



Compassionate learning design as a liberating praxis: stories from learning designers around the world

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Abstract

The goal of liberating learners, educators, educational developers and other stakeholders within higher education from systemic oppression and institutional injustice is unattainable if we consider social justice, well-being, mental health and care/compassion separately. As a collective, we developed a model for compassionate learning design, which is composed of four dimensions: participation, justice, and care, leading to a critical compassionate learning design praxis that itself comprises the fourth dimension.

In this article, we select four representative equity-oriented learning designers/educational developers from among 30+ we interviewed in 2022, seeking to identify examples whose practices aligned with elements of our compassionate learning design model in various contexts worldwide. We also explore areas that appear in their praxis that diverge from or are not covered in our model. We discovered that although we did not directly probe participants on the four dimensions, they each had examples of the four dimensions in their practices. We also saw how each person's positionality and environment influenced: the ways they practised social justice; with whom they were able to create participatory approaches; and the kinds of care they were able to offer and nurture in those around them, an important expansion of our original model.

Keywords: compassion; social justice; equity; learning design; faculty development; educational development.

Introduction

We advocate for the liberation of learners, educators, educational developers and other important stakeholders within higher education, from systemic oppression, such as racial and economic injustice, and from internal institutional injustices, such as gendered pay and epistemic injustice in curricula. We recognise the impossibility of liberation through an orientation towards justice or care separately (Bali and Zamora, 2022; Tronto, 2015). Rather, we see justice and care as intersecting. In previous work, we developed a model for a Compassionate Learning Design (Gachago, Bali and Pallitt, 2022; Pallitt, Bali and Gachago, 2023), with three intersecting dimensions: the desire to increase the participation of learners; an understanding of how power and history affect our ability to participate; and a recognition of how affect and care impact learning, as seen in the emergence of interest in humanising, care- and trauma-informed pedagogies. These three intersecting dimensions result in a commitment to a 'critical compassionate learning design praxis', which we understand as a call to act, to take responsibility and move towards more socially just teaching and learning.

We have used this model previously to reflect on our practices as learning designers/educational developers based in South Africa and Egypt during the COVID-19 pandemic (Pallitt, Bali, and Gachago, 2023). For the current article, we revisited interviews we conducted in 2022 with 30+ learning designers/educational developers known for their social justice orientation and selected four participants that exemplify learning-design practices which mirrored our compassionate learning design model. Starting with a literature review on the growing interest in equity-oriented or socially just learning design models (we use these terms interchangeably), we present a brief overview of our compassionate learning design model and our methodology, and share selected examples of compassionate learning design in practice, highlighting influences, challenges, and strategies towards liberating education across diverse contexts.

Learning design as co-creation and for social justice

A range of terms and associated areas of literature have emerged in the area of co-creation, equity-oriented or socially just design, producing a scattered field of knowledge and practice, using terms such as inclusive design (Mohammed and Watson 2019), co-

design (Akama and Light, 2018), design justice (Costanza-Chock, 2020), universal design for learning (Dalton et al., 2019), or data feminism (D'Ignazio and Klein, 2023). Over the last decade, these conversations have reached higher education, where the student-as-partners literature has called for a more active engagement with students in all matters around curriculum design and development (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). This literature adds an interest in **how** one would go about co-designing for social justice. Organisations such as equityXdesign (2016) have put forward principles and values framed by both design thinking and anti-racism work that can guide more equity-oriented approaches to co-design for various contexts, including higher education. In our work, we have tried to translate this co-design literature into the African higher-education context, moving from terms such as 'equity-orientation' to 'social justice,' a term more familiar in the African context, and finally including notions of compassion inspired by both critical affect theory (Gachago et al, 2013) and Islamic practice (Bali, 2021).

