



Book Review – Zepke, N., Nugent, D., & Leach, L. (Eds.) (2011). *Reflection to Transformation: A Self-help Book for Teachers* (2nd Edition). Auckland: Dunmore.

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JOCE JESSON

University of Auckland

This book is for all of those tertiary teachers who want to become better teachers whether in private training establishments, universities, polytechnics, community settings or workplaces. While a useful higher education course textbook, it also works well for those looking for professional improvement ideas. The basic premise of this edition claims to be the Habermasian domains of human interests; technical, communicative, and emancipatory interest used as the means for transformation. Transformation here is variously interpreted as the ability to learn and act in or on the world. A key part of that is 'reflecting', that is, critically thinking back on your own experiences and meaning-making in order to make change or take action. The book itself is a revision of an earlier volume updating many of the chapters, while it continues to provide those in tertiary teaching with a number of thoughtful concepts for them to consider. Several of the chapters draw on an eclectic collection of theorists; Freire, Shor, Jane Thompson, bell hooks and Myles Horton together with adult learner theorists, Mesriow, Kolb, Brookfield, and Biggs, in their different explorations of transformative action. We actually wander through the curriculum view of what has become known as the Tyler Rationale (Tyler, 1942). First decide on your purpose. Next think about the educational experiences that may be provided that are likely to attain these purposes. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized? And then lastly, how can we determine whether these purposes are being attained? It is a view with potential that was sadly colonised by Taylorist behavioural models and the focus on learning outputs.

In this volume Zepke, Nugent and Leach have pulled together some very readable writers to introduce tertiary teachers to what are often thought to be difficult or fuzzy concepts. While thinking and reflection are considered philosophically within many of the chapters, there is a uniting structure underpinning each one. They all end with a glossary, a list of suggested further reading as well as the bibliography. In a context that is increasingly dominated by the simple instructional models – pre-test, teach, assess and evaluate – this volume offers those who teach courses in adult learning a really useful contrasting text to the usual rule-following output ones.

The book is structured in four sections. Part One, *The Reflective Practitioner*, focuses on the teachers and bringing critical perspectives about the purposes of their own teaching. First, Nick Zepke lays out various ideas behind the concept 'reflection' and extends it at the end beyond superficial naval gazing, pointing the reader towards reflective concepts involving

emotional and spiritual ideas around learning. Maxine Alterio and Janice McDrury pick up these ideas relating them in using story telling in teaching. Dorothy Spiller and Pip Bruce Ferguson explain the details of how to use action research in order to investigate aspects of their own teaching. This process, when coupled with good curriculum theory, helps teachers understand and continually reassess their own practice. As they explain, when conducted with a good critical friend, the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) approach enables tutors, instructors or lecturers to be simultaneously both researchers and teachers.

Part Two, *Effective Teaching Practice*, is much more practically oriented. It gives the reader various ways and means to consider their own teaching. Continuing the theory-practice blend of the book, Dean Nugent in 'Teaching for Learning' spells out exactly how he goes about creating what he calls the *learning circumstance* – a learning community. This is presented quietly as a series of 'this is what I do' personal suggestions. In Chapter 5, 'Inclusive Teaching', Nick Zepke takes up the idea of difference and explores it from two ends – the individual and politically created differences – suggesting that it is the teacher as agent who can work with the difference.

While a range of learning contexts is covered mainly in the formal arena, what is notable are the chapters in which the particular focus is the creation of teaching as *ako*: a relationship between teaching and learning, coupled with relevant exemplars of 'how to'. In this regard, Linda Leach's Chapter 6, 'Beyond Independence', offers much for those new to educational theory or returning to study. She provides a thoughtful challenge to the cry for independence.

Most tertiary teachers are thrown off the deep end; they are selected for the job for their content knowledge. Then without any further education (or a skilled colleague/teacher), these new tertiary teachers tend to revert to their life-world observations of teaching (sometimes from the age of five) as they struggle to form their own pedagogical 'kit'. While they are given a course booklet, there is usually no explanation of how the selections and various assumptions that made up that particular course's design were undertaken. These new teachers have limited pedagogical knowledge and the theoretical complexity of creating pedagogical content knowledge is often denied them. They are then set up to fall into the trap of trying to create bits of curriculum in order to fit the required assessment task determined from somewhere else.

Part 3, *Teacher's Work Behind The Scenes*, thus focuses on teachers' need for careful planning and preparation. In Chapter 8, 'Designing for Learning', Alison Kirkness and Jane Terrell concretely spell out their process of course design. They provide examples of the different ways that desired learning outcomes might be varied as well as showing how the complex whole comes together. This is followed by Zepke and Leach's 'Planning to Engage'. Here the authors use the results of a research project to offer mechanisms to institutions to encourage students' engagement. The focus is the institution's need to change rather than the students'. Some institutions claim to be student-focused but sadly, though, in this regard what comes to mind is a line from Alexander Pope's (1789), 'An Essay on Man': 'Hope springs eternal in the human breast'. The final chapter in this part in a very interesting juxtaposition, focusing on the complexity of assessment in 'Assessment for Transformation'. Here Zepke, Leach and Neutze try and sort out all of the confusing purposes and processes of assessment. It is a chapter that lends itself to being used as

classroom material against which to try and unpack many existing courses' assessment processes.

The book ends in Part 4, *Present Contexts, Future Trends*, with some big picture thoughts about adult learning, globalisation and spiritual teaching, which returns us to the beginning. What are the purposes of adult and higher education? First Brian Findsen sets out the contexts for adult learning in a national situation under pressure from competing global forces. Using what is a clearly Freirean view, he makes explicit the breadth of adult and higher education, identifying in the process the various ways that the transformative learning framework can be developed. He concludes with a series of discussion questions that could challenge teachers to think beyond the immediate, and so site their experience in the broader global challenges to creating the world as a better place. The final chapter by Dean Nugent is an investigation into spiritual teaching using the work of U.S. 1970s cult teacher Adi Da Samraj (born F. A. Jones). Although the sentiments of this chapter may be admirable for some, nonetheless using it as the final word in the volume detracts from what was a really interesting excursion that the rest of the book provides.

Adult learning has become the latest model for Government policy as our country grapples with the consequences of the skilled labour shortage exacerbated by the consequences of the 1990 neo-liberal changes to both the state and education. Sadly at that time, they forgot that all of the state assets that they corporatized and/or sold were at the same time education and training places. Education was deeply embedded in the working culture of the Railways, the Post Office, Air New Zealand, the Ministry of Works and Development as well as large construction companies, and local and central government. Adult and community education was part of the creation of the fabric of citizenship. We as a country have become poorer for the limited focus on the purpose of learning as in institutions we now pursue the idea of higher education and training as the simple answer to what is a complex problem.

What is the purpose of adult and higher education? How can we use this to transform our country for the better?

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DR JOCE JESSON

Critical Studies in Education, Faculty of Education, University of Auckland



Joce's interests are in the area of teachers' work/ teacher unionism at tertiary and other levels. She is a strong supporter of bi-cultural and community education, and is also involved in employment relations education.

Joce Jesson recently retired as Principal Lecturer at the University of Auckland. She is currently a part-time Senior Research Fellow at the University of Auckland and a community educator.

Contact: j.jesson@auckland.ac.nz