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Practice of praxis

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ABSTRACT

The practice of praxis involves engaging in learning with an active awareness of the developmental process as it occurs. Although self-regulation assists in self-directed learning, heutagogy and engaging with praxis are not independent of collaboration and connection with others. Beside the strategic mental and physical aspects of learning, a person's affective states and processes impact their engagement and achievement. Outside the formal framework of education, finding a way to support learning through collective engagement can be a challenge. This study explores an experimental community-based innovation to facilitate deep learning in an informal setting amongst a diverse group of creative adults. An online platform, YapNet, was created to address the gap for people to engage with praxis through a self-directed, interdisciplinary network that encouraged deep learning through critical, respectful feedback. Individuals shared incomplete professional work in progress on the platform, noticed and responded to one another through dialogic commentary. The benefits of this engagement are demonstrated through case studies, of a musician and of a writer. The learning demonstrated by these professionals is discussed and the core principles of YapNet are outlined for transferable use in other social and professional settings.

KEYWORDS

praxis, heutagogy, reflection, agency, self-directed learning

INTRODUCTION

The practice of praxis involves engaging in learning with an active awareness of the developmental process as it occurs. Adults are reticent to engage in public learning and demonstrate potentially un-honed skills or partially enacted processes (Stajkovic, 2006). Could this hesitation stem from a fear of failure born from both what society and education teach us about what we share, how we communicate, and a basic understanding of what things and processes should be either kept internal as private experiences or should be publicly visible? Perhaps it is from a lack of appropriate forum for these processes. This article presents an example of case studies from an innovative practice where a community forum was created for the purpose of practicing praxis.

Modern society teaches us to gather knowledge, be correct in what we do, and protect what we have, by “creating, owning, preserving, and protecting intellectual property” (Jessop, 2005, p. 15) both metaphorically by not revealing processes and literally by using (pay)walls to guard artistic and intellectual outputs (Tennant et al., 2016). Formal education aims to train students as autonomous learners (Mckendry & Boyd, 2012). However, despite the expectation of autonomy, in their own experience, students do not always perceive this shift to being independent learners (Henri, Morrell, & Scott, 2018; Scott, Furnell, Murphy, & Goulder, 2015), and therefore, still depend on external instruction.

In autonomous learning, where students are expected to adopt the self-directed qualities of andragogy as they take responsibility for their learning (Knowles, 1975, 1978), peers, mentors, or coaches play an integral role in a person's learning (Yan, 2012). The guidance to materials, critical appraisals, and externalisation of observation through dialogue involves others and contributes to the self-regulation and self-direction associated with person-centred learning. The underlying focus of ‘learning’ in education contexts often develops

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competencies focusing on outcomes through assessment (single applications) instead of developing capabilities (skills for yet unencountered possibility), which can then be applied to future situations (Abraham & Komattil, 2017; Cairns & Hase, 1996).

Many people develop the capacity for analytical thinking in school, as we are taught to approach tasks using the methodology of scientific experimentation, the analysis of grammatical construction, understanding the unfolding of chronology in history, and the incremental procedures in mathematical proofs. Despite the array of subjects covered, once the underlying cognitive skills are learned, they still need to be taken to new contexts and applied to our life pursuits – professional or otherwise. Ironically, it is often not until adults enter their profession, after leaving the safe, exploratory environment of education, when learned skills are applied to new contexts. Here, an awareness of praxis and metacognition gives a sense of agency and ownership of learning and experience. The need for interaction, reflection, and feedback in learning does not disappear with accomplishment or seniority, yet the opportunity to find and engage with this sort of learning environment becomes far less common in adulthood and in professional settings. Learners are therefore required to go beyond autonomy in learning to develop heutagogy, a type of learning where one not only organises and directs learning, but also engages in a constant reflection of and through their experience (Blaschke, 2012; Hase & Kenyon, 2007).

In life, when individual high-level projects are pursued there is no manual, and understanding and actioning a project requires competence and self-efficacy, a person's belief in their capability to carry out the task (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy beliefs inform a person's commitment, resilience, and perseverance and are integral to effective learning and achievement (Ritchie, 2021; Bembenuddy, Kitsantas, & Cleary, 2013). As people move beyond executing individual strategies of self-regulation, they leave the reliance on teachers to set the task, goal, or parameters (Gandomkar & Sandars, 2018). When moving toward self-directed learning, they realise that understanding and even possessing the capability to execute the analytical principles is only a first step.

