Elizabeth Boling, Richard A. Schwier, Colin M. Gray, Kennon M. Smith, & Katy Campbell (Eds.) (2016) *Studio Teaching in Higher Education*, Abingdon: Routledge (978-1-138-90243-5 [Pbk], 300pp)

It is widely acknowledged that best practice in higher education fosters student inquiry, independent learning, collaborative working, active engagement, interaction – both student-to-teacher and student-to-student, and self-direction (Biggs, 2003; Chickering and Gamson, 1987; Prosser and Trigwell, 2001; Ramsden, 2003). *Studio Teaching in Higher Education* demonstrates how these pedagogic qualities can all be synonymous with learning in a studio environment.

The main body of this book comprises 15 chapters, each one a different example of studio teaching which has been written by a teacher involved with running it. My use of the term 'running' as opposed to 'delivering' is deliberate, this being one of the fundamental differences between studio and non-studio teaching methods.

These 15 so-called 'design cases' have a bookend at the start by the editors, outlining how they were curated – a key term describing their approach to structuring the book; each chapter has similarities and differences with those before and after it. These "Curators Notes" also describe some of the core themes of studio teaching common across the examples. The latter three chapters form a second bookend, discussing the studio from an academic and theoretical perspective; Chapter Eighteen provides an overview of the history and features of the design studio, Chapter Nineteen is an informative critique discussing some potential pitfalls and shortcomings of studio pedagogy; and Chapter Twenty is a view on appropriating studio practices into non-traditional design disciplines, such as engineering and computer science.

The design cases need not be read in sequence, and the reader can dip in and out of these at will. An informative way to approach the book, particularly if unfamiliar with studio teaching, would be to read the first two chapters, followed by the final three – to facilitate a theoretical understanding of the approach – and then to move freely across those in between.

Although the 15 precedents constitute the book's cornerstone, the editors stress that they do not provide conclusive principles or explicit advice that can be directly applied to other situations – such as might be the outcome of traditional case studies. For instance, where authors identify challenges with their approach, they are not always able to offer solutions even. Collectively, however, these chapters provide an experiential meander through a range of studio teaching environments, revealing insights into different structures and methods, and – crucially – reflective experiences of teachers who have adopted this approach. Written in the first-person, they are engaging peeks into the day-to-day dynamics and processes of the studio.

Many of these insights will be familiar to experienced studio teachers, even though the subject field might be very different. In some instances they provide reassuring encounters with challenges that a reader might think are idiosyncratic to their own studio, such as supporting (whilst not leading) students' development, managing assessment in a subjective discipline, and nurturing students' understanding of quality. Notably, they also provide informative ideas for evolving studio teaching, even for those accustomed to it.

Studio teaching is often perceived as space-intensive when compared with transmission forms of teaching, and authors describe having to defend their space from institution administrators. Frequently adopting a Socratic approach, studio teaching centres on questioning and dialogue which over time nurtures self-directed critical thinking; typically this occurs in small group or – more often

– one-to-one tutorials. For example, when recounting her experience of an instructional design course in Chapter Seven, Boling highlights that building incrementally on formative feedback is a characteristic which makes studio teaching very distinctive from lecture-based approaches. Consequently, however, it is an approach that is often described as time-intensive. As Schwier notes in Chapter Three, "Not everyone can, or wants to, take on this kind of messy, heavy teaching" (p. 35).

The term 'studio teaching' brings to mind a space – the studio itself; an art studio, or perhaps a media studio. However, Chapters Ten and Eleven explore the notion of studio teaching as a technique, focusing more on means and methods, independent of space. Studio pedagogy is characterised by learning-by-doing, with less focus on content and more on the experience of learning, often in real-world scenarios. Chapters Nine, Thirteen and Fourteen discuss how the studio can exist in whole or in part in a virtual learning space. Whilst highly pertinent to new directions in higher education, this field of inquiry is particularly challenging given the emphasis placed on dialogue-driven critique being so fundamental in traditional studio pedagogy.

Interestingly the majority of the chapters in the book are concerned with instructional design programmes, and therefore will be of particular interest to those teaching programmes in this field. Others are from more traditional design programmes, such as interior design (Chapter Eight) and theatrical design (Chapter Twelve). As someone who has taught extensively in a design studio, I inevitably approached this book with preconceptions about the challenges and rewards of studio teaching – many of which were reinforced. However, it was something of a revelation to discover that much of what I was familiar with from a traditional design studio also occurs in instructional design courses; this demonstrates how adaptable the approach can be to other programmes.

Schön (1985) argues that many other disciplines could learn a great deal from the design studio, because it is a setting in which to acquire competencies through learning-by-doing, and due to the subtle and complex way students learn from and with one another. The studio is a valuable precedent for student-directed learning environments; one that encourages high levels of engagement, active learning and collective working. This book is relevant to teachers in many subject areas who are seeking alternatives to teacher-centred approaches. Chapter Nine, for example, provides a particularly informative appraisal of the nature of studio teaching and the experience of applying it to an existing programme; it also includes a range of references to literature on applying the studio model when designing programmes of study.

In summary, this book provides a comprehensive insight of different approaches to studio teaching, including the difficulties that can be encountered and the outcomes which it can reward. It would be of interest to both those who already engage with it, and to those considering an interpretation of it.

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