

Book Reviews

Literacy teacher educators: preparing teachers for a changing world

Clare Kosnik, Jennifer Rowsell, Peter Williamson,
Rob Simon and Clive Beck (eds.)
Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2013
ISBN: 978-9-462-09198-6

This forward-thinking volume focuses on the lives, professional practices and visions of literacy teacher educators. These visions encompass all aspects of language, with a focus on critical social practice and multimodal forms of communication. This book, in particular, will appeal to literacy specialists, administrators, teachers, teacher educators and policy-makers. The foreword is by Susan Lytle, professor emeritus at the University of Pennsylvania. A well-known educator and researcher, a literacy teacher and teacher educator for almost 50 years, who has published widely on literacy and urban teacher education, Lytle summarises the book, stating, 'The images of agentive teachers and teacher educators make palpable what it means to purposefully and systematically inquire into and learn from day-to-day practice in the light of different policies/politics and local contexts' (p. xix). The 23 authors have extensive experience in teaching and educational research, and represent a virtual who's who of teacher education. Educators from Canada, the United States, England and Australia, from research-based and teaching-focused educational institutions and at different stages of their careers, have their views represented here. This provides a broad spectrum of opinions and insights into the current state and necessary future direction of literacy teacher education. The book is divided into two sections: the first emphasises current issues in teacher education, and the second emphasises literacy teacher educators' practices. The chapters provide a unique richness in the sense that

they homogenise both the nature of practice and the practical issues they seek to address.

Most of the 13 chapter essays contain an autobiography of the respective authors, outlining why they became literacy teacher educators and their ever-evolving notions of literacy and teaching as social practice and developing forms of communication. The reader can expect a personal overview of each author's pedagogy, theory and research. Furthermore, the authors share much deeper aspects of their work, which go to the heart of teaching and learning, such as their vulnerabilities, challenges and concerns. Issues of prejudice; the limited knowledge and experience of student teachers in dealing with urban education; and narrow local policies are all addressed through personal experience. This is what distinguishes this text from others. In both sections, detailed accounts of how these educators grapple with critical literacies (e.g. social justice, equity, poverty), multiliteracies and multimodal communications (e.g. digital technologies, social media, students' day-to-day lives), government initiatives (e.g. curriculum standards, accountability, reform) and the challenges of teaching in higher education (e.g. maintaining research, inquiry and community involvement) all work together to provide an in-depth understanding of the complex and demanding role of a literacy teacher educator. The stories are compelling, the pedagogical suggestions are realistic and the struggles shared are honest. For example, American professor Kinloch describes how her upbringing in the segregated South influences her need to develop student teachers who will combat racism and segregation, while professors Ghiso and Campano make a case for their deep affiliation with social justice because of their histories with immigration. In the realm of pedagogy, British professor Marshall describes in detail how she and her co-workers use film, literature and technologies to encourage student teachers to move between modes of expression, despite the conservative views

of their government which advises only the use of the traditional modes of reading and writing. In Walsh and Durrant's chapter, 'Multiliteracies: A slow movement in literacy minor', these professors from Australia outline several reasons why other literacy teacher educators may not be modeling the current practices that their student teachers require to be competent educators in the 21st century. They suggest their already 'crowded tertiary curriculum' and the mandates of the 'National Curriculum' under which they must operate do not allow for extra topics. These sorts of frustrations are echoed throughout the book. The concluding chapter takes an interesting turn, as three of the five editors analyse the previous chapters as data for 'salient issues and themes' and present these as a form of 'educational significance'. Some of the key themes listed include: clash with government initiatives; rethinking literacy in a digital age; and thoughtfulness and integrity about teaching and research. The editors conclude with a call for changes in literacy teacher education to accommodate the shifting landscape of literacy, but recognise that the authors in this volume have a 'sense of hope', confirming that with dedication, integrity and commitment, teaching for new era can be accomplished. I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book and gained much insight from it.

Reviewed by Cathy Miyata

Brock University, Ontario, and University of Toronto, Canada

Achieving your Masters in Teaching and Learning

Mary McAteer, Fiona Hallett, Lisa Murtagh and Gavin Turnbull

Exeter: Learning Matters, 2010

ISBN 978-1-844-45214-9

'To be a teacher is to be a learner' (p. ix) is the encouraging statement in the acknowledgements at the start of this very practical guide to, and core text for, *Achieving your Masters in Teaching and Learning*.

Experienced reflective practitioners, McAteer and her co-authors, set out positively with a clear methodological agenda to share their philosophies on the enrichment of teaching and learning drawn from their personal experiences and understandings of education.

In three parts, over seven chapters, a succinct list of exploratory intentions is set out to inform the reader of what they are likely to encounter in the hope of broadening their professional thoughts and understandings having read the chapter. These notions are reviewed at the end of each chapter, recapitulating aspects of the teaching and learning that the reader should have acquired, understood and experienced. The reader will find this systematic approach to the presentation of theories and ideas an aid to building and deepening their understanding of the skills needed for proactive practice while also addressing their individual professional needs. It also offers invaluable support for beginning teachers as they manage their professional training, providing guidance that also facilitates the process of unfolding critical thinking, reflective practice and research skills.

