
BOOK REVIEW

Creativity and Entrepreneurship: Changing Currents in Education and Public Life.

Lynn Book and David Peter Phillips, editors.

Reviewed by Susan Badger Booth, Eastern Michigan University

Creativity and Entrepreneurship is a powerful collection of essays “examining creativity and entrepreneurship both separately and synergistically.” The introduction focuses on two primary concerns:

- 1) How can individuals - as global citizens - foster highly creative, critically active and socially accountable practices to co-create a just and imaginative world?
- 2) How can creativity and entrepreneurship animate institutional and social bodies to build a humane, vivid and interdependent world?

These two large issues could easily be construed as overreaching in scope for such a collection. However, Book and Phillips approach the subject with a thoughtful interpretation of current research, a skillful assemblage of new perspectives, and a clear call for further research and engagement with a broad community of academics and practitioners.

It is worth noting that this collection is the outcome of two national conferences: *Creativity: Worlds in the Making*, 2009 and *Teaching Creativity in Higher Education: Current Trends and Critical Encounters*, 2011. The authors advise that “both conferences corroborated current research and practice, reframing creativity as inherently interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral,” which establishes an important access point for contributors as they address the volume’s two significant themes. Obviously, this confirmation places the importance of *creativity* first with “*entrepreneurship* as a particularly able partner for creativity and an important mechanism for social change.”

The editors conclude their introduction by inviting the reader to see beyond a limited, discipline-specific definition of creativity as only a tool for the sculptor or actor. Instead, they suggest “allying with entrepreneurship studies to produce economic and social value in new ways.” The collection moves forward in three sections: “Reimagining Higher Education: Creative Experiments in Teaching & Learning”, “Disciplinary Immigrants: Strategies in Creative Process & Practice” and “Public Engagement & the Duty of the Imagination.”

Beginning with a powerful chapter on “Creativity in the liberal arts,” Lynn Book describes a semester-long project where she engages with students as part of a gateway course for Wake Forest University’s *Entrepreneurship and Social Enterprise* degree program. Her “Concept for Transformative Practice . . . is designed to disrupt patterns and to foster experiments with even the most mundane actions to stimulate creative potential.” Book reinforces the collection’s call to action in the introduction by moving smoothly between research and practice and making an impassioned case for thoughtful creative theory and essential creative practice.

This first section includes an innovative chapter describing an interdisciplinary collaboration between physical geography and creative writing in Heidi La Moreaux’s chapter “Natural history meets personal history: CLORPT, cores and reference slides.” In this chapter, La Moreaux offers “scientific ways of viewing the world . . . allowing writers and artists to examine factors that influenced their formation, the chronology and texture of events in their

lives and their value systems and beliefs more objectively and comprehensively.” Using geological core samples as a metaphor for writing personal histories, La Moreaux asks students to create a “core diagram of their life.” She suggests “creative writing teachers frequently lament that most students tell rather than show their ideas . . . metaphors of cores and reference slides may provide fresh ways to explore personal history and autobiographical writing.”

In the second section, the editors include a chapter on imaginary worldplay, describing how a tool that “manifests spontaneously in childhood as part of the normal development of imaginative play” can be translated into formal curriculum for an older audience. “As a means of teaching learnable processes of pretense, imagination and knowledge construction, classroom initiatives in worldplay can purposefully take their place in part of a larger educational strategy to foster creative and inventive skills.”

Moving from worldplay to theatrical process and creation as a method for developing creative cognition, Carolyn Roark, Kevin Daum and Mary Abrahams title their chapter: “How to develop an entrepreneur: Teaching creative process management in the academy and industry.” Reflecting on creativity as a cognitive act, they suggest we are all capable of creativity - the trick is having the tools to unlock this natural talent. The authors continue to playfully correlate theatre’s creative cycle into an accessible model for enhanced creative cognition. Their broad applicable outcomes include: “1) Identifying disparate parts, 2) Envisioning how they can work together to provide value, 3) Organizing the process and resources required, and 4) Executing and sharing with others who can gain the value.”

The third section of the book, although not as strong as the previous two, contains some important essays. One such gem is “The Empathy Imperative” by Lyndo Rego and Philipp Essl, which takes what some might perceive as a soft skill and elevates its importance through supporting research and skillful synthesis. Rego and Essl take a next step, however, in suggesting that emotional intelligence is not just measurable and important, but can be developed. They describe programs at the *Center for Creative Leadership* that “cultivate empathy by helping individuals to understand their identity and values and to share them with others.”

Accompanying the Rego and Essl chapter is Scott Sherman’s practical essay “Training the next generation of social entrepreneurs.” Sherman is the Executive Director of the Transformative Action Institute. He reflects on the plethora of college courses that analyze social problems and the huge void of courses that offer solutions to solve these problems. After years of studying social change, Sherman’s organization developed a curriculum encouraging college students to establish social ventures. He discovered that students are not prepared to initiate a social venture and instead need to develop skills in “resilience – overcoming adversity, barriers and challenges, grit – perseverance, hard work and task commitment; creativity and innovation; and relationship–building and networking.”

Though *Creativity and Entrepreneurship: Changing Currents in Education and Public Life* may be weighted a bit too heavily on the side of higher education, it takes a significant step forward in connecting theory and practice. Instead of simply publishing more examples of creativity-building exercises and business plan development scenarios, *Creativity and Entrepreneurship* bravely suggests why this is important to us -, all of us -, both inside and outside of higher education. This reviewer highly recommends taking time to read through this at times dense, but often-enlightening, little book and will be looking forward to additional volumes.