



Book Review – McGee, C., & Fraser, D. (Eds.) (2012). *The Professional Practice of Teaching* (4th Edition). South Melbourne, Australia: Cengage Learning.

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Since 1994, *The Professional Practice of Teaching* has made a significant contribution to teacher education – both during and after initial teacher education. There have been major changes in the educational context from the time of its first edition to this new, fourth edition in 2012. The title of the book indicates the editors' commitment to teaching as a profession where teachers' decision-making is informed by a critical stance to theory and research, underpinned by a strong knowledge base and where their vision for teaching is expressed in practice – skills and strategies – which serve a larger reason for learning than a technicist, recipe following approach.

The book contains 15 chapters, most of which are written by a current or previous member of University of Waikato's education faculty. It can be viewed as a 'treasure trove', a collection of chapters into which teachers may dip and delve, or, read as an entirety. The inclusion of frequent references to similar topics in previous or subsequent chapters contributes to a sense of the book as a totality, rather than just a compilation of discrete chapters.

Several overarching assumptions are identified as important and valued:

- ✚ teachers make a major positive difference, not just to students, but to society;
- ✚ teaching which can be described as professional practice is complex, skilled, knowledgeable and research informed;
- ✚ teaching is emotional work requiring passion and a strong philosophical motivation that will 'stir the mind, heart and soul' (p. 56); and,
- ✚ teaching which empowers students to exercise increasing autonomy over their own learning lies at the heart of the ideology of the book.

As in the third edition, each chapter includes introductory discussion questions, case studies that illustrate the theory in context, end-of-chapter activities to consolidate or expand thinking and web links to enrich the reader's understanding or further exploration of topics. These are supplemented with additional web links and free online study tools available from the publisher's website. The addition of teacher and student voice vignettes helps the reader link chapter content to the 'real world' of teaching in a personalised and lived

manner. These brief narratives invite the reader to imagine a reality of which they might be part.

This edition has increased links to the secondary sector through more secondary focused case studies and teacher/student voice sections. Also, some chapter activities have been extended to provoke thinking in this sector (e.g., consideration of the effect of NCEA on teacher decision-making) and the chapter on assessment includes some new secondary focused paragraphs. For tertiary teachers using the book as a text, or teachers leading professional development presentations to their peers, a selection of online resources is available (e.g., adaptable PowerPoint presentations which cover the main concepts addressed within the chapters).

The degree to which chapters have been updated or changed in the light of educational influences, recent research, curriculum change or digital innovation varies. Some (e.g., Chapters 9 and 10 related to cultural responsive and diverse teaching; Chapter 13, on teachers and professional ethics) have little change. On the other hand, Chapter 11 (related to the role of ICT in learning) changes its foundational metaphor from an 'information highway' to using swimming with dolphins as a symbol of the connectivity, 'intelligence, playfulness and smart decision making' possible within Information and Communication Technologies (p. 224). The chapter focused on the beginning teacher experience has a new author (Jenny Ferrier-Kerr). Different discussion questions indicate a slight change of attention to topics such as resilience, self-efficacy and ownership of professional learning while also retaining the previous appropriate focus on processes involved in the transition to being a beginning teacher and full registration. Information about the phases of development through a teacher's career is supplemented with reference to Moir's model specifically for beginning teachers' development (p. 295) and more strategies to deal with potential reality shock.

In their Introduction, the editors claim that, 'the coverage in this edition is extensive'. They note that 'no book can say everything' and that readers will have opinions about what is omitted or treated too lightly (p. xvii). This is true. There are three areas where I think this is the case: the degree of engagement with the New Zealand curriculum paradigm; the lack of consideration of students with special learning needs; and, the influence of digital technologies on all facets of teaching and learning.

This edition has updated references to the 'new' New Zealand Curriculum (2007) (NZC) throughout including linking quotes to the documents for consideration. In a 'wish list' for curriculum related revisions in this edition, student teachers' professional practice would be enriched through a more focused engagement at the curriculum paradigm level. The challenge of the NZC's commitment to values, key competencies and learning areas as 'the basis for teaching and learning across schools and within schools' (NZC, 2007, p. 37) is different to previous curriculum foci on content acquisition. Consequently, engagement with related challenges (and opportunities) for classroom management, planning and assessment with these as central would have been helpful. For example, the planning exemplars (pp. 149-152) are opportunities to provide leadership and demonstrate how to shape learning experiences in keeping with the NZC paradigm more overtly; where, Key Competencies might, as Hipkins notes, 'integrate knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values. To me, this means that they must be embedded in the current

learning areas (or in contexts that integrate across several of these), not just appear as an add-on' (2005, p. 36).

