

Reviews

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Bull, Joanna & McKenna, Colleen (2004) *Blueprint for Computer-Assisted Assessment* RoutledgeFalmer (London & New York) ISBN 0-415-28704-9 202 pp £24.99
 tandf.co.uk enquiry@tandf.co.uk

I awaited the arrival of this book with some excitement—I have been working and teaching online since the late 1980s and computer-assisted assessment (CAA) is an area that sorely needs writing about. Especially needy are areas in e-learning and virtual environments, which seem to stretch traditional assessment to its limits.

To say I was disappointed is true. But don't get me wrong. It's not what is in the book that disappoints so much as what is mentioned fleetingly but not in enough detail—the coverage doesn't match its title.

Blueprint for Computer-Assisted Assessment is a revised part of a project undertaken between 1998 and 2001 by the authors and colleagues from the Universities of Loughborough, Luton, Glasgow and Oxford Brooks. The authors previously published several sections in 2000 and 2002. Bull and McKenna note in the introduction that "...CAA... has been developing rapidly in terms of its integration into schools, universities, and other institutions... [in] its capacity to offer elements, such as simulations and multimedia-based questions, which are not feasible with paper-based assessments." They go on to comment that "while many practical issues are described and discussed, the book draws throughout on the emerging body of research into CAA, and related work in assessment and learning technologies."

Blueprint contains 11 chapters (and four appendices and a reference list). The first eight

address "educational aspects such as question and test design, scoring and analysis, feedback, and integration with other assessment methods" and Chapters 9–11 cover technical, operational and support areas. And herein lies my problem. Bull and McKenna give only one of those 11 chapters, Chapter 8, to the area they call "CAA-related activities"—namely virtual learning environments, computer-mediated communication, electronic marking of text, and the use of gaming techniques for assessment. The book's focus is objective testing, and gives only brief acknowledgement, in Chapter 8, that "in many ways, CAA exams which use multiple-choice style questions are largely replicating paper-based testing approaches... . Work in certain areas of caa is leading to the development of assessments that are more interactive and quite far removed from both conventional testing and multiple-choice CAA" (p 92). And that's that...

So my disappointment lies in what I expected this book to be about from its title, and even the opening introduction fed my anticipation. But in the end, while well written and soundly based on research, it did not go anywhere near as far into the newer areas of assessment as the title leads one to expect. If you are looking for a book to give you a research-based introduction to electronic objective testing, then this is the book for you. But for me, it whetted my appetite but did not at all satisfy my needs.

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Evans, Gillian (2002) *Academics and the real world* Open University Press (Buckingham &

Philadelphia, Pa) ISBN 0-335-21111-9 165 pp £19.99 (£60 boards)
openup.co.uk enquiries@openup.co.uk

There are two sides to Gillian Evans: she is a formidable historian and theologian, which makes it seem natural that she quotes in Latin without translating (and thereby taxes my rusty School Certificate Latin), and she is a leading member of the Council for Academic Freedom and Academic Standards (which gives her the impetus for the book under review). But she is first of all an uncompromising academic who backs her heterodox views with 590 relevant references from Plato and Cicero via Newman to C P Snow and the Dearing Report (1997, the most significant for over 30 years, on higher education in the UK).

The fact that her views may be heterodox is itself these days an indictment of our society and its relationship to academic values—for if there is one fault in this book it is that it is too orthodox. While it is not blind to the faults of the past, its remedies seem to take too little note of the fact that even verities, that in some way seem eternal, have to be reinterpreted in changing circumstances.

Dr Evans jousts valiantly with the two powers that are reducing the higher education academy in Britain to impotence—the state and the market. She recognises that universities are ill-equipped to defend themselves against either, but that defend themselves they must if they are to maintain academic values. Hence probably her most telling attack is on the willingness of academic management to compromise, for instance as vice-chancellors—servants of the academic community—have abandoned their role of stewardship. In addition vice-chancellors fail to act as a body, so that—not hanging together—they are at risk of hanging separately, which is surely an outstanding example of *trahison des clercs*.