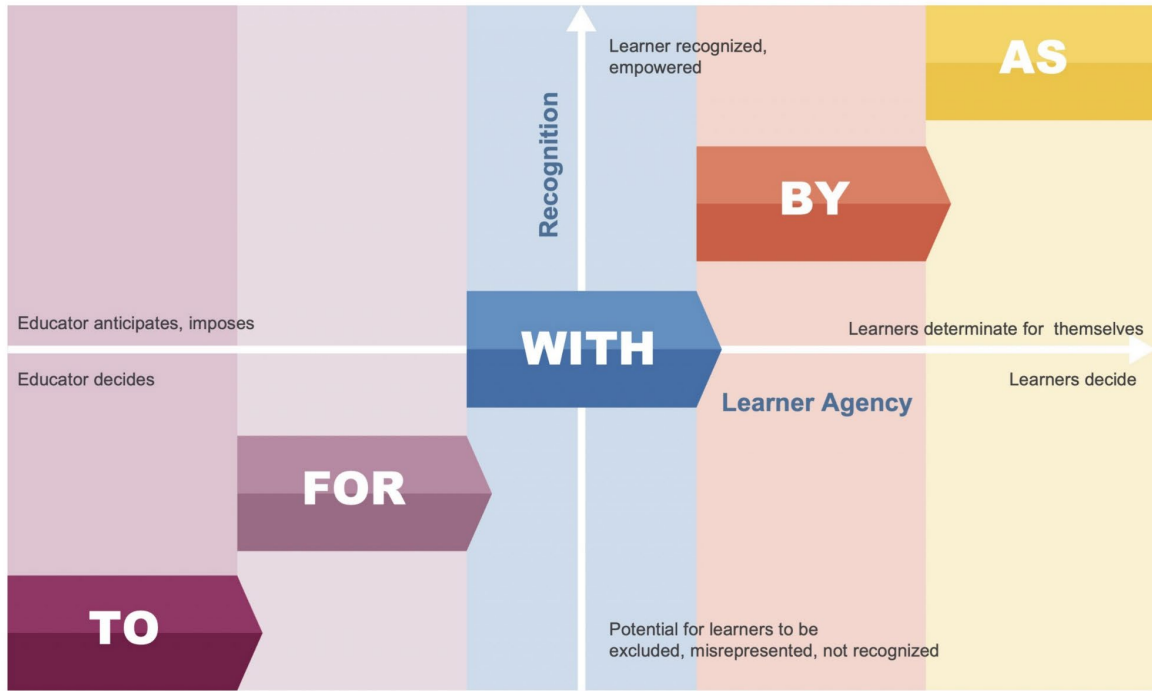
Compassionate learning design framework

Our understanding of compassionate learning design has four dimensions (Figure 1) (Gachago, Bali and Pallitt, 2022):

1. *The desire to increase the participation of learners and other stakeholders.* This move towards more participation is adapted from Nan Wehipeihana's (2013) and Longstreet et al's (2022) work: a desire to move from empathy (where the educator offers what s/he assumes learners want) towards more learner agency and control.
2. *An understanding of power, history and positionality and how that affects our ability to participate:* here, we use Fraser's (2005) definition of social justice as participatory parity, highlighting the intersectionality of privilege based on economic, cultural and political capital.
3. *A recognition of the importance of care* (Noddings, 2012; Tronto, 2015) and how that impacts learning, as seen in the emergence of interest in humanising (Pacansky-Brock, 2020), care- or trauma-informed pedagogies (Imad, 2020; 2021).
4. We argue that a recognition of the aforementioned dimensions results in what we term a '*critical compassionate learning design praxis*', such as a commitment to act reflectively (Freire, 1970/2000), to take responsibility and move towards more

