Open Access

UNCOMMON SPACES, UNCOMMON PEDAGOGIES: PREPARING PRESERVICE TEACHERS AND INFORMING CURRICULUM THROUGH COMMUNITY-BASED ADULT LEARNING

[1]CHRISTABEL KANAYO ANUMENECHI*, [2] MARIA REGINA JAGA

[1]DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION, CURRICULUM STUDIES, PURDUE UNIVERSITY, WEST LAFAYETTE, INDIANA, USA, Email: anumenechichristabellec@yahoo.com
[2] DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION, CURRICULUM STUDIES, PURDUE UNIVERSITY, WEST LAFAYETTE, INDIANA, USA, email: maria.regina1104@gmail.com

Abstract— Adult education increasingly occurs in community-based and informal spaces where diverse learners engage with literacy, vocational training, and social justice initiatives. These environments offer vital opportunities for equity-driven, lifelong learning; however, they are often overlooked in traditional teacher education, which focuses on formal coursework and school-based practicums. In response to this changing landscape, this paper explores unconventional pedagogies and how education unfolds beyond classrooms in settings such as community centres, literacy programs, refugee camps, and grassroots cultural organizations -- spaces that foster pedagogical growth and critical consciousness among preservice teachers. Drawing on public pedagogy and guided by Freire's critical pedagogy, which emphasizes dialogical and transformative learning, alongside adult learning theory, the paper examines teaching and learning within these contexts. It considers how preservice teachers' involvement influences curriculum design, particularly in developing socially just, context-responsive pedagogies. The argument advanced is that teacher education must expand its scope to include adult education across diverse settings—spaces that provide experiential learning essential for intercultural competence and understanding curriculum beyond formal schooling, aligning with Sustainable Development Goal 4. The paper concludes with recommendations for integrating structured, community-based adult learning experiences into preservice training to promote socially responsive pedagogical growth

Keywords— **A**dult Community-Based Learning, Curriculum Design, Pre-service Teachers, Public Pedagogy, Third Space, SDG 4

I. INTRODUCTION

Adult education increasingly unfolds within community-based and informal spaces, where diverse learners participate in some form of basic education, including literacy, vocational, and social justice–oriented programs [1], [2] that foster equity-driven, lifelong learning practices [3],[4] Nonetheless, such settings, ranging from refugee education centers, Freedom schools, Adult education and Literacy centers, to grassroots cultural organizations, are often overlooked in traditional teacher education, which has historically prioritized and emphasized more of formal university coursework and school-based teaching practice, despite growing recognition that such " uncommon spaces offer transformative possibilities for developing teacher competence and critical pedagogical skills for diverse learning environments[5], [6], [7]. I argue that this limited focus neglects the dynamic realities shaping education today, or the pedagogy of now, and therefore fails to prepare preservice teachers (PSTs) for the complexity of contemporary education, the classrooms, and the communities. There has been a growing call for teacher education programs to reconceptualize their scope of analysis by integrating practice-based opportunities beyond conventional boundaries, addressing the disconnect between university-based coursework and authentic field work experiences [6].

Drawing on public pedagogy, this paper foregrounds the educational potential embedded in these learning spaces outside formal schooling, where everyday experiences and collective participation become living curricula [7] [8]. Guided also by Freire's critical pedagogy, which emphasizes dialogical, reflective, and transformative education rooted in learners lived realities [9],[10], [11], alongside foundational adult learning theory [12]. This theoretical exploration examines how preservice teachers' engagement with these unconventional contexts disrupts prevailing assumptions about teacher preparation and curriculum development [10],[12].

Situated within teacher identity discourse, this necessary shift involves creating **"Third Spaces"** in teacher education [6], inherently conceptualized as hybrid learning environments that purposefully merge academic

knowledge with community-based practice. The intersection of designing PST practicums within community sites is specifically intended to disrupt the conventional campus–field binaries that traditionally isolate teacher preparation from community realities [13], [14]. To advance these arguments, this paper interrogates how community-based adult learning centers, such as refugee education programs and Freedom Schools, may serve as "uncommon spaces." To develop preservice teachers' pedagogical skills as well as inform the design of curricula that are socially just and contextually responsive. Empirical evidence validates this redirection, indicating that early, sustained, out-of-school community placements significantly deepen PSTs' cultural understanding and effectively link theoretical coursework to authentic practice [15]. Furthermore, models focusing on place-based education affirm that local communities and places serve as powerful non-school learning environments for PSTs and their future students [16]. In this regard, this paradigm moves toward building equitable, community-engaged teacher preparation models [17] by foregrounding community knowledge [13] and challenging the deficit thinking often associated with urban or marginalized settings [18].