In the absence of a Constitution, Dr Evans is right in seeing a solution in an independent intermediary body. This could be the reconstituted Quality Assurance Agency (Elton, 2001), and it is good to see her praise for its current Director. But such a body would take power away from both the state and the market

and it seems improbable that either would accept a reduction in their current powers. The outlook is not good.

There is a significant omission in the book—the absence of a European dimension in general and consideration of von Humboldt's university reform in particular. Had the book become too long so something had to be cut? Much can be learned from, for instance, German experience over the centuries in defence of academic freedom. In that case, it is of course strengthened by a federal Constitution, which declares in its first Article that "human dignity is sacrosanct. It is to be honoured and it is a duty of the power of the state to protect it." Such a statement has financial implications!

Dr Evans has written a courageous book and there is just a possibility that academia in general may profit from it. Therefore please read it. It is unlikely that it will benefit her own career, but I doubt that will curb her—as her motto clearly is *Fiat justitia et ruant coeli* (Watson, *W Quodlibets of Religion and State*, 1602).

Reference

Elton L (2001) Quality assurance through quality enhancement *Educational Developments* **2**, 4, 1–3.

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Fallows, Stephen & Bhanot, Rakesh
 (2002) *Educational development through information and communications technology* Kogan Page (London & Stylus, Sterling, Va) ISBN 0-7494-3565-8 224 pp £22.50
kogan-page.co.uk kpinfo@kogan-page.co.uk

I started reading this book with enthusiasm. I was busy with a project dealing with success factors for the innovation of higher education through the use of information and communications technologies (IT). I thought, "What a case of serendipity: the right book at the right time." Unfortunately my enthusiasm was short-lived...

This book is an example of common-sense educational technology/instructional development. “Hey guys, look what we did.” This in itself can be very interesting, approaching the readers as adults—quite a novel thought in instructional design land—and letting them actively draw their own conclusions for their own situations. A second approach could have been using a few case studies as a basis for approaching educational technology literature and research, and then using those experiences to make the theory more poignant and applicable, teaching us general rules for educational development through IT.

The problem is that the authors of this book do neither. What they *do* do is try to draw general conclusions from these few pieces of casuistry and tell us what we should learn from their experiences and how we should use those experiences in our daily practice—and this doesn’t at all work, for me at least.

There is, however, a refreshing exception. Maggie Hutchins, in her chapter on computer-mediated communication (cmc), presents a fine and workable theoretical framework for making use of cmc as educational technology. In particular, her discussion of cmc paradigms and learning experiences (Lord, I’m beginning to hate the word “paradigm”) and key features of cmc and related learning opportunities is an example of how it should be.

Almost all of the authors forget in their enthusiasm that the proper first question to ask is either “What is it that we want to achieve with the introduction of IT into education?” or “What’s wrong with education that IT can help?” Rather they all seem to offer solutions to unstated problems. They appear to have taken the cue from advertisers who constantly bombard us with solutions to problems that we did not know that we had. It’s time that book writers, editors and publishers, before they write, edit or publish books like this one, ask themselves: “If IT is the answer, what then is the question?”

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Gale, Trevor & Densmore, Kathleen (2003) *Engaging teachers* Open University (Maidenhead & McGraw-Hill, Pa) ISBN 0-335-21026-0 135 pp £16.99
openup.co.uk enquiries@openup.co.uk

Engaging Teachers: Towards a Radical Democratic Agenda for Schooling provides a well-organised and thoughtful analysis of much that contextualises and constrains teachers’ work in Western democracies. It has little or nothing to say about technology or about the role of technology in bringing about—or aiding and abetting—change agendas. To my mind this was a lost opportunity for Trevor Gale and Kathleen Densmore in their attempt to signpost ways in which communities, their schools, teachers and leaders should interact to progress such change.

Despite social injustice and access issues, information and communications technologies such as the Internet, email, and working with broadband videoconferences do have the potential to bring stakeholders into closer touch with each other, to provide breadth of information sources, and to increase the speed with which action might be progressed. Therefore, it might have been useful for the authors to consider what potential roles these and future technologies of these kinds could have in progressing a radical democratic agenda. Indeed, exposing some of the emerging social justice and economic control issues associated with access to technology might have made some sections of the book less esoteric and more engaging.

