

Book Reviews / Comptes Rendus

Donaldson, Joe F., & Kozoll, Charles E. (1999). *Collaborative Program Planning: Principles, Practices and Strategies*. Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Co.

Reviewed by Y.L. Jack Lam, Faculty of Education, Brandon University.

Collaboration is a common catchword in many disciplines. Literature on the topic of inter-institutional dependency abounds. As the writers in the preface explain, greater competition, closer contact with clientele, reduction of risk, need for greater prestige, more champions for the joint project, easier means of attracting funding, and greater resilience in difficult times are some of the reasons for organizations to work together. Indeed, in a turbulent environment where individuals and organizations are confronted with an unprecedented pace of transformation, uncertainty and vulnerability serve as powerful motivating forces for the affected to work more closely with each other.

Having proposed collaboration as means of advancing the collective well-beings or organizations' survival, few works have been written on the detailed mechanics of collaboration to ensure that it fulfills its original intents and objectives. *Collaborative Program Planning* by Donaldson and Kozoll attempts to fill in the missing gap. Explicitly, the authors recognize that for the successful collaborative relationship to take root, attention needs be paid to the subtle processes and tensions involved in such an undertaking. Throughout the seven chapters that constitute the book, the authors endeavour to elaborate on this underlying message.

Structurally, *Collaborative Program Planning* is a report that contains all the conventional elements of a research project. In the first chapter, the two authors attempt to provide a review of literature which links findings from two separate domains: interorganizational collaboration and planning of educational programs for adults to develop some theoretical foundations for collaborative planning. Five key aspects: types of partnerships, specific organizational arrangements, leadership roles and behaviors, developmental stages in the creation and maintenance of collaborative relationships and tensions between formal and informal collaborative relationships, are explored. While there is no lack of useful suggestions arising from the discussion of these five aspects, the authors, regrettably, have not capitalized on the emergent insights to go one step further: develop a more comprehensive conceptual framework for guiding the implementation of inter-institutional partnership. The theoretical foundation thus becomes a loose conglomerate of gems of wisdom, which does not translate into some coherent frame of reference as readers might expect when reading the introduction.

The second chapter introduces the eight organizations that enter into collaborative partnerships. While the authors depict the profiles of these organizations with care, it is not clear what the environmental conditions or issues are that motivate these organizations to work together. We are not informed until Chapter Three who initiates the collaborative project. Other critical details as to how key people from these organizations develop structure, organize resource, hammer out program and its delivery have never been disclosed. Lacking details in describing the initial effort of shaping the parameter for the actual collaboration to take effect instantly creates two problems in terms of the flow of ideas. First, the transition between conceptual framework and the actual project initiation is very abrupt. Second, we do not see how suggestions from literature will facilitate the launching of the collaborative project. Thus there is failure to demonstrate how theory is linked with practice.

Chapter Three focuses on the contribution of roles of leadership and vision to the collaborative efforts of the organizations involved, and the challenges they face in such efforts. Evidently, having been intimately related to the project, the authors will crystallize from their experiences areas that deserve special attention. It is enigmatic that they should begin with a hypothetical example (p. 39) rather than an actual one. There is,

furthermore, no attempt to rank order the relative importance of the various roles that leadership plays in hammering out the particular collaborative relationship described in the text. It is difficult, conceivably, to believe all roles are of equal significance in aligning organizations to work together in different stages of development. Very likely, the authors are torn between the attempt of simply reporting the findings directly arising from this project and the more ambitious desire to generalize their findings to other settings. The temptation of the latter intent obscures insights obtained from the specific experiences. Such as ambiguity unfortunately is allowed to permeate throughout the much of the text, contaminating the objectives and the messages that the book intends to convey.

Approaching the concerns from another angle, specific comments derived from participants in different organizations will allow us to assess whether the responses are so overwhelmingly similar or whether they are subtly different. If they are similar, we need to know how these come about. If they are different, we have good reasons to expect the authors for a follow-up investigation. Each of these patterns unveils interesting and rewarding insights into a collaborative venture, which should shed important light on this relatively unexplored territory.

By their excessive concerns for generating patterns that can be conveniently classified, Donaldson and Kozoll have not disclosed any differences among participants in most aspects of their responses. We are compelled to believe, for instance, that tensions between developing a vision and having a vision, between informal and formal governance, between accomplishing work and building relationships, between risk taking and risk avoidance, and between stability and transformation are uniformly experienced. This certainly is rarely the case in view of individuals' formal responsibility, institutional vested interest, unique experiences in the project and the overall impact such a project might have on participants.

Such an observed difficulty is no longer an issue when the authors begin to depart from their data pool and discuss six broad issues concerning the sustaining and ending collaborative relationships in generality (Chapter 5). In essence, this chapter has challenged the implicit assumptions that once started collaborative relationships will continue to be sustained on its initial goodwill. The following chapter presents an interesting assessment scheme for projects plotted along a continuum

based on the program complexity and intensity of collaboration. This leads well into the last chapter that addresses the dynamics of collaboration and program planning. References to related literature are provided in conjunction with some principles for conceptualizing collaborative programming, a few of which have been mentioned in earlier chapters. In so doing, the concluding section provided a logical closure to the central theme of the book.

If one is not overly concerned about logical flow of ideas, nor the conventional format of merging empirical evidence with conceptual framework, this book certainly serves some useful purposes of identifying some key features critical for the success or failure of collaboration among organizations. It can be used as a source reference for practitioners interested in undertaking collaborative ventures. It can also be used by researchers as a hypothetical framework for more empirical verification or modification.



Collins, Michael. (1998). *Critical Crosscurrents in Education*. Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company, Pp. 201.

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We need to understand critical pedagogy in a way that will yield sensible strategies for everyday practice. (p. x)

One of the original hopes of critically minded educators is that critical theory would move out of the universities into the practices of everyday life. As the quote from Michael Collins at the top suggests, this is his aim in offering this text on “critical crosscurrents.”

In the introduction to his book, Michael Collins blames the inaccessibility and obscurity of academic writing in critical theory as a significant stumbling block to realizing critical practice in educational sites. He wants to provide a more accessible reading and explication of the major “crosscurrents” in critical theory and pedagogy so that “busy schoolteachers, adult educators, teachers in training, community-based educators, public service workers who see their work as educational” (p. 10) may develop the ability to practice critical pedagogy.