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## **Working Relationally in and across Practices: A Cultural-Historical Approach to Collaboration**

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## Review

Edwards, Anne. (Ed) (2017). *Working Relationally in and across Practices: A Cultural-Historical Approach to Collaboration*. Cambridge University Press

The wealth of data compiled by Anne Edwards, one of the most renowned scholar in cultural-historical theory (University of Oxford) for more than 15 years of research on inter-professional work, has provided with an excellent background and knowledge to bring together the most influential contributions in this edited book. *Working Relationally in and across Practices: A Cultural-Historical Approach to Collaboration* gives value to the ‘conceptual tools’ on which this work is based and which are redefined as they are applied on practice. This compilation of timely and relevant cultural-historical theories provides guidance on how practitioners and professionals approach work and the difficulties they may face while working with others in a collaborative way with the aim of reflecting and discussing them. The book achieves this objective through the coherent union of real situations, such us offering a global response from the view of social workers, teachers and medicine in order to answer to a child’s need.

The backbone of this work is based on three fundamental concepts, in which the author puts the emphasis throughout this collection. The first concept talks about the need to share knowledge to reach consensus after discussion and re-elaboration of ideas: relational expertise. The author links her reflections with the cultural-historical approach and the Vygotskian theories. The second concept is born with two intentions; covering the gaps between the different professional spheres when solving a problem and finding spaces of interaction that favors a single understanding of the problem (through active listening and empathy): common knowledge. As a result of this, in order to achieve a satisfactory inter-professional work, a new fundamental knowledge emerges as a third concept: relational agency.

Leont’ev (1978), Vygotsky (1987) and Taylor (1991) are some of the main authors in which Edwards’ line of work draws on. All of them point out that the individual particularity of each person conditions the profession,

since it is influenced by personal needs, emotions and feelings. Along with this reflection, the chapters of the book help us to unravel what the key features to achieve the bonds that push to create and maintain collaborative work to solve complex problems are. This is how, in short, the challenges can be addressed in a comprehensive and global manner.

This collection consists of three blocks. The first one focuses on the research of professional work, with reference to practical cases of both professionals and beneficiaries. In the second part, it delves into different studies that bring us closer to reality. In the latter part, special emphasis is placed on the design and methodology, closely linked to the three concepts.

Throughout these sections, the author and contributors points out that in the collaborative and inter-disciplinary work a horizontal structure without hierarchies must prevail. She emphasizes a horizontal relational work in which all people learn from all. This will have a positive influence, since this will increase knowledge, while increasing the commitment of the people involved.

In conclusion, we can affirm that this work has a positive impact on the formation of work teams, which need a collaborative way of solving problems and achieving objectives. Taking into account the individual value of each person at an integral level, and the treatment of all contributions as a wealth for the team, will lead to better professional practices and relationships. In the same direction, Anne Edwards and contributors allow us to determine future lines of research that deepen and reveal nuances about relational work. She encourages us to continue reflecting on practices and situations from this social perspective, concretely from research and responsible work with the intention of having greater social impact (Reale et al., 2017).

All the professional fields that wish to achieve the greatest effectiveness of their work teams will find aspects to reflect on in this work. Also, those interested in the collaboration and the exchange of ideas can see their formation enriched after reading this work. The considerations presented in the book can be attractive for professionals specialized in the field of sociology, psychology and education.

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