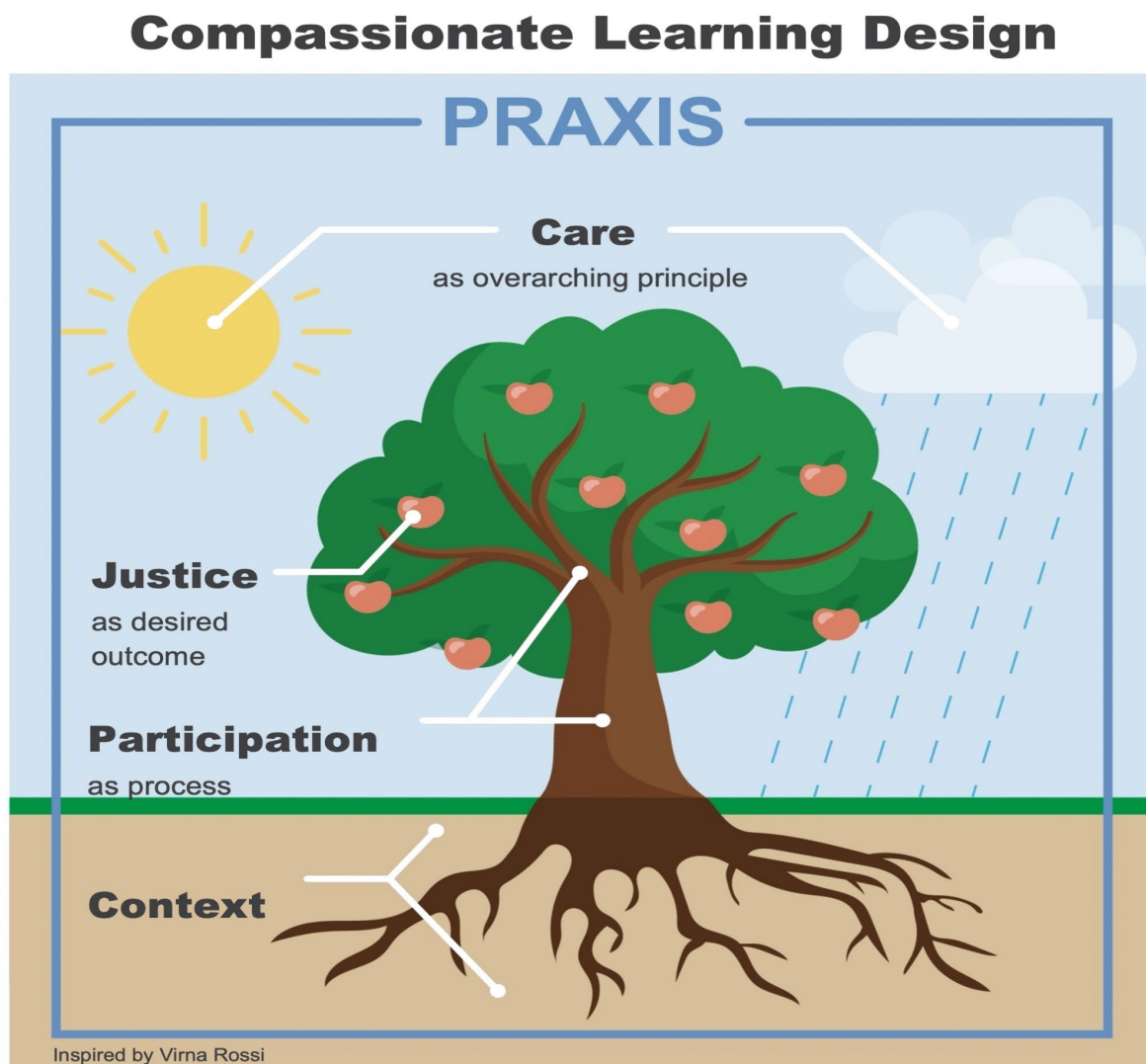
socially just teaching and learning, influenced by work that combines these dimensions such as hooks (1994), Bali and Zamora (2022) and Tronto (2015).

Figure 1. From designing with empathy to co-designing with compassion based on Wehipeihana’s work (2013) (From Gachago, Bali and Pallitt, 2022).



Adapted from Wehipeihana (2013)

Figure 2 below shows the relationship between care as an underlying principle promoting participation as a process, and aspiring to justice as a desired goal or outcome, within a specific context, with praxis as the outcome across these intersections represented by the entire ecosystem. This praxis includes change on individual, departmental and institutional levels, as the case studies shared below demonstrate.

Figure 2. Compassionate Learning Design (Gachago, Bali and Pallitt, 2022).

