

Book title: Learning to Teach in the Secondary School: A Companion to School Experience

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The review

1. What is your overall impression of the book?

My overall impression is that this is a comprehensive book perfect for anyone beginning to teach in a secondary school. It is a revised edition that has been updated over the last 6 years in order to incorporate the latest research into 9 chapters of a variety of helpful sections.

Capel, Leask and Turner have co-written this book using their knowledge of teaching and practice sharing at Brunel and University of London

2. Who do you think would benefit most from reading the book? What will they learn?

The book is clearly helpful for first year trainees though it is still relevant and comprehensive enough to still be useful for NQT and RQT years. The main topics featured include behaviour management, lesson planning and inclusion, which were useful last year, though this year I have focused more on differentiation, ways pupils learn and guidance on academic writing. The main feature is the links to journal articles associated with the topics featured which have been a great basis for my own writing

3. What did you think about the quality of the writing? Please consider the tone, structure and ideas. Does it suit the audience?

The writing style is academic and formal enough to suit the book's audience, namely young professionals who are beginning to be introduced to teaching. The structure of the book may not be in the right chronological order for a teacher to focus on in terms of their development: the book features lesson planning and behaviour management as the first topics, though assessment and ways pupils learn I feel are more advanced topics. It is no way near a definitive manual for teaching though and different people may have different experiences - I focused on it being more of a guideline of what to focus on generally but only after guidance from the ITT on Tuesdays.

4. Please discuss the research used to underpin the ideas. What evidence does the author use? Is it robust and up-to-date?

The featured articles include new articles from such authors as Dix, Bruner and the Department for Education that have all supplemented learning from the Tuesday's sessions previously. Among the historical context of teaching, famous behaviourists such as Skinner, Vygotsky and Piaget are featured and celebrated though with a critical eye on how in the 21st century their ideas and theories hold up in a teaching environment. The full list of articles used can be found in the index for fact

checking and no great claims can be found in the volume that are not supported by referenced ideas and research.

5. What did you learn from reading the book? What ideas/approaches/practice will you change or adopt as a result of reading this book?

The main help that I got from this book was when I was attempting assignment two for BCU last year, specifically how the pupils learn in a classroom setting. The aforementioned section I was able to find from page 249 onwards and featured an array of articles from my psychology undergraduate degree, which I found fascinating and challenging to apply to a different context. Kolb's work especially was useful on the model of how learners learn, and though theoretical, helped me cement my knowledge and understanding of a learner's mind in a new light.

6. Could you share a quote from the book that particularly resonated with you?

The section from Kolb that I found the most helpful was the passage:

'Kolb suggests that learners need, at the concrete experience stage, to immerse themselves in new experiences. Learners reflect on these experiences from as many perspectives as possible at what Kolb calls the reflective observation phase. This reflection enables the learner to create concepts which integrate their observations into logically sound theories at the abstract conceptualisation stage, which are then used to make decisions and solve problems at the active experimentation stage [n.b. see Fielding, 1996 too].'

Simply put, and disregarding the infallibility of this statement, children have a whole load of mental processes going on while learning, and not only is it difficult to tap into their attention at times but, to allow them to process, store and use that information comes with its own hurdles and problems which experienced teachers must be able to somewhat influence.