

Book Reviews

Learning and teaching in secondary schools (4th edition)

Edited by Viv Ellis
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This fourth edition of *Learning and teaching in secondary schools* is the newest addition to the Achieving QTS series. It provides an up-to-date look at the challenges confronting trainee teachers within the framework of the Professional Standards for the Award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) that are currently in place. The book is clearly and logically structured into 15 chapters which, as stated in the introduction, have been created in consideration of changes which may be a reflection of how the coalition government appears to be developing the future of education in this country.

The text is organised into four parts devoted to the main themes that student teachers need to consider during their training: 'Professional attributes and learning', including a chapter on teaching as a master's-level profession; 'Professional skills' with a useful chapter on Assessment for Learning; 'Professional knowledge (across the curriculum)' where 14–19 is considered; and 'Professional knowledge (inclusion)' with a highly readable chapter on special educational needs. Through these broad and encompassing sections, the contributors discuss teaching and learning alongside 'practical' concerns such as classroom management and assessment in schools.

The chapters all link to the 2007 QTS Standards; hence the introduction of the new standards in September 2012 means this book will probably be superseded by a new edition. Currently it assists students with an easy-to-follow guide to the current framework. I particularly liked the inclusion of reflective questions and tasks for the student teacher. An example of this is in the chapter relating to Assessment for Learning where student teachers are asked to draw on their own experiences in analysing student learning considering their own use of questioning, explaining

and demonstrating and the impact they have had on the students' learning. Reflective thinking and being reflective learners is a skill that can be difficult for new teachers to appreciate but is the basis of what makes a good or outstanding teacher. New teachers should be able to think about the how and why of their practice as it is a valuable tool that generates ideas and develops knowledge. This use of reflective tasks throughout the book is a real strength.

Each chapter is helpfully cross-referenced to specific QTS Standards. However, reading these Standards can be quite confusing, so the inclusion of a short précis at the start of every chapter that interprets their meaning in easily accessible language is a useful tool for the student teacher. Similarly, there are relevant practical tasks and case studies that serve to develop the links between theory and practice. The summary of key points at the end of each chapter provides particularly pertinent conclusions to reinforce the implications for practice for student teachers. The 'Further reading' sections and chapter glossaries provide a very thorough resource for student teachers who want to be effective classroom practitioners.

The simplicity of the layout of this book will appeal to student teachers as it is easy to follow and very accessible. It provides strategies and answers to the questions student teachers regularly ask, while avoiding over-complicating the issues. For me the practical approach balanced well with the pedagogical and theoretical issues without being too heavy. I will certainly be drawing upon this book as a good way of introducing discussion and debate concerning issues students might encounter during their teaching experience. The text is well designed to support student teachers and guide them in developing knowledge and understanding regarding classroom practice and the 'art' of teaching.

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