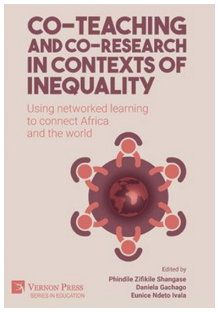
Check for updates

BOOK TITLE:
Co-teaching and co-research in contexts of inequality: Using networked learning to connect Africa and the world



EDITORS:
Phindile Zifikile Shangase, Daniela Gachago and Eunice Ndeto Ivala

ISBN:
9781648895784 (hardback, 311 pp, EUR51)

PUBLISHER:
Vernon Press, Wilmington, DE, USA

PUBLISHED:
2023

REVIEWER:
Gabriel Konayuma[1,2]

AFFILIATIONS:
[1]Senior Vocational Education and Training Officer, Ministry of Technology and Science, Lusaka, Zambia
[2]Country Representative (Zambia), e/merge Africa, Cape Town, South Africa

EMAIL:
gkonayuma@gmail.com

HOW TO CITE:
Konayuma G. The missing link in modern teaching? A review of *Co-Teaching and Co-Research in Contexts of Inequality*. S Afr J Sci. 2024;120(1/2), Art. #16216. https://doi.org/10.17159/sajs.2024/16216

ARTICLE INCLUDES:
☐ Peer review
☐ Supplementary material

PUBLISHED:
30 January 2024

The missing link in modern teaching? A review of *Co-Teaching and Co-Research in Contexts of Inequality*

The subject of co-teaching and co-research in contexts of inequality is timely and useful for transforming teaching and learning in higher education and vocational education. As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, co-teaching and co-research have become very important.

The chapters in this book originated from a call for contributions that was shared before the pandemic and that invited colleagues to share their experiences and reflections on teaching and researching across institutional and geographical boundaries (p. xxxiii). This edited collection consists of 15 contributions from more than 40 international authors from Africa, Europe, the USA, South America and Australia. Generally, most books in the educational field are authored by men, so it is refreshing that more than 70% of the contributors to this book are women. Given that the editors of the book are based in South Africa, the majority of African authors are from South Africa. The book would have been made richer with an inclusion of authors from West Africa, Central Africa and Asia.

The book focuses on how networked learning can be used to connect Africa and the world when co-teaching and co-research are undertaken. This is especially useful in addressing the contexts of inequality that characterise the higher education landscape of Africa. Shangase et al. note that the power of networked learning to connect staff and students globally has never been more evident than during the last few years, during which higher education globally pivoted to online learning (p. xxxiii). Hodgkinson-Williams states that the particular perspective being explored is the value of networked technologies to enable, broaden and sustain team teaching and/or collaborative research within and beyond Africa (p. xxxv).

The book is divided into two main sections: 'Connecting Africa through co-teaching and co-research' and 'Connecting Africa and the world through co-teaching and co-research'. Section 1 consists of six chapters, connecting institutions both within South Africa and the African continent.

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the book by the editors. The editors' definition of co-teaching has much in common with what the literature terms 'Collaborative Online International Learning', which connects classrooms across geographical locations. The book aims to encourage readers to enter co-teaching and co-research opportunities and to contribute to a much-needed conversation around collaborating across unequal contexts and to add to the growing body of knowledge in this field (p. 9).

Chapter 2 provides insights into the interplay that occurred between structure, culture and agency when course facilitators from different higher education backgrounds collaboratively facilitated a postgraduate course. Challenges in collaborating across such differently placed institutions are honestly addressed by the authors. One challenge noted is the inequalities observed within all of the represented higher education institutions and manifested to various degrees of prominence (p. 17). This chapter will be useful to facilitators and managers planning to implement co-teaching as they navigate institutional differences. The results arising from the authors' reflections on co-designing and co-facilitating a module involving structure, culture, agency, curriculum and pedagogy (p. 23–29) are useful for the reader who is experienced or new to co-teaching. For example, on agency, "a strong suggestion for a shared passion for social justice and acute sensitivity for inequalities" is reported (p. 26). This aligns very well with the aim of the book which is to contribute to the conversation around collaborating across unequal contexts.

Chapter 3 shares the reflections of colleagues from three institutions who began collaborating during a one-year Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Technology course at the University of Cape Town. One of the factors reported to have enabled collaboration in the co-research among the authors is group cohesion established by the course design, co-teaching/co-learning approach and block format (p. 46). Researchers seeking to collaborate on research will find useful the reflections on how the authors managed challenges in collaborating across geographical boundaries and the factors that enabled collaboration.

Chapter 10, which is part of the second section of the book, explores how connected co-learning and co-teaching can be designed for inter-institutional collaboration, in online and blended global studios across cultural boundaries – in this case the Global South and North. The conversations of the collaborators were guided by seven themes (p. 181). The chapter ends with four design principles for the conceptualisation and implementation of connected co-learning and co-teaching in online and blended global architecture studios:

1. Employ relevant technologies and techniques through learning design.
2. Acknowledge students as partners to promote student agency and well-being.
3. Consider flexibility through multiple interlinked learning settings and modes.
4. Recognise humanity, humour, culture and community (p. 194–195).

© 2024. The Author(s). Published under a Creative Commons Attribution Licence.

If the reader wanted only an overview of this chapter, I would recommend reading these learning design principles on their own.

Chapter 11 discusses emerging principles for online cross-cultural collaborative research. These principles are based on what the researchers learnedabout their own practices, to ensure committed and sustained engagement in collaborative research online in South Africa, Uganda and the USA. These principles are divided into two main types: inter-personal principles and process-based principles. Inter-personal principles are divided into relationship focused, safe, supportive spaces, collaborative and shared passion. Flexibility, evolving, applied, reflective and contextual are discussed under process-based principles. The reader can find more detailed discussion of these principles on pages 216–218. The emerging principles discussed in this chapter provide views and perspectives on co-teaching and co-research using networked learning, and as such achieve the overall purpose of the book as outlined in the preface. However, the chapter would have been enriched by a collaborator from another continent.

There are very few books, if any, that deal with co-teaching and co-research in contexts of inequality in the way that this book does. *Co-Teaching in Higher Education: From Theory to Co-Practice* by Daniel Jarvis and Mumbi Kariuki (University of Toronto Press; 2017) comes close to this book, but falls short in only dealing with co-teaching and not with co-teaching and co-research online. I would recommend *Co-Teaching and Co-Research in Contexts of Inequality* as a handy reference guide to which one can refer again and again in their co-teaching and co-research journey.