

## **BOOK REVIEW**

Kelly, R. (2020). *Collaborative creativity: Educating for creative development, innovation, and entrepreneurship*. Brush Education Inc.

Reviewed by **Christopher Hinbest**, Ontario Tech University

The main idea behind Robert Kelly's book is developing a creative and collaborative conception of learning situated in a world of radical technological transformation. He proposes that the process of learning needs to be grounded in the interdependence that is found among individuals and that it needs to provide an internal source of motivation for the learner as well. The creative component in this conception relates to the fact that learning needs to be adapted to different circumstances and that it gives place to both theory and practice. It demonstrates that the process of learning is not merely founded on a linear path, and that it equally accommodates the "individual and sociocultural definitional lenses" (p. 12). Meanwhile, the collaborative component identifies the role played by history and subjective preferences, and it also appeals to shared interests and projects that all participants opt for. This begins with a new ecosystem of non-learning in education that places focus on collaborative creativity useful for a transformative educational environment, which suggests the need to equip and empower learners and educators through innovative and collaborative creativity.

Taking this into consideration, the underlying idea developed by Kelly is that diversity and cooperative learning are intimately related to one another. Diversity should not be perceived as an impediment to the possibility of cooperation. There is a need to introduce common goals and visions that are developed in everyday spaces. Further, there is no general narrative of progress that can serve as an origin of all learning discussions. As a result, there is a need to concentrate on the common obstacles that are faced by learners and also the common areas of engagement that can generate a dialogue.

Kelly recognizes the importance of diversity and inclusivity and takes a stand for these principles in the world of learning and education. This is not just a way of recognizing diversity but also a matter of meaningfully incorporating diverging insights and perspectives into the world of education. That is, there is a need to posit common goals and introduce a leadership strategy that is not top down decision making. Decisions must be grounded in the idea of reciprocally shared obligations and entitlements. This also requires the development

of a shared moral perspective that emphasizes the value of truth and sincere interests. Besides this, there is also a need to concentrate on the building of effective channels of communication, as these can only grow in a "truly collaborative creative culture" (p. 84).

One of the major points Kelly raises is the notion that education needs to be situated in a world where substantive changes are occurring at both the technological and societal levels. He shows that collaborative learning is well-suited to such a dynamic reality since it is motivated by the need to develop novel ideas. Through the development of sincere interests and synthesizing of results, one is able to develop a conception of learning that pays attention to both cognitive and cultural considerations.

Second, Kelly raises the valid argument that creative and collaborative learning needs to find the space to include Indigenous education. The underlying mode of rationality in Western education is Eurocentric, and there is a need to utilize the wisdom and insights of other knowledge systems in Canada. A case in point where the integration of Indigenous models can benefit the Eurocentric curriculum surrounds the principle of the gifting economy, which, according to Kelly, resonates with the concept of a collaborative culture. The underlying principle of the gifting economy, as embraced by many Indigenous cultures, posits that individuals do not own anything; hence, all that one has is a gift. Humans are naturally born to share and collaborate.

Third, the book develops the point that the goal of learning is to stimulate creativity rather than consuming material goods. This is a major point that shows the limitations of a consumerist culture which equates the goals of education with the control of the world around us. The consumption-oriented conception of education changes the process of learning into a commodity rather than creation, and because of this, learners are made passive recipients of facts. The corollary, creativity-centred education, promotes dialogue between different knowledge systems and is a reciprocal process of mutual dialogue and give-and-take among different conceptions of learning.

A review of Kelly's idea of creative learning needs to concentrate on the central idea of reframing. This reframing is located at the personal, organizational, and communal levels and shows that it is not an alien and imposed curriculum but a grounded education that needs to be introduced. More importantly, it shows that the motivation for learning needs to be intrinsic and should not be introduced from outside sources. Being well-versed in the values of different cultures, such as Indigenous communities, is mandatory in this type of ideal. Recognizing this, one basic limitation of this book is that its conception of the gifting economy is not grounded on an analysis of the asymmetrical power relations found in the world or even in Canada. Instead, the book posits reciprocal relations and sees the role that is played by sacrifice and a culture of sacrifice, neglecting in the process the relations of inequality that are found in the world and in Canada.

Kelly successfully managed to introduce a concept of learning that is not obsessed with the idea of bureaucratic control and pure universal knowledge that is not founded on specific cultural differences. Instead, he has shown that the creative and collaborative conception of

learning is sensitive to the knowledge traditions of the Indigenous communities, makes sense of learning in a rapidly changing world, and focuses on the limitations of the consumption model of learning.

Kelly's (2020) book is important because it posits a new transformative educational ecosystem for educational practice, useful to both Indigenous communities and curriculum developers. Action researchers will benefit from this book by thinking through concepts that allow for achievable, realistic objectives for authentic creative development in education. The focus on learning as a commodity in a largely material culture at the expense of a creative and collaborative conception of learning is deleterious to Indigenous communities. The Eurocentric model is based on ideals that a significant population of Canadians find alien. Hence, this text could likely benefit Indigenous communities among whom learning consists of stimulating creativity rather than consuming material goods. Curriculum developers in Canada may also benefit from this book since the process of curriculum development tends to suffer from misrepresentation because of the need to develop a general framework (Kelly, 2020). However, educators are often encouraged to be learner-centric. This means that specific behaviour with which a student-learner comes into a classroom must shape the educator's approaches to teaching and learning. Adopting Kelly's (2020) vision for educational practice is a worthy policy change and would ensure that the Canadian educational system is much more inclusive. ■

#### **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:**

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**Christopher Hinbest** is a Master of Arts in Education student at Ontario Tech University. His masters research focuses on creating a sense of belonging, a trauma-informed practice, in online classrooms for refugee students. His current research interests include mental health and trauma, social justice issues and equality, inclusive education, and using digital technologies to foster social cohesion and intercultural awareness.

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