Methodology

We draw on a larger study we conducted in 2022, where we interviewed 34 women (including each other, as we are ourselves educational developers) who practise and support others in designing learning, whether as learning designers, educational developers, instructional designers or similar, across the world. We intentionally chose participants with a public presence on social media showcasing their social justice orientation. We sought diversity in our participants, challenging white male Global North historical epistemic dominance in educational technology by interviewing women from around the world (North America, Europe, Africa, and Australasia). We intentionally sought out participants of colour with a range of disciplinary backgrounds and pathways into the

field (Pallitt, Gachago and Bali, 2025). The interviews were semi-structured and conducted on Zoom by one or more of us. Interviews were recorded, transcribed using otter.ai, and checked by a research assistant.

Here, we use our Compassionate Learning Design (CLD) framework as an analytical lens, selecting four interviews based on a diversity of roles and contexts. To provide a concise but rich story to readers, we manually extracted quotes and ideas from the participants' interviews, categorising them according to elements of our framework.

Use of AI in analysis

We fed our interview notes to a generative AI tool (Claude or ChatGPT). We prompted it to summarise the key points of the notes we had extracted as a narrative for each participant and label the evidence from the notes according to our framework's four categories. When the generated text was helpful, we built on it; sometimes it missed important nuances and we had to add to it manually. Sometimes, we rewrote sections completely. In all cases, we re-inserted direct quotes from the interviews to foreground participants' voices; participants themselves approved their final narratives. This means that anything generated with the help of AI was revised by the authors of this paper and the interviewee.

Categories of responses

We created a table to compartmentalise the complex practices of each practitioner with a row for each of the following:

- Where/how do participants incorporate participation? Who are they including in this participation?
- What does their learning design practice consider as 'justice' and 'outcome'? What change do they want to see?
- How do they include reflections on power and positionality?
- How do they go about 'care'?
- What are examples of how they bring it all together (such as examples of a critical compassionate learning design practice)?

The goal was to explore the concrete practices of equity-oriented learning designers that align with or diverge from our model and to explore these in various contexts. Some participants have requested that we pseudonymise their stories.

Stories of compassionate learning design in practice

Layla (pseudonym)

Layla is a senior lecturer of colour at the School of Education and Professional Studies at a large university in Australia. As educator and researcher, she works at the intersection of Psychology, Learning Sciences, and Education. The broad goal of her research and educational practice is underpinned by equity and social justice.

Participation

Layla emphasises the importance of participatory methodologies, co-creating with students, drawing on the work of critical pedagogues such as Paulo Freire. She collaborates with students to explain the science of learning to their peers, positioning her students as co-creators rather than passive recipients of knowledge. Layla recognises the need to hear directly from students, particularly those from marginalised backgrounds, to understand their perspectives and experiences in higher education. She is inspired by

[...] the kinds of passion [students] bring as younger people who don't have power, but who also haven't encountered resistance and barriers that we've encountered. So they have more hope, and it gives us hope, right?

Justice

Layla's commitment to justice stems from her personal experiences of witnessing inequities firsthand:

growing up as a minority [...] I was very deeply conscious of inequity and how people were treated differently just because [...] of the colour of [their] skin or their name, or just any relative difference from the perpetrator

She draws inspiration from bell hooks' work on the importance of socio-political histories and understanding the 'historicised self', highlighting the need to situate learning within broader systemic contexts. She also acknowledges the value of non-Western knowledge traditions, challenging the dominance of Western epistemologies in education. This reflects her commitment to epistemic justice and diversifying knowledge systems. Her work addresses deficits in how the science of learning is often communicated from a privileged position, striving to integrate equity considerations into the communication of learning sciences by working with students to create curricula for their peers.

Care

Layla based her work on a pedagogy of care that attends to the affective dimensions of learning and validates learners' realities. She highlights the need for courage and vulnerability in engaging with equity work, recognising the emotional labour and discomfort of confronting marginalisation. She also emphasises the importance of building communities of practice and solidarity among like-minded colleagues as sources of strength and support in pursuing equity-oriented work, which can often be challenging and draining.

...it was my fellow travellers, my direct colleagues who share similar values, they really became like pillars of strength, [...] for each other, to push forward and [...] support each other as well. So if you know someone is voicing something, we would explicitly add our voice to the course as well. So they don't feel like they're alone...

