Studies in the Education of Adults

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rsia20

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To cite this article: John Player (2022) Pedagogies of hope and drug-related deaths in Scotland, Studies in the Education of Adults, 54:2, 145-160, DOI: 10.1080/02660830.2022.2065785

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/02660830.2022.2065785

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Published online: 02 May 2022.

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STUDIES IN THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS
2022, VOL. 54, NO. 2, 145–160
https://doi.org/10.1080/02660830.2022.2065785

ARTICLE

OPEN ACCESS

Pedagogies of hope and drug-related deaths in Scotland

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ABSTRACT

The incidence of drug-related deaths in Scotland has reached crisis proportions. Comparable only to the rust belt States in the US these figures point to the impact of the rapid scale of deindustrialisation and a global neoliberal economy, based on austerity, deepening class divisions and a return to a more naked form of capitalism. The question is, does a critical pedagogy have a role to play in understanding and addressing the challenges involved? In other words, how can a practice of such a pedagogy allow participants to deconstruct and decode the structures of domination that oppress and divide them/us? Such pedagogy has undergone differing degrees of reassessment as it no longer serves as an 'adequate platform from which to mount a vigorous challenge to the current social division of labour'. However, the need for a critical pedagogy, rooted in a Freirean notion of hope, for such communities has never been more apparent. This article will attempt to resolve the extent to which such a pedagogy translate from its esoteric detachment to one rooted in history, place and practices, and one capable of engaging with the most disadvantaged, and colonialised fraction of the Scottish society.

KEYWORDS

Critical pedagogy; drug-related deaths (DRDs); pre-existing vulnerabilities; recovery; rustbelt; Scottish radical adult education tradition

Part 1 setting

Introduction

The need for an alternative economic system to capitalism has never been more urgent. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2021) Report refers to vast wildfires sweeping through Greece and California, devastating floods in Germany and heatwaves in Siberia. Such environmental trends may be ascribed to long-term, unrestrained corporate plunder, and the reassertion of a one-sided class war. This imbalance is not, of course, limited to climate change; such a war has devastated fractions of the subaltern class in deindustrialised areas in both Scotland and the US rustbelt. However, the structural processes involved in such an assault are rarely accessible in their entirety. While, for example, the Marxist theorist Georg Lukács (1923, p. 07),

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writes about the 'totalising' impact of capitalism, Jameson (2011, p. 06) points out, 'no one has ever seen that totality, nor is capitalism ever visible as such but only in its symptoms'. Among such symptoms are drug-related deaths (DRDs) in Scotland – now numbered the highest per head of population in Europe and, perhaps, surpassing even those in the United States (National Records of Scotland 2021a, p. 04). The aim of this article is to locate this symptom within both historical and current contexts, and to assess the applicability of a critical pedagogy as a means of not only understanding such symptoms but its ability to offer a language of transformation and hope.

Context

In their recent book, 'Deaths of Despair and the Future of Capitalism', Case and Deaton (2020) highlight the adverse trends in all-cause mortality within the US, disillusioning many people, as Wilkinson (2020, p. 877) points out, 'the profoundly mistaken assumption that America has the best health in the world'. A significant and growing part of these trends are early deaths resulting from suicide, alcohol and drugs, and which, contrary to popular assumptions, are most prevalent among white, middle-aged men. However, the future prognosis is not encouraging, as younger generations 'seem on an even worse trajectory' (Wilkinson 2020, p. 877).

Such 'deaths of despair' as the authors define them are partly owing to the decline in marriage, religion, and worthwhile employment, and compounded by the costs and quality of the medical care system. While Case and Deaton acknowledge the impact of psychosocial causes, they remain wedded to the overall aims of capitalism, seeing only its failures within the margins of theft and rent-seeking behaviour, rather than in growing systemic inequality. Indeed, the authors argue that a major source of redress can be found through educational attainment, emphasising the very sharp distinction in death rates between those with a university degree, and those without (see Case and Deaton 2020, p. 257).

A further important statistic emphasised in this book is that, while drug-related deaths are increasing in many other countries, with concomitant threats to public health, 'apart from drug deaths in Scotland, the numbers are very small compared with those in the US' (see Case and Deaton 2020, p. 38). Trends within this Scottish cohort make for equally grim reading, with figures from the National Records of Scotland showing that there were 1,339 drug-related deaths in 2020, 'a 5% increase on the previous year and the largest number ever recorded' (see The National Records of Scotland (2021a, p. 04). As in the US, the largest increase was in 35–54 year olds, particularly within Greater Glasgow, the West of Scotland, and Tayside, and such deaths have increased over the last two decades with nearly 5 times as many deaths in 2020 compared with 2000. The National Records of Scotland (2021a, p. 04) results also show that, in 2020, Scotland's drug-death rate was '3½ times that for the UK as a whole, and higher than that of any European country'.

