

PREFACE

The book is part of the Educational Innovations Series and includes research output, practitioner perspectives, and reflections on current pertinent paradigms, that throw light on contemporary advances in the fields of theory and practice of educational pedagogies.

Higher education has globally entered, over the last decade, a phase of transformation in which institutions have been compelled to progressively shift their focus from research to teaching. Over this period, the student population in post-secondary has also become increasingly diverse. Faculty are hence increasingly being encouraged to develop pedagogical practices that are student-centered, transformative and inclusive. This objective requires a rapid shift of mindset from instructors, while they are also being constantly reminded, in a contradictory manner, of the need to simultaneously function and thrive within a business model ethos and a neoliberal value system. There is a tangible ambivalence in the messaging faculty receive, and instructors are required to be creative, savvy and versatile in order to navigate this contradiction successfully.

The volume examines the tension which exists between student-centered transformative pedagogies and neo-liberal pressures within higher education, as well as the opportunities being developed in this landscape. While critiques of the neoliberal Academy are not rare, much of the scholarship which highlights the dangers of this shift towards the business model stresses the damage done, the tangible contradictions, and the need for a rejection of neoliberal values. This volume is unique in its desire to highlight the opportunities for transformative work on pedagogy, from within structures that seem resistant to such work of hope and care. It offers unique journeys, insights, and testimonials of educators from around the globe who have developed processes to support and nurture emancipatory pedagogies from within structures that purport to oppose or suppress such work. In so doing, it offers windows of hope and models for sustained innovation to carve out resistance from within and create spaces that remain transformative, unflinching, and empowering inside institutional processes that may otherwise appear oppressive and uncompromising.

These voices from around the global tell a common story: that higher education instructors retain the power to shape classrooms and teaching practices to the image of their hopes, values, and commitments to social justice, even when navigating employment structures, policy, and governance practices that, at best, offer mixed messages and, in the worse of cases, actively discourage such work or hope. Their stories of pragmatic resilience should bring inspiration to many.

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Editor
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