

## REVIEW

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## RESENSIE

Graham Crookes. *A Practicum in TESOL: Professional Development through Teaching Practice*. Cambridge University Press. 303pp

As is evident in education journals, there is considerable interest in exploring new approaches to teaching practice, a core element of teacher education. Working from a critical pedagogy perspective, Graham Crookes makes a valuable contribution to troubling received wisdom and theorising practice. He has no interest in offering a neat programme or an inventory of techniques. Nor is he interested in this book in providing advice on best practice in areas such as oral communication skills, for instance. Though he does not deny their possible value, his concern here is with the development of personal theories and teaching philosophies.

The book is divided into twelve chapters, *Organization and Goals; Writing, Observing, Interacting and Acting Together; Developing a Philosophy of Teaching; Aspects of Classroom Technique; Doing the Right Thing: Moral, Ethical, and Political Issues; Lesson Planning, Improvising, and Reflective Teaching; What (Else) Do you Know?; Motivation and ES/EFL Teachers' Practice; Classroom Management in ES/EFL Contexts; Social Skills and Classroom Community; Working within the System: Institutional Structures and Reflective Teacher Development; Putting It Together and Starting Again – Another Model*. These chapters are contextualised in an introduction which places the book, explains the structure and content of the book and also introduces the author. This is an acknowledgement of the importance of context in determining or limiting knowledge claims, and at the same time the importance of 'local personal, and interested nature of knowledge' (p. 3). Particularly interesting in his scene-setting comments are his comments on *Teaching as performing a social role* (p. 5f).

Becoming a teacher means, among other things, learning to perform a particular social role. In performing the social role of 'teacher' an actor necessarily engages with a script partly constructed by the expectations of our audience of students, fellow-teachers, administrators, and (possibly) parents and community members ... Knowing a large amount about, say, the psychological processes involved in acquiring reading strategies in a second language is of little importance if one cannot enact the teacher role in front of students. Enacting that role includes what can (initially) be said and done, and doing so in a way that will elicit the complicity of the students, who often know their role better than does the beginning teacher.

Teaching is not a technical exercise, but a moral enterprise enacted through social means.

Another interesting aspect is his strong emphasis on teacher learning as a life-long activity. He argues that both an individual perspective (reflective teaching) and a social perspective (teachers in supportive groups learning from each other) are necessary in this enterprise.

Crookes concludes the introduction with an invitation to readers (where they are using the book in a group context) to introduce themselves to each other in the interests of discussion and collaboration. He also foregrounds the role that the voices of his past students play in the book.

The sections are not intended to be followed in linear fashion. Crookes makes it plain that readers should be strategic in selecting the parts that seem most useful, in the light of their current experience and needs. This is an important caveat for users in southern Africa because the options he sometimes asks readers to entertain are not available here.

At the start of each section, there are clear and succinct indications of the central focus, and interspersed in the text or at the end there are questions for discussion.

Viewing this from the perspective of an EFL teacher educator, I found chapters 2, 3, 5 and 8 and the sections dealing with collaboration with other teachers, developing a philosophy of teaching, doing the right thing and motivation the most useful. In *Writing, Observing, Interacting and Acting Together*, Crookes allows prospective (and even experienced) teachers to explore the benefits of collaboration. His approach is to begin by tactfully ensuring that the notion of collaboration and related activities such as journal writing are understood. Another attractive aspect is that he is realistic about the possible problems, inviting students concerned to seek solutions in collaboration with others.

Chapter 3, *Developing a Philosophy of Teaching; Aspects of Classroom Technique*, and Chapter 5, *Doing the Right Thing: Moral, Ethical, and Political Issues; Lesson Planning, Improvising, and Reflective Teaching* need to be read together. Chapter 3 focuses on the need for ES/FL teachers to be able to articulate their views and values concerning practice, while Chapter 5 explores the thorny moral issues that teachers of English face in addition to the usual moral responsibility to perform their role properly 'in a way that aids students' learning' (p. 88). For many prospective and in-service teachers in Africa Crookes's emphasis on a view of politics as relating to power that directly affects getting, keeping, or losing a job is of direct relevance. I found his overview of moral issues particularly valuable.

Indeed a useful part of thinking in this area concerns not so much the ethical systems themselves, but the day-to-day procedures we should use in order to help make our decisions as good as possible, particularly when faced with difficult cases or instances. Due process, deliberation, and consultation with others, are essential. (p. 91)

The chapter on Motivation (Chapter 8: *Motivation and ES/EFL Teachers' Practice*) highlights the need for student teachers (and others already in the field) to be reflective about the conditions that motivated them. Here discussion draws on works by Keller (1983), Peirce (1995) and Thorkildsen (1995) who provide conceptions of motivation in different contexts. Peirce's argument that learners' willingness to use a language is closely related to whether they can really conceptualise themselves as a real user of English is particularly pertinent to southern Africa.

The other chapters provide valuable insights into key areas of practice from lesson planning to classroom management. Here Crookes provides a fresh perspective on commonly held assumptions. On page 104, for instance, he presents a cogent argument in favour the mental rehearsal a physical lesson plan offers, even for experienced teachers:

Why is an aide memoir needed on some occasions? Because teaching makes so many demands on our cognitive resources that we may forget or poorly execute steps, or stumble over content, unless we have the psychological add-on that the plan represents. In regular teaching, we cope with the cognitive load by automatizing behaviors; in running new material or working in unfamiliar circumstances, and especially when we are being more reflective than usual (itself a demanding cognitive task), the humble lesson plan, in its psychological guise, should reappear.

Another feature of the book is the appendices in which practical advice is given on teacher development groups (Appendix A), how teacher educators can use the book (Appendix C), and the NEA Code of Conduct is supplied (Appendix B).

Although the book more obviously reflects the situation in Britain, the USA and the Far East, and most particularly in Hawai'i, I believe that it could help to enrich and transform teaching practice (the practicum). A great strength of the book is that it is theoretically well grounded and that it foregrounds the lived-experience of student teachers as well as experienced teachers.

Crookes never offers neat answers; instead he invites readers to accompany him as he probes salient questions with provides relevant insights from educational theory. Students, teachers and teacher educators alike should find it stimulating.

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