Pre-existing vulnerabilities

Unlike Case and Deaton, however, analyses of the causes of deaths in Scotland are not so conflicted, even by official bodies. As the Records Office (2020, p. 11) points out, in 2020, after adjusting for age, 'people in the most deprived areas were 18 times as likely

to have a drug-related death as those in the least deprived areas', and 'that ratio has almost doubled in 20 years, from around 10 times in the early 2000s'. Often called the 'Sick Man of Europe' (see Whyte and Ajetunmobi 2012, p. 04), owing to mortalities relating to ischaemic heart disease, lung, breast and prostate cancer, as well as cerebrovascular disease, the stalling of life expectancy in Scotland finds many of its answers in the political choices related to austerity measures, the collapse of public services, and policing the poor through the increased conditionality of welfare benefits.

Whyte and Ajetunmobi (2012, p. 04) demonstrate that:

> Scotland's relative ranking in relation to younger working age mortality compared to other European countries has become progressively worse for both sexes over the last 55 years. It is now the highest among the 16 Western European countries compared in this study. In comparison to England and Wales in 2009, younger working age mortality was 46% higher in Scotland for women and 54% higher for men.

The highly political nature of early mortality in Scotland has also been reinforced by those who coined the terms 'Glasgow' and 'Scottish effects' to describe the unexplained worse health in Glasgow and Scotland compared with elsewhere in the UK, even after adjusting for differences in deprivation and poverty. For example, mortality rates in Glasgow were found to be 30% higher than in other cities with comparable indices of deprivation, such as Liverpool and Manchester, and answers were sought in a 'toxic combination of a whole series of historical poor living conditions and adverse political decision-making', at both UK and local government levels (Walsh 2016, p. 01).

However, the situation in Glasgow has been exacerbated by what has been described by Walsh *et al.* (2017, p. 12*)* as, 'pre-existing vulnerabilities' and are linked to 'a flawed model of economic modernisation', including, for example, overcrowding, post-war regional policies, and the selective relocation of parts of the population outside the city'.

Such pre-existing vulnerabilities within both Glasgow, and Scotland as a whole, Walsh (2016, p. 01) argues, can no longer be abstracted and mystified and, indeed, he urges that we 'understand the political dimensions to Scotland's poorer health' and rephrase it as the 'political effect'.

In terms of 'pre-existing vulnerabilities', Walsh *et al.* (2017, p. 12) seek to identify the influence of 'other modifying factors', such as social class determinants. Muntaner *et al.* (1999, p. 699) demonstrate that social class determinants of disease are' related to production (environmental and occupational hazards) and the capacity of the relatively deprived for collective action'. These social class determinants must be articulated with and include the speed of structural change. Scotland was not only the fastest industrialised nation but among the fastest to de-industrialise and such problems must incorporate those of adjustment. In the first period, for example, Devine (2005, p. 03) says that Scotland's industrialisation in the 18th and 19th centuries:

> was at a speed which was faster than any other economic situation in Europe, Scotland moved from a subsistence, agrarian structured society to the second most industrialised nation on earth by the census of 1821. By the census of 1851 it was even more industrialised by census occupational referencing than England, the first industrial nation.

He adds:

> The urban development in the period was colossal. It produced massive social costs, …, where annual mortality rate started to rise again despite the wealth making capacity … in its hinterland through the 1820s and 30s.

This process was focussed primarily on heavy industry such as ship building, steel, ironmaking and engineering and fuelled primarily by coalmining. While social adjustment to this change involved the formation of an organised working class, de-industrialisation rapidly removed such adjustments, and, as Walsh *et al.* (2017, p. 12) point out, this has led to:

> deprivation, weakened social relationships, greater stress, worse mental and physical health, and compensated for – in some cases – by greater reliance on alcohol and drugs related 'coping mechanisms', resulting in yet worse health outcomes.

However, it was the very nature of the working class within the Central Belt in Scotland that was politically targeted and undermined by the Radical Right as capital sought to reassert itself during the 1970s against threats from organised labour. For Collins and McCartney (2011, p. 519), for example, Scotland's health deficit results in part from a concerted attack by neo liberals against the organised industrial working class and sustained across several fronts.

