022, p.272); although it was also suggested that certain online communication tools, such as real-time chat functions, were able to generate discussion and a sense of community (Marshalsey, 2021.)

While in many cases teaching has returned to the studio, the impact of lockdown is still felt. Changes in attendance patterns have been noted anecdotally, as have continuing issues with health and wellbeing of students and staff (Husbands & Prescott, 2023). These factors continue to affect the ability of the studio space to function as a site for development of the mutual engagement and joint enterprise inherent to communities of practice, suggesting a limitation in the way the framework can be applied in art and design teaching going forward.

Further, within art and design teaching we may consider the place of materiality in the shared repertoire of communities of practice as the key limitation of this dimension of the framework. Orr and Shreeve (2018) emphasise the importance of material development work and outcomes in providing "embodied knowledge" (p.94) within art and design teaching and learning, and the challenge of both developing and assessing this work has been felt throughout moves to remote teaching. While attempts have been made to mitigate the impacts of this, through socially-distanced delivery of physical artefacts, or photography of material works, this element of materiality is perhaps where the limitations of lockdown were most keenly felt. However, other elements such as the "words… stories… symbols… [and] concepts" (Wenger, 2008, p.82) inherent to the shared repertoire were able to be retained through remote communication, as students and staff met online, and in many cases resumption of in-person teaching has allowed materiality to return to art and design teaching.

These considerations of the limitations of a post-lockdown application of communities of practice framework suggest that, in line with research into virtual communities of practice during lockdown (Bornstein, 2023), the framework itself continues to have value in describing the formation and functioning of community relationships. However, it is perhaps the way the communities of practice framework is specifically enacted in art and design teaching that needs further consideration, and the ways in which communities of practice can be formed and maintained remotely for art and design students and staff is a valuable area for further research.

As outlined earlier, gaps in pay, progression, and attainment experienced by staff across identity characteristics indicate that identity and power relations have enduring effects on learning and teaching experience, and greater attention could be given to how these factors operate in contemporary communities of practice. While power relations are included in Wenger's initial conception of the model (2008, p.143) this aspect of the theory tends not to be foregrounded, or even discussed, in subsequent applications.

Contu and Willmott (2003) suggest that the ideological relationship between Wenger's theory and current neoliberal values within higher education have lead to an adoption of the concept that works to obfuscate the operation of power dynamics within communities of practice, and the ways in which legitimate peripheral participation is limited through class, gender, race and other identity formations. Whilst they acknowledge the "radical dimension" (p.292) of Situated Learning, and the critical approach within Wenger's work that emphasises the place of identity and power relations in learning in communities of practice, they contend that the case studies included in *Situated Learning* (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and

Communities of Practice (Wenger, 2008) assume consensus within the group without considering how this consensus may be influenced by hegemonic social forces. They go on to contend that this inconsistency has therefore allowed Situated Learning to be viewed as an "innovative approach" (Contu & Wilmott, p.292) rather than a fundamental challenge to existing understandings of learning and teaching.

While the theoretical implications of this are ripe for exploration, it is perhaps the practical implications that could be most pressingly explored. Research indicates a key site for potential limitations in the communities of practice model is in the formation of the relationships at the heart of the model, and consideration of how these can be addressed would allow for the communities of practice framework to be developed in a contemporary setting. Verma (2022, p.9) outlines the ways in which interpersonal interactions can leave those from marginalised communities feeling silenced or excluded, suggesting that societal expectations around who is 'supposed' to be in university settings can affect the development of relationships between peers from different groups. He further outlines that interpersonal examples of marginalisation, such as gaslighting (Verma, 2022, p.9) and microaggressions (p.8), negatively affect the inclusion of marginalised groups in university settings, which would of course then limit the ability to take part in the shared repertoire, mutual engagement and joint enterprise of communities of practice in learning and teaching.

Further, the physical aspect of communities of practice which continues to be regarded as essential in art and design teaching and learning (such as the studio, materiality and the importance of development work), can cause limitations in terms of access to spaces. Students and staff with disabilities may find spaces physically inaccessible, and geography and outside commitments may also limit participants' ability to access a shared community space. Research by Advance HE (2022) indicates that, while remote working had benefits for some students, many disabled students felt isolated and unable to build relationships with peers and teaching staff while working online, again impacting the ability to form communities of practice. This suggests that, within EDI-informed teaching, we cannot assume everyone is having the same experience, and we must understand that differences in identity, ability and access can mediate levels of involvement. Therefore members of communities of practice need to be aware of how groups are formed and whether members are able to be actively involved to ensure diverse and robust communities.

As with the limitations of a post-lockdown application of the communities of practice framework however, it is perhaps not the framework itself but the way in which it is enacted that requires further consideration. An awareness of how we interact, and the ways in which this might limit community involvement, is important for all members of a community of practice, and additionally we might consider the ways in which members might be excluded from the community, physically or interpersonally. Additionally, further research into the formation and maintenance of virtual communities of practice might suggest how remote and asynchronous working could be utilised to form more inclusive communities of practice.

This consideration of the place of the communities of practice framework in the contemporary teaching environment indicates that while there may be limitations in the theory itself, it is how the framework is enacted in practice that can be most fruitfully developed. The ways in which virtual communities of practice could be implemented in the specific context of art and design provides an area for further study, and an understanding of the ways in which identity characteristics can be considered in the development of communities suggests an opportunity for interventions in practice.

Conclusion

In this article the key literature around art and design signature pedagogies and communities of practice has been explored. This literature has highlighted a range of conceptual positions to be taken forward in further research. Signature pedagogies within art and design provide an understanding of learning and teaching expectations of tutors and students in art and design disciplines, and perceptions of established practice within these disciplines. Although challenged by some literature, the concept of communities of practice gives a lens for understanding the ways in which new practitioners develop identities as master practitioners, and may be especially useful in considering this development in studio teaching environments.

Discussion of the communities of practice framework in context of the contemporary teaching landscape indicates large areas for further study. In particular a re-evaluation of both signature pedagogies and communities of practice, both in theory and practice, with regard to de- and anti-colonial teaching practices would be valuable in indicating the values and limitations these approaches hold for contemporary, inclusive learning and teaching. This might mean foregrounding issues of identity within applications of these approaches, or situating them within the wider project of reconsidering our relationships with embedded teaching practice. A re-evaluation such as this is essential to ensure that the value of these approaches is maintained, while ensuring they are 'fit for purpose' in a changing social landscape.

Biography

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