

**PAPER TITLE:** *Collaboration for Social Innovation: The Case of Creating Social Learning Spaces in Higher Education in the UK*

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**A few lines about me:** Having been working for Bournemouth University since 2002 in both teaching and conducting research, I am currently employed in the Learn-Higher project and Personal Development Planning in education for the School of Design, Engineering & Computing (DEC). Apart from my first degree completed in my native Greece I also hold an MA in International Business Administration, an MA in Public Admin & Public Policy and since last November a PhD in Strategic & Public Management (exploring the development of local strategic partnerships in England) all being conferred by British Universities. Through my studies I have developed a keen interest on collaboration, collaborative advantage and collective mind, and therefore I consider participation to the MOPAN conference as very important for my academic development. So far, I participated in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> MOPAN conferences in Loch Lomond, Scotland in 2003 and Tilburg, The Netherlands in 2004 respectively. However, I missed the conference last year although I was intending to participate and had registered for this thanks to Rebecca, my baby daughter who was newly born at the time!

**ABSTRACT**

This paper is concerned with work in progress that stems from both theoretical and empirical considerations on social innovation. It investigates the role of collaboration as a catalyst implemented in the context of higher education that can result in sustainable social innovation. In this light, collaboration and collective mind are utilised as explanatory theoretical mechanisms for social innovation at the individual, group, and organisational level.

From a policy implementation viewpoint the paper will address the following issues, as criteria for establishing a whole system change attitude towards a student-centred process of education in the UK. Firstly, it will identify social technologies as a means of social practice responsive to conditions (personal, relational and contextual) that allow students and university staff to generate social innovation via collaborative efforts. Secondly, it will tackle the issue of how leadership can be appropriately developed in these circumstances in achieving social innovation. To this extent, effectively defined leadership at the university level could respond to the requirements of creating fruitful conditions of social innovation. Thirdly, and possibly most importantly, the paper will focus on the significance of promoting a climate for a student-centred experiential education. The paper will address the impact a whole system change process could have for university staff and students under the remit of

the issues/criteria above as well as the challenges change could bring. The significance of the role and impact of collaboration in this very context is apparent.

To back up the theoretical arguments about how whole system change work affects social innovation the paper will utilise the case of social learning spaces, as part of higher education policy initiatives that have been introduced in the UK recently. In this respect, the concept of learning space is seen under the perspective that cared-for premises can contribute to the creation of more productive higher education communities, thus promoting social innovation. In particular, it will explore the case of the Learn-Higher Centres, a partnership work of sixteen British universities to create spaces as an innovative form of 'where learning happens'. In this light, those centres initiate a culture for designing learning spaces in order to facilitate the changing pedagogical practices needed to support a mass higher education system with its greater student diversity.

Semi-structured interviews and collection of secondary data will be the research methods used for this piece of work. It is anticipated that the paper will inform and enlighten issues of social innovation and collaboration that fit within the overall scope and perspective of the conference. With respect to the research findings, although, novelty guarantees initial success issues of dysfunctional elements and areas of improvement for the Learn-Higher programme regarding the use of social learning spaces will also be highlighted.

**KEY WORDS:** *Collaboration; Social Innovation; Social Learning Space; Student-centred education*

The paper, if selected will be presented with the supplementary support of audio-visual evidence about the use of the Learn-Higher Centre at Bournemouth University, UK.

**PAPER LINK WITH A PRE-THEMED SESSION:**

I would suggest that this paper, if selected could fit within the Creating Collaborative Social Technologies for Profound Social Innovation pre-themed session.