To elaborate, globally, underrepresented adult learning contexts reveal diverse and transformative possibilities for teacher preparation. For instance, in rural Nigeria, adult literacy initiatives often adopt a functional literacy approach, integrating reading and writing with vocational training, health education and civic awareness to empower communities economically and socially [19], [20], highlighting these hubs as where learning intertwines with civic dialogue and economic empowerment. In Australia, Indigenous communities have developed culturally grounded, land-based adult education models where literacy and community knowledge are inseparable [21], [22]. Similarly, in Germany, adult education centres (Volkshochschulen) designed to engage refugee populations demonstrate how community-based adult learning fosters integration, intercultural competence, and civic participation [23]. In Latin America, Freirean adult literacy movements in Brazil and Colombia continue to highlight dialogical education as both a political and emancipatory project [24]. Across these contexts, such learning environments, what this paper refers to as uncommon spaces, exist outside formal classrooms yet profoundly shape pedagogical imagination, equity consciousness, and socially responsive teaching. Therefore, central to this inquiry is the examination of how pre-service teachers' involvement or experiential engagement in community-based adult education informs curriculum or influences curriculum design, particularly in developing pedagogies that are socially just, inclusive, and responsive to learners lived realities [25]. The paper also analyzes how such engagement advances Sustainable Development Goal 4's call for inclusive, equitable, and lifelong learning opportunities for all [26], [27]. The conceptual and pedagogical framing of this paper is informed by critical and public pedagogy. In doing so, the study explores how teacher education might expand its scope beyond traditional institutions to embrace the rich possibilities for learning and teaching that arise within community adult education spaces.

II. AUTHORS' INTERPRETIVE LENS

My professional experience as a teacher educator, spanning over a decade and including leadership in coordinating preservice teacher field placements at a Nigerian College of Education, provides a grounded lens for interpreting these dynamics. Over many years, I observed that preservice teachers are rarely encouraged to explore such "third places" of learning. I draw on firsthand knowledge that preservice teachers are predominantly placed in formal school settings. Teaching practice tends to be confined to conventional classrooms, overlooking the pedagogical richness of adult literacy centres, community initiatives, and informal education spaces. Complementing these perspectives, my co-author brings extensive experience in higher education, with a particular focus on integrating culture into curriculum and school policy. Maria's work centres on embedding cultural and community knowledge into formal schooling structures, advocating for the recognition of cultural and communal ways of knowing, teaching, and learning, not as peripheral enrichment but as foundational to equitable and inclusive education. She vividly focuses on the intrinsic connection between education and identity formation, where her purpose is to reclaim indigenous wisdom as a strategic initiative to enrich curriculum so there will be more room or cultural integrity in educational practices in the other words, her works and concern towards her initiative is to make sure there will be a community-driven curriculum that honour local wisdom and aligned educational objectives with local-cultural contexts, addressing both theoretical frameworks and practical implications for educators and learners so they could thriving in this modern-complex education system; no matter what is the learning settings (informal, formal). This shared commitment to community-engaged and culturally responsive teacher preparation informs us; likewise, our positionality reinforces the critical stance of this paper. This positioning reveals the need to reconsider how and where teacher learning occurs, particularly in community-based contexts, underscoring the necessity to expand teacher education to encompass such 'uncommon spaces' as sites essential for developing socially just, context-responsive pedagogies with the conviction that it cultivates the kind of critical and socially engaged pedagogy envisioned by [10],[8]. Our professional experience thus grounds the theoretical exploration that follows, situating it within lived realities and institutional practices. In doing so, this conceptual paper interrogates the educational potentials of "uncommon spaces" as dynamic sites for shaping preservice teachers' professional identities, pedagogical commitments, and curricular understandings.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

At the intersection of theory and practice, we recognize several mutually reinforcing dimensions through which pre-service teachers encounter, question, and reconstruct the meaning of education in a community context. A central contention of this work is that the preparation model articulated in this paper is anchored in a conceptual and theoretical framework built around three interrelated tenets: (i) the redefinition of field experience through the Third Space concept, as Funds of Knowledge, and as uncommon spaces (ii) the recognition of Public Pedagogy as a critical learning site, and (iii) the philosophical integration of Critical Pedagogy with the tenets of adult learning theory.

A. Defining Uncommon Spaces, the Third Space, and Funds of Knowledge.
"Uncommon spaces" are defined here as non-traditional, generative learning environments that intentionally exist outside the typical structures of K-12 schooling and college. In teacher education, these are conceptualized as "Third Spaces" [6],[28]. The Third Space is a hybrid environment specifically designed to combine the academic knowledge of the university with the practice and community knowledge gained in non-school settings (Zeichner, 2010). Therefore, placing Preservice Teachers (PSTs) in these settings is an empirical strategy aimed at disrupting and challenging the typical school-campus field binaries [13], which often isolate teacher preparation from local realities.

From a pedagogical standpoint, this framework helps to Challenge Deficit Thinking and expand learning sites. Consequently, these uncommon spaces act as a pedagogical Third Space where PSTs are explicitly encouraged to challenge deficit thinking [18] in that deficit theories wrongly attribute poor student outcomes to perceived linguistic or cognitive lacks in low-income or minority children [29]. In opposition to deficit narratives, or viewing communities through a lens of lack, community placements would deliberately shift this perspective by exposing PSTs to the Funds of Knowledge (FoK) inherent in households and communities [3], [29]. The various forms of FoK approach positions community residents as competent individuals whose life experiences furnish valuable knowledge that informs PSTs PSTs' to recognize the cultural wealth and lived expertise that learners bring to educational spaces, thereby reframing their understanding of teaching and learning.

