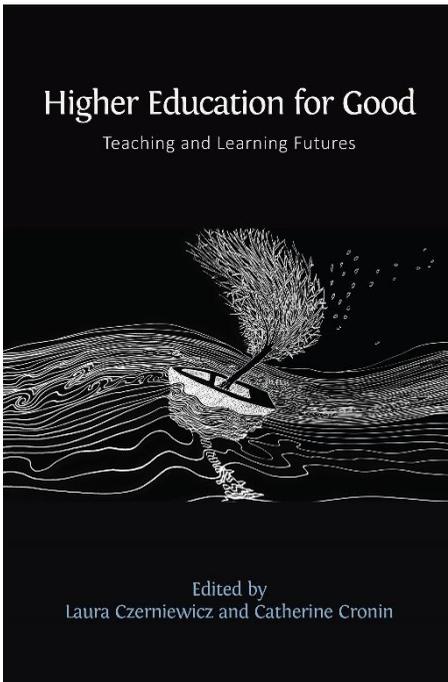


HIGHER EDUCATION FOR GOOD: TEACHING AND LEARNING FUTURES

DOUGLAS BOURN

Czerniewicz, Laura and Cronin, Catherine (eds.) (2023) *Higher Education for Good: Teaching and Learning Futures*, Cambridge: OpenBook Publishers, available in open access format at: <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/books/10.11647/obp.0363>



This is a very impressive publication which is fortunately freely available online as an open access volume. There have been many volumes in recent years that have reflected on the changing nature of higher education, including those that have questioned the dominant neoliberal framework that influences the policies and practices of many universities and funding bodies. This volume falls into the category of reflecting critical approaches to higher education but it does so in a very different way from many similar publications. Within its 27 chapters and authors from 17 different countries, a range of styles and approaches are conducted. Some are written in the traditional

academic style of book chapters. Others use a range of visual approaches including photographs, drawings, poetry, comic book style and wide usage of broader literature including fiction.

It is divided into five sections: finding fortitude and hope; making sense of the unknown and emergent; considering alternative futures; making change through teaching, assessment, and learning design; and (re)-making higher education systems and structures. In addition, there is a foreword from Jonathan Jansen, a preface from Carolina Guzmán-Valenzuela, an afterword from Raewyn Connell and last word from Jyoti Arora. Whilst there is only one author, Su-Ming Khoo, who might be well known to readers of *Policy and Practice*, the authors are a combination of key academics in the field of higher education alongside new researchers, artists and others engaged in promoting learning that is critical of dominant neoliberal approaches.

Within many of the chapters there is reference to the work of Paulo Freire and others who promote a critical pedagogical approach. Postcolonial thinking is also evident and there are some references to the work of Vanessa Andreotti, Sharon Stein and Karen Pashby. The volume also directly addresses two other themes – data extraction and knowledge construction – and the ways in which evidence is used or misused, and applied to re-enforce dominant neoliberal approaches. Dina Zoe Belluigi directly addresses this theme in her chapter on ‘Why “Decolonising” Knowledge Matters: Deliberations for educators on that made fragile’. Several authors offer alternative models including making reference to forms of artistic expression, quilt making and story-telling.

There are a number of themes that can be seen within the chapters. The first of which is in the title of the volume: ‘good’. What does this mean in the context of higher education? Reference is made in several of the chapters to UNESCO’s attempts to re-focus higher education more in terms of public good and this relates to the organisation’s important recent work on sustainable development, global citizenship and futures of education. The second is ‘hope’ and here the influence of Freire can be seen. This theme is reflected in chapters that link hope to direct personal experience and people’s own journeys towards more positive futures. The editors of the volume note that they see it as a journey of radical hope. The third theme is ‘futures’ and this is particularly tackled in terms of alternative forms of learning within higher education, that outline a range of pedagogical approaches that can give space to the voices of the marginalised and dispossessed. For many people working in higher education, addressing

today's big global challenges can appear difficult and challenging. Several chapters demonstrate, through a range of pedagogical approaches, ways in which learners can be inspired to consider and engage in social change. As Sherri Spelic writes in her chapter, 'Counters to Despair', 'hope is a teacher who is still curious' (Czerniewicz and Cronin, 2023: 83). It is reminding us all of our roles as educators and that we are not working alone.

Reflected throughout the volume is also a recognition of the importance of multiple stories and perspectives. Many of the chapters encourage the reader to challenge their assumptions but also to move beyond just critiques to consider visions of the future and ways to make positive change. It is very difficult to identify chapters which are directly relevant to readers of this journal as in some ways all of them are. Some may appear more relevant than others to practices in higher education. The editors bring in experience and perspectives from Ireland and South Africa but all regions of the world are included within a rich tapestry of chapters. It is most likely to be a volume that the reader will dip into in part for inspiration and ideas but also as a form of showing the ways in which learning within higher education can be enhanced by considering a range of pedagogical approaches that go beyond the norm of lecture, tutorial and seminar.

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