

RESEARCH IN TEACHER EDUCATION

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Book Reviews

Excellence in coaching: the industry guide

Edited by Jonathan Passmore

London: Kogan Page, 2010

ISBN 978-0-7494-5667-2

This book collects contributions from coaching practitioners covering a wide range of coaching models; the contributors are considered to be experts in their particular fields. It is aimed at existing coaches who may wish to further develop their practice and offers a selection of the most popular coaching models as well as guidance on getting started in coaching.

The driving force for this book as reported by the editor, who is a chartered psychologist, accredited coach and coaching supervisor himself, is the need for a single guide to coaching practice that may assist in bringing current issues together. It is suggested in the foreword that a recently emerging theme in the coaching industry is recognition of the need to collaborate for the benefit and reputation of the industry and its clients rather than maintaining the protective self-interest that has characterised it in the past.

The wide-ranging series of articles in this compilation are undoubtedly set in a business context. The strategies for each of the seven different coaching approaches, which are described in some detail, do not seem to me to immediately lend themselves to the field of teacher education, although some of them could have a place in supporting the staff development and review process within an education faculty. I personally have some, albeit limited, experience of exploring one of the approaches, the GROW model (Goal identification, Review of current reality, Options, Way forward), with a group of secondary headteachers. There was general recognition that the method had currency when applied to staff development in the school situation.

The book is divided into three sections: 'The business of coaching', 'Coaching models and approaches' and 'Coaching issues'. Most chapters have an extensive list of supporting references. The first chapter reports

that coaching emerged from the area of sports in the 1960s, transferred to business throughout the 1970s and 1980s and is now accepted as a respected and widely used resource for personal development (p. 9). In the first section, there is a helpful explanation that coaching, while having similarities to mentoring, is not the same thing. A mentor has experience in a particular field and imparts specific knowledge, acting as adviser, counsellor, guide, tutor or teacher. The coach's role is not to advise but to assist coachees in uncovering their own knowledge and skills and to facilitate coachees to become their own advisers (p. 22).

The coaching models described use behaviourism, cognitive behavioural therapy, neuro-linguistic programming, solution-focused therapy and transpersonal psychology as their guiding principles. The book certainly explores the field of coaching in depth and as such achieves its prime objective of being a single guide to coaching practice. It seems to me to be particularly useful as a reference book; it is not an easy book to read in its entirety for the novice in coaching.

Coaching is about improving performance and it encourages reflection, both individually and within an organisation, and is facilitative. It assumes that the coachee already has the knowledge, skills and commitment to improve. The coach 'draws' these out during the coaching process by listening and questioning the coachee's answers. Could this process work with trainee teachers who may have the commitment but not necessarily the knowledge and skills, particularly at the start of their training programme?

Reviewed by Paul Betts

University of East London

Doing your PGCE at M-level: a guide for students

Edited by Keira Sewell
London: Sage, 2012
ISBN 978-1-4462-0830-4

I came to review this book with three key questions: How can a text aid Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students in navigating the seeming paradox of demonstrating knowledge, understanding and applying this understanding in a practical context, therefore meeting strict Qualified Teacher Status criteria against a key element of any master's level qualification critically? Does the book contextualise changes in education? And lastly, would this develop the skills and competencies required for successful completion of a master's degree?

M-level PGCE is now firmly established within the initial teacher education (ITE) sector. This engagement with master's level study is valuable in terms of enhanced learning and skills acquisition alongside the fact that a PGCE at M-level is worth 60 credits and is equal to one-third of a master's degree. This can be a considerable inducement to further study and a potential saving on the cost of a master's degree. A good feature of this work is that it explains in accessible and clear language what working at master's level is, the benefit it can bring to students in terms of career progression and the continuing professional development opportunities available to them once they have embarked on their careers.

The book does get students to engage with education developments and think about them critically. A key issue for students at master's level is to demonstrate critical thinking, in particular with educational theories and text. It chooses to develop and emphasise criticality through reflexivity. Reflection is a key element of a teacher's development and is something that all potential employers like to see in their teachers. Teachers need to question their practice critically in order to consider future developments. Also, adopting a critical approach combined with reflections allows a trainee teacher to consider developments in terms of how useful they are in their particular context.

ITE providers deliver a whole range of PGCEs in all phases of education and in specialisms ranging from Physics to Special Educational Needs. This book is designed for a wide audience and is therefore very much a support to the work that ITE providers do with their trainees in terms of subject knowledge development and subject-specific pedagogy. The reflective approach which is encouraged by the author would be well used as pre-course reading to provide

beginning teachers with opportunities to engage critically with educational literature and subject-specific texts.

In answer to the three questions I had when reviewing this book I would accept that this is a valuable text to support students through conceptualising and understanding the requirements of some key aspects of master's level work. Regarding changes in educational context it can be said that change is the only constant. The skills one can develop through master's level thinking and the attainment of a master's degree through further continuing professional development have the potential to enhance the capacity of a critically reflective teaching profession. This last statement partially answers my final key question: this book certainly helps to develop competencies for working at M-level during a PGCE programme, but this is only the beginning of a student's development to completing a full master's degree.

