

Hoyt, L. (Ed.). (2017). *Regional perspectives on learning by doing: Stories from engaged universities around the world*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press. 194 pp.

Review by Elizabeth A. Tryon

Published in the *Transformations in Higher Education: The Scholarship of Engagement* series of the Michigan State University Press, Lorlene Hoyt's *Regional Perspectives on Learning by Doing: Stories from Engaged Universities Around the World* (2017) highlights practices for creating more equitable communities used by partnerships in Scotland, Mexico, South Africa, Australia, Malaysia, Egypt, and the United States. It is a welcome addition to the community engagement literature for practitioners, especially U.S. practitioners looking for program models for authentic, equity-centered engagement.

Looking outside our borders offers a fuller picture of partnerships between academics and communities. In many countries, such partnerships have been moving toward a philosophy of equity in engagement for years in a sophisticated—and in many cases, governmentally supported—fashion. Extensive global engagement networks such as Living Knowledge (www.livingknowledge.org) have supported knowledge exchange and collaboration opportunities between countries (Martin, McKenna, & Treasure, 2011; McKenna, 2017) for decades. A book-length global report commissioned by the UNESCO Co-Chairs in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education (Hall, Tandon, & Tremblay, 2015), contains case studies in twelve countries that the stories in this volume echo in their collective approach to community development aligned with educational goals of creating engaged citizens. The Talloires Network, which was tapped for this project, is another such network, with institutional members in 77 countries (<http://talloiresnetwork.tufts.edu/who-we-are/>). Hoyt invited members of the Talloires Network and their regional partners to help identify potential exemplars of university–community partnerships using a common set of criteria. From the identified partnerships, she and Derek Barker of the Kettering Foundation selected eight representative projects and programs from multiple continents to be profiled in this volume.

The researcher coauthors included academics, community partners, and students. They collaborated over 3 years through workshops, e-mail exchanges, and other meeting opportunities, and analyzed the research data together (p. xviii). Among other commonalities of their work, they noticed several overarching and

instructive components of exemplary partnerships. Each partnership involved different methods and project particulars, but as the coauthors agreed, typically “too much attention is given to fitting learning-by-doing approaches into neat categories” (p. xix), such as service-learning or engaged scholarship. They argued that what is necessary, and revealed by these stories, is *praxis*. They found two practices crucial to creating equitable communities: multidirectional knowledge flow and building inclusive systems of power. All eight institutions see community members as “collaborators, rather than recipients of service” (p. 9) to varying degrees, and many chapters describe some type of epiphany in student learning about equity through that process of validating community wisdom and accepting nonuniversity partners as coeducators. Students witness the courage that marginalized communities exhibit in dealing with daily challenges, which helps them to develop humility and empathy. Where national governments promote and fund innovation and systems change work, the projects illustrate the benefits of deep institutional support, as has been previously studied (Hall, Tandon, & Tremblay, 2015).

Following an initial overview by Hoyt, the book is organized into chapters contributed by those involved in each partnership. Similarities appear in a grounded manner, gradually revealing themselves throughout the book. From Mexico’s Tecnológico de Monterrey University’s “Brigidas Comunitarias” program, where a living-learning “prep-visit-plan” cycle is described, to Malaysia’s “Learning Lab” in a remote village, being embedded in the community is seen as one crucial component of learning-by-doing. In some examples, conditions converged to create fertile breeding grounds for community–university exchange. In Mexico, synergy between the federal constitution’s mandate of 480 hours of social service for a college degree, and the fact that over 53% of the population lives under the federal poverty level, led to programs being developed for students to live in underresourced communities to do project work. The project described here is that of a director of a rural religious organization approaching the university for aid with several initiatives, including seamstress training, K-6 education support, and incubation of small businesses. The story utilizes students speaking in their own words extensively to illustrate their learning outcomes.

The editor describes correspondences between the South African project “Amplifying Community Voices” and the “Living Democracy” partnership of Auburn students with an Appalachian community, drawing parallels in their work for inclusion and

sharing power. The story of the South African partnership begins with a tense recounting of an early attempt at community engagement gone horribly wrong in the postapartheid context. This narrative of a miscommunication with village members that could have ended in violence serves as a blueprint of everything not to do. There is mention of the historical distrust of researchers often written about in the United States (Jones & Wells, 2007; Minkler, 2004). As researchers learned from their early mistakes, the program evolved. Traditional leaders are now asked permission for the students to implement projects, mobilizing mass participation from the villagers to “interrogate pressing issues and make collective decisions about how to address them” (p. 61). Some unique qualities of this model include announcement methods ranging from a “loud hailer” to FaceBook and WhatsApp, and the program’s commitment to developing transformative community leaders, “handing over the baton” (p. 63) for sustainable rural development. The program aligns with South Africa’s National Development Plan to attack poverty, a form of government support similar to that discussed in the chapters about partnerships in Mexico and Scotland. The chapter contains some good charts and lists of student learning outcomes (p. 69). I found that this story embodied a true gold standard of authenticity in CBPR, even including anyone in the village over the age of 7 as a voice in the project.

