



Rekindle Evaluation Framework

Introduction

Rekindle is an innovative new supplementary school designed to disrupt educational inequalities and unlock a love of learning in young people. Together, we are creating an exciting new space of radical possibilities for alternative futures.

Rekindle's innovation can transform the landscape of education. But we need to collectively learn about this innovation to improve our practices and develop a shared narrative of transformation.

Evaluation can be used to collect evidence that documents Rekindle's impact as a foundation to support learning. This evaluation framework provides a shared reference point for us to make sure we have a collective focus for documenting change. It situates Rekindle within the contexts against which we resist: problems with mainstream education, the crisis of care, and structural conditions of injustice – such as racism and inequality. By situating Rekindle in these contexts, we can clearly identify how we are creating a new insurgent approach to education that is rooted in participation, care, and hope.

Mainstream Education Dampens the Love of Learning

The education system limits opportunities to develop young people's critical thinking skills to imagine a more socially just and ecologically sustainable world. Instead, mainstream education often sorts young people out into winners and losers - producing future workers for an economy that is characterised by low-pay and insecurity. The logic of the market has become increasingly influential. Education is characterised by competition, standardisation, and hierarchy. These systems widen inequalities and can dampen, or even extinguish, young people's love of learning.

Young people have little influence over the education system. One of our young people explains that: 'schools care more about their own rules; our world has changed, and they still care about their system and nothing else'. It is not only young people who lack control. Many teachers don't feel empowered to create the changes that they know are needed.

A new approach to education that increases the control of young people and teachers over their shared learning is desperately needed.

The Crisis of Care

We are living through a crisis of care. The unseen caring that happens in families, institutions, and communities – and which build the foundations of society - remain undervalued. Care is needed to raise children, protect vulnerable people, and support the elderly. It keeps people healthy, educated, and housed. Public infrastructures of care, and their investment, have been decimated through austerity politics.

At the beginning of the pandemic, the author Arundhati Roy hoped that it might offer the 'chance to rethink the doomsday machine' and create a 'portal into another world'. But the pandemic both exposed and intensified the crisis of care. The 'doomsday machine' became more violent. We are now in a cost-of-living crisis that pulls the fabrics of care further apart.

The education system does not always provide a space of care for young people, which might be able to provide some shelter against this storm. The capacity for young people to learn is diminished. We need a revolution in how we care for each other.

Social Injustice

The problems with mainstream education and the crisis of care are compounded by social injustice. These are historically rooted structural conditions that have persisted and morphed into new forms over centuries. Rekindle cannot change these systemic conditions alone. But it is important that we understand what Rekindle is struggling against.

The impacts of poverty and low-income on children's education has been well-established. Poverty has a huge impact on children and young people. Child poverty has long-lasting effects. Often intersecting with these inequalities, many young people can be held back by stereotypes and discrimination as cultural differences are not recognised nor understood.

It is vital that we understand the impacts of these injustices and how Rekindle's approach attempts to overcome the challenges young people experience. We can also use this knowledge to develop new forms of political education to develop future generations to continue in the struggle.

The Educational Commons – It Takes a Village to Raise a Child

"It takes a village to raise a child" is a well-known proverb that invites the entire community to nurture children and young people to grow up in a safe and healthy environment. It is the crucial foundation upon which Rekindle's approach is rooted in.

Connected to the idea that it takes a village to raise a child is the concept of the educational commons. Educational commons involve communities of learning where decisions about the educational process are made collectively with equal participation by the teachers, learners, and their guardians. Learning is a common resource which is collectively shaped and managed by the community in terms of equality, freedom, and participation.

An educational commons approach contrasts with how mainstream education works. It is important to evidence how Rekindle puts these ideas into practice. Through dialogue enabled by the evaluation process, we create opportunities for pupils, staff, the board, and the wider community to inform what Rekindle is doing.

Creating a Space of Care: Education with Heart and Soul

Rekindle is designed to support care, connection, hope, and joy. Rekindle is rooted in compassion and care for every young person - supporting them to be all they want to be. We extend this care through our communities.

The space of care that Rekindle creates is made through an attention to supportive relationships and a recognition of our different needs. By creating a space of care, Rekindle confronts the crisis of care. Through our everyday relationships, Rekindle can help to nurture caring values in young people and send ripples out into society. As one young person explained: 'school is a place where you pick many values which are going to shape you for tomorrow and where you learn to collaborate'.

We are guided by our SNAP framework: **S**upport; **N**ourish; **A**chieve; **P**rotect. Every one of us will have different understandings of what these words mean – and we invite our community to collectively reflect on these and help us as we put them into practice.

Critical Thinking to Rekindle Hope in Hopeless Times

Rekindle creates a space of care that emphasises social justice so that everyone is included. But we also must recognise that there are limitations to what Rekindle can do. We are a grassroots

organisation, and alone we cannot change systems of structural injustice that have persisted for centuries. But as the author and activist James Baldwin reminds us: 'Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.'

Rekindle supports young people to be critical thinkers – making a connection between everyday experiences and what is happening in the wider world. We must be honest and educate our young people about social injustice. These are the conversations that many educators are reluctant to have. But Rekindle is different. Rekindle is like a fierce blanket. We are real with young people, and in doing so we can prepare them to understand that life is tough, but also to make sure that they have the capacity to navigate it and make change happen. We will document our approach to political education and the changes young people make.