Engaging with deep learning in a professional context involves recognising, knowing, and beginning to assimilate new skills (Race, 2019). In any context, documenting and sharing the unfolding process of applying skills while actively learning through experiences involves confidence in the self and trust in others. It involves an openness to becoming comfortable with more than competencies and existing achievements, but also with capabilities which go from the known into unknown, as learning processes are explored. People, adults, are not necessarily used to seeing themselves in terms of coexisting, co-learning, and collaborating; however, this is part of the lived experience of learning. In the interview on 'examining life', Butler and Taylor (2010) present a 'challenge to individualism', asking whether the modern world is a place where people need each other and are there, willing to help one another to address one another's basic learning needs.

The present article aims to explore an online platform designed to address the problem of the practice of praxis in adult life by providing a forum for critically supported engagement with deep learning in an open way. Incorporating this methodology for learning beyond formal educational settings can assist people in moving more toward heutagogy, and realising that self-directed learning does not happen in isolation (Knowles, 1990).

THEORY: LEARNING PROCESSES

For the purposes of this article, internal and external aspects of learning that are highly associated both with self-directed and self-regulated learning, specifically cognitive strategies (metacognition and analysis) and personal processes (self-belief, self-regulation, and affective factors), and physical processes (motor skills and enacted behaviours) will be addressed.

In social cognitive theory, the interrelationship of people, actions, and the environment is indelible (Bandura, 1986, 1996). Empirical research focuses on specific aspects of how people use or control identified cognitive processes or behavioural strategies (Bembenuddy et al., 2013; Miksza, 2012) by separating out factors to allow for a closer examination and clearer understanding of the element under investigation. However, other wider factors are also important in life as learning is relational and contextualised. Beeftink, Van Eerde, Rutte, and Bertrand (2012) acknowledge that aspects of personal style in cognition and delivery impact people's professional outputs. Just as with the triadic reciprocity of human behaviour, the physical, mental, and behavioural aspects of learning cannot be separated, and are integral to the whole person experience of learning.

Cognitive skills in learning encompass the identification, categorisation, and analysis of how to accomplish a task or goal. When a person takes responsibility and has agency for their actions they apply these elements by self-regulating their learning through deliberate (self-regulated learning) behaviours (Bembenuddy et al., 2013). When forming self-efficacy beliefs, understanding capabilities is far easier when proximal goals are undertaken, making the task and the processes required clearer (Schunk, 1990). Then the learner can accurately identify the path to take, the skills needed, and their existing levels of competency. They can question whether some aspects of skill development need to be established or addressed before beginning other elements and decide whether iterative steps will require repetition as the learning progresses.

Physical processes involve applying decisions and interacting with the material world around them whether that involves typing, speaking, walking, or executing other fine motor skills. These actions become yet more refined and specialised in disciplines such as cooking or the within the performing arts, where millimetres can make the difference between a successful outcome and injury (Ibrahim & Davies, 2012; Torrents, Castañer, Dinuřová, & Anguera, 2010). As a musician approaches a new project, they embark on a



journey of hundreds of hours toward the time when the public can finally see the music performed (Ericsson, Krampe, & Teschroemer, 1993). This places a combination of physical and mental demands on the artist ranging from training individual muscles for specialist movements through repetitive practice to organise and execute aspects of musical communication (Hosoda, Furuya, 2016; Zhang, Schubert, & McPherson, 2020).

In the professional arena a focus on achieving results makes enacting learning processes more challenging as people are often left responsible to figure out, undertake, and support their learning on their own, often in private (Bradbury, Frost, Kilminster, & Zukas, 2012). Ponton and Rhea (2006) note that the concept of self-directed learning, where a learner is responsible for the entire path of their learning (as opposed only the cognitive processes and behaviours associated with self-regulation) as something that is undertaken by individuals in isolation, as a “socially imposed concept” (p. 43). Societally and professionally the practice of learning in a connected way is less common or accepted than the “follow the leader” model (Corbett & Spinello, 2020, p. 8). Bandura and Cervone (1983) found receiving feedback and engaging in self-reflective comparison impacted self-efficacy beliefs and motivation. Unpacking the *how* of the task is crucial to successful self-directed learning. People often confidently identify *what* they are learning, yet, have little idea of *how* (Vallacher & Wegner, 1987). This aspect of cognition links to self-regulation and involves metacognition (Pintrich, 2004), critical thinking about and analysis of their thinking, and becomes a practical learning behaviour when someone acts on their metacognitive analysis by choosing and implementing strategic approaches.