Equally important, expanding Learning Sites demonstrates to PSTs that teaching and learning are not confined to traditional K-12 classrooms [31]. Examples of effective, uncommon spaces include museum schools, community centres focused on empowerment [29], and settings emphasizing place-based education, which affirms that local communities are powerful non-school learning environments [16]. These spaces not only broaden the goal of teacher preparation but also reinforce the value of culturally responsive and community-based pedagogy.

B. Public Pedagogy and Critical Consciousness.
Extending the conceptual reach of Third Place, this aspect foregrounds the recognition of public pedagogy as a critical learning site that expands the boundaries of where and how education occurs. By definition, public pedagogy is explained to encompass the ways people learn through participation in community life, civic engagement, and cultural discourse outside formal schooling [32], [33], Learning encountered in uncommon spaces necessarily involves public pedagogy, as defined; as education that occurs outside formal institutions, such spaces, including museums, media, community centres, and social movements, serve as active pedagogical sites where meanings are negotiated. These environments contribute to the shaping of public or social consciousness and cultural narratives, positioning learners and Preservice teachers for PSTs as active participants in knowledge constructions and civil engagement. Public pedagogy links directly to the development of critical consciousness [29]. In this study, public pedagogy is positioned both as a context and a method of learning, particularly within community–based adult learning (CBAL) sites, where pre-service teachers can engage directly with lived realities that challenge traditional teacher education models. As [34] notes, community–based pedagogies bring together education and social actions, emphasizing knowledge co-construction between learners and community members. Henry Giroux argues that students need to be taught how to critically appropriate the codes and vocabularies of different cultural experiences so that they may define and shape, rather than merely serve, the modern world as discussed in [35]. Building on these imperatives, these spaces nurture what [29] calls critical public consciousness, allowing pre-service teachers to connect curriculum to community issues and to recognize the educative value of everyday public interactions.

As a further expression of public pedagogy in practice, the act of using community platforms, developing curriculum that addresses public concerns, supports a clear public pedagogy approach to teaching and learning [9] cited in [36]. In community-based adult learning (CBAL) sites, PSTs witness literacy instruction actively merged with community education and action, centered on issues beyond typical academic subject matter [35]. Central to realizing these pedagogical goals is the imperative to empower students intellectually and emotionally, necessitating the validation and critical expansion of their voice [37]. Thus, public pedagogy becomes a transformative bridge between theory and practice, a space where learners begin to see themselves not only as teachers within formal settings but as educators embedded in the larger social fabric.

C. Philosophical Integration of Critical Pedagogy and Adult Learning Theory.
The integration of critical pedagogy and adult learning theory provides the philosophical grounding for understanding learning as a socially situated, transformative process. Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed [38] underscores the necessity of education that fosters conscientização, the development of critical awareness

through dialogue and reflection.) Henry Giroux, as cited in [35], expands this view by arguing that education must empower learners to critically code and vocabularies of diverse cultural experiences, enabling them to define and shape, rather than merely serve, the modern world. Pedagogically, the instructional methodologies in these settings are underpinned by the principles of Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy. Freire's work demands that teaching be viewed as a political act aimed at liberation and transformation, as cited in [39]. He contrasts the oppressive "banking approach" (where students are passive receptacles) with the transformative "problem-posing" method, which encourages dialogue and critical thinking [40] in [29]. Pedagogical stances are inherently tied to the cultivation of critical consciousness.

This Freirean orientation converges with foundational principles of adult learning theories, particularly those advanced by [41], [42], [43]. These theorists emphasize experiential learning, self-direction, and reflective practices as essential to adult education. Together, these frameworks advocate for a dialogic, contextual, and transformative approach anchored in the lived experiences of learners and responsive to the socio-political realities they navigate. The content and delivery models found in community-based adult learning (CBAL) settings naturally operationalize Freirean principles, providing the necessary pedagogical foundation for preparing PSTs. When these traditions intersect, learning becomes an act of praxis and a cyclical process of reflection and action directed toward social change. In the community-based adult learning (CBAL) context, this integration allows preservice teachers to move beyond passive observation toward critical participation, engaging communities as co-educators. [12] describes this as the cultivation of a "critical lens," through which adult learners examine power, culture, and ideology in their contexts.

To further illustrate this integration, adult literacy curricula are inherently rich and varied, with experience becoming content, drawn directly from the lives and experiences of adult learners [35] such as being parents, immigrants, or members of specific cultural backgrounds. Engagement with CBAL supports PSTs in becoming culturally competent teachers – a practice that aligns directly with the goal of critical social justice and anti-oppression pedagogy [25]. Through this integration, learning is no longer confined to abstract theory but becomes a responsive and situated practice. Learning in these settings is explicitly aimed at addressing the social, political world [25], while also responding to specific community concerns, such as immigration policy, or AIDS awareness, and SDG4 quality education goals, as this approach reinforces equity alignment and contributes to the development of community, engaged socially responsive teacher preparation [17]. All this works toward empowering residents for leadership, encouraging active citizenship and sustainability [29] while addressing fundamental social issues and systemic inequities. In this context, PSTs learn the value of developing progression pathways and establishing community hubs to increase capability and motivation among disadvantaged learners [39].