Holistic practice/praxis

As an example of how these three dimensions play out in her practices, Layla shares a students-as-partners project that she was involved in. She approached students who had volunteered at least once in a university setting or elsewhere, reasoning that these students had previously shown motivation to help others. She and three other staff members sought to make an equitable selection from among those who responded to the expression of interest within the available budget. Layla provided an initial set of resources on the topic. However, the true design process was driven by the students themselves through co-design workshops using design thinking methodologies. The students interrogated these topics, unpacked ideas, and finally co-created a course on Learning Science for their peers. They decided which topics to focus on and how to translate that

knowledge into resources to help other students with their university studies. Layla highlights that giving the students this level of autonomy avoided potentially problematic power dynamics and resistance that could arise if they were redesigning professors' courses directly. It represented a high degree of student control aligned with the 'by students' level in the participation dimension of our model.

Holly (pseudonym)

Holly is a faculty development and senior assessment specialist of Colour at a US-based higher education institution, where she works with colleagues interested in making experiential learning a part of their courses.

Participation

Holly emphasises the importance of creating authentic experiential learning opportunities that actively engage students as learners. She highlights an example from her time at another institution, where students went to a Latinx community centre not to teach but to learn from the children there through informal, participatory activities. Her approach aligns with experiential learning cycles that integrate concrete experiences with reflection. Holly sees the instructor's role as facilitating these immersive, student-driven experiences and guided sense-making.

Justice

Holly's commitment to justice stems from her own experiences navigating different cultural contexts while growing up, which she views as 'a gift' that afforded empathy, flexibility and understanding of how people's lived realities shape their situations. Her background involvement in activist movements like advocacy for African American cultural spaces and anti-apartheid sanctions demonstrates a sustained engagement with issues of power, privilege and racial equity from an early age. Holly's dissertation further reflects these concerns, examining what impacts Black parents' schooling choices – unpacking dynamics of race, education and community self-determination. In her current role, Holly is attuned to understanding which dominant structures need disruption to create truly inclusive spaces for minoritised students to bring their full selves to the learning space. She recognises that good intentions alone do not make spaces safe without critical self-awareness around issues like race, power and intersectionality.

Care

A core aspect of Holly's caring approach involves seeing instructors, especially those from privileged backgrounds, as 'whole people' and encouraging them to be vulnerable about what they do not know. She aims to build trust and have them share their authentic motivations for supporting student success. Holly empathises with the discomfort this vulnerability can bring for white instructors who have been socialised to see themselves as experts. She navigates this 'delicate dance' carefully, honouring their lived experiences while still prompting critical self-reflection. Her methods emphasise creating community agreements, attending to how students engage with each other, and cultivating caring learning environments where participants can take risks and embrace problems without clear solutions.

Overall, Holly's equity-oriented design centres around participatory experiential learning, critically examining systemic barriers to inclusion, and nurturing relationships of trust, vulnerability and mutual growth between instructors and learners.

Holistic practice/praxis

Holly had students do a project connected to a community they belonged to. She co-created the rubric with her students, linking elements of the rubric to aspects of the project that only the students themselves could answer. For example, asking to what extent the student described why they wanted to engage with that community, and whether they articulated goals reflecting their own values. Holly used the co-created rubric at the midpoint, not the end, to emphasise and provide formative feedback on the process rather than just the final product. She wanted students to reflect on their motivations, hopes, and what they could realistically accomplish within the course. Her approach highlights being critically reflective about methods and practices, especially around equity issues. She suggests potential student learning outcomes around how students engage with each other, like using names, challenging counterproductive behaviours, and co-creating community agreements. Her approach lies along the 'with' level of our participation dimension.

Brenna

Brenna is a white coordinator for Educational Technologies at Thompson Rivers University in Canada. Before moving into faculty support, she worked as a community college English instructor.

Participation

Working for institutions with open-access mandates has impacted how Brenna views social justice and designing for participation. Brenna does not 'think it's radical to want to make space for everyone'. Brenna and her team focus on enabling faculty to design for participation through a widening access lens, promoting flexible and asynchronous approaches which align with her institution's strategy.