An attractive feature of the book is the presentation of a learning challenge, not only for the novice teacher, but also for the more experienced practitioner to revisit theory and pedagogy in order to adapt and improve the teaching and learning resources and strategies that they implement on a day-to-day basis in their own classroom. In each chapter, the authors consider and fully develop the comprehensive topics in turn addressing the phases of each as well as the generic academic skills that the reader is likely to develop during their study. This allows for a logical flow in the way the key themes are structured. The core topics explored include developing pedagogy; assessment for learning; special educational needs (SEN) and behaviour; management and leadership.

These are illustrated with real case studies of postgraduate students undertaking continuous professional development (CPD) activities. In each case, references to the relevant literature are examined and attributed to the academic skills being explored. For example, on pages 83 and 104 the recommended reading for 'Behaviour Management' is mentioned, encouraging readers to 'Stop and Read' as well as giving a brief summary of the importance and relevance of the listed material. The authors use observations drawn essentially from their own teaching and learning experiences related to theories and pedagogy and how they can best be practically applied.

This allows for a balanced approach to the reading and the development of reflective understanding, which adds to the reader's experience by providing concrete examples and contextualising theory through extended case studies. It further sets out to provide a basis for the next stage in professional development, guiding specialists in the consideration and enhancement of their expertise, thus highlighting the importance of sustained learning and growth in their professional journey. An example is the uncovering of potential opportunities for leadership identified in specific approaches to teaching and learning and identifying emerging interests and expertise.

These might include working with other educational agencies and professionals in and beyond the school, such as educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, educational welfare officers, youth workers, counsellors and advisers, (pp.130–2).

The book is predominantly aimed at those taking the master's level qualification in teaching and learning, but I would recommend it particularly to all teachers considering an MA qualification as it will help to affirm and continue good habits. Having already achieved the MA in Teaching and Learning accreditation, I find constant critical reflection essential as it assists in the continual development of excellence in my personal practise and performance. As a significant milestone in one's professional progress this book also encourages participants to be more proactive in making good decisions about their on-going learning needs. The practical advice explored within the chapters is presented in a supportive way which makes it a useful read for practising teachers wishing to re-explore useful pedagogy for reflective guidance and success in the classroom. Those practitioners who read this book may also wish to apply the themes explored here with a view to informing and possibly shaping the nature of CPD in their educational setting or classroom. Overall this book serves as a useful toolkit in helping teachers take control of their own development in teaching and learning.

Reviewed by Shearon Gordon

Dilkes Academy, Thurrock

Social pedagogy: heart and head

P. Stephens

Bremen: EHV, 2013

ISBN: 978-3-86741-830-0

This book claims to approach the relatively new ideology of social pedagogy with a view to its relevance and credibility within the global academic framework. It makes the case for the inclusion or consideration of social education within the academic and education agenda. The text is aimed at academics, education students and teachers. The author authenticates the ideal that heart rules the head and that we all as human beings have a moral compass. He also claims that social pedagogy is an academic discipline concerned with the theory and practice of holistic education; of the education of the child as a whole person as an integral part of their overall development.

There is an emphasis on the process of reflection as a professional and developmental tool in the practice and application of pedagogic theory. Stephens highlights the key concepts of positive socialisation as being about 'consolidating kindness', 'empowering people' and 'leading by example'. All these conditions and similar ones (such as unconditional positive regard, self-awareness, tolerance and respect) are those that underpin the ideology of youth work – and yet this is never mentioned. Research and evidence in the text is taken predominantly from European and American studies. The author claims that social pedagogy is relatively new to the UK and has only become part of academic discourse over the last 15 years. This requires a considered challenge since the practice of youth work has existed across the UK since the 1800s, disseminated by social and political entrepreneurs and philanthropists such as the founders of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and the Boys' Brigade. These organisations aimed to address the social, moral and emotional needs of under-educated, impoverished and supposedly unruly young men. Youth work's robust moral and social foundations lie within the reflective frame, supported by the mission and vision of the National Youth Agency and the professional mirror across Europe and further afield in the Boys & Girls Clubs of America network. The underlying ethos of easing social problems within a youth and community work structure seeks to support the diseases that exist in society by offering social and personal education for all. The importance of listening and communicating, valuing and not judging, empowering and encouraging, recognising human rights and advocating for the individual and group voice are all explained in the text. Theorists

such as Rousseau, Froebel, Friere and Natorp are all pioneering social pedagogues who comment and critique a world or an education that does not consider the holistic well-being of the individual and their community. These too are old friends of those who teach and participate in youth work as a profession. In the youth and community social pedagogic model we would encourage individual self-awareness and responsibility, and in order to establish these as essential skills would advocate for the likes of Roger's active listening models of applying core conditions of trust, respect and responsibility.

The book is well written and presents clearly its recommendation for including social pedagogy as part of the academic portfolio in the UK. The key concepts and principles outlined are convincingly argued and relevant to what currently exists as a gap in our community make-up. The differing traditions across cultures are explained and compared.