These different fronts included the political choice of deindustrialisation and its attendant features, such as the creation of a reserve army of unemployed, council housing transfers and privatisation of nationalised industries. The undermining of council housing, for example, had the greatest effect in Scotland as 54% of its population was in such accommodation, and led to the creation of different tiers of tenants, stigma, disempowerment and the growing residualisation of communities. Such 'planned misery' (Collins and McCartney 2011, p. 508) soon had the desired effect of a breakdown in the cohesion, confidence, and meaning of working-class communities, with a resultant decline in social mobility and greater incidence of stress, violence and substance misuse.

To some extent, Collins and McCartney (2011, p. 506) also see this process as an act of revenge, highlighting the Upper Clyde Shipbuilder workers occupation in 1971 as forcing a temporary U-turn on the Heath government's early attempts at neoliberal policies, and many of the actions against the West of Scotland – in particular after Margaret Thatcher gained power in 1979 – was to ensure this wasn't repeated. Similarly, the mining industry unions, and their communities and organisational strength, were associated by the Right with the victory of the unions in 1974, and again, were a specific target, and not simply in the West of Scotland.

Indeed, several authors, including Harvey (2005, p. 17), point out that neoliberalism had scant interest in economic efficiency, and that the project was explicitly concerned with a reassertion of class dominance and ending the growing strength of an increasingly organised, militant, and confident working class.

These features were clearly evident in the heavy industries in the West of Scotland, particularly in the shipyards and mining communities, and which were instrumental in the Health government's U-turn in its attempt to introduce neoliberal policies in the early 1970s. As Phillips noted, 'The radical right lamented the particular position in Scotland, but only because this embodied in a more *pronounced form* than the rest of the UK the industrial features that it regarded as especially undesirable: publicly

subsidised heavy industry which was highly unionised and labour intensive and industrial militancy' (Emphasis added) (Collins and McCartney 2011, p. 507)

Such confidence was seen by the Right as unforgivable, and the then-UK Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher's, main post-1979 priority was that of 'killing off the trade unions through the recession of 1981–1983 that destroyed Scottish industrial culture the social cost of which lingers to this day in the appalling mortality figures from heart disease, suicide and depression in West Central Scotland' (Collins and McCartney 2011 505). It is also likely that the 'deferred revenge' of the Right against these communities was also partly owing to the centrality of the Scottish mining leaders, Mick McGahey and Lawrence Daly, in the mining strikes of 1973–1974.

Critical pedagogy traditions

As mentioned, among Case and Deaton's key findings is that there is a sharp distinction between those with a university degree, among whom there has been little or no rise in 'deaths of despair', and those without, where there have been significant rises. In summary, they (2020, p. 257) argue that:

> Over and over again in this book, we have seen the divide between those with and without a four-year college degree, with a whole range of bad outcomes, up to and including death, being visited upon those with less education.

The authors go on to ask, 'Would the world be a better place if everyone had a bachelor's degree?' Such a view, which has gained considerable currency in mainstream US media, in effect reinforces the manner in which social class is reproduced though education, and, indeed, the individualistic acquisition of cultural capital, it is arguable, will do little to address the 'slow destruction of the working class' to which Case and Deaton (2020, p. 92) refer. Instead, as this paper contends, a form of education grounded in critical pedagogy offers a far more realistic, and socially transformative, access to a 'language of possibility' (Cho 2012, p. 23) and of hope.

Constructed out of a combination of 'Frankfurt School critical theory, Gramscian counter-hegemonic practice and Freirean conscientisation', Brookfield (2005, p. 322), critical pedagogy attempts to create new forms of knowledge and encourages 'readings of history as part of a political pedagogical project that tackles issues of power and identity in connection with questions of social class, 'race'/ethnicity, gender, and colonialism', Mayo (2015, p. 1122). And, as Giroux and Giroux (2006, p. 21) point out, critical pedagogy has a long and diverse tradition but 'its innumerable variations reflect a shared belief in education as both a moral and political practice', as well as a 'recognition that its value should be judged in terms of how it prepares students to engage in a common struggle for deepening the possibilities of autonomy, critical thought, and a substantive democracy' (Giroux and Giroux 2006, p. 21).