Justice

Brenna's background in open institutions influences her views on social justice and designing for participation, aiming to 'make space for everyone'. As a settler scholar, she acknowledges her complicity in enacting harm and the complexities involved, reflecting a commitment to justice. The team's efforts to enable flexible and equitable course participation through a 'stealth hybrid' approach (see below) align with principles of justice and inclusivity. Brenna recognises the emotional labour concerns faculty might have regarding care and disclosure, indicating a sensitivity to fairness and boundaries.

Care

Brenna uses 'ethics of care thinking' when working with faculty and also finds this to be useful for reimagining higher education at a systems level. Brenna shares that she has always had an interest in accessibility first, critical digital pedagogy, openness, and pedagogy of kindness. In collaboration with her team, she expresses the various intersections between some of these in practice.

The team models caring interactions with faculty and provides tools to help faculty think about care in their practices. The team's efforts to build individual relationships with faculty and have nuanced discussions about assessment and pedagogy demonstrate a caring approach to faculty development. In the past, the team used to offer 'one or two workshops a week on different focuses, trying to kind of cover off all the different issues that people might raise,' but now she finds that most of her faculty development work

happens differently, starting out with a question like, 'this quiz is broken in Moodle. Help me fix it,' which can become a discussion about assessment practice. Rather than attendance at workshops, Brenna now sees enabling participation among educators as 'more in terms of building individual relationships'. In addition to modelling caring interaction, Brenna also mentions giving faculty the tools to think about care: 'oftentimes, when you try to have these conversations about care with faculty, the initial response back is "I'm not a therapist. I don't want to be in the position of disclosure", which are all very fair points'. Giving faculty space to engage with these issues over time is an important part of her work. Brenna also talks openly about the burnout of learning designers during the pandemic and has blogged about her own burnout (Gray, 2022).

Holistic practice/praxis

As an example of how participation, justice, and care intersect in Brenna's practice, she shares about a practice that emerged post-pandemic, which she calls 'stealth-hybrid'. While there was high uptake of online learning during the pandemic, interest dwindled after campuses opened up again. When the university resumed 'back to normal' in-person classes after the pandemic and discouraged some of the practices developed during the pandemic, such as lecture recordings, some faculty independently created their own 'hybrid solutions off the side of their desks' to stay connected with and responsible for all students.

She refers to these as 'stealth hybrid', as these are not part of the official university policy. To support this, she and her team offer what she calls 'boutique solutions across a range of different comfort levels with technology and different interests that faculty have access to'. Flying under the radar allows them 'to be more responsive to the needs of faculty, outside of the dictates of particular administrative learning'.

Mays

Mays Imad is an immigrant, woman of colour, and scientist, and this influenced her understanding of social justice as an embodied, participatory, and existential commitment rather than an abstract ideal. Teaching at a community college in the US, she recognised the need for a teaching and learning centre; it took five years to convince administration to agree to its creation. Her approach is deeply rooted in her struggles, and she embodies the following elements of compassionate learning design in our model:

Justice

For Mays, teaching and social justice are intimately intertwined. The ‘wounds of injustice’ and ‘trauma of immigration’ that she experienced as a student made advocating for students and change feel like a ‘no-brainer’ when she transitioned into teaching. These are essential to her role as an educator, to do right by students but also for her own humanity and healing. For Mays, this includes addressing both personal and systemic social justice issues.

She asks: what if it becomes illegal to speak about and advocate for equity, diversity, and inclusion, as we are increasingly seeing in different parts of the US? What would drive people to continue to do this work if it is no longer endorsed by institutions; would people stop doing things because they will not be allowed, or will they ‘learn to smuggle the message... because our life depends on it?’ By ‘our life depends on it,’ she means that equality and freedom and our own liberation are interconnected and interdependent.

