

## **Book Review:**

### **Glynn, M. (2023) *Creative Pedagogy: A Handbook for HE Professionals* St Albans: Critical Publishing**

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In this very personal offering, Martin Glynn shares his experiences and techniques garnered through a long career including teaching, writing and performing in a variety of environments. He asks the question "Who will run alongside me?" (p.4). This book is different from the traditional texts on learning and teaching. It feels like the author is sharing what worked for him in a straightforward manner and offering it to you as someone who is "running alongside".

Storytelling is one of the many creative approaches to teaching discussed. The author practises what he preaches by opening with a modified version of the story of Scrooge and the ghost of Christmas past to introduce his own transformation as a teacher:

So, when the ghost of my educational past came calling, I atoned, repented, and decided that bringing creativity into the classroom was my contribution to sharing, transforming, and liberating the classroom into a space full of wonder and excitement. (p.viii).

Through the subsequent twelve chapters, he shares ideas and techniques which might liberate the classroom and introduce at least a modicum of wonder into the space. I might argue, along with Biggs et al (2022), that to truly introduce wonder into learning, the ideas and techniques the author proposes would need to be linked

to the learning outcomes and assessment. Nevertheless, a bank of creative techniques has its place – particularly if they can be integrated into constructively aligned learning, where (in this case) students are also assessed and graded through creative approaches.

Ten principles for creative teaching are proposed in the introduction, challenging the reader to view teaching, learning and learners differently. The first four chapters introduce general guidance for promoting creative learning, including Tuckman's (1965) stages of team development, culturally responsive practice, the concept of bricolage in teaching and finally, techniques for presentations (which are possibly more relevant for students). These early chapters, and some others, end with a thought-provoking exercise or discussion points, and these could be valuable for readers and indeed for educational developers.

After this scene setting, chapter five offers an anthology of strategies to promote interaction in groups. While many of these, such as "Snowballing" or "Pair talk", may be familiar to the reader, some innovative and dramatic strategies are included, and furthermore different approaches to well-known techniques are outlined, for example the "Goldfish bowl". This is followed in chapter six by some exercises around students' self-concept, which might be useful in the context of personal tutoring.

The longest chapter in the book (seven) focuses on the value of storytelling, and includes a number of Aesop's Fables verbatim, followed by several "Sankofa and Daniel" stories, penned by the author. If you do not find a story here which aligns with your message, Glynn also provides guidance on how to write your own story at the beginning of the chapter. Maybe more advice on how to integrate the stories into teaching and learning would be valuable for future editions.

Theatric strategies are introduced in chapter eight, in particular forum theatre, poetry and role play. Chapter nine focuses on disseminating research using performance techniques – this seems to be less relevant to the key focus of the book,

but the principle that research findings should be made accessible to the constituencies who co-produced them is a sound one. The last three chapters cover the link between stand-up comedy and lecturing, using digital stories and photo essays, and finally problem-solving techniques. Many of the latter may well be familiar, such as SWOT and storyboards, but it is useful to have them collected together.

The Afterword returns to the book's mission to work with communities to break down barriers – ending with a poem, which illustrates the author's journey and exemplifies the poetry technique discussed earlier.

This text would be particularly relevant to colleagues who are new to teaching or wanting to make their approach more engaging – and not just in a HE environment. Indeed, many of the techniques outlined could enhance almost any learning environment, and the principles proposed, for example engaging marginalised communities, should be universal. If you are a skim reader, rather than cover-to-cover, you will find that the chapters are relatively free standing – although I would recommend that you start by reading the principles in the Introduction and the Afterword.

While the book might be enhanced by more detail, structure and referenced examples, perhaps its strength is in its spontaneity and the opportunity to refresh your approach by tapping into the author's experience. You may find yourself trying new and more creative techniques and discover that you are indeed "running alongside".

## References

Biggs, J., Tang, C. and Kennedy, G. (2022). *Teaching for Quality Learning at University* Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Tuckman, B.W. (1965). 'Developmental Sequence in Small Groups,' *Psychological Bulletin*, 63(6) 384-399.