The impact of personal affective processes like motivation, resilience, and persistence can neither be underestimated nor assumed to be stable in people’s lives. As a project unfolds, there will be unforeseen influences from all aspects of life that will, in effect, cause people to stumble. This is when connections provided by a community framework are most helpful, as learning does not happen alone (Ponton & Rhea, 2006; Ravenscroft, 2011). Others are valuable in learning, whether to encourage, act as dialogic partners or sounding boards, or simply to observe, listen, and offer external perspectives to our own eyes and ears. Acting as our own ‘other’ can be learned but is a very difficult skill to hone. Examining the underlying skills and processes involved in learning allows noticing and understanding, confirms beliefs of capability, and prepares for a confident application toward the goal (Ritchie, 2015; Schunk & Zimmermann, 1998).

METHOD

Context

YapNet was a small online project created by Geoffrey Gevalt, modelled after his previous project Young Writer’s Project (see <https://youngwritersproject.org>), and launched

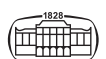
by Gevalt and author as a platform for adults to create work in a supportive community setting. YapNet was voluntarily funded and maintained by its users, and in its initial eight months just prior to the pandemic there were over 500 posts and over 1,600 comments. YapNet’s viability depended on the engagement of internally motivated people both to actively share their projects and to comment on other’s projects, and the pandemic added a particular challenge to the environment. It did continue through the lockdowns of the pandemic, but people were pulled away from this type of enriching learning, especially in light of the pandemic, to other pursuits having to do with maintaining everyday life. YapNet was closed after 20 months of existence, in 2021.

YapNet encompassed a community of users from across the world devoted to sharing creative work and providing other practitioners from various disciplines with specific observations about their unfinished ideas and work. In essence, it was a place to gather feedback. The website was open to anyone in any discipline or genre and contributions have encompassed words, images, sounds, design, movement, and instructional/design. Community members “practice” in this space, that is they shared work that was not fully developed. Each user had their own space and authored posts, designating the category of work (i.e., poetry, music, research, nonfiction, visual art). The site had the facility to include text, audio, embedded video, images, or external links. Once posted, other users could leave text or audio comments, or directly annotate passages within the post.

Users could then respond to comments, revise and track versions of their work, and ‘sprout’ a new post linked to and based on the original. The concept of ‘sprouting’ work served as an inspirational springboard for others to remix or create their own work. Users could navigate posts by author, topic, and date. Beside posts of individual work and ongoing projects, community-based challenges were designed to engage users in short bursts of creativity with prompts for topics and starters such as: new year, new goal; COVID-19 Small Stories; Creative spaces & places; Daily 10-min challenge, 100 days challenge.

By pivoting around the exchange of feedback, the community gave members a clearer understanding of their work, new ways of approaching their concepts, and opportunities to learn by doing, from and with others. The guidepost of “respect” ensures that all work remains protected; artists retain full rights to their works. The site was neither commercial, nor a promotional vehicle. There was no data mining and no personal details were shared. YapNet was run and self-funded by individuals donating their time to build the community. The site was open and free for all to use.

Since its creation just before the pandemic, those who posted on YapNet chose to risk visibility and trust that those who see their work undertake to provide beneficial critical comments. Under a supportive umbrella of respect, and with content visible only to logged-in members, the community engaged more deeply, took greater creative risk, and derived surprising and remarkable benefits from the specific observations of others. YapNet users could shed their professional digital identities and, without fear of unwarranted judgment,



focus on their practice and the effectiveness of their developing work and ideas and openly reflect on how to improve and deepen their concepts. These processes can feel like a risk, as many are not used to honestly sharing or exposing unpolished ideas and work.