Ultimately, recognizing public pedagogy as a critical learning site expands the boundaries of where and how education occurs. In this study, public pedagogy is positioned as both a context and a method of learning as within community-based adult learning (CBAL) sites, PSTs engage directly with lived realities that challenge traditional teacher education models. The philosophical synthesis of Freirean and adult learning principles thus anchors this study's exploration of how uncommon, community-based spaces foster critical consciousness and intercultural competence in teacher education. Moreover, community-based adult learning (CBAL) environments exemplify public pedagogy in action. As Sandlin, Redmon Wright, and Clark [9], in [35] explain, when educators disseminate pedagogical resources or design curricula addressing public concerns, they enact public pedagogy. In CBAL contexts, preservice teachers encounter learning as civic engagement, witnessing literacy, social justice, and critical inquiry woven into community life. Such experiences extend teacher education beyond technical skill-building, positioning it instead as a public, ethical, and transformative practice.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Community-based and informal adult learning spaces have long played a critical role in advancing literacy, social inclusion, and civic engagement, particularly among marginalized groups. Yet, research indicates that these contexts remain underrepresented in mainstream teacher education curricula [44]. Adult learning sites such as literacy circles, refugee education programs, and women's cooperative learning groups often act as "third spaces" for transformative learning settings where learners connect lived experience with collective social action [45], [46]. The body of literature relevant to preparing preservice teachers (PSTs) through community engagement review is clustered and anchored in scholarships that illuminates pedagogical significance around three main themes: (i) the robust practice evident in Community-Based Adult Learning (CBAL) settings, (ii) the persistent critique of how these settings are marginalized in traditional teacher education, and (iii) the conceptual gaps this paper addresses.

A. Research on Community-Based and Informal Adult Education Settings

Research consistently highlights that transformative and highly effective learning practices unfold within community-based and informal adult education sites, often centred around addressing social and political realities [35]. No doubt, these settings prioritize critical thinking and relevance to lived experience. Adult education programs situated in refugee centres and community literacy initiatives demonstrate the capacity to enhance learners' social integration, agency, and lifelong learning dispositions [1]. Such programs emphasize culturally

responsive pedagogy and accessibility, addressing complex learner needs shaped by trauma, displacement, and social exclusion.

Empirical studies demonstrate that informal education empowers learners to link personal and communal transformation. A compelling example emerges from Nigeria, where adult literacy centres have strengthened women's economic participation and civic engagement through locally relevant curricula [47]. Similarly, community-based adult programs in Jordan and Lebanon have provided critical language and integration skills for refugee adults, fostering both psychosocial stability and intercultural learning [48], [49]. Indigenous learning circles in Canada and Australia, grounded in land-based pedagogies and oral traditions, also illustrate how education beyond formal schooling can sustain cultural identity and intergenerational knowledge transmission [7]. Nonetheless, the transformative potential of community-based adult learning remains underrepresented in teacher education programs as traditional teacher education overwhelmingly directs preservice teachers into formal school practicum placements, with minimal engagement in community or informal adult learning contexts. Thus, this marginalization neglects valuable sites where preservice teachers could cultivate intercultural competence, critical consciousness, and pedagogical flexibility– capacities essential for socially just teaching [25], [50].

The concept of Third Space finds practical expression in Indonesia through PKBM (Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat), which serves as community-based hubs for adult equivalency education and literacy progression. According to a report by [51] where he noted how PKBMs in West Java provided accessible, culturally rooted education for school dropouts, positioning themselves as alternatives to "schools" for learners to pursue junior or senior (secondary) equivalency. Later, [52] assessed basic adult literacy programs and documented the modest improvements in literacy outcomes, highlighting the necessity to integrate local wisdom into the design of the program. Together, these studies showcase the dual role of PKBMs in both social inclusion and continuing education, emphasizing the argument that the uncommon spaces offer powerful sites for preservice teacher engagement and community-responsive curriculum design [51], [52]. In more remote provinces of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) of Indonesia, community reading gardens (Taman Baca Masyarakat) managed by local volunteers have been effective in reactivating learning spaces and strengthening community reading culture. These localized practices reinforce more autonomy, wherein such curriculum practices helped schools to integrate local culture into teaching and learning, unveiling the Third space possibilities with PKBM [53].

B. The Marginalization of Community Context in Teacher Education.

Despite growing recognition of the pedagogical richness embedded in community-based adult learning, systemic structures within teacher education continue to reinforce a narrow conception of where legitimate learning occurs. It is critical to ask where knowledge is legitimized. Despite the documented effectiveness and critical scope of community-based Adult learning (CBAL), teacher education programs continue to privilege school-based placements over community-engaged experiences, leaving these rich learning contexts largely overlooked in the preparation of preservice teachers (PSTs). Teacher education traditionally relies on a rigid separation between abstract university coursework and field experiences that are primarily confined to the K-12 environment [25]. This restricted view fails to adequately prepare PSTs for the complexity of contemporary classrooms and communities. Research by [53] argues that such gaps limit preservice teachers' understanding of how learning occurs in diverse, resource-limited, or culturally hybrid spaces. Keller [25] notes that it is relatively uncommon for PST field placements to deliberately focus on engaging adult community members; the emphasis remains overwhelmingly on youth and children, limiting the PST's capacity to broaden their sense of where and how teaching and learning happen [31].