Although founded in education, a more recent youth work background may render me biased; however, this text convinces me that social pedagogy is an appropriate academic area of study. It has also encouraged my thinking, in the light of current developments in the youth work sector that perhaps our future lies in its rebranding as social pedagogy.

This text reinforces ideologies of social education and provides formal and informal educators, academics, students and practitioners with some interesting and relevant topics in the discourse around our roles in the moral and community development of those we work with. I would recommend this book to anyone with an interest in educating socially aware individuals or groups in the development of the person as an active participant in their own learning.

Reviewed by T. Trimmer-Platman

University of East London

The cover notes clearly state that this book is aimed at 'teachers of all subjects' and is a 'comprehensive, practical introduction to the extensive possibilities that Information and Communication Technology [ICT] offers pupils, teachers and schools'. It professes to provide 'practical advice and guidance, tried and tested examples, and covers a range of issues and topics essential for teachers using ICT to improve teaching and learning in this subject'. Furthermore, it claims to be 'a vital source of support and inspiration for all training teachers'.

Although the book is not aimed at the specialist teacher of information technology (very few books are), it has much to offer the specialist teacher or trainee. In addition, leadership teams have begun to understand that the development of ICT within schools is a critical whole school issue, not only for teaching and learning but for efficient internal and external communication and administration. Chapters such as 'ICT tools for professional development', 'ICT in assessment', 'Whole school approaches: integrating ICT across the curriculum' and 'Linking school with home use' are likely to be of more relevance to senior leaders. The book is not written as a linear narrative but rather a collection of contributions by specialist educational researchers covering a diverse range of related discussions based around the benefits and transformational properties of digital technologies in the modern classroom. Whatever the readership, it is possible to find something that will stimulate your interest.

The question then is whether or not the book is a 'practical introduction' and whether it actually offers 'practical advice and guidance, tried and tested examples'. In reality this is not a handbook or 'how to' guide to using ICT in the classroom; rather it is an informed discussion of the issues and opportunities that digital technologies offer and the altered dynamic of the classroom environment that these technologies introduce. This should not be taken as criticism, as it is not the function of a book like this to act as a training manual on how to use a computer, interactive whiteboard or camcorder. Indeed, the early chapters point out quite rightly that this is the function of in-service educational training (INSET) and continuing professional development (CPD) and is often overlooked, which is why the benefits of ICT have not been developed as they should. What this book does extremely well is to provide a variety of concise research-led discussions into the benefits of various forms of digital technologies.

Learning to teach using ICT in the secondary school.

A companion to school experience, 3rd edition

Marilyn Leask and Norbert Pachler (eds.)

Abingdon: Routledge, 2013

ISBN 978-0-415-51652-5

To a student teacher or teacher wanting to adopt digital technologies the academic research underpinning the topic will be of interest, but you really want some practical ideas, signposting to resources, to be inspired or pointed in the right direction. Many of the chapters provide that motivation. I would, for example, highly recommend 'ICT tools and applications', 'Using the interactive whiteboard to support dialogue in the whole class context' and 'Teaching and learning with digital video production'. Even an ICT specialist who has been teaching and advising on the subject for 22 years found himself enthused and reflecting on new approaches and possibilities.

On the other hand, there are chapters that I found problematic. One of the fundamental attributes of good teaching is the ability to communicate one's message at an appropriate level and language for the target audience. In computing we refer to high-level and low-level programming languages. A high-level language is one that resembles normal English and allows the inexperienced programmer to begin to write computer code. Low-level languages are those that are written closer to the machine code understood by the computer itself but which are inaccessible to all but the most experienced programmers. A few of the chapters in this book could be described as written in a low-level code often accessible only to those with a background in educational research, rather than in the language of the target audience.

Perhaps one of the drawbacks of a book such as this is that it tries to make itself accessible by providing concise overviews of given aspects of ICT. At times I found myself wondering where the counterarguments were or wanting a fuller exposition of the topic. In the otherwise excellent chapter 'Using multi-play digital games and online virtual worlds in secondary school teaching', for example, I felt that there was a lack of balance. The underlying research evidence and case studies demonstrating the benefits of virtual game-playing in the classroom were compelling. There was no mention, though, of the technical difficulties, costs and dangers of playing networked role-playing games. I read nothing about ethical considerations of playing violent 'shoot 'em up' games in an educational environment or the possible conflicts between the approach to computer games in school and parental viewpoints. On occasion I felt that there was need for more exploration of the practicalities and issues involved in implementing new approaches.

One might say that the unstated aim of a book such as this is to foster discussion and debate in the subject area. No two reviewers will ever agree entirely with

what has been written and no book is ever going to satisfy everyone. As an experienced ICT specialist and, until recently, someone that led postgraduate initial teacher training programmes, I would wholeheartedly recommend this book as a valuable contribution to that debate and as a source of inspiration and ideas to anyone wanting to introduce or extend the use of digital technologies in their teaching.

Grant King

Mid Essex ITT

(recently retired)
