

# Reviews

*Learning in the Round:  
Concepts and contexts in work-based learning*  
Patrick Smith and Chris Kemp  
with Teresa Moore and Roger Dalrymple  
Cambridge: Cambridge Academic, 2013, 156pp.  
ISBN 9781903499757 (pbk) £18.95 (also available as ebook)

This book in many ways provides an innovative pedagogy for the realisation of work-based, lifelong learning in a higher education arena. A range of relevant literature is used to show the necessary shift away from a traditional modernist epistemology towards a more appropriate approach that values experiential, constructed knowledge. The concept of 'learning in the round' allows the necessary social, collaborative and reflective aspects of learning to take centre stage, so to speak, for particular vocational and professional fields of practice, e.g. event management, sports coaching. The almost equal relationship between the three key actors, i.e. participant, specialist and facilitator, becomes the pivotal aspect in making such learning relevant, meaningful and effective.

The chapters explore and enhance the concept of work-based learning and the authors' particular notion of 'learning in the round', as well as providing research data concerning its use with practical examples. In essence, this is 'cutting edge' pedagogy that allows the necessary flexibility and self-direction within a curriculum to fully appreciate the complexity, tacitness and situated nature of advancing professional expertise; whilst also maintaining a critically analytical and evidence-informed underpinning.

Overall the notion of 'learning in the round' is referred to and explored throughout, but greater coherence of the chapters and themes would have helped to place the ideas within an HE arena more easily. In places it is unclear what types of workshops are being expounded. It would also

have been useful to have heard a lot more about the various assessment patchwork methods being adopted for this format, e.g. how do all three actors in the process contribute to that; what reflection models are used; how are various levels of reflection identified and assessed? Further editing may have been able to address some of these issues. There are a few issues with the production of the book (e.g. confusing and limited explanation of photos and diagrams, duplication of pages, and typos).

That said, this book does provide stimulating and refreshing ideas for an authentic and appropriate approach to work-based learning and continuing education. Its key feature is the innovative and creative approach being explored - from the design of the curriculum to the operation and the assessment of such learning; the clarity with which such learning is understood; and the way it is valued and the commitment shown to it. For those of us in HE dealing with lifelong professional learners, the book provides some useful and refreshing commentary.

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*Social Work Education and Practice:  
Scholarship and innovations in the Asia Pacific*  
Edited by Bala Raju Nikku and Zulkarnain Ahmad Hatta  
Brisbane, Australia: Primrose Hall, 2014, 226pp  
ISBN 9781304779137, £29.90

Alongside the short introduction and conclusion, this book comprises 11 chapters exemplifying innovative approaches to social work education across a range of countries in the Asia Pacific region, including Australia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam; countries of the Global North and the Global South with diverse colonial, post colonial and independent histories. For these reasons alone this book is worthy of attention.

This edited collection is an important work that gives voice to several unheard countries, many of which are growing and developing their

social work education systems in appropriate and indigenous ways as well as drawing on some of the better 'tried and tested' pedagogical methods from more established systems across the world and applying these to local contexts.

The chapters are separated into three parts, delineating the core focus of those sections. Part I, comprising five chapters, concerns innovatory teaching developed within higher education institutions in different countries. This is followed by a fascinating collection of case studies in the next four chapters that make up Part II. The third part is the shortest, sporting only two chapters which offer proposals on important topics, notably spirituality and inculcating communal harmony, for inclusion within future programmes. These proposals promote social justice, harmony and dignity – core concerns for social work across the world – and could have been usefully developed further; perhaps this could be planned as a future edited collection.

It is fascinating to have presented in one volume innovations in teaching and learning in various countries of the Asia Pacific region, but it is Part II that, for me, offers the richest of the three sections. The case studies demonstrate the passion and commitment of the authors for developing high quality innovative and exciting educational initiatives that may offer potential for transferring or translating into other programmes, including those outside of the Asia Pacific. For instance, Huang Nguyen's chapter describes the use of fiction and journalism as methods for learning about and exploring social work situations and concomitant feelings about them. She employs her skills as a fiction writer and journalist as well as social worker, deploying them with her students.

What also strikes the reader from this case study section is the emphasis on co-production and active learning. Some of these pedagogical approaches are, of course, used world-wide, and some adopted from more established models of teaching and learning in the Global North, such as court room practice and skills. However, they are used in local settings and their reporting demonstrates some of the ways in which each region, the Asia Pacific in this case, can share, utilise and adapt the pedagogical technologies of others.

The editors have brought together an important group of established and neophyte scholars which is evident in the work as a strength as well as indicating a need for greater depth at times. Overall, the book is useful and important. It gives voice, it shows innovation and it

promotes an often ignored or marginalised area. However, the book is hampered a little by a need for deeper proof-reading and editing for English language usage in some instances. This is perhaps something that the publishers rather than the authors and editors needed to be aware of and undertake. The editors, working at least in a second language, have done a sterling job at bringing the disparate collection together. In respect of the chapters, the book may be described as the proverbial 'curate's egg' – good in parts. However, this is in itself useful in that it gives recognition and voice to educational practices and innovations which might otherwise remained occluded.

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