The absence of community-based experiences reinforces a narrow vision of pedagogy that is detached from social realities [33]. One may wonder whether this neglect stems from structural and systemic barriers that limit the integration of community-based adult education into teacher training – barriers such as institutional traditions, accreditation requirements, and the perceived legitimacy of nonformal settings [1]. Integrating field experiences in community adult learning centres could strengthen preservice teachers' capacity to design inclusive and responsive curricula that attend to adult and intergenerational learners. Although the consequences are evident, excluding exposure to CBAL sites deprives PSTs of opportunities to see teaching practiced as an integrated approach, one that encompasses counselling and advocacy alongside language and grammar instruction.

C. The SDG 4: Equity and Lifelong Learning.

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, situates adult learning within a global commitment to equity, inclusion, and lifelong learning [54] emphasizes that adult and community education are essential for achieving SDG 4, particularly in advancing literacy, gender equality, and social cohesion. However, a conceptual gap persists in teacher education programs, which often fail to integrate those global imperatives into preservice curricula [49], [54]. This disconnect reflects a broader marginalization of nonformal and community–based learning spaces, despite their proven capacity to address educational disparities and foster transformative learning. CBAL programs, which are deeply embedded in local contexts, do offer rich opportunities for pre-service teachers to engage with diverse learners and develop pedagogical approaches that are inclusive, culturally responsive, and socially just. Yet, the absence of structured engagement with such spaces in teacher preparation undermines efforts to align with SDG 4's vision of lifelong learning and equitable education.

Summarily, the literature reveals three interrelated gaps that this paper seeks to address, particularly the disconnect between educational theory advocating critical social justice and the practical realities of PST field experiences.

One key gap is operationalizing the concept of the "Third Space" – a pedagogical framework that integrates academic and community knowledge to foster transformative learning [6], [28], [17]. While scholars call for the creation of such spaces, this paper argues that Community-Based Adult Learning (CBAL) settings offer a concrete and underutilized environment for enacting this framework. The pedagogical potential of CBAL remains largely unexplored in preservice teacher education research, despite its alignment with inclusive, socially responsive teaching. Furthermore, this study addresses the persistent issue of deficit thinking in teacher education. [55], [29], proposing a model in which PSTs engage with adult learners not as recipients of charity or remediation, but as co-educators whose lived experiences enrich the learning process, demonstrating a direct link between the theory of Freire's praxis (action and reflection upon the world to transform it and the practical pedagogical skills needed for culturally competent teaching.

In addition, this paper foregrounds Global South perspectives, West Africa, Southern Asia, and immigrant contexts, which remain underrepresented in discussions of adult education as a site for teacher preparation. While SDG 4 calls for inclusive, equitable education, few studies explicitly connect this global mandate with the public pedagogical role of preservice teachers working in informal or community contexts. Exploring how community-based and informal adult education settings serve as "uncommon spaces" for PTS development reveals how engagement in these contexts can enrich curriculum design aligned with principles of equity, inclusion, and the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4 for quality education [26], [27]. By foregrounding community adult learning, the study seeks to expand scholarly attention toward pedagogical practices beyond formal schooling, advocating for expanded experiential learning that critically informs teacher preparation

V. Approach and Methodology: Conceptual Synthesis and Critical Engagement

Given the conceptual nature of this paper, the methodological approach does not rely on empirical data collection. Instead, it draws on a critical-conceptual synthesis of existing scholarship in public pedagogy, critical pedagogy, and adult learning theory [8], [10], [12]. This approach brings together formal theories to construct a critical lens for examining both the potential and the exclusion of community-based adult learning spaces in teacher education. As this research proposes a reconceptualization of preservice teacher (PST) preparation models, the methodology employed centers on conceptual synthesis and critical analysis of existing literature, identifying tensions, synergies, and possibilities for curricular transformation.

First, key concepts and frameworks were synthesized to map the theoretical terrain of community-based adult learning and its implications for preservice teacher education. Second, a critical analysis was conducted to identify tensions, gaps, and synergies in the literature, particularly regarding the preparation of PSTs to engage in non-traditional learning spaces conceptualized as the Third space. Third, insights from this synthesis and analysis were organized into thematic explorations, highlighting how these uncommon learning environments foster pedagogical skill development, intercultural competence, and critical consciousness.