Throughout the discipline there is an emphasis 'on the agency of teachers and students in classrooms and communities who learn how to advocate for social justice, how to work tactically and strategically to advance the interests of the disenfranchised, and how to confront and undermine dominant ideology' Brookfield (2005, p. 322). In what is, the more mainstream variant, this is achieved through a dialogical approach between teachers and students, eschewing the 'banking concept' of education – of

which Case and Deaton's BA Degree is clearly an exemplar – and where knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. In response, Paulo Freire, one of the founders of critical pedagogy, proposes a problem-posing method, 'unapologetically centred on reinventing education for the practice of freedom', and for the poor and disadvantaged themselves.

Such interpretations are not, however, unproblematic or uncontested. Wheeler-Bell (2019, p. 273), for example, believes that critical pedagogy has become increasingly detached from its roots in critical theory, and, as a result, the discipline is now in a state of 'dilution and fragmentation in which critical pedagogues are unable to bring the plurality of critical education approaches together theoretically around a set of shared principles'. This tendency towards habitual and unthinking behaviour, coupled with an 'inability to account for its aims and purposes', has, according to Wheeler-Bell (2019, p. 273) left critical pedagogy with an identity crisis.

In the same vein, there is an increasing danger of the discipline becoming an overly broad church. This, for example, sees depoliticised forms of critical thinking 'integrated into the curricula of university programmes which are oriented towards shaping the "entrepreneurial" student-subject' (Ridley and Davis 2017, p. 66), and extending as far as its use in business administration and management courses. This, of course, reflects neoliberalism's ability to appropriate progressive thought as much as the potential fluidity of critical pedagogy itself.

According to Brookfield (2005, p. 323), on the other hand, perhaps the most serious and sustained criticism of how 'critical theory has been translated into pedagogical practice has focussed on the work of Giroux', which maintains that 'there is remarkable lack of self-criticality evident in critical discourse, that the discourse is itself oppressive and functions as a form of repressive tolerance … and that the teacher as benevolent, freedom-fighting agent of emancipation is unproblematised'. To feminists in particular there is a paternalistic arrogance – a sense of 'teacher knows best' – throughout the discipline, and indeed much of these criticisms are directed at Paulo Freire himself.

Scottish traditions

However, much of the core strength of this pedagogical approach lies in its ability to replace esoteric detachment, with a practice that is rooted in history and place, and which has the aim of unveiling the dominant ideologies that stigmatise, marginalise and oppress substance users. Indeed, such an approach has the potential to continue, and to build upon, a long-standing tradition of radical and transformative educational practices for the Scottish working-class (see Crowther and Martin 2010, Humes 2018).

Scotland has a popular educational tradition that, according to Crowther and Martin (2010, p. 01), is rooted in the tension between what are defined as its 'radical and 'respectable' approaches. The authors (2010, p. 01) point out that the radical tradition refers to adult learning 'based on a curriculum concerned with social and political change whereas the respectable tradition describes provision aimed primarily at personal development or individual advancement'. Much of this tension was played out in

the relationship between, on the one hand, Scottish Labour Colleges and the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), and on the other the Universities outreach provision.

Whereas the respectable tradition included 'a patch work of liberal adult education classes provided by the ancient Scottish universities and local authority provision, the radical tradition was linked with the growth of socialist ideology in the 19th and 20th centuries' (Crowther and Martin 2010, p. 01). The Scottish Labour Colleges of the 1920s, in particular provided the 'first systematic attempt at radical education provision for working people based on a Marxist inspired curriculum' (Crowther and Martin 2010, p. 01). Founded in 1916 by, among others, the revolutionary leader of the immediate post-First World War period, John MacLean, these Colleges fully acknowledged that education was never neutral and that the fundamental disciplines of economics and history had to be taught 'from the labour standpoint' (Humes 2018, p. 127).

The approach was remarkably successful. Humes (2018, p. 125), quoting Broom (1973, p. 171), argues that: 'McLean's greatest positive contribution was probably in the sphere of working-class education. For over ten years, his weekly evening economic classes attracted hundreds of workers and gave many of them a starting new insight into the economic and political forces governing their lives'.

Crowther and Martin (2010, p. 02) argue that following the recommendations, in Scotland, of the 1975 Alexander Report, Adult Education: The Challenge of Change, the expansion of adult education provision by Scottish local authorities, particularly in disadvantaged communities, led to the creation of Community Education Services, which combined adult education, community development and youth work into an integrated service. The main aim was to widen educational opportunities for traditional 'non-participants' by adopting a 'community development approach'.