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Hills, Howard (2003) *Individual preferences in e-learning* Gower (Aldershot, UK & Burlington, Vt) ISBN 0-566-08456-2 180 pp £55 boards
gowerpub.com info@gowerpub.com

The fact that everyone is different does not necessarily mean that we all learn in different ways. But it is true, by and large, that most

methods of instruction make little allowance for individual differences in learning.

This book discusses how new technology can both enhance and be constrained by differences between learners. It provides two specific examples of research on how learners differ (research by John Carroll and Gordon Pask, respectively). Then it describes one approach in detail, that is based on learning styles. The book concludes with two brief examples of how this latter work may be applied in practice. Each chapter is clearly written, cogently argued and followed by an excellent summary.

The book is written for a training context rather than an academic one. This means that, from an (my) academic point of view, some of its strengths are some of its weaknesses. Thus, several examples are based on the author's experiences rather than on evidence, there are few detailed references, and there are several overgeneralisations. Readers interested in similar issues in an academic context will find the paper by Baldwin and Sabry (2003) more helpful.

In this book the later chapters rely heavily on work arising from ideas on learning style as measured by the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory, and expanded by David Kolb in the US and Honey and Mumford in the UK. These ideas are accepted by Howard Hills as largely correct. Sixteen different personality types are discussed, and figures detailing the proportions of men and women who fall into these categories are given to one decimal place. The content is complex, but anyone who wants a clear account of this work will find it here. However, an academic might question the validity and the universality of this particular approach (see Coffield *et al*, 2004). Nonetheless, the implications of taking an individual differences approach to designing instruction in the context of new technology are clearly discussed by Hills (and by Baldwin and Sabry).

References

- Baldwin L and Sabry K (2003) Learning styles for interactive learning systems *Innovations in Education and Teaching International* **40**, 4, 325–340.
- Coffield F *et al* (2004) Learning styles and pedagogy: a systematic and critical review

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Inman, James A *et al* ed (2004) *Electronic collaboration in the humanities* Lawrence Erlbaum (Mahwah, N.J. (& Eurospan, London)) ISBN 0-8058-4147-4 419 pp \$99.95
erlbaum.com orders@erlbaum.com
eurospan.co.uk orders@eurospan.co.uk

Call me snobbish but I was pleased by the absence of “e-terms”. Possibly the idea of calling the book “e-collaboration” never crossed the editors’ minds but sometimes such new words seem a bit trite.

I believe that collaboration, when it works, is wonderful. I was hoping to find here insight into deploying the technology-mediated variety. My own limited experiences, both as a student and as a tutor, have been disappointing. There are answers in this book, or rather, options and issues.

The back cover blurb writer maintains that “this text is cutting edge.” How can it be, when the technologies in the book—for example email, on-line discussion lists, hypertext and MUDs (multi-user dimensional systems, ie, text-based virtual reality) have been around for over 20 years? Because of the quality of its scholarship and writing, that’s how. Many chapters left me reeling: even the foreword is provocative with the use of strikingly brave typography to represent something of computer-mediated discussion’s rich but chaotic multi-voiced-ness. And I was bemused, even astonished, by James Inman’s Chapter 4, ‘Electracy for the Ages’. His presentation of the concept of “cross-temporal collaboration” still makes me pause for thought long after reading it—but the whole book is like that.

The book is organised into four parts. Each part has four or more essays and is followed by a “Response” to tie them together. Indeed, the Response device itself offers readers a kind of cross-temporal collaboration. When I have

read something powerful, I want to share and discuss. Thankfully, each Response is like meeting a renowned expert with time to kill, who conveniently happens to have read what you just did. So I asked each of the four such experts what they thought of the preceding chapters—and the candour of their answers was so helpful. For example, after reading about the use of MUDs in Chapter 14, I enthused about them, explaining how I had immediately attempted to join one and had begun to think how I could use it in my teaching. Lloyd Benson listened patiently and gave his Response—which calmed me down without crushing the nascent innovation.