This approach allows for a conceptually rigorous yet practice-oriented examination of community-based adult education, situating the discussion within global priorities such as SDG 4 and social justice pedagogy. The aim is not to present new empirical data but to establish a robust theoretical foundation for integrating previously siloed domains: Third Space pedagogy in teacher education and critical adult learning practice, and equity and social justice as primary bridges:

(1). Theory-to-Field Connection (Third Space): This paper synthesized literature that critiques the traditional campus–field binary in teacher education [13] with research that documents the capacity of "Third Spaces" to deepen PSTs cu; cultural understanding and link theory to practice. This synthesis enables a comparative critique of traditional and alternative field experiences, revealing persistent gaps in preservice teacher preparation and proposing theoretically grounded pathways for bridging these divides. Moreover, Community-Based Adult Learning (CBAL) settings demonstrate empirically how "uncommon spaces" function as genuine Third Spaces that offer experiential, socially embedded learning opportunities for PSTs.

(2). Pedagogy-to-Action Integration and Relational Knowing (Freirean Praxis): This dimension synthesizes Freire's critical pedagogy with the practical applications observed in CBAl settings to demonstrate a Cultural-to-Instructional Framework. Drawing on the concept of Funds of Knowledge (FoK), it emphasizes that community wisdom constitutes rich instructional content, challenging traditional notions of curriculum as detached from learners lived realities, for instruction. Community-based learning environments situate knowledge within real social contexts where learning occurs through relationships, participation, and shared problem-solving. Drawing from [56] notion of situated learning, these spaces position preservice teachers as active participants rather than detached observers. Fostering relational knowing and praxis-oriented engagement.

(3). Shifting Cultural Consciousness and Dispositions: Sustained, supervised, course-based community engagement is empirically linked to shifting PSTs' preconceptions and supporting multicultural understanding. This pedagogical approach aligns with broader educational aims, including equity, inclusion, social justice, and global sustainability. By engaging deeply with communities, PSTs begin to challenge dominant ideologies and cultivate dispositions that promote agency – recognizing that meaningful change necessitates the reflective participation of marginalized groups in their own liberation. Community-based learning also enhances social well-being by fostering integration, strengthening social capital through trust and networks, and encouraging active citizenship. These outcomes directly support the foundational goals of social justice teaching and global imperatives for inclusive and equitable quality education (SDG 4) and gender equality (SDG 5), by recognizing

and affirming the role of marginalized populations, including women and ethnic minorities, in shaping their educational experiences as noted by [39].

VI. IMPLICATIONS FOR PRE/ TEACHER EDUCATION

The utilization of Community-Based Adult Learning (CBAL) sites as "uncommon spaces" presents profound implications for both systemic and curricular reform of preservice teacher (PST) preparation. These spaces challenge traditional boundaries of learning by urging teacher preparation programs to extend or move beyond learning beyond institutional walls and embrace community-based adult education as a legitimate, impactful pedagogical site. This approach offers a tangible pathway for cultivating culturally, asset-minded, and critically conscious educators who are equipped to navigate and respond to the complexities of contemporary classrooms [29], [17].

Teacher preparation programs must intentionally design field experiences as "Third Spaces" – hybrid environments that purposefully integrate university-based academic knowledge with lived, practical community knowledge [53], [28]. This deliberate merging is essential for disrupting the conventional campus-field dichotomy that often isolates pre-service teachers (PSTs) from the social realities of the communities they are preparing to serve [28], [25]. Engaging preservice teachers' critical consciousness, intercultural competence, and pedagogical adaptability, qualities that are indispensable for teaching diverse learner populations and advancing the equity-centered objectives of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education).
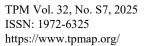
Teacher Preparation programs should incorporate Sustained Engagement Programs that integrate early supervised, and course-based community engagement [57], [8]. Empirical evidence demonstrates that such out-of-school placements consistently deepen PSTs' cultural understanding and effectively bridge abstract theory with observable practice, shifting and challenging their preconceptions about diversity and marginalized populations. Embedding experiential learning in "uncommon spaces," such as refugee literacy centers, indigenous knowledge hubs, and community outreach programs, encourages future educators to reconceptualize education as a socially embedded practice rather than a school-bound activity. For teacher educators, this shift necessitates rethinking curriculum design, cultivating partnerships with local communities, and recognizing informal and nonformal learning as integral to professional preparation.

VII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper advocates for the preparation of preservice teachers within Community-Based Adult Learning (CBAL) settings as a transformative strategy for structural and pedagogical reform in teacher education. By positioning CBAL sites as "Uncommon Spaces", this model successfully operationalizes the Third Space framework, bridging the theoretical divide between the university, the school, and the community [6], [13]. The core strength of this approach lies in its capacity to immerse PSTs in environments governed by "Uncommon Pedagogies", educational practices rooted in Freire's critical pedagogy and adult learning theory, which are challenged to integrate dominant narratives and engage in dialogic, emancipatory learning. These pedagogies emphasize reflection, praxis, and the co-construction of knowledge with marginalized communities, fostering a deep understanding of education as a relational justice-oriented endeavor. Ultimately, the integration of public pedagogy, critical pedagogy, and adult learning theory is not only to instruct but to serve the public intellectuals and change agents. These educators are equipped to advance justice, inclusion, and lifelong learning, aligning their practice with global imperatives such as Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5, and contributing meaningfully to the creation of equitable and socially responsive educational systems.