YapNet adopted and valued personal learning, which is inherently something unique for each learner (Downes, 2016). To maintain coherence within the creative community and work toward a collaborative ethos or theme, there needed to be a sharing approach. The feedback provided was constructive and users both posted and commented on one another's work. Those on YapNet shared a range of artistic experiences and expertise with words, images, video and audio documenting their creative processes online with the YapNet community. The care shown by being noticed, as much as any specialist knowledge, fostered growth.

The online platform of YapNet provided the setting, material, and participants for this research. The community of practice allowed for an organic and visible experience of learning and undertaking creative projects amidst strangers. YapNet was not a designed or planned formal experiment, thus demonstrated an authentic lived experience of this practice of praxis.

Research questions

Based on the theoretical background, which highlighted the importance of personal, cognitive, and self-directed processes, this research aimed to explore how deep learning was executed and its relation to a resilient practice. Therefore, the present research adopted goals of exploring these principles in practice, and the following research questions were formulated.

1. How did participants engage with the environment of YapNet?
2. What challenges in their own learning did participants encounter and confront while using YapNet?

Research method

An audit of material from two identified projects by YapNet users was undertaken, and representative extracts are presented to address the research questions and demonstrate if and how praxis was achieved by this community.

Participants

An open call was presented to the YapNet users to volunteer their work and comments for inclusion in a publication. Projects by two YapNet users were chosen for inclusion here as case study examples. These participants each engaged differently with the platform to produce different mediums of work (live music performance and published text). Both examples were subsequently presented in public as finished pieces and can be accessed online in the public domain.

Instruments

The online platform of YapNet provided the instrumental framework for participant work to be presented and engaged

with. This comprised two parts: the creator's posted material and the community response to the work. Text was an obvious choice for communication online, however images and audio were also possible and included.

Procedure

Individual creators chose how and what to present on the platform. Community members voluntarily responded to created material with comments. The author engaged with all text, audio, and video content posted that related to the two case studies presented in the present article. This process took place between May 2019 and February 2021.

The first case study presents elements of a musical project encompassing 128 daily diary-like posts totalling over 44,000 words, with 115 video and audio clips, and images included in most posts. The second case study is of a writer's work comprised a final piece of 3,200 words, developed over four drafts and multiple posts with several revisions over the course of three months.

Data analysis

Material from each creator was examined and extracts most concisely demonstrating aspects of engagement with learning processes and interaction with the community and the platform are presented. There has been an effort to allow the voice of each creator to tell their own story of praxis. The following two examples of the individual's learning journey demonstrate how YapNet was used as an environment and community. Each case study is presented and discussed in turn.

There are no ethical implications for material inclusion here. All posted material and comments from YapNet members have been presented with permission.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Each case study is presented in the format of the participant's goal and perspective, their engagement via their post, and the community response. Research question one is addressed by the act of being accountable through the user's post; documenting and sharing processes within this community setting combined with the potential for having learning be 'seen' and supported by others allowed and encouraged growth. To address the second research question analysis and discussion of the learning processes undertaken is presented, and then related to other studies and literature.

Case study 1: a cellist learns the Kodaly Sonata

One musician used YapNet as a platform to 'learn out loud' for 128 days in preparation for a public performance of the Kodaly Sonata for solo cello. The musician posting on Yapnet learned a challenging work for solo cello that had specific extended techniques such as intricate pattern work, regularly using the side of the thumb to depress the string in the higher register, or using multiple fingers to depress



strings while also plucking the strings with other fingers from the same hand while simultaneously using the other hand to bow sustained notes. Aural memory needs to be acutely trained and discerning and the spatial muscle memory needed to be mapped and secured (Loimusalo, Huovinen, & Puurtinen, 2019), as well as training the physicality of the fingers and arms for the endurance and stamina of playing as required throughout the 35-min piece of music. Mentally and physically this sort of practice is exhausting, and as a solitary pursuit the learner is completely reliant on themselves for all elements of the learning.

This artist used YapNet as a place to be transparently accountable in preparations for a public performance. They shared their intention in engaging with the platform and the project:

“I started this as a 100 Days type project, but I didn’t want to ‘share’ via social media as part of a firehose activity. I didn’t want to spout interesting tidbits that look glam, I wanted to learn this piece.”

The sense that this space allowed for an articulation of the learning process and genuine reflections that would be ‘seen’ and noticed, as opposed to voyeuristically viewed. The following two entries shared by this musician, one from a month into the project and the second after a brief pause in their daily engagement routine, after the artist returned from a trip abroad, demonstrate distinctly different aspects of physical and mental challenge encountered in the learning process.

