

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS THIS BOOK FOR?

Ways of seeing

When you first go into school you will no doubt experience the frenetic pace of the school day. Some things will be familiar to you and some things will be very new. Observing practice in school through the new lens of the student teacher will enable you to experience the richness of the classroom. With so much to take in, however, this may lead to multi-sensory overload! This book will enable you to know *how to look and listen*, and *what to look and listen out for* when looking at schools, classrooms and pupils during the hurly-burly of the school day.

A language for learning

In line with the philosophy of Reggio Emilia we see learners as rich in every way. As such we see you as experts in your field bringing knowledge and experience to your course and new working environment. As a graduate you will have subject specific language from your field. This book will enable you to develop other languages about learning. An understanding of the vocabularies of learning theories, with the grammatical framework of your educational experiences, will allow you to synthesise your expert subject knowledge. We acknowledge that all language is value-laden and culture-specific and this book will explicitly bring your attention to the ideological and political use of terminology and vocabulary in relation to teaching today.

Meaning making

By developing your skills and insights into practice and developing a professional language, this book will support you in reflecting about learning and teaching. We believe that reflection is crucial in order to learn, and as such this book will support you in asking deep and challenging questions about

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your practice. As your reflective skills sharpen, you will discover layers of complexity that surround the relationship between teaching and learning. Your skills as a professional will strengthen as you ask questions of your practice; through enquiry you will make familiar aspects of learning unfamiliar. The resulting reflective thinking and discussion will deepen your understanding of teaching and learning.

Theory as kinetic energy

We see theory as an energy, as a food to nourish your practice. By living theory you will bring your practice to life. Just as in order to live healthily we need to consider what we eat and its effect on our bodies and minds, so too should we explore the nature and implications of theories for our practice.

This book will support you in 'theory-using' and 'theory-building' as a powerful, knowledgeable practitioner. All schools are different, all teachers are different and this book will help you in developing your professional self.

WHO IS THE BOOK FOR?

This book is for PGCE students, NQTs and teachers engaged in Masters-level work and other professionals who are seeking to undertake enquiry with integrity in school settings. Additionally we hope the book will be supportive to our colleagues who are HEI tutors, school-based mentors and class teachers, in their engagement with student teachers.

HOW MIGHT YOU ENGAGE WITH THE BOOK?

This book is intended to support your understanding of, and the links between theory and practice. It is not a book therefore to be read in isolation of either of these fundamentals. Theory and practice will exemplify, contextualise and situate your learning as a teacher researcher. Although you will all engage differently with the book, the three sections of the text will stimulate thinking and provide support in specific ways.

This book is in three parts:

- Part 1: The importance of enquiry in enhancing learning
- Part 2: Key methods and ways of doing enquiry
- Part 3: Professional development and moving from student to teacher.

In **Part 1** we introduce you to the policy landscape of education, to concepts around learning and to the notion of student teachers as researchers.

In Chapter 1 we introduce the education policy landscape within which you will practice. We explore the terrain of professionalism and professional identity and then set that within the context of an increasingly politicised arena. We map out for you key ideological concepts and policy concepts and explore Modernism and Postmodernism in relation to education.

In Chapter 2 teachers' beliefs about theories are considered in some depth, as is the less than straightforward relationship between teaching and learning.

In Chapter 3 we invite you to consider theories that seek to explain how learning happens, and we have approached this in the kind of critical analytical manner that we see as essential to adopting deeper approaches to learning. We consider the strengths and weaknesses of four key learning theories and the implications for pedagogy and assessment.

In Chapter 4 we argue that research is an integral part of your professional practice. We pick up the themes of learning from Chapter 2 and look at issues relating to research that might help you as a student teacher. We explore the place of reflection and reflexivity in research, learning and teaching and offer complexity theory as a lens through which to look at learning.

In **Part 2** we move the focus to the classroom and look at issues related to observing classrooms and the kind of methods that you might employ in developing your learning through enquiry.

Chapter 5 opens Part 2 of the book and asks you to think about the presuppositions that you will bring to teaching and reflect on things you observe in teachers. We also ask you to consider the kinds of knowledge that teachers need.

In Chapter 6 we ask you to consider issues related to observing children and in particular how we can make meaningful interpretations about what children learn. We ask you to reflect on how teachers might construct learners.

In Chapter 7 the focus is on the conceptual frameworks that underpin research, such as methodology, and on methods that might be helpful for the student researcher.

In Chapter 8 we support your critical reading and writing – essential at Masters level – by immersing you in words and putting writing under the microscope.

Chapter 9 focuses on fieldwork – we take you step by step through the issues related to the methods of interviews and questionnaires.

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Part 3 of the book is designed to support your professional development, as you enter your new profession.

In Chapter 10 we explore ways in which you might work with other professionals, presenting this in a historical context so that you are aware of how this area has evolved, and we also lay out some inherent dilemmas.

In Chapter 11 we invite you to consider your own professional development needs.

We hope you find this book both challenging and supportive.