As far as the radical tradition was concerned a major strand in its rebirth was the formation in 1979 of the Adult Learning Project (ALP) (Kirkwood and Kirkwood 1989). An initiative of the newly created Community Education Service. The project aimed to translate Paulo Freire's concepts into the context of the Scottish working class. Through its pedagogy and curriculum, ALP made significant contributions to enabling the marginalised voices of Scottish communities to be heard, placing a new emphasis on cultural struggle.

Part 2: pedagogical practices

Lived experience

My own practice involved working in the Adult Learning Project (ALP) for 14 years and included work with marginalised groups on topics such as Scots-Irish history, and asylum seekers, as well as decoding the globalising of Scottish football (Player 2013). My current work, however, with substance users derives from two sources: firstly, through an educational initiative with substance users in recovery – the Share: Learning for Democracy; and secondly, as a result of my current employment as an Independent Advocacy Worker for substance users in East- and Mid-Lothian in Scotland.

The share: learning for democracy

From where, as Cho (2012, p. 23) asks, can critical pedagogy find a 'language of possibility' and pedagogy of hope? This paper asserts that the example of 'The Share: Learning for Democracy' course provides such a pedagogy, offering those in recovery from drug and alcohol use the means to address such issues of societal structure and agency. Begun in June 2017 when the recovery café in Edinburgh, the Serenity Café, invited several adult and community educators to deliver a weekly political literacy course, and which, in its statement of intent, described itself as a 'series of dialogical workshops'.

Despite the pandemic and the subsequent closure of the Serenity Café, this course remains an inclusive educational space using Zoom conferencing, and looks at structural issues at an individual, local, national and global level. Its agreed purpose is to 'investigate current systems to build and promote solidarity with people and other groups to champion progressive change'. Its promotional material also refers to the ongoing 'learner teacher/teacher learner relationship', emphasising its Freirean roots (see Freire 1970, 1972, 1985, 1997, Freire and Macedo 1987, Giroux 2010, Darder 2018).

The name, 'The Share: Learning for Democracy' (SLD), is derived from the 12 Step Fellowships whose meetings usually start with someone in recovery sharing their 'strength, hope and experience'. However, the title recognises, to some extent, the criticism made by Alexander (2011, p. 299) who argues that 'the major reason that Bill W's solution to the problem of addiction is insufficient is that 12-step programmes do not address the social causes of addiction. Perceiving individuals as the sole cause of their addictive downfall makes sense morally and pragmatically in the 12-step milieu, but it rules out the possibility of social action to ameliorate the dislocating cultural environment'.

Instead, the SLD aimed to negotiate a curriculum which sought to unveil the dominant ideology that effectively stigmatises, marginalises, and oppresses people who are substance users. The curriculum reflected an understanding that the 'lived experience' of substance users, while an important starting point, was insufficient and need to be complemented by 'questions of knowledge' (see Mayo 2015, p. 1129). Wiggins (2011) attempts to show how a synthesis with popular education could strengthen critical pedagogy and bridge some of the divisions that separate radical educators, and suggests (2011, p. 46) that harmonising the two disciplines also requires a 'softening of the anti-intellectualism' that she noted amongst some popular educators. This need for a softening of anti-intellectualism within the SLD was fully acknowledged.

The negotiated curriculum of the SLD aimed to address the social causes of addiction, and, over a 3-year period, organised dialogical practice around, for example, the creation of the Welfare State and the NHS; Palestine; DRDs in Scotland; the 2021 Scottish Election; Brexit, towards a Politics of Fear; Neoliberalism; Nationalism and Indyref; Alienation and Jemmy Reid; and Gender and Patriarchy, and the James Connolly Society amongst others. The curriculum was organised, discussed, and agreed every 2 months, and there were regularly 25–30 people in attendance.

When the Serenity Café closed in 2019, SLD was hosted by the Edinburgh Recovery Activities (ERA) who insisted that the workshops included only those in recovery as ERA is one of the few educational spaces for such people. This educational space took

the form, from early 2020–2021, of online meetings – due to the restrictions of the pandemic – with the view to returning to face-to-face meetings. However, the ERA's policy of excluding those still using substances remains contentious as it omits a considerable proportion of those who could participate. Given the scale of DRDs in Scotland, a harm reduction approach coupled with the longer-term aim of complete abstinence, may be worth considering for the future development of a critical pedagogy programme.