I don't possess a humanities background but am sure that, whether *you* do or not, this text will richly reward your attention.

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Kozulin, Alex *et al* ed (2003) *Vygotsky's educational theory in cultural context* Cambridge UP (Cambridge, UK, Melbourne & New York) ISBN 0-521-52883-6 477 pp £21.95 (£55 boards)
cambridge.org

This very comprehensive book brings together 20 articles on Vygotskian educational theory. The material collected here is drawn from a wide range of countries, subject areas and contexts.

Vygotsky and his followers see child development, and cognitive development more generally, as the consequence of learning experiences that take place in social situations. Social constructivism, and Vygotsky's contribution to it, has become increasingly influential in recent years. Arguably, some of the key components of the theory—such as the notion of the zone of proximal development (zpd)—are not always well understood. Through exploration and analysis of Vygotsky's original writings, and the work of others who have developed his theory, the subtlety and relevance of the concept of the zpd is clarified. That's just an example. A particular strength

of the collection is the way that the authors combine theory with description and analysis of specific examples of educational design and practice.

It would be invidious to try to list the many topics covered in this collection. While all the articles are concerned with school and pre-school learning, I found I was frequently making notes about the relevance of the discussion to higher education and adult learners. Many of the contributions will be of interest to readers concerned with the design and development of learning materials and environments in any context. Vygotsky's stress on "imitation"—seen as the interaction of the learner with more competent others—is discussed in depth and has obvious relevance to the design of group interaction and peer support. Vygotsky's theory turns the focus away from the individual learner to the individual's learning within a community of learners. The importance of affective issues, these often undervalued in adult learning, is also highlighted.

Particularly interesting, and of relevance to the design of web-based learning resources, are the sections on the role of literacy in language in cognitive development. The acquisition of symbolic tools is seen to be central to this process; but it is also argued that symbolic tools by themselves are insufficient and that the acquisition and development of psychological tools are essential.

This book is strongly recommended for anyone wanting to find out more about Vygotsky's theory and the writings of others who have extended his ideas; it is a rich resource to dip into for ideas and stimulation.

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Nicholls, Gill (2002) *Developing teaching and learning in higher education* RoutledgeFalmer (London & New York) ISBN 0-415-23696-7 196 pp £22.50
tandf.co.uk *enquiry@tandf.co.uk*

Over the past decade, calls for greater quality and accountability in university teaching have been echoing through the ancient stone, red-brick and ferro-concrete walls of academe. These have finally brought staff development in from the cold to play a more central role in university planning and practice.

In the UK this demand for teaching excellence has led to a new accrediting body, the Institute of Learning and Teaching (ILT). Academics are highly recommended to become members of ILT, and the Institute's proposed national framework for continual professional development (cpd) sets out clear criteria for cpd and for judging the subject and pedagogical knowledge and professional values of "the good teacher." The Institute also requires those applying for membership to maintain a personal professional development record (pdr) to demonstrate that they "remain in good standing" in their professional abilities.

This book by the Professor of Education and Director of the Institute for Learning and Teaching at King's College, the University of London, is designed to help new and serving university teachers to meet ILT's requirements. It is organised around the key areas suggested by ILT, namely:

- Planning and preparation
- Conducting teaching and learning sessions
- Assessment and evaluation
- Revising and improving teaching
- Leadership, management and administration
- Continual professional development

It does so progressively, using diagrams, tasks, exemplars and points for consideration to guide the reader in enabling students to learn, mastering various teaching strategies and technologies, interpreting institutional missions, regulations and policies, and understanding the theories, research and values underpinning these. The book is not prescriptive. It may set out general principles but it encourages individual and contextualised approaches to cpd.

