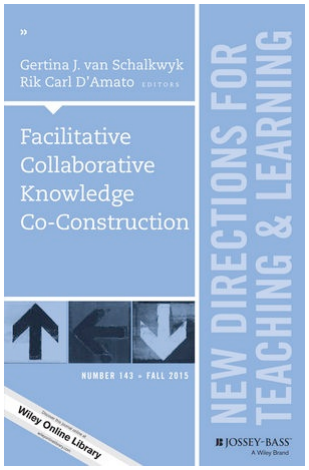


Facilitative Collaborative Knowledge Co-Construction (New Directions for Teaching and Learning, Number 143)

van Schalkwyk, Gertina J.; and D'Amato, Rich Carl, eds.
Wiley, 2015

Book Review

Tags: collaborative learning | collaborative teaching | learning community

Reviewed by: Laura Simmons, *Portland Seminary*
Date Reviewed: August 4, 2016

Facilitative Collaborative Knowledge Co-Construction is the second volume in a series under the Jossey-Bass *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* imprint (see Carolyn Jones Medine's review of volume 1, *From the Confucian Way to Collaborative Knowledge Co-Construction*, posted April 15, 2016). Van Schalkwyk and D'Amato both have experience at the Centre for Teaching and Learning Enhancement at the University of Macau, China. As such, this volume and its predecessor aim at improving the learning experience of Asian students, particularly in Confucian teaching contexts. In the first volume, the "authors provided a framework that was designed to encourage teachers as they move from a Confucian way of teaching toward a more collaborative way of providing a co-constructed knowledge base in the classroom" (i).

"One can certainly train students to memorize facts and follow algorithms, but unless they know what the algorithms mean and when and how to use them, their mastery of the subject is only superficial. Moreover, most of the knowledge that is acquired by rote learning will be lost quickly because it has no connection to anything meaningful in students' minds and lives" (3), argue the editors. One challenge in considering this volume for use in US-based contexts is that it is firmly aimed at those who have traditionally taught using rote learning and memorization of facts – repeated references to "the Asian classroom" make this clear. One questions the degree to which such methodologies are entrenched among religious and theological educators in this country. Certainly constructivist learning is a challenge for any number of traditional educators, but involving students in problem-solving or helping them see the value of personal reflection and application in their learning is less foreign to many of us.

Published by the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion
301 West Wabash Ave, Crawfordsville, IN 47933
(765) 361-6047 (800) 655-7177 fax (765) 361-6051
Fully Funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. and Located at Wabash College

Where these insights may be useful is in reminding faculty of the unique needs of international students coming from Confucian-based systems. Chapters in this volume focus on the value of constructivist, cooperative, and collaborative learning; relational intelligence; insights from neuropsychology; sociocognitive skills and emotional intelligence; and "engendering critical reflective thinking within a collaborative teaching and learning context" (2-3). Mary M. Chittooran's chapter on "Reading and Writing for Critical Reflective Thinking," for example, contextualizes specific tools like questioning, feedback, and the presentation of alternative explanations, demonstrating how each might best be used with Asian students. Chittooran also explores sixteen different reading and writing activities; any of these might spur creative ideas for teaching a variety of students. Helen Y. Sung's exploration of emotional intelligence offers seventeen suggested questions to help expand students' emotional fluency.

There is some repetitiveness between chapters, particularly as various authors review the characteristics of Confucian learning environments and how education is changing. This volume may lend itself best to "cherry picking" whatever portions or techniques are needed for a given professor's context or students. Most of Amato's chapter on brain-based learning with Yuan Yuan Wang, for example, may translate over to a variety of educational contexts. Their advice that "learners should not be grouped by age but should be grouped by processing or aptitude levels in most learning activities" (55) is as germane in a Biblical languages class as it is in a room full of international students.

https://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/resources/book_reviews/facilitative-collaborative-knowledge-co-construction-new-directions-for-teaching-and-learning-number-143/

Published by the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion
301 West Wabash Ave, Crawfordsville, IN 47933
(765) 361-6047 (800) 655-7177 fax (765) 361-6051
Fully Funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. and Located at Wabash College