“Day 28: June 28

Well, you know that bit I worked *so hard on*? I learned the sequence wrong. That’s right. How did I find out? I watched a video and thought, ‘hey, is that famous person playing the wrong notes?’ His fingering didn’t match anything physically possible for the pitches I thought were there. ... So I went back to the score and looked really carefully at the music: where I’d written ‘D’ over the note was supposed to be a ‘B’. I sometimes have a hard time counting ledger lines and have to put a pencil or my finger to count which one I’m one because I lose track, and sure enough I miscounted and learned that sequence wrong. Fortunately it’s easier the way it’s written, and makes more melodic sense (not surprisingly!!). It’s easy to change.

I played the following two pages lots. Well for a half hour, which was all my right arm would allow today. I had a suite of vaccinations this morning in prep for a trip to speak in Brazil, and the nurse did say that my right arm (they used both!) would feel like someone swung a bag of bricks into it. At least my thumb doesn’t hurt!!

Those two pages (notes up high and coordination) were all about getting the patterns in my mind and ear: all three-finger, four-string chords. You know the Harry Potter giant chess game in one of the movies, where they must move to the right places and sometimes it’s a perilous leap? That’s it; until it’s stable, and then I’ll be like a parkour princess.

I leave you today not with a recording, but with the new skill at the bottom of movement 3, page 7 where I bow the bottom string with one finger on it, and also hold down

the next string with that same finger and the other two strings with the middle two fingers AND THEN pluck the top three strings with my pinky.yep. *pinky*.”

Community comment:

“This is both funny and enlightening, as your comment is yet another indication of the power of YouTube to teach each individual the things they want to know. When I need to do some simple plumbing, or car repair, or learn stop motion or cartooning, or a guitar chord fingering, or whatever ... someone has probably already shown me how, and made a video about it that I can watch, repeat, slow down. We’re all teachers. We’re all students.”

Author response:

“Definitely!! There is the possibility to learn all around us and the teachers can be likely and unlikely. That guy on YouTube is a great teacher and I can sit with my score and question his fingering!”

“Day 74: August 24

Today I didn’t practise until late - the very end of the day. Children came first earlier, and the day certainly slipped away. When I actually did sit down I grinded (yes, not ground, that would be too easy to say, this was truly awkward) through the first 5 pages of movement 3 for a half hour after 9pm. It was like chewing on a fence post. Have you ever seen a wasp eat an old decayed bit of wood to make its nest? That’s what it felt like - unsavoury, gnawing through decayed cellulose to get to something that I certainly didn’t find tonight. Man, motivation to get it back is tricky - and it takes this awful spring clean that is more like mould remover with pure elbow grease.”

Community comment:

“Interesting idea: how does your practicing/playing change depending on time of day? or is it more germane to talk about energy level?”

Author response:

“It does change, and as time goes on and the weather changes I need to be aware of how to learn to play well at the time of the concert. It is not so odd with a normal event, but if it was really early or really late, that makes it harder for sure. For me it is not so much time of day as it is the discipline of clearing my mind before starting so I can focus. Sometimes that is easier to do than other times.”

Across these two pieces of writing, the musician not only relays the story of the day’s practice but also evidences different aspects of the learning process. She developed new ways of instruction through the self-reflection, analysis, sharing, and engaging with self and public observations of physical and mental processes during learning. The first post demonstrates various strategic methods for learning, exemplifying self-regulation in action as outlined by [Bembenny et al. \(2013\)](#) and [Zimmerman \(2000\)](#). She presents a focused reflection that articulated the processes in a way that is understandable to another who perhaps does not play that instrument.



Specifically in the first entry there is evidence of deliberate strategic behaviour as the musician

- identifies errors
- seeks external social sources for learning (other cellists)
- seeks published material (the score)
- undertakes physical questioning (coordination/motor skills)
- repeats to gain physical skills
- repeats to gain aural skills and
- makes efforts to reorder, organise, and memorise aspects of the material to enhance learning.

