



# Education as a hope in uncertain times

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## Together for learning

### Understanding the ecosystem of collaborative learning

More than ever before, collaboration and dialogue have become means to address major challenges we are currently facing - pandemic, conflict, humanitarian crises. At the macro societal level but also at the micro-level of workplaces and classrooms, knowing how to collaborate and how to solve problems together is paramount. Yet, while the value of working and learning together with others is widely acknowledged, meaningful and productive collaboration remains difficult to accomplish, gauge and guide.

In this keynote, I will reflect on the complexity of the collaborative learning process and what it implies for researching these processes from an ecological perspective using new analytics techniques.

Outcomes of collaborative learning have been examined extensively through scaled assessments and sociocultural studies continue to reveal new knowledge about the dialogical nature of collaborative learning. Yet remaining are questions about how individual cognitions are joined into productive interaction, how collaboration dynamics are shaped or what drives collaboration when difficulties occur.

Against this backdrop, and taking departure in empirical research on small group collaboration in higher education contexts, I will discuss (i) the need for examining the collaborative process as an interrelated set of actions, people and resources – the ecosystem of collaborative learning, (ii) individual and collective factors salient to collaborative learning, and (iii) the multimodal nature of in-situ collaboration. Further, I will elaborate on how digital technologies and data-based analytic techniques offer new opportunities to examine some of the 'black-boxed' aspects of collaborative learning.

This presentation will also consider the challenges of researching collaborative learning processes. First, I will address methodological challenges, primarily focusing on the pitfalls of reductionistic interpretation and the need for methodological triangulation. Second, I discuss a combined empirical and conceptual challenge; as digital traces of collaboration are disclosed through new digital technologies and analytical techniques, the question of what constitutes collaboration becomes highly relevant. I will conclude by exploring the implications of examining the ecosystem of collaborative learning for how we are framing education to prepare a young generation to jointly engage with present and future hardships.



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