While there are two chapters that contribute to culturally responsive teaching, the minimal acknowledgement of the teacher's professional responsibility to consider the needs of students for whom the classroom is a challenging space continues in this edition. This is disappointing given the editors' belief in the importance of teachers who provide 'a school experience that is relevant to all students and not just those who are already suited to the system' (p. xv). Consideration of special needs learners, whether they be the gifted and talented, learning challenged or physically challenged is present in terms of say, mobility issues when considering classroom space, or possible tensions in developing a sense of community. However, catering for the diversity of learning needs found in a typical classroom is very challenging for neophyte teachers. While not expecting a dedicated chapter, for this teacher educator there is not enough consideration of these learners or support for differentiated learning and teaching in chapters focused on teacher decision-making relating to planning, assessment, and developing safe learning environments.

It is clear that the revised edition has attempted to update references to ICT and digital technologies – and, this is critical. But, what is not evident is engagement with the changes these have had on 21st century learning literacies and the possibilities they generate in teaching and learning. In McGee's very important section on interaction and ideology, and in the light of the enormous possibilities for interaction and learning now available through digital technologies, it is simply not sufficient to state that, 'the use of computers in schools is changing assumptions and practices of interaction' (p. 103). More engagement with this 'teaser' is necessary in order to provoke professional practice that utilises digital technologies that have not previously been available as tools for learning. Ideas later in the chapter raise some questions for consideration but do not provoke the type of ideological debate that needs to occur; for example, a case study about how ideological assumptions can shape the way schools explore the dilemma related to whether to use or ban the mobile phone. In regard to planning, we read that it is 'usually in written or diagrammatic form' (p. 138) and later (p. 157) that 'increasingly teachers are using computers to record their planning'. However, it is not just that most schools have digital planning proformas that teachers are required to use, but also about how these are linked to official documentation, student learning plans, assessment and reporting processes. Sewell and St George's chapter, 'Developing a Community of Learners', retains its focus on ideas of emotional, intellectual and social connections in a way that enables 'a sense of the spiritual to be nurtured' (p. 254). Teachers would be well served if this section had also engaged with the possibilities and challenges related to connectivity and collaboration online – especially in the light of the NZC's specific focus on these topics within the e-learning and pedagogy section (see, NZC, 2007, p. 36).

A particular strength of previous versions has been the acknowledged importance for education to nurture students' spiritual needs (see, 2008, p. 264) and arguing that spirituality be respected as a natural component of life and, consequently, important for education. The third edition included a critical reminder of the place of spirituality; the fact that 'our search for beauty, truth, justice and wonder is as pressing now as it has ever been' and the fact that

'acknowledgement of our spiritual needs in education is still emerging' (2008, p. 263). The fourth edition, while referencing spirituality occasionally, no longer sounds a clarion call for its part in a critical consideration of teaching and learning in the same way. I am disappointed with the changes to the final chapter – especially the removal of the valued focus on the place of spirituality in well-being and teaching and learning. In a book that many student teachers have as a text, this omission from the last chapter which draws the attention of its readers to 'the importance of raising "their heads" to take a critical view of the educational politics within which their work is situated' (2012, p. 308) is consequential. Teachers in mainstream schools need to be invited to explore educational approaches that 'take their broader role seriously, their role in nurturing the soul as well as the mind' (Fraser, McGee & Thrupp, 2008, p. 263). As Poetter, Goodney and Bird (2004) note, 'by not addressing the spiritual side of students, our colleges and universities are presenting a fragmented, narrow view of human culture ... As our world becomes more globalized and culturally diverse, the implications of this are disquieting' (p. 132).

However, despite my criticisms of this edition, the book continues to make an important contribution to the development of teachers: who are professional; who base their work on strong research-informed theoretical foundations; who have a strong commitment to professional practice; and, who recognise the need for a critical perspective, given that teaching is both moral and political by nature. Such teachers are characterised by decision-making which is 'deliberate and owned, not prescribed or just the current bandwagon idea' (Norsworthy, 2003, p. 60). This book continues to provide a springboard for building a knowledge base for teaching and learning practice which rightly earns the descriptor 'professional'.

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