Equally, for a programme whose declared roots are in the works of Paulo Freire, and which aims to use cultural contexts to promote functional and critical literacy practices, the 12 Step Programme offers both possibilities and restrictions. The possibilities of applying the Método Paulo Freire (see Elias 1975, Freire and Macedo, 1987) to functional literacies are considerable. For example, the investigative stage between teacher and student aims to establish the most significant words and themes in the student's life, discovering and naming key words such as abstinence, powerlessness, unmanageability, amends, humility, sponsee, inventory, text, compassion, and spiritual awakening; all of which provide opportunities for literacy acquisition. The problem-solving stages involved in critical literacies and critical pedagogy are being addressed to some extent by 'The Share: Learning for Democracy' but, I would argue, urgently need to develop into Scottish-wide autonomous and federated initiatives supported, but not governed, by organisations, such as, the Scottish Drugs Forum (SDF), the Scottish Recovery Consortium (SRC), the Scottish Government Residential Rehabilitation Committees, and the Drug Related Deaths Taskforce.

Advocacy

This focus on drug use, and the application of critical pedagogy as a tool for recovery, has been reinforced by my current employment as an Independent Advocacy Worker for People who Use Drugs in East- and Mid-Lothian in Scotland.

Whilst living in Edinburgh I cycle to meet with people in recovery organisations, as well as those using different local authority services and also the NHS Substance Misuse Services. On the route to Dalkeith I became aware that I was passing Danderhall, an ex-mining town, and Shawfair, an economic development regeneration initiative built on top of Monktonhall, which was Scotland's most fully realised deep coalmine complex. Located in the Mid-Lothian Coalfield, it was a last survivor from the Coal Board investment period of the 1960s – comparable with post-war mine-building projects in the Ruhr in Germany – and was of similarly enormous scale. Monktonhall closed in 1997. Also, when cycling to Penicuik I pass the Bilston Glen colliery, or the Loanhead regeneration site which now covers it over. Again, this was one of the National Coal Board's (NCB) most successful super-pit developments, with an intended output of 1 million tons per annum. It closed in 1989.

The advocacy work also brought contact with mining communities which had a tradition of political educational work carried out by the National Union of Mineworkers Scottish Area (NUMSA). I undertook several interviews with former miners as well as with the author of *Coal County,* Ewan Gibbs. These adopted the *extended case method* (see Burawoy 1998, Scheiring 2020) developed by Burawoy, the

aim of which is to 'locate everyday life in its extra-local and historical context' (Burawoy 1998, p. 04). These were semi-structured interviews, recorded and transcribed. While the limitation of making claims from such a small research cohort is acknowledged, this small piece of qualitative educational research will form the basis of a wider study on the consequences of de-industrialisation and help develop curricula ideas for further pedagogies of hope such as the SLD.

The significance of this pedagogical approach used by NUMSA from the early 1950s is highlighted by Gibbs (2021, p. 191), when he describes:

> the establishment of residential political schools aimed at young miners. Delegates enrolled on 'an educational course not only on technical mining matters but on general social and political questions'. From 1954 this message was also spread in the pages of the Scottish Miner which was published monthly and represented the achievement of the long-held aim of a newspaper for mining trade unionists in Scotland.

Importantly, Gibbs (2021, p. 191) refers to his interview with Mick McGahey, a NUMSA leader, who reminisces about the educational journey for activists:

> The first thing they did was send you on a training course. You went to the Salutation Hotel in Perth for a weekend school. And it was aboot Marx, it was aboot Engels, it was aboot Lenin. It was aboot the ownership ae the means ae production. It was aboot the politics behind why does the government behave like that, why do we behave like that. It was a complete package ae political education that I don't think exists nowadays in any organization. Any trade union organization. That's what made it strong.

Gibbs (2021, p. 191), however suggests that 'these activities developed within Stalinist–Labourism's parameters' and that the training course's success in fully engaging young activists into the insights of *Capital* and other theoretical works is open to discussion. The first miner I interviewed when asked about Perth said:

> We used tae go to schools in Perth Aye there were schools every year in Perth (JP organised by the National Union of Mineworkers) – we would learn things – how tae deal wae people things like that. A never got into the Karl Marx and things like that. A' went there tae learn tae negotiate and things like that A' was a leading man down the mines an aw that – A was the youngest leading man at Bilston Glen Colliery.

Arguably, NUMSA's approach was overly didactic and created a degree of resistance to it amongst young miners. A contemporary critical pedagogy, on the other hand, might draw upon a dialogical approach which emphasises the interrelation between teacher/learner which, as mentioned, was the method of used in the Share: Learning Democracy.