The author stresses that understanding student learning and developing teaching skills takes time and requires critical reflection upon the actions taken to test theories and per-

sonal beliefs. He provides a five-question framework for reflecting on premises and practices that he suggests can be applied in any discipline or teaching context:

- Does my practical theory about a teaching situation stand the test of being put into practice, or do I have to modify, develop or change it?
- How can I develop strategies that fit my practical theories, and are they likely to improve my teaching and the students' learning?
- How can I identify and select appropriate strategies from a range of alternatives available?
- How can I develop and put into place the strategies I want to try out?
- How can I monitor the effects of the strategies I have implemented and record their outcomes?

This book will be a good companion for newcomers to university teaching, and for longer-serving staff with limited cpd experience who wish to conceptualise or re-conceptualise and inform and improve their teaching styles and effectiveness in the lecture theatre, classroom, small-group tutorial and seminar, and in teaching with technology.

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Pastoll, Gregory (2002) *Motivating people to learn* Novalis (Cape Town) ISBN 0-95843-695-9 223 pp \$19.50

This book probably does not mention technology once—but it still provides extremely interesting reading for all people who work with IT in education and experience some difficulties in having IT and/or e-learning adopted with enthusiasm. In fact very frequently the problem in such contexts is not with technology, but with the poor motivation of learners to learn—and the issue of motivation is often addressed too superficially by those working on IT for learning, for they assume without proper basis that learners, and particularly young learners, will love to learn with IT.

Gregory Pastoll explains here that motivation to learn is the key to successful learning of

any kind, and that it is not only an issue of teaching techniques: his radical but not ungrounded starting point is that “school has a habit of adversely interfering with people’s attitudes to learning”, and many critical views are expressed on current teaching practice at school and university. Once you recognise that there are more and more exceptions to the situation, the picture described does not appear too far from reality.

The book’s Introduction makes clear the author’s standpoint with regard to education systems; it deserves to be read carefully in order for us to understand better the rest of the book—which is really a source of structured thinking and practical advice on how to generate and maintain motivation to learn.

Section A distinguishes between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, and argues that much more should be done to address intrinsic motivation rather than relying on the typical approaches of extrinsic motivation (the stick and carrot approaches, in other words).

Section B is a very enjoyable distillation of advice on how to be a “motivational teacher”, and is well rooted in classroom experience and examples from school and university lectures.

Section C is probably the one that might produce more impact on the world of IT for learning, once the suggested 12 “strategies for designing learning activities based on intrinsic motivation” have been “translated” into the world of e-learning.

Finally, Section D tries to exemplify how a portfolio system would be a much more coherent assessment approach—if intrinsic motivation to learn has to be stimulated—than a system based on traditional grades; this section too can easily be “translated” into the e-learning world, by recognising the potential of motivating in creative ways as opposed to a purely formal and institutional approach.

On the whole, this book provides very enjoyable reading that generates sympathy in anybody who has experienced bad teaching in her/his youth; but, above all, it offers a very relevant set of practical tips on approaching innovative teaching practice and supporting

learners. It can be a good reference point for anyone wishing to address seriously the issue of motivation—not only teachers but also parents, moderators of learning communities, researchers with one foot on practice...

My only regret, while reviewing this book from a *BJET* perspective, is that the “translation” of the author’s wisdom into the world of “educational technology” is the reader’s responsibility. But maybe this challenge was intentionally prepared to stimulate our intrinsic motivation to learn?

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Scharff, Robert & Dusek, Val ed (2003)
Philosophy of technology: an anthology
Blackwell (Oxford & Malden, Mass) ISBN 0-415-26346-8 167 pp £18.99 (boards £65)
blackwellpub.com
e-help@blackwellpublishers.co.uk

Recent large-scale meta-analyses of the existing literature suggest that we do not yet have the necessary research to justify the expansion of technology in our schools. Thus, we have seen an increase in the number of calls for new research, particularly for studies that attempt to measure the cognitive gains made with technology use. Although such calls are justified, many of them miss two important factors. First, they lack reference to studies that address the larger societal and cultural impact of technology use. Second, they fail to capitalise on past studies, particularly on research projects that draw on a broader definition of the term “technology”.