Although the United States has no federal service mandate or broad government support for engaged partnerships, the Appalachian story of “Living Democracy” shows a community’s self-directed efforts through innovative programs that share power with disempowered communities to combat the effects of the abuse of the natural environment by the increasingly deregulated mining industry. The destruction of the natural beauty of the landscape has visited similar tragedies on oppressed families, who had little material goods or power to begin with but were attached and grounded by the beauty and bounty of the land for centuries. Community organizer Marie Cirillo contributes a very personal narrative about her teaching. One of her teaching practices is honoring and recognizing that—despite decades of exploitation, drug issues, and unemployment—there are hidden layers of courage and character that stereotyping this population doesn’t serve (Knight, Poteete, Sparrow, Wrye, & Cirillo, 2002). Her unvarnished writing tone contrasts with that in sections written by her coauthor, Auburn professor Mark Wilson, and clearer transitional framing would have helped readers shift mental “voice” gears. A simple but meaningful

table (p. 159) illustrates Cirillo and Wilson's philosophy of moving from service to political engagement/living democracy.

Reminiscent of the asset-based community development (ABCD) model (Kretzmann, McKnight, & Puntenny, 2005), and referencing David Mathews's work with the Kettering Foundation, the "Activate" program at the University of Glasgow is a community development degree for working adults. Many participants are from Glasgow's East End, an area made victim of the "race to the bottom" impact of globalization—rife with unemployment and associated social issues. The brilliance of this model is its "grow your own" philosophy. Using a Freirean innovative curriculum, students are pulled from a pool of community activists who want to move beyond Band-Aid approaches to bring about systemic change. They receive training in community development and then set out as leaders back in their neighborhoods. Many of the participants reported historically having felt that they had received messages that they did not belong at a university. One Activate student shared, "Never in a million years did I think I would ever be going to university—except maybe as a janitor" (p. 47). How compelling a story, considering that the University of Glasgow, founded in 1451, could be seen as epitomizing the ivory tower.

The "Refugee Action Support" program in Sydney uses mutual goals of teaching-while-learning to deal with refugees' culture and language problems, an approach that may be useful to many nations currently facing record numbers of people fleeing violence or political persecution. Students from marginalized backgrounds, some migrants themselves, are recruited as literacy tutors for Sudanese, Afghani, and other refugees. The chapter contains considerable detail on how the program works, including successes and challenges, the history, activities, funding, and a good rationale for the university's preference for the term *community engagement* instead of *service-learning* (p. 88). This refugee settlement model offers some good lessons, including acknowledging and working within limitations and achieving sustainability through individual dedication and institutional commitment.

Also instructive of working across boundaries, authors from the recently created American University of Cairo recount that in the context of Arab Spring and the resultant political instability, its "Lazord Academy" internship program has built bridges between students and marginalized communities. The program pays close attention to mentorship of youth who, due to the "youth bulge," have little hope for employment, making them ripe for recruitment to less constructive activities (p. 129). Inspired by a Talloires-

awarded program at Portland State University, the authors mention the volatile political climate and how they used an ecological perspective—chaotic versus strategic—for the program’s beginnings (p. 131) to allow the “messiness” to gel organically. Within 4 years, the Lazord partnership has developed into a regional program with three locations, each supported by the U.S.-based Lazord Foundation, an achievement that seems amazing in the context of the dynamic, shifting political landscape.

The story that felt like an outlier in terms of the stated best practices of inclusion and power sharing is of the International Medical University (IMU) of Malaysia’s “Village Adoption” partnership with the village of Tekir. Until the penultimate page of this long, detailed chapter, written by two IMU medical faculty members, charity-model language crops up repeatedly. With its undertones of neocolonizing superiority, the depiction of the health project that emerges seems stratified and unidirectional. However, in the conclusion, reflecting on Boyte and others they have cited, the authors come to the realization seemingly in real time on the page that the project began almost in direct opposition to good “civic professionalism” (p. 122). Acknowledging this deficit-model start, the authors express their belief that the partnership is now beginning to evolve. The utility of this chapter would have increased had the authors begun with the caveat that they had learned the hard way to walk the talk of “creating more equitable and prosperous communities” (p. xx)—and that rather than having a 4-year lag in achieving the beginnings of equity, it’s best to begin programs with intentional community stakeholder interest.

Most of these narratives are very accessible, although in the stories from the Global South, some sections could benefit from more situating context—in the South Africa chapter, one student talks of expectations for their participation in community engagement including “monetary benefits.” This was surprising to me. In the United States, I’ve not read of students having an expectation that they will be paid for doing service-learning. Likewise, some country-specific language, such as the term *hailer*, could have used more explanation. I would encourage leaders of these programs to continue learning from each other and looking at other global exemplars to push the boundaries of their community capacity-building skills. Readers interested in furthering their practice can likewise gain much helpful knowledge from this book as a piece of their quest to create more equitable community and global engagement.

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