A more critical pedagogy of hope might do well to use some of Gibb's (2021 interview) insights on how to engage those both in recovery and still using when he suggests that:

> you could do an exercise where you ask people attending the café in Dalkeith what Dalkeith means to them? Or Midlothian - or Mayfield – I think you could choose based on the circumstance what best and it might be that you get valuable individual perspectives there but I think the collective element could be quite useful there as well – you could maybe get people to collectively agree on some sort of definition or some sort of idea of the past or present.

The second miner interviewed, who had subsequently trained in Community Education after the 1984/5 strike, was blunt when he said:

> You're no just filling empty vessels – you are just trying to get people to ask questions and I suppose I am contradicting myself here by saying I am not a huge fan of Freire but I am a huge fan of the 'But Why' method. I am a huge fan of like you are in this situation right – how is that?

A key theme in Freire's work is his criticism of the 'banking model' of education in which the student is a passive recipient of knowledge. Such knowledge is held by the expert/teacher, who attempts to deposit it into the empty vessel of the student's mind, which, Freire argues, is not how human beings learn. As Smucker (2017, p. 87) points out people 'might memorise facts this way, but they do not develop themselves as critical thinkers'. In order to really learn, people have to become actively engaged learners. The Freirean 'But Why' method is explained by the second miner when he said:

> … if you take people at rock bottom and if they are willing to talk about it – talk about why they are in the situation they are in – what they do need to know in order for them to be so poor in a country as rich as this and in a place as rich as Edinburgh somebody else needs to be doing pretty well and not making their contribution. … … I suppose it is like when you are talking to people you have to piss them off cause you probably have to point out that things arnae fair but it's not because of their Ma or Da.

The second miner is suggesting that in order for people to feel some sense of *agency* in the learning process such critical pedagogy might have to 'piss them off'. Smucker (2017, p. 87) suggests that this process is more important than 'the specific content, especially in the early stages of student's development, because once a student has become engaged in a process of critical reflecting upon their own experiences, they are then equipped to keep learning, honing their knowledge, and developing their capacity for critical thinking'.

Discussion/conclusion

> Well my daddy worked in the coal mine
> Till the company shut it down
> Then he sat around and drank hisself blind
> Till we put him back underground
> Now nothin' grows on this mountain
> And what's a poor boy to do?
> Except to wander these hills forgotten
> With the Oxycontin blues
>
> Steve Earle (2007) 'Oxycontin Blues'

Steve Earle is a country blues singer from Texas, USA and is a political and recovery activist. His song 'Oxycontin Blues' describes the use of alcohol by miners as a pain killer and the use of opioids, such as Oxycontin, by their unemployed offspring. The interviews mentioned above equally highlights the historical use of alcohol as a form of recreation and self-medication by the Scottish industrial working-class which is now complemented by that of opiates, benzodiazepines and poly-drug use within the post-industrial period.

The first miner interviewed, for example, described his work as a trade union organiser:

> You had tae deal wae the Union as well which in thae days you wouldnae believe the stories about the Union half the time they were in the Pub – you couldnae get them oot the Pub an' the boys doon the Pit knockin their pan in - where were the Union? They were sittin in Paddy's Bar in Loanheed.

Gibbs (2021, p. 92) points out, expressions 'of class-consciousness developed in spaces that furnished active associational lives: the workplace, public space and social institutions such as Miners' Welfares'. Such heavy alcohol use emerged, according to Gibbs (2021, p. 134), 'as a response and coping strategy for social displacement across generations'. Gibbs adds that the colliery closures during the 1980s further exacerbated this dependence on alcohol whilst the redundancies contributed to even more excessive drinking and early deaths. The link between alcoholism in the mines and contemporary drug use, described by Steve Earle above, is further demonstrated by Foden *et al.* (2014); McLean (2016); Schofield *et al.* (2016) and Parkinson *et al.* (2018). While the drug of choice might be slightly different in the United States from the poly-drug use practices in Scotland, the outcomes are markedly similar both in scale and effect. The similarities, inevitably, also extend to developments within the respective political economies. Research in the US by, for example, Ikeler (2018, 2020), Friedman *et al.* (2020), and Scheiring *et al.* (2020), highlight causes of DRDs closely akin to those in Scotland.

Scheiring *et al.* (2020, p. 03), argue that the present conjuncture put 'the issues of deindustrialisation and the working class back into the spotlight'. Deindustrialisation effectively 'disrupts communities by increasing social inequalities and socio-cultural distance, intensifying the competition for scarce resources that decreases workers' solidarity, by eliminating industrial workplaces as crucial sites of community formation, contributing to de-unionisation, and increasing shame among the unemployed that leads to social isolation'. Crucially, these authors argue, 'deindustrialisation's adverse impact on communities is also felt by subsequent generations born after mass closings, leading to a continued decline of working-class culture', and signals an 'existential crisis in contemporary capitalism' (see Scheiring *et al.* 2020, p. 03).