REFERENCES

[1] L. Morrice, "The promise of refugee lifelong education: A critical review of the field," International Review of Education, vol. 67, no. 6, pp. 851–869, 2021. doi: 10.1007/s11159-021-09927-5.

[2] Teaching for Change, Putting the Movement Back into Civil Rights Teaching. Civil Rights Teaching Project, 2024. [Online]. Available: https://www.civilrightsteaching.orgR. A. Aderinoye, "Adult education practice in Nigeria: Between pedagogy and andragogy," Pedagogy and Andragogy Journal, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 1–15, 2018.

[3] T. Chang, "Quality, equity, inclusion, and lifelong learning in pre-service teacher education," Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability, vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 91–104, 2019. doi: 10.2478/jtes-2019-0014.

[4] Stein, D., & Imel, S. (2002). Adult learning in community: Themes and threads. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 2002(95), 93–100. https://doi.org/10.1002/ace.61

[5] L. Wasburn-Moses, T. Kopp, and J. Hettersimer, "Community-based field experiences in teacher education: Opportunities and challenges," Issues in Teacher Education, vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 67–84, Fall 2012. [Online]. Available: https://www.itejournal.org/wp-content/pdfs-issues/fall-2012/06wasburn-mosesetal.pdf

[6] K. Zeichner, "Rethinking the connections between campus courses and field experiences in college- and university-based teacher education," Journal of Teacher Education, vol. 61, no. 1–2, pp. 89–99, 2010. doi: 10.1177/0022487109347671

[7] M. Battiste, Decolonizing education: Nourishing the learning spirit. Purich Publishing, 2013.

[8] H. A. Giroux, "Critical pedagogy: Revitalizing and democratizing teacher education," Teacher Education Quarterly, vol. 31, no. 1, pp. 31–47, Winter 2004. [Online]. Available: https://www.teqjournal.org/backvols/2004/31_1/giroux.pmd.pdf

[9] J. A. Sandlin, R. R. Wright, and C. Clark, "Reexamining theories of adult learning and adult development through the lenses of public pedagogy," Adult Education Quarterly, vol. 63, no. 1, pp. 3–23, Feb. 2013. doi: 10.1177/0741713611415836

[10]. P. Freire, Pedagogy of the oppressed, 30th anniversary ed., M. B. Ramos, Trans. Bloomsbury Academic, 2000. (Original work published 1970).

[11] J. M. Dirkx, "Transformative learning theory in the practice of adult education: An overview," PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning, vol. 7, pp. 1–14, 1998.

[12] S. D. Brookfield, The power of critical theory: Liberating adult learning and teaching. Jossey-Bass, 2005

[13] M. D. Janzen and C. Petersen, "Beyond schools: Community-based experiences as a third space in teacher education," Brock Education Journal, vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 53–66, 2020. doi: 10.26522/brocked. v29i1.817.

[14] K. Brayko, "Community-based placements as contexts for disciplinary learning: A study of literacy teacher education outside of school," Journal of Teacher Education, vol. 64, no. 1, pp. 47–59, 2013. doi: 10.1177/002248711245880.

[15] H. Coffey, "'They taught me': The benefits of early community-based field experiences," Teaching and Teacher Education, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 335–342, 2010

16] M. Yemini, L. Engel, and A. Ben Simon, "Place-based education – a systematic review of literature," Educational Review, vol. 77, no. 2, pp. 640–660, 2025. doi: 10.1080/00131911.2023.2177260.

[17] M. E. Lynch, "A conceptual framework for third spaces that disrupt school-university partnerships," Education and Urban Society, 2025.

[18] H. L. Hallman, "Community-based field experiences in teacher education: Possibilities for a pedagogical third space," Teaching Education, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 241–263, 2012.

[19] A. Robinson-Pant, "Women, literacy and development: Overview," in Encyclopedia of Language and Education, pp. 588–599, Springer, 2007. [link.springer.com]

[20] C. Joseph and R. Said, "Community-based education: A participatory approach to achieve the sustainable development goal," in Encyclopedia of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, pp. 101–111, Springer, 2020.

[21] M. Eady, A. Herrington, and C. Jones, "Literacy practitioners' perspectives on adult learning needs and technology approaches in Indigenous communities," Australian Journal of Adult Learning, vol. 50, no. 2, pp. 260–286, 2010. [Online]. Available: https://espace.curtin.edu.au/handle/20.500.11937/41829

[22] B. Boughton, D. Ah Chee, J. Beetson, D. Durnan, and H. Spiers, "Recognising the role of Aboriginal adult educators in developing community-based literacy programs in remote Australia," Australian Journal of Adult Learning, vol. 53, no. 1, pp. 54–75, 2013. [Online]. Available: https://ajal.net.au/archive

[23] B. Käpplinger, "Addressing refugees and non-refugees in adult education programs: A longitudinal analysis on shifting public concerns," European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 161–177, 2018. doi: 10.3384/rela.. 2000-7426.rela242.