The writing conveys personal challenge, beyond the delivery of skills or use of behaviours as she notes the disappointment of dealing with the unexpected failure of discovering mistakes, the experience of physical discomfort from a vaccine which impaired her endurance. However, she managed the challenge of both the cognitive load and physical coordination of the advanced musical demands, and this has synthesis of skill has been investigated and demonstrated in high-level musicians (Vernia Carrasco, 2021). There is a sense that she was able to ‘get a load off’ by sharing these challenges, even with an unseen community.

The second entry lacks the detail of strategic application and instead is overwhelmingly focused on aspects of personal challenge. The description is emotional, and conveys helplessness, yet it is clear that she has not quit, and retains a sense of self-efficacy. When not supported by an in-built framework of predetermined staging posts or deadlines, sustaining self-efficacy and motivation can be difficult to achieve alone, especially when a setback occurs (Bandura, 2013), and can be fostered by family and other social support (Zarza-Alzugaray, Casanova, McPherson, & Orejudo, 2020). Progress in musical learning is not linear (Gruhn, 2002), and the impact of this even on a goal directed, aware individual is likely to include moments of emotional instability. The regular, visible accountability toward the goal and to real people on the site became a template for self-reflection and articulated analysis. Within learning, these processes are integral to a higher level, deeper learning practice (Race, 2019). The knowledge that there was a community of observers on YapNet provided the social support network needed for the musician to find motivation to sustain her efforts toward the goal.

Case study 2: a writer prepares a story

A writer shared a rough first draft of a story that, over numerous iterations and series of community suggestions, was polished to the point it was presented publicly as a stage play, and later became part of a novel. In a process of being receptive and open the writer engaged with a range of critical comments including specific suggestions about word choice.

Community comments:

“I was oddly struck by this being present tense. The last non-speaking verb was ‘quieted’ which is a sort of active past, although all the others are present.”

Other comments noticed the overall emotional impact of the work:

“The first draft packed a huge punch for me, and somehow I’ve missed some of that emotion. I enjoyed this one (Draft 3), but would like to have the gut wrenching emotion of the initial piece. This seems muted. ...Don’t know if this is helpful, I really do like this piece. If I hadn’t read the two previous drafts, I would simply say WOW! Thanks for letting me read this.”

These were not passing praise nor were they the casual comments that one would expect from friends or benign acknowledgement from acquaintance colleagues, but the comments were in-depth queries that one might find in a formal, structured learning situation. The comments were posted by people from across the world, with experience in various disciplines, who all adhered to the ethos of respect. This ensured that comments were presented with care and it was then the choice of the primary author to engage with them or not. Because this space was designated as a feedback place, these were welcomed and caused the author to reflect and subsequently improve. This supports results found by Van den Boom, Paas, and Van Merriënboer (2007) where feedback and reflection positively impacted the use of self-regulated learning behaviours.

Author response:

“Your suggestions took me to ideas and thoughts and concepts I wouldn’t have had otherwise. Additional drafts brought me additional suggestions. And affirmation. I kept going. I kept at the process of editing, strengthening, clarifying, editing. The final version is much different – deeper and more complex – than the original.”

For the writer he practiced an emergent learning and a willingness to take on criticism rather like a tumbleweed:

“...it disentangles from the roots and is easily blown around. Being dry but still malleable, the dry plant attains a rounder form (i.e., global pattern) via repeated pattern of contact with the ground and the bending and breaking of its stems (i.e., local changes). Eventually the accumulated deformations round the weed ...Upon reaching a wetter area, the plant absorbs water and physically opens up...” (Downing, 2015, pp. 23–24)

The result was considerable growth and after four drafts, the piece was sent to the director of the Vermont Stage who then put the work on for a run of performances and can be heard here. The affirmation, first on YapNet and then on stage was enough for the author to later incorporate the story into his novel.

On YapNet, for both creators learning was articulated and externalised over the course of a project through posting of iterative versions, comments, and annotations, demonstrating aspects of self-regulation presented publicly within an emerging social and critical support structure. The learning experience in each case was remarkably supported by diverse artists with generous comments (both critical and supportive) throughout the projects and the artists all gained new perspectives on what it is to learn, teach, and communicate.



With no designated framework outside of the formal education setting to facilitate and support the holistic, psychological and physical processes required to enact learning in everyday life, these artists risked moments of vulnerability on YapNet when sharing unfinished work. They opened doors to deeper learning by engaging in a dialogic approach and welcoming the inherent tension of opposing views (Wegerif, 2007). They gained external perspectives, allowing them new avenues for development beyond anything available to them in traditional professional settings. Unless there is a culture of iterative, open critique, the 'showing' of work tends to be reserved for once it has been fully completed.