As mentioned, Scotland experienced 'especially profound deindustrialisation during the latter part of the 20th century' and that this 'adversely affected health through unemployment, poverty, alienation, and associated health behaviours' Collins and McCartney (2011, p. 510). Indeed, as also mentioned such a view needs to be reframed within the context of a sustained political assault, which, while premised on rapid, politically driven deindustrialisation, is seen to have been broader in aims, and its impact much wider, than mass unemployment alone. As a result of this assault, as MacWhirter points out, 'The communities that gave meaning to the lives of hundreds of thousands of working-class Scots disintegrated' (quoted in Collins and McCartney 2011, p. 505). This loss of shared purpose and meaning, and indeed of collective support, it can be argued, finds its direct corollary in the incidence of drug-related deaths, as well as those related to alcohol, suicide, and violence.

It is also important to note that regaining political currency has been Friedrich Engels' (Engels 1993, p. 106) concept of 'social murder', particularly with reference to the long-term effects of austerity and privatisation of the public realm. Writing in

1845, Engels identified how the living and working conditions experienced by English workers sent them prematurely to the grave, arguing that those responsible for these conditions – the ruling authorities and the bourgeoisie – were in fact committing social murder.

Most of the contemporary analyses of the concept have followed Engels in focussing on the effects of capitalist imperatives upon working class health, whilst identifying the recent undoing of social protection. However, as Grover (2019, p. 341) points out, the question of intention is crucial, and that there must be intent on the government's part to kill. This can be through either commission (intentional killing) or through omission – through a 'reckless and wanton disregard for the lives of those affected'.

In Scotland's case, the Conservative governments knew in advance what the effects of their assault on the organised working class would be. As such, the strict intentionality of their actions leaves the above distinction between commission and omission open to question. It also leaves the framing of drug-related deaths in Scotland as those of 'deaths of despair' as wholly inadequate.

The trends in substance and alcohol deaths in Scotland remain bleak. The number of alcohol-specific deaths has increased by 17% to 1,190 in 2020, up from 1,020 in 2019, according to statistics on deaths by various causes published in August by National Records of Scotland. The National Records of Scotland (2021b) similarly records 1,339 drug-related in 2020, an increase of 5% from the previous year – the highest in Europe. These figures are the result of specific vulnerabilities resulting from the unprecedented speed of the nation's industrialisation and de-industrialisation. In the first stage, such vulnerabilities include those of the colonisation of sections of the Scottish working class, whilst in the second stage – that of de-industrialisation – the country was particularly targeted by the neoliberal right owing to its militant trade unionism and its associated collectivism.

The question remains – how do you replace this collectivity when work is precarious, ad hoc or non-existent? As Ikeler (2018, p. 01) states 'what happens to worker power when the most pressing struggle in workers' lives isn't against the boss but against addiction?' However, his notion that recovery has replaced trade unionism is double edged as the ruling classes are more than content so see oppositional energies directed within such channels alone.

A form of education in contemporary Scotland which has the aim of unveiling the dominant ideology that effectively stigmatises, marginalises, and oppresses people who are substance users must be rooted critical pedagogy. For the findings of the House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee (2019, p. 52) enquiries into problem drug use in Scotland assesses how stigmatising language is internalised by those experiencing drug dependence. The Scottish Affairs Committee recognises that 'language is an important driver of stigma'. Stigmatising language reinforces negative stereotypes. 'Person-centred' language focuses on the person, not their substance use INPUD International Network of People who Use Drugs, 2020, p.01). A pedagogy of hope in Scotland must invoke a language of possibility that counteracts current hegemonic use of scrounger and junkie discourses.

While such a pedagogical approach – which finds many of its roots in a Scottish radical tradition – offers a language of possibility and hope, this needs to be

complemented by political initiatives. By initiatives such as broader political alliances including the most deprived, marginalised and stigmatised elements of Scottish society along with a revitalised – and militant – trade union movement in co-operation with pro-independence sections. Embryonic resources of hope, however, can be seen in the Scottish Government's move towards a minimum income guarantee. This could form the basis of a Universal Basic Income (UBI) and thereby begin to reverse the poverty, health inequalities, and the resultant drug-and alcohol-related deaths that distinguish Scotland within Europe.

Disclosure statement

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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