Reviewed by John Macklin

University of East London

Contemporary issues in learning and teaching

Edited by Margery McMahon, Christine Forde and Margaret Martin
London: Sage, 2011
ISBN 978-1-84920-128-5

The authors argue that the confidence of newly qualified teachers in the classroom can come from engagement with key issues about the *why* of teaching as well as from the technicalities of the *how*. The clear remit of this book is to encourage thinking about values and about the purposes of education. Teachers need to question routine practice and be prepared to justify the decisions they make in the classroom rather than stick to a 'repertoire of tried and tested formulae'. This book is a counterbalance to any material that suggests that good teaching can be downloaded and delivered off-the-peg.

All contributors to initial and continuing teacher education programmes at the University of Glasgow, the authors share a key belief in the notion of education leading to greater equality and social justice.

They see a critical awareness of policy, and the values that underpin policy, as central to teachers' ability to develop an understanding of their role and practice within 'the landscape of education'.

Chapters in each of the book's three sections, 'Policy', 'Learning' and 'Practice', draw on research and debate, encourage reflection and, fundamentally, require readers to articulate their positions. Thinking points in each chapter ask readers to express opinions, consider beliefs, explore practice and identify potential changes. Case studies ground the discussions. Key questions for reflection and discussion at the end of each chapter take the debate back to the reader – or, ideally perhaps, groups of readers.

Inclusion, and the exploration of what genuinely inclusive practice is, come across as fundamental. For me, the book really comes to life in George Head's chapter on inclusion and pedagogy, a lynchpin at the end of the policy section taking the reader into the learning section. Head takes the notion of inclusive pedagogy by the scruff of the neck, shakes the tired carcass of differentiation and lower expectations and pulls out a model of complementary pedagogy in which learners question critically ('How do you know that?') and work creatively and collaboratively with the teacher. This, Head argues, 'provides a milieu in which pupils may be able to differentiate for themselves'. It is a chapter of broad statements about inclusive practice, and some of these generalise about inclusive practice that I am, perhaps, unfamiliar with. I am not sure about teachers in inclusive classrooms finding 'points where students' personal lived experiences intersect with issues within wider society', although this is perhaps simply about teachers starting from learners' own interests and prior knowledge. Above all, however, this is a chapter that requires us to think about who we are and what we do, exemplifying the exploration of identity, values and purposes of education that are the book's core.

Contemporary issues in learning and teaching is squarely aimed at new teachers, arguably to catch them before routine practice takes too strong a hold. However, the book has much wider relevance: the caution to 'guard against the danger of a naïve acceptance of policy as the province of expertise' is for all of us.

Reviewed by Andrew Read

University of East London

Using museums as an educational resource: an introductory handbook for students and teachers

Graeme Talboys

Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2010

ISBN: 978-1-4094-0145-2

This is by far the most detailed book I have come across about organising visits to museums and using them as learning tools, resources, inspiration and stimuli. It covers preparation, logistics, legal requirements, risk assessment, time management, follow-ups, long-term strategies and building relationships with museums and cultural institutions and sites.

It provides a large amount of detail on how you can work with buildings, objects, pictorial and documentary material as well as how you can use loan services and online and digital sources.

At the end of his book, Talboys writes, 'This book has only scratched the surface of the subject, introducing you to some of the basics. The rest comes with practice and experience'. I would have to disagree; I found this book very comprehensive and I have worked both as a teacher and a museum educator for many years. I would certainly hope that the level of detail and the myriad of things to think about and plan would not put anybody off visiting museums because they feel they wouldn't be able to do justice to Mr Talboys.

I would have liked to see more tables and perhaps short lists that could be used as a resource to help people in developing their planning and it would have been useful to use examples and/or case studies from teachers to give a more practical aspect to the book.

The world of museum and cultural learning is developing rapidly, with more places either offering digital devices such as cameras, videos, iPods and tablets or advising and allowing visitors to use their own devices as ways of capturing, consuming, creating, collaborating and communicating their experience. Talboys doesn't address these issues, and the section which deals with online and digital sources is somewhat sparse and could usefully be extended, perhaps in a future edition.

Museums are developing or adopting new learning theories such as blended learning or Philosophy for Children and experimenting with self-organising, student-generated and informal learning methods.

I think students and teachers would be interested in how you might use these with collections and cultural sites.

Museums and other cultural institutions are always looking to engage with new audiences. Many adult learning institutions as well as special educational needs (SEN) schools and services, language schools, community groups and special interest groups use cultural places as learning environments. This book doesn't deal with these groups, but perhaps there's another book that Mr Talboys could write that addresses these learners.

If you are interested in using museums as an educational resource and you work in a school, then this is a detailed and thorough book that will give you more than enough to be able to make your visits a productive, exciting and inspiring learning experience.

Paul Clifford is this month's guest reviewer. Paul is currently the Digital Programmes Manager at the Museum of London, developing, delivering and evaluating innovative blended learning sessions for a range of different audiences including primary-aged school children, families and SEN clients. Paul previously developed blended learning sessions at the British Museum and developed and managed their digital learning facility from 2000. He has been involved with many significant projects including 'Mummy: the inside story', a three-dimensional exploration of a 4,000-year-old mummy, and the National Museums Online Project. Before this Paul worked in formal education, community education and the creative arts field.