Personal learning and a practice of praxis develops where learning is undertaken 'out loud', and not in isolation. Here, specifically through critical feedback and public reflection, the two individuals in the case study examples embraced learning and their own development. When practitioners actively embark on this type of journey, they demonstrate awareness of their experiences, examine their chosen pursuits more closely, and deepen the impact of learning. Lieberman and Pointer Mace (2010, p. 77) advocate for and encourage developing communities of learning practice, highlighting: "making practice public in this way can be transformative." As professionals, this requires both noticing and questioning of assumptions to do with competencies and the wider societal expectations or assumptions of professional roles. Being receptive to criticism can enable growth to occur beyond the (possibly) limited perspective of our own ideas.

The practice of learning cannot be taught or understood simply by isolating its strategic or analytical components. The whole person must be considered in relation to their environment, their physical, and their affective state as the push and pull of how these play out in practical situations can be unexpected. This was demonstrated in the first case study, where the musician benefitted from engaging with process and being supported, and others observed the thoughts of an expert learning something complex. Community members witnessing these thoughts gained the valuable experience of witnessing the strategic understanding of processes. The open, sandbox type framework provided by YapNet facilitated growth. Providing a safe space for presenting work, commenting, sharing, and creating a connected network helps develop personal learning and improvement (Downes, 2012; Goldie, 2016).

LIMITATIONS

This study is limited by examining only two case studies. Learning methods and approaches to projects across disciplines is hugely individual. This research represents only a snapshot of possibilities. There are also limitations in conveying the interaction of a community in a single article. The autoethnographic aspect of the research also acts as a limitation, as the author was also a member of the community, and therefore is inherently biased. However, every effort has been made to adequately and authentically

represent and demonstrate the principles and processes at work on in this community of practice.

IMPACT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PRACTICE

The principles adopted on this online platform demonstrate heutagogy where learning is autonomous, yet it is built on a cycle of participation and witness, and not a solitary pursuit. Aspects of this practice can be taken forward into other academic, professional, and social settings to encourage learners toward heutagogy. On YapNet, cornerstones for engagement included respect for others, a considered approach to criticism, and an awareness of a creator's ownership of their material. Together these fostered an environment of equity and possibility. The integration of these key principles into widespread personal and professional practice can enable people to more readily accept and embrace engaging in a genuine practice of praxis. Each of these is explained below first as it was used on YapNet and then in a way that translates beyond the confines to more general contexts.

- Respect.

There was a conscious effort to take the whole person into account when inviting people to share and when engaging with shared work. No piece of a project is devoid of personal attachment, and recognising that as a starting place gives rise to reflection and a compassionate consideration of any feedback shared.

- Criticism as commentary on the content, not as personal judgement.

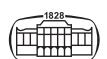
On YapNet critique was offered as a stand-alone commentary that was solely purposed to help the author improve. This can be translated into feedback without grading, whether this is to a standard with a numerical or letter value or as a comparative judgement against others.

- Ownership resides with the creator.

At no time was the work shared 'for' someone else. There was not a sense that it had to comply with or adapt to someone else's template or demands. In practical terms, this gives an inherent sense of value to the work and allows the creator to claim responsibility for what they have done, which is essential for meaningful reflection and the development and maintenance of motivation. These principles can be implemented through personal investment so people can experience growth and see the results of engagement with genuine holistic learning practices.

CONCLUSION

YapNet provided a place where a true application of the 'yes I can' of self-efficacy and agency could be explored and



realised through sharing work, engaging in evaluation, re-assessing, reflection, and communication with others. To engage in this type of self-directed learning, people need to develop an understanding of the core skills involved in their chosen goal or project, and not simply an idea of how to apply skills within a selected or pre-defined context. People wishing to engage with the practice of praxis also must actively reflect, acknowledging the self in learning and how they are mentally and physically impacted by, progress through, and interact with their surroundings and others. Praxis cannot be reduced to its constituent components, and in this space practitioners were able to navigate their learning paths and demonstrate the benefits of engagement, openness, and connection to facilitate growth in learning.

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