[24] M. Gadotti, "Revisiting Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed: Issues and challenges for the 21st century," Educational Action Research, vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 475–483, 2010. doi: 10.1080/09650792.2010.524826

[25] P. Grossman, K. Hammerness, and M. McDonald, "Redefining teaching, re-imagining teacher education," Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 273–289, 2009. doi: 10.1080/13540600902875340.

[26] United Nations, "Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," United Nations, 2015. [Online]. Available: https://sdgs.un.org/goals

[27] M. Silva, "MOOCs for lifelong learning, equity, and liberation," in Education for All: Equity and Sustainability in the Digital Age, pp. 1–19. IntechOpen, 2021. doi: 10.5772/Intech open 100000.

[28] L. M. Laughlin, "Third space, partnerships, & clinical practice: A literature review," School–University Partnerships, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 44–59, 2021.

[29] D. B. Keller, "Requisite community engagement for teacher education: A different take on service learning," Athens Journal of Education, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 93–110, 2019.

[30] L. C. Moll, C. Amanti, D. Neff, and N. González, "Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms," Theory Into Practice, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 132–141, 1992.

[31] E. R. Hamilton et al., "Preservice teachers' community-based field experiences at a museum school," Frontiers in Education, vol. 4, p. 115, 2019.

[32] H. A. Giroux, Take Back Higher Education: Race, Youth, and the Crisis of Democracy in the Post–Civil Rights Era. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

[33] J. A. Sandlin, B. D. Schultz, and J. Burdick, Handbook of Public Pedagogy: Education and Learning Beyond Schooling. New York: Routledge, 2010.

[35] B. E. Neumann, Probing to Know: A Teachers' Guide to Exploring Critical Thinking and Adult Literacy. Boston, MA: Adult Literacy Resource Institute, 1989.

[36] P. A. Gouthro and S. M. Holloway, "Using a multiliteracies approach in adult education to foster inclusive lifelong learning," CASAE: Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education, vol. 38, pp. 143–143, 2019.

[37] S. Aronowitz and H. A. Giroux, Education under siege: The conservative, liberal and radical debate over schooling. Bergin & Garvey, 1985. doi: 10.4324/9780203222034.

[38] P. Freire, Pedagogy of the oppressed. Continuum, 1984.

[39] D. Holtom, R. Bowen, and H. Pells, "The benefits to the individual, to society, and to the wider economy in Wales of widening participation in community-based adult learning (Final Report)," Pobl a Gwaith / People and Work, 2021.

[40] P. Freire, Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage, P. Clarke, Trans. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998.

[41] J. Mezirow, Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1991.

[42] S. D. Brookfield, Understanding and facilitating adult learning: A comprehensive analysis of principles and Effective Practices. Jossey-Bass, 1986.

[43] M. S. Knowles, The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species. Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing, 1984.

[44] S. B. Merriam and L. L. Bierema, Adult Learning: Linking Theory and Practice. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2014.

[45] S. D. Brookfield and J. D. Holst, Radicalizing Learning: Adult Education for a Just World. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2011.

[46] P. Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: Continuum, 1970.

[47] R. A. Aderinoye, "Adult education practice in Nigeria: Between pedagogy and andragogy," Pedagogy and Andragogy Journal, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 1–15, 2018.

[48] S. Dryden-Peterson, "Refugee education: The crossroads of globalization," Educational Researcher, vol. 45, no. 9, pp. 473–482, 2016.

[49] UNESCO, "Global Report on Adult Learning and Education: Transforming Lives through Adult Learning and Education," UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2022. [Online]. Available: https://uil.unesco.org/adult-education/global-report

[50] P. Grossman, K. Hammerness, and M. McDonald, "Redefining teaching, re-imagining teacher education," Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 273–289, 2009. doi: 10.1080/13540600902875340.

[51] N. Katayama, "New developments and roles of community learning centers in Indonesia: Focusing on the participants of equivalency education programs," Journal of International Development Studies, vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 131–151, 2023. doi: 10.32204/jids.32.1_131.

[52] M. Maghfirah, A. Iskandar, and colleagues, "PKBM as an alternative to inclusive education for the community," SPEKTRUM: Jurnal Pendidikan Luar Sekolah (PLS), vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 45–58, 2024.

[53] K. M. Zeichner, "Rethinking the connections between campus courses and field experiences in college and university-based teacher education," [Online]. Available: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249704767. Accessed: Dec. 5, 2025.

[53] UNESCO, "UNESCO Strategy for Youth and Adult Literacy and its Action Plan (2020–2025)," United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Paris, France, 2023. [Online]. Available: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000387424 [unesdoc.unesco.org]

[54] M. Milana and T. Nesbit, Global Perspectives on Adult Education and Learning Policy. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

[55] H. L. Hallman, "Community-based field experiences in teacher education: Possibilities for a pedagogical third space," Teaching Education, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 241–263, 2012.

[56] J. Lave and E. Wenger, Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

[57] S. Weber, "The impact of service learning on pre-service teachers' preconceptions of urban education," Journal of Inquiry and Action in Education, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 1–18, 2017. [Online]. Available: https://digitalcommons.buffalostate.edu/jiae/vol8/iss2/2 [digitalcom...ostate.edu]