Fortunately, Scharff and Dusek have given us a book that meets both of these goals. In *Philosophy of Technology*, the editors set out to collect historical and contemporary manuscripts and articles that act as an anthology of technology and its relation to humanity. They begin by addressing the history and philosophy of technology. The book continues with sections on defining technology and “Heidegger on technology.” And the editors conclude with sections on “Technology and human ends” and “Technology as social practice.” There are

55 articles that make up these six sections, with authors ranging from Aristotle and Plato to Marx and Foucault.

Each college and university that hosts an educational technology, media or communications department should have a class in either “philosophy of technology” or “society, technology, and culture” at its core. For those that do, this would be an excellent textbook to guide the curriculum. It is difficult to give a thorough review of the entire anthology as certain chapters are easier to read than others, and this depends on one’s philosophical background. Certain chapters are also more or less applicable to individual readers’ areas of study. However, the editors have put together a collection of articles that would be appropriate to use to discuss the technological condition in any graduate classroom. Unlike many technology books, they include enough bridges between the past and present to convince readers that the technological condition is not a new one, and that history does indeed repeat itself.

This book is not for the general hobbyist. It contains deep, theoretical and philosophical work that is meant to challenge and enlighten. However, it is a must-have reader for anyone who takes technology studies seriously. In its pages, readers will explore the impact of technology on society and culture, and culture and society’s impact on technology.

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Shepherd, Clive (2003) *E-learning’s greatest hits Above and Beyond* (Brighton, UK) ISBN 0-9545904-0-6 190 pp £29.95
aboveandbeyond.ltd.uk

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This is an unusual book in that it is primarily an edited collection of “comment” pieces that Clive Shepherd has written for *IT Training* magazine over the past three years and therefore covers a range of topical issues around the area of e-learning. Its origins are both a

strength and a weakness. The journalistic style of a monthly column brings a freshness to the writing, and each individual piece is highly readable. However, as a book, the collection lacks coherence: there is no clear storyline that takes the reader through the important issues of e-learning. Most of the issues are covered but the links between them are not immediately apparent.

When I first saw the title I thought that this was a book of case studies, perhaps because case studies are on my mind at present. Rather like a CD collection of greatest hits from a band of the 1960s, I rather hoped that this would be a definitive collection of case studies from which we could all learn and take heart. I also hoped that there would be some case studies of projects that did not work as expected, on the grounds that we perhaps learn more from failures than from successes. The case studies are there, but not in any great detail: they serve to illustrate points well made in the text, but leave the reader wondering what else they might have to teach us.

The book is divided into four main sections, covering the management of e-learning projects, the skills required to support e-learning, the technologies involved, and the design and development of materials. Inevitably, there is some overlap between the chapters as well as that lack of connectivity between them. Each of the chapters is very topical (they were, after all, written for a monthly column), and I suspect that they will begin to date quite quickly. There are numerous quotes from professionals in the industry who are (for the most part) well-known names now, but they—and their companies—may not be so well known in a few years’ time. If you don’t know the luminaries and their companies then the quotes lose some of their impact.

Clive Shepherd is one of the most experienced and respected figures in the UK e-learning community and his views are worth reading. The strengths of the book are the short case studies and the checklists that abound in every chapter. This is essentially a book written from experience—the experience of the author and the e-learning projects that he clearly knows well. Even if you already have the individual issues of *IT Training* over the past three or four

years (which is unlikely), this is a book worth buying so as to have the distilled experience ready to hand.

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Venkatesh, Murali *et al* (2003) *Learning-in-community* Kluwer (Dordrecht, Netherlands & Boston, Mass) ISBN 1-4020-1387-6 122 pp €75
wkap.nl orderdept@wkap.nl

This monograph concerns an approach to professional education at college level that involves essentially a kind of active learning where classroom work is completed and learning is put into practice by giving support to the local community. The term “community” in the title does not refer to the “learning community” concept (which is not directly addressed in this book)—but rather to the social environment where learning is improved through real practice. This, in the authors’ experience, constitutes a valuable work setting whose results are rich, varied, challenging and more fruitful than those of internship and simulated case studies. The learning model is based on four elements: client-centred work, apprenticeship through participation, social dimension of professional action, and social task design; it is sketched here through the discussion of the relevant teaching experiences of the authors over almost a decade—but it is never really developed as regards its practical or theoretical aspects.

