# BOOK REVIEW / COMPTE-RENDU

*Learning Through Community Engagement: Vision and Practice in Higher Education* is an excellent co-edited collection of 19 inter-connected chapters exploring the process of Professional and Community Engagement (PACE) program implementation in higher education contexts. PACE programs are mutually beneficial to students and community organizations. Programs pair students with community organizations to work on an identified project exploring a societal issue or theme. In the first section of the book, the authors explore the history of community engagement practices in Western higher education. The second section highlights important considerations to take prior to, during, and following implementation of faculty-wide or institution-wide PACE programs in contemporary higher education contexts. Finally, the third section engages the reader in critical reflections related to PACE program implementation, identifying the benefits and potential risks involved. The authors then discuss the process of implementation of an institution-wide PACE program at Macquerie University (Sydney, Australia), as the primary case example they draw on throughout the book; however, they also source other global examples. Each chapter is carefully crafted to model a critically reflexive approach to PACE program implementation. Emphasis is placed on the importance of sustainable, reciprocal, equitable, power-sharing, and socially relevant practices. Readers are provided with the 'how to' knowledge needed for such implementation, which the authors enrich through real-world examples. As such, this book provides a practical guide for those seeking to implement a PACE program within a higher education context.

The strength of the book lies in the authors' detailed exploration of the potential advantages of PACE programs for students, higher education institutions and community partners, as well as their identifying of potential risks inherent in such programs (i.e., perpetuation of stereotypes, reproduction of oppressive power dynamics, forced dependency, and reproduction of colonial relations). Importantly, the authors explore the personal (i.e., attitudinal, etc.) and institutional (i.e., academic tenure criteria, etc.) barriers frequently faced by those seeking to implement such a program within a higher education context.

Realistic recommendations aimed at resolving these barriers are provided by the authors, which also makes this book a practical guide for higher education administrators involved in the implementation process.

The authors make a convincing argument for the value-added nature of PACE programs for students, community partners, and higher education institutions. The authors contend that such programs can decrease the opportunity gap for students with less access to volunteer and/or work experiences. They do so by providing students with real-world experiences that can contribute to greater employability upon graduation. Furthermore, the authors argue that PACE programs have the potential to bridge the gap between theoretical (i.e., abstract classroom) knowledge and real-world application, allowing students to develop problem-solving skills that are transferable, including across disciplines. The authors include numerous student perspectives throughout the book that support these arguments, though more attention could have been given to the challenges and/or barriers to participation that some students may face when participating in PACE programs. Greater insight into these would allow stakeholders looking to implement PACE programs to be proactive in addressing these challenges and/or barriers.

Several of the book chapters (e.g.,14, 16, and 18) emphasize the importance of adopting a bottom-up approach to PACE program implementation, with the goal of creating socially relevant programs. The authors encourage readers to redefine and decentralize the idea of 'knowledge holder.' They present an alternative tri-partite model of PACE program implementation. The model stresses the importance of stakeholder ownership of and contribution to the knowledge-creation and learning processes involved in PACE program implementation, emphasizing the importance of equal involvement of students, community members, and higher education institutions (including faculty). The theoretical contributions of this model for PACE program implementation in higher education provide a solid structure that organizers can use to guide an implementation process aimed at promoting equal power sharing and reciprocal benefits from project inception to completion.

Missing in the model for this reader, though, is an acknowledgment of the inherent power dynamics between some of the actors included in the model, especially those that would be challenging to meaningfully address (i.e., between students and faculty). The model also misses foregrounding the influence of local and global societal contexts that can impact the PACE program implementation process (i.e., legislations, social norms, historical power relationships, etc.). Perhaps stand-alone chapters could have explored in greater depth the effects of historical / contemporary power dynamics between the actors involved so as to enhance the book's utility. The fact is that PACE programs often focus on social justice issues with marginalized communities. Though the authors provide a critical analysis of such power dynamics in relation to Indigenous

community partners, missing is an in-depth analysis of power dynamics with other historically (and/or presently) marginalized communities (i.e., 2SLGBTQIAA+ individuals, racialized individuals, individuals without housing, individuals living in poverty, etc.).

The authors state that PACE programs that utilize a tri-partite approach can provide community partners with the resources needed to solve identified problems and/or improve functioning and efficiency, even as the community maintains shared ownership of the process. Shared ownership, however, is difficult when resource allocation is controlled by one party (i.e., funds, 'labour-power'), and where it is typically higher education institutions. Ways to redress these inequitable power dynamics are not provided, thus weakening the case for *feasible* collaborative and reciprocal partnerships. Furthermore, the authors do not consider whether the allocation of resources from higher education institutions to community programs could negatively affect resource allocation from other sources (i.e., public agencies). For example, I work in a healthcare department that is interested in having healthcare students participate in a PACE program within an already established volunteering program at a local hospital. Could the long-term involvement of healthcare students in a hospital-based PACE program affect funding provided to that hospital by public agencies to hire nursing staff? The authors do discuss the risk of dependency that can develop through PACE programs, but do not address the secondary losses (i.e., withdrawal of public funding sources) that could place the very sustainability of some community organizations at risk. This could be especially important for PACE programs whose community partner is situated in a low-income context.

Despite the noted important gaps, the book remains exceptionally well-written, uses accessible language, models and fosters critical discussions, and provides helpful and practical guidelines for faculty, program administrators, and community partners interested in PACE program implementation in higher education contexts. *Learning Through Community Engagement* provides readers with an exploration of the history of community engagement practices in Western higher education, highlights the important considerations to take prior to, during and following implementation of PACE programs in contemporary higher education contexts, and engages readers in important critical reflections related to implementation.

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