Participation

Mays incorporated participation by involving students as consultants when setting up the Teaching and Learning Center, valuing their input alongside educational theory. She insisted on giving herself the title of ‘coordinator’, not director, of the centre and making it a community-based, not a top-down structure. She engaged faculty through informal learning communities to understand their perspectives before introducing new practices. She resists assuming that faculty members are not doing ‘active learning’ or similar inclusive pedagogies, or blaming the teacher for not following education literature – instead, she wants to focus on their passion and practice, to remind them of what they are doing well, and challenge what theory says if it does not apply to the local context of their community college experience and their particular students. In other words, she believes that her colleagues are doing good work already and wants to capitalise on that by empowering them to share and do more.

Trauma and care

Using her background in science to bridge the gap between the academic literature on learning and the realities of marginalised students, Mays focuses on how trauma experiences affect the brain and body and, thus, people’s ability to engage and learn.

Mays advocates for incorporating social-emotional dimensions into teaching. She introduced trauma-informed pedagogy for both faculty and students. Knowing first-hand how difficult this work is, having initially faced resistance from administration when offering such sessions to students, Mays emphasises care for faculty through initiatives like decompression sessions and offering workshops about healing the healers.

Two other ways Mays expresses/practices care are that she feels the need to protect teachers from being 'blamed' for not following 'best practices,' so refused to create things like checklists of 'dos and don'ts' or to follow a de-contextual cookie-cutter approach when she felt this was not constructive in the establishment of the centre.

She also mentioned the importance of relationships: 'We want to bring people together. We don't want to fracture relationships. We want to build meaningful and empowering relationships.'

Holistic practice/praxis

Mays brings together social justice, participation, trauma-informed approaches and mutual care in her overall educational practice, which can be seen in the way she went about setting up the Teaching and Learning Center, as described above. She grounds this in a philosophy of interconnected humanity – that failing to engage in this work harms both students and educators. Even in prohibitive contexts, she encourages educators to find ways to 'smuggle the message' and continue the work.

If I don't do this work of equity and justice, not only are there ethical and moral dilemmas, but there is also a personal wound chipping at my own humanity. Being silent or ambivalent impacts my own humanity.

Discussion: the interplay of justice, participation and care

The cases shared above show the rich and nuanced compassionate learning design practices of the women we interviewed. This section brings together what we have discovered about the four learning designers' perspectives on justice and reflections on power and positionality, their strategies for incorporating participation, and their approach

towards care. Each enacted their praxis differently depending on role and context, entangled with their identities and experiences.

Perceptions of justice: reflections on power and positionality

For many in our group, awareness of injustice began early in their lives, growing up as minorities themselves, which helped them empathise with and advocate for other minority groups. This resonates with the writing of bell hooks (1994) on how her intersectional identity impacts her practice; she considers sharing her own vulnerability a prerequisite to asking others to make themselves vulnerable. Each participant's experiences with justice were deeply ingrained either in their own experiences of inequity as minorities or in their experiences working with particular minority groups.

Although participants shared how their own intersectional identities and experiences influenced their views on social justice, they did not discuss the potential impact of 'mirror neurons'. In line with Powell and Menéndez (2016), participants may be better at noticing or redressing injustices faced by people with whom they had more in common, and may have blind spots about some other marginalised groups. They may have surrounded themselves with diverse others to overcome this, but this did not come out explicitly in the interviews.

Participation of whom?

The different contexts meant that our participants work across the continuum of participation. Some work with students, in a 'by students for students' situation, without the involvement of educators in the power dynamic. This might liberate students without disrupting or threatening the power of educators. In other cases, the focus is designing with colleagues, which we would see as a participation level of 'as', for example, Mays' refusal to take a top-down approach as an educational developer and instead focus on the faculty community sharing (see Figure 1), with almost complete autonomy. However, even if we welcome diverse people to co-create, there are still inequitable power dynamics among them (Mercer-Mapstone, et al, 2017). Even when students co-create, there are race and gender dynamics, including between minority students; when working with educators, differences in rank and discipline may result in unequal privilege. Gender, ethnicity and nationality also make a difference in the dynamics within a faculty

community. While none of the participants discussed in depth the conundrum of 'parity of participation' (Fraser, 2005), we could see in their responses their acute awareness of how their own, their colleagues' and their students' positionalities impact their relationships, voice and agency.

