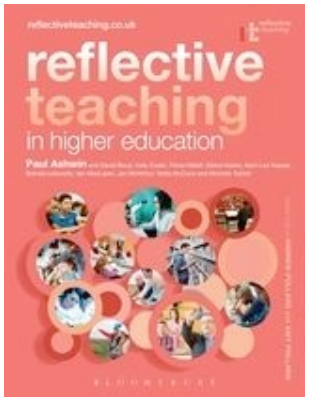


Reflective Teaching in Higher Education

Ashwin, Paul and Boud, David, eds.
Bloomsbury Publishing Inc. , 2015

Book Review

Tags: critical pedagogy | critical reflection | effective teaching | reflective teaching

Reviewed by: Gordon S. Mikoski, *Princeton Theological Seminary*
Date Reviewed: April 15, 2016

A group of English, Scottish, Irish, and Australian scholars has produced a thorough and insightful resource for effective teaching in higher education that seeks “to bring together the latest knowledge and understanding of teaching, learning, and assessment in higher education” (xi). The editorial team developed the approach to reflective teaching on the basis of the ten point Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) developed in the UK. The chapters in each section refer to the relevant principles in TLRP and put forward credible arguments grounded in recent empirical research. The editors intersperse useful reflective activities and case studies throughout each chapter in order to promote reflective inquiry by individuals and groups of teachers.

The editors organized the book into five parts: Becoming Reflective; Creating Conditions for Learning; Teaching for Understanding; Reflecting on Consequences; and Deepening Understanding. Taken together, these five elements constitute a model for the development of effective teaching in higher education that is comprehensive, open-ended, and ongoing. The approach offered here functions like a dynamic spiral toward adaptive expertise. The emphases on evidence-based theory and practice, constructivism, teaching as jazz improvisation, assessment as a crucial component of learning, and robust inclusion all recommend this book to contemporary educators in higher education.

I find only two deficiencies in this impressive body of work. At four hundred pages, only the most dedicated teachers or administrators in higher education will read the work as a whole. I tried to plow my way through to the end several times, but could only make limited progress in any one session of reading due to the density of the material. I think a book half the size of the existing volume would have sufficed.

The second problem concerns the commitment of the authors to critical pedagogy. Toward the end of the book, the editors advocate ever more strongly for a largely Frierian-based approach to diversity and inclusion as the best – perhaps the only – way forward in higher education today. While I have more than a passing interest in critical pedagogy, I find the narrowing of the philosophy of education bandwidth advocated here to be overly confining and surprisingly uncritical. I would have liked to see a treatment of multiple approaches that would support the establishment of egalitarian and inclusive communities of learning in higher education.

I see four likely uses for this book. Those charged with leading doctoral seminars on teaching in higher education may find this a particularly valuable resource. I know that I will. It could well serve as a viable alternative to Barbara Gross Davis's *Tools for Teaching* (2nd ed., Jossey-Bass, 2009). This book could also help new professors develop the kind of reflective practice that will enable them to become expert practitioners of the craft of teaching. Many individual chapters of the book could find use by those leading in-service faculty development sessions. Finally, academic deans or committees responsible for promoting effective teaching in faculties could profitably work their way through this resource in its entirety as a way to gain a 360° sense of effective teaching and learning in higher education today.

https://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/resources/book_reviews/reflective-teaching-in-higher-education/

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