The book contains several interesting observations about the organisation of practical and group work (as well as regards the development of consulting expertise), which could result in useful developments for teachers of vocational and professional education. However, almost half of the pages are devoted to describing the context in which the approach was developed and the structures which were created in the authors’ university in order to support that work; these do not appear really relevant from the point of view of educational technology. In much the same

way, just one-fourth of the books and articles referred to (which are mostly not very recent) concern learning and education, the rest being mostly related to sociological and organisational issues.

The book is not straightforwardly written; the description of the examples is split, without reason, between the different chapters, which causes several repetitions and compels the reader to go through the whole book before getting a clear picture of the approach in practice.

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Also received

Please note that coverage here does not preclude later fuller review.

Britton, Edward *et al* ed (2003) *Comprehensive teacher induction* Kluwer (Dordrecht, Netherlands & Norwell, Mass) ISBN 1-4020-1147-4 404 pp €151
wkap.nl orderdept@wkap.nl

The review after this one describes teacher induction in Britain as the first year in employment after becoming a newly qualified teacher; it hints that it doesn’t have much to do with improving the novice’s skills as a teacher per se. Things don’t have to be like that—*this* book describes how induction can be more than a short period of caring support for novices—it looks at programmes in China, France, Japan, New Zealand and Switzerland that last at least twice as long and really do make some progress in helping the novice become a better teacher. It does this in great depth. However, it does so by presenting a detailed account—typically 50 or 60 pages in length—of each of those five local systems, with significantly shorter introductory and concluding chapters; this makes it hard for readers to sort out what really does make for effective teacher induction and therefore what could help them develop practice appropriately in their countries.

Bubb, Sara (2003) *Insider's guide for new teachers* Kogan Page (London & Sterling, Va) ISBN 0-7494-4101-1 182 pp £12.99
 kogon-page.co.uk kpinfo@kogon-page.co.uk

"Succeed in training and induction" shouts the cover of this Career Guide published for the *TES*, Britain's ancient weekly newspaper for pre-university teachers. New teachers in Britain, as in effect defined here, are those undertaking training (whether already serving or still in higher education) and thereafter following the "induction" (formerly "probationary") year as newly qualified teachers (NQTs). This book actually concentrates on the practicalities of the latter part of all that, and, as regards the training part, sticks mainly to choosing, applying for and starting on a post-graduate certificate of education course. So it becomes clear that to "succeed in training and induction" as a teacher doesn't require much in the way of teaching practice or ability, though there is some good advice on passing the (compulsory) IT test during training and preserving your voice. Maybe Phil Race's 500 tips for teachers should have been included in summary form to say something about what the career actually entails.

Glover, Derek & Law, Sue (2002) *Improving learning* Open University Press (Buckingham, & Philadelphia PA) ISBN 0-335-20912-2 182 pp £16.99 (boards £55)
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Subtitled "Professional Practice in Secondary Schools" and written by (respectively) a visit-

ing professor and a normal one at Nottingham Trent University, this is an academic but readily usable guide to school improvement. School improvement by various semi-objective approaches has been a major bandwagon in Britain for almost a decade now—but, although the main measure of a school's overall quality of education provided must be to do with the learning of the learners, it is not common to find an approach that addresses that so explicitly. So here we find learners' and teachers' views, theories of learning, links between learning and other aspects of a school's provision, such as leadership and the curriculum, and so on. The main such aspect is, as surely everyone accepts, the quality of teaching—and the main way in which this book goes wrong is to have very little on teaching. After all, a learner-centred approach to teaching—as this book claims to espouse and explore—involves

- The teacher's development of "smart" learning objectives (mentioned twice, but in neither case smartly), and...
- their appropriate use to improve the o-going assessment (mentioned three times, but briefly, and probably only summatively) of the learners and of...
- their quality of learning (not mentioned) and thereby...
- evaluation (not mentioned in this sense) of...
- quality of teaching (not mentioned in any sense).

So—no more than four marks out of 10!