

## Book Review

### Collaboration in Higher Education: A new ecology of practice

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Abegglen, S., Burns, T., and Sinfield, S. (2023) (Eds.) *Collaboration in Higher Education: A new ecology of practice*. Bloomsbury

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*Collaboration in Higher Education: A new ecology of practice*, edited by Sandra Abegglen, Tom Burns, and Sandra Sinfield (2023), delves into the intricacies of engaging in collaboration and partnerships within higher education (HE). This book embraces an invitation approach, urging readers to navigate the complex world of HE marked by pressing challenges and demanding authentic conversations and collective actions. The invitation encourages readers to reflect on their own circumstances, fostering an opportunity to acknowledge the past, present, and future contributors, paving the way for constructive progress through co-creation endeavours.

The book eloquently articulates the value of collaboration within, throughout, and beyond HE. Organised into eight sections, it showcases over thirty case studies contributed by a diverse array of over 100 individuals across disciplines, institutions, and national boundaries. These carefully selected case studies serve as tangible examples of authentic practices. The book's structure encompasses the following segments: Introduction: Why Collaborate?, Choose Your Own Collaboration: An Adventure in Academic Time and Space, Staff Collaborations to Enhance Teaching and Learning, Students as Partners, Collaborations with Stakeholders, Creative and Digital Partnerships, Decolonising Relationships and Partnerships for Social Justice, and Reflections on Collaboration. Consequently, this book is an essential reference. It provides readers with an intricate map of the terrain and narratives, guiding them on a collaborative journey exploring innovative curriculum design and delivery methods, enriching student learning and success.

The book centres on co-creation and cooperative partnerships in HE, guiding the readers through the six sets of case studies representing the different voices within HE. These narratives build upon eco-social justice principles and acknowledge the various national collaboration contexts in HE. Including authors' personal accounts underscores the collective power of collaborative practices, often launching into creative and ad-hoc conversations for further in-depth discussions. The editors, therefore, consistently emphasise the transparent sharing of the highs and lows of collaborative practices in HE, creating spaces for active listening and actions to celebrate and shape co-working, co-researching and co-writing among colleagues, ultimately paving the way for more humane ways of working.

This book's unconventional variety of contributions creates a sense of urgency regarding the need for our community to co-produce critical education projects. This arises from the desire to minimise the sense of

isolation, individualisation, and competition often experienced in the competitive academic space. While breaking down barriers can be challenging, the relevance of its chapters offers readers a sense of belonging, knowing that others encounter similar situations. Further, these chapters explore ways to enhance teaching and learning (Section 3), create inclusive and equitable spaces (Section 4), and push partnerships beyond the norm by "changing the rules of the game" (Section 6), fostering supportive networks, and "decolonising relationships and partnerships for social justice" (Section 7). Reflective practice emerges as a recurring theme throughout, with each contribution featuring a reflective account and recommendations for future actions. This approach enables readers to become part of the authors' learning journeys. It encourages reflection on their own collaborative practices in their roles, inspiring them to shift their mindset, positioning themselves as 'facilitators' and 'active partners' in HE.

The challenges and opportunities for collaboration presented in this book underscore the compelling need for colleagues to reconsider their positions, responsibilities and perspectives on the transformation they wish to see within HE. Trust and respect are identified as crucial ingredients for bringing originality and creativity to our practices. While this book boasts both quality and content from a wide range of perspectives, the sheer volume of voices from different nations, institutions, disciplines, and experiences can be overwhelming. Thus, just as recognising the barriers and challenges in active collaborations in higher education takes time and deep commitment to effect transformation, critical engagement with the key issues presented in this book also requires time, space, and commitment to apply these practices to pedagogical activities. As emphasised throughout, our learning experiences are individualised, and the journey process renders our collaborations unique, fostering further reflection and dialogue.

*Collaboration in Higher Education: A New Ecology of Practice* truly appreciates the variability between and within higher education colleagues. Regardless of one's role and responsibilities in higher education, this book has been curated with an international audience in mind. It seeks to establish justice through nurturing collaborations and engaging in dialogues that enhance pedagogy, all the while recognising that each collaboration journey is unique, shaping our thoughts and values regarding what education means to us.

## References

Abegglen, S., Burns, T. and Sinfield, S. (2023). *Collaboration in Higher Education*. Bloomsbury Academic. [https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/63691/1/9781350334069\\_PDF.pdf](https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/63691/1/9781350334069_PDF.pdf)

## Biography

*Kiu Sum* is a lecturer in nutrition in the School of Applied Health and Life Sciences. Kiu's mixed-methods research includes workplace nutrition, public health nutrition, and nutritional behaviour. Aside from nutrition, she is also a pedagogy researcher focusing on student engagement and partnerships, and assessment and feedback.