Care

Throughout the sections on care, all the participants exhibited a relational approach to care that was reciprocal between them and those they cared for (Noddings, 2012), not transactional or care as duty. We know that those who give care to others need a community of carers in order 'to sustain them' (Noddings, 2012, p. 54), and our participants' stories show how they aim to build communities for that. Many of our participants see themselves as disruptors, resisting the dominant ways 'things are done in academia', often following 'underground' approaches to care work in response to systemic injustice that discourages or silences the care work (Bali, 2022). We noted that none of the participants discussed the potential for care sometimes being harmful or even disempowering and patronising (Eales and Peers, 2020; hooks, 2004), although their attempts at including their colleagues in decision-making shows their intent at creating equity. They also did not discuss the inequalities that may occur when some people's care needs are more visible than others. They may, in practice, have strategies for addressing both types of needs, or believe their caring approach should address a diversity of care needs, but this was not explicit in the interviews.

Conclusion: liberation as collective praxis

The stories shared illustrate the complex interplay of justice, participation and care and how these can manifest as compassionate learning design practices. The stories also show the similarities and differences in practices based on the identities and systems within which participants work: their background, dominant organisational cultures, the assumptions, norms, and behaviours of their institutions, and wider societal systems (Gachago, Bali and Pallitt, 2023a; 2023b), adding an important dimension to our model.

What stands out in our analysis is how each of these learning designers embodies socially just and caring practices in many of their roles and at multiple levels, with diverse

audiences: as educational developers working with other educators; as teachers working with students; and as activists within or beyond their institutional boundaries. As Mays says, not doing this work would chip away at her 'humanity' (see Freire, 1979/2000).

We also see how participants sometimes need to advocate for care against resistance from institutions (Gachago, Bali and Pallitt, 2023a; 2023b) and need to provide care for educators to model caring behaviour towards students. We recognise that when educational or academic development work is centrally mandated and designed, it may come from a place of empathy (for example, surveying educators to gauge interest and need) rather than compassion (with and by, empowering educators to co-create their professional development journeys according to their philosophies and values). In their quest for authenticity and integrity, our participants fight to embody these practices in every area of their lives to have the kind of impact they hope for. They exhibit an awareness of systemic issues along with a willingness to resist and continually adapt, sometimes openly and sometimes 'by stealth'.

As such, they not only liberate themselves, their students and their classrooms, but also have wider reach (hooks, 1994). The work moves them towards a more systemic liberation through their continuous modelling of a compassionate learning design practice, mirroring Freire's concept of a liberating praxis, which integrates both critical reflection and transformative action: 'reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it' (1979/2000, p.51). This kind of collective praxis can lead to 'humanization' (Freire, 1979/2000, p.51), developing both **critically conscious, empowered learners and educators** who can liberate themselves and the world from injustice. We see these learning designers' practices as radical, aimed at transformation but also as 'act[s] of love' (Freire, 1979/2000, p.45; hooks, 1994) and demonstrations of their humanity and courage.

Initial interviews were exploratory as to how the participants embodied equity-oriented learning design and educational development practices; we did not probe for the particular elements of our compassionate learning design model, nor were we trying to challenge the depth of their work in order to find gaps, flaws or limitations. Further research may entail asking participants about areas they hope to grow, along the four dimensions of our compassionate learning design model, and their perspectives on the hidden pitfalls of speaking about social justice without addressing the diverse elements within it, or care

without addressing its potential for harm, or participation without ensuring parity and justice.

A critical compassionate learning design praxis can take many forms and can work at many levels: from the one-on-one relationship between an educational developer and one faculty member to the relationship between teacher and learners in the classroom, to the relationships among teachers in their own community. Readers may benefit from this model and the diverse examples provided of how it applies in practice. We hope readers might reflect on their own practices and assess where they are applying the recommendations of our model and what kinds of barriers they need to overcome to provide more compassionate learning design approaches. We hope the examples here inspire others to take action, to have courage in the face of resistance, and to find ways to advocate, even if they sometimes have to 'smuggle the message'.

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The authors used generative AI to the extent explained in the Methodology section and the limitations and biases inherent in generative AI are acknowledged in the manuscript. The authors have complied with the JLDHE's principles of AI use.

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